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978-0-521-54072-8 - Heidegger's Being and Time: An Introduction

Paul Gerner

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Introduction

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Martin Heidegger was born on 26 September 1889 in Messkirch, a small town in south-west Germany, about 20 miles north of Lake Constance. From 1903 to 1906 he attended the Gymnasium in Konstanz, having secured a scholarship through Conrad Gröber, the Archbishop of Freiburg, who was also from Messkirch. Although he attended classes at the Gymnasium he lived in a hostel reserved for boys destined for the priesthood. In 1906 he transferred to the Gymnasium and seminary in Freiburg and in 1909 briefly entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). However he left after only two weeks, ostensibly on health grounds. Still with the intention of becoming a priest he enrolled in the theology faculty at the University of Freiburg. Although theology was his main subject he was also required to do some philosophy, though in a form approved by the ecclesiastical authorities. However he had already developed an interest in philosophy independently, specifically in the question which was to dominate his thinking throughout his career – the question of the meaning of being. The first stimulus to this came from the study of a book given to him by Conrad Gröber while he was still attending the Gymnasium in Freiburg – Brentano's *On the*

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*Several Senses of Being in Aristotle.*¹ And in his final year at school he came across a work by the Freiburg theologian Carl Braig *On Being: A Sketch of Ontology*.² From the first semester of his theological studies he immersed himself in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (having heard that Husserl was deeply influenced by Brentano).

In 1911 he gave up the idea of training for the priesthood and switched to philosophy. In 1913 he wrote his doctoral dissertation on the theory of judgment in psychologism and in 1915 his habilitation thesis on the theory of categories and meaning in Duns Scotus.³ Both of these works show the strong influence of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* – the first the influence of Husserl's critique of psychologism, the second the influence of Investigation 4, 'On the distinction between independent and dependent meanings and the idea of pure grammar'. From 1918 to 1923 he was a Privatdozent in Freiburg and also Assistant to Husserl, who had come to Freiburg in 1916 as successor to Heinrich Rickert. In 1923 he became an associate professor in Marburg and also began work on *Being and Time*, which was eventually published in 1927.⁴

¹ *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden bei Aristoteles* (Freiburg: Herder, 1862). English translation: *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, trans. Rolf George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

² *Vom Sein: Abriss der Ontologie* (Freiburg, 1896).

³ The text which formed the basis of his study was at that time attributed to Duns Scotus (1266–1308) himself though it has since been shown to be the work of a member of the school of Duns Scotus, Thomas of Erfurt.

⁴ As a result of the success of *Being and Time* and on the recommendation of Husserl he secured the chair at Freiburg in 1928. In 1929 he gave his inaugural lecture 'What is Metaphysics?'. In the same year he had his famous debate with Ernst Cassirer on the interpretation of Kant at Davos. Having originally been apolitical, Heidegger was attracted by Hitler and like many others saw in National Socialism a means to national renewal. This led him to accept the Rectorship of the University of Freiburg in May 1933. He resigned in April 1934. It seems that his romantic and rather idiosyncratic

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BEING AND TIME: AN OVERVIEW

For purposes of orientation and to avoid getting lost in the detail of Heidegger's study I will start by giving an overview in which I hope to capture the essence of Heidegger's thought.

Being and Time is concerned with the question of the meaning (*Sinn*) of being, not in the sense of what's it all about, why are we here, or even why is there something rather than nothing, but in the sense of what we should understand by being, what being 'is' ('is' in scare quotes because one of Heidegger's main contentions is that being is not a being, not even the highest being). Ultimately it is concerned with the meaning of being as such – rather than with the meaning of this or that being. But for the most part *Being and Time* is not *explicitly* about being as such but about the being of that being which I myself am. For reasons which will be explained later, he will call this being or entity 'Dasein'. To ask and attempt to answer the question of the meaning of being is to engage in *ontology*. Because reaching clarity about the being of Dasein is regarded as a necessary prerequisite of tackling the question of the meaning of being as such the analysis of the being of Dasein is called *fundamental ontology*.

The first half of *Being and Time* (Division One) is taken up with the attempt to give an account of the basic structures

version of National Socialism and his efforts to implement it resulted in friction with party officials. In his Nietzsche lectures between 1936 and 1940 Heidegger was critical of so-called Nazi philosophy and seems to have attracted the interest of the Gestapo. After the war Heidegger went before a Denazification Commission and was issued with a *Lehrverbot* (teaching ban). He began to lecture again in 1951. In 1966 he was interviewed by the German magazine *Der Spiegel* and gave an account of his Rectorship and the events leading up to it in which he seeks to play down his involvement with the regime. On his own instructions this was not published until after his death. He died on 26 May 1976 and was buried in his home town of Messkirch.

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of the being of Dasein. It is a *phenomenological* account in the sense that it is not a matter of inference or argument but of 'seeing'. Essential to Heidegger's notion of phenomenology is that there can be a seeing, not just of *entities* and their properties, but of *being* and structures of being. Whereas for Husserl the subject-matter of phenomenology is consciousness, for Heidegger the subject-matter of phenomenology is being.

The term he will use to designate the being of the entity he calls Dasein is *existence*. The important thing about existence, in contrast to other modes of being, is the understanding of being. To say that Dasein *exists* is to say that Dasein *is* in such a way that it understands being – its own being but also the being of things other than itself to which, as Heidegger will put it, it *comports* itself.

The basic structures of the being of Dasein he will call *existentials*. These are contrasted with *categories*, which refer to the basic structures of the being of entities other than Dasein. The most basic of the structures of the being of Dasein is what he will call *being-in-the-world*. Dasein is *in the world* not in the sense of one thing being spatially contained in another thing but rather in the sense of being *engaged* with things. Dasein is not a *subject* for which the world is an *object* over against it. It is possible for Dasein simply to behold things, but such mere beholding is only possible as a modification of engaged having-to-do-with things. The things with which are engaged are in a broad sense *used* or *employed*. Such entities are what he will call 'equipment' (*Zeug*). He speaks of such entities as being 'ready-to-hand' or 'available' (*zuhanden*) and of their mode of being as 'readiness-to-hand' or 'availability' (*Zuhandenheit* or *Zuhandensein*). This is contrasted with the being of things and their properties which simply occur, which he calls presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit* or *Vorhandensein*). Dasein is in the world in the sense of being engaged with

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things, but what Heidegger means by *world* is not itself an entity, not even the totality of entities (of what is), but the web of significance which makes it possible for entities to show themselves or be encountered. World has to do, not so much with what is, but with the *openness* of what is. He will speak of different modes of comportment to entities. Understanding of world is not itself a mode of comportment to entities but rather what makes comportment to entities possible.

The being of Dasein is always someone's being, or as Heidegger puts it, is always *mine*. This character of being a *self*, this selfness, is not to be understood in terms of a persisting non-material something which through its persistence and self-sameness unites the multiplicity of my mental states and makes them *my* mental states. The sense in which Dasein is a self is one which involves the possibility of *choosing* ways of existing. But that the being of Dasein is always mine does not mean that Dasein is something essentially private and isolated. The being of Dasein is being-in-the-world, but the world is not my private possession but a *shared* world. Being-in-the-world is being-*with*-others-in-the-world. Relationship to others is not just a contingent fact about Dasein, the fact that I am not the only one of my kind. Being alone is a possibility but it is only possible on the basis of being-with. Being-with does not depend on inference from bodily appearance and behaviour. But nor does it depend on something non-inferential like empathy. Empathy is not the bridge between one private subject and another private subject but is itself made possible by being-with.

Heidegger will speak of the being of Dasein being *disclosed* in Dasein (though he will also make it clear that this is inseparable from the disclosing of the being of entities other than Dasein and of being as such). The 'Da' (or 'there') in Dasein refers to such disclosedness rather than to spatial location.

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There are two basic modes of disclosedness – affectedness (*Befindlichkeit*) or mood (*Stimmung*) and understanding (*Verstehen*). In the first of these Dasein is disclosed in its thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), its sheer thatness. In the second it is disclosed in its possibility, its ability to be. In understanding how to be Dasein is *projecting* itself onto possibilities of existence. So he will say that the being of Dasein is thrown projection.

Dasein is thrown into the world (is always already in the world) and is always 'ahead of itself' in the sense of projecting itself onto possibilities. It is also engaged with entities *within* the world (given Heidegger's terminology chairs and tables, sticks and stones are *within* the world but not *in* the world. Only Dasein is *in* the world). These three basic features of existence – thrownness, projection and engagement, or what he will call 'concern' (*Besorgen*) – in their essential interconnection are what he will call 'care' (*Sorge*). Heidegger's answer to the question 'What is the being of Dasein?' is the being of Dasein is care – in this sense of 'care'.

In the various modes of comportment to entities entities are allowed to manifest themselves as entities. They are brought out of concealment or as he will put it, they are uncovered or dis-covered (*entdeckt*). What makes the uncovering of entities possible is the understanding or disclosedness of being. This has implications for the understanding of *truth*. Traditionally this has been understood as a relationship of agreement or correspondence between a statement and a state of affairs. For Heidegger truth is essentially unconcealedness (*Unverborgenheit*). Statements are not true by virtue of agreeing with something or corresponding to something but by virtue of uncovering something. But the uncovering accomplished by (true) statements, he maintains, is parasitic on the uncovering accomplished by engaged having-to-do-with things, which in turn is dependent on the disclosedness of being. So the

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statement is not the basic location of truth, and the most primordial truth is not the uncoveredness of entities but the disclosedness of being.

The structures of being which Heidegger's phenomenology of Dasein lays bare are structures of Dasein in what Heidegger calls its *everydayness*. Everyday existence is what he calls *inauthentic* existence. But it is also possible for existence to be *authentic*. To exist authentically is to choose and own my possibilities of existence and in this sense to *be* myself. To exist inauthentically is to have my possibilities of existence determined by something he calls *das Man* (the One or They). I do, feel, judge, think as *one* does, feels, judges, thinks. The relationship to others – being-with – is essential to existence (in Heidegger's sense of the term) but there is also a sense in which others – in the shape of the One or They – take away my being. Another aspect of inauthenticity is what he calls falling (*Verfallen*). This is absorption with – or lostness in – entities within-the-world. Dasein is disclosed to itself in its fallenness in a 'distinguished' mood or mode of affectedness he calls *Angst* (anxiety). This is unlike fear in that, whereas fear has as its object some entity within the world and is fear *for* some particular possibility of being, *Angst* has as its object not an entity within the world but the world as such. And what it is anxious *for* is not some particular possibility of being but being-in-the-world as such. In *Angst* the nothing (*das Nichts*) is disclosed. This disclosure of the nothing involves the entities, in which one is absorbed or lost in falling, 'slipping away' in their totality in such a way that they lose all relevance and no longer offer any support.

Authenticity involves a certain mode of comportment towards death, the *end* of Dasein, the possibility of the impossibility of Dasein. Death is not something which happens to Dasein. The being of Dasein is being towards death. Death

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is the possibility which is most my own, the possibility with regard to which there can be no deputising. Because it involves the severing of *all* relations to others Heidegger calls that possibility of being that is death *non-relational* (*unbezüglich*). It is also the most extreme possibility in the sense that it is the possibility of the impossibility of *any* comportment to anything and in this sense cannot be *surpassed* (outstripped, overtaken). Death also has its own kind of *certainly* but is indeterminate with respect to its *when*. Existing inauthentically, Dasein covers up and disguises these features of death. Existing authentically, Dasein faces up to death as the end of Dasein.

The notion of *conscience* also plays an important role in Heidegger's account of authenticity. It is interpreted by him as the call to authenticity. As ordinarily understood conscience declares me guilty – for what I have done and for what I have failed to do. It warns me of possible guilt for what I may or may not do in the future. And when my conscience is clear it declares the absence of guilt. But Heidegger wishes to maintain that there is a sense in which Dasein as such is guilty. Conscience discloses my guilt but it is *ontological* guilt. Guilt in the ontological sense is: the null being-the-ground of a nullity (*das nichtige Grund-sein einer Nichtigkeit*). What this means is that with respect to both thrownness and projection the being of Dasein is determined by a *not*. As thrown, Dasein has *not* brought itself into existence. It is its disclosedness but this is *not* something it has brought about. It belongs to itself but has *not* given itself to itself. It projects itself onto possibilities, but possibilities into which it has been thrown, in the sense that it does not create the world which defines the possibilities of existence open to it. It is the ground of its projecting but as thrown it is a null (*nichtig*) ground. The other aspect of Dasein's being, its projecting, is also null, determined by a

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not – but not just because it is *thrown* projection. Simply as projection it is also essentially null. In projecting Dasein is choosing possibilities of being. To the extent that it does this Dasein is *free*. But freedom as the choosing of one possibility necessarily involves not having chosen the others.

In recognising my ontological guilt and facing up to death I am also ready to decide how to act in the concrete situations in which I find myself. So Heidegger will also say that authentic existence is resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*). The German word is also chosen for its connection with the German word for disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*). Recalling that for Heidegger truth is essentially unconcealedness, we can say that resolute disclosedness is pre-eminently true.

The being of Dasein is care. Care can be authentic or inauthentic. But what is the sense or meaning (*Sinn*) of care? Heidegger's answer is that it is *time*. But time in what sense? It is not time in what Heidegger calls the ordinary or common sense. This is time understood as a uniform sequence of nows. On this understanding of time the not-yet-now becomes the now and the now becomes the no-longer-now in a beginningless and endless and irreversible sequence. In interpreting the being of Dasein in terms of time Heidegger is not making the obvious point that we are essentially temporal beings in the sense that we are in time understood as the sequence of nows. Dasein is not simply in time, its temporality is not what he calls 'within-time-ness' (*Innerzeitigkeit*). Nor does Dasein's temporality consist in within-time-ness combined with awareness of within-time-ness. The temporality that is distinctive of Dasein, and in terms of which its being is to be understood, is what he calls *ecstatic temporality*.

In the technical, ontological, sense Heidegger gives to it, 'care' designates the three principal structures of Dasein's being in their essential unity – projection, thrownness and

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concern. In projecting itself onto possibilities of being-in-the-world Dasein is '*ahead* of itself'. As thrown, Dasein is *already* in-the-world. As already in-the-world it is *bei* entities within-the-world, in the sense that it is involved with them, dwells with them, is absorbed by them. Underlying each of the three essential components of care is what Heidegger calls a temporal *ecstasis*. The three temporal ecstases in their essential unity are what constitutes the ecstatic temporality (or original time) in terms of which Dasein's being is to be understood. They correspond to the past, present and future of time as commonly understood but cannot be identified with them. That is to say, they cannot be identified with the no-longer-now, the now and the not-yet-now.

In its projection Dasein is coming-towards-itself in its possibility. In its thrownness it is coming-back-to-itself in its having-been (*Gewesen*). In letting entities within-the-world manifest themselves Dasein is making entities present or enpresenting (*Gegenwärtigen*) them. Ecstatic temporality is this unity of coming-towards-itself, coming-back-to-itself and enpresenting. Each of them is an *ecstasis* in the sense that in each of them Dasein is *outside itself*—though not in the sense that it is initially encapsulated within a private sphere of pure interiority from which it somehow manages to escape. By virtue of my ecstatic temporality I am already outside myself.

Ecstatic temporality is the sense or meaning of the being of Dasein. Heidegger thinks that if this claim is to be substantiated it must be possible to give a temporal interpretation of all those structures of Dasein's being uncovered in Division One. In other words, for each of the existentials it must be possible to show that it is grounded in a specific mode of ecstatic temporality. All three ecstases must underlie each of