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# Authentic Dasein as Pathway to Heideggerianism as a Political Philosophy - a Political Vibration of Being and Time

Thomas Akpen

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AUTHENTIC DASEIN AS PATHWAY TO HEIDEGGERIANISM AS  
A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY – A POLITICAL VIBRATION OF BEING  
AND TIME

A DISSERTATION  
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY  
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## ABSTRACT

In the history of Western philosophy, Martin Heidegger is the only philosopher after Plato and Aristotle to have seriously investigated the question of being. Instead of dwelling on particulars as previous philosophers did, Heidegger probes the question of being by investigating the being of the investigator of being. This being is Dasein, understood as human existence. Dasein is not just a *thinking thing* (res cogitans) or a *political animal* (politicus animalus), but essentially a being-in-the-world. Dasein has two modes of existence in its being-in-the-world – inauthentic existence and authentic existence.

To exist inauthentically is to reject the clarion call of conscience to own up the guilt that characterizes the being of the human being. To acknowledge the self-insufficiency that is the lot of every Dasein plunges Dasein into its authentic mode of existence. Therefore, to exist authentically is to be resolute, decisive, or to use Friedrich Nietzsche's terminology, it is to *will radically* in Dasein's being-in-the-world-with-others. Willing radically is not utopian, it is demonstrated in the political process when the individual delegates another to represent him in the community of selves for the construction of a State that enhances, not only the disclosure of the meaning of being, but also the being of the investigator of being. It is this

kind of exposition of Heidegger's ontology that marks the epiphany of the political vibration of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

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THIS WORK IS DEDICATED TO MY  
LATE FATHER

PETER DOHOL AKPEN

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 A Case Statement.

There is considerable consensus of opinion in philosophical circles that Plato and Aristotle are philosophers that seriously investigated the question of being. In his investigation of being, Plato had located being in higher and lower realms. In his theory of forms, Plato contends that higher being is spiritual, it is the most perfect and unchangeable of which all lower beings, beings subject to change are only their instantiations (*Phaedo* 65d ff and 100c ff). Hence for Plato, being is highly hierachicalized.

In his investigation of being, Aristotle, on the other hand, seeks the understanding of *being qua being* (*Metaphysics* 25a). His rigorous consideration of being leads to the conclusion that though we can talk about primary and secondary senses of being, and being in actuality and being in potentiality, what is essential to all is that being is what “is”.

After Plato and Aristotle, Martin Heidegger is said to be the only philosopher to have accorded the question of being a very profound attention. He did not seek to investigate being under a certain aspect; he did not seek to place being in higher and lower realms; he sought to unveil being and restore the mystery of the word “is” which had been long concealed (*aleitia*) by philosophers. To concentrate on beings instead of being is to

conceal the meaning of being. It may be explained that some philosophers indicate the former with “being” while the latter is indicated with “Being.” Heidegger did not make such a distinction. He expressed “being” or “Being” with the same term, being. This expression will be adopted in our project.

The effort of Heidegger was to unconceal being by way of a particular being, Dasein. His effort to unveil being by means of Dasein (human existence) has earned him prominence as one of the greatest contemporary philosophers of his century.

Though Heidegger’s thought on being is given very serious attention in current philosophical debates, the same regard seems to be lacking in political philosophy hence “his status as a political philosopher... is less clear” (Strauss and Crospey 1987, p. 888). Though the status of Heidegger as a political philosopher may seem not to be very clear to some, it is the purpose of this project that evidence from his major work, *Being and Time*, argues otherwise.

## 1.2 Scope and Purpose of Study

This project uses Heidegger’s major philosophical work called *Being and Time* as its main source. However, use will also be made of some of his later writings which help give the emphases of this research a more forceful presentation.

It was Heidegger who called attention to the misconception of being, a misconception that leads to nihilism. In *common parlance*, nihilism is said to be the position that nothing is. This does not mean total abyss or emptiness; it does not mean that there is nothing, but that there is no ground for beings and therefore there is no order or standard that is not subject to change. It was Nietzsche (1967) who said that "...every belief, every considering- something-true, is necessarily false because there simply is no *true world*" (p. 14). Therefore "...the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be *a divine way of thinking*" (p. 15). Hence he recommended a complete rejection of all external values and meaning. In his words, "Nihilism does not only contemplate the "in vain!" nor is it merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy" (p. 18). All this is necessary for the precise reason that there is no objective world out there, being has no ground. For Heidegger, nihilism is the understanding that this ground is no-thing or no-being. This ground has to be grasped as being in its primordial sense, it is something other than particular beings. Heidegger was seriously concerned with the problem of nihilism which seemed to have infected the whole of western philosophy for if there is no being, or to use Nietzsche's phrase, "if God is dead," then there would be moral and political chaos. Thus, it was out of Heidegger's concern for nihilism that sprouted his

ethical and political *thought*. This work will be confined to his political thought with the purpose of making the case that given the evidence in *Being and Time*, a monumental effort to disclose being, Heidegger's philosophy can also be considered as political philosophy. Though Heidegger did not aim at expounding a political philosophy in *Being and Time*, a philosophical analysis of this text exposes Heidegger as one who was not a novice to political philosophy, but one of the enduring political philosophers of his time.

### 1.3 Review of related literature

What is sought here is a review of literature available on authentic existence. To attempt a review of the whole literature on authenticity will be too much material for this work since so much has been researched and written on this topic, not only by philosophers but also by psychologists. This section is intended to show the origin of the notion of authentic existence in the Danish philosophy Kierkegaard, who is considered the father of existentialism, and render an account of how this term came to be understood by subsequent philosophers in the existential movement up to Jean-Paul Sartre.

Soren Kierkegaard was concerned with living – what does it mean for the human being to live? Kierkegaard's subject was not some abstract thing.

His subject was the individual, the human being and his existence. Now “in Kierkegaard’s view, this purely subjective entity lay beyond the reach of reason, logic, philosophical systems, theology, or even “the pretenses of psychology. Nonetheless it was the source of all these subjects” (Strathern 1997, p. 7). The individual is a thinking being but he also has different emotions and these inform and influence his thought. This is what philosophy should be about – the individual and his existence. It was this thinking of Kierkegaard that gave rise to what is known as “existence-philosophy.” Christened “existentialism,” its concern was with the “problem of existence” – what does it mean to exist, what does it mean to be? The question Kierkegaard was raising was the question of being. To raise the question of what it means to exist is to raise the question of the meaning of being. So it cannot be said that Kierkegaard was the first to raise this question. Even before Plato and Aristotle, this question had been raised (cf. Kenny 2004, p. 1ff). However, the individual was not the point of focus as was the case with Kierkegaard.

In the history of Western philosophy, it was Descartes who for the first time, directed philosophy to the human condition when he said “*cogito ergo sum*” meaning “I think, therefore I am”. Put in Descartes’ words (1993) “here I make my discovery: thought exists; it alone cannot be separated from

me. I am; I exist – this is certain” (p. 19). Hence for Descartes in this instance, being is thought and thought is being. By the word *thought* I comprehend or grasp all that which I have the awareness as functioning in me. Even if what I am thinking about is false, nonetheless it is certain that I who have these thoughts exist. This [thought] is what is most true, most certain and unchangeable. For the first time, philosophy was directed to the subject as the subject became for Descartes, the starting point of philosophy. That is why it is often claimed that it was Descartes who introduced the concept of the subject into modern philosophy. But this “I” of Descartes lacked “flesh.” It existed only when it was thinking. The self could know for certain that it existed because of its doubt but it could not know for certain its cogitations and perceptions, etc. – this does not answer the question of existence as Kierkegaard viewed it, for thinking and existing are not the same thing. My existence must be lived. It must be “existed.” Existing is a form of doing, not a form of thinking. What he would advocate would be a thinking and doing as solution to the problem of existence. He was thus set to properly articulate the meaning of existence.

The center of Kierkegaard’s philosophy was the “existing being,” the individual who must will one thing, the good, for wholeness lies in the

purity with which a man "...wills the Good..." (Kierkegaard 1956, p. 64). In Either/Or Part II, Kierkegaard (1990) argues that:

There are conditions of life in which it would be ludicrous or a kind of derangement to apply Either/Or, but there are also people whose souls are too dissolute to comprehend the implications of such a dilemma, whose personalities lack the energy to be able to say with pathos: Either/Or...nevertheless, even in matters that in and by themselves, are innocent, what a person chooses properly, test himself, so that eventually he does not have a painful retreat to the point where he started (p. 158).

The point of Kierkegaard is that the individual, in his existence, in his DOING, is always faced with life's choices. Life's choices are two-fold: the aesthetic choice and the ethical choice but the aesthetic choice is no choice; it is inadequate. Kierkegaard explains himself in the following words:

The aesthetic choice is either altogether immediate, and thus no choice, or it loses itself in a great multiplicity. For example, when a young girl follows her heart's choice, this choice, however beautiful it is otherwise, is no choice in the stricter sense, because it is altogether immediate. If a man aesthetically ponders a host of life's tasks, then he...does not readily have one Either/Or but a great multiplicity, because the self-determining aspect of the choice has not been ethically stressed and because, if one does not choose absolutely, one chooses only for the moment and for that reason can choose something else the next month (1990, p. 167).

Therefore, the only choice that is absolute is the choice between good and evil and this choice is ethical. These two choices are the two ways of human

existence: the aesthetic way and the ethical way. Whichever way we take, we are consciously and freely choosing to take up our existence – either the aesthetic path or the ethical path. And here we see the roots of what is known as existential philosophy. Once we choose as free beings, we must assume full responsibility for our actions and not attribute our choices (and their consequences) to something or someone else. Those who choose to live in the aesthetic way share the vision that they have to live for themselves and have pleasure as their motivator. Because the pleasure-seeking individual is driven to act or not to act by pleasure, Kierkegaard contends that such an individual lacks the necessary tools to take charge of his existence. Such a person “lives for the moment, prompted by pleasure. His life may be self-contradictory, lacking in stability or certainty” (Strathern 1997, p. 38). In the event of a critical appraisal of his mode of being, there is the feeling of despair which is consequent upon the absence of meaning in his life. This is why this kind of existence is inadequate. Now there are two attitudes we can take when faced with the inadequate mode of existence: we can say it is our destiny and stay put in our condition or we can take the path of freedom and responsibility and be the pilot of our own lives; we can choose to remain in the cave of despair or choose to come out of the cave of despair to the world of mature responsible adults. For Kierkegaard, the only

way out of the cave of despair is self-creation which means “to will deeply and sincerely” (Strathern 1997, p. 41) and by saying so, Kierkegaard was touting the ethical as a replacement for the aesthetical.

The person who chooses the ethical chooses good and attains wholeness and the inner purification of his being. But “the person who chooses only esthetically never reaches this transfiguration, this higher dedication. Despite all its passion, the rhythm in his soul is only a spiritus lenis [weak aspiration]” (Kierkegaard 1990, p. 167). As Palmer (1996) puts it: “...Kierkegaard believed that aestheticism could not really provide a true form of selfhood, rather it was a form of ALIENATION from selfhood” (p. 79). It is this alienation from selfhood that Kierkegaard calls ‘aestheticism’ (cf. Kierkegaard 1990, p. 91). Since alienation does not breed wholeness of personality, it can be understood why Kierkegaard vehemently argues for the ethical way of existence. And here, the individual is key – he actively engages in self-creation by his choice. Unlike the aesthetic person who accepts his situation and perhaps attributes it to fate, the ethical person takes his destiny into his own hands by his choices. In the words of Strathern (1997): “Where the aesthetic individual merely accepts himself as he is, the ethical individual seeks to know himself and to change himself by his own choice. He will be guided in this by his self- knowledge and his willingness

not to accept what he discovers but to try to improve upon it” (p. 42). He is ready to make effort, to labor, to journey out of the cave of fragmentation and multiplicity to the world of wholeness and adequacy. This is the ideal, the goal of wholeness of human existence.

For Friedrich Nietzsche (Kaufmann 1989), the one who overcomes all multiplicities and fragmentation is characterized thus: “...cheerfulness, patience, unpretentiousness, and contempt for all great vanities, as well as by magnanimity in victory and forbearance regarding the small vanities of the vanquished; men possessed of keen and free judgment...men who have their own festivals, their own weekdays, their own mourning” (p. 127). Such, Nietzsche believed, are in greater danger because of their “...radical rejection of value, meaning and desirability” (Kaufmann 1989, p. 131). Though they are more fruitful, more fulfilled and are happier. Nietzsche insists further on the radical nature of this mode of existence when he says that this “...greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is: to live dangerously!” (Kaufmann 1989, p. 127). To “live dangerously” is to stay above the surface of life; it is to take away the masks that characterize our everyday living in order to attain the true self. The renowned German poet Rilke captures this point better in his poetic language which asserts that:

We discover that we do not know our role; we look for a mirror; we want to remove our make-up and take off what is false and be real. But somewhere a piece of disguise that we forgot still sticks to us. A trace of exaggeration remains in our eyebrows; we do not notice that the corners of our mouth are bent. And so we walk around, a mockery and a mere half: neither having achieved being nor actors (Kaufmann 1989, p. 141).

Man must resist being a “mere half”, he has to be himself, he has to create his own existence each moment of each passing day. In the perspective of Jose Ortega, man is his own possibility for the reason that at his disposal is the abstract possibility of existing, but not the reality. He must earn his life economically and metaphysically. His being is not like the being of a stone which just is. Neither is it like the being of a beast which is and lives. Man is and lives and knows that he exists. Because all the three forms of being are found in man, he is half immersed in nature and half transcends it; he can be said to exist like other beings but transcends them. His future is always of concern to him. He has to provide for himself economically and metaphysically. Hence he always engages in the project of improving himself. What belongs to him by nature is realized by itself and because it presents no problem, he does not consider it his true being, his true self. But man’s extra-natural part is yet to be realized; it has to be worked on. Because

man's true self is not a given but a self creation, it is his aspiration and therefore becomes his life project, the project of realizing his true being.

We cannot but contend that each individual's life is only but a constant effort to realize what Ortega calls a 'definite program or project of existence.' In the words of Ortega (Kaufmann 1989): "...each man's self – is nothing but this devised program. All we do we do in the service of this program...man begins by being something that has no reality... he is a project as such, something which is not yet but aspires to be" (p. 154). Thus man has the possibilities of being in any mode of his choice. For Ortega, these possibilities are not a given but must be searched out by man. They are not out there for the individual; they have to be found by him and be his own creation and a product of his imagination. Then when they are found out, the individual is the one who has to select from the wide range of choices before him. He has to choose because he is a free man. Ortega explains further that:

I am free by *compulsion*, whether I wish to be or not. Freedom is not an activity pursued by an entity that, apart from and previous to such pursuit, is already possessed of a fixed being. To be free means to be lacking in constitutive identity, not to have subscribed to a determined being, to be able to be other than what one was, to be unable to install oneself once and for all in any given being. The only attribute of the fixed, stable being in the free being is this constitutive instability (Kaufmann 1989, p. 156).

Ortega saw this notion of freedom as the full maturity and harvest time of the Heraclitean world of perpetual change and the harvest is great indeed! In freedom, man creates his program of existence that answers in a satisfactory manner, the difficulties that circumstance presents to him. But instead of solving all the difficulties, this program presents difficulties of its own which give rise to a new program drawn in light of the first. The second program seeks to cancel the absurdities of the first; in the second the first is preserved in order to be avoided. In the second program which adopts a thorough experiment, man ceases from being what he was. But the second project of being gives rise to a third, and so on. Through these series of testing and negation, man keeps accumulating being – the past. It is through this process that man “...goes on making for himself a being through his dialectical series of experiments” (Kaufmann 1989, p. 156).

It seems that the dialectic is not merely logical, it is a dialectic of historical reason. Thus it is in historical reason that is located man’s authentic “being”. He is what has happened to him, what he has done, his past. If man is what he has done to himself, then there are no boundaries, no limits on his capabilities. This is man’s authenticity – he is a world of limitless possibilities. And this is his nature too! To put it in the words of Ortega “Man lives in view of the past. *Man, in a word, has no nature; what*

*he has is – history...what nature is to things, history... is to man”*

(Kaufmann 1989, p. 157).

Commenting on history, Karl Jaspers makes an important point that because we are historical beings our questions and answers are determined by our historical conditions. Our truth is an interpretation of what has been given to us. We must not negate our past, but to be original, to have genuine insights, to be true philosophers, our thoughts must grow from our own source. To develop our own source, we have to engage in the activity of thought. But this thought, this philosophizing, lacks meaning “...unless a reality of the thinker complements the thought” (Kaufmann 1989, p. 177). This activity is the inner action by which a person becomes himself; it reveals their true being since thought and humanity are indissolubly connected. Thought can draw attention to or throw light on ‘existence’ in such a way as to enable the existing individual to understand what is meant in terms of their own experience. It is by this path that the essence of man, in its entirety, is attained in the individual person.

### **Rebelling Against The Absurd**

Albert Camus, a French existentialist and a contemporary of Jean Paul Sartre describes his own version of authenticity as *rebellion against the*

*absurd*. In the *Myth of Sisyphus* Camus tells the story of the human condition. In this Greek legend, Sisyphus is condemned by the gods for scorning them, hating death, and loving life. He was condemned to the absurd punishment of ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain. Whenever Sisyphus reached the top, the heavy rock would roll back on its weight to the foot of the mountain, necessitating a repeat of the process again and again with no end in sight. The gods thought they had found the best punishment for Sisyphus for the reason that Sisyphus' hope for success would only be in vain. Now, Sisyphus has two options: either to give in to this absurd condition or revolt against it by creating meaning out of it. Sisyphus chose the latter option. It was very easy for him to consider his existence as absurd and an existence without hope and perhaps even prefer suicide, but he did not. Rather he chose to revolt against his condition by considering his ability to roll the stone up the mountaintop a form of victory. For this reason Camus considers him a happy man. His victory was in his struggle. For Camus then, Sisyphus is the hero for rebelling against the absurd and creating meaning out of absurdity. In this myth, Camus reveals human existence as meaningless; we are thrown into a world that has no meaning, cohesion and purpose. It is when we use our freedom and rebel

against this absurdity that life attains purpose, meaning and cohesion. This point is expressed in the words of Camus (1991) thus:

That revolt gives life its value. Spread out over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to that life. To man devoid of blinders, there is no finer sight than that of the intelligence at grips with a reality that transcends it. The sight of human pride is unequalled. No disparagement is of any use. That discipline that the mind imposes on itself, that will conjured up out of nothing, that face-to-face struggle have something exceptional about them. To impoverish that reality whose inhumanity constitutes man's majesty is tantamount to impoverishing himself (p. 55).

For Camus therefore, we become authentic only through the path of revolt, through rebellion. We must be people who say no "...but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation" (Camus 1991, p. 13).

Of all the above versions of authenticity, it is Kierkegaard that had the greatest influence on Heidegger in his project to uncover being through Dasein (human existence). When Martin Heidegger uses the term authenticity (and inauthenticity), he is expressing the point that Kierkegaard expresses with the term "wholeness" but he certainly does go beyond it. Because authenticity is the core of chapter three of this project, specifics shall not be gone into at this point. Just a few points will be outlined here. Heidegger contends that the world into which we are thrown is the 'they-world,' what Kierkegaard would characterize as the 'aesthetic' world. For

Heidegger (1996), in the 'they-world' "Da-sein plunges out of itself into everydayness, into groundlessness and nothingness of inauthentic everydayness. But this plunge remains concealed from it by the way things have been publicly interpreted so that it is interpreted as "getting ahead" and "living concretely" (p. 167/178). Thus the 'they-world' is a 'public' world, a world in which humans are basically conformists, subjects who do not profoundly consider themselves agents of free choice who can critique the status quo, question being and understand it. In this mode of being, humans concentrate on the accidental and the trivial and the mere multiplicities of life. In the perspective of Collins and Selina (1999), "...in inauthentic being, Dasein takes up the tempting offer of a "home" in the world, with Them, and allows itself to find its security there. Thereby it closes off possibilities, sealing out Dasein's recognition of its unity" (p. 84). Since the being of Dasein is a unity, this mode of existence is thus inauthentic and does not lead to the essence of Dasein or even tend towards it.

Now we need to turn away from the 'they-world,' the world of inauthenticity in order to disclose the being of Dasein. It is this turning away from inauthenticity that Heidegger calls authenticity; the turning away from the everyday world and the 'they' to raising seriously the question of the meaning of being as agents of free choice. To do this, we have to eliminate

all particulars and the trivial so as to arrive at the core of Dasein. For Heidegger: “Authentic being lies in the unifying of the scattered constituents of Dasein’s being, including its being-towards-death. They have to be recognized for what they are, not lost in the practical world, not washed out by the Them” (Collins and Selina 1999, p. 84). Thus it is by eliminating all particulars and the trivial, shunning the life of comfort and facing the reality of death that Dasein is brought to its authenticity.

Whether in authentic or inauthentic existence, Dasein takes up its being-in-the-world, but in the latter, the freedom that characterizes the being of Dasein in the former is lacking. In this vein, Dasein is not a mind, it is not a consciousness in the tradition of Husserl, but is absorbed and defined by what he does. It is this insistence on the active coping and freedom of authentic Dasein that heavily influenced Jean–Paul Sartre’s version of existentialism.

Unlike Husserl but very much like Heidegger, Sartre contends that being is not a mind, it is not consciousness. Sartre would define consciousness as complete emptiness. It is outside the realm of matter and as such it is “nothing,” it is free. Consciousness becomes being when it chooses. For Sartre then, being is the conscious being of the human person who possesses the ability to organize his understanding of the world.

Humans become more aware of the world in which they live by the choices they make as we engage in the project of existence and not by becoming more deeply conscious as Sartre thought was the implication of the phenomenology of Husserl. However, Sartre's insistence is consciousness and not the being of Heidegger. And since "All consciousness is consciousness *of something*" (Sartre 1992, p. 21), since it is empty and becomes being only when we choose, Sartre's philosophy makes a detour from thought to action.

Whereas Heidegger would concentrate on the question of being, Sartre would choose to dwell on its various aspects. His choice of the aspects of being led him to distinguish two kinds of being with the terms the "in-itself" (*en-soi*) and the "for-itself" (*pour-soi*). Being-in-itself refers to objects, things without awareness or consciousness. Sartre (1992) describes it this way: "...being-in-itself has no...consciousness of itself. The in-itself has nothing secret; it is solid" (p. 28). A tree can be said to be being-in-itself. It has no awareness and cannot improve itself nor organize its world. Being-for-itself, on the other hand, is the consciousness that is empty and "nothing", it is not the consciousness that leads to knowledge as in the case of Descartes' cogito. It is the consciousness that is free and only exists for something. In the words of Sartre (1992): "...the for-itself is the foundation

of its own nothingness in the form of the phantom dyad – the reflection-reflecting. The reflecting exists only in order to reflect the reflection, and the reflection is a reflection only in so far as it refers to the reflecting” (p. 241). Therefore being-for-itself is the consciousness that does not know anything, rather it is the consciousness that is capable of creating itself through its choices. It refers to a condition of self-awareness and self-determination. The point of Sartre is that the human being does not possess a predefined nature but is in total lack of everything. Individuals are “nothing,” that is, they are free. Humankind is therefore nothing, it is freedom. And it is from nothingness, it is from freedom that being comes into the world. The consequence of this is that man is a “...being condemned to be free” (Baskin, 1988, p. 63). By freedom, Sartre means the ability to define and assign meaning to the world. Humans are thrown into a meaningless world, a world without absolutes. As free beings, it is their task to invent meaning in a world with no “static ideals.” It is only then that they realize their freedom. As Sartre indicates: “man does not exist first in order to be free *subsequently*; there is no difference between the being of man and his *being-free*” (1992, p. 60). Therefore to refuse to act in freedom and create their own meanings because of any value systems they may have imposed on themselves is acting in *bad faith* or *self deception (mauvais-foi)*. And

because humans act freely, they are responsible for their actions. It is this unity of freedom and responsibility in Sartre's thought that gives his philosophy its special twist. Humans become authentic beings when they create meaning in their meaningless world and take responsibility for their actions.

#### 1.4 Hypothesis

The effort of Heidegger to disclose being by way of Dasein does not make his project in his *magnus opus* anthropological or anthropocentric. The focus of Heidegger is *being*. The being that Heidegger chose to unveil is as empty of acts and objects as the "bracketed" out consciousness of Husserl. Being is not a "this" or "that." To arrive at being, Heidegger would choose not to pay attention to particulars by beginning with the being of the Dasein that raises the question of being, the being of the individual that philosophizes. Since each person is a human being (Heidegger would say, "Dasein is in each case mine"), it follows that the individual is not some kind of "bloodless" entity that only theoretically contemplates the world. The human being thinks and feels different kinds of emotions in their being-in-the-world. In their existence, they exist with things and with others - they exist in a community, in a State, for "...every state is a community of some

kind...established with a view to some good” (Aristotle’s Politics 1252a1). Now, for Heidegger, to exist authentically in this community of selves is to shun the massification of the subject by choosing themselves rather than following the crowd. Choice is in our being-with so is political, aimed at our good. Hence “...man is by nature a political animal” (Aristotle’s Politics 1253a2-a3). But what does the term “political” mean?

The term “political” hardly gets a straightforward definition. Rather, it is employed in contrast to other ideas to simply provide content to a situation which is far from a definition. But in various ways the term “political” “...is generally juxtaposed to “state” or at least is brought into relation with it. The state thus appears as something political, the political as something pertaining to the state – obviously an unsatisfactory circle” (Schmitt 1996, p. 20). To avoid this circle and attain the definition of the political, what is needed is to identify specific political categories.

In aesthetics the distinction is between the beautiful and the ugly, in economics, between gains and losses, and in morality the contrast is good to evil. Now, to extend the same distinction to the political to be able to give it a definition by way of criterion rather than articulate an exhaustive meaning, it can be said that, “the specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy” (Schmitt

1996, p. 26). But it must be noted that the political enemy does not have to be morally evil or ugly in the sense of aesthetics. The distinction only stands for the depth of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. However, the political enemy is foreign, he is alien, he is the other, he is the stranger. Against this background, Heidegger's political enemy is what is different, the other. Heidegger's political enemy is that which needs modification for the attainment of the true subject, the real self. It is that fragmentation or triviality that the subject sets to modify in order to realize his potentiality-of-being. To be able to preserve one's true mode of being, the political enemy has to be discovered and overcome. This is why Schmitt (1996) would contend that "the...objective nature and autonomy of the political becomes evident by virtue of its being able to treat, distinguish, and comprehend the enemy-friend antithesis" (p. 27). It is in this enemy-friend antithesis, this "antagonism" that the substance of the political is found.

In today's ordinary conversations, the political is very often used when the intention is party politics. This is not what is meant here. It is not the "fight" for political office. The enemy-friend dichotomy definitely suggests the possibility of combat because the being of man is a never ending struggle and as such he is symbolically combatant. War or military

action is not being suggested here, for it might be really political not to go to war. In no way is there a reference to a “we-they distinction that...produces irrational nationalism, political conflict, and even warfare” (Don Keyes 1999, p. 130). Although the remark of Venetius that ‘let him who desires peace prepare to go to war’ is very often quoted, war is “the most extreme political means” (Schmitt 1996, p. 35). And even talking of war implies that the political decision has already determined who the enemy is. The content of politics is not war, nor is it the aim or purpose of politics. And even in the talk of combat, in the talk of war, we see the reality of this enemy-friend grouping. So the phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever present enemy-friend classification, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for economics, morality and aesthetics. It is only when this distinction is made that man is able to understand that the path from the many to the one demands a self-conscious effort and results only from a sustained rigorous process.

It was Heidegger who called philosophers to the two ways of human existence – the authentic way and the inauthentic way. He argued that the inauthentic mode of human existence does not disclose the being of the subject (Dasein). The ‘they-world’ is not the “truth” of the being of Dasein. Using the political categories of Schmitt, the inauthentic mode of existence

of Dasein could be characterized as the “enemy” in an existential sense since it is not what Dasein strives for. It is that which is “foreign” to the authentic mode which Dasein in its being strives to modify in order to reach authenticity; Dasein strives to modify inauthenticity and not the other way round.

Now, the whole of political action is dictated by some consideration of what is good or bad, better or worse. Political philosophy results from the dedication of individuals to attain the knowledge of what is the good life and the good of society (Strauss and Crospey 1996, p. 642) and the good life is that which man realizes his potentiality-of-being. For Heidegger, this is attained when man does not fall away from his being as essentially a “being-with.” He argues that man has fallen away from his being, a falling away that is manifested in their one-sided and exaggerated technological and scientific development, but as he says, “science does not think.” The only way man can return to his true being is by turning away from the trivial to the fundamental, from the inauthentic to the authentic. In the perspective of S. Wolin (1960) “The characteristics of political philosophy are an activity” (p. 2), and if political philosophy is that activity of thought that is inspired by the lofty ideals of authentic human existence, then Heidegger’s *Being and Time* can also be considered a monumental work on political philosophy, a

work that profoundly considers that dimension of the activity of thought that returns man to his ground.

### 1.5 Significance of Study

It is widely acknowledged that Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* has influenced works on ethics, social philosophy, aesthetics, the philosophy of language and so many other areas of human endeavor. But no strong positive content is given to his political philosophy. Therefore, the goal of this research project is to fill this academic vacuum so that this philosopher, one of the greatest of his time, will eventually be given his place in circles of political philosophy.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF BEING – A HISTORICAL EXPOSITION

#### 2.1 THE MEANING OF PHILOSOPHY

Heidegger's contention is that the question of "what is philosophy?" is simply a question of "what is being?" It is for this reason that this project begins with the meaning of philosophy among the ancient Greeks who first used the term, and how it came to be understood by philosophers after them. Such a historical exposition justifies Heidegger's metaphysical stance that since Plato and Aristotle, philosophers have forgotten the meaning of being and instead concentrated on entities (*Seiendes*). By investigating the being of the investigator of being (Dasein), Heidegger was set to return philosophy to its roots.

The word "philosophy" comes from a combination of Greek words *Philos* (love) and *Sophia* (wisdom) and is generally defined as the love of wisdom. Though philosophy is generally defined as love of wisdom, what constitutes wisdom is heavily influenced by the historical situation as well as the intellectual trend of each philosopher's era. However, in the midst of the peculiarity of each philosopher's time, there is some measure of consensus

that “wisdom is the understanding of what is important, where this understanding informs a (wise) person’s thought and action” (Nozick 1989, p. 267). With this understanding, a person of wisdom prioritizes and puts what is important in its proper position. This is to say that whatever their historical situation, philosophers ought to concede that philosophy is the search for wisdom, the rational enquiry of the question of existence, system of theories on the nature of reality, ethics and knowledge, God, art, politics and economy, etc. Philosophy covers a wide range of issues but its end is some kind of knowledge, it focuses at some kind of comprehension or wisdom about fundamental issues such as knowledge, meaning, reality, value, truth and being.

Philosophy arose out of man’s desire to know, the desire to comprehend his surroundings. Man’s questioning of his environment and the search for the meaning of being gave birth to philosophy. The Greeks are the ones on record to have first developed their comprehension of the world into philosophy. In philosophical circles, the Greeks who first articulated their understanding of the world into philosophy before Socrates are called the Pre-Socratics. For the purposes of this project, we begin from Heraclitus.

## **2.2 The Pre-Socratics.**

### **A) Heraclitus.**

The insights of Heraclitus have been admired by many philosophers. After reading his treatise on philosophy, Socrates is said to have remarked thus: ‘what I understand of it is excellent...what I don’t understand may well be excellent also; but only a deep sea diver could get to the bottom of it’ (Kenny 2004, p. 13). The result of the influence of Heraclitus is that his philosophy attained so many colorations down through the centuries. Heraclitus thought he was opening a new ground in philosophy, a ground that no philosopher before him ever dared. His proposition was that only change is constant. Everything is in motion and nothing is constant. The only thing that is constant is change. Plato speaks of Heraclitus thus: “I seem to see Heraclitus sprouting some ancient bits of wisdom that Homer also tells us – wisdom as old as the days of Cronus and Rhea... that “everything gives way and nothing stands fast,” and, likening the things that are to the flowing of a river, he says that “you cannot step into the same river twice (Cratylus 402a). For Heraclitus therefore, the ultimate principle of all reality is change. The world is like a flowing river; we cannot step in the same water twice because the water is not the same two moments together. Waters of a river are never stagnant, they keep on flowing.

Now, when Heraclitus likens the world to a river that is constantly flowing, Plato understands him to be saying something more than an articulation of a physical phenomena. To explain this perspective, Plato quotes these words of Homer: “Ocean, origin of the gods, and their mother Tethys” (Cratylus 402b). And for Plato, tethys simply means “Spring,” for “after all, what is strained and filtered is like a spring, and the name ‘Tethys’ is a compound of these two names” (Cratylus 402c). And again in the Theaetetus, Plato remarks: “...when Homer talked about ‘Ocean, begetter of gods, and Tethys their mother’, he made all things the offspring of flux and motion (Cratylus 152e 7- 10). This is to say that when we consider allegorically the saying credited to Heraclitus that “you cannot step into the same water twice,” the point of Heraclitus may be that everything in the world is composed of constituents that are always changing; from constantly changing constituents springs forth the universe. For Aristotle, this notion of something springing presupposes change and goes to confirm that everything is in motion and nothing remains the same but possesses the potentiality to become something else. This idea of “springing” forth will be of particular interest to Heidegger and assume a certain coloration in his approach to the whole question of being.

Another endearing argument of the constancy of change is Heraclitus' use of the example of fire. He is understood to have said this:

“The world was an ever-living fire; sea and earth are the ashes of this perpetual bonfire. Fire is like gold: you can exchange gold for all kinds of goods, and fire can turn into any of the elements” (Kenny 2004, p. 14).

Heraclitus was of the view that this universe was not of man's creation or the work of some supernatural being but is always sustained by Logos. This term “Logos” is very often rendered in English language as Word or Reason, but there seems to be no evidence to suggest that this “Reason” means the capacity of human thought or Divine Reason in Christian theology. Whether this “Logos” meant human reason or Divine Reason, Heraclitus asserted that it is what governs reality. We see this view point ring loudly in Christian theology when Logos is identified with God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ) as John the Evangelist writes: “In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word [Logos] was with God and the Word [Logos] was God (John 1:1). Its influence is also seen in the Logos Christology of the Johannine tradition in the words: “And the Word [Logos] became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14).

## **B). Parmenides.**

While Heraclitus was of the persuasion that everything changes and nothing is constant except change, Parmenides proposed that nothing was in motion, but what is already is. Aristotle renders the philosophy of Parmenides in the following words:

Parmenides seems to speak that, ...besides the existent, nothing non-existent exists, he thinks that the existent is of necessity one and that nothing else exists, ...but being forced to follow the phenomena, and supposing that what is is one in formula but many according to perception, he now posits two causes and two principles, calling them hot and cold, i.e. fire and earth; and of these he ranges the hot with the existent, and the other with the non-existent (Metaph. 986b 27-987a).

For Parmenides, therefore, being was only what is, and there was no becoming; becoming is an illusion. His argument being that if something comes into existence, then it comes either out of being or non-being. If it comes from being, then it already exists, it cannot come to be again. If it comes from non-being, then it is nothing for out of nothing comes nothing, pure and simple. In other words, Parmenides begins with the “real”, what is self-evident. In this way, Parmenides is seen to have founded the doctrine of radical monism in which being is one. It will become the project of later philosophers especially Plato and Aristotle to reconcile Heraclitus and

Parmenides by seeking to account for change and permanence in the universe.

The radical monism of Parmenides has far fetching implications. If being already is, then only what is thought can be said to exist for one cannot think nothing (that is, without thinking of it as something; to think is the same as the thought that it is). If being cannot come from nothing, if there is no becoming, then being is one, indestructible, eternal, indivisible and ungenerated. If being is eternal and indivisible, then there is no vacuum and hence no empty space, for that would mean there is no being there. It appears that this is why he rejects the notion of motion for the reason that: “Motion would involve Being going from where Being is to where being isn’t (but there can’t be any such place as the place where Being isn’t)” (Palmer 2000, p. 28). For him then, there is only thing - being. Being of whatever nature it may be, is, and as such cannot be said not to be. We can speak of being and have it as the object of our thought, we can be thinking of something but that which we are thinking about is something, even if it is not quantitative. We cannot think “nothing” for thought is always thought of something. Being “is”. For Parmenides therefore, things such as multiplicity, motion, and change are only appearances, only phenomena. One may be of

the reasoning that Parmenides was off the line but Parmenides' thought marked a serious effort in the investigation of the question of being.

From the opinion of Thales that everything rested on water to the radical monism of Parmenides that nothing ever moves. We see that philosophy at this point was concerned with the cosmos. It was during the time of the Sophists that philosophy for the first time looked to the subject.

The Sophists were migrant philosophers who moved from city to city teaching, and, from it, they earned their living. They offered instructions in so many fields ranging from mathematics to politics, to rhetoric, beginning with grammar. For the Sophists, there are methods of very skillful argumentation and strategies for winning disputations. Knowledge of such is key to success. Perhaps the most popular of the Sophists was Protagoras, whom Aristotle credited to have distinguished the genders of nouns and the tenses and moods of verbs (Rh. 3. 4. 1407b6-8). His most quoted statement is 'man is the measure of all things'; an individual, for Protagoras, cannot be mistaken about what seems to him here-and-now, because the appearance of things is relative and unique to each person. In this frame of mind, Protagoras was of the persuasion that there were two opposing sides to the same matter and with the ability of manipulation, one could win on any side of a case. It is said that Protagoras boasted that he was capable of making a

worse case look better. The story is told that he sued one of his students, Eualthus by name, for not paying his fees. The student had refused to pay the fees because of his inability to win a single case in spite of the lessons offered by Protagoras. The argument of Protagoras was that if he wins the case, Eualthus must pay up because the verdict was given for him Protagoras; and if Eualthus wins it, he must still pay up, because he would have won a case. Hence his stress was on subjectivity, relativity and expediency as the backbone of solipsism - man can make a worse case look better and vice versa and therefore is the measure of all things. For Aristotle, this kind of ability to transform a worse case into a good one and a good one into a worse case is “fraud; the probability handled was not genuine but spurious, and has a place in no art except Rhetoric and Eristic” (Rh.1402a 25-27) for truth is not a matter of appearance or perception. Other critics proclaim him “the first professor,” the “father of higher education,” (Taylor 1976, p. 61), the ‘first outcropping of the academic mind’ (cf. Jarratt, 1991) and, for Marrou (1956), he was “...a professional man for whom teaching was an occupation whose commercial success bore witness to its intrinsic value and social utility” (p. 49). But it was for this kind of reasoning, this turn to the human being, that it can be said that for the first time in the history of philosophy, philosophy turned to the subject and not to

the cosmos. It was now time for subsequent Sophists to nuance the philosophy of Protagoras.

For Gorgias, if man is the measure of all things and truth can be made to surface where it was absent, then there are no absolutes. His philosophical stance then was that there is nothing; if there were something existing, it cannot be known; and even if I knew that which existed, one could not communicate it. Perhaps Gorgias was ringing the bells of philosophical nihilism! But others thought of him differently. For Copleston (1993): “...the great rhetorician wanted to show that rhetoric or the skilful use of words was able to make plausible even the most absurd hypothesis” (p. 94). His emphasis on communication and his consideration of rhetorical art as the mastery of the art of persuasion led many to conclude that for him rhetoric, was going to replace philosophy as had been understood by previous philosophers.

For the Sophist Thrasymachus, all our arguments, all our debate “about morality is empty [nothing], except insofar as it is reducible to a struggle for power” (Palmer 2000, p. 47). Justice is synonymous with might; it is the interest of the stronger. A violation of the law framed by them and for them is considered a violation of justice.

It does not take an extraordinary power of imagination to see the relativism, skepticism and nihilism in the Sophists' philosophy but we see how their concentration was on the human being and not the universe. In the Sophists, especially in Protagoras, philosophical discourse ruptured and suddenly man became interested in himself as "the measure of all things".

### **2.3 Socrates and Plato.**

Socrates enters into the history of philosophy as a genius beyond compare. He marks a special point in the investigation of the question of being hence previous philosophers are ranked as pre-Socratics as if to suggest that before Socrates there was no philosophy. However, one cannot but submit that such a demarcation became necessary because he brings into philosophical enquiry unrivaled twists and turns. In spite of his genius, the consensus on him is this: "Socrates left behind no writing, and there is hardly a single sentence ascribed to him that we can be sure was his own utterance rather than a literary creation of one of his admirers" (Kenny 2004, p. 32). Since he left no writings, the main sources of his teaching are from two of his followers: Xenophon and the legendary philosopher, Plato. Two of them give accounts of Socrates trial for corrupting the young and for impiety. In these accounts, they present what is considered the defense of

Socrates against the charges. In his account of Socrates' defense and his *Memorabilia Socratis* (four books of Socrates' memoirs) and the *Symposium*, a dialogue of Socrates, Xenophon presents us a Socrates whose language incites and encourages, a Socrates who argues and questions. The Socrates of Xenophon is pious and prayerful (*mem.* 1.2.20); he is a man with no vain ambitions, and not lacking in the virtue of moderation and the qualities of acceptance and good will (*mem.* 1.2). His concern was to make humanity better and therefore can be characterized as a maker of good citizens. Such a person, for Xenophon, cannot be charged for corrupting the mind of the young and for impiety. The Socrates that Plato presents in the many Socratic dialogues he composed is a man who had very deep philosophical ideas but communicated them in very simple and yet profound systematic literary styles characteristic of a genius. To grasp the ideas in those literary styles required maximum intellectual concentration on the part of the student. The Socrates that has had the greatest impact on philosophy and provoked the wildest intellectual conversations is that given by Plato. He wrote over twenty-five *Dialogues* in his name besides other works. Because Plato wrote the dialogues of Socrates, the effort to decipher when it is Socrates or Plato speaking may not yield definite results. But Palmer (2000) would opine that "in general, we can say that Plato's philosophy was

more metaphysical, more systematic, and more other-worldly than Socrates' philosophy was" (p. 55).

In Socrates, philosophical thought took new directions. Aristotle captures this point in the following words: "...two things may fairly be ascribed by Socrates – inductive arguments and universal definition, both of which are concerned with the starting-point of science" (Metaph.1078b 27-29). This is to say that Socrates' interest was to have universal ideas, fixed concepts on the basis of which particulars can be adjudged as true or false. To say that "man is the measure of all things" as the Sophists claimed, is nothing objective if we do not know what the concept "man" is and establish it as a universal. Socrates was rejecting the relativism of the Sophists because he found out that universal concepts remained the same though instantiations of those concepts may differ. For example the concept "man" is the same but individual human beings differ in talent, size, intelligence, etc. Though Socrates rejects the relativism in the philosophy of the Sophists, we see that in him, too, philosophy turned from the universe, as in the Sophists, to the human being. But for him, philosophical discourse is not a matter of grammar and play on words but of objectivity which is not possible without objectively valid definitions. This is why we see that he is always searching for and seeking definitions in his dialogues: justice in the

*Republic*, piety in *Euthyphro*, courage in *Laches*, temperance in *Charmides*, and the list goes on. It was Socrates' desire for objectivity and truth that brought him into conflict with Greek authorities and eventually death. His philosophy was to be made popular by the genius of Plato, one of his students.

Of all the Dialogues of Plato, his *Republic* is the most famous. In this Dialogue, Plato is said to have laid out the essence of his philosophy in the allegory of the cave (*Rep.* 514a1ff). Plato likens the task of philosophy to a journey out of the cave. It is by journeying out of the cave of ignorance, it is by taking that rugged ascent out of the cave to the bright sunlight that ignorance is overcome. To remain in the cave would be to live the unexamined life which is not worth living. In other words, the examined life is a rugged process that demands conscious effort and perseverance. It was this rugged and systematic process that he was going to engage in his investigation of the question of being. In this way, he would account for the multiplicity and unity of being. Of all his teachings, it was in his theory of Forms that Plato is said to have laid out a systematic doctrine of being.

## **Theory of Forms.**

In the world of experience, we encounter particular things that share the same qualities. We may have encountered or seen many dogs, dogs of different shapes and sizes and colors but what is common to them all is the form “dog”. We may have seen many human beings, men and women of different qualities – tall, short, thin, fat, etc - but whatever their qualities, they have the same human Form. Therefore, whenever there are several beings that have the same name, they all have the same form. In his *Republic* Plato expresses this point thus: “...as you know, we customarily hypothesize a single form in connection with each of the many things to which we apply the same name...” (596a 6-7). For Plato, this is the universal, the common quality which is understood in the idea, for example, of good. There are several good things, but we must form a single general idea of good itself. Good itself, or beauty itself would have to be a universal, an idea, a form, of which particular good things or particular beautiful things are their instantiation. These forms are non-sensible, they are non-material, but are instantiated in material and sensible things. For this reason they are not a figment of the human mind but ultimately real. They explain why a thing is the way it is and are the source and origin of the being of things so are their cause. Because they are non-sensible and non-material, they are perfect and

incorruptible and are the essences of particular things; they are archetypes, the perfect examples of that which participates or shares in their being. For Plato therefore, a form is an abstract quality or property which existed apart from particular things. Everything has its form. Take any property of an object; isolate it from that object and consider it by itself and you are thinking a form. These forms, in Plato's words, "...existed, and ...other things acquired their name by having a share in them..." (Phaedo 102b 1). Forms do not exist in space and time and as such they are transcendent. This means that you cannot tie the existence of forms in any place or time. They are separated from all other properties and as such they are pure.

With this idea of forms, Plato is able to account for the question of the one and many found in Heraclitus and Parmenides. In his investigation of being, Heraclitus proposed the theory of eternal flux of things – change is the only thing that is constant. In the perspective of Plato, the position of the philosopher Protagoras that man is the measure of all things, implying that a person cannot make any mistake about what appears to him here and now because the appearance of things is relative and unique to each individual, is closely related to the Heraclitean doctrine of the permanence of change, flux and movement in general. Parmenides dethroned the theory of change and in its place, enthroned the theory of radical monism in which being is only one

– for that which is already is and being cannot come from non-being. With the theory of forms, Plato was able to account for permanence and change by positing being in two realms – the non-sensible, transcendent realm of forms and the material realm, particular concrete entities that share in the being of forms. Plato accounts for permanence by arguing that non-sensible being, forms do not change. It is the particular entities, material beings which are instantiations of forms that change. Hence the form of beauty does not change but beautiful things do; the form of good or good itself does not change, but good things do change. Thus, by splitting being into two realms – the realm of transcendent forms and the world of matter, Plato is able to explain the experience of the one and the many presented in the philosophies of Heraclitus and Parmenides. Therefore in Plato, being is hierarchicalized or departmentalized into non-sensible being and sensible being, into perfect (unchanging) being and imperfect (changing) being. Non-sensible being is perceived through the mind, while sensible being is grasped through the senses. This is the dualism in Plato’s metaphysics.

#### **2.4 Aristotle.**

It was Aristotle who said that “all men by nature desire to know” (Metaph. 980a 1). Although all human beings desire knowledge, all that is

known is not the same, there are degrees of knowledge. The knowledge that knows the why and the cause of things is superior knowledge. Now, for Aristotle, some knowledge aims at the production of some effect. True knowledge or wisdom does not aim to secure any effect but knowledge for the sake of knowledge; it seeks to understand the cause of things. Metaphysics therefore, is knowledge *par excellence* because it seeks knowledge of the primary or first or ultimate cause of things. To use Aristotle's words, Metaphysics studies *being qua being* (being as being), and not being under a certain aspect. Thus philosophy arose out of wonder, when men were desirous of understanding their surrounding and sought to explain why things were the way they were.

For Aristotle, the effort of Thales and his Milesian school was cosmological, it was a reflection on nature, and therefore concerned with material causes; Heraclitus ended up with eternal flux; Parmenides with just one being; Protagoras was stuck with relativism when he made man the measure of all things; while Plato dwelled on the theory of ideas or forms which for him failed to satisfactorily account for change. It was going to become the project of Aristotle to account for the primary cause of things and being and becoming by means of his categories and the doctrine of act and potency.

In his *Categories*, Aristotle divides being into ten categories. The categories seem to classify the being of all things that there are. Among the categories are Substance, quality, quantity, relation, etc. Aristotle sums them up in his own words: “Of things said without a combination, each signifies either substance or quantity or qualification or a relative or where or when or being-in-a-position or having or doing or being-affected” (Cat.a25-25). The category that Aristotle was most concerned with was the category of substance (*Ousia*). Of all the categories, only substances are independent – every quality is a quality of substance; quantities are the sizes and amounts of substance; the category of relation show how substances stand to one another. All the other categories are modifications of substance – ontologically, they exist in a substance and do not have separate being (Cat. 1a25), they inhere in a substance as color inheres in a body. Hence we can say that ‘this man is pale or that animal is fat.’ In this case, pale and fat exist in man and animal and not vice versa. Thus ‘man’ can be said to be primary substance while pale can be considered its modification. Without the primary substance, there can be no modifications.

In a summary of his doctrine of being, Aristotle said “being is said in many ways”. In other words, there many modes of being. If we can speak of being in many senses, then the primary meaning of ‘being’ is the sense in

which we call substances beings. The category of substance is therefore essential for Aristotle. That is why he says that the question of being is simply a question of what substance is (*Metaph.* 1028b4). But metaphysics is concerned with substance in the primary sense since things are either substances or affections of substances. Ultimately, metaphysics ends up being the study of substance which does not change, but that is a topic for another research. In this project, it suffices to say that because being is substance in the primary sense, substance is that which is predicated or said of so many things but itself not a predicate. Hence Socrates and Aristotle, though different, are both said to be men.

To explain being and becoming, Aristotle introduces the notion of potentiality (*dunamis*) and actuality (*entelecheia or energia*). For Aristotle, there are two senses of potentiality or *dunamis*. We talk of potentiality in a strict sense when something is the source "...of change in another or in the thing itself *qua* other" (1046a11). *Dunamis* in this sense refers to the power that something possesses to make a change. The word *kinesis* is used to designate the exercise of such a power, which is a movement or process. The sense of potentiality in which Aristotle is interested in is the second sense. The second sense of potentiality refers to the capacity a thing has to be in a different and more completed state. In this sense, potentiality is related to

actuality (1048a37). Aristotle describes the relationship between potentiality to actuality in the following words: "...as that which is building is to that which is capable of building, so is the waking to the sleeping, and that which is seeing to that which has its eyes shut but has sight, and that which is shaped out of the matter to the matter, and that which has been wrought to the unwrought" (1048a35-b3). By making the distinction between being in actuality and being in potentiality, Aristotle was able to account for how what was not came to be and how what once was ceased to be. What came to be was in potentiality of actualizing what it always had the potential to become. Thus the tree that once stood ceased to be because it had realized its potential to be a house, and the same with bricks: a boy was in potentiality of being a man; a girl in potentiality of being a woman, etc. For Aristotle, "the term 'being,' then, includes anything that has a *positive reference to existence*, whether this existence be actual or merely possible. The common element in actual and possible beings is their *capacity for existence*. Hence, 'being' in general means something capable of existing, *existible*; something capable of being actualized, *actualizable*; something capable of being realized, *realizable*" (Bittle 1939, p. 13). Though actual being is what we are first aware of, being in potentiality is an equally real mode of being yet to reach its potential. Anything that is exists but the mode of existence differs.

Hence being is not ambiguous or analogous, it is not either one or many, it is not eternal or material, but equivocal. Bittle (1939) concurred with the equivocation of 'being' when he remarked that:

...the idea of 'being' is the *narrowest in comprehension* and the *widest in extension*. By the comprehension of an idea we understand the sum total of all the attributes or thought-elements which constitutes the idea; it is expressed in the definition of the content of the idea. By the extension of an idea we understand the sum total of all the individuals and groups to which an idea can be applied (p. 17).

Explaining further, Bittle writes that "the comprehension of 'being' is the simplest of all, since it contains but a *single* element, namely, that which is 'existible,' that which is not 'nothing.' Its extension is the widest of all ideas, because it can be applied to absolutely *everything* that exists or can exist – finite and infinite, God and creature, material and immaterial, substance and accident" (1939, p. 17). This extension of the notion of 'being' was the work of the genius of Aristotle in his doctrine of act and potency and in this way, he was able to reconcile the Heraclitean eternal flux and Parmenides' monism and yet avoid the dualism in Plato. This is considered his most significant contribution to metaphysics.

## **2.5). Between Descartes, Kant, and Husserl: The uniqueness of Heidegger.**

### **i) Descartes**

In the history of Western philosophy, being was identified with the subject for the first time in the philosophy of Descartes. This was echoed in his most quoted statement “*Cogito ergo sum*” meaning “I think, therefore I am.” For Descartes (1993): “...here I make my discovery: thought exists; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am; I exist – this is certain” (P. 19). By thought Descartes means that by which he grasps or comprehends all that he has the awareness of as functioning in him. Even if what he is thinking about is false, it is very certain that he, the individual having these thoughts is in existence, cannot have his being be denied. The more a person doubts his existence, the more he proves it because there has to be an individual in order for doubt to exist. And for Descartes, doubt is a form of thinking. So this [thought] is what is most true, most certain, and unchangeable. For Descartes, therefore, being is thought and thought is being. This thought, this Cogito, becomes “an extraordinary discovery and the first principle of all of Descartes’ work” (Robinson and Garratt 1999, p. 57). It would become for him the starting point of philosophy.

The project of Descartes was not to lay out a metaphysics in the likes of Plato and Aristotle, but obviously he was seeking to establish philosophy on a solid ground, that which is not subject to individual interpretation or change. For Descartes, if philosophy is defined as the love of wisdom and if by wisdom we do not only comprehend and exercise the virtue of prudence in our daily dealings, but also by it attain the most excellent knowledge necessary for a good moral life and creativity, then philosophy embraces not only metaphysics but also physics and cosmology, with metaphysics as the roots of all. In his consideration, the other sciences would be the branches stemming from the trunk of physics.

Using his analogy of a tree, if the roots of metaphysics must be what roots are to the trunk of trees, then they must be certain, firm, and solid. It must not be a reliance on authority as he thought Aristotelians did. We cannot rely on past philosophers to answer present questions, questions which they may never have thought, raised or intended to answer. Neither can we use their philosophy to foster present doctrine. Philosophy was not going to proceed in that manner. If philosophy were a matter of relying on authority, then new knowledge would not be possible. His path, his method, therefore was to discard all past philosophical traditions and rely on reason, not authority, to attain philosophical truth. This was his systematic method.

To invoke his analogy of a tree again, the trunk of the tree is physics resting on the roots of metaphysics which will be the intuitively apprehended existence of the “I” and from there, he will establish the criterion of truth, prove the existence of God and the existence of the world of matter.

By using the analogy of a tree, Descartes was of the mind that there was an underlying unity to all different branches of knowledge. This was manifested in his interest in mathematics. For him, mathematics shows the basic fundamental structures shared by every branch of knowledge sprung from the roots of metaphysics. Captivated by the certainty of mathematics, Descartes (1960) remarks thus:

Considering that among all those who have previously sought truth in the sciences, mathematicians alone have been able to find some demonstrations, some certain and evident reasons, I had no doubt that I should begin where they did, although I expected no advantage except to accustom my mind to work with truths and not to be satisfied with bad reasoning (p. 16).

Fascinated by mathematics, Descartes was thus set to learn from some of the branches of mathematics because he saw that “although the objects they discuss are different, all these branches are in agreement in limiting their consideration to the relationships or proportions between their various objects” (1960, p.16). With this frame of mind, he was to show that by

adopting a few rules, it was possible to discover true knowledge. Descartes' first rule was: "...never to accept anything as true unless I recognized it to be certainly and evidently as such: that is...to include nothing in my conclusions unless it presented itself so clearly and distinctly to my mind that there was no reason or occasion to doubt it" (1960, p. 15). No idea was to be accepted as true unless it was *clear* and *distinct* in his mind. By "clear" Descartes means that ideas in the mind must be as obvious and apparent to someone as material properties that they see with their eyes. A perception is said to be distinct to an individual if it is not only clear but also different from all other perceptions so that nothing remains unclear about it. An example of this kind of perception is noticed in geometry whereby we do not confuse one geometrical figure with another. One is clear and distinct from another and cannot be confused. Some ideas are from the person, others are innate, others must come outside of them and are grasped by the mind and are not its creation or construct. It was Descartes ability to "play" with the notion of the clarity and distinctness of ideas and thought that he was able to prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul in his *Meditations*.

In his words, his second rule was to: "...divide each of the difficulties which I encountered into as many parts as possible, and as might be required

for an easier solution (1960, p. 15). That is, when you split problems encountered into smaller ones, understanding is easier. His third rule was to argue from the simple to the complex. And finally, he was to go over all that he has done carefully. In this way, mistakes made by previous philosophers are avoided and the move is steady towards sound logic and scientific knowledge. All these spring from the indubitability of the “I”.

By relying on his thinking and rejecting traditional philosophy, Descartes reasoned that philosophy would eventually rest on a firm foundation: the roots of thought – human reason. Descartes is known for having changed the terms of reference of metaphysics by insisting on reason rather than authority and by stressing the place of the subject as the starting point of philosophy. In the perspective of philosophers after him, Descartes’ stress on reason and its capabilities seemed to have been exaggerated as so much was taken for granted. He had suggested the method of a presuppositionless inquiry but seemed not to have been radical enough. Is reason capable of making metaphysical claims? How does knowledge take place? What can reason know and cannot know? This was the impetus for the philosophy of Kant as he set to investigate first of all what constitutes knowledge and consequently the grounds for the possibility of metaphysics.

## ii) Immanuel Kant

It was Kant who declared that though he was in love with metaphysics, he had not received any favors from it. This declared interest in metaphysics was going to shape the course of his philosophy. To attain metaphysical knowledge, Kant was first of all going to state what he thinks it is and then proceed to establish the conditions of knowledge on the basis of which to argue whether or not and in what sense we can claim metaphysical knowledge.

The main concern of Kant was the status of metaphysics: all through the history of philosophy up to his time, metaphysical thought has lacked the consensus and certainty found in the fields of mathematics and physics which make *necessary* and not *contingent* claims. To place metaphysics on the same footing with mathematical science and physics, the uncertainties and contradictions had to be resolved once and for all. In the perspective of John Kemp (1968):

Metaphysics is thought of by Kant as the philosophical inquiry into first principles which is categorized, in accordance with contemporary practice, under three heads, God, freedom, and immortality; it is the investigation by rational methods of the nature and attributes of God, the existence and presuppositions of human freedom (free will), and the immortality of the human soul (p. 1).

While in fields like mathematics and physics there has been some consensus of opinion, same is lacking in the metaphysical enterprise. A theory that is held dear to one philosopher is declared inadequate by another. Lack of consensus in metaphysics goes back to the pre-Socratic times and the time of Plato and Aristotle as well.

For Kant, metaphysics is classified into three branches of metaphysics. They are rational psychology, rational theology and rational cosmology. Rational psychology is the effort to establish truths about the nature of the soul by means of reason alone; rational theology is the effort to prove that God exists and establish truths about His nature by way of reason alone. For Kant, to be able to establish truths about God and prove his existence or to be able to prove the immortality of the soul by means of reason alone, we have to first of all establish the necessary conditions of knowledge on the basis of which we can even begin to argue whether or not such attempts can yield any satisfactory results to put metaphysics on the same footing with mathematics and physics. When it comes to rational cosmology, Kant reasons that attempts to argue on both sides, although conflicting, appear to be of equal validity, resulting in contradictions, what Kant calls “antinomies” which means “conflict of laws” (Kant 1996, p. 443). For example, to argue that there is causality and freedom results in an antinomy

because of the principle of non-contradiction. Yet for Kant, arguments on both sides have equal validity if we take the critical rather than the dogmatic approach of the empiricists. Hence his critical approach was going to replace the dogmatic approach in the whole metaphysical enterprise. Kemp (1968) states Kant's approach in the following words:

...instead of dogmatically assuming, as previous writers on metaphysics have done, that our intellectual powers are sufficient for the making of the discoveries which are the objects of metaphysics, he insists that metaphysical investigation be suspended until a full inquiry has been made into the nature of our reasoning powers and their suitability for this metaphysical task (p. 7).

It was Descartes who had called philosophy to the powers of reason when he discovered through his Meditations that he could doubt everything but not the fact that he, the doubting being, existed. Thus Descartes realized that "what defines human beings is that they think, not that they have a physical existence" (Robinson and Garratt 1999, p. 106). In spite this discovery, Descartes, in the thinking of Kant, was not systematic in his methodology. He made assumptions and conclusions without first of all investigating how the human mind attains knowledge. Knowledge is not from reason or mind alone (Descartes) or through experience alone (Hume), but from the combinatory sources of sensibility and understanding, or in modern

terminology, perception and conception. Of particular philosophical importance to Kant was David Hume's denial of the cause and effect relationship. In his *Treatise on Human Nature* David Hume (1778) writes:

...we reason beyond our immediate impressions, and conclude that such particular causes must have such particular effects; ...What is our idea of necessity, when we say that two objects are necessarily connected. Upon this head I repeat what I have often had occasion to observe, that as we have no idea, that is not deriv'd from an impression, we must find some impression, that gives rise to this idea of necessity, if we assert we have really such an idea. In order to this I consider, in what objects necessity is commonly suppos'd to lie; and finding that it is always ascrib'd to causes and effects, I turn my eye to two objects suppos'd to be plac'd in that relation; and examine them in all the situations, of which they are susceptible. I immediately perceive, that ...the object we all call cause precedes the other we call effect (p. 155).

This quotation expresses, in the words of Hume, his reason for the rejection of the concepts of cause and effect: we do not see or experience any cause and effect relations, what we see or experience is a constant conjunction or a succession of cause and effect. And since this phenomenon is not empirical, we are only in the habit of associating or assuming that every effect must have a cause.

But for Kant there is a necessary connection between cause and effect. The connection between cause and effect is not a matter of association. If it

were, new knowledge would not be possible which Kant believed it was.

Paul Strathern (1997) sums up the implication of Hume in the following

words:

...Hume had reduced philosophic certainty to its lowest ebb. Experience, he declared, was our only source of true knowledge. Hume's empirical philosophy had demonstrated the impossibility of creating any further philosophical systems. To build any system one needed such elements as causality (that is, cause and effect), but Hume had shown that this was a mere supposition...it looked as if this was the end of philosophy (p. 15).

This is why Kant is said to have remarked that Hume had woken him from his "dogmatic slumbers." For Kant, it is true that knowledge begins with experience but it is not determined by it. To be able to have a table experience, the table must impact a persons' senses (the sense of sight) but they have to have the concept of table before they can say that they have seen a table. It is with the input from reason by way of concepts (which emerge from the name Categories) that they can say they have seen a table or know what a table is. They cannot claim to have experienced a table if they did not have the concept of table. Without the concept of table, they would see a table but would not know that what they have seen is a table; without the concept of a house, they would see a house and enter it and live in it but would not know that what they saw, entered, and what they are living in is a house. But to have the concept of table or house is not the job

of the senses but the prerogative of the understanding. So it was not enough for Hume to tell us what reason could not do without taking the next leap of questioning what reason can do.

In his critical approach rather than the dogmatic approach of the empiricists, Kant introduces one of his most famous distinctions in his philosophy, the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon (that is, things-in-themselves and things-as-they-appear). Thus, all people perceive are appearances, they are mere representations. But representations are of something, they are of "... 'things-outside of me' ... 'objects in *space*', ... 'things outside of us' relatively to our self as determined in time" (Ewing 1967, p. 178). Because things in themselves appear to us, there is a causal connection between what appears and the appearance. If it rains then the rivers swell, we cannot say that there is no necessary connection between the rain falling and the swelling river (that is, cause and effect) for the simple reason that we do not experience it as Hume claims. So knowledge begins from experience but is not determined by it. Rather, experience is determined by the structures (categories) set by the mind. This is the process of every cognition, without it there will be nothing like human knowledge. Therefore, all humans can ever know, all they can ever have cognition of are

appearances, phenomenon; they can never know things as they are in themselves.

Having dealt with how cognition is possible (through the mutual workings of perception and conception), Kant moves to the realm of metaphysics, which, as can now be understood, is not empirical knowledge. Humans have never seen God, neither have they seen an immortal soul or observed a man's will functioning freely. Metaphysical knowledge is not experienced-based (it is not posteriori but a priori). Since it has been shown that there must be input from experience which is in turn determined by the structures set by the mind for cognition, to argue for the existence of God or immortality of the soul or freedom on purely epistemological grounds is an exercise in futility. Using epistemological principles to argue in the realm of metaphysics is the reason metaphysics has not taken its place among the sciences such as mathematics and physics. We cannot apply the categories in the realm of metaphysics, which, as has been noted earlier, is about a priori knowledge. As Kant (1996) puts it: "...the pure categories can never be of *transcendental* but always only of *empirical*" (p. 310). In order for metaphysics to be in the ranks of the natural sciences, it needs to adopt a new method. Hence, Kant is quoted to have said that: "The genuine method of metaphysics is fundamentally of the same kind as that which Newton

introduced into natural science and which was so fruitful” (Copleston 1994, p. 192). Thus, to resolve the absurdities in the metaphysics of his predecessors, Kant was going to invoke the authority of his noumenon and phenomenon distinction.

It was the conclusion of Kant (1996) in the *Transcendental Analytic* that:

...the understanding can a priori never accomplish more than anticipate the form of a possible experience as such; and since what is not appearance cannot be an object of experience, the understanding can never overstep the limits of sensibility within which alone objects are given to us. Its principles are merely rules for the exposition of appearances; and the proud name of an ontology that pretends to provide, in a systematic doctrine, synthetic a priori cognitions (e.g., the principle of causality) of things in themselves must give way to the modest name of a mere analytic of pure understanding (p. 311).

Things in themselves are never known to humans, but their appearances are. Now when noumenon and phenomenon are translated as things-in-themselves and things-as-they-appear, note must be taken that by noumenon, Kant is not referring to things that can be known by the understanding (like Plato’s Forms). For Kant, noumenon are entities that are not objects of sensible intuition. Any effort to apply the categories to noumenon will be an exercise in futility because they are not objects of sensible intuition, they are

not given in a manifold. But it does not mean that the categories cannot be used to extend thinking. However, the extension of thinking is not the same as theoretical knowledge.

When reason strays into metaphysics and seeks to find truths because reason demands so, it becomes dialectical. The existence of God cannot be proved by reason because of its demand for the unconditioned condition of all particular existents. God is not an appearance. He has not appeared to anybody as appearance in philosophy is understood. The existence of God cannot be proven from speculative reason. Neither can His attributes be established by defining Him to be such. As to whether His existence can be disproved, Kant (1996) argues for both sides of the case in the following words: “Hence the supreme being remains for the merely speculative use of reason a mere ideal – but yet a *faultless* ideal, a concept that concludes and crowns the whole of human cognition. Although the concept’s objective reality cannot be proved by this speculative path, it also cannot be refuted by it” (p. 616). To appeal to the principle of causation as Descartes did to prove that God exists is to use causation in an unjustified sense because the causal principle applies only to the sensible world. Even if the existence of God could be proved, it could not be the God with the attributes theologians assign to Him. All that can be said is that God, as noumenon, could exist

from an ethical point of view. That is, there could be practical grounds for believing in Him. And, on the same practical ground, it can be argued for the immortality of the soul (the concern of his second Critique). But grounds for belief in God does not constitute theoretical knowledge of God.

Concerning freedom and causality, Kant again uses the same critical approach by way of the noumenon/phenomenon distinction to resolve the absurdities: causality according to nature takes place in time and so is causality of happenings or events. In this case, Kant concedes that causality of happenings is natural causality – a necessary connection between an event and a preceding cause. Now, Kant takes a leap as he asserts that if appearances were things in themselves, there could be no freedom. If causality through freedom is possible, then one could say that taken as phenomenon, the happening is determined by natural causality. But considered as noumenon, the event is determined, not by natural causality but by freedom (Again, this is taken up in the second critique where he argues that this kind of causality is the causality of self and is required ethically for moral responsibility. That it is required does not mean it is known that there is such a causality). Kant's effort is to argue that the two kinds of causality do not contradict each other. It is a matter of adopting a critical, rather than a dogmatic, approach.

It was Kant's strategy to make a distinction between theory of knowledge and metaphysics and, by using the noumenon and phenomenon distinction, to be able to provide a profound update of philosophical methodology and ground the possibility of metaphysics. What is important for Kant is both method and content and not just the content of the metaphysical enterprise. With his method, knowledge of being in itself is impossible; entities are known only as they appear to us. The mind is only capable of knowing appearances. This is the being that a person knows, it is what they can grasp – appearance. As to things as they are in themselves, persons cannot have cognition of them for the simple reason that they are outside the scope of reason's capabilities as they are not given to them in experience. This was to mark the era of phenomenology in a heightened sense and not the shadowy Cartesian doubt which ended in certainty.

### **iii) Husserl**

For Edmund Husserl consciousness is always consciousness of something, whether what is referred to exists in the world outside of a person or not is irrelevant; something is always given to them with “evidence” in their consciousness. In his theory of intentionality, Husserl (1998) notes: “Intentionality is an essential peculiarity of the sphere of

mental processes taken universally in so far as all mental processes in some manner or other share in it..." (p. 199). Every consciousness in its acts, intends (that is, tends towards, refers to) something. Thus, Husserl continues that: "...intentionality is what characterizes consciousness in the pregnant sense and which, at the same time, justifies designating the whole stream of mental processes as the stream of consciousness and as the unity of one consciousness" (p. 199). Klaus Held (Welton, 2003) expresses this point of view of Husserl when he takes this position: "If consciousness were not a referring consciousness, possessing the capacity, the 'ability' to bring the empty, indirect, indefinite 'intended' to fulfillment, then it would not have any intentionally given object" (p. 14). Thus intentional acts or intentional experiences represent units of consciousness that one understands himself as having when expressing himself in a statement. In this line of thinking, one's objectless (that is, empty) intentional experiences such as your thought of a flying antelope or a football game on the sun has content, what it lacks is a corresponding object or real event – an actual flying antelope or an actual football game on the sun. It is therefore intentionality that gives consciousness its objective meaning.

Husserl saw in Descartes some anticipation of phenomenology when he proposed the theory of radical doubt, a presuppositionless inquiry, a

“bracketing” of the existence of whatever is presented in consciousness.

As Husserl puts it in his words (1960):

This universal depriving of acceptance, this “inhibiting” or “putting out of play” of all positions taken toward the already given Objective world and, in the first place, all existential positions (those concerning being, illusion, possible being, being likely, probable, etc.) – or, as it is also called, this “phenomenological epoche” and “parenthesizing” of the Objective world – therefore does leave us...something (p. 20).

In other words, we gain something by means of the phenomenological epoche or the suspension of judgment. What is gained from the suspension of judgment is that philosophy, as Husserl viewed it, is set on a solid foundation once and for all. But for him, though Descartes had begun the journey to the realm of essence; though there was some anticipation of phenomenology in Descartes, Descartes was not true to his radicality when he settled for the existence or certainty of the *ego*. For Husserl, even the question of the existence of the ego should be suspended, “bracketed”.

Moreover, the ego of Husserl does not have drives, as the ego of Descartes, that feels and wills, etc. The thoughts (*cogitationes*) which Descartes was so sure of from which he inferred the certainty of the ego are for Husserl mere phenomena and representations of reality and not reality itself. Those realities outside of consciousness, what Kant calls things in themselves

given to a person in consciousness should be “parenthesized”. Our concentration should be on appearances, mere phenomena. Phenomena appears to consciousness through acts of consciousness and are outside of consciousness. They (acts of consciousness) too should be “bracketed”. Furthermore, every thought is thought of something; every noesis (which are acts of consciousness) has its corresponding noemata (what is meant, meanings) and the realm of noema is the realm of essences. When acts of consciousness are “bracketed” or “parenthesized” as well, what is in consciousness is pure phenomena. For Husserl then, by means of this phenomenological method (tagged “phenomenological epoche or phenomenological reduction” which is the narrowing down of what is presented, to phenomena and “bracketing” the question of existence) what is left is pure consciousness. Pure consciousness is “the unifying realm where all our awareness takes place” (Strathern 2002, p. 25). It is a perspective on phenomena and is not itself phenomena. It is simply a vantage point, a mere projector which never appears on the movie screen. It is this projector that is the being that endures even if the individual and the whole world were not to exist.

#### **iv) The uniqueness of Heidegger.**

Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, sought to return metaphysics to the science that it is meant to be – which is the investigation of the question of being. What does it mean to exist? What does “is” mean? To do this, he rejects traditional metaphysics as expounded by his predecessors in the likes of Descartes and Hume. Paul Strathern (1998) sums up the metaphysics of Heidegger in the following words: “As an individual I am not, and can never be, a detached observer of the world: one whose utmost certainty is that he thinks (Descartes), or that he experiences (Hume). No, primarily I am aware of myself as an existent being in the midst of a world” (p. 48). What is certain is that a person is a being-in-the-world. They are in the world, enmeshed in cogitations, unlike the Cartesian dualism of cogito and ego. Heidegger’s notion of being is not particular beings. Being is not a “presence.” Being, for Heidegger, is revealed through language. Thus the function of philosophy should be to enable being be itself, to plunge in being, as in its element, the way a fish dwells in water. For Heidegger, philosophy is simply a letting be of being. Initially he was fascinated by Husserl’s analysis of being by means of his epoche in which entities or particular beings were “bracketed.” But what was left after Husserl’s epoche was the transcendental ego – some substance with no drives, a mere

perspective which in earlier Husserl even made no contribution to the organization of the material in consciousness. Heidegger became increasingly dissatisfied with the transcendental aspects of Husserl's philosophy. Philosophy, as he viewed it, cannot proceed in such a fashion. It must be returned to being. Paul Strathern (2002) puts this perspective thus: "The proper study of philosophy should be the subject which experiences the world rather than some bloodless thinking thing which only theoretically thinks the world. The Absolute Being was no longer the aim of Heidegger's phenomenological endeavor" (p. 27). That is why instead of concentrating on pure consciousness, Heidegger's philosophical endeavor would concentrate on the study of being itself. Previous philosophers, in the reasoning of Heidegger, had identified being with beings. The result is that the word "is" which had a profound mystery in the pre-Socratic times had, in western philosophy, become a verbal or linguistic glue that ties words or sentences together. Being does not mean beings or a particular being but just "being" as that which grounds the duality of subject and object that is presupposed by the study of beings. The uniqueness of Heidegger lies in the fact that he does his investigation by shifting emphasis from an investigation of man's reason (Kant) to an investigation of man in his totality though both insisted on the finitude of man.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HEIDEGGER ON BEING

#### 3.1). THE MEANING OF BEING

Heidegger begins his *Being and Time* (1996) with a quotation from Plato's *Sophist* (244a). He says: "For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression 'being.' We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed" (p. 1/xix). In those opening sentences of *Being and Time*, Heidegger gives focus to his philosophy which was to resurrect an old question, the question of being which previous philosophers had attempted to answer. His method was that to answer the question, we must first of all understand the question. Any definition of being by way of attributing entities to it is to be off the starting point necessary for a proper investigation of the meaning of being. Though being appears to be the most universal concept, it cannot be defined. The fact that being cannot be defined heightens the importance of the question because we think we already know what it is, that is, we think we know its meaning. In the event that something has meaning for us, somehow, we know that thing. So, somehow, we do think we know what being is. As Bittle (1939) puts it:

We derive the concept of ‘being’ from the things around us: they all are ‘beings.’ A tree is a being; and so is a house, a bird, a dog, a cloud, a lake, a star, a book. All objects, persons, places, facts, qualities, actions, events, are beings or things. Whatever is present in the universe or outside of it in some way or other is a being. Each one is a particular *kind* of being, distinguished from every other by its own degrees of being. But they all have this one feature *in common* that they *exist*, and that is why we can apply to them the same word – ‘being’” (p. 12).

So, we seem to have some idea of what ‘being’ is. But what we actually know are entities and not the meaning of being. Hence the need to raise the question of being more profoundly. For Heidegger, to ask the question “what does y mean” is to make effort to unconceal y itself, to comprehend it. In order to comprehend something, that which we seek to comprehend must be contextualized, it must be put in a context. Heidegger calls such a context “horizon.” We can talk of being in the context of time. Hence his remark that “Time must be brought to light and genuinely grasped as the horizon of every understanding and interpretation of being” (Heidegger 1996, p. 15/17) and whether or not time is shown to be the horizon of being is not the most important issue, the journey and its discoveries is what counts.

We already conceive of being as self-evident because somehow, we know what it is since it is used to predicate entities. Conceived this way, being can be said to be what “*is*,” what “*exists*.” It was Descartes who said

*“Cogito ego sum”* meaning *“I think therefore I am”*. It is common place that humanity conducts itself in this way, humans think they know what existence means. When they express themselves in a statement “there is water”, there is a supposition of an “is”. The moods of man reveal to him that he himself exists in such and such a way as in Descartes’ cogito. Heidegger himself would say that human beings always carry out their activities in an understanding of being. When humans say that something “is” they suggest that it exists, it is there, it is real, it is an entity as opposed to nothing. Since that which has being is there, why seek to understand the meaning of being? For Heidegger, humans may know particular entities or states of mind without an understanding of the deeper meaning of “is.” If it is agreed that all knowledge is conceptual, then though beings may be known conceptually, the being by which they are what they are (and which man understands) stands unknown.

In traditional metaphysics, being has been considered as “self-evident.” Heidegger notices that right from Plato’s dualism to Aristotle’s “being is said in many ways” down to Kant’s noumenon - phenomenon distinction, being is considered to be “self-evident.” Heidegger characterizes this attitude to the question of being as “the forgetfulness of being.” When Heidegger says that being has been forgotten, he is not referring to the

absent mindedness of a cab driver who forgot his car keys but cannot remember where he had left them nor is he referring to a food vendor who forgot his cart, he is referring to the historical situation in which we see the failure of the language of philosophers to reveal the true meaning of being. A true understanding of being, the unconcealment of being will occur only when we return to the Pre-Socratics – that is the way back to the thinking of being. No wonder he choose the words of Plato to begin his major work, an indication that he was going to investigate being as intensely as the ancients did! Heidegger understands philosophy as a dialogue between being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seiendes*); it is the dialogue between being as that unchanging reality within being or existence which endures and the meaning of being or appearances of particular beings or entities. For Heidegger, being is not presence but process while being(s) refers to the concrete forms of existence. This distinction is of high philosophical importance for Heidegger because when language concentrates on *Seiendes* instead of *Sein*, the whole question of being is distorted. To turn from being to beings as the basic question of metaphysics is to divide and estrange being from beings and destroy the ontological inseparability of the being of being. Heidegger holds Pre-Socratic philosophers in high esteem, especially Heraclitus and Parmenides because their language seriously attempted the revelation of being. But

philosophers after them have deviated from being and focused on particular beings. In the words of Michael Gillespie (Strauss and Crospey, 1987):

...those thinkers who have developed the basic framework within which we think and act, those whom we might justly call law-givers in the most fundamental sense, have misconceived Being and forgotten its original meaning. The failure of these thinkers to recognize the truth about Being, i.e. the truth about what is most fundamental, has led in Heidegger's view to a fundamental distortion of the categories of language and thought...this not only prevents us from coming to terms with Being... but cuts man off from authentic human understanding and activity (p. 890).

Thus for Heidegger, language had broken away from its vocation to reveal Being and instead resorted to mere representation and classification. "Is" has become a mere grammatical term, a linguistic glue in the process of thought. We take note of the remark of Richard Polt (1999) that: "Heidegger is not just asking about the *word* "Being", or Sein. Language is important to Heidegger...but the question of Being is not just a question about language" (p. 27). The point that Heidegger seeks to make is that being is obscurely manifest to us not only when we utter words such as "is" and "am", but also in any way of comporting oneself toward entities as entities.

In the perspective of Heidegger, the question philosophers have asked "what is philosophy?" is simply the question of "what is being?" So man must be attentive to philosophy for the simple reason that philosophy is

about being. Thinking engages being and through language, reveals it. In his Letter on Humanism (Cahoone, 2003) Heidegger writes:

...in thinking Being comes to language: language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech (p. 174).

It is language that speaks, not, or not primordially, man. Language is that sphere in which man can dwell aright and make clear to himself who he is. Language is the house, that “place” of being and in that “place” man dwells. It is because man is able to express language in speech that he is able to raise the question of being. Heidegger notes that, “Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought (1996, p. 3/5). So the ability to ask the question of being presupposes familiarity with being. This means that there is an “...*average and vague understanding of being*” (Heidegger 1996, p. 4/5) even if that understanding is distorted. Heidegger asks: “what is being?” And the question been asked here is not about an entity. For Heidegger being “...is that which determines beings as beings, that in terms of which beings have always been understood no matter how they are discussed. The being of beings “is” itself not a being” (1996, p.

4-5/6). In the perspective of Heidegger, being and entities do not signify the same ontological reality in metaphysics. Very often, Heidegger would call the difference between being and entities as *the ontological difference* (Heidegger 1982, pp. 17, 319). Therefore, the question of the meaning of being is not a question about an entity, it is not a question about the aggregate of particular things in the world. Because being does not refer to an entity or sum of beings leaves the word the most abstract of all ideas. However, it does not refer to nothing. Here, Bittle (1939) offers us the insight that:

Since the idea of 'being' is composed of but a single element, the 'existible,' it is the most empty of all ideas. It ignores every kind and special modification of entity in its comprehension and expresses solely the one element common to all to all things, namely, their capacity for existence. But while 'being' is the most empty of all ideas, the most indeterminate of all concepts, it has a *positive content of reality*" (p. 17).

The meaning of being which Heidegger sought to unveil is certainly a *positive content of reality*. Therefore, being

...cannot be identified with 'nothing' as it is done in *Georg Hegel*... He does this because of the indeterminateness of the idea of 'being.' But indeterminateness does not deprive 'being' of all positive content. If it did, and if 'being' were equivalent to 'nothing,' then there would be no difference between 'being' and non-being,' between 'thing' and

‘no-thing.’ That would be a patent contradiction in terms, a logical and ontological monstrosity (Bittle 1939, p. 17).

For Heidegger on the other hand, to raise the question of being was to unconceal this “*positive content of reality*”; the question is the question of why all the entities and the aggregate of particular things in our world count in the first place as beings. Therefore, meaning for Heidegger cannot be analyzed solely within an epistemological inquiry. Nor does it apply primarily to words or sentences. Instead meaning is a way of existing, a mode of one’s being able to be. Meaning is located within the ontological inquiry. Thus, the question being raised is about a “thing” that is no thing at all. We ought not to mistake of confusing being with a particular being: not ourselves, not the universe, not a Supreme Being but rather an event or process by which things come to be. It is the process that renders all entities and particulars meaningful. But it is not a process that leads to the Hegelian transcendent, the absolute, by way of his famous triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Rather, it is a process that leads to the letting-be of being, the unconcealment of what is concealed. In the words of Richardson (1974), “Being, then, is emergent-abiding-power that always hides itself in the seeming-to-be, because it is intrinsically finite in its manifestation” (p. 266).

Dasein reveals this being that makes particular beings possible because it (Dasein) has privileged access to it.

### **3.2 Being, beings, and Dasein**

#### **i) Being and beings**

Now Heidegger would raise the question: What is the being that renders possible all existence, which is the *is* in every understanding of being? If being (*Sein*) is that which makes present, if it is being that makes extant all particular beings, then it is the basic task of philosophy to investigate being itself. For Heidegger, the word metaphysics itself allots this task to philosophy, because metaphysics means “moving beyond nature”, “it is an effort to transcend discrete phenomenal units in order to arrive at the universal principles of reality and existence that lie “inside” or “beyond” them” (Steiner 1979, p. 64). This stance is echoed in Plato’s theory of forms, Aristotle’s primary substance, or being, in the primary sense, the determinism of Leibniz, the idealism of Kant, Hegelian geist, Husserl’s pure consciousness, and so on. But this kind of path for Heidegger, is a turning of metaphysics toward transcendence and is defeatist. Metaphysics cannot proceed by attributing all appearances, all particulars to an unseen teleological agency. Heidegger articulates a different approach

and that would be a dwelling on the *thereness* of the collectivity of entities. The collectivity of entities is made present to us by “being lit”, that is, by the agency of illumination. It is by this agency that all that is forgotten is let-to-be. For Heidegger, this light itself stands concealed. This light is not a “being,” or Plato’s “Idea,” or Hegel’s “Spirit,” or Kant’s “noumenon”. It is “a clearing” (a *Lichtung*) by which all beings shine forth and are unconcealed. This is phenomenology for Heidegger, a word with a Greek root which itself means “radiance”, “self-disclosure.” It is this unconcealment of being by being, this disclosure, that Heidegger calls “truth”. It is light that shines forth and illuminates being bringing forth “truth.” Whatever this light, whatever this being that discloses being, it is concealed from man and it is not an entity. Characterizing this being, Richardson (1974) emphasizes:

Being is not a being, because it is that which enables beings to be (present) to man and men to each other. It is nearest to man, because it makes him to be what he is and enables him to enter into comportment with other beings. Yet it is farthest removed from him because it is not a being with which he, structured as he is to deal directly with only beings, can comport himself (p. 6).

Critics of Heidegger would say that his metaphysics deviates from being when he unfolds a special affinity of being with the human being. But this is

not the orientation of Heidegger's ontology but rather an emphasis on the peculiarity of the being of man as the investigator of being. No being can investigate the meaning of being in the manner man does. In fact, only man as *ratio animalus* is sufficiently equipped and disposed to this daunting metaphysical task. Levinas displays less anthropomorphism in his distinction between being and whatever is. For Levinas (Steiner, 1979):

Whatever is ... comprises the sum-total of all things, of all persons, in a certain sense it comprises God Himself. The Being of beings...is the fact that all these objects and persons are. Being does not identify itself with any of these beings, not even with the concept of being in general. In a certain sense, Being is not... For if Being were, it would in its turn be a being. Whereas Being is, in some way, the very occurrence of existence in and of all beings (p. 67).

Because being lights up beings, it is the subject of metaphysics while entities which are objects (in consciousness brought into consciousness through acts of consciousness in the Husserlian perspective) are studied by the physical sciences, what Heidegger calls the *ontic* sciences. Though beings are studied by the *ontic* sciences, being encloses all particular beings and lets them be. Being is the arena that lets particular beings be. This arena is not synonymous with what Leibniz would characterize as space where particular beings inhere, it is not a container in which all the furniture of the universe are collected in time. It is that dimension out of which even space and time

themselves find their presence. This is the view that Richardson (1974) held when he observed that:

Being is the domain of openness, because it is the lighting-process by which beings are lighted up. If these beings be “subjects” or “objects,” then the light itself is neither one nor the other but “between” them both, enabling the encounter to come about. It is from Being, then, that metaphysics derives all its vigor as from its proper element (p. 6-7).

Whether this being which lights up beings plays the role that time as “...the form of our inner intuition” (Kant 1996, p. 91) plays in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, mediating between the categories and experience because it has its feet in both worlds, is not the issue here. What is of metaphysical significance to Heidegger is that it is this being that “clears” the path and leads to the revelation of beings.

Now this disclosure, this lighting-up of beings is to a particular being, it is a disclosure to something and that brings us to Dasein, a very important terminology in Heideggerian lexicon. Every disclosure is a disclosure to something and that something is the human being (Dasein). Thus Dasein becomes the starting point of Heidegger’s investigation of the question of being.

## ii) Dasein

In the metaphysical approach of Heidegger, to begin the investigation of the question of being, one must first of all investigate the being of the investigator, that is, our own being as questioners. Heidegger denotes this by the term “Dasein”. Etymologically, Dasein means “being-there.” Joseph Fell (1979) makes the point that:

...out of habit – almost out of instinct – we read ‘Dasein’ as ‘man’ and we read ‘world’ as “the external to Dasein.” Yet Dasein is not man, and world is not external to Dasein. Here again, the fallacy of simple location must be combated. The difficulty of combating it is indicated by counterintuitive character of asserting that Dasein is a being whose Being is to be there in a world which it itself is. Dasein is not simply here where I am as an embodied man at the spot  $x$  at the moment  $y$ . Dasein is ‘there’ – wherever there is a world. This means that the boundary of Dasein is the world itself – the world’s ‘horizons’ – and not merely a point within the world...(p. 41).

Fell continues that

...it is true that Dasein may ‘individualize’ itself within its world, but the world within which it individualizes itself is itself Dasein. Because of this... ‘I’ am more fundamentally ‘there’ than I am ‘here’ and can only understand myself as ‘here’ insofar as I am ‘there’. This may sound like a rank idealism that either bloats the self, or ego, to universal size,...or reduces all being to the self. But it is neither. Dasein is an original unity that is prior to the distinction between self and environment, or subject and object, or ego and noematic correlate. It is the ground within which these distinctions can be made or are possible (p. 41).

This is why the term Dasein is not reducible to the human being, but inclusive of it. Simply stated, then, Dasein is that entity which in its being we understand as human life. Dasein is “human existence.” Heidegger (1996) further explains this term in the following words:

Da-sein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned about its very being. Thus it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being. And this in turn means that Da-sein understands itself in its being in some way and with some explicitness...understanding of being is itself a determination of being of Da-sein (p. 10/12).

Dasein is always ontological, its being always relates to existence.

Heidegger captures the being of Dasein thus:

We shall call the very being to which Da-sein can relate in one way or another, and somehow always does relate, existence (Existenz). And because the essential definition of this being cannot be accomplished by ascribing to it a “what” that specifies its material content, because its essence lies rather in the fact that it in each instance has to be its being as its own, the term Da-sein, as a pure expression of being, has been chosen to designate this being (1996, p. 10/12).

It was Heidegger who said that philosophy has taken being for granted by not raising the question of being as rigorously as it should. By choosing

the term Dasein instead of man, Heidegger wants to avoid the old meanings associated with the term and urge us to look at ourselves with new eyes.

When we take a new perspective on ourselves and challenge the prejudices of traditional metaphysics, we proceed steadily on the path that leads to the uncovering of the meaning of being. Man's mode of being is what singles him out. For Heidegger, Man stands in the position to answer the question of the meaning of being since he is the only one seriously raising the question itself. Because man is able to raise the question, it means that he is also capable of finding the answer. Now, Heidegger is quick to warn that whether or not we arrive at being or unconceal it is not the matter, what is important is the journey. That journey is thinking (*Denken*). In the perspective of Heidegger, thinking is not an opinion or a notion. It does not mean representing or having an idea about something. In his introduction to Heidegger's *What is called thinking?*, Glenn Gray writes that thinking for Heidegger is "... a response on our part to a call which issues from the nature of things, from Being itself. Thinking is determined by that which is to be thought as well as by him who thinks. It involves not only man's receptivity to Being but also Being's receptivity to man" (1968, p. xi).

Thinking is a concrete seeing and saying of the way the world is and this is what the Pre-Socratics did, especially Parmenides who insisted that we

cannot think nothing. In thinking (*Denken*) therefore, man (*Dasein*) becomes the “shepherd” of being and not its engineer. To “shepherd” being is to think and thinking is questioning and putting ourselves in question as much as the cherished opinions and inherited doctrines we have long taken for granted. Questioning is a way of clearing a path that every person must learn to clear for himself without attaching a resting point. The clearing is what must go on, it is what must endure because the more that clearing the better the disclosure of that which is cleared. Questioning and thinking are not a means to an end. To think is to be on the way to being. This is what is of importance for Heidegger – the way, the journey – and not the destination. We may never arrive at the destination, but being on the way, we can progress toward it. This journey intended to progress toward being starts with the investigating subject, *Dasein* (the human being), a *Seiendes*. Because *Dasein* is being-in-the-world, this unique ontological dimension makes it possible for *Dasein* to engage in the metaphysical task of understanding itself and the meaning of being and beings through the activity of thought.

There is a connectedness between being, beings, and man as *Dasein* for the being of beings is not something external, “out-there” by itself or even “out-there” in entities. The implication of Heidegger is that the being of

beings implies the meaningful relatedness and the intelligible presentness of entities to and for man considered as Dasein. This is why Heidegger considers questioning a clearing, a clearing that only man is capable of, and he alone can dwell there. He is capable of clearing because he is a being-in-the-world that questions and questioning is a clearing through thought.

When Heidegger talks about thought that clears being, he is not referring to the primacy of thought, particularly logical thought, over being. Metaphysics conceived this way is ruled by logic and so the very possibility of being and its meaning proceeds from thought. Being for Heidegger is not a matter of logic and so the choice of the term Dasein is to turn the tables so that being determines thought and not vice versa. In the words of James Damske (1970):

Heidegger wishes to overcome the domination of thought over being...thought should again become subordinate to, and indeed determined by being. One could hardly wish for a more decisive confirmation of the new position of primacy won by being in the turning than the ringing summons to a new effort to overcome traditional logic by a return to the question of the essential relation of thinking to being...[through] a more original, slicker kind thinking proper to being (p. 93).

What is basic to Heidegger's Dasein is "being-there," or "being-in-the-world." This is our existence, our "mine-ness," as Heidegger would

insist that Dasein is in each case mine, I exist and each one of us exists. Existence is what is specific to Dasein. It is the place where the subject encounters object and so Dasein is the being that understands its being and the being of other beings. For Descartes, it was the rational clarity that was so fundamental to human existence. One could put every other existent in doubt. The whole universe and our understanding of it could be considered a hallucination. However, one cannot be in doubt that he who is doubting exists. There has to be a mind for there to be doubt. Hence his conclusion: “I think, therefore I am.” In spite of the logic of Descartes’ cogito, his insight is obscured by its own language. His use of “I” appears to have a profound reliance on the nature of two verbs: “to think” and “to be.” The “I” of this thinking and the “I” of this existing are only grammatical fulfillments. The Dasein of Heidegger is not a grammatical necessity, it transcends logic and the rules of grammar. In Heidegger, the fundamental comprehension of our existence is more profound and indubitable than that of Descartes. Man’s fundamental apprehension is not Descartes’ “cogito ego sum” but of the very fact that I am “there”, I am “being-in-the-world.”

Now Dasein’s being-in-the-world is not fragmented but a unitary structure. In the words of Heidegger (1996), “The compound expression “being-in-the-world” indicates, in the very way we have coined it, that it

stands for a *unified* phenomenon” (p. 49/53). Heidegger insists that Dasein’s being-in-the-world is not ‘in’ as water is found in a glass, that is to say, as objects stand to objects, one ‘inside’ the other as objects are located in a container; it is not ‘in’ like objects in the Leibnizian space. This is because Heidegger’s “world” refers to the “state,” the “how” in which what is is in the world. In explaining Heidegger’s “world” Werner Brock (1988) writes that Heidegger’s “world” designates primarily

...neither the sum total of the things of nature nor a characteristic of the community of men...but it means originally the “how” in which the things are “in the whole” as implicitly related to human Dasein, though for historical reason, this relationship was not given prominence in the strictly philosophic exposition (p. 26-27).

Therefore, being-in is existential, it “is ...the formal existential expression of the being of Da-sein” (Heidegger 1996, p. 51/54) and as such it is characteristic of Dasein. For Heidegger, Dasein’s being-in is better described as a dwelling alongside, a tarrying along or being “amid.” In the perspective of Dreyfus (2001), “What Heidegger is getting at is a mode of being-in we might call “inhabiting.” When we inhabit something, it is no longer an object for us but becomes part of us and pervades our relation to other objects in the world...Heidegger... call this way of being-in “dwelling” (p.

45). In *Heidegger's Existence and Being*, Werner Brock (1988) conceives of Dasein's being-in-the-world thus:

Being-in-the-world" is analysed as a unitary phenomenon the "in" in this connection is of a nature entirely different from the "in" applied to any phenomenon that is "vorhanden." If a thing is said to be "in" something else, this relationship is "spatial." If a being of the kind of Dasein is said to be "in" something, the relationship is not meant to be primarily "spatial" but means to "dwell," to "sojourn," to "stay," in the sense of the Latin word "habitare" (p. 27-28).

The way Dasein plunges itself in the world, its preoccupations in the world, its concerned comportments exemplify the manner of its existence, and this is part of Dasein's way of being as "care" (*Sorge*).

For Heidegger, Dasein's primary mode of being-in-the-world is its concerned being alongside beings and tarrying with others which he contrasts with another mode of being which he calls "knowing the world." The difference is that "knowing is a mode of being of Da-sein as being-in-the-world, and has its ontic foundation in this constitution of being... phenomenally...*knowing is a kind of being of being-in-the-world, ... knowing is already together with its world...*" (Heidegger 1996, p. 57/61). This is to say that "The question of Being is deeper than the question of knowing, "ontology precedes epistemology" (Polt 1999, p. 47). We must exist before we can question tradition or breakaway from it. In Dasein's

primary mode of comportment to the world, it becomes disengaged, and its perspective is that of subject looking at an object. An example is that of holding a writing pen in one's hand. One can engage in its use by writing with it or can just withdraw from its use and just 'talk about it' and might even describe it as some inches long, green and as possessing many other attributes. This change in comportment has a profound implication for the human being. That is to say that one can simply investigate being (what Heidegger means by *ontology*), talk pertaining to being (*ontological*), or simply talk pertaining to particular facts about entities devoid of any *regard* to their being (*ontic*). This is why the being of the human being is *existence*, we *Ek-sist*, meaning we *stand out* into future possibilities, into past heritage, and into the present. We are not like stones that just exist, we are not encapsulated in a present moment and position with no self-determination. No, we engage in the project of self-understanding, what Heidegger calls *self-interpretation or self understanding*, and so we essentially reach out from ourselves to others and to entities. Thus, Dasein is always "with" and because Dasein is never alone and in a relation, things matter to us, as well as our own being. In the perspective of Heidegger (1996):

Sciences and disciplines are ways of being of Da-sein in which Da-sein relates to beings that it need not itself be. But *being in a world*

belongs essentially to Da-sein. Thus the understanding of being that belongs to Da-sein just as originally implies the understanding of something like “world” and the understanding of the being of beings accessible within the world (p. 11/13).

As such, Dasein is not a mind but is absorbed and defined by what it does, by its handling of what matters; we are who we are by what we do in the world, we are Dasein, the being that “...possesses – in a manner constitutive of its understanding of existence – an understanding of the being of all beings unlike itself” (Heidegger 1996, p. 11/13). This is the implication of Dasein conceived as being-in-the-world. Blackham (1959) renders this perspective better in these words:

A man is possibility, he has the power to be. His existence is in his choice of the possibilities which are open to him, and since this choice is never final, once for all, his existence is indeterminate because not terminated. Nevertheless, the mode of existence of the human being has a structure: it is being-in-the-world. This Being-in-the-world which constitutes human being is the being of a self in its inseparable relations with a not-self, the world of things and other persons in which the self always necessarily finds itself inserted (p. 88).

This is what it means to say that the essence of Dasein is its existence, its being-in-the-world.

### 3.3 The Triune Structure of Being-in

It was the view of Heidegger that Dasein is never directly in the world. We always find ourselves in a particular situation, we are always in a specific circumstance, in a specific moment, so Dasein is “there”. The situation in which Dasein finds itself is a *Lichtung*, a clearing, literally a clearing in the forest. In this clearing, Dasein is illuminated “in itself as being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1996, p. 125/133). Since this “illumination”, this clearing is by Dasein, Dasein is a field of disclosedness. What Heidegger is about to establish is a deeper understanding of Dasein’s being-in-the-world as disclosive for when the structure of the being of Dasein is unraveled and unwrapped, we see that those existential structures serve a fundamentally disclosive function. Hence they are a clearing, a *Lichtung*.

In its being-in-the-world, Dasein is not to be construed as a subject related to an entity but as being-in-the-world, it is always outside itself, formed by shared practices, and absorbed in its everydayness, absorbed in one activity at a time. This is why though Dasein is being-in-the-world, it is in the world in a specific situation.

It was Heidegger who said that the being of Dasein is “an issue” for it. It is because its being is an issue for it that Dasein opens up a clearing. This

clearing is done by itself and not by any other being. Thus Heidegger (1996) states that:

When we talk in an ontically figurative way about the *lumen naturale* in human being, we mean nothing other than the existential-ontological structure of this being, the fact that it is in the mode of being its there. To say that it is “illuminated” means that it is cleared in itself as being-in-the-world, not by another being, but in such a way that it is itself the clearing...*Da-sein is its disclosure* (p. 125/133).

The existence of Dasein is to stand out from the world and to become something in the world, and in so doing it throws light on what is there, and indeed makes it that there is a world. It is for this reason that Dasein is by its nature *lumen naturale*. Dasein is the center of its clearing so it is being-its-there. Being-its-there is Dasein’s opening onto the clearing. In ordinary grammar, being-its-there suggests spatiality. But Heidegger’s employment of the term “being-its-there” is not spatial but refers to the peculiarity Dasein is positioned in the *Lichtung*, in the clearing. For Heidegger therefore “here” and “over there” are possible in a “there,” that is, when there is a being which has disclosed spatiality as the being of the there” (Heidegger 1996, p. 125/132). Dasein “bears in its ownmost being the character of not being closed. The expression “there” means this essential disclosedness. Through disclosedness this being (Da-sein) is “there” for itself together with the Da-

sein of the world” (Heidegger 1996, p. 125/132). Dasein does not seek to close up its being but opens up itself for “illumination,” an “illumination” that is constituted by light. Heidegger would further explain that:

The light that constitutes this clearedness of Da-sein is not a power or source objectively present ontically, for a radiant brightness sometimes occurring in this being. What essentially clears this being, that is, makes it “open” as well as “bright” for itself, was defined as care... the full disclosedness of the There is grounded in care (1996, p. 321/351).

In caring, each Dasein is engaging in a clearing activity both of itself and of its situation. Though each Dasein engages in its own clearing and therefore we can say it is its own “there,” there is one shared situation, there is a situation common to them all.

There is a distinction between an action and what results from an action. This is to say that there is a difference between clearing as an activity and what results from the activity of clearing. Thus several individuals can engage in the labor of clearing a forest but there is only one forest that is cleared, just as many individuals can pull a car by a rope each holding his portion of the rope but only one car is pulled. In this event “the surrounding world is different in a certain way for each of us, and not withstanding that

we move about in a common world” (Heidegger 1982, p. 164). It is this same point that Husserl expressed with a phenomenological twist when he said that:

...within myself, within the limits of my transcendently reduced pure conscious life, I *experience* the world (including others) – and, according to its experiential sense, *not* as my private *synthetic* formation but as other than mine alone, as an *intersubjective* world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its objects to everyone. And yet each has his experiences, his appearances and appearance-unities, his world-phenomenon; whereas the experienced world exists in itself, over against all experiencing subjects and their world-phenomenon (1960, p. 91).

Thus the present is unique to each human but it is also the present of other individuals and not personal property to be claimed and hoarded. Individual humans do not transform the world in which they are and make it conform to them. We are in the world and with others in the same world and together, though from a unique point still available to others, engage in the investigation of the meaning of being. Heidegger renders this in his own language when he says that “although each one of us utters his own now, it is nevertheless the now for everyone” (1982, p. 264). It is because this now is for everyone that makes consciousness possible as every consciousness is consciousness of this now. For Heidegger, without the ground of the ‘there’

as a derivative mode, consciousness is not possible. Though mental states such as the excruciating pain from a toothache are an individuals, they are nevertheless shared by everyone subject to the same condition. The moment one is placed in the situation, the situation is no longer *yours* alone but *ours*. That Dasein's present situation can always, as a matter of principle, be shared with others is a fall-out of the reality that its intelligibility is contingent on shared practices. It is for this reason that Dasein's 'there' is a shareable grasp of a world that is already shared. This is why for Heidegger, "this being bears its ownmost being the character of not being closed" (1996, p. 125/132) but open to disclosure and "The expression "there" means this essential disclosedness. Through disclosedness this being (Da-sein) is "there" for itself together with the Da-sein of the world" (1996, p. 125/132). All this is indicative of the fact that "the nature of Dasein is being-in-common, human existence is a shared existence and the social interdependence of our everyday experience is primordial and constitutive" (Blackham 1959, p. 91). Thus each Dasein's individual activity of clearing which is always a situated activity is also a shared clearing that leads to disclosure. And because every clearing activity is a situated one, every Dasein has the tripartite structure of "...understanding, attunement, and falling" (Heidegger 1996, p. 320/349).

It is obvious that these structures are divided, but the supposition of Heidegger is that they should be taken as a unitary structure and seen as a whole. Each one of them is an *Existential* and cannot be understood when isolated from the rest; they are the fundamental moments that are always found in each Dasein and are the existential structures of Dasein's *Existenz*.

### **A) Befindlichkeit**

For Heidegger, Dasein finds itself in a situation and is affected by it. The word that he employs to designate this idea is the German compound *Befindlichkeit* meaning “how one finds oneself.” This word *Befindlichkeit*, which seems to have been crafted from the ordinary German greeting in which one is questioned “*Wie befinden sie sich?*”, that is, “How do you find oneself” or “How are you?” or “How do you feel?,” has very special and profound philosophical connotation for Heidegger. It represents the “discovery of self as already in the world, understanding, and discourse...” (Langan 1966, p. 23); it includes the many ways that things in the world matter to Dasein. The fact that something can matter to Dasein “is grounded in attunement” (Heidegger 1996, p. 129/137).

## **i) Thrownness**

Man finds himself in the world that already is. Heidegger would prefer to say that Dasein finds himself in a situation. He employs the term “thrownness” “...which must be understood in a purely ontological sense as wishing to signify the matter-of-fact- character of human finitude” (Richardson 1974, p. 37). Dasein is always ‘thrown’ in a world. Dasein is thrown into the world most radically at birth and is always in the world. Therefore, Dasein is not the cause of the situation, rather the situation is the cause of Dasein. This is why Heidegger contends that “Da-sein is swept along thrownness, that is, as something thrown into the world, it loses itself in the “world” in its being factually dependent on what is to be taken care of” (1996, p. 320/348). As being-in-the-world, Dasein finds itself in a world it did not create; it is thrown into a historical moment it did not construct and is strictly a historical being.

## **ii) Moods.**

Going into the specifics of the manifestation of *Befindlichkeit* is the sense of *moods (or attunement)*. From the German *Stimmung*, moods has much broader implication than our English understanding of the term. In the sense that Heidegger uses it, it embraces moods such as the sensibility of the

age or cultural sensibility (which in ancient Greek times took the shape of wonder), the culture of a company, the temper of the times, not excluding the moods displayed in an examination hall. Thus moods or attunements designate the ways Dasein can be affected and display the tone of the being-there of Dasein. Moods can somehow disclose 'how a person is' and show a peculiar attunement to existence. Moods are all ways of finding that things matter, they are "ways of finding ourselves in the world" (Polt 1999, p. 64). Thus, they are all ontic specifications of affectedness, the ontological existential condition that things always already matter.

Moods are not our inner, private emotions or feelings that are "statements" on our encounter with the world, they are public, considered "...as fleeting experiences that "color" one's "psychical condition" (Heidegger 1996, p. 313/340). As such they disclose things in a peculiarly profound way that feelings cannot. When moods are understood in this way, one can assert that *fear* (a form of mood) discloses an entity as a threat rather than cut us away from that which is threatening. Hence moods disclose the way we are affected and do not hinder such a disclosure. Fear (as well as anxiety which will be treated later) disclose Dasein but it "discloses this being in its jeopardization, in its being left to itself" (Heidegger 1996, p. 132/141). In the mood of fear, we can identify "fear of," "fear itself," and

“fear for.” Thus in fear, Dasein is afraid of a definite thing. This will be discussed later in the next section but it is necessary to observe at this point that for Heidegger (as well as for Kierkegaard) fear is not to be confused with dread. Werner Brock (1988) renders the distinction between fear and dread (or anxiety) in Heidegger as well as in Kierkegaard in the following words:

Both Kierkegaard and Heidegger distinguish “dread” from “fear” (Furcht). “Fear” is always the “fear of something definite.” “Dread” is, as Kierkegaard puts it, “the reality of freedom as a potentiality, before this potentiality has materialized”; it is a “sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy” and its object is “the something which is nothing (p. 44).

Both dread (or anxiety) and fear are ontological phenomena. The phenomena of fear “inhibits” and because fear “inhibits” Dasein, it discloses Dasein but as Heidegger puts it, fear “predominantly discloses Da-sein in a privative way” (Heidegger 1996, p. 133/141). Hence moods disclose rather than hinder the disclosure of Dasein as it is ordinarily thought. No wonder Schelling remarked that though we have formed the habit of saying that “love is blind,” what is actually disclosed is that love really gives us sight! Immanuel Kant would word this perspective aesthetically by saying that beauty is not in the object. Rather it is a result of the free play or harmony of

imagination and cognitive powers, provoked by what is given. Beauty, in Kant's words, is "...a free play of our presentations... cognition ...and...imagination" (Kant 1987, p. 93). Heidegger (1996) emphasizes that:

Mood...comes neither from "without" nor from "within,"... mood...is not... related to something psychical, it is itself not an inner condition which then in some mysterious way reaches out and leaves its mark on things and persons...it is a fundamental existential mode of being of equiprimordial disclosedness of world, being-there-with, and existence because this disclosure itself is essentially being-in-the-world (p. 129/136-137).

Though moods disclose our being-there, Heidegger reasons that not all moods are disclosive since he concedes that there are bad moods. In Bad moods, instead of disclosing, "Da-sein becomes blind to itself, the surrounding world of heedfulness is veiled, the circumspection of taken care is led astray" (Heidegger 1996, p. 128-129/136). They (bad moods) must therefore be controlled. Seeking to avoid moods altogether is defeatist, what Dasein should reach out to is good moods because of their quality.

As beings thrown into the world in some way, Dasein is thrown into a mood even before its reflection on it. Thus Heidegger insists that we must not be misled into "...ontologically denying mood as a primordial kind of being of Da-sein in which it is disclosed to itself *before* all cognition and

willing and beyond their scope of disclosure” (Heidegger 1996, p. 128/136). Because humans are always encircled by entities that matter to them in some definite way, they are always in a mood. Dasein can never be without a mood. Given this condition that Dasein is always “there” as a being that understands itself as well as other beings, it has to take a stand on its being as well as on the way that things matter. Though Dasein is a unique being that can probe the meaning of being as well as its being, it is a being with inadequacies brought about by the exposition of its total structure. To reveal the total structure of Dasein, Heidegger would use what he calls “anxiety.”

### **Anxiety and fear.**

Anxiety is considered by Heidegger as a privileged way in which Dasein is revealed. From his point of view, it is anxiety that reveals the total structure of Dasein. The nature of an equipment is never known until it has a breakdown. Similarly, in the thinking of Heidegger, the event of the breakdown of Dasein unconceals its total structure. No wonder he uses anxiety in which Dasein experiences a total breakdown to reveal its total structure! It has been previously indicated in this work that Dasein is thrown into a world which already has its meanings and therefore it is thrown into a public world. It is for this reason that it has to define itself, not on its own

terms but in terms of the public world. It throws itself into the meanings already given by the world. Rather than produce its own significances, it comprehends itself as reliant on an already created system of significances.

For Heidegger then:

Being a *self*, Da-sein is the thrown being as self. Not *through* itself, but *released to* itself from the ground in order to be *as this ground*. Da-sein is not itself the ground of its being, because the ground first arises from its own project, but as a self, it is the *being* of its ground. The ground is always ground only for a being whose being has to take over being-the-ground (1996, p. 262/285).

But insofar as it is considered as being-in-the-world, insofar as it is “there” it is its ground for the reason that it comprehends itself as a being projected into its possibilities through its choices. No meanings are intended for individual Daseins. As a result, Dasein is alone though in its being-in-the-world, it is with-others. If no meanings in the world are assigned to individual Daseins, the implication is that no role, no mode of existence has an intrinsic meaning for Dasein. Jean-Paul Sartre gives an existentialist twist to the “aloneness” of Dasein when he says that:

It is I who give meaning to my surroundings by my projects and to the events which affect my projects: I create my situation and am responsible for it, and it is in this situation that I am free. When I separate myself in consciousness from what is there, I constitute not

the world but its existence and meaning for me: it is by the independence and indifference of things and my capacity to separate myself from them and to act on them in order to change them for the sake of some project, a future end, that I have liberty which I am (Blackham 1959, p. 132-133).

It was the contention of Heidegger that anxiety is not a concept. As he affirms:

Being anxious discloses, primordially and directly, the world as world. It is not the case that initially we deliberately look away from innerworldly beings and think only of the world about which *Angst* arises, but *Angst* as a mode of attunement first discloses the world as world. However, that does not mean that the worldliness of the world is conceptualized in *Angst* ” (1996, p. 175/187).

Anxiety offers the revelation of Dasein as a being that though it is “there”, it is not the origin of meanings that it employs in its self-apprehension and that it is thrown into a “there” willy-nilly, it is not its meanings or its own contents but its empty thrownness. Within this framework, just like in fear, in anxiety, Dasein is “bewildered” or “inhibited.” Thus fear and anxiety are forms of the ontological disposition of Da-sein by which its situation is affectively revealed. But Heidegger is quick to add that there is a difference between anxiety and fear. Though not cutting us off from something, fear is always a retreating from somebody or from an entity that is in the world, always as fearsome, coming from a specific

section of our environment, which can cause pain and is inescapable. Take for example a kid who is afraid of a needle in a physician's office where he has gone for a shot against flu. He is afraid of the needle which is a determined being for himself in the course of fearing. Once again, we would like to emphasize that Anxiety (or dread) is different from fear. This is because what Dasein is anxious of is not an entity in its environment, it does not cause pain as the needle would in the kid at the physician's office, it is not a thing "here" or "there," it is a non-being. Therefore Dasein is anxious about non-being. However, this non-being is not nothing. For Heidegger, it is rooted in a "something." The nature of this "something" in which no-thing is grounded is for Heidegger "...the world as such" (1996, p. 175/187). The disclosure here is that "that about which Angst is anxious is being-in-the-world itself" (Heidegger 1996, p. 175/187). Unlike Sigmund Freud who, in his psychoanalysis, opined that the human being experiences anxiety because of a long period of repression of frustration and fear, Martin Heidegger turns the tables in the following words: "fear is *Angst* which has fallen prey to the "world." It is inauthentic and concealed from itself" (Heidegger 1996, p. 177/189). It can be seen then why originally, Heidegger does not say that Dasein is anxious but rather that "anxiety" is anxious

(“*Angst* is anxious” Heidegger 1996, p. 174/186). The aim of this once again peculiar Heideggerian vocabulary is to turn the Freudian tables.

## **B) Understanding (Verstehen).**

Another component of the whole structure of Dasein is understanding. Dasein is a being unlike other beings because it understands itself. Dasein’s self understanding differs in a very deep way from observational attitudes such as perception or intuition. For Heidegger, understanding means to show forth, to throw forward and project and as such is expressive of Dasein’s active comportment toward possibilities, toward its projects. Dasein’s understanding breaks barriers and horizons and opens up its possibilities in the world. This is why in Heidegger’s thought, understanding is in no way a reference to cognition, unlike in Thomas Hobbes’ thought. For Hobbes (1950), “when a man, upon hearing of any speech, hath those thoughts which the words of that speech and their connexion were ordained and constituted to signify, then he is said to understand it; *understanding* being nothing else but conception caused by speech” (p. 39). In a latter edition of Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1998), he writes that “...when...discourse is put into speech, and begins with the definitions of words, and proceeds by connexion of the same into general affirmations, and of these again into syllogisms; the end or last sum is called the conclusion; and the thought of

the mind by it signified, is...knowledge of the consequence of words, which is called SCIENCE” (p. 43). Therefore, for Hobbes, understanding is a cognitive ability. But for Heidegger, understanding is not a cognitive faculty. As Heidegger puts it, “we do not restrict ourselves to an orientation toward cognition” (1996, p. 160/170) though cognition is not alien to it. The term “understanding” is rather employed as an “existential component of There-being by reason of which the latter is capable of bringing to expression that which it comprehends” (Richardson 1974, p. 66). Understanding is a “know-how,” an “ability.” Therefore understanding is also a mode of the disclosure of Dasein. In understanding, Dasein takes a stand on its thrownness “in the sense that we have to carry it out by actively developing it (not bringing it into a higher stage, but keeping it up in its primary heights)” (Vycinas 1961, p. 44). Dasein is in the world with things and very often engages in their use. It is understanding that discloses the meaning of things as tools and as such it discloses the world as well as Dasein.

Dasein is a being thrown into the world to project itself. One can therefore say that Dasein is thrown into possibilities and therefore a free being. These possibilities can be either construed as what-should-be or side-tracked or rejected or seized positively as in the case of Sisyphus who created meaning out of the absurd punishment by the gods to endlessly roll

a huge rock up a mountaintop when he considered his ability to roll up the rock several times a form of victory. Whatever Dasein does in its thrownness, it is a being thrown into a world of limitless possibilities to project itself. It can therefore decide to overtake its thrownness by projecting itself or refuse to do so. That Dasein can project itself in its thrownness means that Dasein is a being that understands itself. Though Dasein is a being whose questioning of being is its being, it is limited since Dasein as a being thrown into a world, is finite; it is a being that does not create, but only directs its thinking on itself and on entities that already are. Because Dasein directs its thinking on itself and what already “is,” it can only disclose the “how” of things. This disclosure is contingent on the stance of Dasein, that is, on its cognition. This is why cognition is such a necessary component of what Heidegger calls “understanding.” But this understanding, for Heidegger, is not an attitude that man can be said to possess as his feature, rather the reverse is the case, it (understanding) is that event in whose possession man is. Man’s everyday understanding of himself is distinct from and prior to any contemplative or cognitive attitude.

The understanding of Dasein is self-interpretation. This interpretation is within a context, and since Dasein is being-in-the-world and is thrown into the world, the self interpretation of Dasein is in the context of the things it

encounters. Dasein stands in a position to view them with regard to their meanings and significances. These meanings and significances are based in Dasein. Dasein makes them understandable by giving them meanings which are a kind of judgment. Now, it can be said that because judgment is based on interpretation (as an existential, a way of being of Dasein), it attains meaning not in a primary but in a secondary sense. Meanings proceed from Dasein and not from that which is judged and so interpretation on which judgment is based, is an activity of giving meaning to entities, occurring only in Dasein. A Heideggerian designate of this existential is *Rede* (meaning “speech” or “logos” or “discourse” or “language”) in which Dasein articulates what it understands of itself and the meaning-giving activity. In the perspective of King (1964):

Heidegger’s interpretation, speech (*Rede*) is a fundamental existential which is co-original with attunement and understanding. These latter have in themselves a definite and intricate structure, so that the being disclosed by them is always articulated. What is understandable is therefore always expressly articulable. Speech, as an existential, is the articulation of understandability: of existence and fellow-existence, of the significance-whole of world and of the being of beings within the world (p. 117).

This highlights the special ontological status of Dasein as a being that comprehends itself in its “being-there” and its ontological advantage over

other beings. That is, Dasein is a being that can and does let “something” be seen through language or discourse precisely because it understands itself as well as other beings. By language is not meant language-as-spoken but a reference to that ontological constituent of Dasein without which language is possible. In later Heidegger, extensive elaboration is made on the notion of *Rede* translated as “logos.” In this work, it suffices to say that it is the point of Heidegger that Dasein is thrown into the world, and in its thrownness, it is “there” with other *Seiendes*. In its “there” which is being-with, it is intimately joined one with another and is in a concrete situation. Because the present of Dasein’s being is not determined, its being is an issue. Thus it seeks total meaningfulness explained in light of its concrete situation. Dasein engages in the project of self understanding. Such a growing self-comprehension of Dasein which Heidegger calls “interpretation” is also given the name “hermeneutic.” Thus Dasein has a peculiar possibility of understanding itself, of engaging in a self interpretation, a self-understanding of the human being because it is able to do so. Dasein engages in the project of self-interpretation and discloses itself through logos (which Heidegger understands as a process of making known or the power-to-let-be-seen what is understood and not its Greek meaning). And through “reciprocal listening-

in” (Heidegger 1996, p. 163/175), an element of logos, Dasein listens to each other and makes dialogue and community possible.

### **C) Fallenness (Verfallen).**

The term “fallenness” refers to Dasein’s average everydayness. As Richardson (1974) captures, by employing the term Fallenness, Heidegger is simply arguing that Dasein

...is first of all and for the most part pre-occupied with the “world” of its ontic experience...that totality of beings opposed to itself with which it is continually engaged. And inevitably so. For it is bi- dimensional, ontic as well as ontological: it is only through an existentiell engagement that the existential prerogative can come-to-pass (p. 70).

Though Dasein is being-in-the-world, it is its insertion in the world of its day to day projects and possibilities that gives it its objectivity. It is at this level, the level of Dasein’s day to day activities and dealings that the structures of *Befindlichkeit* and *Verstehen* melt and function. Thus Dasein finds itself in a situation, throws itself into possibilities in its everyday concerns and activities. In as much as Dasein is already “there,” it is actually at the level of average everydayness that it carries out its existence where it finds itself in a situation, projects itself to possibilities and does so for the most part in its everyday concerns and activities. But, as Richardson (1974) indicates, if

Dasein "...is so absorbed in the ontic as to be oblivious to the ontological (Being), it has forgotten the very prerogative that constitutes its uniqueness; it has "fallen from," "taken flight from" its authentic self, it is lost in inauthenticity" (p. 70). Thus in its plunge in the world, Dasein in its average everydayness can take up its existence in two ways: either authentically or inauthentically. This is the condition of Dasein "first of all and for the most part" in the intercourse of the day.

Dasein is thrown into an already existing situation and is with things; it is not the cause or ground of the situation but rather the situation becomes the ground upon which Dasein 'finds itself'. (Philosophical tradition calls this finitude, Dasein is a being that is finite.) In as much as the structures of Dasein have been identified separately, it was the view of Heidegger that the ontological structures of Dasein be seen as unitary not separate. This unitary structure of Dasein is what is called care (*Sorge*). It is this unitary structure of Dasein that is the being of Dasein. The being of Dasein is care, a unity. The structure of care and its relations to the structure of being-in is rendered by Heidegger in the following words:

Da-sein exists as a being that, in its being, is concerned *about* that being itself. Essentially ahead of itself, it has projected upon its potentiality-of-being *before* going on to any mere consideration of itself. In its project it is revealed as something thrown. Thrown and

abandoned to the world, it falls prey to it in taking care of it. As care, that is, as existing in the unity of the entangled, thrown project, this being is disclosed as a There (1996, p. 373/406).

Care, as construed by Heidegger, is not a psychological phenomenon that refers to psychological states such as “tribulation” or “the cares of life” but is understood as an ontological structural concept which may not exclude psychological states found in Dasein.

For Heidegger, what the structure of Dasein discloses is that Dasein as a being thrown into an already existing world is a finite being, a temporal being that comes face to face with its fate in death. Paul Strathern (2002) sums up this point better when he says that “...in angst, or disquieting guilt, or the grim prospect of dying, the being of *Dasein* is disclosed to us” (p. 54). To shy away from Dasein’s possibility of death and concentrate on searching for pleasure is for Da-sein to *fall-away* from its being and be inauthentic.

### **3.4 Inauthentic Dasein**

Heidegger’s early remark was that each one of us, every person, is a human being. In his Dasein analytic, he says “The being whose analysis our task is, is always we ourselves. The being of this being is always *mine*” (Heidegger 1996, p. 39/41). And “The essence of this being lies in its to be” (Heidegger 1996, P. 39/42), that is, the essence of the being of Dasein lies in

the fact that a person exists, (I exist). Unlike the Cartesian “cogito ergo sum”, existence assumes priority over thought. Persons exist human beings before they exercise the power of thought. Hence existence is more fundamental than cognition. Now, there are two ways in which each Dasein can take up its existence: Dasein exists either inauthentically or authentically. In a very simple explanation, “someone is authentic when he is what he should be, and inauthentic when he is not what he should be, when he does not act in accordance with his “having to be” (Koren 1967, p. 57). By extension, Heidegger would say that a speech is inauthentic when it is idle talk, a meaningless chatter, a tautology of what “everybody” says instead of the linguistic articulation of Dasein’s personal judgment or feelings. As an example of inauthenticity

...if, for instance, man’s being is a “having to be” for others (Marcel), one who meets his fellowmen with hatred or indifference leads an inauthentic existence; he is estranged from what in his inmost being he “has to be.” Generally speaking, then, if man realizes himself in a way that does not harmonize with the fundamental orientations of his being, he is estranged from himself or inauthentic (Koren 1967, p. 58).

It can be recalled that for Heidegger, the being of Dasein is a unity. It is this unity of the being of Dasein that is called “care.” Now, he contends that:

Beings whose being is care cannot only burden themselves with factual guilt, but they are guilty in the ground of their being. This being guilty first gives the ontological condition for the fact that Da-sein can become guilty while factually existing. This essential being guilty is, equiprimordially, the existential condition of the possibility of the “morally” good and evil... Primordial being guilty cannot be defined by morality because morality presupposed it for itself (Heidegger 1996, p. 264/286).

Basically, humans are counted here as essentially guilty beings, since guilt is not about what a person has or has not done, but about two inescapable features of care.

Heidegger might sound strange because guilt is usually associated with responsibility for something that one should have avoided or avoiding something one should have done (what may be termed error by commission or omission). However, even this notion of guilt is not alien to Heidegger because there is a past to everyone’s life (a dimension of guilt which is rendered as indebtedness) and a future to everyone’s life (a dimension of guilt which is rendered as responsibility, or potentiality-of-being). Each Dasein can consider itself indebted because one’s past is the foundation of their existence which is out of their control since they are thrown into a situation that is not their making. Heidegger (1996) would state that:

Being a *self*, Da-sein is the thrown being *as self*. Not *through* itself, but *released to* itself from the ground in order to be *as this ground*. Da-sein is not itself the ground of its being, because the ground first arises from its own project, but as a self, it is the being of its ground. The ground is always ground only for a being whose being has to take over being-the-ground (p. 262/285).

Although Dasein is not the ground of its being, one must accept one's situation and work within that to project his/her being. It would be inauthentic to shy away from this reality and act as if one is the cause of their situation and have total control of the ship of the situation. While one does not have total control of their situation, nevertheless, they are a free agent called to build on the foundation of their past, to project their possibilities. For they have to be them and not somebody else.

Because humans have a past and a future, there is need for a special moment, the call of conscience, to wake them up to the various aspects of the existence of Dasein. This call of conscience simply means a conflict between two styles of existence. Dasein is always soaked in the day to day existence in such a way that it turns away from guilt and becomes "lost in the manifold 'world' of its heedfulness" (Heidegger 1996, p. 255/277.) It is in the call of conscience that Dasein as care, in the mode of silence, calls Dasein as the fallen they-self, waking up inauthentic Dasein to its

indebtedness and potentiality-of-being that are part of care, the ground of its being (cf. Heidegger 1996, p. 255-256/277-278).

The inauthentic and authentic modes of the existence of Dasein are not two different kinds of people or entities or separate selves but refer to the two ways of being for the same being. Just as conscience is not a withdrawal from the world of activity to some interior tranquility, so is authentic existence not to be construed as a turning away, a monastic withdrawal from the world but rather a way of existing in it. In the authentic mode of existence, the way of existing is choice through which Dasein realizes its potential as a being thrown into possibilities. For the most part, Dasein lives inauthentically in its average everydayness. This, it does by losing itself in the manifold of the world. By absorbing itself and losing itself in its everyday concerns, it abandons its being. It is by this neglect that Dasein loses itself in inauthenticity (cf. Heidegger 1996, p. 248/268) and identifies itself with the common man (*Das Man* - “they-world” or “people”).

Common man is not a reference to an individual person and yet everybody, not in the sense of the totality of the whole of humanity but prescriptive of the way that Dasein carries its day to day being for the most part. When Dasein turns the common man, it assumes the self that is not its self.

Vycinas (1961) describes Heidegger’s Common Man (*Das Man*) this way:

It is not a self-reliant being. The common man goes to work at his appointment hour. After work he looks for some sort of entertainment or relaxation; in his proper time he takes a vacation. He reads what is supposed to be read and avoids things to be avoided. Sometimes he avoids crowds and seeks inner development. The common man, the nobody and everybody at the same time, dictates our culture ...the domination of common man tends to uniformity...and to publicity...in his life there are no problems because these problems are solved by the common man. One must take it and live comfortably...(p. 42).

This picture of the common man is not a negativity, it is not some alien non-being into which human existence seldomly deviates, like the Christian notion of sin occasioned by the Fall from grace or innocence. *Das Man* refers to the concealment of the ontological primacy of Dasein and thus belongs to the very structure of Dasein. Though a non-being, *Das Man* “..must be conceived as the kind of being of Da-sein nearest to it and in which it mostly maintains itself” (Heidegger 1996, p. 164/176). Therefore Dasein cannot run away from inauthenticity. The nature of Dasein is being-in-common, human existence is a shared existence and the social interdependence of the day to day living is primordial and constitutive. A person’s full consciousness and self-affirmation proceed from their consciousness of other selves. Humans depend on one another and have their preoccupations. They can disengage themselves from this or that preoccupation and not from preoccupation. In the same vein, they can free

themselves from this or that person but not from social relations as a whole. They cannot fly away from the world and from others because Dasein is being-with. They can only modify preoccupations and social relations. Thus, authenticity is not a cancellation or negation of inauthenticity but only a modification of the *Das Man* in Dasein. Humans do not see themselves first of all as individuals, they see themselves as part of the “world.” For the most part, they live like the world, life that is not theirs (inauthentically). Hence Heidegger would say that in daily life, “...initially, for the most part,... Dasein is not itself” (1996, p. 118/125) and therefore loses itself in the they. A mode of this losing of oneself is “alienation.” Heidegger’s alienation is not the Marxist alienation whereby man is alienated from his labor. Alienation simply refers to that mode of existence whereby Dasein is distant from itself by taking on the “we-world.” Since Dasein is for the most part in the inauthentic mode of existence, “...it is only gradually that we begin to discover our identities rather than think of ourselves as things in a world of things, as substances with given properties” (Vycinas 1961, p. 42). Hence “The authentic way of existence is needed to provide the grounds on which the authentic mode of being can be built. Authenticity is nothing but a modified inauthenticity” (Vycinas 1961, p. 42); it “...is not something fully separated from the oneself, but rather its modification...accomplished by

choosing a way of being based on the very self of *Dasein* instead of on oneself” (Vycinas 1961, p. 58).

### **3.5 Authentic Dasein**

The being of the authentic mode of Dasein involves choice. Dasein as a being thrown into the world and into history is a being whose being is its potentiality-of-being. Thus, it is a being with a past, living in the present and with a future. The past is its foundation for the present and because its being is an issue, because it has a future, it must project itself in its thrownness. Though very often, Dasein chooses not to choose, it has a responsibility, it must choose and choice involves the notion of conscience.

Conscience is simply a conflict between two styles of existence. It is the awakened awareness of our finite, moral existence characterized as that which puts forth something for our comprehension. Conscience discloses something. This is because for Heidegger, when one is so absorbed in the *Das Man*, one is attentive to idle talk (fascination with the modern) and to the leveling chatter that ensues. The result is the failure of Dasein to listen to itself. It is the call of conscience that shatters this barrier. Conscience does not partake of this chatter, but silently calls humans as beings that understand themselves as well as other beings to face who they are. Conscience thus calls humans forth to choose their possibilities in their

thrownness. In effect, that which calls them to choose is themselves. In conscience, it is humans calling themselves from the they-world back to themselves. The call of conscience therefore, is not to be comprehended as proceeding from God or from a source or power other than Dasein itself but from the very finitude of Dasein. Heidegger (1996) affirms thus:

*Conscience reveals itself as the call of care: the caller is Da-sein, anxious in thrownness (in its already-being-in...) about its potentiality-of-being. The one summoned is also Da-sein, called forth to its ownmost potentiality-of-being (its being-ahead-of-itself...). And what is called forth by the summons is Da-sein, out of falling prey to the they (already-being-together-with-the-world-taken-care-of...) (p. 256/277-278).*

Though it is oneself calling, the call is not planned and is strange to one in one's everydayness. It asks one to own up one's guilt, to be true to oneself. It asks one to own up to one's actions. One can choose to fly from them or follow or answer this call. To follow this call and own up to one's actions is to live in authenticity. To choose to flee from the call of conscience is to live inauthentically. No matter what one chooses to do with the call of conscience, one is living up one's existence – either authentically or inauthentically.

Conscience speaks to one of guilt, guilt understood by Heidegger as an ontological reality or phenomenon and not a matter of morality. Guilt is

not a moral fault. It is not caused or brought about by an act of guilt, rather it is because humans are guilty of their existence that they can commit an act of guilt. The basis for guilt lies in the lacking character which is part of the structure of Dasein. Nullity is the designate of this lacking character which essentially belongs to the structure of Dasein. In the words of Patricia Johnson (2000), “The call of conscience does not say we are guilty because we continue eating the snack food, or even because we have harmed another person. Our guilt is our incompleteness. What we are guilty of is a refusal to acknowledge our own finitude” (p. 29). There is a lack in Dasein because though Dasein is being-in-the-world, it is thrown into its “there” to project itself. It did not throw itself into the situation nor the cause of the situation into which it is thrown and yet it is expected to project itself as a being whose being is its possibilities. It is thrown into possibilities to start itself without being given a foundation but considered its own foundation and there, it is expected to project itself. Thrown into many possibilities to project itself, Dasein is expected to choose, that is, to sift from among many possibilities in order to project its possibilities. It is this ‘thrownness’ that reveals the nullity of Dasein, it is the mark of its guilt. As such, Dasein is guilty. Guilt ontologically understood is primordial, it is more primary than guilt in the moral sense. The thrownness of Dasein discloses man as a being

with possibilities. Therefore, Dasein is a guilty being and it is conscience that calls humans back from their concealed guilt, it calls them back to themselves as thrown beings, from their guiltless everydayness to the guilt of authenticity. This is why Heidegger would again explain that “authentic existence is nothing which hovers over entangled everydayness, but is existentially only a modified grasp of everydayness” (1996, p. 167/179). This modification of Dasein’s everydayness is reflected in the acknowledgment of guilt in which Dasein “exists as a being that has to be as it is and can be” (Heidegger 1996, p. 255/276). For Carman (2003) therefore, “...authenticity... just amounts to “owning up” to that essential nullity in an attitude of openness and resolve” (p. 13).

When humans rise up to the occasion and own up to their guilt, Dasein becomes resolute and resoluteness is particularly disclosive of the being of Dasein. Resoluteness (also called decisionism) is simply the response to the call of conscience to own up their guilt. Heidegger offers a further explanation of resolute Dasein in these words: “As authentic being a self, resoluteness does not detach Da-sein from its world, nor does it isolate it as free floating ego... resoluteness brings the self right into its being together with things at hand, actually taking care of them, and pushes it toward concerned being-with with the others” (1996, p. 274/298). Therefore,

resoluteness is a clearing, a *Lichtung* that creates an authentic relationship in one's being-in-common and being-with-things. Meaning that Dasein is resolved in living in a way as to disclose things, others, and itself while at the same time owing up its finitude. Thus in being resolute, Dasein is determined to be true to itself, it is determined to be true to what it means to be authentically human. This is a clearing that enables Dasein the shepherd of being to attain an understanding of the being of entities which have the ability to further enhance the possibilities of Dasein in its thrownness. It is when one's possibilities are clear to them and it is when one resolutely chooses those possibilities that the being of Dasein and its vision of the world gets clearer as beings thrown into it without one's asking. When Dasein finds itself in such a position, its tarrying along becomes authentic and it is in turn better informed on its choices. In its choices, Dasein is to choose itself and it is by choosing itself that it is free. Failure to be resolute in choosing itself drifts Dasein into inauthenticity, in which it follows the dictatorship of the they-world. But humans are actually never free of the common man because, as Heidegger (1996) indicates, Dasein is always "...at the mercy of the dominant interpretedness of the they" and "even resolutions are dependent upon the they and its world" (p. 275/299). It is the they-world that continues to provide each Dasein with the initial

understanding of what choices Dasein has, choices that do not arise only once but keep on presenting themselves so long as Dasein is in-the-world. This is why for Carman (2003), what sets Heidegger aside and distinguishes him is "...his radical rejection of any conception of Dasein as a finished or in principle finishable self, an integrated whole, a complete occurrent entity" (p. 266). Dasein therefore, has to remain resolute in its pursuit of its possibilities. While it is important for Dasein to remain resolute to its possibilities, it is necessary to remember that it is the they that furnishes Dasein with a possibility and offers it the initial material for making the possibility its own. The authentic Dasein then would be one who is resolute to his indebtedness, lives in the presentness of the "now" and is attentive to his responsibilities, standing up to Dasein's ownmost possibility as a temporal being, the possibility of death; it (authenticity) is therefore "...a kind of "forerunning resoluteness" in a concrete situation toward death" (Carman 2003, p. 265). In its resoluteness, authentic Dasein "...lives each moment as an integral component of the overall story it is shaping in its actions" (Guignon 1993, p. 89), responding to the call of conscience in its average everydayness, for Dasein's own everyday understanding of itself always tend towards averageness, superficiality, and obscurity. As Johnson (2000) sums it all: "We can refuse the call of conscience and be inauthentic.

This means that we remain in the “they,” hiding from the reality of our mortality. Or, we can respond to the call of conscience and become authentic” (p. 29).

Heidegger’s notion of authenticity must not be equated with the notion of wholeness by Jaspers. Jaspers argues that human existence can be intelligible to itself as anything like a whole entity, complete and unified. He further indicates that totality and infinity are positive characterizations of life which is in principle vulnerable to division, opposition and destruction. It seems that for Heidegger, Jasper’s attempt to understand human life as “a whole” is fatally obscure. Jaspers’ assertion that we can grasp the problem of human existence with the aid of the prior conception of the notion of unity and totality is obscured because even though philosophical theorizing offers considerable knowledge, that does not imply that one can attain the meaning of the being of what is said in those theories through observation; one cannot attain the meaning of Dasein by just observing Dasein. Unlike the discipline of psychology which seeks to understand human life through the instrument of observation, tests, and theories, Heidegger’s Dasein cannot be understood as such because it is beyond that realm.

For Heidegger, the most fundamental comprehension of man dwells in an immediate and engaged concern in which both the past, the now, and the

future dimensions of man's being are experienced not as a temporal schemata for an objective progression of facts, but in another, more primordial way. That primordially differs from the observation or contemplation of anything like a whole, complete, unified occurrent subject. As Heidegger indicates, though the starting point of his *Being and Time* was with a hermeneutic of everydayness, his main purpose was to gain "...a phenomenal basis for the answering the leading question of the being of the totality of the structural whole of Da-sein" (1996, p. 178/191). To provide an account of the being of Dasein as a whole and without falling prey to traditional and metaphysical conceptions of wholeness that was the lot of Jaspers, Heidegger's methodology was:

... in effect to change the subject in a subtle but profound way by replacing the very idea of human existence understood *as a unified whole* with a concrete internal interpretation of Dasein *owing up wholly* – that is, *wholeheartedly* – to itself in its existence. To own up to oneself in one's existence is to exist authentically. It is Dasein in its authentic aspect, then, that promises to reveal the deep structure of human existence as falling, thrown projection (Carman 2003, p. 276).

This does not in any way suggest that what is primordial is simply what is authentic. As Carman (2003) better puts it, "It is rather that the authentic mode of existence, which is ontically contingent, is authentic precisely in its

ability to uncover or cast light on the primordial structures of being-in-the-world that obtain whether Dasein exists authentically or inauthentically” (p. 276). Therefore, in faithfulness to his methodology, Heidegger does not pay attention to a particular existentiell mode of Dasein’s existence but rather chooses to investigate Dasein from within “...asking what Dasein’s understanding of itself *as a whole* might amount to” (Carman 2003, p. 276). It is when Dasein accepts its fate as a finite being that it understands itself completely, wholly or authentically. A refusal to listen to itself speaking to itself as a being destined for death is for Dasein to want its being considered “...*as fragmentary*” (Heidegger 1996, p. 215/233) and therefore remain in the inauthentic mode of its being.

### **3.6 Authenticity and inauthenticity as owned and disowned existence.**

Heidegger insists that the being of Dasein is existence. In his words, “The “essence” of this being lies in its to be” (1996, p. 39/42). This statement of Heidegger appears simple and straight to the point if existence is understood as presence. But as Heidegger (1996) emphasizes:

When we choose the word existence for the being of this being, this term does not and cannot have the ontological meaning of the traditional expression of *existentia*. Ontologically, *existentia* means *objective presence*, a kind of being which is essentially inappropriate

to characterize the being of which has the character of Da-sein (p. 39/42).

When Heidegger states that the essence of Dasein is its existence, he is not making a statement of facts, but he is about the way in which something must a priori, necessarily, be by virtue of its own essence; it is a statement of a fundamental ontology that is distinct or unique vis-à-vis other ontologies. Thus, if there is what we call a man, then he must exist. This is why the position of Heidegger that the essence of man is his “existence” cannot be construed in its linguistic setting, the word “exist” for him does not mean *real existence* as it is traditionally understood, for if it did, he would not be saying anything about a unique human way of being which has not been said before. To say that “man exists” is to say something essential about man, but the word *exist* connotes the unique way in which man is said to be: he is so that he can comprehend himself in his being. This way of being or existing is, in the perspective of Heidegger the “essence” of Dasein.

There is a difference between the existence of Dasein and that of entities. In fact, Heidegger reserves the terms “exist” and “existence” for man. What will be called here the “real existence” of entities he tags “real being” and the structure of this mode of being is called “reality.” This is one of the peculiarities of Heidegger’s grammar for no such distinctions are

made in our everyday use of English language. Therefore, there are two main ways in which beings can be said “to exist” and “to be real.” The being of an entity such as a tree is not known to itself and as such it does not know whether or not it is. Its being is known only to human beings for only to cognitive beings is such a mode of grasping possible. Such beings that just “are” are passive to their existence. But the being of Dasein is different. To use the language of the Catholic theologian and philosopher St. Augustine of Hippo in his *Contra Academicos (Against the Academics)* and *On Free Choice of the Will*, the human being (Dasein) does not only exist and live but it also knows it is alive. So Dasein actively participates in its being in its average everydayness. As a being with a past, present, but most importantly with a future, its being, in the perspective of Heidegger, “is the issue.” This refers to the fundamental character of the existence of Dasein. The purpose or aim or end of Dasein is to comprehend being, and his own being as a being with a future, a future conceived and defined by himself and not by the ‘they-world.’ But, as Magda King (1964) writes:

Remarkable as the pursuit and achievement of such an aim is, for Heidegger it is even more remarkable how man must be to be capable of conceiving something like an aim at all. For this, he must be able to throw himself forward into a future, to discover as yet completely “nonexistent” things and events and take his direction from them for what should be done “here and now.” Above all, he must be able to

understand himself not only in that I *am*, but in the possibility that I *can be* (e.g. I can be the Mount Everest climber), and thus come toward himself, so to speak, clad possibilities (p. 44).

This is the path that Dasein takes in order to be unique in its existence and stand out in its being in relation to the being of other beings. In effect, Dasein "...must be able to transcend, to go out beyond himself as he already is to the *possibilities* of his being, and it is this unique way of being which Heidegger calls existing" (King 1964, p. 44). Thus it is not that *a person is* that is important but how *they can be*. This is the *mineness* of their existence. Their possibilities are the specificity of the existence of their Dasein and each Dasein.

Possibility as rendered in Heidegger is not synonymous with factual possibility. Heidegger is not talking about contentless, logical notion of possibility whereby they can exercise the power of thought about the possibility of something without any contradiction. For example, in Husserl's phenomenology, one can think about the possibility of a winged horse without any contradiction. On Husserl's terms, the thought is meaningful, the only lack is a corresponding object. This is the fruit of his theory of intentionality.

And one can think of possibility in terms of the metaphysics of Aristotle. In this case, beings that are possible but not yet actual are said to

be in the secondary sense of being while those beings actualized are said to be the beings that one is first aware of, though both are equally real modes of being. Aristotle's doctrine of act and potency in which he articulated the various but equal modes of being is seen as his most significant contribution to metaphysics.

But for Heidegger, "...the ontological presuppositions of historiographical knowledge transcend in principle the idea of rigor of the most exact sciences," (1996, p. 143/153) that is, in the ontological characterization of existence, possible-being ranks before any actuality. Possibility in this last sense is the "energy" or "power" which "enables" or "empowers" or "capacitates." That the "essence" of Dasein is its existence, implies the understanding of possibility in the last sense. Thus, to say that "The "essence" of this being lies in its to be" (Heidegger 1996, p. 39/42) is not to hold that man first of all exists and only later defines himself by what he does through his choices - this would be more Sartrean than Heideggerian - the point in that very important statement of Heidegger seems to be that "...understanding himself in his own ability-to-be enables man to be man in the most essential respect, namely in respect of his self" (King 1964, p. 46). By interpreting existence as "possible-being," (that is, ability-to-be) Heidegger underscores the point that "...existence is that way of being

which is capable of going out beyond what is to what is not, and so disclose not actual things or beings, but the *possibility* of beings, the being of beings in the mode of possibility (King, p. 48). Thus while beings that are not Dasein have no possibility and as such do not nor can care for their being, the being of Dasein is care as possible-being.

Now there are two possibilities of Dasein's existence, what Heidegger calls in German *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit*. Since the root *Eigen* means "own" we can say that the terms *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* simply mean "being one's own self" and "a disowned self." As Vycinas indicates, "self" for Heidegger "... is not thing and not an I-thing, but a way to be, a way to exist. *Dasein* in everyday existence is not a self, but a oneself" (1961, p. 57). Dasein does not exist and only afterwards attains selfhood. Magda King (1964) articulates Heidegger's understanding of self in the following words:

...man is a self in existing, i.e. in understanding that "I *myself* am this man; this being is *mine*." How a man is himself is determined by the way in which he lets his being be his. No man has freely chosen his being; he may not have wished it if he had any say in the matter; nonetheless, he *can* freely take over his being as his own responsibility, he can turn to it face to face, letting it fully disclose itself singly and uniquely his (p. 57).

For Heidegger, one is entirely “one’s *own self*” (1996, p. 252/273) when he carries out his existence this way, reaching out to his highest possibility as a finite being. Reflecting on owned existence, Carman (Wrathal and Malphas, 2000) was of the opinion that this kind of existence “...consists in nothing over and beyond our ongoing resistance to the banalizing, leveling presence that pull us away from any explicit recognition of the “mineness” at the center of our existence” (p. 25). But to disown Dasein’s existence, Magda King observes that one can simply do this: “...turn away from himself, not letting his being fully disclose itself as his own, covering over its finiteness by throwing himself into those “endless” possibilities that come to him from his world” (1964, p. 57). Basically, what Dasein does in this mode existence is to disown “...the possibility of the utmost illumination of which his being is capable and falls into the disguise which characterizes his lostness to the world” (King 1964, p. 57). The result is that Dasein seeks “...to avoid death by concealing it...and it seeks the modern” (Johnson 2000, p. 34).

Whichever way Dasein chooses to take, it is living out its existence; either owing up or disowning its existence.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF AUTHENTIC DASEIN

#### 4.1 The historicity of Dasein

Dasein is a being that is thrown into the world. It is thrown into the world most radically at birth. This exposes Dasein as a temporal being and as such, a historical being. Dasein is disclosed in history. In Heidegger's words: "...it is disclosed to *itself* as being ecstatically *stretched along* in historical temporality, even though it does not know itself as this" (1996, p. 376/409). That Dasein is a historical being means that it has a past. But Dasein is also a being with a future, an end. That future or end is death. Dasein is always already ahead of itself, thinking in its present being, Dasein's ownmost possibility. Though we are thrown into the world, we are always projecting possibilities and are deeply concerned with what lies ahead of us. Raymond Aron and Miriam Conant (1978) were in this line of thinking when they wrote that "Men's minds are divided between two tendencies: some look to the past to understand the present and draw lessons from precedents; others are inclined to pursue changes throughout time and, by their actions, stress ...the new. Of course, a reasonable mind seeks to combine these two tendencies" (p. 239).

And this is surely the way of the authentic Dasein which seeks to integrate the past with the present while looking into the future, drawing its present projection of possibilities from its indebtedness, and never shying from its ownmost possibility of death. Thus the human being, Dasein, is stretched out between two ends – at one end it is birth or beginning and at the other end, it is death. On these two ends, Thomas Langan (1966) makes this reflection:

The rather physical conception of life span as a course between two temporal sign posts (between beginning and end) waiting to be filled up with a quantity of fragmented events might be suitable for a *Vorhandensein*, but not for an existent...Dasein's death is not just a capital moment to be fulfilled someday...it is rather the fact, the awareness of which will, through anguish, keep Dasein in a state of *Sorge*, in other words in a grasp of the structural totality of that thing which I am. Nor is the pole of my existence, my birth, simply a moment over and done with; rather for the caring Dasein it becomes a present, conditioning reality that grasped as fundamental thrownness – that radical contingency which touches as an essential consideration all of my concrete possibilities as Being-toward-death (p. 57).

For Heidegger then, "...both "ends" and their "between" *are* as long as Dasein factually exists, and they *are* in the sole way possible on the basis of the being of Da-sein as *care*" (1996, p. 343/374). Thus as we need to be in the grasp of death in order to comprehend our totality, we must also grasp our radical thrownness. It is not one's biological birth that is to be grasped.

Birth is human's beginning. If death is an isolated event for every person, then the perspective of Heidegger is that birth takes place in a social setting. No one throws himself/herself into the world. Man is thrown into the world by others and always thrown into a community. Thus in man's being "there," they are in the community of other selves. The past is always part of him and is present in him, as a living tradition. Just as the reality of death reveals to humans their unavoidable finitude, so does their radical thrownness reveal the communality of their finitude. Arguing for the communality of Dasein, Heidegger asserts that:

...if fateful Da-sein essentially exists as being-in-the-world in being-with others, its occurrence is an occurrence-with and is determined as *destiny*. With this term, we designate the occurrence of the community, of a people. Destiny is not composed of individual fates, nor can being-with-one-another be conceived of as the mutual occurrence of subjects. These fates are already guided beforehand in being-with-one-another in the same world and resoluteness for definite possibilities (1996, p. 352/384).

Thus, the finitude of Dasein is communal in nature, with one's past and present existence blending together in the projection of their possibilities. Since one's past is blended with the present and is not lost because it is past, tradition – a handing down by way of a repetition of the past in the present – ensures that what was is not lost but handed over and lived in the present. In

this way, the present becomes a continuation of the past made possible by tradition. Tradition or retrieve "...is explicit handing down, that is, going back to the possibilities of the Da-sein that has been there" (Heidegger 1996, p. 352/385). Thus expressed, humans are always members of communities with tradition in which their past is handed over. It is the perspective of Heidegger that as human beings, the possibilities of being that are handed over to them have an enduring repetition. But as Patricia Johnson (2000) explains, "This repetition is not going back to the past and experiencing as those who lived then experienced it, nor is it bringing the past into our present in some unchanged fashion. Repetition is projecting the possibility of the past as a possibility for our own existence" (p. 34). That is to say that, in this repetition, Dasein finds its potentiality all over again, it retrieves its potentiality. Heidegger himself insists that "Retrieve neither abandons itself to the past, nor does it aim at progress" (1996, p. 353/386) and therefore, what repetition does is that it reveals Dasein's history as open and not closed. And it may be added that "...history has its essential weight neither in what is past nor in the today and its "connection" with what is past, but in the authentic of existence that arises from the future of Da-sein" (Heidegger 1996, p. 353/386). That Dasein has a past which is handed over in the present and looks forward to its possibilities means that being is temporal, it

contains an inalienable temporal dimension. Dasein's "factual" coming to presence not only occurs in history, but is itself history.

Heidegger chooses the term "historicity" to describe the intrinsically historical character of human being-in-the-world. In its dealing with the world, Dasein is already philosophical and "thought" itself is already practical. Dasein is not only a being that seeks self understanding and the understanding of other beings, becoming the "shepherd" of being by way of thinking, but also one that chooses and feels all kinds of emotions in its being-in-the-world. Construed this way, the traditional philosophical division of labor between "theoretical" and "practical" is overcome. These two spheres have a very intimate and integral relation in the historicity of being by way of Dasein bringing about the politics of its history.

## **4.2 The politics of history**

The disclosure of being occurs in time and over the course of time. The implication here is that being has a history. Now to say that being can be said to have a "history," it might also be said that it has "politics." There might be politics of being, forms of political life that would aid being's historical "coming to presence." It can be recalled that Heidegger's philosophical attempt was to disclose being which had been forgotten for so

long. It was his view that instead of concentrating on being, philosophers diverted philosophical course to the consideration of beings (*Seiendes*). His philosophical project was to seriously investigate the question of being and illuminate and unconceal being as was never done before. Since this forgetfulness of being occurred in time among various philosophers, it was historical. And so we ask with Richard Wolin (1990): “What is the role to be played by *politics* in the historico-metaphysical process whereby the “forgetting of Being” is overcome? Can politics with any plausibility be said to function as a “midwife” in the process whereby the truth of being is historically recovered?” (p. 12). It is in his account of the historical character of Dasein’s being-in-the-world that Heidegger can be said to have cast the seed of a political philosophy. No wonder the political philosopher Charles Vaughan (1925) succinctly contended that “Political theory goes hand in hand with history” (p. 1), even when that history has metaphysical roots behind it.

Heidegger’s urgent insight on the disaster of the forgetfulness of being informed his drive to aim a polis that would make the world “safe” for the flourishing of being. This drive did not seem to primarily improve human action. Perhaps this is why Leo Strauss is said to have cautioned that “there is no room for political philosophy in Heidegger’s work” (1983, p. 30). It

may be ontologically tenable to say that Heidegger is much more concerned with fundamental ontology than articulating a political philosophy; being is more primordial than political theory. Nevertheless, his political thought is intertwined with his systematic reflections not only on Dasein but also on fundamental ontology, history of being, and much more. It was Heidegger's stance that the being that has access to being is the human being – Dasein – a being that is not primarily the Cartesian *res cogitans*, nor the Husserlian "...bloodless thinking thing which only theoretically thinks the world" (Strathern 2002, p. 79). It is rather a being-in-the-world that engages in practical and social relations which include "understanding," "being-with," "care," and "everydayness." This is the primordially of human existence on Heidegger's terms – for humans, thinking comes from the fact that first and foremost, they exist in the world. Thus human being-in-the-world is primarily characterized, not by consciousness nor cogito, but by self-interpretation or understanding (*Verstehen*). Concurring with this characterization of man's being-in-the-world by Heidegger, Gadamer (1975) writes that:

Understanding is not a resigned ideal of human experience adopted in the old age of the spirit, as with Dilthey; nor is it, as with Husserl, a last methodological ideal of philosophy over against the naivete of unreflecting life; it is, on the contrary, the original form of the

realization of There-being, which is being-in-the-world... understanding is There-being's mode of being, in that it is potentiality-for-being and 'possibility' (p. 230).

Now, this being that is characterized by self-interpretation is historical. And in his understanding of Heidegger, Wolin (1990) contends that:

...historicity signifies the fundamentally historical character of all human Being-in-the-world and life-forms; a nineteenth-century claim to which Heidegger adds an important "existential" twist: not only does Being-in-the-world exist in history, but human existence is itself *historical*. That is, "historicity" is not merely a quality of Being-in-the-world that reveals itself *ex post* to the detached and objective observer...Rather it characterizes the facticity of human Dasein itself, which takes the form of an active mediation of a given past in light of a self-chosen, future-oriented potentiality-for-Being (p. 23).

Dasein is a being that knows the course that it is taking in its thrown possibilities. And because it knows the course it is taking and resolutely wills it, the historical motion is not a passive one but rather an active "letting itself happen," the deliberate carrying of a destiny. It is for this reason that Heidegger calls the motion of Dasein's self-extension a "happening," (*Geschehen*) from which he seems to have derived the word "historical destiny" (*Geschichte*).

The word "history" is often loaded with meanings such as "past" or a collection of events changing in the course of time or what is given to man

in tradition. For example, *Überweg* defines history as "...the unfolding of the essence of spirit" (Myers, 1989, p. iii), the motion of man and his world. For Sylvia Thrupp, the ideal context of history is not one of pure rationality since "Departmental solidarities build themselves around tradition, prestige, rivalry, personalities, and temperament" (Grew & Steneck 1977, p. 294). Hence for Sylvia Thrupp, history can be defined as "...the search for a synthesis of human experience as reflected in the course of events including the propagation of ideas..." (Grew & Steneck 1977, 293). For Heidegger, all history should reveal their rootedness in the historicizing possibilities in the "happening" of man taken as Dasein. Authentic Dasein requires that humans comprehend their being in its innermost possibilities and "possibility" is certainly future-directed and not past-centered. But Heidegger would indicate that, "In the fateful retrieve of possibilities that have-been, Da-sein brings itself back "immediately," that is, temporally and ecstatically, to what has already been before" (1996, p. 357/391). Thus, Dasein's grasp of his possibilities in the present requires the making "now" of the possibilities offered by his past. Dasein must apply himself to the past in order to realize his present possibilities. Dasein's present is therefore never cut-off from his past and always future-looking. So, in the perspective of Thomas Langan (1966), "The Dasein that does not shoulder the burden of his destiny, either

because he ignores the past or because he ignores his responsibility toward the future, becomes the tool of fate and blind arbitrariness, both of which are only aspects of his own inauthenticity” (p. 59).

In the study of Dasein in his freedom, that is, man as a real existent, history is concerned not with facts but with the concrete, the concrete possibilities of Dasein. It is this point on the concrete possibilities of Dasein that is made in this Prologue of the fourth Edition of Fredrick Schuman’s book called *International Politics* (1948):

I have set thee at the world’s center, to observe whatever is in the world. I have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that thou mayest with greater freedom of choice and with more honor, as though the maker and moulder of thyself, fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shall have the powers to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are animal; thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul’s judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms of life...Pico Della Mirandola, *Oratiode hominis dignitate*, 1486 (p. 1).

In choosing these words of the ancients, Schuman reinforces the weight of possibility as that which is unique to the being of Dasein in history. History is not about what everyone accepts as fact. As Heidegger insists: “If historiography, which itself arises from authentic historicity, reveals by retrieve the Da-sein that has-been-there in its possibility, it has also made the “universal” manifest in what is unique” (1996, p. 360/395).

The reason being that insofar as “existence always is only as factually thrown, historiography will disclose the silent power of the possible with greater penetration the more simply and concretely it understands having-been-in-the-world in terms of its possibility, and “just” presents it” (Heidegger 1996, p. 360/394). History has the power to bring to the forefront, possibility as the unique being of Dasein in its being-in-the-world. Schuman (1948) concurs with Heidegger on the power of history in the remark that:

To others, concerned as watchers and movers with the challenge of today and the promise or menace of tomorrow, the tale of many yesterdays, reconstructed by the history and science of living men and women, has another meaning. By revealing what has gone before, it illumines the act of the human adventure now being played and suggests the pattern of acts to come. The drama of earthborn and earthbound humanity, despite all its crisis and intermissions, is a continuous history (p. 1).

Because history is not about happenings, events in the distant past, but an epiphany of the continuity of Dasein’s being-in-the-world, Heidegger (1996) reconstructs the theme of history in the following words:

The question of whether historiography only has its object a series of unique, “individual” events, or whether it also has “laws,” is radically mistaken. Neither what only occurs uniquely nor something universal above this is its theme, but rather the possibility that has been

factually existent. This possibility is not retrieved as such, that is, authentically understood historiographically, if it is distorted into the pallor of a supratemporal pattern. Only factually authentic history, as resolute fate, can disclose the history that has-been-there in such a way that in retrieve the “power” of the possible breaks into factual existence, that is, comes toward it in its futurity (p. 360/395).

Thus, it is for the reason that the one can in the present circumstance comprehend the human significance of what is past in terms of the possibility it holds for his own future projections. In this way, the meaningfulness of the historical event can transcend its place and time. Therefore, such a historical event can become meaningful for others without compromising its facticity. In this way, Heidegger articulates a completely new and astounding notion of a science of history, revealing Dasein as a being that cannot be given a fixed structure, designated solely by terms such as “a rational animal” or “a political animal” but a being that transcends a single category because he is essentially a being-in-the-world that surges and draws itself from its past and can project itself in its thrownness.

Now, in order to project its possibilities in its being-in-the-world, Dasein is necessarily “...associated with a concrete form of social existence in which individuals actively participate” (Lukacs 1991, p. 72) because Dasein is not an isolated being in its being-in-the-world, it is with-others. As such, Dasein is in-the-world as a citizen among other citizens, beings that

consider their future as “an issue.” Hence Aristotle would say that “...man by nature is a political animal” (*Politics* 1253a3-4), politics understood as the art of living together, which by implication, is the art of living. What Heidegger would then consider as “good living” would not be primarily or only that which fosters human activity but also “existential,” that is, that which flourishes the disclosure of being and the being of Dasein. For in its togetherness, Dasein discloses itself to itself. In this way, as Wolin (1990) indicated, politics can with some great deal of reason “...be said to function as a “mid-wife” in the process whereby the truth of Being is historically recovered” (p. 12) in the concrete unfolding of the dynamic movement of time. If, as had been indicated by Charles Vaughan, that political philosophy goes hand in hand with history, then one can concur with Henry Schmandt (1960) that political philosophy “...is more than a mere recital of ideas of social and political thinkers or a survey of ideas concerning public morality...political philosophy must do more than record political theories of the past” (p. 17). Political philosophy must therefore see itself more as “an activity,” a form of inquiry, related “to what is “public” (Sheldon Wolin 1960, p. 1-2) where Dasein lets-itself-be. And it was Heidegger’s view that Dasein’s sense of self for the most part, is from the public. On Heidegger’s conception of the public, Blackham (1952) has this to say:

Heidegger, like Kierkegaard in his account of the public, describes the process by which each one in a necessary conformity to established usages, judgments, and opinions, is assimilated to the general forms of human existence. This is the great alibi, the proof that all the time I was in respectable company, the flight from personal responsibility, the escape into anonymity...Assimilation to this established general form of human existence necessarily means the sacrifice of my own possibilities, the I remains buried in the one (P. 91).

Now, for this I, this self to be authentic, Dasein must accept its guilt, a guilt that is grounded in nullity. This project is constructed in and recognized in the public world. This is why Heidegger's fundamental ontology in *Being and Time* can be seen as containing a rich seed for political philosophy understood as an inquiry, an inquiry that is "...in its own way a real, meaningful, and useful inquiry..." more so when that inquiry and the inquiry of political philosophy "...tries to understand, interpret, and evaluate ...man's ideals and...his conception of the universe in which he lives" (Sait, 1947, p. 13) and invites man to be active in the motion of history.

### **4.3 Being-with as the realm of politics**

Dasein's existence in the world is always a being-with, a communal existing with other Daseins and with things which it often uses as tools. It is

in actively engaging itself in the world of things and other Daseins that it is able to grasp itself and project its possibilities and reveal itself. But Dasein does not reveal itself in isolation. Authentic Dasein is never a solitary one; a true self does not isolate itself from other selves but dwells with them. It is in *koinia*, that is, in communion with other selves and as such opens up its possibility of understanding others in its being-with-in-the-world. A person is not the starting point from which he or she draws belief about others. They exist among things and among others and do not stand out among them. This is very much unlike the Cartesian principle whereby the “I” becomes the starting point and every other thing and even the world can only be drawn from its indubitability. This definitely leads to solipsism whereby every existent and even the world are contingent on the non-contingency and indubitability of the self. Husserl would try to get around this problem by arguing that the world is “there” and all humans have their individual, intentional experiences of it, without changing the world. Husserl terms this “intersubjectivity,” humans constructing an intersubjective world, starting from their individual intentional experience of it and yet not having themselves consume it or make it theirs such that no one else can have access to it.

The Heideggerian perspective and escape from solipsism lies in the uniqueness of his ontology. For him, one's being is not dichotomized into "I" and the world or consciousness and the world which consciousness is conscious of. One's being is essentially a being-with as a being-in-the-world, thus making as his point of departure, the normal social way of existing: one does not stand out among others, one exists "with" others and with things. Only when Dasein comprehends its way of existing in this way and engages "...in dealing with the things of its surroundings, does it reveal itself as caretaker and as being in the world" (Vycinas 1961, p. 40-41). And this world is a world that is always shared with others. In existing in this world, "*Dasein* is always taking care of things, and in this care or at its work it meets other *Daseins* – not as things, but as to-be-together-in-the-world, i.e. as co-*Daseins*" (Vycinas 1961, p. 41). Heidegger would insist that this being-with is not only with other *Daseins* but also with entities existing in and encountered in the same world by Dasein. In describing the being of these beings, Heidegger contends that they are "... neither objectively present nor at hand, but they *are like* the very Da-sein which frees them – *they are there, too, and there with it*" ( Heidegger 1996, p. 111/118). So Dasein is in the same world together with entities and with others and more than that, it does things in the same world together with others. The world of

Dasein is a with-world, a being-in that is essentially a being with- others. We cannot avoid existing with others because it characterizes the being of Dasein as a being-in-the-world. Dasein is “co-Dasein.”

Jaspers (Kaufmann 1989) has this to say on the communality and interdependence of Dasein’s being-with, the being that investigates the question of being:

Man...is not a self-sufficient separate entity, but is constituted by the things he makes his own. In every form of his being man is related to something other than himself: as a being to his world, as consciousness to objects, as spirit to the idea of whatever constitutes totality, as Existenz to Transcendence. Man always becomes man by devoting himself to this other. Only through his absorption in the world of Being, in the immeasurable space of objects, in ideas, in Transcendence, does he become real to himself (p. 168).

To become real, to become authentic therefore, Dasein must be neither alone nor unabsorbed in active coping. This situation arises from the guilt of Dasein and the authentic Dasein is that which accepts its inadequacies, its guilt, understanding that the other has within it the power to reveal to Dasein its true being as a being with inadequacies fully revealed by the reality of his ownmost possibility, the possibility of death. As Jaspers (1989) puts it:

The individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone, I sink into

gloomy isolation – only in community with others can I be revealed in the act of mutual discovery... Isolated or self-isolating Being remains mere potentiality or disappears into nothingness (p. 174).

It is in Dasein's togetherness that results in the discovery of Dasein's mutual dependency and a being that transcends mere potentiality.

It is necessary to stress the point that Dasein does not only refer to what one knows as human existence. As James Ward (1995) describes it:

Dasein is a way of Being of the being in and for which the question of Being becomes possible, a way characterized by temporality...it is the name not of a being but rather of a *site*, a location in or at which beings are at once disclosed and concealed, in or at which Being is thereby exhibited, and which also must be understood as happening, as temporal movement (p. 3).

This being as *kinesis* and site must be taken co-jointly and not separately.

Considered as a siting or happening, Dasein can be collective and historical; thus Heidegger can write of the Dasein of a people or our historical Dasein (cf. Heidegger 1996, p. 355-6/389-390). Dasein is never simply individual but can be said to have or does have collective and historical senses. This is why one can agree with James Ward (1995) that "...these possible senses of Dasein mark its political dimension, and since Dasein is Dasein, the being-open to Being, needed by Being, Being also has a political dimension" (p. 4).

To investigate the question of being is to ask what is being? For Heidegger, the being question is simply to "...seek what makes the thing a thing... what conditions the thing" (Heidegger 1967, p. 8-9) which is a thing not to itself but to the questioner. This questioning to see what makes a thing a thing is historical as any attempt at attaining the meaning of a "thing" is in the long run historical. Viewed in this way, what is often called "natural" is actually "historical." "What is" is very often "what has been." Hence Husserl would call on all to avoid, to rescind from, adopting what he calls "the natural attitude" which is the presupposition that that which is directly given to one in sensation is the "thing." The reason was to break away from the "conditioned present" in order to arrive at that which is not adulterated in any by the biases of tradition. In this way, humans step into the realm of transcendental reflection. It must be conceded that such questioning is political questioning. The ability to come to the grasp that man's "natural" world-view is historical, that in the event that he comprehends an entity as that which has properties, "it is not we who are seeing and speaking but rather an old historical tradition," which informs and draws us to a point of decision (Heidegger 1967, p. 40). These decisions that Dasein makes do not occur in a vacuum but "in the sphere of historical freedom, that is, where a historical Dasein decides its ground, as well as how it decides, what level of

freedom of knowledge it will choose and what it will posit as freedom” (Heidegger 1967, p.42). Heidegger quickly adds that “...these decisions are different at differing periods and among different peoples. They cannot be forced. With the freely chosen level of the actual freedom of knowledge, that is, with the inexorableness of *questioning*, a people always posits for itself the degree of its Dasein” (1967, p. 42). This speaks of Dasein’s active coping in its being-in-the-world and being-with in which it is resolute to its destiny. It is here that Dasein finds itself in the arena of politics. In this regard, Hannah Arendt (1993) writes: “...political thought...described the sphere of human affairs – all that belongs to the living together of men in a common world...and...philosophy and its truth are located not outside the affairs of men and their common world but precisely in them” (p. 17). It is this togetherness, Dasein living and acting together in the same world that constitutes “...the very texture of the political realm” (Arendt 1993, p. 231) where Dasein in its resoluteness projects its possibilities, thus revealing itself as one belonging to the family of man as *animalus politicus*.

#### **4. 4 The politics of Authentic Dasein**

Reflecting on philosophers and political philosophy, Spinoza (1937) has this to say:

Philosophers conceive of the passions which harass us as vices into which men fall by their own fault, and, therefore, generally deride, bewail, or blame them, or execrate them, if they wish to seem unusually pious. And so they think they are doing something wonderful...and...make verbal attacks on that which, in fact, exists (p. 80).

Adding, Spinoza bares his mind on politics in the following words:

...on applying my mind to politics, I have resolved to demonstrate by a certain and undoubted course of argument, or to deduce from the very condition of human nature, not what is new and unheard of, but only such things as agree best with practice...I have labored carefully, not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to transcend human actions; and to this end I have looked upon passions, such as love, hatred, anger, envy, ambition, pity, and the other tribulations of the mind, not in the light of vices of human nature, but as properties, just as pertinent to it, as are heat...and the like to the nature of the atmosphere... (1937, p. 81-82).

One can see in Spinoza's statement a desegregation of being which bears the ontological ring of Heidegger that even what one ordinarily considers as "negative" is not negative in an existential sense; emotions such as hate are not manifestations of negativity or emptiness but reveal the mode of man's being-in-the-world. Dasein is being-in-the-world but transcends the world as a being that understands its being as well as the being of other beings.

Though it is being-in-the-world, Dasein certainly must take a stand on its

being and must be defined by what it does, uses, avoids and expects, wherever it finds itself in the world. In the words of Heidegger (1996), “Da-sein...finds “itself” in *what* it does, needs, expects, has charge of, in the things at hand which it initially *takes care of* in the surrounding world” (p. 112/119). Heidegger makes the same point in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1982) in which he states that Dasein “...finds itself primarily and usually in things because, tending them, distressed by them, it always in some way or other rests in things. Each one of us is what he pursues and cares for. In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we take care” (P. 159). Therefore one is not what one is, but rather, as Heidegger insists, “one is” what one does” (1996, p. 223/239). One is not defined by the mere fact that they are in the world but by what they do as beings-in-this-world, that is, to put in Heidegger’s words “...the “essence” of Da-sein is grounded in its existence” (1996, p. 110/117). In this way, “...the *substance* of human being is not the spirit as the synthesis of body and soul, but *existence*” (Heidegger 1996, p. 110/117). It is the same point that Kierkegaard (1989) makes in his remark that: “The self is not a synthesis of soul and body, inner and outer, experiences and movements; the self is the stand a certain way of

being takes on itself” (p. 146). The true self therefore, is that which takes a stand on its self by what it chooses to do in its being-with in the world.

It is this mode of existence that Spinoza calls a transcendence of human actions. This is Dasein’s own existence – the owning up of one’s guilt – is what Heidegger tags “authenticity.” And it is here that Heidegger makes the final break-through into political philosophy even if his political philosophy is less imperative and not an obvious must like others (cf. Ebenstein 1952, p. viii).

Authenticity is also known by the term “resolve” or “decisiveness.” Heidegger would say that authentic Dasein is “resolute” as against the irresolution that characterizes inauthentic Dasein. The inauthentic Dasein lives in the dictatorship of the world (the “they” world or *Das Man*). The inauthentic stands on the way to authenticity for the simple reason that it is Dasein’s “instinctual” manner of existing. It is for this reason that Heidegger indicates that for the most part, one is not the ‘who’ of Dasein but the “*Das Man*” is its ‘who.’ Authentic Dasein demands, not a cancellation of inauthenticity, but rather a modification of inauthenticity. This is why authenticity is nothing but a modified inauthenticity; authentic being-one’s-self takes the definite form of an existentiell modification of the ‘they’ which is a deficient manner of existence that Heidegger calls “falling.” If

inauthenticity means a living under the dictatorship of everyday human affairs and therefore a flight and escape from personal responsibility, then as Taylor Carman (Wrathal and Malpas, 2000) stresses, "...authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) just amounts to "owning up" to that essential nullity in an attitude of openness and resolve" (p. 1).

Living in the dictatorship of everyday human affairs stems from the very being of Dasein in-the-world. No wonder Heidegger himself acknowledges that "primarily and for the most part" Dasein exists in a deficient manner, "Da-sein is initially and for the most part *together with* the "world" that it takes care of" (Heidegger 1996, p. 164/175). Sheer knowledge of the finitude of man's existence is sufficient to keep Dasein forgetful of its being. The many mechanism's of Dasein's forgetting-of-itself Heidegger designates with terms such as "being-distant," "averageness," "publicness," "leveling down," and "accommodation." The end result of Dasein's forgetfulness is that one is delivered more completely into the hands of the ubiquitous dictatorship of everyday human affairs. Hence Dasein becomes "...lost in the publicness of the they" (Heidegger 1996, p. 164/175); his being melts away into the being of others and gains "the solidity and assurance of ...massive existence" (Blackham 1952, p. 91). It is these ways of Dasein's being that Heidegger calls inauthenticity, a term that

also designates a rejection to make one's being his own and it is a very common mode of existence because, as Blackham observes, "to resist and break with this mode of existence in order to realize other possibilities would create a crisis in my personal life" (1952, p. 91.).

Heidegger's emphases that the most common mode of Dasein's existence in the togetherness of Dasein is the inauthentic mode might seem to suggest that he is very critical of political life. Richard Wolin (1990) states the case better in these words:

...in its more extreme formulations concerning "publicness," "leveling," etc., the argument of the existential analytic tends toward a total repudiation of the public world and its project. The "fallen" nature of those life-forms that characterize "publicness" – our Being-with or *Mitsein* – seems permanent and irreplaceable. And in this respect, Heidegger's analysis appears to dovetail fully with anti-democratic abhorrence of "publicity" (*Offentlichkeit* – a term that itself becomes a type of deprecatory shorthand for the totality of modern political forms) that proved such a common theme in the discourse of the conservative revolutionaries (p. 36).

To break into the authentic mode of human existence therefore, Dasein must, as a matter of necessity, overcome (and not smash) the common man; Dasein must realize that though there is a very strong propensity to take refuge from one's original situation, the human plight, in the comfort and assurance of this anonymous and approved way of existing,

Dasein has to project itself; Dasein has to make itself different rather than being 'one like many' and this it can do by modifying its inauthenticity. To do otherwise is, as Jean Paul Sartre contends, to refuse to choose and therefore to live in *bad faith* (*mauvais foi*). This is Dasein's possibility, the possibility to be itself rather than anonymity, the possibility that is "stopped" by the *Das Man* but reachable by choice. Heidegger (1996) constructs this point in these words:

The They even conceals the way it has silently disburden-ed Da-sein of the explicit *choice* of these possibilities. It remains indefinite who is "really" choosing. So Da-sein is taken along by the one, without choice, and thus gets caught up in inauthenticity. This process can be reversed only in such a way that Da-sein explicitly brings itself back to itself from its lostness in the they... When Da-sein thus brings itself back from the they, the they-self is modified in an existentiell manner so that it becomes *authentic* being-one's-self (P. 248/268).

Because choice is such an important part of this whole enterprise to reach authenticity, Heidegger is quick to add that:

This must be accomplished by *making up for not choosing*. But making up for not choosing signifies *choosing to make this choice* - deciding for a potentiality-of-being, and making this decision from one's own self. In choosing to make this choice, Da-sein *makes possible*, first and foremost, its authentic potentiality-of-being (1996, p. 248/268).

It is in Dasein's commitment to choice that it overcomes the they-world, the *Das Man*. Jaspers (Kaufmann, 1989) would comment that when Dasein surges up in choice and chooses the authentic self as its mode of being, it becomes decisive, it "... is guided by something unconditional which can only spring from the *decision*" (p. 177). Jaspers continues that, "...decision makes *Existenz* real, forms life and changes it in inner action, which, through clarification, keeps us soaring upward" (ibid). Viewed against this background, one can concur with Wolin that "with this "choice" of an authentic Self, we are on the threshold of Heideggerianism as a *decisionism*" (1990, p. 37), that resoluteness that must characterize the being of the human being if it is to realize its potentiality-of-being in its being-in-the-world.

This kind of stance may seem like a celebration of subjectivity together with the faculty and powers of human will evident in Western philosophy since Descartes and so a deviation from the notion of subjectivity as viewed by Heidegger. Heidegger's choice of language and repeated use of term's such as "mineness" "selfhood" rather than the old designation of subject is meant to signal his stance that what is uppermost in his ontology is that Dasein as a being that has access to being is essentially in-the-world; "...it is *itself* not a predicate, but the absolute "subject" (Heidegger 1996, p.

293/318). So this self-affirming subject inherent in the notion of decisionism or resolute Dasein is in no way an abandonment of the rich philosophical tradition of Heidegger's *Being and Time* but its very soul, the self is in-the-world. Heidegger himself asserts: "...if the self belongs to the essential qualities of Da-sein whose "essence," however, lies in *existence*, then I-hood and selfhood must be conceived existentially" (1996, p. 293/318).

Politically constructed then, resoluteness or decisionism is the acceptance that the authority of Dasein is the basis for legitimacy and not truth. This concept of resoluteness did not start with Heidegger. Its root can be traced back to the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes had argued in his *Leviathan* that what legitimizes is power not truth. In his words, "There could be no legitimacy...without power (1950, p. 12).

Heidegger seems to have built on this understanding of legitimacy in his construction of the being of Dasein as that open to possibilities. A lack of such understanding leads to the forgetfulness of Dasein's potentiality-of-being in its being-in-the-world. The authority of Dasein is about the understanding of its possibilities, its potentiality-of-being and not truth. No wonder Heidegger chose to understand truth as unconcealment and in this way, avoid traditional meanings such as "correctness" very often associated with it! In the words of Jaspers (Kaufmann, 1989), truth "...is more than a

possession of the intellect” (p. 176). Dasein’s *Lichtung* discloses its being to itself as that which has unrestricted openness to being. This openness is what propels and invigorates Dasein’s activity and/or human life in such a way that it owns up its existence, its guilt, even as it projects its possibilities. As Hannah Arendt (1998) puts it, “Human life in so far as it is actively engaged in doing something, is always rooted in a world of men and of man-made things which it never leaves or altogether transcends” (p. 22). Thus, in his being-in-the-world, “...action alone is the exclusive prerogative of man; neither a beast nor a god is capable of it, and only action is entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others” (Arendt 1998, p. 22-23). One can agree with Hannah Arendt that it is this special relationship between action and being together that justifies Aristotle’s statement that man is by nature political, that is, a social animal (Arendt 1998, p. 23). It is in action that lies the being of Dasein as that which is open to possibilities, open to being. Without action demonstrated in Dasein’s response to the call of conscience to own up its guilt and take a stand on its self, the being of Dasein will be closed. It is the same stand that is taken when Dasein chooses to engage in politics as an art of good living in its being-with when it allows itself to be led by another. This shall be returned to in the next chapter. But for now, it suffices to say that it is for this kind of explication that resolute

Dasein can be said to be the political stance of *Being and Time*. As Robert Audi indicates in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, "...a political doctrine must be grounded in the nature of reality" (1999, p. 721) and this is no less true of Dasein conceived as being-in-the-world and a being-with-others. Thus, Heidegger's authentic Dasein or decisionism can be said to be the political guise of his regional ontology. By regional ontology, we mean the study of the meaning of being by first probing a particular being, Dasein, the investigator of being.

Leo Strauss would remark in his essay on *Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy* that in the annals of history, existentialism and decisionism have existed in a symbiotic relation. He makes this affirmation: "Existentialism appears in a great variety of guises but one will not be far wide off the mark if one defines it...as the view according to which all principles of understanding and of action are *historical*" (Strauss 1983, p. 30). By this, he means that their ground is no-thing but the resoluteness of man in the dynamic of history. In this way, all positings of beliefs, of values, can proceed only from the un-induced and free activity of human will. This is how existentialism breaks away from tradition reached only in what Heidegger calls Dasein's everydayness. If there is nothing like "truth" or "ground" or to put it in Nietzsche's way "if God is dead" then

meaninglessness is replaced by the resoluteness of Dasein or decisionism where the indecisiveness of the 'they' is modified with the decisiveness of the one. Here is the arena of "*a radical assertion of will*; a will, moreover, that is pure and unconstrained by the impediments of social convention" (Wolin 1990, p. 39). The individual will must be asserted in Dasein's authentic mode of existence. Reiner Schurmann (1987) would trace the stress on the will in authentic Dasein this way: "The will is rooted phenomenally in care and therefore in Da-sein's existential openness. The voluntary and the involuntary, then, are opposable as the authentic is to the inauthentic." (p. 245). Schurmann (1987) continues that:

In this view the phenomenon of the will is linked to the existential determination called resoluteness or resolve. When being-there is authentically resolved it wills something: its own (*eigen*) possibilities. Its *Eigentlichkeit*, authenticity, consists in making these resolutely its own. In that way, the will is not a faculty but a phenomenon concomitant with the modifications through which I attain my ownmost, most originary truth (p. 245).

Thus, authentic Dasein must will, and "will radically." For Nietzsche (1968), such a one who abandons the radical assertion of his will "...is a type in regard to morality, but not a type in himself" (p. 205) hence his remark that "I assess a man by the quantum of his power and abundance of his will: not by its enfeeblement and extinction; I regard a philosophy which teaches

denial of the will as a teaching of defamation and slander...” (Nietzsche 1968, p. 206).

It is with such a view of the will that Nietzsche brings to the forefront an important aspect of the philosophy of Heidegger as one of human conduct: the resoluteness of Dasein in its everydayness is only what makes possible its unique mode of being as a being with a potentiality-of-being. Heidegger and Spengler saw modern technology as the epitome of the “radicalized will,” though Heidegger was somehow critical of some aspects of Spengler’s understanding of Nietzsche. As Zimmerman (1990) puts it, “...both writers claimed that modern technology could be explained not in terms of material causation, but instead only in terms of factors which transcended the ken of natural science. For Spengler even instinctual behavior was finally shaped by a non-biological metaphysical force: will” (p. 27). Disagreeing with Spengler, Heidegger was of the view that:

Spengler’s conception of history was essentially biologicistic, the result of a superficial interpretation of Nietzsche’s doctrines. Spengler’s attempt to discover the “morphological types” of history indicated that he was gripped by a quasi-scientific, and thus misguided, view of history. As a result, Spengler understands ‘decline’ in the sense of mere going-to-the-end, i.e., as biologically represented perishing. Animals ‘go under,’ they perish. History goes under, insofar as it goes back into the hiddenness of the beginning – i.e., though in the sense of perishing, [history] does not go under, because it *can never thus* ‘decline’ (Zimmerman 1990, p. 27).

It is in view of this understanding that Heidegger made the submission that:

...the west could not “decline” because history was not constituted by human *existence*, not by animal life. The decline of the west was not an aspect of the biological repetition of cultural formations, but instead a dimension of the creative cycle of repetition which involves a movement back toward the primal “source” of history and a going-forth into a new historical beginning (Zimmerman 1990, p. 27).

Heidegger’s criticism of Spengler did not stop him from celebrating in his philosophy, Spengler’s view of the industrialized West. As Zimmerman (1990) notes, “Spengler conceived of that phenomenon as Faustian geist, the modern manifestation of the will to power. The drive for power originated when Western man conceived the “monstrous thought” of yoking the very forces of nature” (p. 27). Thinking that he has conquered nature, nature seems to have more dominion over him. Man has become dependent on and has been mastered by what he has made. The result is that man has fallen away from his being. This is a stretch of Heidegger’s rendering of man’s assertion of his self in his being-in-the-world. However, the point here is a recall to the understanding that in modernity, Heidegger saw a radicalization of the will of Dasein to which it is called. For Heidegger, Dasein’s foremost task is to answer this call metaphysically. In this way, it

will unlock the doors to the uncovering of the meaning of being as well as its own being.

Understanding itself as such, Dasein is decisive on its own accord, knowing that failure to do so would be a mark of inauthenticity. Thus understood, what is more important is that the decision is made and not how it is made. With this melt down of tradition and the radicalization of the individual will in authentic Dasein, or as Wolin will choose to call it, *sovereign decision*, the result is the shattering of routine. In the thinking of Wolin (1990):

The cardinal virtue of the sovereign decision, therefore, is that it *explodes* the routinization to which life is subject under the conditions of the bourgeois normalcy or Heideggerian “everydayness.” Or as Schmitt tells us in a statement that might be taken as a clarion call of vitalism in all its manifestations: “The exception is *more interesting than the rule*...in the exception *the power of the real life* breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid repetition (p. 40).

It was the same emphasis on the radicalization of the will in authentic Dasein that the renowned political philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, made in his argument that in a democratic setting, it is not those in elected offices that rule, but the individual will. Once voted into office by the exercise of that will at the polls, representatives of the people should realize

that they are there at the instance of the people and not themselves. Hence sovereignty is in the hands of the people, the electorate and not in the elected. Representative government, in the language of Heidegger, is a demonstration of Dasein's potentiality-of-being.

### **i) Conscience and Heidegger's Social world**

For Heidegger, it is the call of conscience that draws Dasein from its inauthentic mode to authentic decision, thereby transiting from the anonymous one to the self asserting I. In order for Dasein to realize its potentiality-of-being, it must decide, but this decision must be from himself and not from the 'they.' It is conscience that calls Dasein to own up to its being by making the decision to be socialized, the decision no longer to exist in the undifferentiated, 'they mode.' "Conscience calls the self of Da-sein forth from its lostness in the they" (Heidegger 1996, p. 253/274). Now, the self to which the summon is made remains indifferent and does not know its 'what.' The one calling, too, is neither very clear or definite nor is the call put in words. Heidegger (1996) describes the call and the caller in these words:

Not only is the call meant for him who is summoned "without regard to his person," the caller too remains in a striking

indefiniteness. It not only fails to answer questions about name, status, origin, and repute, but also leaves not the slightest possibility of making the familiar for an understanding of Da-sein with a “worldly” orientation. On the other hand, it by no means disguises itself in the call. The caller of the call ...absolutely distances any kind of becoming familiar (1996, p. 253/274).

And because the caller distances himself from the wordless call and the call itself is unclear and is disguised, the result of this is the obscurity of the direction and the constitution of the caller and also summons. There is no definiteness neither in the direction one is called nor in the constitution of the caller and the called. This ‘ambiguity’ is a mark of inauthenticity by Heidegger’s standards and so points to the lack of resolve. Strangely enough, it is this indefiniteness that Heidegger offers praise again and again. It is strange because in his analysis of inauthenticity, Heidegger had pointed out that indefiniteness characterizes Dasein in the inauthentic mode. Further strange is the characterization of “silence” as a mode of communication.

There appear to be no obvious reasons for Heidegger not wanting to use unambiguous and direct terms to characterize the call of conscience. For Heidegger, using terms that are not ambiguous and are direct to characterize the call of conscience might result in a confusion. Wolin (1990) captures the main reason for this stance better in the following words:

His main reason for refusing to characterize the call in direct and unambiguous terms is his fear of associating it with the degraded Dasein of the They – an association that would merely precipitate a relapse into inauthenticity. So much depends on the call that, at all costs – even that of excessive abstraction – it must not be construed with the platitudinous nostrums of the They-self (p. 42).

Furthermore, the “silence” of this call is not the voice of God either, since Heidegger is not presenting an onto-theology. An argument for onto-theology would give Dasein the reason not to be itself in choice and therefore acting, to use Jean-Paul Sartre’s terminology again, in *self deception or bad faith (mauvais fois)*. But it was the position of Heidegger that Dasein’s being-in-the-world is being-with-others in which language constitutes Dasein’s authentic togetherness-with-others. If this is the case, then one must explain the postulation that the “silence” of conscience is a mode of communication. Simply explained, it has been Heidegger’s approach to avoid the traditional terms which have been so polluted by their everyday use and by previous philosophers. The whole arena of man’s expression of himself in language has, as a matter of fact, been completely usurped and distorted by the ‘they’ that the way out for authentic Dasein is the penetrating power of silence, what Heidegger calls “reticence.” Put in Heidegger’s words:

The call does not report any facts; it calls without uttering anything. The call speaks in the uncanny mode of *silence*. And it does this only because in calling the one summoned, it does not call him into the public idle chatter of the They, but *calls him back* from that *to the reticence of his existent potentiality-of-being* (1996, p. 255-256/277).

By speaking out for silence, one would perceive Heidegger's social world of Dasein's engagements as that of a radical dichotomy. It may appear dichotomized because on one side, there is the "everydayness," which is to be characterized by inauthentic modes of Dasein's existence such as "ambiguity," "publicness," "idle talk" (or a discourse of concealment), "busy-ness," "falling-prey," and the fascination of the moderns with what is new, (and Heidegger had himself said that foremost and for the post part, Dasein exists in the inauthentic mode.) And then on the other side, Dasein in its authentic mode shuns the "publicness" of the *Das Man* to the point where Heidegger prefers reticence to speaking or using the adulterated linguistic expressions of they-selves. The implication here is that the realm or sphere of authentic Dasein is above and apart from the social world and inauthenticity is its diluted form which, for the most part, Dasein exists in its average everydayness.

Viewing Dasein objectively as presented by Heidegger, one notices some amount of value-judgments concerning the nature of human sociability, the hopes of togetherness of humans and if at all there can be any

human self determination. But in order to focus on the political, it appears that on the basis of the analysis Heidegger offers us, many men and women could be deemed incapable of meaningful self-determination. The reason is that, as Heidegger has already indicated, Dasein foremost and for the most part is inauthentic, dissolved in the being of others where every other is like the next. To draw a political conclusion from this fundamental ontology exposed by Heidegger, one can hold that the perhaps the only political philosophy that agrees with the material is elitist, thereby concurring with Wolin (1990) that "...since the majority of citizens remain incapable of leading meaningful lives when left on their own devices, their only hope for "redemption" lies in the imposition of a "higher spiritual mission from above" (p. 46). In this way, Heidegger might seem to have taken the bent of Plato who argued in his political philosophy (*The Republic*) that in a situation where people have proven to be unable to lead themselves because of consistently allowing the lower part of themselves (that is, the appetitive soul) to dictate what they do, the guardians (ruled by the rational soul) are in their service when they undertake leadership of the society. It was Heidegger himself who said that "...resoluteness brings the self right into its being together ...Resolute Da-sein can become the conscience of others" (Heidegger 1996, p. 274/298). The political conclusion that agrees with the

ontological dualism of authenticity and inauthenticity is that human beings would not oppose being ruled by others. Thus, that a human being can be led by another is not in contradiction with, but affirms Heidegger's stance that the structure of Dasein's being is not fixed, Dasein has the potentiality-of-being and such is demonstrated when it allows itself to be led by another in its "co-Daseining." For resolute Dasein which wills to be and assert itself, to now to allow itself to be led by another is indeed, to use Nietzsche's terminology, to *will radically*.

The guilt of man or the nullity that permeates the whole being of Dasein relays the fact human existence is not entirely under human control even though we may wish that it were so. There is lack in human nature and as such no single Dasein in our togetherness can provide all that is needed for a fulfilling human existence. This draws from Heidegger's contention that in Dasein's being-in-the-world, it uses things and is with things and other Daseins. Humans are always in existence with others and with things because they are guilty, a guilt grounded in their nullity (their insufficiency). It is because of the same insufficiency of man that Plato conceived to be the root of politics and society – we come together so that all our needs can be met. Since Dasein's being-in-the-world is essentially a being-with, one cannot but contend that in Heidegger's notion of authenticity which is a

resolute or decisive return to Dasein's guilt, there is ample basis for drawing a political conclusion from the ontological premise of *Being and Time*.

## **ii) A Political categorization of authentic Dasein**

The mark of authentic Dasein is action and this action, to put in Nietzsche's words is to *will radically*. It is this action and the consequent relationship it has with Dasein's togetherness that makes Dasein a "political animal" and raises Dasein to a unique existent in its being-in-the-world. This self-understanding of Dasein results in a total rejection of radical solitude. Thiele (1995) puts this perspective of Heidegger better when he states that:

Heidegger, therefore, firmly rejects the position that authenticity entails denying or ignoring the collective, public constitution of our being. It is precisely *inauthenticity* that begets the delusion of individual sovereignty and autonomy when all the while one remains swept along by the zeitgeist and actuated by social and cultural conventions. Thus Heidegger observes that heroic denial of or attempted escape from social life, far from being an authentic act, is generally indicative of a deprivation. Actual participation in one's social environment, an ontic involvement, is correctly understood as compliant with rather than antagonistic to ontologically social structure of human being (p. 56).

The question now becomes how to give a political characterization of this resoluteness or decisionism. What form does the radicalization of the will in

authentic Dasein take in Dasein's participation in its social life or politics in which there is an *Existentielle* transformation of life conduct devoid of the seemingly "joyless" social ontology of the 'they'?

For Reiner Schurmann, who suggests that we read Heidegger backwards by reading his later writings first, Heidegger's comprehension of being is basically "polyvalent," which in human thought must be construed as an ever-enduring happening, an "ever-new" event; it is groundless. Construed in this way, the ethical posture of Heidegger is very much unlike that of Aristotle who argues that there is the final end of human action, that which is sought for itself and not for the sake of anything else. Hence Aristotle is generally perceived as having proposed and endorsed the ethics of teleology, the teleological model of human activity. In the thinking of Schurmann, Heidegger de-emphasizes this model by not seeing any final end or goal or purpose of human action. It was against this background, that Thiele (1995) stated that:

...action (and by implication, politics) can have no final goal or purpose: the Heidegger *Holzwege* are "paths that lead nowhere." The central notion of Heideggerianism as a political philosophy would thus be *anarchy*. Here, the etymological basis for the word – an-arche, without first principle – assumes decisive significance. As a theory of anarchy, Heideggerian politics "withdraw legitimating ground from all central authority." The preconditions of human freedom would be established by this new emancipation from all "static ideals" (p. 53).

In seeking to give anarchic politics a more positive outlook, Schurmann was of the position that it affords us the understanding that, “Power has no intrinsic purpose, that playfully reaching ever new social constellations is an end in itself; that its essence is boundless interplay without a direction imposed by central authority” (1987, p. 53). Reiner Schurmann was not alone in this anarchist reading of Heidegger. Richard Schmitt (1969) is said to have remarked that Heidegger’s insistence on the resolute self would actually “...incline him toward an anarchism like that of Henry David Thoreau, who proclaims, ‘That government is best which governs least’” (p. 250). It must be admitted that, for Heidegger, the resolute Dasein must be its own self. In his own words, “Resoluteness constitutes loyalty of existence to its own self” (1996, p. 357/391). And also the refusal of authentic Dasein to go along with the ‘they’ might perhaps be some of the reasons why the likes of Schurmann would see an anarchist implication in Heidegger! However, Heidegger makes a point of great significance that authentic Dasein “...understands history as the “recurrence” of what is possible and knows that a possibility occurs only when existence is open to it fatefully, in the Moment, in resolute retrieve” (1996, p. 358/391-392), that is to say, that resolute Dasein owns up its past and does not shy away from it. Because

Dasein's being-in-the-world is basically a being-with-others, this past determines not only the destiny of the individual but that of the people.

Heidegger expresses this point in the following lines:

...if fateful Da-sein essentially exists as being-in-the-world in being-with-others, its occurrence is an occurrence-with and is determined as *destiny*. With this term, we designate the occurrence of the community, of the people...The destiny of Da-sein in and with its "generation" constitutes the complete, authentic occurrence of Da-sein (1996, p. 352/384).

Thus, with the notion of destiny, all efforts to draw anarchism or radical individualist reading from Heidegger's philosophy are cancelled out.

Concurring, Karsten Harries writes that "Heidegger's understanding of destiny rules out all attempts to draw anarchistic consequences of *Being and Time*" (Murray 1978, p. 312), when he judges that authenticity makes the demand on the individual to work for the realization of the common destiny. This is because Dasein is essentially a being-with (*Mitsein*). And as such authentic Dasein would really subordinate to common destiny. In this vein, Heidegger writes that "Resolute Da-sein can become the "conscience" of others. It is from the authentic being a self of resoluteness that authentic being-with-one-another first arises, not from ambiguous and jealous stipulations and talkative fraternizing in the they and in what they wants to

undertake” (1996, p. 274/298). It is therefore with the categories of *destiny* and *Mitsein* that Heidegger, in a very decisive way, dislodges those who make the “radical individualist” reading of *Being and Time*. In its place, these categories usher in what Wolin calls an “*organicist*” perspective on the social ontology of *Being and Time*, a perspective which “suggests that an understanding of Da-sein as an “existential totality” must precede the attempt to analyze the latter in its component parts” (Wolin 1990, p. 56-57). In other words, one has to buy into the principle of totality whereby the being of Dasein is not dichotomized but construed as a unity. For Dasein does not exist in any of its modes of existence separately. Inauthenticity is found even in the existence of the most authentic Dasein. It is for this reason that existential totality of Dasein must always precede all efforts directed at its analyses and so seen as a unity. It is this same unity that is expressed when Dasein refuses to negate its past, allowing it to inform its present. To listen to the voice of the past does not in any way mean that Dasein is not autonomous in its present. To offer some material to the idea of autonomy, Heidegger listens to history. As Karsten Harries writes: “...to understand what his own essence commands, the individual has to understand also the origin of that essence and the destiny which ties him to others, to his people” (Murray 1978, p. 313). Our common destiny is to realize our potentiality-of-

being “the sake of which any Da-sein is as” (Heidegger 1996, p. 179/191) a historical being. This potentiality-of-being is realizable only through the exercise of our human freedom (to associate, to question, etc). It is because of this destiny that men and women band together as free men and women. The result of this is the deliberate and un-coerced association of free men and women in a polis in which they actively participate in the process in which they determine how, who, and what rules them in their togetherness. No wonder democracy has been defined by some as a necessary evil in which government is ‘of the people, by the people, for the people’!

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A VISION OF HEIDEGGER'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

#### 5.1 Heidegger's Political heritage

In his essay on *Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy*, Leo Strauss (1983) cautions against reducing the whole of political philosophy to politics. A look back to our distant past reveals that political philosophy has usually had a much wider scope than politics. Leo Strauss puts this perspective better in these words:

Whoever is concerned with political philosophy must face the fact in the last two generations political philosophy has lost its credibility in proportion as politics itself has become more philosophic than ever in a sense. Almost throughout its whole history political philosophy was universal while politics particular. Political Philosophy was concerned with the best or just order of society which is by nature best or just everywhere or always, while politics is concerned with the being and well-being of this or that particular society (p. 29).

This general or wider scope of political philosophy makes a very strong case against the argument that there is no room for political philosophy in Heidegger's fundamental ontology. In fact, many see Heidegger's metaphysics as an interpretation of his milieu, a milieu from which he believed the 'gods have fled.' It was his project to articulate a human existence that would recall man to his own being in his everydayness.

Though the exposition is phenomenological, it could also be construed as a statement on human existence.

First and foremost, man lives in the world as a socially defined person, what Heidegger calls the *Das Man*. Human beings are always in a situation, they are in social and cultural involvements, beyond total comprehension. Heidegger himself acknowledges that Dasein is never a solitary being, it is always a being-with other Daseins. Charles Guignon (1983) concurs with Heidegger on this point in his assessment that “Far from being an autonomous and isolated subject, the self is pictured as the ‘Anyone’ (*das man*), a ‘crossing point’ of cultural systems unfolding through history. To be human, in Heidegger’s view, is to be a place-holder in a network of internal relations, constituted by a public language, of the communal world into which Dasein is thrown” (p. 86). In the language of Heidegger (1996):

Statements communicate beings in the how of their discoveredness. Da-sein, perceiving the communication, brings itself to a discovering being toward the beings discussed. The statements made are made about something, and in what they are about they contain the discoveredness of beings. This discoveredness is preserved in what is expressed (p. 205/224).

But expression is always an expression-to and so presupposes communality. Therefore, man is essentially a communal being, a social entity, a being-with with a common destiny. One notices here the influence of Plato and Aristotle, and indeed the early Greek philosophers, as well as the Hegelian analysis of Spirit and Marx's understanding of man in terms of the activity, not of thought, but of labor, on Heidegger's communal understanding of the being of the human being. A variation of the communal nature of man is seen also in the works of prominent political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* and John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*. In them, the analysis of man always locates him in a context, in a situation, and therefore he is always in a political situation (at least implicitly), even if such investigation is purely metaphysical. It is no surprise that Heidegger would say that Dasein is thrown into a historical moment and into a situation, a situation that is neither his choice nor his own creation! This is why even in the authentic mode of Dasein's existence, his thrown nature cannot be altogether avoided. Rather, he acts from it in order to realize his potentiality-of-being. Hence authenticity is conceived, not as a negation of, but as a modified inauthenticity. In Zimmerman's articulation of Heidegger's communal Dasein:

...people willingly conform to social norms, partly because of anxiety, partly because they gain self self-definition only in relationship to a social whole into which they have been “thrown” at birth. Self-conscious deliberation about “choices” is relatively unimportant when compared with the choices that have already been made for us. We find ourselves “pressing ahead” into the possibilities that are laid open for us at beginning. Our possibilities are largely circumscribed by family, gender, community, socio-economic class, race, and culture...(1990, p. 22).

We are “thrown into a world” (Heidegger 1996, p. 179/192), thrown into togetherness so radically that what is called Dasein’s authentic existence “...is nothing which hovers over entangled everydayness, but is existentially only a modified grasp of everydayness” (Heidegger 1996, p. 167/179).

It was Heidegger’s view that in its everydayness, Dasein lives in the *undifferentiated mode*, the ubiquitous dictatorship of the everyday world, in which there is that constant longing for the new, the modern. This ontological statement was construed as very evaluative of the society of the day which was estranged from itself. It was against this background that Zimmerman observed that “While Heidegger claimed to reveal something essential about human existence in his account of everydayness, in fact many of his ‘descriptions’ were critical evaluations of everyday life in the industrialized-urban society” (1990, p. 22). Thus, he sees Heidegger’s assertion, that, in man’s daily life “*Everydayness is not the same as primitiveness*. Rather, everydayness is also and precisely a kind of being of

Da-sein, even when Da-sein moves in a highly developed and differentiated culture” (Heidegger 1996, p. 47/50-51), as a concession in this regard. For Coletti, Heidegger’s exposition of Dasein’s average everydayness was not just pure ontology but was greatly informed by his experience of industrialized Germany. As Coletti (1979) puts it, *Being and Time* is

...a work upon which are indelibly stamped signs of the crisis of the German society of the period...The “enterprise” takes on an independent life, as if it belonged to no one – the object becomes the subject, and the subject becomes the object of its object. The uncontrolled forces of society exacerbate to the extreme the nature of those forces extensively analyzed by Marx, which operate “behind men’s backs” with the peremptory necessity of natural events (p. 172-173).

Stephen Bronner was even more specific. For him, Heidegger saw the reality of ‘publicness’ (a word very often used to refer to “civil society”) as a dominant mode of inauthenticity. ‘Publicness’ refers to the world of business or the world of commerce. Bronner was of the persuasion that Heidegger was not very forceful in bringing out this hidden meaning and in this way was able to conceal his fundamental ontology as a statement on the fallen, industrial, capitalist Germany (cf. 1987, p. 169). The result was that

Big-city Germans were distracted by curiosity about new places, faces, and products...Curiosity-stricken German *Dasein* is

everywhere and nowhere. This mode of being-in-the-world reveals a new kind of being of everyday Dasein – a kind in which *Dasein* is constantly uprooting itself (Zimmerman 1990, p. 23).

In this mode of being, Dasein is “...*never dwelling anywhere*” (Heidegger 1996, p. 161/173). Now, whether those readings or interpretations of Heidegger have any justification or not, such readings of Heidegger further underscores the point that Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein provokes a lot of thought not only in philosophical discourse but also in theology, ethics, psychoanalysis and even more. With this kind of fundamental ontology, it is no surprise that even Leo Strauss, who had said that “There is no room for political philosophy in Heidegger’s work” (1983, p. 30), soon qualified his statement saying: “...this does not mean that Heidegger is wholly alien to politics” (1983, p. 30). Heidegger’s analysis of human existence by way of Dasein is so thought provoking that a *reductionist* reading of his *magnus opus* is certain to generate controversy.

Hans-Christian Lucas (Rockmore & Margolis, 1992) reflects on *Being and Time* in the following words:

Even though there are some facts that might argue for political indifference in *Being and Time* (this, in itself, dangerous enough), still, Winfried Franzen must be taken quite seriously when he says that there is in the diction, at least, and in parts of the vocabulary and in the whole atmosphere created by the language of the writing, a

striking continuity...between *Being and Time* on the one hand and the rectoral address of February 1934, as well as the shorter political appeals, on the other... (p. 239).

For Lukacs, this is what “Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jacques Derrida intend...” (1991, p. 238), that a necessary connection be seen between Heidegger’s rectoral address and *Being and Time*. In his rectoral address, titled “*The Self-Determination of the German University*” Heidegger stated his case that:

It is only when we carry within ourselves that profound and far-reaching thoughtfulness that gave ancient Greeks wisdom that we fully understand the splendor and greatness of the setting out of the decision by which the German people wills itself, something already decided by the young and the youngest strength of people (Lukacs 1991, p. 167).

It was Plato who had said, in his *Republic* that “all great undertakings are risky, and, as they say, what is worthwhile is always difficult” (497 d9), a remark Heidegger included in his rectoral address (cf. Ward 1995, p. 171). By including this remark of Plato in his rectoral address, Heidegger underscored the point that nothing great comes cheap; something such as the project of unveiling being which had been long forgotten in Western metaphysics was going to be a very rigorous project. But what was more important was the journey and not the destination. This may explain why

many think that Heidegger's rectoral address and *Being and Time* be seen as necessarily connected and even more, the suggestion by Schurmann that we read Heidegger's works backwards.

It has been remarked that Heidegger's political philosophy is heavily reliant on the political philosophy of Plato. As Ward (1995) comments, "Some scholars characterize Heidegger as a political Platonist or quasi-Platonist, as a thinker who adds yet another chapter to the history of the error or delusion that philosophers are somehow better suited to rule than anyone else" (p. 171). Tom Rockmore seems to argue for the Platonic tone of Heidegger's political posture when he names the teaching of Heidegger's rectoral address "a form of right-wing Platonism" which as a doctrine encompasses the idea that "it is only the philosopher who can ensure the good life for the people" (cf. Rockmore 1992, pp. 54, 197) evidenced in Heidegger's language when he says that when Dasein is authentic or resolute, it "...can become the "conscience" of others" (Heidegger 1996, p. 274/298). On the other hand, "Other scholars argue that Heidegger is ignorant of, gives insufficient attention to, or is perversely wrong about the place of politics in Plato, reading him according to modern conventions, that is, anachronistically, as an epistemologist and ontologist, insensitive to the philosophical importance of Platonic dialogue" (Ward 1995, p. 171).

Whichever remark that weighs on us, it seems obvious that Heidegger was knowledgeable in Platonic political philosophy.

In the rectoral address, Heidegger writes:

The self-determination of the German university is the original common will to its essence. The German university is valued by us as a loftiest school that educates the leaders and the guards of the fate of the German nation...This will be accomplished only when we – teachers and students...stand fast with our German fate in the hour of its greatest need (Farias 1989, p. 100).

In the perspective of Heidegger then, the university was the environment of those who, to use the language of Plato, had come out of the cave of darkness to the world of enlightenment, and had returned to it, as it were, to instruct the students and consequently set them free for Germany's hour of need. The occasion of the address was also seen as an invitation to return to the roots of true enlightenment found in the philosophy of early Greek philosophers. Farias (1989) phrases this point thus:

The university seems transformed into a community of leaders molded by "discipline" into a school that produces the guardians of the community, a nation that knows itself to be in "its" own land. Knowledge about the spirit creates a mission of philosophical reflection. Understanding the spirit is nothing but understanding the "originary." According to Heidegger, the first presupposition is fulfilled if we submit ourselves again to the power of the very beginnings of our spiritual-historical existence. This beginning is the

beginning of Greek philosophy (p. 100).

This is why we must return to the Greeks to establish the heritage of Heidegger's political persuasion.

Now, if Heidegger is a political Platonist or quasi-Platonist or knowledgeable in Platonic political philosophy, we must now seek to understand the political philosophy of Plato. The beginnings of political thinking give us two basic political alternatives. We can understand politics as (*poiesis*). And when politics is understood as *poiesis* (to make), the understanding has the influence of Plato (cf. *Republic* 497d9ff). In this sense, the State or *polis* is construed as a work that must be done, be made, instituted, or founded because we are basically self-insufficient and complement each other in our existence. Thus, the State is like a work of art, with the human person taken as an illustration of the organic structure of the human society. Barker (1964) indicates that "...if we place ourselves at a point of view suggested by Plato himself, and regard the State as an organism – that is to say, as a whole of which the parts are organs for the attainment of a single end..." (p. 157), then "...Of such a whole the human body, whose members are all organs for the purpose of life, has generally been taken as a type" (Barker 1964, p. 157). Such an understanding of the State expects the individual to identify with the State and conform to what is

demanding of him for its very survival. This is because the survival of the State is the survival of the individual and the failure of the State is the failure of the individual.

On the other hand, politics understood as *praxis* is different and is Aristotelian in its roots. Politics understood as *praxis* have debate, negotiation and deliberation as its hallmark. In this kind of politics, one is compromising and must always engage in the power game (cf. *Politics* 1253a-1255a1). Barker (1964) renders the difference between Aristotle and Plato in the following words:

Every individual does and must identify himself or herself with a lower scheme, and narrower order – that of family. It is true that the State is a fellowship and each one of us part of it; but it is also true that it is a fellowship of fellowships, each one of part of those – which is the great lesson that Aristotle teaches. It is true again that the State is a product of the mind – that it is mind concrete in an external organization: it is not true that the unity of the State is as the unity of a single mind, or that mind must be concrete in a single organization, the “Republic one and indivisible” (p. 156-157).

It was Heidegger who had called philosophers to the profound investigation of the question of being. By doing so, he engaged metaphysics in a way it had never been done before – starting from ground up by not concentrating on *Seiendes* (entities) but *being* itself. He did this by way of Dasein conceived as being-in-the-world. In this sense, Heidegger was radical

by breaking away from tradition in order to take philosophy back to its origin. In his analysis of Dasein, Heidegger made the startling discovery that the mode of being in which this being under investigation predominantly exists is the 'Anyone,' the *Das Man*, an existence in the 'publicness' of the 'they.' He captures this point thus:

Loosing itself in the publicness of the they and its idle talk, it *fails to hear* its own self in listening to the they-self. If Da-sein is to be brought back from this lostness of failing to hear itself, it must first be able to find itself, to find itself as something that has failed to hear itself and continues to do so in *listening* to the they. (Heidegger 1996, p. 250/271).

In listening to the they, Dasein has spent itself seeking the modern, going after the easy life, talking the idle talk, and therefore forgetting himself and his destiny. The only way the 'gods can return to where they fled' was for Dasein to modify its inauthenticity. Put in Heidegger's words, "This process can be reversed only in such a way that Da-sein explicitly brings itself back to itself from its lostness in the they" (1996, p. 248/268). This is fundamental ontology and its political implication is radical. The political implication of this ontology is radical in the sense that inauthenticity is the dominant mode of Dasein's being from which it is called by conscience. Perhaps, it was Heidegger's understanding of the

radical nature of this call that informed his remark that Dasein may decide to be “*passed over in this call*” (1996, p. 252/273), the call to authentic human existence. If “Politics as praxis is always politics of the feasible” (Dallery, Scott, & Roberts 1992, p. 8), then, though Heidegger’s general political posture may have a Platonic influence, his notion of authentic Dasein as a being that is open to the possibilities of human existence presents ample ground that underscores the political vibration of *Being and Time* and more so as one of praxis, (even if his famed rectoral address may be ‘a form of right-wing Platonism’). Now, if in the concept of authentic Dasein, Heidegger broke into political philosophy, what mode of political practice does the concept endorse?

## **5.2 The embrace of democracy**

In *What Democracy meant for the Greeks*, the ancient Greeks describe democracy this way:

...our government...is called a democracy, because its administration is in the hands, not of the few, but of the many. Yet, although all men are equal in the sight of the law, they are rewarded by the community on the basis of their merit; neither social position or wealth, but ability alone, determines the service that a man renders. As we are liberally minded in our public life, so in our personal relations with one another we are generous; for we are not resentful nor do we look with disapproval when our neighbor enjoys himself in his own way, but are

friendly and tolerant. In public matters we acknowledge the restraint of reverence, we are obedient to those who are in authority and to the laws, especially those laws which protect the less privileged and those unwritten ones whose transgression is admittedly shameful (Walter 1960, p. 60).

Here, democracy is associated with the virtues of tolerance, mutual respect, harmony, and a sense of justice for all whereby, as Aristotle stipulates in his *Nichomachean Ethics*, citizens are rewarded based on merit. For Aristotle, this kind of justice is called distributive justice (1130b30-1131a25). For the ancient Greeks, this kind of democracy was the envy of others. But the practice of democracy kept on evolving new twists and nuances as many States came to embrace it and adapted it to their culture. It logically follows that what was democracy then may not necessarily be the exact democratic practice now. Grene (1965) takes note of this when he acknowledged that:

The Athenians had not created their democracy in the name of universal equality of man, as the Americans or the French did, nor did they even acknowledge the universal applicability of democratic principles, as the British have sometimes done in the course of changes in their constitutional history (p. 36).

Therefore, the idea of democratic rule is not static but keeps on expanding in meaning as humanity grows in its knowledge and practice, constantly

adapting it to evolving patterns for effective governance. Though its origin is Greek and may be foreign, democracy is practiced in many countries in the world today. The word 'democracy' itself is a word in Greek language. The meaning is basically the same then and now: 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' though the specifics of the practice differs from country to country. In this age, and indeed all times, one does well by listening to these words of Walter (1960):

In times like these, when democratic institutions have undergone more violent criticism and attack than ever before, it may be useful to re-examine ...the original evolution of a democratic society, its aims and procedures, the appraisal of its successes and failures by its own critics, the causes of its decline. Since the problems which confronted the Greeks were in many respects similar to ours, it may be that we can still profit from their experience (p. vi).

One may not be able to go into the specifics of the Greek democratic system but a word can be said that its practice sought to provide the citizens with all the tools necessary for self-determination and discourage tyranny. In this way the Greeks "...regarded the State as educational and ethical in its primary purpose rather than military and coercive, and recognized its duty to provide citizens with opportunities for richly varied living" (Walter 1960, p. v). Though the State recognized its duty to the citizens, there was actually no contractual agreement. This is a remarkable difference from modern

conception of politics. As Barker (1964) notes “ Modern political thought has borrowed from biology an organic conception of the State, which it has opposed to the legal conception of a contract entertained by thinkers like Hobbes and Locke, exactly as Plato drew from his teleology a similar conception, and opposed it to the “conventional” view of the Sophists” (p. 157). Hobbes and Locke constructed their political theory based on their conception of the nature of man, just like Plato did from the point of view of self-insufficiency.

### **Thomas Hobbes**

Hobbes believes that humans are basically equal. Human beings are born equal in the faculties of mind and spirit. Though some are stronger and perhaps more gifted physically and mentally, Hobbes was of the view that the difference is not very significant. As Hobbes (1950) puts it:

Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself (p. 101).

Every person loves himself. Because every man loves himself, he seeks his own good, he is basically very competitive, glory-seeking and after his defense. This explains why the man of nature is constantly at war to gain the advantages of this life. As Hobbes himself admits, “It is true that the advantages of this life can be increased with other people’s help. But this is much more effectively achieved by Dominion over others than by help” (1950, p. 24). Stemming from the natural desire to survive against all aggression and attain personal independence, every man has the right to assert and defend himself, hence war. To end this vicious circle of dominion which accounts for violence to each other, a power is created by the community. This power is feared by everyone and it has the authority to enact and enforce laws binding on all in order to ensure peace. The understanding is that individuals owe the State obedience while the State assumes the responsibility to protect them. In this new environment, individuals no longer view each other with fear and suspicion because some power has been established to protect them should they be violated in the new arrangement. This agreement is contractual: the State is to provide the advantages of this life while they (the citizens) in turn will live in obedience. The conclusion is that fear gave rise to society. In the words of Hobbes “...no one should doubt that, in the absence of fear, men would be more

avidly attracted to domination than to society. One must therefore lay it down that the origin of large and lasting societies lay not in mutual human benevolence but in men's mutual fear" (1950, p. 24). Because of fear of each other, we enter into a sort of contract so as to be protected from the violence and aggression of the other.

### **John Locke**

For many scholars, John Locke is a majoritarian democrat. In fact, many critics would not hesitate to say that John Locke, on his own terms, could have argued for *absolute* majority rule. He is perceived as a political philosopher who could argue that minorities could appeal their case against the majority (with approval of all reasonable men) when the majority become tyrannical. Jean-Jacques Rousseau would be his opposite in the sense that he will not argue for absolute majority rule because essentially the minority are also in a contract and so once the terms are breached, they have a right to seek redress. A contract is always with terms. Without such, that contract is null and void no matter who is involved.

For John Locke, the state of nature was that of an unorganized government. For Hobbes before Locke, there was constant war among men before the State was formed. Locke took the inverted position: there was

peace before the forming of the State. In the state of nature, man was peaceful. In the state of nature, the life of man was characterized by peace and goodwill. For Hobbes, man was self-subsistent and things like “rights” and “property” were non-existent in the state of nature but came about only after he entered into civil society. For Locke, men in the state of nature are creatures who possess some natural rights. As Locke puts it, they have the rights to “...order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit...without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man” (1936, p. 117). John Locke was of the belief these natural rights demand respect. It was because men had no common judge or leader who would adjudicate in the event of dispute that men may have decided to leave that state of nature indefinitely. But Locke himself will raise the question: “If man in the state of nature be so free as has been said, if he be absolute lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest and subject to nobody, why will he part with his freedom, this empire, and subject himself to the dominion and control of any other power?” (1936, p. 12). Because there was no common judge to adjudicate in the event of disputes among citizens, the rights of man were not secure and so when the time was ripe, man decided to make a transition, to emerge from the state of nature to the civil State, in which a common judge was established to adjudicate over

them. The end of this transition was the “...enjoyment of their properties in peace and safety” (1936, p. 134). This emergence was only “...with an intention in every one the better to preserve himself, his liberty and property...for no rational creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse” (Locke 1936, p. 134). Thus, every political philosophy is built on the understanding or conception of human nature of its proponent. Meyer (2001) agrees with this point when he says that:

The political order advocated by a theorist will be compelling only if the underlying conception of nature that serves as its source of direction. From within this framework, then, political debate begins and largely ends with an attempt to establish or reject the truth of a particular conception of nature itself. If a derivative interpreter appears to reject the history of Western political thought, this can only result from the conviction that this thought is derived from incorrect views of nature (p. 123).

From Plato to Aristotle down to modern political thought, the understanding of the nature of man has been the main determinant of any political philosophy and the formulation of any system of government. Disagreement or debate of political philosophers and the practice of different democratic systems in the world have certainly been drawn from different views of human nature. Hence, we can say that the concept of democracy is not defined and fixed, its understanding and practice follows the principle of

“continuities and discontinuities.” In order to argue for the disposition of *Being and Time* to the lofty ideal of democracy, there is need to state Heidegger’s view of the being of the human being.

It was Heidegger’s view that being cannot be defined. He writes:

“Being” is the self-evident concept. “Being is used in all knowing and predicating, in every relation to beings and in every relation to oneself, and the expression is understandable “without further ado.” Everybody understands, “The sky is blue,” “I *am* happy,” and similar statements. But this average comprehensibility only demonstrates the incomprehensibility. It shows that an enigma lies *a priori* in every relation and being toward beings as beings (1996, p. 3/4).

For Heidegger then, we think we know what being is but when asked what it is, one begins to categorize it into particulars, that is, one discovers that one does not know what it is. There is a similar attitude to the being of the investigator of “being,” that is, the human being. The being of this being always relates to existence [*Existenz*]. Now “...the essential definition of this being cannot be accomplished by ascribing to it a “what” that specifies its material content, because its essence lies rather in the fact that it in each instance has to be its being as its own, the term Da-sein, as a pure expression of being, has being chosen to designate this being” (Heidegger 1996, p. 10/12). In his understanding of Thomas Aquinas’ rendering of the nature of man, Heidegger contends that:

Thomas Aquinas is engaged in the task of deriving the “transcendentals,” the characteristics of being that lie beyond every possible generic determination of a being in its material content...and that are necessary attributes of everything “something,” whatever it might be...This is to be accomplished by appealing to a being which in conformity with its kind of being is suited to “come together” with any being whatsoever. This distinctive being, ...[“the being whose nature it is to meet with all other beings”], is the soul (*anima*) (1996, p. 12).

But for Heidegger, “The priority of Da-sein over and above all other beings which emerges here without being ontologically clarified obviously has nothing in common with a vapid subjectivizing of the totality of beings” (1996, p. 12/14). Heidegger avoids using the word “nature” to describe the being of Dasein because of the meaning previous philosophers attached to the word. For him, the word “nature” tends to reduce the human being to a single category. The being of Dasein is what it can be in its being-in-the-world-with-others. In other words, “The ontic-ontologically priority of Da-sein is ...the reason why the specific constitution of the being of Da-sein – understood in the sense of the “categorical” structure that belongs to it – remains hidden. Da-sein is ontically “nearest” to itself, ontologically farthest away, but pre-ontologically certainly not foreign to itself” (Heidegger 1996, p. 14/16).

Heidegger resists attaching one content to Dasein. As Richard Polt understands Heidegger, “Dasein is not a fixed ground of meaning but finds itself already claimed by an inherited meaning and then (if it is properly Dasein) responds creatively to this inheritance” (Scott, Schoenbohm, Vallega-Neu, & Vallega 2001, p. 87). It is a being that responds constructively to its being in its togetherness because for it, “Existence is not only the ground but also the end of life and its truest meaning. The quality of a life – its success – is a function of the amount of its degree of existence; it is a function of the degree to which one feels one’s being. Different lives are lived to different degrees” (Cooper 1999, p. 20). Dasein is not just a *ratio animalus* or a *politicus animalus*. It transcends any single categorization because it is essentially a being whose being is its potentiality-of-being. It is this potentiality-of-being that counts as its being. Thus, “When Dasein properly takes up its thrown projection, the “there” (or “here”) opens up” (Scott, Schoenbohm, Vallega-Neu, & Vallega 2001, p. 87). Dasein is a being open to being, open to its possibilities and in willing, it realizes them. These possibilities are feasible only in Dasein’s being-with. It will be recalled that Heidegger had argued that Dasein is guilty. And guilt is grounded in nullity, in lack. So basically, Dasein is a being that in its *Existenz* is self-insufficient. That Dasein must face its ownmost possibility, the possibility of death is an

attestation to the self-insufficiency of its being. The authentic Dasein therefore is one that returns to the guilt to which it is called by conscience. Constructing a political system around Dasein's potentiality-of-being, we listen to Heidegger (1996) himself say that:

Indubitably, the fact that one Da-sein *can be represented* by another belongs to the possibilities-of-being of being-with-one-another in the world. In the everydayness of taking care of things, constant use of such representability is made in many ways. Any going to..., any fetching of ..., is representable in the scope of the "surrounding world" initially taken care of. The broad multiplicity of ways of being of being-in-the-world in which one person can be represented by another extends not only to the used-up modes of public being with one another, but concerns as well the possibilities of taking care of things limited to definite circles, tailored to professions, social classes, and stages of life (p. 222-223/239).

Representation is always in Dasein's togetherness. And since Dasein is essentially a being-with, a being that is not solitary, representation is key to its very existence. So Heidegger (1996) stresses that:

...the very meaning of such representation is such that it is always a representation "in" and "together-with" something, that is, in taking care of something. Everyday, Da-sein understands itself initially and for the most part, however, in terms of *what* it is accustomed to take care of. "One *is*" what one does. With regard to this being (the everyday being-absorbed-with-one-another in the "world" taken of), representability is not only possible in general, but is even constitutive for being-with-one-another. *Here* one Da-sein can and must, within certain limits, "*be*" another Da-sein" (p. 223/239-240).

With the understanding of the inherent representability of Dasein, which as Heidegger indicates, is “in” our different “modes of public being-with-one-another” Heidegger finally comes to the embrace of democracy since representation is the hall mark of democracy in which the human Dasein expresses its common will for continuity and change. In the history of political philosophy, there have been tensions within democratic political theories themselves, though this is in accordance with its very principle of dialogue. As Pennock (1979) notes:

These (and other) tensions ...largely reflect man’s tensions: between desire or interest on the one hand and duty or obligation on the other hand; between belief in equality and the demand for differential reward, status, and prestige; between the liking for privacy and the enjoyment of collective activity; between selfishness and altruism. As different theorists feel greater awareness of one or the other of these pairs of opposites, their theories tend to vary accordingly (p. 59).

It is true that there are tensions and disagreement between different schools political thought. But this exercise is never an attack on democracy itself. As Pennock (1979) observes:

“Liberal democracy,” or “pluralistic democracy,” is under attack by critics who espouse “collectivism” or “holism.” They attack it for its individualism; but they do not normally attack democracy itself. They

usually claim to be attacking one (spurious) version of democracy in behalf of the proper ideal of democratic government and society (p. 62).

Although there may be disagreement, there is consensus that representation is constitutive of any democratic system anywhere in the world. Therefore, that "...representation is not only possible in general, but is even constitutive for being-with-one-another" (Heidegger 1996, p. 223/239-240) is indicative of the democratic bent of *Being and Time*. To choose to be represented is for Dasein to be the "conscience" of others. Dasein can choose to be represented only when it answers the call of conscience to own up its guilt, its empty thrownness. Answering this call can take the mode of political participation in which Dasein may make compromises and transfer its rights to another in its togetherness for the sole purpose of realizing its potentiality-of-being. To shy away from this mode of being is for Dasein to plunge itself into inauthenticity. Thus construed, the following remark from Montana, a study group from the Eisenhower Leadership Group (ELG), can be seen as an appropriation of Heideggerian inauthenticity:

American democracy is at risk. Too many of us – either from complacency or despair, inertia or ignorance – are leaving the work of civic engagement to others. Too many of us are expecting someone else to carry all the water. The upshot? A democracy in which too few people do the public business, leaving

many disengaged and disenchanted (Salvador and Sias 1998, p. 3).

### 5.3 The State

The main goal of *Being and Time* was not to articulate a political philosophy. Neither was its aim to found a school of aesthetics or ethics. However, for Heidegger, all philosophical traditions seem to have steeped themselves in onto-theological presuppositions. The old subject/object distinction which construed beings after the model of the “present-to-hand” is a good demonstration of such onto-theological assumptions. To suggest that there is, from a natural standpoint, a legitimate difference between epistemology, ethics, psychology, already has the presupposition that these matters should be considered as “beings” and therefore as something present-to-hand rather than first and foremost considering them from the perspective of their relation to being. As Dreyfus (2001) notes:

Heidegger opposes this philosophical move. He denies the traditional assumption that there must be a theory of every orderly domain – specifically that there can be a theory of the commonsense world. He insists we return to the phenomenon of everyday human activity and stop ringing changes on the traditional oppositions of immanent/transcendent, representation/represented, subject/object, as well as such oppositions within the subject as conscious/unconscious, explicit/tacit, reflective/unreflective (p. 6).

Not to return to the phenomenon of everyday human activity but consider beings only as something present-to-hand would be to forget the primordially of the relation between beings and being, a forgetfulness with nihilistic consequences. In the event of nihilism, the world will not be invigorated by the resources either of the fermentation of philosophy or of a new political theory or of a new ethics, thereby maintaining the status quo and leaving the world untransformed. The ontological significance of these areas of human existence can be retained only by way of *Denken* (thought), that is, by seriously reflecting on the disaster of the forgetfulness of being.

It is obvious that Heidegger's *Being and Time* lacks a clearly articulated political philosophy explainable by the fact that it is no work set *precisely* for a political objective. But as Leo Strauss has argued consistently, Heidegger is no foreigner to the terrain of political philosophy. As Ijsseling (Dallery, Scott, & Roberts, 1992) admits, Heidegger "...even tends to aestheticize politics in a way that assigns to philosophers and to the German *Volk* a specific and exalted mission" (p. 8). Farias (1989) writes that in his politics:

Heidegger pointed to a superpersonal principle – "the fate of the German nation" (*Volk*) – that through its movement explains and determines the action of those subordinate to it. Obedience and individual action are organized through this transcendental occasion,

in the presence of which privileges disappear and which agents according to credit they gain in regard to that decisive moment (p. 99).

Heidegger's insistence on the *Volk* is no accident. This insistence on the superpersonal principle has the implication that the question as to whether or not humanity will be able to understand the meaning of being in the near future is at least to some extent contingent upon the evolution of a new political dispensation. Because the disclosure of being is always within a context, a social setting, its understanding, to a large degree, is contingent on the availability of a political framework that is conducive for asking the kind of ontological question that Heidegger wanted to ask. To raise profoundly the question of being, there is need for an enabling environment. In other words, politics can make possible the flourishing of being, by providing an enabling environment for raising the question of the meaning of being.

It is because politics is intricately linked with historical life that Heidegger spent so much time analyzing Dasein's average everydayness. Hence, "bad moods," Heidegger argues, should be avoided because they do not enhance the disclosure of being to Dasein. Heidegger therefore proffers a justification for a State as an agency of historical-ontological truth. Thus, the State plays an indispensable meta-ontological role in the unveiling or disclosure of being. It is in the special "work" of the State that being is

unconcealed. By work, is meant *techne* (craft), but not *techne* in the ancient Greek sense. As Heidegger explains, "...*techne* signifies neither craft nor art, and not at all the technical in our present-day sense; it never means a kind of practical performance" (2001 p. 57). What *techne* means for Heidegger is that it "...denotes a mode of knowing. To know means to have seen, in the widest sense of seeing. Which means to apprehend what is present, as such" (p. 57). It is a bringing forth, a seeing that unconceals and utters a new perspective or deeper insight. *Techne* "...is bringing forth of beings in that it *brings forth* present beings...*out of* concealedness and specifically *into* the unconcealedness of their appearance; *techne* never signifies the action of making" (Heidegger 2001, p. 57). One can notice here a ring of the Heraclitean notion of change as life's constant: change is not an emergence from nothingness but a letting-be of what was in a way that it was not. With the notion of work as *techne*, the perspective that the role the State plays in the disclosure of being is meta-ontological can be construed as such in the sense that the State as "labor" or work appears as the essential and necessary condition for all successive labor of disclosure. For Heidegger, *techne* conceived this way exposes the disclosive nature of the work of art also. Hannah Arendt (1998) concurs on this point when she writes that:

The immediate source of the art work is the human capacity for thought, as man's "propensity to truck and barter" is the source of exchange objects, and as his ability to use is the source of use of things. These are capacities of man and not mere attributes of the human animal like feelings, wants, and needs, to which they are related and which often constitute their content. Such human properties are as unrelated to the world which man creates as his home on earth as the corresponding properties of other animal species... (p. 168).

Arendt continues that "In the case of art works, reification is more than mere transformation; it is transfiguration, a veritable metamorphosis in which it is as though the course of nature which it wills that all fire burn to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames. Works of art are thought things, but this does not prevent their being things" (p. 168-169).

Heidegger's notion of "labor" as a clearing, a *Lichtung* furnishes us with a very special weapon in the comprehension of his theory of the ontological role of the State. As Wolin (1990) describes it, *Lichtung* is :

...a type of transcendental-ontological openness, by virtue of which unconcealment becomes possible. As an essential presupposition for the unconcealment of beings, the clearing possesses a type of ontological superiority vis-à-vis the world of ontic reality, that is, in relation to the world of beings themselves. This clearing is a place of encounter, a meeting point between Being and beings (p. 113).

For Heidegger (2001):

In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is clearing, a lighting. Thought of in reference to what is, to beings, this clearing is in a greater degree than are beings. This open center is therefore not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting center itself encircles all that is, like the Nothing which we scarcely know. That which is can only be, as a being, if it stands within and stands out within what is lighted in this clearing. Only this clearing grants and guarantees to us humans as a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are (p. 51).

That clearing that guarantees access to the being of the human being brings about the unconcealment of being which for Heidegger, is truth (*alethia*).

Hence for Heidegger, truth is not logical truth, for “if logic is anything today, it is the ‘science of deduction’ and “its most conspicuous purpose...the justification and criticism of inference” (Dahlstrom 2001, p.1).

Truth is not a matter of inference nor is it subject to the approval of Descartes’ correspondence theory of truth; it is unconcealment of being through work of art but established through other types of work as well. As Heidegger (2001) himself writes:

Truth happens only by establishing itself in the conflict and sphere opened up by truth itself...This happening is historical in many ways...one essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has opened up is truth setting itself to work. Another way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state. Still another way in which truth comes to shine forth is the nearness of that which is not

simply a being, but the being that is most of all. Still another way in which truth grounds itself is the essential sacrifice. Still another way in which truth becomes is the thinker's questioning, which, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness (p. 59-60).

Therefore, in the political philosophy of Heidegger, the role or the part that the State plays is to set the stage for the work of truth, to enable the unconcealment of being. Heidegger does not offer us the specifics of this, but does contend that the State does engage in the work of unveiling of being. The State, the *polis* "...is a type of work, a rescuing of openness from the shadows of concealment in which the phenomenal glory of truth first comes to light" (Wolin 1990, p. 114). Thus understood, the uniqueness of Heidegger once again comes to the forefront. He was not building his understanding of the State or *polis* on any previous foundation. And for him, to understand the State "naturally" would be like looking at the past with the eyes of today, or transferring the present to the past. It is against this background that Ward (1995) warns that:

If we are interested in Heidegger's understanding of the *polis*, we must put aside the assumption that we are – or for that matter, any Greek thinkers – possess a correct understanding against which Heidegger's interpretation may be compared. We must be prepared to consider the possibility that the *polis* has not been properly understood before Heidegger (p. 173).

Versions of the State are as varied as there are various political philosophers. For the ancients, especially Plato, the *polis* is the site measured by the gods and the caring for the gods is the essential concern and task of political men. That is to say that the world which the State created was a type of *Lichtung*, "...it erected or set to work a network of spatial relations in which the concealment and unconcealment of beings – gods and mortals, heaven and earth – as such took place" (Wolin 1990, p. 114). In the perspective of Heidegger, this understanding of the State is very far from its modern conception because we live in an age from which the gods have fled. Now the being that we are searching for, the being been cleared is a *site* in which being is historically disclosed to Dasein and no longer a *site* for relation between the gods and mortals. Wolin (1990) renders the Heideggerian state thus:

The state is the historical presupposition for *all* works that come into Being, *all* concealment, *all* human world-relations. It is the *indispensable presupposition for all setting truth to work*, the primordial ground and *sine qua non* for all possible ontic-ontological encounters. The state is the foundational ontological-historical framework in terms of which the human experience of Being and beings comes to pass (p. 114).

That is why in terms of what is logically prior, it is the polis vis-à-vis the citizens and all its social establishments. Hence individual citizens may die

and pass into nothingness, but the state endures in time. Similarly, it can be said that while inhabitants of a city may sleep, the city does not. In the perspective of Heidegger, there is a profound relationship between the disclosure of being, works, and politics. The work of the State is the historical site in which all the disclosure of being through the work of the word in thought (as well as that of logos in poetry) is grounded and also preserved. As Heidegger writes in his *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, "...to exhibit the inner history in which the dominance of thinking over the Being of beings developed...such an exhibition has no effective historical force as long as we ourselves have not awakened the forces of our own questioning from and for our history at this very moment of the world" (2000, p. 191). It is through the work of the word in thought that being is unveiled in the historical site of State, grounding and preserving all disclosures. All clearing of being in the history of philosophy were on this site which is at the same time their historical ground. All attempts at transcending the past clearings will also be in this site. In other words, it is in this site that the past and the present meet in logos.

Dasein is essentially a being-in-the-world and so it is in the world of all activities of disclosure. This is why for Heidegger, questioning, the process through which being is disclosed becomes "...a fundamental

happening of historical Being” (2000, p. 152) and it is “Only where Being opens itself up in questioning does history happen” (2000, p.153).

Questioning is always historical, in a social setting where truth is revealed.

As Wurzer (Risser, 1999) notes, this is why

Creating a state...is not a political operation per se but rather the sigetic resolve of thinkers who, in accordance with their de-cision to prepare for the arrival of the last god, experience the historical moment of “what comes to pass (*Ereignung*) in the turn, in which the truth of being becomes the being of truth” (p. 194).

Thus, in restating Heidegger’s case with some emphasis, Wolin (1990) writes that the *polis* or State means:

*...the place, the there, wherein and as which historical being-there is. The polis is the historical place, the there in which, out of which and for which history happens. To this place and scene of history belong the gods, the temples, the priests, the festivals, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, the council of elders, the assembly of people, the army and the fleet. All this does not first belong to the polis, does not become political by entering into a relation with a statesman and a general and the business of the state. No, it is political, i.e., at the site of history, provided there be (for example) poets, alone, but then really poets, priests alone, but then really priests, rulers alone, but then really rulers (p. 115).*

In his submission that all inhabitants of the polis have to have the disposition to subordinate their desires and wants to the aspirations of the

State or the destiny of the *Volk*, Heidegger may appear to be endorsing totalitarianism and therefore antidemocratic. It was Ijsseling who wrote that:

Heidegger appears to be an antidemocrat ...for reasons. First, a pre-given truth about society written in Heaven, in Nature, or in Reality does not exist for Heidegger. Society must be built from the ground up. And, second, Heidegger emphasized the idea of the unity of the thinkable, although there is always the problem of difference (Dallery, Scott, & Roberts 1992, P. 9).

But it was Heidegger who insisted that leaders be real leaders. Hence his contention that leaders should be "...authentically founded" (Heidegger 2000, p. 154). For him then, the rulers who have now, as it were, become the *representatives* of the people in view of their common destiny with the led, are to be "authentic" and not impostors, though in this essential relationship, the State somehow has to enjoy some monopoly. One sees this monopoly of the State even in today's democracies in concepts such as the doctrine of "eminent domain" whereby the State possesses the right to take over an individual's property without his/her approval and sell it to another individual or business institution for development with the understanding that it will do the community "greater good" (*summum bonum*). Carl Schmitt (Schmitt, 1996) concurs on this when he notes that

The decisive question...concerns the relationship of ...state and politics. A doctrine which began to take shape in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a doctrine inaugurated by Machiavelli, Jean Bodin, and Thomas Hobbes, endowed the state with an important monopoly: the European state became the sole subject of politics. Both state and politics were linked just as indivisibly as *polis* and politics in Aristotle (p. 6).

With this conception of the State therefore, when one is led by another and decisions unfriendly to some members of the public are taken, it can be argued that even in such a situation, Dasein has become the “conscience” of others; and of course, it is the authentic Dasein, the Dasein that is resolute to its being that does submit to, and accepts the “voice” of others speaking on its behalf in its togetherness so that Dasein’s potentiality-of-being can be realized (or at least tend towards it). It is for this reason that Aristotle understands politics as praxis whereby individuals must engage in the power game and compromise (*Politics* 1253a ff).

#### **5.4 Freedom and Power**

Dasein is a being that is thrown into the world and it is thrown very radically at birth. In its thrownness, Dasein is also thrown into history and hence it is a historical being. Now, though Dasein is thrown into the world and as such thrown into a historical moment, it is not the cause of this thrownness, nor is

it the cause of the historical moment into which it is thrown. Although Dasein is not the cause of its thrownness, as a being whose being is his potentiality-of-being, it is asked to project its possibilities in its thrown world. Heidegger (1996) captures this point in the following words:

Da-sein exists as thrown, brought into its there *not* of its own accord. It exists as a potentiality-of-being which belongs to itself, and yet has *not* given itself to itself. Existing, it never gets back behind its thrownness so that it could ever expressly release this “that-it-is-and-has-to-be” from its *being* a self and lead it into the there...As *this being*, delivered over to which it can exist uniquely as the being which it is, it is, *existing*, the ground of its potentiality-of-being. Because it has *not* laid the ground *itself*, it rests in the weight of it, which mood reveals to it as burden (p. 262/284).

The thrownness of Dasein discloses the being of Dasein as a being that is guilty. And guilt is grounded in nullity, a lack. In other words, human existence and concrete situations are not always self-willed or self-determined. Thus there is an essential relationship between thrownness and nullity. Hence Heidegger observes that “Da-sein exists as thrown, brought into its there *not* of its accord” (1996, p. 262/284). And this is the being of Dasein, a being that did not create itself nor its situations, a being whose being is without any ground. In fact, it is a being whose “...character is determined by thrownness as a fact of the being that it is, and so determined, it has always already been delivered over to existence, and remains so

constantly” (Heidegger 1996, p. 255/276). But, as Heidegger notes, “...the facticity of Da-sein is essentially distinguished from the factuality of something objectively present” (1996, p. 255/276). Though in as much as Dasein is not the cause of its thrown situation, it can still release its existence and project itself for the reason that it is a unique being whose being is its potentiality-of-being; it “...exists as a being that has to be as it is and can be” (Heidegger 1996, p. 255/276). Dasein is its thrown ground and as such becomes its being “...only by projecting itself upon the possibilities into which it is thrown” (Heidegger 1996, p. 262/284).

Although Dasein’s being is its potentiality-of-being, it very often refuses to take up its being, thereby staying behind itself. The failure of Dasein to stay above its thrownness results in the inability of Da-sein to be its own master. Although Dasein’s being is “...always already given,...it needs to take a stand on itself” (Dreyfus 2001, p. 173). And herein lies the *freedom* of Dasein: although our being is groundless, although human existence is “nothingness” in the language of Sartre, “...it is precisely this lack of a priori, metaphysical determination of our being-in-the-world that is simultaneously the source of our *freedom*: our capacity to choose or will our own potentiality-for-being” (Wolin 1990, p. 47). Our power and freedom is our ability and readiness capped with the determination to rupture the

entanglement of the guilt of Dasein demanded of authenticity in Dasein's "co-Daseining." The being of Dasein in its everydayness seems to have been "colonized" by the dictatorship of the *Das Man* but is redeemable by the forces of power and freedom. The being of Dasein is its potentiality-of-being (freedom) and the ability to be that which it has to be is represented by Dasein's power (the power of thought). It is upon this power that "...logic depends" (Langan 1966, p. 98) and upon it is built all political power and discourse as well. This is why "For existentialism...the category of freedom is preserved as a result of the proviso that *existence* is ontologically prior to *essence*: that is, as a result of the fact that the facticity of our being-in-the-world is more "primordial" than the subsequent categorical determinations through which we are defined" (Wolin 1990, p. 48). Human beings exist first and then define themselves by what they do, by their actions. Therefore, though humans are understanding beings, they are not just the *res cogitans* of Descartes: they are beings-in-the-world who are not what they but are defined by their freedom and authority to be what they can be in the State.

## **5.5 Authority**

In Dasein's being-in-the-world, to resolve to be resolved even without pre-given assurances of a reason for such a resolve is a sign of authenticity

and to demand for reasons for such a resolve is indicative of Dasein's inauthentic existence. Dasein is basically a guilty being called by conscience to accept its guilt, its nullity. In resolve, Dasein sets itself back to itself and is free for the world. Resolve is the authentic response of Dasein to the silent call of conscience. It may be explained that:

Further, retinence is also a kind of "gathering of human beings to itself." It thus constitutes a preparedness...for experiencing the withdrawing-refusal...of be-ing as a kind of gifting...This gifting involves the coming to pass of beings in their singular, unprecedented character. That is, the preparedness for experiencing the apparent withdrawal of be-ing from beings enables an experience of this withdrawal as belonging to and as needful ...in be-ing's enowing character. In turn, this preparedness increasingly draws thinking farther away from any tendency to try to return to familiarity. It allows be-ing *its* own, most strange and question-worthy way of determining da-sein, of determining beings anew, as enowed in the be-ings own eventuation (Scott, Schoenbohm, Vallega-Neu & Vallega 2001, p. 23).

Therefore, resolve is not a withdrawal from the world, it is not a negation of the world. In the words of Heidegger, "As *authentic being a self*, resoluteness does not detach Da-sein from its world, nor does it isolate it as free floating ego" (1996, p. 274/298). Rather, "Resoluteness brings the self right into its being together with things at hand, actually taking care of them, and pushes it toward concerned being-with with others" (Heidegger 1996, p.

274/298). But Dasein's insertion into the world of everydayness alone does not provide the authority needed to make sense of decision. Without a set standard or set rules for every given situation, it is an uphill task for Dasein to prefer one course of action for another. Put in the words of Heidegger, "Resoluteness is certain of itself only in a resolution. But the *existentiell indefiniteness* of resoluteness never makes itself definite except in a resolution; it nevertheless has its *existential definiteness*" (1996, p. 275/298).

Thus there is need for Dasein, a need that Heidegger acknowledges to be authority that will make it possible for Dasein to choose to modify its inauthentic mode of existence and to return to its being. That authority Heidegger found in the past of Dasein (Dasein's heritage), a past that informs the present and throws light on the future. This is what is called repetition, which is not a mechanical repetition of what is past, but constitutive of an authentic response to the call of conscience in which the past is not forgotten, but actually informs the present. This is why De Beistegui (1998) insists that:

In order to understand Heidegger's relation to history, to the past and to the tradition, it does not suffice to consider superficially his remarks concerning the necessity to deconstruct the history of ontology. It is of the utmost importance to understand such a

deconstruction is aimed at retrieving a constructive relation to the past, based on a proper (*eigentlich*) understanding of history as originary temporality (p. 30).

Dasein's authority is its ability to draw its present from the past as a temporal being. Thus "...the sole authority that a free existence can have..." (Heidegger 1996, p. 357/391) is repeatable possibilities of existence. But it is not every past that is deserving of any repetition. This is to say that a past, even if it is perceived as worthy of repetition is not as such authoritative. Therefore, it becomes a selective repetition of Dasein's past construed as such by Dasein. Now, how does one make the selection of a repeatable event? For Heidegger, one does the selection when one chooses his own hero. As Heidegger puts it, "Da-sein may choose its heroes" (1996, p. 352/385). Perhaps the hero is an archetype! How does one justify his selection or choice of who the hero is? Here, there is Heidegger's silence but one can look to Dasein's potentiality-of-being for a voice.

To articulate what would be Heidegger's rendering of political authority requires an abstraction from the notion of the individual choosing his hero. And here there is need to listen, but with some degree of critical intelligence, to the words of Henry Thoreau (2001) who wrote that

I heartily accept the motto, - "That government is best which governs

least”; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which I also believe, - “That government is best which governs not at all”; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have (p. 203).

Thoreau appears very anarchistic. But a point that can be drawn from the anarchistic bent of his political philosophy is the clarion call on the individual to rise up (resolute) to their being and be true to their genius. It was Thoreau’s contention that:

It is the irresolute and idle who have no leisure for their proper pursuit. Be preoccupied with this, devoted to it,...no idle engagements distract you...Misfortunes occur only when a man is false to his genius. You cannot hear music and noise at the same time. We avoid all the calamities that may occur in a lower sphere by abiding perpetually in a higher sphere (1927, p. 195).

What is this “higher” sphere of Thoreau if not Dasein’s call to realize its potentiality-of-being? It was the observation of Rousseau that in society, one “Constantly...follows custom, never one’s own genius. One no longer dares to appear what one is” (1990, p. 6). Each person tries to appear to be acceptable to all the others by following “custom” – the prevailing conventions – rather than their own inclinations, beliefs, values and what one can really be. No one dare show themselves as they are; they are not themselves. For Rousseau therefore, the goal for all people is to be

themselves: “To be something, to be himself, and always himself, a man must act as he speak, must know what course he ought to take, and must follow that course with vigor and persistence” (Rousseau 1993, p. 8). We ought to educate every child to “...live rather than to avoid death; life is not breath but action, the use of our senses, our minds, our faculties, every part of ourselves that makes us conscious of our being. Life consists less in length of days than in the keen sense of living” (Rousseau 1993, p. 11). It is not enough to have good plans nor is it enough to have a clear and distinct view of what is a good life or of what one perceives as being of value; one must consciously follow one’s plan of action with resoluteness. Goals are real for us only when they are vigorously pursued; only those values are real for one that animate their actions. For Rousseau then, “True happiness consists in decreasing the difference between our desires and our powers, in establishing a perfect equilibrium between the power and the will” (1993, p. 52), which is only found, to use Heidegger’s language, in the Dasein that is authentic and resolute. This is authority in a primordial sense! This is why Dasein’s self-possession which Heidegger emphasizes is not an invitation to anarchy but is to be rather located in the truly positive historical possibilities that Heidegger finds in the being of the authentic human being. In this way, authority for Heidegger is not, as such, external. It is the openness of Dasein

to its being and becomes the presupposition and legitimacy for external authority in Dasein's togetherness-with-others in the polis. As a being open to being whose being is its potentiality-of-being, Dasein is *in* authority and is open to authority in the polis thereby enhancing the disclosure of being as well as Dasein's potentiality-of-being to itself. And when external authority enhances the disclosure of being and the realization of Dasein's potentiality-of-being, it becomes an extension of self. In this way, Heidegger understands with John Stuart Mill that "Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of inward forces which make it a living thing" (1974, p. 853). The tendency of inward forces that make the human being a living thing arises from the dynamism of Dasein's potentiality-of-being in its "co-Daseining" as it takes a stand on its being. Therefore, as Flathman contends (1980), "...authority is not purely and simply power or strength..." (p. 13) but presupposes that internal dynamism that makes political authority meaningful and authoritative. In other words, one may make the distinction between being *in* authority and being *an* authority, the latter dominant in political associations, but one cannot say:

...that political authority is always *in* authority, never *an* authority. We can and should say that *an* and *in* authority cannot be assimilated...political authority fall under the *in* rubric. But it does not follow that there are no significant relationships, conceptual as well as empirical, between *in* and *an* authority or that the theorist of the one can simply disregard the other (Flathman 1980, p. 18).

In its togetherness, Dasein can be *in* and/or *an* authority. But no matter its shape or form, authority is that internal dynamism that brings Dasein to itself and enhances the realization of its potentiality-of-being and the destiny which ties one to another. It was Alexis De Tocqueville (Lively 1962) who said that “Men never seek success by appealing to superior authority, but by appealing to individual powers acting in concert” (p. 129). Therefore, authority for Heidegger, is that ever-occurring concert between conceptual as well as empirical (that is, between being *in* and being *an*) authority in the togetherness of Dasein.

## **5.6 Leadership**

In his rectoral address, Heidegger was emphatic on leadership. For him, the willingness to assume the position of rector of the university was an expression of his acceptance and willingness to render spiritual leadership to the community. In his own understanding, the university does more than

provide an environment for academic excellence; it (that is, the university) does not restrict itself to training "...the leaders and guardians of the fate of the German people" (Murray 1978, p. 313) but offers itself as a place of "spiritual legislation" (ibid). For him then, while the university could train out sound minds, the impact of the university must transcend academics and transform the whole German world. Dasein's fallenness and existence under the ubiquitous dictatorship of the everyday world makes urgent such a "spiritual revitalization." Such "spiritual revitalization" must be accompanied by intense "work" or "labor" so that the university students can discover their identity as leaders. The kind of leadership that Heidegger has in mind can only be understood upon the analysis of the concept of resoluteness. It was the view of Heidegger that the resolute is autonomous and not a conformist. And autonomy requires that the one who is autonomous comprehends his own essence and what that essence commands which in turn is linked to an understanding of the destiny of the community of which the individual being, though autonomous, is a member. And yet, this destiny, together with the place of the member of this community, are not given to us by history, but must be extracted from it. This is to say that the place of the individual can be given only by interpreting history. Therefore for Heidegger, leadership assumes the form of interpretation. To

make this interpretation, Heidegger focuses on science. In his view, so much emphasis is placed on “usefulness.” In the perspective of Heidegger (1996), “...we have made basic a kind of theoretical grasping of innerworldly beings, of nature, in which the modification of our understanding of being amounts to a transformation” (p. 331/361). Humans have become mathematical in their approach to entities. And:

What is decisive about the mathematical project of nature is...not primarily the mathematical element as such, but the fact that this project *discloses a priori*. And thus the paradigm of the mathematical natural sciences does not consist in its specific exactitude and binding character for “everyone,” but in the fact that in it the thematic beings are discovered in *the* only way that beings can be discovered: in the prior project of their constitution of being (Heidegger 1996, p. 331-332/362).

In other words, what has made mathematical science a model is the way in which its perspective on beings is guided by the prior projection of their state of being. But by such a projection, man has distanced himself from and is opposed to himself and to beings that there are. It is obvious that science is a matter of objectification and therefore hinges on a detachment from more engaged modes of being in the world.

For Heidegger, the detachment essential to science was one that ought not to be construed as some sort of monastic disengagement. Rather, it ought

to be construed as a product of human labor, some “work.” Appealing to the reasoning of early Greeks, Heidegger was of the stance that ancient Greeks took cognizance of this when they made *theory* the highest mode of *energeia* of man’s labor in his world of preoccupation. Therefore, in science, instead of man being afraid of nature and letting what is to be, it seeks to bring it to the projective vision of the human being thereby conquering it. This is meant to explain that when Heidegger draws attention to the beginnings of science in the Greek world, he is simply calling for a kind of *Denken* that does not fragment science into sciences but rather seeks the establishment or reestablishment of the “spiritual world” necessary for the avoidance of the propensities for disintegration in his time.

The category of resolve requires that Dasein comprehends his place in its world but such a comprehension requires a great exercise of thought which disengages one for his world. In Heidegger’s words, “...resolute Dasein frees itself for its world” (1996, p. 274/298). In the rectoral address, he affirms that this world of Dasein is not out there but is established or reestablished by human labor or work. Authentic human existence hinges on such an establishment. Viewed this way, it asks of those who lack the strength to fashion their own labor to subordinate themselves to the labor of “charismatic” leader(s) which gives them their place and joins them to the

rest of the community with a shared destiny. For Heidegger, such leaders include the poet as well as thinkers and statesmen. They consciously cast their work against overwhelming nature and in it capture the world which is thus opened up. Their work is more than an arbitrary establishment and lets others recognize its authority because such work is not free invention but an interpretation of the meaning of earth. Earth is ground. Rendered in the words of Heidegger (2001), ground is the:

...emerging and rising in itself and in all things in *phusis*. It clears and illuminates, also, that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground earth. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent (p. 41).

This meaning is brought to light in work of art, language, and in poetry, and make man know his place. It is necessary to explain that for Heidegger (2001):

Poetry...is not an aimless imagination of whimsicalities and not a flight of mere notions and fancies into the realm of the unreal. What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects head into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out (p. 70)

It is this understanding of poetry that informed Wurzer's contention that "...poetry participates in philosophy's *other* beginning, a radical departure from the specular reflexivity of a *first* beginning in which being is merely the mimetic effect of the principle of sufficient reason" (Risser 1999, p. 187). In other words, Wurzer is of the view that "Poetry...frees thinking from the "weariness" of dialectical discourse, that pale consciousness of a bi-millennial hermeneutic" (Risser 1999, p. 187). Such understanding of poetry, together with the disclosures of work of art and language have the potential of enabling the individual to remember his calling, ensuring the preservation of his authenticity.

For Heidegger, of all the creators or leaders, the work of the statesman is given a privileged place because it grounds and preserves the work of the other creators. In other words, the work of the statesman establishes the polis, the place in which the poet, artist, and thinker, as well as those who lack the strength to be creators, find their place. However, all these creators or leaders, not just the statesman alone, are to be subordinated to for the individual to be authentic. But it must be quickly added that such a demand for individual subordination to leadership should not be seen or construed as accepting one's place without any questioning as found in Plato's rendering of justice whereby those on the lowest ladder of social

stratification assume their place in the commonwealth with total resignation. No, the very notion of authenticity demands that the individual does not follow a leader without challenging his leadership. As Murray (1978) puts it, “Every following carries resistance with it. This essential tension between leading and following may not be obscured, let alone eliminated” (p. 315). The authentic being is one who follows but knows why he is following because in following, he believes to be taking a stand on his being so as to realize his potentiality-of-being. In other words, questioning is a quality of a good follower and through it, Dasein is open to its being and authentic in its being-in-the-world. Questioning leads humanity to new beginnings necessary for self-transcendence. To do otherwise is to be inauthentic or irresolute.

## **5.7 Summary and Conclusion**

### **Summary**

Philosophers have defined philosophy as ‘love of wisdom’ and metaphysics is wisdom par excellence because it seeks to comprehend first principles, that which is and not subject to change. This is why for Heidegger, the question of “what is philosophy?” is simply the question of being. Being is not particular beings, it is not *Seiendes*, but that which

determines particular beings as beings and renders them meaningful. Being is always what “is” but this “is” is not of grammar nor an entity. That is, being is not a different sort of being or substance but rather the process or movement as distinguished from the motion of beings in and by which beings disclose themselves, becoming intelligible as present. The path towards grasping this being starts with the investigation of the being of the investigator, Dasein, which we know as human existence. Dasein is the being that understands its being as well as the being of other beings. Dasein is a way of being of the being in and for which the question of being becomes possible, a way characterized by temporality. Dasein is essentially being-in-the-world but not encapsulated or boxed in a situation. This being has two modes of existence – inauthentic existence or authentic existence.

To exist inauthentically is for Dasein to seek to be like everyone else but himself. Under this mode of existence, Dasein, the being that investigates being chooses to live under the ubiquitous dictatorship of the everyday world thereby disowning its existence. But Dasein has a higher calling to be the shepherd of being. This call is the call of conscience from Dasein to Dasein to own up its existence. Dasein is called to own up its guilt rooted in nullity. As such, this call is the call to authentic existence, a call to modified inauthenticity. When Dasein responds to this call and owns up its

lack, it becomes authentic and resolute, taking a stand on its existence. This stand is taken not by way of a monastic withdrawal from the world of everydayness, but in Dasein's everyday concerns. This marks the political dimension of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Dasein as being-in-the-world is a being-with-things-and-with-others and therefore also political. This is why the human being transcends just one single categorization such as the Cartesian *res cogitans* or Aristotle's *politicalus animalus* but a being whose primordiality is its existence in the world. That Dasein exists implies the existence of others. Dasein is not a solitary being but a communal being. This communality of the being of Dasein indicates man's common destiny. The attainment of this common destiny demands that Dasein chooses to be *represented* by another. In other words, it may allow another to be its "conscience." And such an exercise is always political as it embraces the practice of democracy. When Dasein gives itself to the demands of democracy (such as subordination to authority or leadership in its togetherness), it is owing up to its guilt as an interdependent being. This is a mark of authenticity in Dasein's being-in-the-world.

## Conclusion

Heidegger's integral approach to the question of being in *Being and Time* has certainly earned him prominence in several fields of human endeavor. Though this work is a master piece in metaphysics, his analysis of Dasein gave focus to the existential movement, while at the same time making inroads to political philosophy. To read Heidegger's *magnum opus* backwards, as some philosophers have suggested, runs the risk of interpreting him from the point of view of his partisan politics. To read the same work as just another great articulation of the philosophy of being also runs the risk of overlooking the political implications of his work. Political philosophy is not a matter of repeating verbatim the ideas of political and social thinkers or a rehearsal of political theories. Political philosophy transcends all that. It is an inquiry that determines and shapes Dasein's mode of being in its public world. Such inquiry becomes even more necessary and urgent because of Dasein's fallenness. To inquire presupposes questioning. And how can there be any inquiry if there is no community of selves? If democracy is 'government of the people, by the people and for the people' then the submission here is that, in the perspective of Heidegger, democracy

itself is a form of questioning through which the true being of the investigator of being can be disclosed. To suggest otherwise is to deny Dasein's guilt grounded in nullity.

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