

THE EARLY HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I read *Being and Time* (1927) together with some course lectures that Heidegger taught between 1928 and 1930 in order to clarify Heidegger's early account of freedom. Although the conception of freedom of *Being and Time* is different from his later account, I argue that they must be understood in terms of one another. In particular, the idea of "transcendental freedom" that Heidegger developed for the first time in 1928, can provide a richer interpretation of his earlier work. In the first two chapters, I explore this account of transcendental freedom. This is, I claim, an *ontological account*, for it goes beyond the anthropological analysis of Dasein and concerns the ontological question of the *meaning of being*. In this sense, I argue in the first chapter that freedom, understood as the "freeing" or "opening" of the groundless possibility in terms of which Dasein understands both its own self and the world, is the transcendental condition of our understanding of being and, consequently, the condition of our own self-understanding. In the second chapter, I explore another character of transcendental freedom, namely the withdrawal from alternative possibilities that in each case occurs in freeing *one* possibility. I claim that for Heidegger it is only by virtue of this withdrawal that Dasein can exist as a particular and constant being. In the final chapter, I explore the idea of freedom presented in *Being and Time* in the light of the account of transcendental freedom. I argue that, in becoming authentic, Dasein "appropriates" the groundless, null project of transcendental freedom, and it is in this appropriation of the possibilities that it has not chosen that Dasein can "become free."

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Introduction

There is an ambiguity in Heidegger's treatment of freedom in *Being and Time*. On the one hand, as Da-sein, as being-there, we find ourselves thrown into a world full of things and other people, in a situation that we have not created or aimed for. Not only that: we find *our own selves* in this situation not as something that we can shape at our will but rather as part of this situation that, just like every other aspect of it, is *already given*. Even our wishes and projects do not come from us: we find them already there, in the world. As Heidegger writes, Dasein "has *not* given itself to itself."¹ If he had left things here, we would have to interpret Heidegger's work as an example of a phenomenological-ontological demonstration of determinism. However, the existence of Dasein is more complex than that. In Chapter 6, Division I of *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces a very particular mood of Dasein, anxiety. When we experience existential anxiety, Heidegger claims, the world and situation in which we are, for the most part, entangled, sink into insignificance; those wishes and tendencies with which we identified ourselves vanish away, and we are left with the naked truth of our existence. Without the distractions of the world and others, the individual finds herself completely alone, left with nothing but her own self. This self, she soon finds, is not a substantial, objective being but rather a groundless, empty potentiality of being that she still needs to become. Existence is, for the anxious Dasein, a burden. Anxiety shows the fact that *Dasein is left to itself*. Dasein has not given itself to itself, but it is left to itself. This is not only a paradox of *Being and Time* but a paradox of existence itself. We find ourselves thrown in a world, identifying with a self whose origin we can never reach; and yet, at certain moments, we suddenly become aware of the individual solitude of our groundless being. Many questions arise here. How can a being that cannot create its own being be, at the same time, responsible for its

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 284/272.

being? What is the fundament of this self that, unable to “constitute itself,” still has to become itself? For the most part, we are entangled in a world, our wishes, our projects, and other people. Anxiety, that is, the awareness of one’s groundlessness, of one’s freedom, is a very rare occurrence. Can we thus say that we are only free in those rare moments when we are anxious? Do we even have the freedom to leave our entanglement and identification with the world and others and “become anxious”? We can summarize all these questions in a single one: in what way, if any, is Dasein free? This will be the guiding question of this dissertation.

I believe that the answer to this question is not found specifically in *Being and Time*. Rather, it must be elucidated in reading this text together with various lectures that Heidegger gave in the years following its publication. In particular, I will answer this question by reading *Being and Time* (1927) together with *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (1928), “On the Essence of Ground” (1929) and *The Essence of Human Freedom* (1930). To a lesser degree, I will also make reference to *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927) as a supporting source of *Being and Time*, and I will be using the lecture “What is Metaphysics?” (1929) to guide my reading of the later lecture courses. The works published between 1928 and 1930 certainly *go beyond* the ideas of *Being and Time*, but by doing so, far from leaving them behind, they enrich them and provide a new, more enlightening way of interpreting them. They do that, I believe, because these works are a completion of the unfinished project of *Being and Time*, whose second part ought to have gone beyond the anthropological dimension of existence discussed in the first half and explore the greater phenomenon in which this existence is possible, namely the phenomenon of being. In Heidegger’s terminology, these works leave behind the *ontic* analysis of Dasein in order to explore its *ontological* roots.

The pertinence of an *ontological* analysis for the question of freedom comes from the fact that this question acquires relevance in Heidegger's work not because it is related to Dasein but because it is related to the question undertaken in *Being and Time*, namely the *question of the meaning of being*, that is, the question of "how being becomes understandable."² Perhaps the greatest peculiarity of Heidegger's account of freedom is, thus, that the realm in which this question is asked is beyond the human being: it does not solely concern the being of Dasein but the *being of beings* in general. The question of freedom is an *ontological* question.

In order to properly grasp Heidegger's idea of freedom, we must get rid of the conventional use of this term. Thus, we must avoid understanding freedom as "free choice," that is, as an ability of an individual self to make its own decisions and shape its own being. As I will repeat multiple times throughout this dissertation, if we take freedom in this conventional sense, we have to say that Dasein is not free. Entangled in this disclosure of being that it has itself not disclosed, Dasein cannot determine the situation that it is in, and insofar as its own being *belongs to this situation*, it cannot determine itself either. And yet, Heidegger concedes that Dasein is in some sense free. For freedom is not, according to him, the power through which the individual becomes a master of itself, but the phenomenon of "freeing" or "setting free" beings; that is, the "opening" of the "clearing" in which beings show themselves, a clearing of which we are not the origin but *as which* we always already exist. As the "freeing" or disclosure of being, freedom is not simply an ability of *a* being; it is the condition of possibility of the self-showing of beings, including of that being that we call "Dasein." Therefore, Heidegger's account of freedom reverses the priority between freedom and the human being. Freedom, he says, is not a predicate of Dasein; rather, Dasein is a

² John Sallis, *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 91.

predicate of freedom³. For the existence of Dasein, as being-there, happens always already as this groundless clearing which we do not bring to existence and whose ground we can never reach. Therefore, the fact that Dasein is free –that is, the fact that its being has been “freed”– means precisely that it does not possess a “free will,” that it cannot, as the *being that has been disclosed*, disclose itself.

The fact that the question of freedom becomes an ontological question does not mean that the human being is out of the picture. Dasein is still the central focus from which the question of the meaning of being and, consequently, the question of freedom, must be asked. For Dasein is the place of freedom, the being through which freedom “opens” this clearing of being. According to Heidegger, freedom discloses the totality of beings insofar as it *transcends them* and opens a groundless possibility that lacks substance and determination. As we will see, it is only through the primordial “giving” of this groundless possibility that everything else can appear to us: things can only show themselves on the basis of this possibility that itself is not a thing. Heidegger’s point is going to be that although Dasein has not given rise to this possibility, it *exists as this possibility* or, to be more precise, it *is concerned about* this possibility. In other words, Dasein does not possess freedom, but it exists as the “freeing” of the groundless possibility in terms of which every being is freed. Therefore, although freedom, as the “opening” of Dasein’s existence, grounds this existence, Dasein is the being that is disclosed as the *care for this existence*. Insofar as beings free themselves always as relevant for this care, Dasein is the being in which the understanding of being happens. It is, in this sense, the ground of the understanding of being, a ground that is, nevertheless, given always already within this clearing, within this understanding whose origin it can never reach.

³ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 9.

In order to properly understand this conception of freedom and its difference from the common idea of “free choice,” we must avoid identifying Dasein with a psychological, substantial self that as such could have abilities such as freedom or understanding. Da-sein is its “being-there”; it is the disclosure of being that has been freed. In this sense, Dasein is not an entity that separates itself from a world; it is its understanding of this world, the disclosure of its own “there.” As Heidegger puts it, Dasein is being-in-the-world. When I (or Heidegger) use the term “self,” I am not referring to a substantial self. I am simply pointing out to the reflexive character of existence, that is, to the fact that this existence *is concerned about itself*. This reflexive character of being is not of secondary importance: being discloses itself *only on the basis of this concern*. Only in this reflexive relation of “taking care of oneself” does the world show itself as the context for this care. And yet, this world does not occur *after* I am concerned about a pre-existing being, separated from the world. Care only happens on the basis of an engagement with the world, that is, as an engagement between the possibility that I am and the world through which this possibility is understood and taken care of.

The analysis of freedom is what Heidegger calls an “existential” analysis. Heidegger calls “existential” the theoretical understanding of the basic structures of Dasein’s being that, although essential for its existence, Dasein does not necessarily have to grasp in order to exist, as opposed to the “existentiell” understanding of Dasein in terms of which this being actually understands itself and other beings. Since we are trying to explain not only how Dasein understands freedom but how freedom grounds and makes possible its existence as the being that understands being, our discussion will fall into the category of an existential analysis. However, insofar as the existence of Dasein *is its understanding of itself*, that is, its existentiell understanding, an

existential analysis of this being will necessarily be about its existentiell dimension, and it should thus begin and end in this existentiellity.

In the first chapter, I explain the transcendental character of freedom understood as the condition of possibility of Dasein. Freedom makes possible the existence of Dasein, I claim, in two primordial ways. First, in “giving,” “opening,” or “projecting” the possibilities in terms of which it understands itself, freedom makes possible the existence of Dasein as its reflexive relation to itself. This relation to one’s self is not a theoretical knowledge of one’s being, but rather a relation of Dasein to itself in which this being “is concerned about” and “takes care of” its possibilities. Second, Dasein “frees” a world, that is, it lets this world show itself on the basis of this free, groundless possibility. In opening the understanding of being, freedom frees the existence of Dasein as the being that understands being. Only because freedom, as the ground of the understanding of being, has the character of selfhood –in Heidegger’s terms, it has the character of “mineness,” that is, it frees, in each case, *my possibility*– can Dasein, as the being that is *in each case mine*, understand being. In this way, the relation between freedom and Dasein will become more evident: freedom is the ground of Dasein, for it is that in terms of which this being understands being in general as well as its own being. At the same time, freedom only grounds the understanding of being in grounding the understanding of *an individual Dasein*. Dasein is, thus, the being through which freedom discloses or “sets free” the understanding of being.

The second chapter explores a second character of transcendental freedom. Freedom is always the opening of *one* possibility –the particular possibility in terms of which Dasein attains its self-understanding and the understanding of being in general– and, therefore, the *withdrawal* from all other possibilities. By virtue of this withdrawal, Dasein exists not lost in an infinite number of possibilities but rather as a determinate, steadfast self. Thus, freedom makes possible the

constancy of the self. It does so, I argue, only insofar as it grounds or sets free the temporality of Dasein. This temporality is not an “objective” temporality independent of the finite Dasein. On the contrary, as the temporality in terms of which Dasein understands being, it is from the beginning a finite temporality, that is, a temporality that contains within itself the possibility of its end. In this analysis, the phenomenon of death will become relevant not only as the actual “end” of the human individual or as the “*existentiell* understanding” of this end but rather as a character of *transcendental freedom*, a character by which freedom grounds the self as a constant, steadfast individual.

After this long digression into Heidegger’s later works, I turn back to *Being and Time* and the particular account of freedom that is presented in this work. This digression is not accidental or unnecessary, for it is only from the explicit account of transcendental freedom presented for the first time in 1928 that we can properly understand the conception of freedom that Heidegger offers in his first book. In particular, I claim that the idea of freedom presented in *Being and Time* differs to some extent from the transcendental account that Heidegger would later put forward, but it can be best understood in terms of the latter. The account of freedom of *Being and Time* is not *transcendental* but rather what I call an *existentiell* account, for it refers to the freedom that Dasein *achieves* in a particular *existentiell* mode of existence, where its being is disclosed “in its authenticity,” that is, in its original groundlessness and individuality. The aim of Chapter 3 is to understand *existentiell* freedom in the light of transcendental freedom. In this analysis, we find that Dasein, as the “product” of transcendental freedom, does not become *existentiell* free in becoming a “master” of itself, but rather in surrendering itself to the original character of the disclosure of its being, which, grounded in freedom, is a groundless, thrown disclosure. Thus, the *existentiell* freedom of Dasein consists in “setting free” the *original disclosure* of its being that,

according to Heidegger, remains for the most part “covered over.” Because the disclosure of being is a freeing of being, what Dasein “sets free” in existentiell freedom is transcendental freedom, that is, the original groundless, null possibility that this being is concerned about and takes care of.

CHAPTER I: FREEDOM AS THE GROUND OF DASEIN

In this chapter, I explain Heidegger's *transcendental* account of freedom, according to which freedom is that which makes possible the *understanding of being in general*. This account of freedom transcends the limits of the human Dasein: the problem of freedom is not anthropological but ontological, for it is at the centre of the question of the meaning of being. Freedom is, primordially, the "freeing" of being. This does not mean, however, that our guiding question –the relationship between freedom and Dasein– is wrongheaded: this ontological turn, I argue, does not lessen the importance of Dasein for answering the question of freedom. First, insofar as freedom is the condition of the understanding of being in general, it is also the condition of Dasein's self-understanding. Because, for Heidegger, Dasein *is* its self-understanding, freedom is revealed as the *condition of possibility* of Dasein's existence. There is, however, a more important way in which Dasein is still fundamental for the question of freedom. Freedom is the "freeing" of the understanding of being; however, this understanding always belongs to the being that understands being –Dasein. As the "opening" of the phenomenon of being, freedom only gives itself through an individual Dasein, that is, through the understanding of being of *each* particular Dasein.

This chapter starts by giving an exhaustive account of the character of Dasein's existence. First, I describe the existence of Dasein in terms of this being's understanding of itself. This understanding is not a theoretical relation between a subject and an object but rather the relationship of care for one's being-in-the-world. Second, I consider Dasein as the being that, by virtue of its fundamental being-in-the-world, that is, by virtue of its fundamental *transcendence*, understands the being of beings in general, including its own being. With this aim, I describe the threefold *grounding structure* in terms of which Dasein understands being that Heidegger puts forward in his lecture "On the Essence of Ground." In this description, it will become evident that,

as the being that “grounds” the self-showing of beings, that is, as the being that understands being, Dasein has not created this understanding from itself; rather, it always finds itself already entangled in it. This understanding of being inside of which Dasein exists is not another being; the disclosure of being is groundless. The fact that the understanding of being is groundless means that Dasein is grounded in freedom. Freedom will thus be defined, in the second section, as the “opening” of the transcendent “space” of Dasein’s groundless possibility from which everything, including Dasein itself, becomes understandable. Thus, it will become evident that freedom does not belong to Dasein; rather, Dasein belongs to freedom as that which comes to be in the free opening of this possibility. However, I will claim, it is only in an individual Dasein that freedom expresses itself as the ground of the understanding of being, for freedom always frees an individual existence. Therefore, the relationship between freedom and Dasein will become clear: freedom is the ground of Dasein, that which makes possible this being’s being as the being that understands being; but, at the same time, freedom only expresses itself through Dasein, for being is only disclosed for an individual Dasein.

The main sources used in this chapter are the lectures and lecture courses that Heidegger gave between 1928 and 1930, in particular *The Metaphysical Foundations of Metaphysics*, “On the Essence of Ground,” and *The Essence of Human Freedom*, in which the transcendental character of freedom is explicitly stated for the first time. However, insofar as these lectures are particularly poor in their descriptions of the human existence that this freedom grounds, they will be read together with *Being and Time*, where Heidegger gives an exhaustive account of the existence of Dasein. Thus, the 1927 text will be used in the discussion of Dasein’s character of care and being-in-the-world. Reading together these works, I believe, will make possible a deeper

understanding of the complicated relationship between freedom and Dasein that I try to elucidate in this dissertation.

1. The Existence of the Self as Being-in-the-world

1.1 Care as the Being of Dasein

Heidegger's account of the being that we are (Dasein) is determined by his choice of a phenomenological method. Even though phenomenology, as the method of investigation, determines *how* we know things rather than *what* we actually know,¹ we soon find that the use of this method will have significant ontological consequences for the development of the question of being, and consequently for the development of the question of Dasein. In the Introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger states that phenomenology means "to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself."² Because "the phenomenological concept of phenomenon, as self-showing, means the being of beings,"³ that is, because the being of beings corresponds, for Heidegger, to the way in which beings are understood in phenomenology, this method is not one among many that one could use to answer the question of being. For "as far as content goes," he writes, "phenomenology is the science of the being of beings – ontology."⁴ Because the being of beings *is* our phenomenological understanding of them, any ontological inquiry into the being of beings must be phenomenological. Moreover, if the being of beings corresponds, for Heidegger, with the phenomenological understanding of being, then the question of the meaning of being is not only related but identical to the question regarding the understanding of being. As he observes in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, "the relation between being and the

¹ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 35/33.

² *Ibid.*, 34/32.

³ *Ibid.*, 35/33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 37/35.

understanding of being is so straightforward that what holds for being also holds for the understanding of being, i.e. such that being is identical with its own deconcealment.”⁵ For this reason, the analysis of Dasein as the being that understands being is central to answering the question regarding the meaning of being.

We can understand from the beginning the difficulty of attaining a phenomenological grasp of the being of Dasein. The being that *understands the being of beings*, that is, the being to which beings show themselves in their being, is Dasein. Therefore, the being whose being we are trying to understand is precisely the being that makes possible the understanding –that is, the self-showing– of any being. We seem to have thus two ways of considering the being of Dasein: as the being that *understands* being, that is, as the condition that makes the self-showing of beings possible, or as the being that *is understood* as it shows itself to itself. In the first sense, we approach Dasein “from the ground of the fundamental question”⁶ (of the meaning of being); that is, we regard it as the being that, by virtue of its understanding of being, makes possible the understanding of any being, including its own. In the second sense, we explore the character of Dasein as *one* of the beings that this being understands. Through this dissertation, it will become clear that these two ways should always be approached together. Dasein is, for Heidegger, its understanding of itself. As John Sallis puts it, understanding itself, relating to its own self-showing, “is Dasein’s way of being its Being.”⁷ This means that there is not a substantial self that can somehow be explained independently of Dasein’s understanding of it. However, this self-understanding is only possible for a being that has disclosed a “clearing” within which *being in general* can be understood. As Heidegger writes in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, “[i]f man did not possess an

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁷ John Sallis, *op.cit.*, 114.

understanding of being, *he could not comport toward himself as a being*: he could not say ‘I’ and ‘you,’ he could not be ‘he’ himself, could not be a person.”⁸ At the same time, this understanding of being in general, as that which allows for Dasein’s self-understanding, is intrinsically connected to this self-understanding.⁹ In this sense, Heidegger argues that “insofar –and only insofar– as Dasein exists as a self, it can comport “itself” *toward* being.”¹⁰ For, as we will see, the understanding of being is always articulated around the self-understanding of this being, insofar as beings initially show themselves as relevant for one’s purpose. Therefore, grasping the being of this being *as the being that understands beings*, necessarily entails penetrating into this being’s self-understanding, that is, into how this being relates to itself.

What kind of relation –or, in Heidegger’s terms, *comportment*– does Dasein hold towards its own being? And how does its understanding of itself make possible its understanding of every other being? It is important to take into account here that Dasein’s self-understanding “is not a relation of knowing between two beings.”¹¹ The relation of Dasein to itself is not a relation between a subject and an object. The self is not primordially given as some kind of “cartesian ego” or “objective thing” that, *qua* objective, contains thoughts, perceptions, etc., or which can be defined in terms of certain attributes or personality traits. Before any philosophical or theoretical attempt to thematize itself as the objective being that can be understood in the latter ways, Dasein understands itself, in *existence*, not as a “finished,” “objectively present” thing, but in terms of its *possible ways to be* that in each case it is *not yet*. In other words, Dasein does not understand itself as *what it is* but as *what it can be*. Unlike other beings, Dasein is never already itself; rather, it

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 88.

⁹ *Vid.* John Sallis, *op. cit.*, 94.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground, in *Pathmarks*, 97-135, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 109.

¹¹ John Sallis, *op. cit.*, 114.

must always still become itself; that is, it must *take care* of itself. In Heidegger's terms, the being of this being is *at issue for it*; Dasein is "entrusted with having to be,"¹² that is, with having to become itself. The comportment toward itself that defines the being of Dasein is *care for one's own Dasein*. As Dasein's way of being, care is not one among many ways in which this being can relate to itself: it is the way in which Dasein *is* itself as the being that *has to become itself*.

The fundamental being of Dasein as care can only be shown in a phenomenological analysis of Dasein's pre-theoretical comportment toward itself; that is, it can only be demonstrated by an analysis of the existentiell self-understanding of Dasein. This pre-theoretical Dasein, the being that is engaged in practical, everyday activities, never has a grasp of itself as the "thing" that is performing a given activity. In fact, the more one is engaged in the activity, the more one forgets about one's "self" as what is doing the work. However, this does not mean that the self disappears from the everyday being of Dasein or that it is some kind of theoretical illusion. As the being that exists *for the sake of itself*, that is, as the being that exists in "taking trouble concerning itself,"¹³ always in its way to become its possibility, Dasein comports to itself as care even when this comportment is not explicitly grasped. Dasein's everyday activity implicitly reveals the comportment of Dasein toward itself as care insofar as it reveals Dasein's comportment toward its possibility as the "for-the-sake-of-which" of any given comportment. For example, when I close the window because I notice that it is raining outside, I am caring for my own existence. I do not do so, however, as the "body" that is moving in this or that way, nor as a soul with certain attributes and abilities. But I am still taking care of my own being insofar as closing the window concerns a possibility of my existence, that is, insofar as the act of closing the window is itself for the sake of

¹² Martin Heidegger, "On The Essence of Ground," 121.

¹³ David Krell, *Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth, and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being*. (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1986), 18.

a possibility of my own being that I, as the being that has to become itself, must take care of and work for; in this case, my own shelter and protection. The comportment to the window or even to my own body can only be understood in terms of this original comportment to myself as the care for my own possibility. It is in this sense that Heidegger argues that Dasein's comportment to itself is the for-the-sake-of-which of everyday dealings and activities, and it is as this for-the-sake-of-which that Dasein primordially relates to itself. We can understand thus in what sense Dasein's self-understanding determines its comportment to other beings. My comportment to the window, for example, depends on the possibility that, in each case, I take care of. If I need protection from the rain, the window will be understood as that which gives protection from the rain.

This comportment of Dasein towards its own possibility is not a relation between a being and an "empty, logical possibility"¹⁴ that this being later decides to actualize. Dasein does not pre-exist taking care of its possibility as the being that "decides" to take care of this possibility. Possibilities are always already the for-the-sake-of-which of Dasein's activity in the world, and they do not pre-exist the engagement of Dasein with the world. This is because Dasein is not an isolated "I" that takes care of itself: its being is being-in-the-world. The possibilities that one is concerned about are always given in terms of the world. For example, the demand to take care of one's shelter only presents itself within a context where there is rain, houses and windows. The whole context with which Dasein engages gives itself in terms of a possibility of Dasein; but this possibility only finds its meaning within this context. Taking care and being concerned, as ways of being of Dasein, happen always in an engagement between Dasein and the world. Dasein does not have to take care of isolated possibilities but rather of whole situations that present themselves as demanding to be taken care of. Thus, Dasein can exist as this *care for its existence* only insofar

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 143/139.

as this existence has the character of being-in-the-world, that is, insofar as it exists as this “clearing” within which a totality of beings can appear.

In our constant engagement with the world, we are for the most part unaware of the possibility that we are taking care of. Our understanding of it is, generally, implicit. It *guides* our activity and determines our comportment to other beings, but for the most part we are not explicitly aware of it. For example, as I write these lines, I am taking care of a particular possibility, namely becoming a Master’s graduate and, ultimately, becoming a philosopher. Although these possibilities, which define my self-understanding, are that for the sake of which I am writing and therefore they guide my writing, I remain for the most part unaware of them as I am absorbed in writing this thesis. This self-understanding that, without making itself explicit, “guides” the comportment of Dasein as a whole and makes possible its comportment to other beings is what Heidegger calls a *circumspect* understanding. As circumspect, it is an understanding that gives itself always *in the world*. The primordial way in which Dasein is given to itself is, thus, circumspectively, as the “for-the-sake-of-which” that guides its activity in the world.¹⁵

As the being that relates to itself as the possibility that it has to become, Dasein “is always already *ahead* of itself in its being.”¹⁶ This means that Dasein, as care, always relates to its being as what it is *not yet*. For example, before I actually get shelter and protection, I already exist ahead of myself in this shelter and protection, insofar as I already exist *for the sake of* this shelter and protection in taking care of it. Dasein, as care, is always “beyond” its own being, for it relates to possibilities that it yet has to take care of, to possibilities that it is always *not yet*.

¹⁵ The term “activity” should be understood here in a broad way, for the dealings of Dasein in the realization of its own possibilities do not need to be “active” in the restricted sense of the word. In this sense, Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that if we want to use the word “activity” to describe the everyday dealings of Dasein “it would have to be so broadly conceived that activity also encompasses the passivity of resistance.” (*Ibid.*, 300/287)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 191/185.

Moreover, throughout our explanation of Dasein's comportment to itself as care, we found that Dasein is not only "beyond" itself because it understands itself in terms of a possibility that, as such, is always not yet, but also because its concern for existence is not a concern for some "I" that exists before its engagement in the world; it is always a concern for one's being-in-the-world, that is, for the whole situation in which one finds oneself. Dasein is only itself, that is, it is only *care for its existence*, insofar as it is in a world. The character of care has the character of being-in-the-world. As being-there, Dasein is not a being that pre-exists this world; rather, it is always the disclosure of this engagement with the world that Heidegger calls "care." It is in this sense that Heidegger claims that Dasein "gives rise to itself" –that is, to its relation to itself as care– "in coming toward itself from out of the world."¹⁷

1.2 *Dasein's Transcendence: Being-in-the-world*

The world that Dasein is in each case in is not simply the sum of the "objects" that one encounters outside and that exist independently of Dasein's understanding of them. The world, for Heidegger, is the self-showing or understanding of a totality of beings that is disclosed for Dasein. As we will see, in this understanding, the beings of the world as not presented "objectively," as beings independent of Dasein, but already in their *relevance* for the existence of Dasein. For example, the window is understood initially not as an object standing there but already as relevant for the shelter that Dasein seeks. Because the world is always the disclosure of beings for Dasein, there is only world on the basis of the disclosure of Dasein's being-in-the-world: "world is only if, and as long

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground," 21.

as, Dasein exists.”¹⁸ However, we also said that Dasein, as being-in-the-world, only relates to itself –that is, it only exists– in being already engaged with the world.

We seem to have arrived at a circle. On the one hand, it is true that the world only “appears” to Dasein as the being that understands being. It is only from the horizon of this being’s relation to itself as care that something like world, that is, the totality of beings understood in their relevance for Dasein’s possibility, can be disclosed. Thus, the disclosure of the world is dependent on Dasein. However, this does not mean that the world is “subjective,” that is, a projection toward the “outside” from a being that is, in some sense, “inside.” This being is itself only *outside*; it only “finds” itself, that is, it only becomes itself, in this world that contains beings other than itself. Dasein does not create the world; it always finds itself already in it. In his lecture “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger puts this paradox in the following terms: Dasein, at the same time, *grounds* the world and *takes ground* in the world. This means that Dasein makes possible the understanding of the being of beings –that is, it is the disclosure of world in which this understanding becomes possible– but only understands its own self from this world. It is in this circle of grounding that we find the key to understanding Heidegger’s account of freedom. Insofar as Dasein does not exist before its being-in-the-world, that is, insofar as it has to *take ground* in this world, this being does not have the freedom to create its own world or to shape the being that it in each case finds in this world as that of which it must take care. However, the fact that the way in which it finds itself in this world is as the groundless possibility that *has been freed as the ground of the world*, points to freedom, that is, to a groundless “freeing” of the possibility as which Dasein exists, as the origin

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 170.

of this being. As the ground of Dasein, freedom is *prior to Dasein* as that which discloses its being and the world this being is in. But before we get into this, we need to understand in what way Dasein *gives ground* and *takes ground* in the world.

It is in his 1929 lecture “On the Essence of Ground” that Heidegger defends the idea that Dasein, at the same time, *grounds the world* –provides an understanding of the world– and *takes ground* in the world –understands itself from this world. This grounding faculty, as an essential character of Dasein as the being that understands being, manifests itself in a threefold grounding structure in terms of which Dasein both grounds and takes ground in a world. First, Dasein grounds or *establishes (Stiften)* a world. Second, it grounds *particular beings* within this world (*Begründen*). And third, as a self, it *takes up a basis* in this world (*Bodennehmen*). Although this threefold grounding structure only becomes explicit in “On the Essence of Ground,” the description of Dasein’s being-in-the-world given in this short lecture is not exhaustive enough to gain a good grasp of Dasein’s grounding relation to the world. For this reason, the exposition of these grounding structures will be in the following subsections supplemented with the rich description of Dasein’s character of being-in-the-world given in the first chapters of *Being and Time*.

(a) Dasein as the ground of the world and innerworldly beings

What does Heidegger mean when he says that Dasein *gives ground*? To “ground” or to “found” something is, as John Caputo puts it, “to give a reason for what is founded, to explain it, to give it intelligibility.”¹⁹ Because we said that the most original understanding of beings, that is, the understanding that reveals beings in their being, is the phenomenological self-showing or primordial manifestation of these beings, the ground of something, as that which makes this

¹⁹ John Caputo, “Being, Ground and Play in Heidegger,” *Man and World* 3, 1 (1970) 26-48, 27.

something intelligible or understandable, will be, for Heidegger, that which “renders the appearing of the appearance possible.”²⁰ Thus, saying that Dasein’s self –i.e., its relation of understanding to itself– grounds something means that the comportment of Dasein to itself renders possible the understanding of that something. According to Heidegger, Dasein *gives ground* in two different senses: it grounds a world, in which beings are given as a “whole” and, at the same time, it grounds the particular beings within this world. Therefore, our task is twofold. First, we must show how Dasein’s self-understanding grounds its understanding of other beings. Second, we must explain how its comportment toward beings always happens in a world, that is, in an understanding of these beings as a “whole.”

How is the understanding of beings determined by Dasein’s self-understanding? Above we explained how, relating to itself, Dasein also relates to other beings. In the same way that Dasein’s self-understanding was not defined in terms of a relation between a subject and an object but rather in terms of a comportment of care for itself, we cannot presuppose that Dasein’s original understanding of beings grasps them as objects. In taking care of its possibility of shelter, Dasein closes the window and thus relates to it. Its initial comportment to the window is not a theoretical understanding of the window as an “object.” From the start, the window is understood and used in terms of its *relevance* for Dasein’s shelter. Insofar as it constitutes the way in which this window first shows itself, this relevance is not something that is attached to what the window is “in itself” (as an object) but rather defines the essence or what-being of this being. The practical circumspection of Dasein, which guides Dasein’s relation to the world, “understands beings primarily as equipment”²¹; that is, it understands beings in their what-for, in their relevance for a possibility of Dasein. Thus, the what-for of a being is determined by the possibility of Dasein that

²⁰ *Idem.*

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 163.

guides this understanding: every what-for refers to a *for-the-sake-of-which*, which is the possibility of which Dasein takes care. Since beings primarily show themselves in terms of this relevance, Heidegger says that “[r]elevance is the being of innerworldly beings, for which they are always already initially freed.”²² Now, we said that the ground of something is that which makes possible the manifestation of a being in its being. Because the being of beings is relevance, that which makes beings intelligible in their relevance must be the ground of these beings. Since we said that things are only relevant in terms of a possibility of Dasein, we understand how Dasein, taking care of its possibility, grounds the understanding of every other being in its being. Because relating to itself, Dasein has always related to something else as relevant for its possibility, in existing, Dasein has always already *grounded something* [*Begründen*], that is, it has already understood something as relevant.

Thus, we have shown how Dasein grounds or makes intelligible every being unlike itself. We still have to show how this being does not relate to each individual being on its own but rather to all beings as a whole. In other words, we have to show how Dasein comports itself primarily to a *world*. We said that the initial way in which Dasein discovers beings is in their relevance. However, nothing is ever relevant on its own. For example, the window is only relevant for Dasein’s shelter together with the walls, the roof, and the rest of the house: “relevance itself is always discovered only on the basis of a totality of relevance.”²³ Circumspect understanding, guided by the possibility of Dasein as the *for-the-sake-of-which* of relevance, always already discloses a totality of relevance within which Dasein can take care of its possibility. The disclosure of this totality is what Heidegger calls “world.” The world, he says, “is not something subsequent

²² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 84/82.

²³ *Ibid.*, 85/84.

that we calculate as a result from the sum of all beings.”²⁴ Rather, it “is unveiled and understood already in advance in every existent Dasein before any apprehending of this or that being.”²⁵ Beings can be understood in their being only insofar as they are encountered in a world, that is, insofar as a totality of relevance is pre-understood or pre-disclosed. For their particular relevance can only be understood within a context of other things that are also relevant. This means that the comportment of Dasein toward beings is primordially a comportment to them as a whole, as a totality of relevance, as a world. As the “for-the-sake-of-which” around which this totality is articulated, Dasein grounds or “establishes” [*Stiften*] the world. This does not mean, however, that Dasein first establishes the world as a totality and, only later, uncovers beings within this world. In the disclosure of a world, particular beings have always already been understood as relevant within the totality of relevance that makes this understanding possible.

(b) The being of Dasein as thrown: grounding as “taking up a basis”

In the previous subsection, we explored two of the three ways of grounding that, according to Heidegger’s “On the Essence of Ground,” belong to Dasein, namely grounding as the *establishing* of a world and grounding as the *grounding of something*. These are ways in which Dasein, as the being that understands being, *gives ground* or makes being intelligible. In this subsection, we will explain how, in the third mode of grounding, Dasein *takes ground* in the world, that is, it “takes up a basis” [*Bodennehmen*] in this world, it gains its self-understanding from this world. In this mode of grounding, the transcendent character of Dasein will be made more evident. Not only is Dasein always already “outside” relating to other beings: it also *gains its own self-understanding* in this transcendence. Insofar as Dasein’s being is defined by its very self-understanding, finding

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 165.

²⁵ *Idem*.

itself in the world is not a recognition of something previously existent but the coming-to-be of the existence of Dasein as care. The way in which Dasein in each case finds itself is, in Heideggerian terms, as *thrown*, that is, “always already in a definite world and together with a definite range of definite innerworldly beings.”²⁶ However, this being is thrown, that is, it finds itself in the world, *as the ground of this world*, that is, as the “for-the-sake-of-which” of every appearance, as that in terms of which everything is understood in its relevance. Therefore, Dasein is not the ground of the world because it “creates” from itself the possibilities from which all beings are understood but rather because it always finds itself already as these possibilities.

The idea of thrownness presupposes two things: (i) Dasein is *the disclosure or understanding* of its own Dasein, and (ii) this disclosure is always the disclosure of a being-in-the-world. Dasein is thrown because, as the disclosure of its own being, it can never be that which, existing before the disclosure, does the disclosing. As thrown, Dasein “never gets back behind its thrownness so that it could ever release this ‘that it is and has to be’ from its being a self and lead it into the there.”²⁷ Dasein does not decide first that it wants to get sheltered and, only later, takes care of its shelter: the world in which it first finds itself already discloses seeking shelter as something that one must do. Thus, the disclosure of Dasein is always the disclosure of a being-in-the-world. There is no pre-disclosure of a “self” before being-in-the-world. This does not only mean that Dasein cannot exist “before” the world, but also that this world in which Dasein finds itself constitutes this being’s self-understanding. It is in this sense that Heidegger says that we encounter ourselves “by way of the beings which we encounter as intraworldly.”²⁸ For example, only because one finds oneself surrounded by carpentry tools that present themselves as useful for making certain things

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 221/212.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 284/272.

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 171.

can one take care of the possibility of becoming a carpenter. Thus, Dasein *takes ground* in the world insofar as it has already gained its self-understanding from this world.

Because Dasein grounds itself in a world, that is, because its understanding of itself is always given in terms of the understanding of the world that it grounds, this world determines not only the particular self-understanding of Dasein (as shelter, as a carpenter, etc.) but also the *how* of this self-understanding. In Heidegger's words, the beings that Dasein relates to in the world *attune* Dasein. What does this mean? Dasein is always given to itself in a particular way, under a particular "how," which is what Heidegger calls "mood" or "attunement." Because, as we have said, Dasein *is its disclosedness*, these moods cannot be an "inner state" of Dasein but must be the way in which Dasein is "there," that is, the "how" this being is disclosed in the world. Using Heidegger's own example, the mood of "fear" discloses the "there" of Dasein "in its jeopardization."²⁹ In fear, Dasein's possibility, as that for the sake of which it is, is understood *as threatened*. For example, when I am afraid of losing my house, which is for the sake of my shelter as a possibility of my own being, my own being—that is, my possibility of shelter—is given to me in danger.

Heidegger's point is that this attunement belongs to the disclosure of the world. The innerworldly beings that Dasein discovers in the world determine the "how" of the being of Dasein as its "there." For example, I am afraid for my own shelter because fire is discovered as a threat. Because Dasein exists in a world in which things are disclosed already as threatening to its being, one can never choose the mood that one is in or know why one is in a particular mood, for "the possibilities of disclosure belonging to cognition fall short of the primordial disclosure of moods in which Dasein is brought before its being as the there."³⁰ I always find myself already in a mood:

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 141/137.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 134/131.

even if I try to “ignore” my fear, I can only do so insofar as my being and the world have already been disclosed under the mood of fear.

It has thus become clear in what way Dasein *takes up a basis* in the world. We defined ground as that which makes the understanding of something possible. Insofar as Dasein understands and attunes itself in terms of the beings that it finds in the world, it finds its ground in this world; that is, it *takes ground* in it. We seem to have arrived at a circle within the structure of grounding. On the one hand, Dasein is the being that makes possible the understanding of beings. For example, it is Dasein’s care for the possibility of being a carpenter that makes possible the understanding of tools in their relevance for the work-world of a carpenter. However, it is only from this world that Dasein’s self-understanding as care becomes possible in the first place: only insofar as tools are disclosed in the world as relevant for carpentry work can one become a carpenter. Dasein is the ground of the world insofar as the understanding of all beings is made possible by its self-understanding. However, it did not create this world or the understanding of being through which the world is disclosed, and it did not create, either, its own self-understanding, its own disclosure. In each case, Dasein finds itself as *having to* take care of a situation that it has not chosen; in other words, it finds itself as having to be the ground of a world that it has not grounded. Therefore, Dasein is the ground insofar as it is *released as the ground* of the world, the ground of the beings of this world, and the ground of its own being. Thus, the meaning of *taking ground* becomes more clearly understood as *taking over being the ground*, both the ground of one’s own self, that is, the ground of the being that one in each case *has to be*, and the ground of the world, as the possibility in terms of which every being is understood and thus uncovered. As the being that understands being and, in doing so, understands *its own self* and *the world*, Dasein has to become a ground that it did not “create.”

We can thus understand why Heidegger defines the threefold structure of grounding as “unitary” and its different moments as “equioriginal.” For the understanding of being to be possible, the three moments must always be given as a unity. The situation in which Dasein discloses itself and the world is always disclosed as a whole. In the “establishing” of a world, an understanding of the possibility of Dasein in terms of which the world is disclosed must already be available. For the understanding of this possibility, however, the world and innerworldly beings that attune and determine it must be already disclosed. And for innerworldly beings to be understood, the world from which they are understood, as well as the possibility in terms of which their relevance is defined, must already be given. What this unitary, reciprocal character of grounding ultimately shows in regard to the question of freedom is that Dasein, as the being that understands being, is not able to “produce” from itself this understanding of being, and it is not able, either, to choose the possibilities that it takes care of. For Dasein itself –that is, the relation to its own possibility– *already belongs* to this unitary understanding of being in which its own being, the world, and particular beings, are given together and in terms of each other. That from which its understanding of being is possible –namely its own possibility, its own self– is only given in terms of that which is to be understood from this possibility –the world. As the disclosure of its “there,” Dasein does not *create* its understanding of being; it exists already *as this understanding*.

In this section, we have explained the being of Dasein as its understanding of itself as *care*, as well as the grounding structures that make this understanding possible. These grounding structures have been shown to be *transcendent*: the understanding of the being of beings, as well as the understanding of Dasein’s own being, are only possible in the transcendence of a world from which everything gains intelligibility. Beings are only understood in their relation to the whole that surpasses or transcends them, and even Dasein only understands its own possibilities in terms

of this whole as the implicit for-the-sake-of-which of the totality of relations. Thus, the origin of this grounding structure, that is, the ground of the understanding of being itself, must have the character of transcendence. If Dasein is, as Heidegger claims, grounded in freedom, there needs to be a relation between the freedom that grounds Dasein and this being's fundamental transcendence. In the next section, I will explain how freedom is, as the ground of Dasein, the disclosure of the transcendence that gives rise to Dasein as a possibility. This transcendence has shown itself to have a unitary structure: Dasein grounds a world, its own being, and innerworldly beings in different ways, but they all come together in the unitary structure of the world. The understanding of being is always already the disclosure of this triple structure. In Chapter 2, I will show how, for Heidegger, freedom is also that which "holds together" this unitary structure, for it is the origin of the unitary temporality on the basis of which this unity is possible.

2. Freedom as the Ground of Dasein

2.1 The Negative Account of Freedom

In our analysis of the existence of Dasein as being-there, we found that this being has the character of *thrownness*. Dasein exists always already in a particular world and in a particular mood. One cannot exist before its being-in-the-world or before taking care of its possibilities, because one's existence is precisely this taking care of one's being-in-the-world. But if Dasein has not grounded itself, who or what "throws" Dasein into its "there" or, in other words, what is the ground or origin of Dasein? What are the conditions that make possible Dasein's understanding of being?

As a fundamental step in his "phenomenological *epoche*," Heidegger casts aside all theological accounts of the origin of the human being. The condition of existence, that is, the very condition of phenomenology itself, must be discovered from a phenomenological standpoint. A theological narrative according to which the individual was created by a transcendent, superior

being cannot be phenomenologically conceived. Scientific accounts of the origin of this being are also not pertinent in a phenomenological description, for insofar as phenomenology is ontologically prior to science, its claims cannot rest in scientific presuppositions. The ontological ground of Dasein as the being that understands being can only be understood from a phenomenological-ontological analysis. The ground that Heidegger *phenomenologically* discovers in the existence of Dasein is not a ground but precisely an *absence of ground* or, to be more specific, an “*abyss of ground*.”³¹ Dasein is *groundless*.³² This means, we will see, that Dasein is grounded in freedom. But before we explore the meaning of freedom as the ground of Dasein, we need to give an account of how Heidegger shows, in a phenomenological analysis, the groundlessness of Dasein. We discover the groundlessness of our being only insofar as the non-ground that makes possible our existence permeates this existence. Heidegger conceives the presence of this non-ground in the existence of Dasein in two different ways. In *Being and Time*, he argues that Dasein has a fundamental experience of the groundlessness of its being in the attunement of anxiety. This attunement will be further explored in Chapter 3. In his lecture “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger does not discuss anxiety at all, but he points to the presence of the abyss of ground of Dasein in the grounding structures in terms of which Dasein understands itself and other beings (that is, grounding as establishing, taking up a basis, and grounding something). In each of these structures, the absence of ground manifests itself as the *horizon* of this grounding, that is, as the condition of possibility of the understanding of the being of beings and, consequently, of our own self-understanding.

³¹ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground,” 134.

³² Although the phenomenological description of this groundless ground is original in Heidegger, his idea “groundlessness” follows the German mystical tradition that begins with Böhme and Eckhart. According to this tradition, the ultimate, primordial ground, that is, the ground that all beings –including God– share, is an Abgrund, a groundless ground on the basis of which everything has its existence. *Vid.* Sean McGrath, “Heidegger and Medieval German Mysticism,” *Heinrich-Seuse-Jahrbuch* 1 (2008), 71-100.

How is the groundlessness of Dasein present in the “establishing” of a world? In taking care of its possibility, Dasein “establishes” or “opens up” a world articulated around this possibility. This possibility is not something that Dasein already is; it is something that is *not yet*, something that one must always still become. Thus, this possibility is not a being among other beings, it is a no-thing. As this no-thing, this possibility is also not grounded in another being. For, as we have explained before, phenomenologically, it is not something that Dasein, as a constituted self, brings about, but rather that which in its very disclosure discloses the existence of Dasein. Thus, this possibility is a *groundless no-thing*. Understanding itself in terms of this groundless possibility, Dasein is always *not yet*, always *ahead of itself*. In Heidegger’s terms, it “transcends” or “surpasses” itself. And in this surpassing, in this “opening” of the “not-yet,” “the abyss is opened which Dasein, in each case, is for itself.”³³ Dasein is itself only in relating to this abyss, that is, only in taking care of its groundless possibility. Insofar as the world articulates itself around the possibility of Dasein, the world is groundless. Heidegger’s point is that it is only on the basis of this groundlessness that this world in which Dasein takes care of its possibility, that is, the world in which Dasein *understands being*, is disclosed. For, as we have seen, it is in terms of the possibility of Dasein, which itself is not a thing and transcends all things, that the totality of relations of relevance gives itself. Thus, the abyss of ground *that Dasein is* as care grounds the world.

This groundlessness manifests itself also in the grounding or understanding of the innerworldly beings that this being deals with in its existence. Because the understanding of beings is grounded in Dasein’s comportment to itself, particular things are always understood in terms of a possibility of Dasein. For example, the window is given as protection from the rain because its

³³ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 182.

being is given by its relevance for the shelter of Dasein, but it could also be understood at another time or by someone else as something to let fresh air enter the house. In this sense, Heidegger writes that “grounding always necessarily provides a given range of what is possible.”³⁴ This is why, he argues, the ground or essence of things, the reason why things exist, has been traditionally understood across the history of philosophy under questions such as “why this exists *rather* than something else, ... why something exists in this way *rather* than in another way, ... why anything exists *rather* than nothing.”³⁵ The “rather than” belongs essentially to the understanding of beings, for they are always understood in terms of a possibility, of something that is not-yet and thus contains the possibility of its own negation. Insofar as beings are understood from the abyss of ground of the “not-yet” of Dasein’s possibility, they are groundless: they could have been something else –for they could have been relevant in another way– or could have been nothing at all –they could have been absolutely irrelevant for Dasein and thus never be uncovered in the world.

The abyss of ground of Dasein is also present in the way in which this being *takes ground* in the world. Taking ground has the character of *taking over* being the ground, that is, of being released to oneself in order to exist as the ground. This means that Dasein is entrusted to become itself *not of its own accord*:³⁶ the being of Dasein is given to it as a burden. Dasein exists in each case as care for its transcendent possibility. However, this is not a possibility that it has produced. As the disclosure of its care for being-in-the-world, Dasein finds itself always already caring for this possibility. This is why it is important to understand the difference between a *groundless* being and a *self-grounded* being. Saying that Dasein is self-grounded would mean that the self exists, in

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground,” 133.

³⁵ *Idem.*

³⁶ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 284/272.

some way, before it exists, that is, before it is this thrown not-yet, and therefore that it can, as this pre-existent self, shape itself and decide over its existence. However, this is not the phenomenological experience of existence. In each case, we find ourselves thrown into a given situation, thrown into a given Dasein. Becoming ourselves does not consist in *changing* this situation or changing who we are but rather in becoming this thrown, groundless possibility that is disclosed to us as *what we have to be*. Dasein is not self-grounded but rather groundless.

The difference between Dasein being a self-grounded being and a groundless being is the difference between Dasein *being free* and Dasein being *grounded in freedom*. Saying that Dasein is groundless means that its being springs as the “opening” of this groundless possibility that demands to be taken care of. That is, it means that Dasein does not ground itself, and it is not grounded in another being; it is in each case “set free” as this possibility that articulates the disclosure of an existence that is concerned about itself. In other words, it means that Dasein is grounded in freedom. In this account, freedom is not something that the individual “possesses.” Dasein is not the being that sets itself free; it is the being that is in each case freed. Thus, one can never “own” the freedom of one’s ground: Dasein is *determined by freedom*. It is in this sense that Heidegger says in his analysis of Schelling’s *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* that freedom is not a predicate of man; rather, man is a predicate of freedom: “freedom is the encompassing and penetrating nature, in which man becomes man only when he is anchored there. That means the nature of man is grounded in freedom... [M]an is, insofar as he brings about this participation in freedom.”³⁷

³⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, 9.

2.2 *The Positive Account of Freedom*

(a) **Freedom as the Transcendental Condition of Dasein**

So far, we have only given a *negative account* of the idea of freedom as the ground of Dasein. From this negative perspective, the fact that freedom is the ground of Dasein means that Dasein is groundless, i.e., that its existence consists in its care for the groundless no-thing of its possibility, that is, for a possibility that is not a being and is not grounded in another being. However, Heidegger also provides a positive account of the phenomenon of freedom as the ground of Dasein. From a positive standpoint, freedom is not the absence of a cause but the free *opening* or *projection* of the possibility for the sake of which Dasein exists. If the negative account focuses on the lack of cause of this possibility, the positive account focuses on its *disclosure*. In this positive sense, freedom is conceived as the origin of Dasein's "for-the-sake-of," that is, as the origin of that possibility for the sake of which Dasein exists. But, Heidegger writes, "not in such a way that there was first freedom and then also for-the-sake-of." Rather, "freedom is ... one with the for-the-sake-of."³⁸ In what way is freedom the "for-the-sake-of"? What Heidegger calls the "for-the-sake-of" is the possibility that Dasein is concerned about in its existence, its *purpose*, a purpose as which this being understands itself and in terms of which it understands other beings. The possibility of getting sheltered is understood as Dasein's purpose, as what this being must pursue; and it is as relevant for this purpose that the window and the rest of the world are originally understood. Heidegger holds that "a purposiveness is only possible where there is a willing,"³⁹ that is, it is only possible as freedom. For only freedom can "set free" a purpose that in each case *exceeds*—or in Heidegger's terms, *transcends*—beings—including Dasein—; that is, a purpose that is always ahead, always not-yet.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 191.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

As the disclosure of the “project” that in each case “exceeds,” freedom grounds Dasein’s understanding of being, including the understanding of its own being. For only *as this exceeding* can Dasein understand itself as the possibility that, always ahead of its being, it takes care of. Moreover, in this exceeding, freedom *discloses a world* from which Dasein can understand beings as well as its own self.⁴⁰ In projecting the possibility of which Dasein takes care, the relational whole organized in terms of the relevance for Dasein’s purpose that we call “world” has always already been disclosed. In fact, purpose only gives itself in relation to this world. Thus, it is *as transcendence* –that is, in “exceeding” Dasein and in projecting a whole that “surpasses” beings– that freedom grounds the possibility of the understanding of being and the self-understanding of Dasein. Freedom “sets free” the understanding of being of the Dasein in “setting free” this “exceeding,” that is, in transcending all beings. It is for this reason that Heidegger claims in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* that “Dasein’s transcendence and freedom are identical.”⁴¹

Insofar as freedom, as the opening of this “excess,” is the condition in which being is understood, freedom cannot be considered one among many compartments of Dasein. Rather, all forms of compartment, that is, all forms of understanding, are only possible on the basis of freedom. As the disclosure of this “excess,” freedom sets free the understanding of being to which Dasein always already belongs as its own self-understanding. This means, once again, that freedom is not an ability of Dasein, but in fact that which makes the existence of this being, that is, its understanding of being and self-understanding, possible. Dasein is not the self that does the transcending; it is not that *from which* purpose originates. Rather, it is already this purpose that is not-yet, it is already the exceeding that has been disclosed. Insofar as this being is only this transcendence, that is, this relation to what is not-yet, Dasein cannot pre-exist its freedom: it cannot

⁴⁰ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, “On The Essence of Ground,” 126.

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 185.

itself “do” the transcending from the “inside.” As François Raffoul puts it, the excess that I relate to in relating to my possibility “is not *my* excess, in the sense that I project it from myself; it is rather an excess that *I am*.”⁴²

As the condition of possibility of Dasein’s understanding of being, freedom is the *transcendental condition* of this understanding. We said that freedom is identical with transcendence. Therefore, we have that transcendence is transcendental. Heidegger finds here a fundamental connection between these two terms –transcendent and transcendental– that, although etymologically related, had remained conceptually separated since Kant had established a clear distinction between them in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. For Kant, while the *transcendental* refers to the *a priori* conditions that make experience possible –or, in Heidegger’s terms, the conditions that make *the understanding of being* possible–, the *transcendent* refers precisely to the opposite thing, namely to that “which lies entirely beyond experience,”⁴³ that which belongs to the realm of “things in themselves” that can never be known. Thus, the transcendental pertains to an “immanent” subject that never gets to know the “transcendent.” By overcoming the duality between an immanent self and a transcendent world and affirming that the self is *always already transcendent*, Heidegger bridges the meaning between these two terms.⁴⁴ The transcendental still refers to the conditions of possibility of experience, but these conditions are not situated in the “inner” sphere of a subject. The transcendental is transcendent; not in the sense that it is “beyond” what the subject can know but in the sense that, as the possibility that is always “not-yet,” it *exceeds* or *transcends* all beings and, in this exceeding, makes possible the understanding of these beings. Therefore, the transcendental *is* the transcendent. Only because Dasein finds itself already in a

⁴² François Raffoul, *Heidegger and the Subject* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1998), 153.

⁴³ Norman Smith, *A Commentary to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 238.

⁴⁴ Thus, he says that “an elucidation and interpretation of transcendence may be called a ‘transcendental’ exposition” (Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground,” 109)

world, that is, in a whole of relations organized around a “not-yet” that in each case surpasses its being, is experience, that is, the understanding of being, possible. As the origin of this transcendent projection, freedom is the transcendent-transcendental condition of the understanding of being.

We are now in a better position to answer our question regarding the relation between freedom and Dasein. As the disclosure of the transcendence of a possibility and a world articulated in terms of this possibility, freedom allows for Dasein’s understanding of the world and of itself. In making possible Dasein’s relation to itself as care for its possibility, freedom is not an ability of a pre-existing self; rather, it gives rise to the self that *is* this relation. Thus, the self has not created its relation to itself; it is in each case this relation. This means that freedom is not an ability of the self, something by means of which the self gives itself a particular determination; rather, freedom is the condition of possibility of the self, that which makes possible its determination. The already-determined self can never possess freedom; it always finds itself *already determined* by freedom, that is, already being this groundless purpose, this possibility, this “no-thing” that has been already freed. In this transcendental account, the question of freedom transcends the realm of Dasein: it does not belong to the anthropological level of analysis but rather to the ontological realm that makes this anthropological analysis possible. For freedom is, as the original phenomenon of the disclosure of being, “the ground of the possibility of existence, the root of being and time, and thus the ground of the possibility of understanding being in its whole breath and fullness.”⁴⁵

(b) Freedom and Mineness

Freedom is the transcendental condition of the understanding of being. As such, it “precedes” and makes possible Dasein’s understanding of being. However, this freedom must not be understood as *a thing* that exists before Dasein and creates it, but rather as the “coming to be” or disclosure of

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 94.

Dasein as the being *that is this disclosure*. Freedom discloses the understanding of being as that as which Dasein exists. It “projects” the exceeding purpose that Dasein is as a being ahead-of-itself. Dasein does not create its purpose; it is always already this purpose. That is, it is always already the being-in-the-world that has been freed. But the “exceeding” possibility of freedom is not an abstract, universal possibility. It is, in each case, *my* possibility, *my* purpose: a possibility which I have not created but I nevertheless find as *my own*. Heidegger argues, in this sense, that the possibility to which I relate in care has the character of *mineness* [*Jemeinigkeit*]. As he puts it in *Being and Time*, “the being which this being is *concerned* in its being is always my own.”⁴⁶ I must become the ground of this being that, although I have not myself “created,” I in each case find as mine.

This does not mean that there is a pre-existing subject that attributes the possibilities that it “finds” to itself. Rather, the very finding of these possibilities as mine, that is, as that which I am concerned about, gives rise to my existence as this concern. Only because the freedom that in each case grounds my being has the character of mineness can I exist as this being that is concerned about this being that is *my own*. In what way does freedom have the character of mineness? In his lecture “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger claims that freedom “holds the for-the-sake-of-which toward itself.”⁴⁷ This “holding toward” refers to the fact that the possibilities that are freed always manifest themselves already as something to be taken care of. The possibility that freedom sets free has the character of care. It is in the “coming toward itself” of freedom that the individual Dasein, as the care for its possibility, happens. This “coming toward” is not a coming toward some reified being from which this freedom originated; only the “coming toward” gives rise to that to which it is coming back, for only in the movement of “coming toward” does the *relation to itself*

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 42/42.

⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground,” 126.

as *care* that this being in each case is, emerge. I am myself only insofar as I belong to this “coming toward itself” of the existence that has been freed. The relation of this freed disclosure to itself, which is a relation of *care for its purpose*, is the relation that I in each case am. This relation does not happen between the “clearing” of being that is disclosed and something else that lies outside of this disclosure: this relation is *the structure of this clearing*. Thus, only insofar as I, as this comportment to my possibility, belong to freedom, is the understanding of being that springs from freedom given in each case as mine. The understanding of being does not belong to me because I “create” it, but rather because “I am it, I am of It.”⁴⁸ As François Raffoul puts it:

I belong to myself insofar as I am delivered over to the being that I am. By going to this source of this enigmatic “coming to oneself,” the concept of *Jemeinigkeit* points toward such an initial possibilizing, outward the primordial appropriation through which being is given to me in order that I be ... its There. This self-possession thus rests upon the gift of existence.⁴⁹

We can see now in what way freedom grounds Dasein *as an individual*. The individuality of Dasein is rooted in the freedom that, projecting a possibility, holds this possibility toward itself and, in doing so, gives rise to the relation of existence to itself. Only because freedom is in itself individual—that is, only because it “comes to itself,” because purpose is in each case *my purpose*—is the “self” that emerges from freedom also individual. The very individuality of Dasein is only made possible by the individual character of freedom. Dasein is an individual only insofar it inhabits freedom, i.e., insofar as it exists as the being that emerges from the individuation of freedom in the turning of the projection toward itself.

⁴⁸ Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 46.

⁴⁹ François Raffoul, *op. cit.*, 221.

Insofar as freedom is itself individual, the understanding of being that freedom grounds must also be individual. The understanding of being belongs to each individual Dasein. It is from the understanding of the possibility that is in each case my own that I can understand the being of every other being. Insofar as the possibility for-the-sake-of-which every being is uncovered in its relevance has the character of mineness, being, that is, the understanding of being, has itself the character of mineness. Being is understood in each case as mine; it is *given to me*. Thus, mineness is not only a character of Dasein's relationship to its own possibility, but also of its understanding of being in general. As Raffoul points out, mineness is "a determination of Being."⁵⁰ It is in this sense that Heidegger argues in *The Essence of Human Freedom* that "going-after-the-whole" –that is, pursuing the question of the meaning of being– is "a going-to-the-roots of every individual,"⁵¹ that is, to the individual freedom from which being, always given in mineness, emerges. Freedom grounds the understanding of being always *through an individual existence*.

This does not mean that Dasein exists as a self that is isolated from the world and other people. Dasein is not a substantial self that can be separated from the world and from others; rather, it is this disclosure of a being-in-the-world and (insofar as this world already contains other people) being-with-others. Heidegger's point is not that the "I" precedes the "you" but simply that the disclosure of being, a disclosure *within which* the understanding of the "I" and the "you" are possible, has this reflexive character of *concern for itself* which he calls *mineness*. However, this concern is not a concern for a psychological "I" but a concern for existence itself, an existence that is already being-in-the-world and being-with-others.

In this chapter, I have presented Heidegger's *transcendental account* of freedom, according to which freedom is not an ability of Dasein but rather that which makes Dasein's existence

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 91.

possible as the disclosure of the concern for a being-in-the-world. At the beginning of the chapter, I pointed out that Dasein could be approached either as the *being that understands being* or as *one of the beings* that it understands. We have shown how, for Heidegger, freedom grounds Dasein *in both senses*. As the “freeing” of the possibility that Dasein is concerned about, freedom makes possible the being of Dasein as care for this possibility. Thus, it is in terms of freedom that Dasein acquires its self-understanding. Moreover, freedom was also shown to be the ground of Dasein *as the being that understands being*, for the freeing of Dasein’s possibility always sets free a context of relations organized around this possibility, a contexture inside of which beings are disclosed or understood in their being. Therefore, freedom was shown to be the ground of Dasein’s understanding of being. However, Dasein has not lost its relevance for the question of freedom. On the contrary, our analysis of the concept of *mineness* showed that, for Heidegger, *it is only through Dasein*, that is, through this being’s care for its existence, that freedom grounds existence. For the possibility in terms of which the understanding of being is disclosed is always a possibility of Dasein. The understanding of being is always dependent on the self-understanding that emerges in the free projection of Dasein’s possibility. Freedom only becomes the ground of grounding, that is, the ground of the understanding of being, in becoming, as a possibility, the ground of the particular Dasein that is concerned about this possibility. It is only through Dasein, as the being that in each case understands being, that freedom, as the condition of this understanding, frees beings. In this sense, Heidegger writes in *The Essence of Human Freedom* that

[h]uman freedom is the freedom that breaks through in man and takes him up unto itself, thus making man possible ... Seen now from the ground of his essence in freedom, something awesome [*ungeheuerlich*] and remarkable becomes clear, namely that man exists as the being in whom the being of beings, thus beings as a whole, are

revealed. Man is that being in whose ownmost being and essential ground there *occurs the understanding of being*.⁵²

⁵² *Ibid.*, 94-95.

CHAPTER II: FINITE FREEDOM AS THE GROUND OF FINITE TEMPORALITY

In Chapter 1, I explained how, for Heidegger, freedom grounds the existence of Dasein as care. However, there is an essential character of Dasein that was left unexplained, namely, the constancy and steadfastness of its being. Even though Heidegger rejects the idea that the self is something like a “substantial being” that remains constant when everything else changes, he acknowledges the fact that there is some “constancy” at the center of the Dasein that ties together all the experiences that I consider, in each case, mine. In fact, I can only “care” about my own being on the basis of this constancy. What is the ground of this constancy if not the existence of an unchanging substance? In this chapter, I argue that the constancy of Dasein is made possible by the particular character of this transcendental freedom. For insofar as the existence of Dasein is always the disclosure of *certain* possibilities and not others, the purpose of freedom is always a particular, determinate possibility. As the disclosure of a particular and determinate possibility, freedom withdraws from all other possible possibilities and projects the existence of a determinate and steadfast existence.

In the lecture “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger argues that the steadfastness and subsistence of Dasein “is possible only as temporality.”¹ Dasein is constant not on the basis of being an “objective thing” but rather on the basis of the particular “unitary” character of its relation to time. Therefore, in order to understand how freedom makes possible the steadfastness of this being, we must clarify the relationship between freedom and temporality. I will argue that, for Heidegger, time is not something “in which” freedom can disclose the possibility and existence of Dasein. On the contrary, temporality itself *arises from freedom*; freedom is the ground of time.

¹ Martin Heidegger, “On The Essence of Ground,” 132.

Freedom discloses or “sets free” time. In the first section of this chapter, I explore this grounding relationship between freedom and temporality. For this exploration, I rely especially on Heidegger’s 1928 lecture course, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, where he explicitly develops the relation between transcendental freedom and time. However, since Heidegger’s explanation of temporality is especially clear in *Being and Time* and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, I will also refer to these texts.

Heidegger’s understanding of time is fundamentally related to his account of Dasein’s understanding of being. Dasein understands being *on the basis of time*. As the ground of Dasein’s understanding of being, temporality is fundamentally linked to a finite, mortal being. Therefore, Heidegger maintains that time is primordially finite. In the second section of this chapter, I argue that it is because time is originally finite –that is, because freedom projects itself in an individual, finite self– that the existence of Dasein as steadfast and constant is possible. In other words, it is because freedom, opening up the possibility as which Dasein exists, has already relinquished every other possibility, that Dasein can exist as finite, constant and steadfast. In the lecture courses where he develops his new account of freedom, Heidegger does not link this freedom with the finite character of temporality that he had explored in the discussion of death in *Being and Time*. However, I believe that the discussion of death is still essential to understand the finitude of transcendental freedom. For this reason, I bring together the analysis of death and finite temporality of *Being and Time* and the idea of transcendental freedom developed in the later lectures. In this analysis, death is not simply the existentiell understanding that Dasein has of its own end; it essentially belongs to the transcendental freedom that makes possible this existentiell understanding. Only because freedom, in disclosing the existence of Dasein, also discloses the possibility of the impossibility of this existence –that is, the possibility of death– as certain, can it

disclose a *steadfast* existence. For only thus can it project a particular possibility, a possibility that is also *not* other possibilities.

1. Freedom as the Ground of Temporality

1.1 *The Ecstatic-horizonal Character of Temporality*

Heidegger's discussion of temporality is fundamentally linked to the question of being, and, therefore, to the question of the *understanding of being*. As he argues in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, "being and time are interwoven with one another. The 'and' signifies a primordial *co-belongingness of being and time from the ground of their essence*."² In this section, I will show that this common ground of being and time is freedom. However, before we explain this common ground, we must first clarify the relationship between being and time. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger claims that care –that is, Dasein's understanding of being– is intertwined with time in such a way that the disclosure of being –that is, the disclosure of the self, the world, and innerworldly beings– is only possible on the basis of a primordial *disclosure of time*. It is in this sense that he writes that temporality is "*the meaning of authentic care*" or that time is "the horizon of every understanding and interpretation of being."³ What is the character of this "temporality" in terms of which being is understood? And how does it relate to this understanding? According to Heidegger, if we want to understand the original temporality in which being is disclosed, we must get rid of the vulgar interpretation⁴ that regards time as something "objectively present," as a being among other beings, in particular as a "pure succession of nows, without beginning and without end."⁵ For him, time, as the horizon of the understanding of being, is not, itself, "a being";

² Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 84.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 17/17

⁴ The "vulgar" interpretation of time refers to the way in which time is commonly understood. According to Heidegger, this common understanding "has become explicit in an interpretation of time which reflects the traditional concept that has persisted since Aristotle and beyond Bergson" *Ibid.*, 17/18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 329/314.

in fact, he argues, we must not say that “time is,” but rather that “time *temporalizes*.”⁶ This “temporalizing,” according to Heidegger, has an “ecstatic-horizonal” nature: time is always “outside of itself.” Not because it goes outside from an “inside” but because its very essence, as a non-objective temporalizing, consists in “going outside,” in disclosing the “temporal horizons” from which beings become understandable. In order to properly understand the character of this ecstatic-horizonal temporality, we must understand it together with the understanding of being that its disclosure makes possible; that is, we must understand it in relation to care.

Care is Dasein’s way of understanding or relating to being. This understanding has the character of being-ahead-of-itself, already-in a world, together-with innerworldly beings.⁷ Dasein takes care of a possibility that it is not-yet (it is ahead-of-itself) in engaging with a world (already-in a world) and the particular beings within this world (together-with innerworldly beings). Heidegger’s point is that the components of this understanding are only possible on the basis of the original temporality in which they are disclosed. How is this so? The first component of care is being-ahead-of-itself. Dasein is, we said, always relating to –taking care of– a possibility that it is *not yet*, a possibility that it must still *become*. This means that Dasein’s relation to itself is a relation to the future. This future should not be understood in the ordinary sense, as something that *at some point* will be, but for now, it is not here yet. The originally disclosed future, the future that makes possible Dasein’s understanding of itself ahead of itself, is the “coming in which Dasein comes toward itself”⁸ as the possibility of which it takes care. It is, in other words, the disclosure of the “being ahead” in its very character of *being ahead*, and not in terms of a “future time” that will at some point become a “now.” It is only in Dasein’s “coming toward” itself as its futural

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 204.

⁷ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 186/192.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 325/311.

possibility that the future “temporalizes” itself and makes possible the understanding of Dasein’s being as care, that is, as ahead-of-itself. Because the future is always this “coming,” the futural possibility in terms of which Dasein understands itself is, as William Blattner writes, “a possibility that can never be actual, a future that can never be present.”⁹ The futural possibility that constitutes one’s self-understanding must remain futural as long as one still relates to one’s being in terms of this possibility. For example, a mother can only remain a mother as long as she projects the possibility of her motherhood into the future so that she can “take care” of becoming a mother or, as Blattner would put it, *press ahead* into becoming a mother.¹⁰ The possibility of being a mother is not an “end goal” that one day will be realized; it is the horizon which guides the activities that make one a mother. In fact, the moment a woman stops pressing ahead into the possibility of being a mother, that is, the moment she stops taking care of being a mother, she stops being a mother altogether.

The second component of care, being already in the world, can be explained in terms of Dasein’s primordial relation to the past. Being already in the world means that Dasein is *thrown*, that is, that it does not *create* its own self but rather *finds* itself already attuned by the world that it is in. Thus, the possibilities that Dasein presses ahead into are not only futural but also past: insofar as Dasein is always thrown into its possibilities, these possibilities are the way in which Dasein finds itself *as what it already was*, that is, as its past, which Heidegger more explicitly characterizes as the having-been of Dasein. In Heidegger’s words, “taking over thrownness ... is possible only in such a way, that futural Dasein can be its ownmost ‘how it always already was,’ that is, its ‘having-been.’”¹¹ We can understand this through the example of being a mother. While in order

⁹ William Blattner, “Temporality,” in *A Companion to Heidegger*, eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathal (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 314.

¹⁰ *Vid. Idem.*

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 325/311.

to be a mother one needs to project the possibility of motherhood into the future, as something that one is always not-yet, it is no less true that one can only be a mother if one has already “found oneself” as a mother, already concerned about the kind of things that a mother is concerned about in taking care of this possibility. This “finding oneself already as being ...,” that is, finding oneself *already in a world*, is the original meaning of the past as “having-been.” Thus, if we want to understand the proper existential meaning of this past, we must not fall into an ordinary interpretation of time for which the past would be something that at some point was present but is not anymore. It is undoubtedly true that there is a moment when one starts being a mother, but from this first moment, the woman *finds herself* thrown into motherhood, attuned to being a mother and to the world of a mother. The possibility of being a mother is always what one *has been*, what one is thrown into. As Blattner puts it, “at every moment that an attunement characterizes me, even at its first moment, I am already thrown into it; it is already past.”¹²

Dasein understands itself *together with innerworldly beings* in terms of the present or, more particularly, in terms of *making things present* in their being. In taking care of its own possibility, Dasein discloses a world from which it can understand beings in their being, that is, in their relevance. The uncovering of beings in their relevance for the whole context in which Dasein exists is what Heidegger means by making present. This making present belongs as originally to the self-understanding of Dasein as the future and the past. A mother can only be a mother in making present a world full of relevant things for being a mother, such as equipment to take care of the baby or dangerous things that threaten the child’s safety. This world of relevant things belongs to her subjectivity as much as the possibility in terms of which she understands herself, for it is only in this present world that she can understand herself as a mother and become one. This

¹² William Blattner, *op. cit.*, 315.

understanding of the present is far from the vulgar interpretation that regards it as a succession of “nows.” What is in each case made present is not a “now” but rather “the actual situation of the there in such a way that existence circumspectly takes care of the factual things at hand in the surrounding world in action.”¹³

After explaining the Heideggerian understanding of primordial time, that is, the time in which the understanding of being (care) is possible, we are in a better position to understand why he calls this conception of time “ecstatical-horizonal.” From a phenomenological perspective, the experience of the future, past, and present is not that of objects that one encounters in the world. The future is the “coming toward” oneself of the possibility that one takes care of, the past is the “coming back” to what one has been, and the present is the “staying with” the beings discovered in the world.¹⁴ Coming-back, coming-towards and staying-with are not the way in which we understand something like a pre-given “objective time” but rather the essential character of time itself. The coming-toward, coming-back-to and staying-with define the original meaning of temporality. “As determined by this toward, back-to, and with,” Heidegger says, “temporality is *outside itself*.”¹⁵ This does not mean that there is an “inside” of time. As Heidegger puts it, time “is nothing but the outside-itself pure and simple.”¹⁶ For, again, temporality is already the “outside” of the coming-back, coming-toward and staying-with. It is in this sense that, recovering the Greek expression *ekstatikon*, which means “stepping-outside-self,”¹⁷ he characterizes time as *eks-tatic*. Each of the “moments” of temporality, that is, the coming-toward, coming-back, and

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 326/311.

¹⁴ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 266.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁷ *Idem.*

staying-with, are thus “ecstases” of temporality, that is, “directions” in which time goes outside of itself.

In what way is time, as ecstatic, “horizontal”? By virtue of its ecstatic character, time is always an opening towards..., a removal to... As removals to..., Heidegger argues, each of the ecstases has a “*horizon* which is prescribed by the mode of the removal”¹⁸ The horizons are the “wither” that the ecstases open up in their ecstatic projection, “the *open expanse* toward which remotion as such is outside itself.”¹⁹ They are the “space” that the coming-toward, coming-back and staying-with disclose. As the opened *topos* of time, these horizons are that *in terms of which the understanding of being is possible*. For example, the ecstasis of the future, as the coming-toward pure and simple, opens up the horizon in which Dasein can be “ahead of itself,” the horizon in which it can relate to its possibility as futural. This horizon is not, itself, the particular possibility that Dasein understands as futural but rather “futurity as such.”²⁰ In the same way, the horizon of the past makes possible Dasein’s finding of what has-been, and the horizon of the present allows for the situation, that is, the context or world, to be uncovered as such.

The horizontal schema of temporality is that on the basis of which Dasein can relate to its possibility as future and having-been, and, consequently, that in terms of which the disclosedness of the world is possible. This horizontal schema is thus the condition of possibility of Dasein’s self-understanding and, therefore, the condition of possibility of its understanding of being in general. In this sense, Heidegger claims that “*we understand being from the original horizontal schema of the ecstases of temporality.*”²¹ In Chapter 1, I explained how, for Heidegger, the understanding of being of Dasein is possible in a threefold structure of grounding. I underlined, then, the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 208.

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 307.

transcendent character of this structure: the understanding of being is possible only in the “exceeding” of the possibility of Dasein in terms of which the world is disclosed and understood. Heidegger’s point is that this transcendence is always already a temporal ecstatic opening. The relationship of Dasein to itself as care is only possible in the exceeding of the future that one is not yet. The uncovering of innerworldly beings is only possible upon the understanding of the “presence” of the present. And finding oneself as thrown, that is, as what one has always been, is only possible in terms of the horizon of the past, that is, in terms of an understanding of what one has been. Thus Heidegger claims that “[t]he *ecstatic character of time makes possible the Dasein’s specific overstepping character, transcendence, and thus also the world.*”²² As the being that understands itself from this transcendence, that is, as a being that exists in stepping beyond itself (in coming towards itself, coming back to itself, and staying with itself), Dasein itself is grounded in the primordial *eks-tasis* of primordial temporality: “[i]n its ecstatic character, temporality is the condition of constitution of the Dasein’s being.”²³

In Chapter 1, I claimed that the transcendence of the world has a *unitary* structure in terms of which the understanding of being is possible. The threefold structure of grounding is not merely the sum of its different moments; rather, the three modes of grounding (establishing, taking up a basis and grounding something) are always given together in the disclosure of the world. Dasein always understands itself in understanding the world and its innerworldly beings. In fact, as we have seen, Dasein’s self-understanding is only possible on the basis of the understanding of the world that this self-understanding grounds. Heidegger argues that this equi-originality between the different moments of grounding is only possible insofar as the horizons of temporality do not follow each other in a linear sequence but always temporalize themselves as a unity: “the

²² *Ibid.*, 302.

²³ *Ibid.*, 267.

ecstematic unity of the horizon of temporality is nothing other than the temporal condition for the possibility of *world* and of world's essential belonging to *transcendence*.”²⁴ For the vulgar understanding of time, the three dimensions of time can never be given in a unitary way: the past is something that is not there anymore, the future is something that is not there yet, and the present is a succession of “nows” that constitute, in each case, what is there. But in the Heideggerian understanding of time, it is not the case that only the present is “there.” Rather, past, future, and present –that is, having-been, future, and making-present– constitute together the unity of the “there” that Dasein in each case is in existing. The being of Dasein as the “there” is the potentiality-of-being –which, as a potentiality, is projected onto the future– that, as thrown, Dasein finds always as what it has already been –that is, as past– and of which it always already takes care in making present a world of relevant objects for becoming itself. The unitary character of the temporal horizons does not happen only after each ecstasis has been given on its own. As James Luchte points out, the horizons of temporality “are not ‘detachable.’”²⁵ The three ecstases are always disclosed together in the disclosure of the whole situation that Dasein finds itself in. They constitute one single horizon upon which Dasein can relate to itself and to the world. For this reason, the three ecstases are always understood together and in terms of each other: the future potentiality-of-being always already makes present the world in which Dasein is thrown as what it has been; what this being, in thrownness, finds as what it has been is always the future potentiality-of-being that makes present; and what it finds in its present is always given in terms of its relevance for the futural potentiality-of-being that it has been. Temporality is thus defined as the “unified phenomenon of the future that makes present in the process of having-been.”²⁶ This

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 208.

²⁵ James Luchte, *Heidegger's Early Philosophy: The Phenomenology of Ecstatic Temporality* (London: Continuum, 2008), 57.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 326/311.

unity is not “supported” in an objective thing from which the three ecstases arise. Rather, “the unity of the ecstases is itself ecstatic”²⁷: it discloses itself already as the “outside” that goes in the three directions. Only in terms of this primordial, ecstatically unified temporality can the simultaneity of the different dimensions of care and grounding be understood. The necessary simultaneity of the “ahead-of-oneself,” “already in the world,” and “together with innerworldly beings,” and, in consequence, the relation between the kinds of grounding as “establishing,” “taking up a basis,” and “grounding something,” is possible only insofar as past, present, and future do not follow each other in a line of “nows” but always temporalize as a unity. In other words, transcendence as such, as this unitary understanding of being in terms of a world, is only possible on the basis of the primordial unity of ecstatic temporality. In this sense, Heidegger writes that

...projection of world and absorption by beings, as ways of grounding, belong in each case to a *single* temporality insofar as they co-constitute its temporalizing. Yet just as the future ... temporalizes only insofar as having-been and present also –as intrinsic to time– temporalize in the specific unity of time, so too those ways of grounding that spring from transcendence display this connection.²⁸

Although the three ecstases of temporality temporalize themselves always together, Heidegger claims that the future has a certain priority over the other ecstases.²⁹ For although past, present and future arise together in the unitary horizon in which the being of beings can be understood, the ecstases of the past and the present are always given in terms of the ecstasis of the future. We have seen that the uncovering of beings in their relevance is always given in terms of Dasein’s relation to itself as care: only insofar as I relate to my shelter as the possibility of which I take care and as the for-the-sake-of-which of my dealings in the world, can the window show itself, in its being, as

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 207.

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, “On The Essence of Ground,” 128.

²⁹ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 329/314.

relevant for this shelter. Moreover, we have also seen that the way in which Dasein, as thrown, finds itself, is not as an objective, finished thing, but rather as the possibility that one has to be, a possibility that is always ahead of oneself. A mother, we said, finds herself concerned about being a mother; she finds herself *having to be* a mother. Therefore, both the world that is made present and the possibility as which Dasein in each case finds itself, are given in terms of the possibility that Dasein is not-yet, the possibility that comes-toward as that which Dasein must become. In other words, both the present and the past are understood in terms of the futurity of Dasein. It is in terms of the futural possibility of Dasein that the world is *made present*, and it is as this futural possibility that Dasein finds itself as thrown, that is, as what it *has been*. Thus, although the past (as having-been) and the present (as making present) are always given together with the future, they are given *in terms of this future*. In Heidegger's terms, they *temporalize themselves out of the future*.³⁰ Therefore, the future has priority over the other ecstases not because it comes "first" but rather because "the ecstatic whole of temporality, and hence the unity of horizon, is determined primarily out of the future."³¹

1.2 *Freedom as the Ground of Ecstatic-horizonal Temporality*

What is the relevance of the discussion of temporality for our guiding question, namely, the relationship between freedom and Dasein? In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Heidegger claims that the ecstatic-horizonal temporality in which Dasein understands itself *is grounded in freedom*, for it "temporalizes itself" out of the "for-the-sake-of" of freedom.³² This means that the horizon of time is *given by freedom*: as the disclosure of Dasein's possibility, freedom opens up the horizon of time in which being is understood. What does this mean? We said that temporality

³⁰ *Vid. Idem.*

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 211.

³² *Vid. Ibid.*, 213.

temporalizes itself primordially out of the future. This future is not a subsequent “now” but the coming-toward in which the possibility of Dasein is understood in care. This possibility is a groundless possibility; it is the purpose that freedom “projected ahead” in setting free the existence of Dasein. Heidegger’s point is that freedom does not “plan ahead” into a future that pre-exists this “planning ahead.” Rather, there is a future only insofar as freedom has always already, insofar as Dasein exists, “planned ahead.” For only because freedom has, in setting free a purpose, *transcended* all beings and projected what is “not-yet,” can the ecstatic horizon of the future open up *as this transcendence*, that is, as the *outside*, the *not-yet* that comes toward as the *futurity* of Dasein. In opening the horizon of the future as this coming-towards, freedom has always already also opened up the unitary horizon of temporality. For as long as the horizon of the future has been projected as the coming-toward of the possibility, this possibility that comes-toward has already been found as what *has been*, and it has already *made present* a world understood in terms of it. Thus, it is from the primordial projection of freedom’s for-the-sake-of that the horizons of temporality open up as the *topos* of this “for-the-sake-of,” of this “not-yet.” As the ground of the understanding of being, freedom is also *the ground of time*.

The fact that freedom is the ground of time means, negatively, that time is groundless. The groundlessness of time can be phenomenologically attested in the recognition of its ecstatic character. What Heidegger calls the “temporalizing” of time is not something that happens to a being – “[t]emporality ‘is’ not a *being* at all.”³³ Rather, this temporalizing, as the pure emptiness of the coming-toward, coming-back, and staying-with, is in itself the essence of time. Therefore, time is not something that has its ground or origin in another being; it arises spontaneously, already *as temporalizing*, that is, already as the for-the-sake-of that comes-toward in the future. The

³³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 328/314.

horizons of time are *set free* in the original disclosure of the groundless existence of Dasein. They belong to the abyss of ground of Dasein, that is, they are that no-thing upon which Dasein's understanding of being is possible.

Therefore, the transcendental freedom that "frees" temporality is not a freedom that Dasein possesses as an ability but rather that which makes possible its very existence as a temporal being. In the same way that we do not produce our understanding of being but exist already in it, we do not create the time that grounds this understanding. The self does not exist before the coming-toward, coming-back and staying-with of primordial temporality; rather, it exists *as* this coming-toward, coming-back and staying-with. For example, the horizon of the future is not something that the self "opens" when it makes plans for itself. *The self is already its projects*; it is already its coming-toward-itself as futural, that is, it is its coming-toward-itself as the project of which it must take care. Therefore, Dasein cannot produce an understanding of the future (or of the past or present) from its own being, for its own being, its own self-understanding, is already an understanding of the future, not as something that it has created but as something in which it dwells. This means, again, that the transcendental freedom from which time arises is not an "ability" of Dasein: freedom is the ground of Dasein as the being that understands being from a horizon of temporality.

The fact that time is that which grounds and makes possible the being of Dasein does not mean, however, that time can exist independently of Dasein. Just like the understanding of being that time makes possible only comes to be as the understanding of being of a particular Dasein, the temporality that grounds this understanding only temporalizes itself in the disclosure of an individual existence. Time, like being, has the character of "mineness": the opening of the horizons of temporality is in each case the opening of *my* horizons; the coming-toward, coming-back, and

staying-with belong in each case to me. For that which comes-toward is in each case *my* possibility, that is, my purpose, my exceeding, my ownmost not-yet. In fact, only insofar as these horizons belong to me can I relate to the possibility that comes toward as *my* possibility. It is in this sense that Heidegger writes in *The Essence of Human Freedom* that

...in the essence of time itself there lies individualization, but not as the particularization of a universal, for time is never primordially universal. Time is always in each case my time, my and your and our time, not in the external sense of private bourgeois existence, but from the ground of the essence of existence, which is in each case individualized to itself.³⁴

There is not a “universal time” that precedes the existence of Dasein and makes possible this existence. Rather, time temporalizes itself always already as the ground of a particular existence, as the ground of a particular understanding of being, and thus as the ground of a particular self-understanding, of a particular self. Insofar as the individual is always a *finite being*, that is, a being determined by a finite temporality, finite temporality is more original than –and, in fact, makes possible– something like a universal, infinite time. As Heidegger claims in *Being and Time*, “only because primordial time is *finite* can ‘derivative’ time temporalize itself as *infinite*.”³⁵ That is, only because time has been disclosed in this finite, individual Dasein, can the infinite, universal time be understood. In the next section, I analyze the character of this finite temporality.

2. Freedom as the Ground of Dasein’s *Finite* Temporality

2.1 *The Primordiality of Finite Temporality*

As the ground of the understanding of being of this particular, finite being, time is primordially finite. The finitude of Dasein, and therefore the finitude of time itself, cannot be ontologically

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 91.

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 331/316.

understood by simply stating that this being “ends,” that is, that there will be a moment in the future when this being will not exist anymore. This idea would be inconsistent with the original ecstatic-horizonal character of temporality, in which the future is not a moment that will happen at some point but the coming-toward in terms of which Dasein relates to its possibility. Death, as a “future event,” belongs to the future that *comes toward* us: as long as we exist, we are already dying. Death belongs to the futural possibility in terms of which we understand ourselves. “Just as Dasein constantly already *is* its not-yet as long as it is,” Heidegger writes, “it also always already *is* its end.”³⁶ For this reason, he continues, “the ending that we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify a being-at-an-end of Dasein but rather a *being toward the end*.”³⁷ Thus we can see how he completely changes the vulgar interpretation of death. Death is not an objective event that happens at some point to every human being and by virtue of which one is not “there” anymore. Heidegger uses the term “demise” to refer to the latter phenomenon. He claims that we can never relate to our own demise as an objective event. Since all understanding is an understanding of and from a “there,” and demise is the annihilation of this “there,” the actuality of this demise is simply incommensurable for Dasein. Death belongs to the self-understanding of Dasein only insofar as it can be regarded as a phenomenon of the “there,” that is, only insofar as it can be understood as a *futural possibility*, as a possibility that comes-toward. Understood as a futural possibility, death is what William Blattner calls an “existential death,”³⁸ for it refers to the end of existence *insofar as this end belongs to this existence*, that is, insofar as it is understood from this existence.

The possibility of death differs from all other possibilities of Dasein. To start with, it is the *most extreme* possibility of this being, for it is the possibility of the impossibility of its own

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 245/236.

³⁷ *Idem.*

³⁸ William Blattner, *op. cit.*, 315.

existence. In this sense, some scholars such as Stephen Mulhall argue that Dasein's relation to death is not as much a relation to an existential possibility as to what he calls an "existential impossibility."³⁹ Whereas we relate to other possibilities in *taking care* of them, the possibility of death is not something that we take care of, that is, a possibility that we become, but precisely the possibility of the impossibility of becoming any possibility whatsoever. This means that death is never understood as an isolated event but always as that which threatens to make impossible all the other possibilities of Dasein. It is in this sense that Mulhall writes that "death ... is shown to be graspable essentially indirectly, as an omnipresent condition of every moment of Dasein's directly graspable existence."⁴⁰ And it is in this sense that Heidegger argues that, as a *futural possibility*, death cannot be *expected*, but must be *anticipated*. According to him, whereas in *expecting* death, we simply await an actualization that we will never experience, in *anticipating* it, we understand our whole existence under the knowledge that we are going to die, that is, as finite. In anticipation, death is never grasped in its "reality" as demise, but it is always present, in Sean McGrath's words, "as the horizon toward which I am always moving but at which I never arrive."⁴¹ The anticipation of the possibility of death makes evident for Dasein that its own self, its own possibilities, can and will certainly become impossible, that is, that they are *finite*. Thus, in anticipating death, Dasein understands the finitude of its own self.

This understanding of finitude does not need a conceptual or theoretical grasp of the fact that one is going to die and, therefore, one's possibilities are finite. This would mean that the understanding of Dasein's finitude comes only after it has understood itself in an abstract way

³⁹ Stephen Mulhall, "Human Mortality: Heidegger on How to Portray the Impossible Possibility of Dasein," in *A Companion To Heidegger*, eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 304.

⁴⁰ Stephen Mulhall, *op. cit.*, 304.

⁴¹ Sean McGrath, *Heidegger: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 47.

where time either does not exist or is infinite. The original disclosure of Dasein's existence is always already finite, for the ecstatic horizon of temporality originally temporalizes itself as finite. As long as it exists, Dasein is already thrown towards its death, its possibilities are already given as finite and determinate. Insofar as temporality temporalizes itself originally in a finite existence, the finitude of temporality is more original than the "infinite time" that the vulgar understanding of time considers primordial. This vulgar understanding only comes from a distortion of the finite temporality that is originally disclosed, a distortion in which the individual ecstatic-horizonal temporality has been turned into an objectively present being that exists independently of the temporalizing of each individual Dasein. In this vulgar understanding, the individual death of Dasein becomes a mere event in the infinite chain of nows that will continue after this death. Heidegger considers that this "inauthentic" relationship to death, in which death is regarded as a mere event that occurs in an "objective" time, is not more primordial than the relationship to existential death, where death is anticipated in the future that comes-toward. In fact, he holds that this inauthentic understanding of death, as well as its corresponding inauthentic understanding of temporality, is an "evasion" from existential death, that is, a flight from the fact that, in existing, we are always already dying.

2.2 The Relation Between Death and Transcendental Freedom

In the lecture courses where Heidegger develops his original account of freedom, we do not find any reference to the phenomenon of death. However, I believe that death is still fundamental for the understanding of transcendental freedom and, to some degree, it is still present in these lectures. For although the phenomenon of death is not considered explicitly, the finitude of Dasein and the finitude of freedom itself are still essential in Heidegger's account of transcendental freedom. This death, however, must not be reduced to the "existentiell death" that the Dasein of *Being and Time*

discloses in anxiety, an account of death that led many to believe Heidegger to be an existentialist. It is, rather, an existential or *transcendental* death, a death that grounds the possibility of Dasein as a particular, determinate, and constant possibility.

The connection between freedom and death is already present, to some extent, in *Being and Time*. Heidegger writes in paragraph 52 that Dasein, anticipating its death, “has always already decided in this or that way in its being-toward-death.”⁴² This brings to the fore a new side of freedom that we have not considered so far: freedom is not only the “choice” of certain possibilities but also the “rejection” of others. Insofar as time is finite, choosing certain possibilities always requires that I withdraw from other possibilities. As Heidegger puts it, “freedom is only in the choice of the one, that is, in bearing the fact of not having chosen and not being able also to choose the others.”⁴³ This idea is, *prima facie*, not inconsistent with our most basic intuitions about what freedom is. We know that freedom is the choice of *one* possibility over the others, and therefore we know that our freedom as finite beings entails the renunciation of some of our options. However, this interpretation does not disclose the true meaning of the finitude of *transcendental* freedom.

This vulgar interpretation of freedom supposes that the ability to withdraw from possibilities belongs to the Dasein that in each case can choose its possibilities. According to this view, each individual is at the beginning of her life open to a potentially infinite number of possibilities and, as she freely makes decisions, she progressively renounces all the other potential choices that she could have made. However, in Heidegger’s transcendental account of freedom, Dasein does not possess freedom as the ability to choose its own self; rather, freedom, understood as the “opening” of existence, is what makes the existence of this self possible in the first place. How is the “withdrawing” of possibilities present in this transcendental freedom? In his 1929 lecture “On the

⁴² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 259/248.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 285/273.

Essence of Ground,” Heidegger explores this “withdrawing” aspect of freedom. According to him, freedom, as the groundless projection of the possibility of Dasein, has always already disclosed some possibilities and withdrawn from others. In this sense, he writes that “certain other possibilities ... are withdrawn from Dasein, *and indeed merely through its own facticity*.”⁴⁴ As the “opening” of freedom, Dasein does not find itself thrown into an infinite number of infinite possibilities: it always finds itself in determinate possibilities. That is, the “there” of Dasein, in which this being is already thrown not of its own accord, has in each case already relinquished many possibilities. This means that, in opening up the being of Dasein as a possibility, freedom already closes off that which it has opened. In other words, the opening of possibilities of freedom is always already “an opening onto finitude, withdrawal, and closure.”⁴⁵

Now the connection between death and transcendental freedom becomes clear. The existence that freedom opens for Dasein is always already finite. But only an existence that has been disclosed together with the possibility of its own impossibility, that is, together with the possibility of death, can be finite. In projecting the existence of Dasein, freedom, as finite, has always projected the possibility of its end as certain and insuperable. Thus, it has always already disclosed these possibilities as determinate and finite. This means that the phenomenon of death acquires a great ontological significance. As the closure of the finite possibilities of Dasein, death is not merely the actual end of this being; it is, primordially, the *withdrawal from possibilities* that always characterizes the disclosure of an individual existence. Death belongs to the finite transcendental freedom that “projects” Dasein as a finite existence, that is, as an existence that is always *not* other possibilities. As the withdrawal of transcendental freedom, death is itself transcendental, that is, it is a condition of possibility of Dasein’s existence. For it is only by virtue of this withdrawal that

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, “On The Essence of Ground,” 128.

⁴⁵ David Krell, *op. cit.*, 60.

Dasein can be brought into a particular, determinate and constant existence. It is in this sense that Mulhall claims that Dasein's being-toward-death "is an ontological (that is, existential) structure, rather than ... an existentiell state ... of the kind that that structure makes possible."⁴⁶ Death is not something that happens at the end of the individual's existence; it is the condition of possibility of this individual's life as a particular and constant life.

2.3 *Finite Freedom as the Ground of the Constancy of Dasein*

Freedom is only transcendental, that is, it only makes possible the existence of Dasein "in the unity of excess and withdrawal."⁴⁷ If in its excess it allows for Dasein's relation to itself as *care* for its possibility, in its withdrawal it makes possible the constancy and steadfastness of this relation. Because in "On the Essence of Ground" Heidegger does not provide a thorough explanation of this withdrawal, in order to understand in what way the withdrawing character of freedom allows for the steadfastness of Dasein's self-understanding, we draw on *Being and Time*, where he explains how death, as the condition of this withdrawal, makes possible the existence of Dasein as a constant being.

Heidegger claims that death is constantly present in the life of Dasein as the threat of the impossibility of *all* its possibilities. In this sense, not only the particular possibility that Dasein is in each case taking care of, but also its *whole potentiality-of-being* as an individual, is threatened by death. Understood under the threat of death, the individual existence of Dasein as a potentiality-of-being is disclosed as *determinate* and *finite*. It is disclosed as determinate because, in anticipating death, Dasein has already withdrawn from the possibilities that do not belong to its particular potentiality-of-being and thus has already disclosed "all the possibilities lying before

⁴⁶ Stephen Mulhall, *op. cit.*, 304.

⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, "On The Essence of Ground," 32.

it.”⁴⁸ And it is disclosed as finite because its particular potentiality-of-being is, in the anticipation of death, understood “up to its end.”⁴⁹ By virtue of the withdrawing character of death, Dasein discloses itself as a particular, finite potentiality-of-being, and therefore discloses its whole, determinate being. Only because Dasein’s existence is the project of a *particular purpose*, that is, only because the projection of freedom closes off a potentially infinite potentiality-of-being always open to what is new and strange, can Dasein exist as a “whole,” that is, as a finite and particular being.

The disclosure of this wholeness is not the discovery of an objective, whole being, but rather the disclosure of Dasein’s comportment to itself as care, a care that is always “*care for steadfastness and subsistence*.”⁵⁰ Dasein is disclosed as a whole insofar as its understanding of itself as care is the understanding of a determinate, constant being. A mother maintains her constancy as a mother not on the basis of being “objectively” a mother but on the basis of her steadfast care for being a mother. The constancy of the self does not consist for Heidegger, as it did in the traditional accounts of the subject, in the “sameness and constancy of something always already present.”⁵¹ Self-constancy is to be found, rather, in the steadfastness of care across the ecstases of temporality. Again, this does not mean that Dasein maintains itself as an invariable substance through a sequence of nows. One can only maintain this self-constancy insofar as past, present, and future do not follow each other in a sequence but are always *given together* as a finite unity: Dasein’s steadfast relation to itself as care is sustained in the unitary character of the ecstases of temporality. Dasein is constant because it *makes present* a world in which it takes care of a potentiality of being (its *future*) that *repeats* what it has been (its *past*). It is only because the

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 265/253.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 305/292.

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground,” 132.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 320/305.

potentiality of being that Dasein is concerned about *repeats* the determinate possibility in which one is already thrown, that is, it is only because future and past are always understood together, that the self-understanding of Dasein is constant. And this repetition is only possible, in turn, because the freedom that has opened up the existence of Dasein as care, has always already disclosed Dasein as a determinate, particular possibility and has thus withdrawn from all other possibilities. In other words, repetition –and therefore, constancy– is only possible insofar as the phenomenon of death, as the closing off of Dasein’s freely projected potentiality-of-being, belongs to transcendental freedom.

The anticipation of death discloses Dasein as a whole, constant being. We must avoid interpreting this wholeness of Dasein as the final actualization of its potentiality-of-being. We said that Dasein relates to its end in the *anticipation* of this end rather than in its *arrival*. In this sense, the wholeness that this end makes possible is the wholeness that Dasein anticipates in anticipating its end. What kind of wholeness does Dasein anticipate? This wholeness cannot consist, for Heidegger, in something like the “fulfillment” of one’s being, not even in the anticipation of this fulfillment. While a piece of fruit might attain its fulfillment with its ripeness, Dasein does not necessarily fulfill all its possibilities with its death. In fact, Heidegger writes, life usually “ends in unfulfillment.”⁵² The end of Dasein is not the actualization of this being’s possibilities but, in fact, the *impossibility of this actualization*. The impossibility of the fulfillment of Dasein’s potentiality-of-being shows itself particularly in the *indefinite* character of death, that is, in the fact that we can die at any moment and never know when this moment is going to arrive. If the wholeness of Dasein was the same thing as its fulfillment, then Dasein’s phenomenological experience of death would not be that of a “constant *threat* arising from its own there”⁵³ but simply the anticipation of the

⁵² *Ibid.*, 244/235.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 265/254.

“completion” of the possibilities of one’s being. The possibilities that Dasein discovers in the light of its existential impossibility are disclosed as finite, particular and, therefore, as “whole” possibilities. However, this wholeness does not consist in the anticipation of their fulfillment but rather in the fact that they are understood as finite, that is, under the undeniable possibility of having to be taken back, in terms of the impossibility of being truly fulfilled.

Insofar as death does not correspond with the fulfillment or actualization of Dasein’s project, this project “is itself ... essentially null.”⁵⁴ For, as a project, it does not run towards its actualization but precisely towards the *impossibility* of this actualization. The existence of Dasein as a finite potentiality-of-being consists in “pressing ahead” into a possibility that, as possibility, always remains futural. This possibility has an end, but this end does not correspond with the moment where this possibility finally becomes actualized, but rather with the moment in which it becomes impossible. The possibility of being a mother that a woman is always “becoming” as long as she is a mother only overcomes its character of possibility with death. However, this death is not the actualization of the possibility but precisely the impossibility of this actualization. Therefore, we have that the end that, anticipated in the ecstatic future, makes possible the withdrawal of possibilities and, consequently, the existence of Dasein as this particular, determinate, and constant possibility, is at the same time that which makes impossible the *actualization* of this possibility. As long as it exists, Dasein must exist as this possibility that runs not towards its fulfillment but towards its impossibility.

As a thrown, null project, Dasein does not only lack control over the origin of this project; it also lacks control over its completion. Thrown into its finite existence, Dasein always finds itself thrown into its imminent, certain death, a death over which it has no control, but which determines,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 285/273.

in each moment, the totality of its being. As withdrawal, death belongs to freedom, for it manifests itself in the fact that finite freedom has always decided in *one* particular way. However, we have said multiple times that this freedom is not something that Dasein possesses; it is, rather, the transcendental freedom that grounds and discloses its existence as a constant, finite self. Withdrawal is, thus, not a “power” of Dasein, mainly because this being lacks control over its own death. Dasein always starts as a self *from this withdrawal*, for it is already thrown as a finite, particular self. As withdrawal, freedom is not an ability of Dasein to decide upon its own being, but precisely its “impotence” to make this decision. Insofar as freedom opens up a possibility in which Dasein finds itself as this determinate, particular being thrown into death, Dasein is impotent to go beyond, or even “actualize,” the particular, null project that it is.

In Chapter 1, I claimed that Dasein does not “create” its projects; rather, it always already exists as these projects. Now we see that Dasein does not even have power over the project that is its existence, because its end, which brings this project to completion, is not something that it can freely bring about. As the being that is grounded in the freedom that exceeds and withdraws, Dasein is utterly impotent over its own existence: it cannot “create” its existence and it cannot either fulfill the projects of this existence. It is in this sense that Simon Critchley argues that being human for Heidegger “consists of a double *impotentialization*.”⁵⁵ For, on the one hand, Dasein is thrown into a life that it has not created, responsible for a task –becoming itself, taking care of itself– that it has not chosen. In Critchley’s words, “life is a series of repayments on a loan that you didn’t agree to.”⁵⁶ And, on the other hand, this project that Dasein is responsible for is a project that this being can never fulfill, a project that is, ultimately, null. Dasein can be nothing more than this finite,

⁵⁵ Simon Critchley, “The Null Basis-being of a Nullity, or Between Two Nothings: Heidegger’s Uncanniness,” in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*, ed. Daniel Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

impotent, being. However, it is only on the basis of this double impotence that Dasein can exist as Dasein, that is, as the being that understands being and fundamentally cares about its own being. For only insofar as its existence has been already freed as a groundless potentiality-of-being in a world can this being exist as care for this existence. And only as thrown into death, that is, as thrown always into a determinate, finite existence, can it exist as a particular, determinate and constant being. Thus, the existence of Dasein is sustained in its impotence and finitude. This impotence, in turn, is only possible on the basis of freedom. As Heidegger claims in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Dasein “can be powerless only as free.”⁵⁷ For it is only because freedom already “frees” the existence of Dasein in the world that this being exists as thrown. And it is only because freedom, in opening up this transcendence, already closes it off, that Dasein can exist as its steadfast care for a *constant* possibility. In short, only as free can Dasein confront the burden of having to be this thrown, particular, and finite self.

⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 216.

CHAPTER III: THE EXISTENTIELL ACCOUNT OF FREEDOM OF *BEING* *AND TIME*

So far, we have been discussing Heidegger's ontological-transcendental freedom as the opening of an abyss of ground upon which the existence and the world of Dasein are disclosed. This is the way in which Heidegger considers freedom in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, "On the Essence of Ground," and *The Essence of Human Freedom*. However, in *Being and Time*, he seems to have in mind a different kind of freedom, a freedom that Dasein only attains in one of its existentiell ways of being, namely authenticity. When it becomes authentic, Heidegger claims, Dasein *becomes free* for its potentiality-of-being and its death. This freedom cannot be called transcendental, for transcendental freedom, as the condition of the possibility of the existence of Dasein, is *ontologically prior* to any particular way of being of this being. Dasein cannot "become" transcendently free because transcendental freedom is the condition of possibility of its existence: as long as it is, Dasein is always already free, for its existence has already been freed. Does this mean that Heidegger changed his view on freedom after *Being and Time*? Or are these two different kinds of freedom compatible with one another? In this chapter, I argue that they are compatible and that, in fact, the notion of freedom that Heidegger brings up in 1928 can help us understand and clarify some ambiguous points of the earlier account.

The possibility of freedom that Heidegger attaches to the way of being of the Dasein that he calls "authentic" is better understood together with its opposite, namely "inauthenticity." For this reason, I begin this chapter by giving an account of the inauthentic existentiell way of being of Dasein. Inauthentic existence refers to the tendency of this being to "cover over" that which is always freed, that is, to cover over its own disclosure, its own understanding of being, its own existence. In particular, inauthentic Dasein covers over the mineness or individuality of its being.

It is this tendency to cover over what is freed that makes inauthentic Dasein unfree. In the second section, I explain how the mineness and individuality that remained covered over in inauthentic existence are disclosed in the phenomenon of the *call of conscience*, where Dasein is summoned to its authentic being. Moreover, I explain how in this disclosure Dasein becomes *resolute*. After introducing the two existentiell modes of being of Dasein, in the third section I explain what I call the “existentiell account of freedom,” that is, Heidegger’s account of freedom in *Being and Time*. This is the freedom in which authentic Dasein, in disclosing the authentic character of its being, “sets free” this authentic disclosure or, in Heidegger’s terms, “becomes free *for it*” or lets itself be determined by it. The final section explores how the notion of transcendental freedom, brought up for the first time in 1928, can help us understand the existentiell account of 1927. In particular, I claim that that which Dasein becomes free *for* in its existentiell freedom is transcendental freedom itself, that is, the groundless, transcendent, potentiality-of-being that is in each case given as my own and that remains, in inauthenticity, covered over. Moreover, I argue that the transcendental idea of freedom can clear some typical misunderstandings of the existentiell account. Particularly, it prevents us from interpreting the latter in terms of a “free will” that the authentic Dasein that “owns itself” possesses as a master of its being.

1. The Inauthentic Existence of Dasein.

Heidegger claims that, for the most part, Dasein leads an “inauthentic” existence. In order to properly grasp the meaning of “inauthenticity,” it is important to understand the etymology of the German word that Heidegger uses here, namely *uneigentlichkeit*. The word “eigen” literally means “own.” Thus, the *eigentlich* Dasein is the Dasein that *owns* itself, and the *uneigentlich* Dasein is the Dasein that *does not own* itself. What does Heidegger mean by “owning oneself”? Since, for him, the self is not an “object” or “substance” but rather the self-understanding of Dasein –that is,

its projection upon a potentiality-of-being–, owning myself does not mean “possessing” my own self but rather understanding myself as my own potentiality-of-being, that is, taking the being that is given as *mine* as *my own* possibility, as the being that *I am concerned about*. It means, in other words, not being indifferent to my own being. Authentic Dasein takes over being the being into which it is thrown; that is, it takes this being as its own. On the contrary, inauthentic or *uneigentlich* Dasein does not own itself and therefore does not relate to its being as its own. In this way, the disclosure of inauthentic Dasein *covers over mineness*, that is, it covers over the original disclosure in which Dasein finds itself as having to be its own being.

Insofar as it covers over the mineness of its being, inauthentic Dasein is not itself. This does not mean, however, that inauthenticity is a negation of selfhood or that inauthentic Dasein leads some kind of self-less existence. On the contrary, being “not-I,” that is, being inauthentic is, for Heidegger, “a definite mode of being of the ‘I.’”¹ Inauthentic Dasein *covers over* mineness, but this does not mean that mineness, as an essential (existential) structure of Dasein, completely disappears in inauthenticity. Not being mine is a particular way of relating to the being that is always already mine. I can only be indifferent to my being insofar as I am constitutively not indifferent to it. Authenticity and inauthenticity are different *existentiell* modes of Dasein that are only made possible by the *existential* structures that we have presented in the previous chapters – mineness, transcendence, being-unto-death etc. Only because Dasein, in its existence, has been delivered over to itself as having to be its own being, can it be itself –own the being to which it has been delivered over– or not be itself –that is, cover over the being into which it was thrown.

What is the character of this “covering” of Dasein’s inauthentic self? Dasein “covers over” its own being when instead of understanding itself and the world in terms of this potentiality-of-

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 116/113.

being that is given in each case as mine, it understands itself in terms of something else. What is that in terms of which Dasein understands itself for the most part? Heidegger argues that inauthentic Dasein understands itself in terms of public interpretations and publicly available possibilities that do not belong to its ownmost self. These public interpretations are provided by what Heidegger calls the “they,” and the self that understands itself in terms of the they is the “they-self.” The public interpretations of the they belong to everyone, but, at the same time, they do not pertain to any particular Dasein. The they is the way in which Dasein, for the most part, understands itself and others; however, the they-self never makes these possibilities *its own*. The Dasein that lives as the they-self is nothing but the place-holder of possibilities that could belong to anyone else. One’s being is indifferent for the realization of these possibilities. This attitude, Heidegger argues, takes away the responsibility from Dasein: in the same way that a company does not take responsibility for exploiting its workers because the law allows it, the they-self does not have to take responsibility and own its decisions because this is how “they” do it. In Heidegger’s words, “the they always did it, and yet it can be said that ‘no one’ did it.”² This *averageness* of the they does not only “prescribe what can and may be ventured,”³ but it also reduces every attempt of originality of any singular Dasein to “something long since known.”⁴ By doing this, it completely suppresses the individuality of the singular Dasein: anyone can be anyone else, for everyone is the same. Thus, inauthentic Dasein is never itself.

The “they-self,” as a particular way of Dasein’s self-understanding, is not an abstract, objective way of being of a “psychological self,” but rather a particular disclosing of the “there” which Dasein, as being-in-the-world, in each case is. In covering over mineness, the “they” distorts

² *Ibid.*, 127/124.

³ *Ibid.*, 127/123.

⁴ *Idem.*

the way in which Dasein understands the world. In particular, the “they-self” discloses the world in such a way that, in disclosing it, it has already covered it over. To this disclosure of the world, there belong particular modes of understanding, interpreting and relating to this world, which Heidegger discusses in Chapter 5, Division I of *Being and Time*. These modes are idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. Idle talk makes use of language’s possibility of losing its fundamental relation to the world. In Heidegger’s words, it “omits going back to the foundation of what is being talked about.”⁵ The discourse of idle talk is not grounded in the world but in the averageness of the public interpretation of the they. Therefore, it is a way of discourse that, instead of revealing the world as it shows itself, levels down every occurrence to something that is already understood within this public interpretation. If idle talk transforms the way in which Dasein *speaks about* the world, curiosity distorts the original way in which Dasein *is* in the world. As we have seen, Dasein relates to the world as the “equipmental context” of a work-world in which it can relate to itself and to useful beings discovered in their relevance. However, guided by curiosity, “Dasein lets itself be intrigued just by the outward appearance of the word”⁶ and thus never stays or “dwells” anywhere. Because it never stays anywhere and only interacts with the world in a superficial way, Dasein never really deals with the world as a world-work. By losing its original relation to the world, it does not only lose an understanding of the “relevance” of beings, but it also “gets rid of itself as being-in-the-world.”⁷ That is, it loses its original interpretation of itself from the world. The understanding of being brought about by idle talk and curiosity is ambiguous, for “we can soon no longer decide what is disclosed in genuine understanding and what is not.”⁸ Insofar as idle talk has lost the connection of language and the world, and insofar as the Dasein guided by

⁵ *Ibid.*, 169/163.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 172/166.

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 173/167.

curiosity only looks at the world superficially and refuses to “take action” in it, the difference between what actually happened, that is, the instances in which Dasein has actually dealt with the world, and what is just guessed or manipulated by inauthentic talk and discovered by a curiosity that does not interact with the world, becomes superfluous. This ambiguity, Heidegger writes, “stamps carrying things out and taking action as something subsequent and of no importance.”⁹

Guided in its interpretation of the world and its own self by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity, inauthentic Dasein loses its relation to what is actually disclosed. Everything is understood in a “groundless floating,”¹⁰ not in the sense that the groundlessness of Dasein has been disclosed, but rather because the inauthentic understanding of the they has lost the ground on what is disclosed. In fact, the groundlessness of Dasein, as well as its death, remain essentially covered over in inauthenticity. Insofar as inauthentic Dasein covers over mineness, that is, the fact that its being belongs to itself, it has already covered over its groundlessness, that is, the fact that *it* has to become this null possibility that it has not chosen for itself. The Dasein that leads an inauthentic existence does not, as the groundless being that it is, take over being the ground: others (i.e., the “they”) have become the ground of its being. This means that the others provide the possibilities in terms of which Dasein understands itself and its world, so that Dasein does not have to take over the task that defines its existence, the task of becoming itself. In Heidegger’s words, “the they *disburdens* Dasein in its everydayness,”¹¹ that is, it takes away from it the character of “having to be its being” that essentially belongs to it as a groundless, free being. Insofar as the possibilities that I live by are not my own, it is not me in my ownmost groundlessness who lives my life: it is always “they” who are responsible for my becoming.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 174/168.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 177/170.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 128/124

The “they-self” also covers over death as Dasein’s ownmost possibility and thus closes off the individuality, finitude, and self-constancy of this being. The “they” relates to death in terms of the ambiguity and superficiality proper of its mode of being. Existentially, death is a phenomenon of life and, in fact, the possibility that most properly belongs to *my* existence. However, the “they” distorts it into an event that happens precisely “outside” my life, when I am no longer alive, and, especially, as something that always happens *to others* but has not yet happened to me. The roots of this interpretation lie in the inauthentic interpretation of death as demise, that is, as an objectively present event that only has a “real” presence at the end of the individual’s life, when this individual does not exist anymore. However, without an authentic grasp of death as its ownmost and most extreme possibility, Dasein does not have a grasp of the particularity and finitude of its existence. Without a grasp of its particularity and finitude, it gets lost in the infinite possibilities that the “they” offers. Driven by curiosity and ambiguity, it never dwells anywhere and it never takes action; it keeps constantly looking for what is new, always “dispersed in the multiplicity of what happens daily.”¹² Dispersed and lost in the world, Dasein lives in “unself-constancy,”¹³ thus losing sight of the wholeness of its being that manifests itself only in a constant and steadfast existence.

The inauthentic existence of Dasein is not a “choice” of this being if by “choice” we understand the product of a “free will” that belongs to the individual and through which it constitutes itself. Dasein could only have a choice to be inauthentic if it could exist *before* its understanding of itself and decide upon the trajectory of this understanding. Heidegger explains Dasein’s entanglement in the interpretations of the “they” in terms of “falling prey” to these interpretations. As long as it exists, Dasein has always already fallen prey to the way of being of

¹² *Ibid.*, 390/370.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 323/309.

the “they,” it has already covered over its ownmost being. In Heidegger’s words, “[t]he facticity of Dasein is such that Dasein, *as long as* it is what it is, remains tossed about and sucked into the turbulence of the they’s inauthenticity.”¹⁴ Therefore, in terms of the common understanding of freedom, we have to say that Dasein is not free. However, if we take into account Heidegger’s particular understanding of freedom as transcendental, that is, freedom as the “freeing” of the existence of this being, we can say that inauthentic Dasein *has been freed* as inauthentic. It belongs to the unconcealment of the “there” – an unconcealment that, we said, is the “free opening” of the groundless possibility from which Dasein can understand being– to unconceal itself as concealed. And in the same way that the inauthentic existence of Dasein is the way in which existence has already been freed, Dasein can only *become authentic* if its being is “freed” as the groundless possibility that is *its own*. The phenomenon by which freedom uncovers the being of Dasein in its authentic existence is the “call of conscience.”

2. The Authentic Existence of Dasein

2.1 The Disclosure of Authentic Dasein in the Call of Conscience

Authentic Dasein is the self that “has explicitly grasped itself.”¹⁵ Its existentiell understanding of itself does not cover over but in fact reveals the existential structures of its being. Before we delve further into the phenomenon of authenticity and how the authentic self comes to being in the call of conscience, we need to explain the relation between the authentic and inauthentic existence of Dasein. Heidegger’s view on this matter is confusing, and at times he seems to defend contradictory statements. For example, when discussing the concept of the “they” in Chapter 4, Division I of *Being and Time*, he claims that the authentic self is a “*modification of the they as an*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 179/172.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129/125.

essential existential.”¹⁶ This seems to suggest that becoming authentic is only possible on the basis of inauthenticity, as a modification of this more original phenomenon: one can become oneself only on the basis of not having been oneself, that is, on the basis of an interpretation of one’s being that has been given by others. However, in Chapter 3, Division II he writes that “the they-self is an existentiell modification of the authentic self.”¹⁷ But this means precisely the opposite, namely that the they-self only exists as a modification of a more primordial, authentic self that underlies it. For Heidegger, both statements are correct in some way, because authenticity and inauthenticity hold different kinds of priorities. Heidegger often claims in *Being and Time* that *initially and for the most part* Dasein is inauthentic. Inauthenticity is the initial and most common way in which Dasein is itself. No one is born authentic; rather, authenticity is always a call that pulls Dasein away from its original lostness in the “they.” It is not the case that Dasein is first a separate individual and then integrates itself into society. Dasein is always thrown into its there as being-with-others, and it is from this being-with that it can gain an understanding of itself and the world. The priority of the “they” is not only a matter of *temporal* priority, as if Dasein was born inauthentic, dependent on the interpretations of the they and lost in the world and then, at some point, could get rid of these interpretations and this world. As we will see, even when Dasein has attained its authenticity, it never gets rid of the possibilities and the world of the “they.”

However, the authentic self also has some kind of priority over inauthentic existence. Heidegger claims that the existence of the inauthentic self is only possible on the basis of the existential structures of Dasein that are disclosed in authenticity. Inauthenticity is a flight from the self, that is, a flight from one’s being, a mode of existence in which this being does not own itself as the being of which it must take care. But, as Heidegger writes, one “can only have lost itself

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 130/126.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 317/303.

and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is essentially possible as authentic, that is, it belongs to itself.”¹⁸ François Raffoul offers a good explanation of this point: he argues that the inauthentic ways of being of Dasein such as “not being *oneself*, fleeing *in the face of oneself*, closing *oneself* off to *one’s* own being, getting away from *oneself*” are “comportments that Dasein maintains, if only in a ‘negative’ or deficient mode, towards itself.”¹⁹ This means that the lack of selfhood of the “not-I” of inauthenticity presupposes selfhood, for it presupposes a relation of this being to itself, even if this is a relation of indifference. As Raffoul also puts it, the indifference towards itself characteristic of the inauthentic Dasein “presupposes non-self-indifference as its condition of possibility.”²⁰ Whereas to other beings, their being is not either a matter of indifference or non-indifference –they simply are what they are–, Dasein, as the being that has its being to be, can either be concerned or not be concerned about the being that it has to be. Turning away from itself is a particular way in which the self relates to itself. In other words, the concealment of the self belongs to the very disclosure of this self. Dasein always owns itself, whether it owns up to this fact or flees from it. Because in authenticity Dasein relates to itself *as its own being*, that is, because in authenticity this being is not indifferent to itself, the primordial existential belongingness of Dasein to itself is disclosed in the mode of authenticity. For this reason, authenticity offers an ontical gate to the philosopher who wants to understand the ontological grounds of Dasein’s being. And here is where the priority of authenticity lies: this mode of being reveals the ontological structures –owning one’s being, being concerned or non-indifferent towards one’s being...– that make any existentiell mode of being –authentic or inauthentic– possible in the first place. However, this does not mean that authenticity is “better,”

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 42/42.

¹⁹ François Raffoul, *op.cit.*, 239.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

morally or ontologically, than inauthenticity. They are simply two different ontical or existentiell ways of being of the being that always already belongs to itself.

Now that this point has been clarified, we can go back to our original question, namely, how does Dasein disclose its authentic self if it has initially and for the most part fallen prey to the way of being of the “they-self”? According to Heidegger, Dasein existentiell or ontically discloses its authentic self in the “call of conscience.” He writes that “the call of conscience has the character of *summoning* Dasein to its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self.”²¹ In the call of conscience, the existence of Dasein’s “self,” that is, of its *concern for its own being*, which remained hitherto covered over, is disclosed in its authenticity. Heidegger offers a detailed account of the phenomenon of the call of conscience in Chapter 2, Division II of *Being and Time*. Like any other call, he argues, the “call of conscience” has a caller, a message, and someone who is called. The one who is summoned in the call of conscience is the self that Dasein initially exists as, that is, the *they-self*. Generally, the they-self, lost in the world of the they, listens to idle talk and fails to listen to its own being. In the summons, Dasein finally hears itself, but not because it gets “information” about itself or about what it should do. It listens to itself because the constant chatter of the they, in which it was for the most part lost and distracted, is pushed into insignificance²² so that Dasein is “robbed of its refuge”²³ from itself and is thus disclosed in its ownmost being, that is, as the care for a groundless possibility that it must always still become. This means that the call of conscience does not have any particular “thing” to say to Dasein; in fact, it says nothing. The call is not understandable in a “worldly” way because it is precisely this worldly way of understanding that disappears with the call. In making idle talk disappear, the summons opens Dasein to the disclosure

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 269/259.

²² *Vid. Ibid.*, 273/263.

²³ *Idem.*

of the naked reality of its own, individual existence, that is, to its ownmost “there,” which is presented to it as its ownmost potentiality of being, as the not-yet that it in each case is. It is in this sense that Heidegger claims that the *authentic self* summons the they-self to itself: in disclosing the authentic existence of Dasein, the call pushes away the distractions of inauthenticity and frees Dasein in its authentic existence as this groundless possibility that is concerned about itself. The self that is called is the they-self lost in the idle talk of inauthentic existence, the caller is the “self,” that is, the groundless being of Dasein as care for itself, and the message is the silence that sinks idle talk into indifference and directs Dasein towards an authentic existence.

We have defined the self as Dasein’s relation to the being that is in each case its own. For the most part, however, Dasein does not relate to its own being, for the mineness and individuality of its being are only revealed in the call of conscience. A problem arises here: insofar as Dasein *is* its relationship to itself, we cannot presuppose that, underlying the inauthentic existence of Dasein in which this being does not own itself, there is another, more original, authentic self that manifests itself in the call of conscience. The caller, as the ownmost being of Dasein, cannot exist “before” Dasein enters into a relation to its ownmost self, because the self is precisely this relation. Heidegger writes that “[t]he call is precisely something that *we ourselves* have neither planned, nor prepared for, nor willfully brought about.”²⁴ And yet, he also says that “the caller is Dasein, anxious in its thrownness.”²⁵ But if we are not responsible for the call of conscience, how can Heidegger claim that it is the self that is calling? We find the key to understanding the phenomenon of the call of conscience in the fact that this call “comes *from* me, and yet *over* me.”²⁶ Previously we differentiated between Dasein and its ground. Dasein does not ground itself; rather, it is *freed*,

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 275/265.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 277/267

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 275/265

that is, it is grounded in freedom as the “opening” of the possibility as which it always already exists. Heidegger claims that “Dasein calls as conscience from the ground of this being,”²⁷ that is, from the absolute freedom of its ground, not from the already existing “they-self.” This means that the authentic self *is freed in and as* the call of conscience; it does not exist before the call. Therefore, it is in some sense wrong to say that that which calls in the call of conscience is the self, because, as Raffoul puts it, “it is ... the very movement of the call which brings a self-to-come, it is the pre-personal (if not impersonal) event of Being which precedes and exceeds the one (the ‘someone’) that will have to assume it as his or her own.”²⁸ The caller, the authentic self, frees itself, that is, it “gives rise” to itself in the call. The particularity of the disclosure of the authentic self in the call of conscience is that it does not cover over the groundlessness and nothingness of its ground. The call fully discloses the emptiness of the transcendence and finite temporalizing that make possible the world and the self. In the call, Dasein finds itself as this groundless potentiality-of-being *that it must become*, thrown into a groundless world that is itself disclosed in terms of its empty possibility. It is in this sense that Heidegger describes the caller as “Dasein in its uncanniness, primordially thrown being-in-the-world, as not-at-home, the naked ‘that’ in the nothingness [Nichts] of the world.”²⁹

The authentic self is as much thrown as the inauthentic self, in the sense that Dasein already finds itself existing as authentic and cannot, by its own powers, bring itself to authenticity. The difference between the thrownness of the authentic and the inauthentic self lies in the particular attunement in which each of them is disclosed, that is, in the particular way in which Dasein in each case finds itself and the world. For the most part, Dasein finds itself in an attunement that

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 277/266.

²⁸ François Raffoul, *op. cit.*, 229.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 277/266.

covers over its groundlessness, thrownness, and mineness. That is, for the most part, Dasein falls prey to the ambiguous idle talk that distorts its authentic understanding of itself and the world. In falling prey, it does not free itself, that is, it does not free this being that *owns itself*; it frees the they-self that *does not own itself*. However, in the call of conscience, Dasein is revealed to itself in an attunement that does not cover over but fully discloses the reality of Dasein as the thrown, groundless being that belongs to itself. This attunement proper of authenticity is *anxiety*. Heidegger explains the character of anxiety by comparing this attunement with another common mood, namely fear. Fear is always clearly *about* something –a particular being or phenomenon (for example, fire)– and *for* something –a particular possibility of Dasein (for example, its shelter, which is understood as threatened by the fire). However, both that *about* which and *for* which Dasein is anxious remain indefinite. There is nothing innerworldly about which Dasein is anxious. For something to be seen as the “object” of one’s anxiety, anxiety would have to be the kind of attunement in which certain things can be relevant in some way for Dasein, just like in fear some things can be relevant insofar as they are “fearful.” However, in anxiety, the very possibility of things being relevant disappears: “the totality of relevance discovered within the world of things at hand and objectively present is completely without importance.”³⁰ The world disclosed to anxious Dasein is “uncanny,” for in it Dasein loses the feeling of familiarity with the world and the others: the things and possibilities in which it once found itself “at home” become absolutely insignificant. But precisely because the things in which Dasein distracted itself become insignificant, precisely because the world and others have nothing to “offer” to this being, the original condition that always underlies and makes possible the relevance or irrelevance of things, the groundless transcendence of Dasein as being-in-the-world, can be brought to the fore and thus

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 186/180.

uncovered as that *about which* Dasein is anxious. In anxiety, the pure Dasein, i.e., the groundless, thrown being-in-the-world of this being, is disclosed not as the forgotten background that makes possible the understanding of beings but *in itself*. What anxiety is anxious *for* also remains indefinite. Anxiety not only makes the innerworldly things that once worried Dasein sink into insignificance; it also “takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself” in the way in which it had been doing it up to now, namely, “in terms of the ‘world’ and the public way of being interpreted.”³¹ Not only the world, but also *other people* have no refuge to offer to the anxious Dasein. Therefore, Dasein cannot be anxious for a certain possibility of its being, for the common, shared interpretations that once distracted it from facing its own groundlessness have also disappeared in anxiety. Thus, this being is faced with its individuality, that is, with its *ownmost* being-in-the-world, with its *ownmost* being-possible, with the groundless being that is a *no-thing*—that is, only possibility— but which it has to be. This groundless, thrown, and individual possibility is what Dasein is anxious *for*, and it is disclosed as what Dasein has to be, as its own particular burden.

The call of conscience, where Dasein and its world are disclosed in the attunement of anxiety, “discloses the most primordial potentiality-of-being of Dasein as *being-guilty*.”³² Heidegger distinguishes between the moral guilt that is traditionally associated with the “voice of conscience” and the *existential* guilt that discloses itself in the call of conscience and, according to him, makes the former possible. In Paragraph 58 of *Being and Time*, he describes the different ways in which human beings are said to be guilty in the moral sense, hoping to find in these ontical phenomena an ontological root that can explain the existential guilt of Dasein that would make them possible in the first place. He defines being-guilty in the ontical sense as “having debts,” or owing

³¹ *Ibid.*, 188/182.

³² *Ibid.*, 288/276.

something to another person, as well as “being responsible for,” that is, “being the cause or author of something.”³³ Combining these two definitions together, he comes up with a third definition of guilt, namely “having the responsibility for having a debt.”³⁴ Because he defines responsibility as being the ground or cause of that for which one is responsible, and a debt as a “lack” in another person, he formally defines the character of being-guilty as “being-the-ground for a lack in the Dasein of another.”³⁵ Now, the concept of “lack,” he argues, is not appropriate to describe the existential realm of Dasein, for “a lack, as the not being present of what ought to be, is a determination of being of objective presence,” and therefore, “nothing can be essentially lacking in existence.”³⁶ However, he believes that if we maintain the character of “not” that belongs to the “lack,” and thus define guilt as “being-the-ground for a being which is determined by a not,”³⁷ we can get an idea of existential guilt. We have already explored the way in which the being of Dasein is determined by a “not.” First, it exists “*not through* itself, but *released* to itself from the ground”³⁸; and second, it is a being that, in being itself, it “is constantly *not* other possibilities.”³⁹ Dasein is guilty because it has to be in each case the ground of this null, groundless project that it has itself not grounded, that is, it has to be the ground of a “not.” I have *not* chosen this and I have no control over it—insofar as I have no control over my own death—but it is still *my* being, I have to be it. In other words, being guilty means that I must *take care* of my being as that which I have not chosen and which is a nullity in itself; it means that this being that has been freed is *mine*. Thus, the call of conscience, in disclosing the mineness and groundlessness of my being, reveals my ownmost being as that which I have not given to myself and over which I have no control but

³³ *Ibid.*, 282/270.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 282/271.

³⁵ *Idem.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 283/272.

³⁷ *Idem.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 285/273.

³⁹ *Idem.*

which I must nonetheless make my own. Only in understanding this guilt, that is, only in understanding the mineness and groundlessness of being can Dasein become authentic, that is, own itself.

2.2 *The Authentic Disclosure of Resolute Dasein*

The call of conscience does not give Dasein new information about itself. Rather, it presents a new kind of “hearing,” that is, a new disclosure in terms of which Dasein finds and understands its being. Heidegger claims that, when it properly listens to the call, Dasein becomes *resolute*, that is, it leaves behind its lostness in the they and becomes the authentic potentiality-of-being that it has to be. Resoluteness is not only a mode of being of a “self,” if by this we understand a mode of being of a being separated from the world and the others. As Taylor Carman points out, the German term for resoluteness, *Entschlossenheit*, “means decisiveness or resolve, but it also literally means unclosing, or disclosing, which is to say remaining open.”⁴⁰ Resoluteness is thus a mode of disclosure of the “there” of Dasein; in particular, it is the *authentic disclosure* of the “there” which does not cover over the character of Dasein’s existence. In this authentic disclosure, Dasein is uncovered in its individuation, that is, it is disclosed as the potentiality-of-being that is *my own*. But insofar as this potentiality-of-being is always in a world, in resoluteness a world of beings and other Daseins is always also disclosed. In fact, according to Heidegger, because in resoluteness this world is grounded in my ownmost potentiality-of-being and not dispersed in the possibilities of the they, the world and the others are understood *more authentically*.

⁴⁰ Taylor Carman, “Authenticity,” in *A Companion To Heidegger*, eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 291.

Heidegger argues that to every mode of disclosure there belongs a mode of *understanding*, a mode of *attunement* and a mode of *discourse*. What kind of understanding, attunement, and discourse does Dasein have in resoluteness? Resolute Dasein understands *itself* in terms of its ownmost potentiality-of-being, that is, in terms of the possibility that it in each case finds as its own. This potentiality-of-being is disclosed in terms of its groundless origin and understood only as a possibility, as a burden that one has to take over rather than as something that one substantially is. Insofar as Dasein is not an isolated self but a being-in-the-world, that is, a being that understands itself from the world, the phenomenon of world as the disclosure of a totality of beings does not simply disappear in authenticity. However, this world is understood in terms of authentic potentiality-of-being that is disclosed in the call. Uncovered and understood in terms of the potentiality-of-being of authentic Dasein, the world is also understood under the groundlessness and indeterminateness of this being's possibility. Thus, the attunement of the "there" of resolute Dasein is *anxiety*, which reveals the uncanny nothing of Dasein's abyss of ground, that is, the transcending not-yet of my potentiality-of-being. The kind of discourse of resoluteness, that is, the way in which the uncanny world and the groundless potentiality-of-being are articulated in discourse, is *reticence*. Reticence "brings the self back from the loud idle chatter of the they's common sense"⁴¹ and expresses the uncanny nothing of Dasein's ground in *silence*. Therefore, we have that resolute Dasein dwells in the groundlessness and indefiniteness of its self, its world, and its language. It seems like the appropriation of its own being in authenticity can be only the appropriation of this no-thing that one is at the bottom of its being. How can Heidegger claim that the Dasein that hears the call authentically becomes resolute and brings itself "to factual action"⁴²?

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 296/283.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 294/282.

How is it possible that resolute Dasein is more authentically “in the world” and “with others” if the authentic Dasein in its individuation is its own nothingness?

For the majority of *Being and Time*, Heidegger avoids using the word “action” to describe the dealings of Dasein in the world. This is because he believes that the use of this term could lead the reader to think that the only kind of dealings of Dasein are practical and that theoretical or passive endeavours are not as well a way of Dasein’s being-in-the-world.⁴³ However, when discussing resoluteness, he often affirms that resolute Dasein is always already *acting*. By saying this, he does not mean that Dasein is always doing “active things.” He uses the word “action” because he wants to avoid suggesting the idea that the individual being disclosed in the authentic existence of Dasein withdraws from the world and from its relations to others. Heidegger argues that, in fact, in resoluteness, “the ‘world’ at hand does not become different as far as ‘content,’ the circle of the others is not exchanged for a new one.”⁴⁴ Resolute Dasein is still in the world and with others, even in a more “authentic” way than it was before. Authentic Dasein’s attitude towards this world and these others is not that of a passive observer: it *takes action* in the world, it engages with it. In resoluteness, Dasein always resolves upon something. However, we have just said that, as the attestation of the groundlessness of its being, the call of conscience brings Dasein to the nakedness of its individual self and the uncanniness of its being-in-the-world. What can Dasein resolve upon if the revelation of its ownmost being manifested itself as a groundless and naked existence? Surprisingly, Heidegger claims that the resolutions of Dasein “are dependent upon the they and its world.”⁴⁵ The “they” provides the first interpretation in terms of which Dasein understands itself. In this sense, Dasein is always already thrown into the world of the they, that

⁴³ *Vid. Ibid.* 300/287.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 298/285.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 299/286.

is, thrown into the possibilities that it shares with others. For the most part, Dasein gets entangled in the world and the inauthentic way of being of the they in such a way that *it does not own its being*, it does not relate to its being as its own. But in appropriating its potentiality-of-being, resolute Dasein appropriates the possibilities of the they, into which it is always already thrown, as *its own possibilities*, and thus “becomes guilty” for them. Whereas, for the most part, the way of being of the they took the responsibility away from the individual, resolute Dasein, having appropriated the possibilities that were handed out to it by the they, turns these possibilities into its own and becomes concerned for them *as its own possibilities*. The same possibilities by means of which it once fled its being are now appropriated and made its own. It is in this sense that Heidegger writes that “resoluteness appropriates untruth authentically.”⁴⁶ Insofar as one has appropriated these possibilities, the contexture of relevance that opens up with their projection is also authentically grasped and one can thus interact with the world and with others in a more authentic way, without getting lost and distracted in the superficial curiosity of inauthenticity.

Insofar as death is a possibility that in each case belongs to Dasein’s ownmost being, that is, a possibility into which one is always already thrown, Dasein can only own its being insofar as it also owns its death. For this reason, Heidegger argues that resoluteness is always necessarily *anticipatory resoluteness*: an authentic life is a life lived toward-death, that is, a life in which I appropriate the possibility of my own end as that which determines my existence but over which I have no power. In Raffoul’s words, authentic Dasein, in appropriating death, “appropriates the inappropriable.”⁴⁷ It makes its own that which it can never really possess. In anticipating its death, Dasein becomes truly guilty. We defined “guilty” as being the ground of a being that is determined by a “not.” Only in anticipating its death does Dasein truly understand and *make its own* the nullity

⁴⁶ *Idem*.

⁴⁷ François Raffoul, *op. cit.*, 251.

of its being, as a finite project that it has not chosen and over whose end it has not control. Owning its death, Dasein properly owns its being-a-nullity, that is, the impossibility of the actualization of its possibilities and the indefiniteness of its life. And owning its ownmost nullity, it finally owns itself. Resoluteness becomes anticipatory resoluteness. Anxiety, as the attunement of the call of conscience and resoluteness, bringing to the fore the potentiality-of-being of Dasein, is always already anxiety for death, that is, anxiety for the ultimate nullity of one's potentiality-of-being. In Heidegger's words, "the nothingness before which anxiety brings us reveals the nullity that determines Dasein in its *ground*, which itself is as thrownness into death."⁴⁸

The reason why the anticipation of the possibility of death holds primordially in Dasein's authentic self-understanding is that it is this anticipation that first reveals to Dasein the individuality of its existence. Inauthentic Dasein, insofar as it leads a life oblivious of its own death, does not have, according to Heidegger, a real grasp of the singularity of its being-in-the-world. Insofar as I fall prey to the interpretations of the they and thus understand myself in terms of possibilities that I have not appropriated as my own, I am oblivious of the "mineness" of my own being. I am this possibility, but anyone else could have replaced me. Thus, this possibility is not really my own. However, in the anxiety that anticipates my death, I become aware of my own being, for I realize that no one can replace me when it comes to my death. The possibility of death cannot be shared with others, for in it, the very possibility of sharing something with others—that is, my being-with—is at stake insofar as *my own* existence is itself at stake,⁴⁹ that is, insofar as it is threatened with its impossibility. I can only get lost in the world and in the they because I am my own being in the first place, that is, because *I am* in the world and with others. This being-in-the-world and being-with-others in which I tend to get lost and forget myself, disappear with my death

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 308/295.

⁴⁹ *Vid. Ibid.*, 263/252.

insofar as *they belong to me*. Thus, it is the anticipation of death that, in pointing to its impossibility, reveals the singularity of my existence. For this reason, only in the anticipation of my death do I become really resolute, for only in this anticipation does the singular character of my existence, that is, the fact that this is *my* existence, get authentically disclosed.

Anticipatory resolution does not only bring Dasein to its ownmost potentiality-of-being as the possibility of its authentic future, but it also discloses its original past and present. Only in holding to its past can Dasein achieve the steadfastness and consistency proper of a resolute existence. But this authentic past is only disclosed in the authentic anticipation of death. When Dasein, anticipating its death, discloses its individuality and finitude, it relinquishes the endless opportunities and distractions of the *they* in which it was lost and thus discloses its being *as it has been*, that is, the being as which it finds itself in thrownness. Anticipatory resolution “drives every random and ‘preliminary’ possibility out,”⁵⁰ so that Dasein “takes itself over as the being that it is,”⁵¹ that is, the being that it “has-been” as thrown. Taking over the being that it has been, it achieves authentic resolution and becomes a Dasein which does not get lost in the curiosity of always looking for what is new but rather sticks to itself: it becomes *constant*. It is for this reason that Heidegger identifies resolution with “the *repetition* of a possibility of existence that has been handed down,”⁵² that is, with making what one *has been* the possibility that one *has to be*. Only the Dasein that, in anticipating, repeats what it has been, can achieve steadfastness and constancy.

Heidegger claims that “in resoluteness lies the existentiell constancy which, in keeping with its essence, has already anticipated every possible Moment arising from it.”⁵³ This does not mean, however, that in anticipatory resoluteness Dasein constantly dwells in the future, always waiting

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 383/365.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 287.

⁵² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 385/367.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 391/372.

for the next moment. In fact, as McGrath points out, “anticipation brings us into the present moment for the first time.”⁵⁴ This “present moment” is not a mere beholding of things that are “real” –that is, that are “objectively present”– in the here and now, but a more original and meaningful present that Heidegger calls the *Augenblick*, translated to English by Macquarrie and Robinson as the “twinkling of an eye,” and by Stambaugh simply as the “Moment.” This authentic present does not get lost in the things that it makes present in some kind of self-forgetfulness, that is, in forgetting what one has been and what one is to become. On the contrary, the Moment “is held in the specific future (self-precedence) and past (repetition) of resoluteness.”⁵⁵ The Moment makes present what Heidegger calls the *situation*, that is, a contexture of circumstances, possibilities, and beings relevant for one’s possibility. In other words, it discloses the world in which Dasein can become itself. In the Moment, Dasein does not lose itself in the superficiality of what the inauthentic self seeks in curiosity; rather, it for the first time grasps the present as the “situation of action.”⁵⁶ Brought to the present moment, Dasein acts,⁵⁷ it *becomes itself*.

2. The *Existentiell* Conception of Freedom

Heidegger introduces the discussion of freedom in *Being and Time* in the context of his analysis of resolute Dasein. In particular, he claims that resolute Dasein has *chosen itself*.⁵⁸ Moreover, he says that in anticipatory resoluteness Dasein “becomes free” *for* its ownmost being-guilty,⁵⁹ for its death,⁶⁰ and for its ownmost potentiality-of-being.⁶¹ This implies, in turn, that the inauthentic Dasein is, in some way, *not free*. Heidegger is holding here a different idea of freedom than the

⁵⁴ Sean McGrath, *Heidegger: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, 53.

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 287.

⁵⁶ *Idem*.

⁵⁷ *Vid.* Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 300/287.

⁵⁸ *Vid. Ibid.*, 287/276.

⁵⁹ *Vid. Ibid.*, 288/276.

⁶⁰ *Vid. Ibid.*, 384/366.

⁶¹ *Vid. Ibid.*, 191/185.

one he defends in “On the Essence of Ground” or in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, which is the one that I presented in Chapters 1 and 2. In this later account, which I called “transcendental,” freedom, understood as the ground of Dasein (i) is not something that Dasein can overcome in its existence, for it is the very condition of this existence, and (ii) it is not an ability of Dasein but rather the very “opening” or “giving” of this existence. Authentic Dasein cannot “become free” and “choose itself” because freedom, as the ground of existence, makes possible this existence in which one could later be free or unfree. Thus, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger must be speaking of a different kind of freedom. I will call this freedom “existentiell” because, unlike the transcendental freedom discussed in previous chapters, it belongs only to a particular existentiell way of being of Dasein, namely authenticity.

We have established that existentiell freedom is not the same as transcendental freedom. But we must also avoid identifying this freedom with a “free will” in which the authentic Dasein finally overcomes its thrownness and becomes a master of its own being. Rather, this freedom is “a freedom that has marked similarities to the freedom of which Spinoza and Schelling speak, namely, that of appropriated necessity.”⁶² Authentic Dasein does not choose its own being if by choosing we understand deciding from oneself what one is. It “chooses” its being in the sense that it *appropriates* the being that is in each case disclosed *as its own*. In other words, it becomes free insofar as it makes its own that which it has never chosen.

In order to understand this existentiell account of freedom, we must distinguish between two kinds of freedom, namely freedom *from* something –for example, some constraint of nature or culture– and freedom *for* something. Heidegger says that resolute Dasein has become free *for* something, not *from* something. What does it mean to become free *for something*? Explaining

⁶² Sean McGrath, *Heidegger: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, 52.

Kant's account of positive freedom in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger says that being free *for...* means "being open *for...*, thus *oneself* being open *for...*, allowing oneself to be determined through..., determining oneself to... .. give oneself the law for one's action."⁶³ Insofar as Kant's ideas on freedom imply that the self is the master of itself, that is, that it is the constituted self that decides the law that it gives to itself, Heidegger disagrees with this perspective. However, he still believes that authentic Dasein becomes free insofar as it becomes free for something, that is, insofar as it "lets itself" be determined by something. But that for which Dasein becomes free is not some law that it, as a constituted self, has chosen for itself, but the being that it already is as thrown, which is its own individual necessity. This means that becoming free does not consist in coming up with a rational law to determine one's being but in letting that which one always already is, but which remains for the most part covered over, determine one's being. Becoming free means thus "setting free" that which for the most part was concealed, that is, letting one's being –and with it, the being of the world and innerworldly beings– manifest itself *in its being*, manifest itself as it is. Insofar –and only insofar– as this being that is set free in authenticity is in each case given as mine, does the authentic Dasein come to *own* its own being in "setting free" this being. That is, only because in its authentic disclosure this being is given as *my own* do I "own" my being in resoluteness.

Understanding the existentiell freedom of Dasein requires understanding that *for which*, according to Heidegger, Dasein becomes free in resoluteness, that is, *what kind of being* it discloses as its own in authentic existence. First, Heidegger says that Dasein becomes free for its *being-guilty*, that is, it discloses itself as guilty. The realization of one's existential guilt is the realization of the groundlessness of one's being. Dasein is guilty or responsible for its being because this

⁶³ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 15.

being is not a substance but a possibility that is always not-yet, something that one must always still become. Therefore, in “setting free” its being-guilty, Dasein “appropriates” the groundlessness of its being; it lets itself exist as the groundless being that it is. As McGrath puts it, we become authentic “when we are content to exist without explanation”⁶⁴ and we “appropriate our own lack of substantial being.”⁶⁵ That is, we become free when we own this thrown, groundless potentiality-of-being that we have not chosen but nevertheless must become.

Heidegger claims that authentic Dasein *chooses itself*.⁶⁶ This means that, having listened to the call, Dasein leaves behind the inauthentic existence of the “they-self” and its ambiguous and inauthentic way of understanding, and discloses the authentic character of its being that remained hitherto covered over. This does not mean that authentic Dasein becomes free from others or from the possibilities that the society of the “they” provides. On the contrary, insofar as Dasein always finds itself thrown into the possibilities of the “they” and “choosing oneself” means nothing but appropriating one’s thrown being, becoming free means *authentically owning* the possibilities of the they, letting oneself be determined by them. In authenticity, Dasein understands both itself and the world under these possibilities. What changes is that these possibilities are now understood as the groundless possibilities that *I am responsible for becoming*. The possibilities of the “they” have become my own and I must realize them *as my own*. It is only in choosing its thrown being that Dasein chooses itself.

Heidegger writes that in becoming free for its ownmost possibility, Dasein “lets its ownmost self *take action in itself*.”⁶⁷ This statement may seem paradoxical. On the one hand, Heidegger insists that the Dasein that “chooses itself” in resolution has an active attitude and an active role in

⁶⁴ Sean McGrath, “Heidegger and Medieval German Mysticism,” 86.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 287/276.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 288/276.

becoming itself, but, on the other hand, he argues that all that resolute Dasein does is let the being that it finds as thrown be disclosed as it is, which suggests a passive attitude. However, on a closer look, we find that there is actually not a paradox here. Heidegger insists on the active role of Dasein in order to avoid suggesting that resolute Dasein abstracts itself from the world. Resolute Dasein, he argues, still deals with the world and with others, and it does so in a more authentic way: whereas the inauthentic Dasein, driven by curiosity, does not “get the work done,” authentic Dasein has an understanding of the world that goes beyond its outward appearance and discloses it already as the context in which Dasein must act. However, this “acting” of authentic Dasein does not correspond to an active willing, as if one could decide *who it is* and *what it does*. Authentic Dasein does not “create” itself; it appropriates the being that it finds as its own. However, this being that it finds as its own is not an objective, substantial self, but a possibility that it *has to be*, that is, as a possibility that calls for action. Thus, it is true that resolute Dasein is always already acting, but insofar as this acting is not the product of a will that belongs to Dasein but rather of the freedom *as which* this being exists, the attitude of resolute Dasein, i.e., of free Dasein, is in fact passive.

Insofar as the death of Dasein belongs to this being’s ownmost potentiality-of-being, in becoming free for its potentiality-of-being, that is, in appropriating its being, Dasein also becomes free for its death. Choosing oneself ultimately means choosing one’s death. This does not mean that resolute Dasein chooses to kill itself, but rather that it owns the possibility of the impossibility of its own existence as constitutive of this existence. In owning its existence as a finite being, that is, in choosing itself, Dasein chooses to exist “as the possibility of an insuperable nullity,”⁶⁸ it chooses an existence which remains and will always remain uncompleted and unrealized.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 330/315.

Becoming free for death, that is, letting death determine my being, means surrendering to an end over which I cannot decide and which I cannot predict, an end that renders the actualization of my possibilities impossible. In McGrath's words, "the anticipation of death is a willing of oneself as a journey without destination, a being-toward-possibility without the closure of actuality."⁶⁹ Understanding itself in terms of the possibility of its death, resolute Dasein keeps itself open for the end of its potentiality-of-being. That is, insofar as death belongs to Dasein's potentiality-of-being, being free for one's potentiality-of-being means "*keeping oneself free for the possibility of taking it back*, a possibility that is always factually necessary"⁷⁰ insofar as "in its death, Dasein must absolutely 'take itself back.'"⁷¹

The authentic appropriation of one's death results in the authentic appropriation of one's past, of that which one has-been. The Dasein that has become free for its death and its existence as a finite being has chosen to surrender to its *fate* over trying to be a master of its own being. We have already explained how the Dasein that, anticipating its death, has understood its finitude and individuality, abandons the "curious" attitude of the they-self, which is always looking for new things, and comes back to its own being, to that which *it has always been*. In the repetition of what I have been, my heritage becomes *my own*, not because I change it so that it can fit my own needs and desires, but because I let it determine my being, because I become free for it.

The finitude of existence thus seized upon tears one back out of endless multiplicity of closest opportunities offering themselves—those of comfort, shirking and taking things easy— and brings Dasein to the simplicity of its *fate* [*Schicksals*]. This is how we designate the primordial occurrence of Dasein that lies in authentic resoluteness in

⁶⁹ Sean McGrath, *Heidegger: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, 48.

⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 308/294.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 308/295.

which it *hands itself down* to itself, free for death, in a possibility that it inherited yet it has chosen.⁷²

Thus, ultimately, that for which Dasein becomes free in resoluteness, that which it chooses when it becomes itself, is its own fate, and therefore the impossibility of attaining self-mastery and free will. But it is only in this choice that it truly becomes its ownmost self and attains the constancy of a self that does not get lost in the present but is always *free for the situation*, that is, for the disclosure, in the Moment, of the wholeness of its being –future, present and past–. In this Moment, where my ownmost self is finally disclosed, I discover that, as a self, I am impotent: I have not chosen what I *have been* and will not choose what I *will be*, because *what I am* is precisely this having-been and will-be that I have not chosen. Only in appropriating this impotence, that is, in appropriating my existence as a thrown, determined individual, can I become really free. For only in this appropriation do I come to own the freedom through which I exist as a thrown being.

4. The Relation Between *Transcendental* and *Existentiell* Freedom

The account of existentiell freedom that Heidegger defends in *Being and Time* is better understood in the light of the account of transcendental freedom that he develops between 1928 and 1930. In this section, I argue that this is the case in two main ways. First, the transcendental notion of freedom can reveal what Dasein *becomes free for* in authenticity, namely the free, groundless nothing that makes possible the self-showing of the world and Dasein. In this sense, I claim that when Dasein becomes free for its ownmost self, its ownmost being-guilty, and its ownmost death, it becomes free for *freedom itself*, that is, it “sets free” the groundless, finite possibility which for the most part remains covered over. Moreover, I believe that Heidegger’s account of transcendental freedom can help us avoid some fundamental misunderstandings that his

⁷² *Ibid.*, 384/365.

presentation of existentiell freedom in *Being and Time* gave rise to. In particular, the new account rules out the possibility of interpreting the freedom of authentic Dasein as the result of some kind of “free will,” as if becoming itself was a choice that Dasein could make. If the self is always the projection that Dasein has not itself projected, Dasein cannot, by its own means, become authentic. Rather, it is disclosed in each case already as authentic or inauthentic.

4.1 Existentiell Freedom as “Letting Freedom Be”

That which Dasein becomes free for in existentiell freedom, I argue, is transcendental freedom. This is because the things that Dasein becomes free for in resoluteness – namely its authentic potentiality-of-being, its being-guilty, and its death– are not things that Dasein has “chosen” for itself but rather the purpose that this being was given, that is, the opening of a groundless, transcendent possibility, an opening that Heidegger calls “freedom.” This possibility, we said, discloses itself initially inauthentically, that is, as covered over, and it is only “uncovered” in the authentic existence of Dasein that the call of conscience discloses. Therefore, that which Dasein “sets free” when it “becomes free” for its potentiality-of-being is this possibility of transcendental freedom, that is, this project that has always already been freed *as covered over*. In resoluteness, Dasein frees itself for its own freedom, that is, for its own ground, for it lets freedom set free this “abyss of ground” from which Dasein articulates its understanding of itself and of the world. This also explains why Heidegger claims that, in resoluteness, Dasein does not isolate itself from the world but in fact is more authentically in the world. The project of Dasein, the possibility of which this being takes care of, is always given in a world as the for-the-sake-of-which of this world, that is, as the center in terms of which things can become relevant or irrelevant. Setting free the potentiality-of-being of Dasein, as the opening of freedom, means also setting free the world and the innerworldly beings that arise together with the projection of this possibility. In inauthenticity,

the world was covered over by idle talk and curiosity. But when, in authenticity, the possibility of Dasein is fully disclosed and understood, the world that arises with it also becomes authentically disclosed.

In authenticity, Dasein becomes free for its ownmost being-guilty. In the disclosure of Dasein's being-guilty, the character of groundlessness and mineness of its being makes itself manifest. As a non-substantial being, Dasein has always the responsibility to become itself. When its potentiality-of-being is disclosed to Dasein in authenticity, it is always disclosed as its ownmost, groundless potentiality-of-being, that is, it is disclosed as a possibility that it has not chosen but which it must become. In disclosing its mineness and groundlessness, Dasein becomes free for the freedom of its ground. For only insofar as the disclosure of the possibilities of freedom is always *individual*, that is, it has the character of *mineness*, can the self that arises as this possibility understand itself as its own being and free itself for its individuality. The self-appropriation that takes place in becoming guilty is not an appropriation of a given being by a pre-existing self; the self arises only with and as the appropriation. Therefore, this appropriation is not something that the self does but a character of being itself, a character of the free possibility that is already disclosed as mine. In a similar sense, we said that the Dasein that becomes free for its being-guilty becomes free for its groundlessness. But it can only become free for its groundlessness insofar as it exists as this "abyss of ground" that is always freed as one's own. Freeing oneself for one's groundlessness in becoming-guilty means existing as the groundless transcendence as which Dasein is freed.

A similar thing can be said about the meaning of "freeing oneself for death." In the second chapter of this dissertation, I explained that, for Heidegger, the potentiality-of-being of Dasein is a being-unto-death. Insofar as the projection of my being is a being-unto-death, I always exist as

a nullity, that is, as a potentiality-of-being that does not run toward its actualization but toward the nothingness of death. The groundless project of finite freedom is a nullity. Becoming free for death means becoming free for this nullity, owning oneself as this nullity. This nullity is the nullity of a finite freedom, that is, a freedom that is always determinate and always withdraws from certain possibilities. Therefore, in becoming free for death, Dasein becomes free for its finite transcendental freedom. The achievement of self-constancy that comes from the appropriation of one's death is also the result of becoming free for the null potentiality-of-being projected by freedom. The finite freedom from which finite temporality arises, in withdrawing and relinquishing the infinite possibilities that one could have been, is the ground of the finite, constant self. Therefore, the proper grasp of temporality of the authentic self –that is, the understanding of the original past, present and future in constancy and repetition– in terms of which Dasein attains its constancy, is the result of setting free and appropriating the original temporality in which Dasein is initially freed. In setting free this finite and groundless potentiality-of-being, it sets free freedom itself, that is, it sets free the disclosure of its existence.

The fundamental relation between existentiell freedom and transcendental freedom has become obvious. When Dasein becomes authentic, it “becomes itself.” But that which it becomes is not something that it “chooses” in the common understanding of this term: Dasein is not a master of its own being. Rather, it becomes that which it finds *as its own* in the call of conscience. It *appropriates* this disclosure; it becomes responsible for it. This being that it finds as its own is not, however, an “objective being” or a being that is grounded in another being. What it finds is a groundless, free projection, a potentiality-of-being that is always not-yet. Thus, what it finds, what it “lets be” in resoluteness, is freedom itself, that is, the disclosure of its existence as this null, groundless, transcendent potentiality of being that is always one's own. In owning the freedom of

its ground, that is, in becoming responsible for this existence that it is concerned about, Dasein *becomes free*.

4.2 Authentic freedom and free will

Heidegger uses many expressions that, if interpreted without taking into consideration the ontological presuppositions on the basis of which they are uttered, can lead to an incorrect understanding of the existentiell account of freedom. For example, in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, he claims that “the existent Dasein can *choose itself on purpose* and determine its existence primarily and chiefly starting from that choice.”⁷³ If we are unaware of Heidegger’s account of transcendental freedom, we could think that becoming itself is a decision that a pre-existing Dasein has made. This implies, in turn, that Dasein possesses, if not the freedom to decide who it is, at least the freedom to decide whether it is itself –as this potentiality-of-being that is given as its own– or not. But this disagrees with Heidegger’s account of transcendental freedom, according to which freedom is not an ability of Dasein but rather that through which Dasein comes to be itself. I argue that only through this transcendental account of freedom can we properly understand in what way the authentic Dasein of *Being and Time* “chooses itself” and avoid the interpretations that regard freedom as an “ability” of the self.

Insofar as Dasein is always thrown into its self and its world, that is, always thrown either to its entanglement in the world or to its authentic self, this being cannot freely “step back” from the situation in which it finds itself. This would mean that there is a self that exists before its being-in-the-world as authentic or inauthentic, a self who can at any time decide to get lost in the world or gain an authentic existence. Through this dissertation, I have explained several times why this cannot be the case for Heidegger. Dasein is its self-disclosure, which is always already either

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 170.

authentic or inauthentic. There is no pre-existing self that can decide over its way of being. In this sense, the call of conscience is not a decision of the self: neither of the self that, as the they-self, is lost in the they, nor of the self that summons this lost self back to itself. Authentic Dasein only comes to be in the summons, as a self that one *is not* and *has not decided to be* but yet comes as that which one has to be. It is true, however, that Heidegger claims that, in order to *hear* the summons and thus take over one's ownmost potentiality-of-being, Dasein must *become free for the call*,⁷⁴ let this call be, that is, open itself to hear the summons. In choosing oneself, one must, if not be the cause of the call, at least be open to it. In Heidegger's words, one must *want to have a conscience*.⁷⁵ It can seem like Heidegger is suggesting here that, although the call does not come from the being that one already is as the they-self but rather from a self that is still to come, one can at least choose whether to be open to receiving this call or not. However, if we are coherent with Heidegger's account of transcendental freedom, even the attunement of anxiety and the call of conscience are states in which Dasein suddenly finds itself without having chosen to be there or being open to them. This is why Heidegger, as David Storey points out, does not suggest, like other philosophies do, especially in the Eastern tradition, any sort of practice that one could use to open oneself to the call.⁷⁶ The arrival of the call does not depend, in any way, on the existent self, because the self is precisely what comes with the call. It is in this sense that Heidegger claims in "What is Metaphysics?" that "we are so finite that we cannot even bring ourselves originally before the nothing [that is, before the ground] through our own decision and will."⁷⁷ Freedom, as the ground of our being, frees itself only by itself. Even "being free for the call" is not a choice that

⁷⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 287/275.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 288/276.

⁷⁶ *Vid.* David Storey, "Zen in Heidegger's Way," *Journal of East-West Thought*, 4 (2), 113-137, 136.

⁷⁷ Martin Heidegger. "What is Metaphysics?" in *Basic writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 106.

Dasein itself has willingly made; it is a “choice” that has already been made by the freedom that gives rise to the self. And yet, the being that is disclosed in the call is always *my own being*, that groundless, null possibility that I am and must become.

If we take into account the transcendental conception of freedom, we can also discover another interesting point that Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*. If the self is only the potentiality-of-being that one finds oneself in each case being, then the inauthentic being of the self, that is, the disclosure that covers over and distorts what it has disclosed, is also an opening of freedom, for an existence –albeit an inauthentic one– is still being freed. We say that in inauthenticity freedom is “covered over” because the transcendent, groundless and null “opening” on the basis of which every being is “freed,” remains hidden. Inauthentic Dasein *does not* exist as the groundless, transcendent and null possibility that is “freed”: it is not concerned for its own being as the being that it has to become, and it does not live in the anxious anticipation of its death. However, it can only exist in a negation of the groundless, null character of its being on the basis of this character. It can only be indifferent to its being because its being is already its own; it can only get lost in the world because this world has been freed. Therefore, unfreedom –existentiell unfreedom, that is– is a way of being of freedom –of transcendental freedom–, a way of being of this free projection in which the disclosure covers itself over.

This understanding is not, I believe, a forced interpretation of *Being and Time* that imposes an artificial coherence in Heidegger’s thought. *Being and Time* does not offer an account of the free self that Heidegger revokes only a year later. In fact, Heidegger’s earlier work already develops many concepts that point in this direction. The concept of “thrownness,” according to which Dasein does not “create” its own situation but already finds itself in it, is the best example of this. The appropriation of one’s being in authenticity is not an overcoming of this thrownness

but rather an appropriation of one's being as a thrown, groundless individual. This is why Heidegger rejects the existentialist reading of his early works. What he is doing, he insists, is not an anthropological analysis of Dasein, but rather an ontological inquiry into the being of beings. Only insofar as being itself has the character of mineness and freedom can we speak of something like a "free self," which is not a self that masters itself but rather a self that, *through freedom itself*, has become *free for freedom*. That is, a Dasein that has been disclosed or "set free" as the groundless, null being that owns itself. In this thesis, I argued that, although this account is already present in *Being and Time*, it only comes to the fore when this work is read in the light of Heidegger's later works, in particular, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, "On the Essence of Ground," and *The Essence of Human Freedom*.

Conclusion

I started this dissertation by pointing to an apparent contradiction between the “thrown” character of Dasein –the fact that we find ourselves already in a world, taking care of projects that we have not chosen–, and the “groundlessness” of its being –the fact that we are a pure, non-substantial, possibility, a being that is always “not yet.” The idea of freedom that I presented throughout this dissertation has shown that thrownness and groundlessness are not contradictory but in fact describe the existence of a being that is *grounded in freedom*. It is true that Dasein is thrown, that it finds itself in a situation where it did not choose to be, taking care of a possibility that, although always given as *its own*, it had not willed for itself. However, as thrown, Dasein is groundless. The possibility that it finds as its own –a possibility from which it gains its self-understanding as well as the understanding of the world– is a possibility that is always not-yet, a possibility that one must still *take care* of. As the being that finds itself as this possibility, Dasein always understands its own being not as what it decides to be or as what it already is but as the burden it must become.

Dasein can be thrown in a world as a groundless possibility only insofar as freedom is not a property of Dasein but that which makes the existence of this being possible. For only if Dasein does not *give itself* its own possibility but rather *is given* already as this possibility can it find itself already in an understanding of its own being and the world. Freedom is that which, in “setting free” the transcendent possibility, the not-yet of Dasein, “gives” this being its self and the world. This does not mean that freedom is the ability of another being, higher than us, that makes our existence possible. Freedom is not a being; it is the simple freeing of the non-actual purpose that sets free the understanding or disclosure of a temporal world in which things can manifest themselves as relevant for this purpose. It is only as groundless that the free possibility of Dasein

grounds the world. For only this possibility that is always not-yet can, in exceeding all beings, open a “beyond,” an *abyss* of ground within which beings can be understood.

Heidegger’s analysis of the freedom of Dasein leads to a very interesting conclusion: the fact that we are free, that is, the fact that we are grounded in freedom, does not mean that we can “choose” our own selves or “create” our own situation, but precisely the opposite: that we are *impotent* to choose or even actualize our own projects. On the one hand, because, as a thrown, groundless possibility, Dasein exists always already in a world, it cannot “reach” its ground and thus choose its situation. The “free” possibilities of Dasein, that is, the possibilities that freedom has freed for Dasein, belong already to a situation in which this being finds itself. Thus, we can say that Dasein is not that which does the “choosing” but that which has been “chosen.” On the other hand, insofar as Dasein always finds its possibilities as finite, that is, as destined to the impossibility of their actualization, this being cannot “fulfil” itself. Because freedom has the character of “withdrawal,” that is, because existence always frees itself as a particular and finite possibility, Dasein always has to face the impossibility of ever “completing” the project of becoming itself. It is not only that we cannot choose this project that is our life; we cannot even “actualize” it.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger claims that Dasein can “become free.” However, becoming free does not mean overcoming impotence. It means, rather, *appropriating* it. When we become free, that is, when we become “authentic,” we “set free,” we “let be” the freedom and groundlessness in which the disclosure of the world and the self are possible. Becoming free means accepting our freedom, that is, accepting the character of this groundless possibility that is disclosed as one’s own. It means, moreover, living according to the finitude of our existence, that is, living as a possibility that remains always futural and will never be actualized. I claimed that

this appropriation is not something we can freely bring about from ourselves. For, Heidegger argues, we are so impotent with respect to the disclosure of being that there is no effort that we can make to “become free” for it. Even the “acceptance” or “appropriation” of our essential impotence and the overcoming of an inauthentic existence cannot come from us.

Throughout this dissertation, I often insisted on the fact that, although the issue of freedom acquires in Heidegger an ontological character, freedom is still to be understood only as the freedom of Dasein. The possibilities of freedom are not free-floating possibilities that I, as an individual, later appropriate. They are, in each case, *what I am*. Freedom is the ground of *my* understanding of being, not because I have created it but because *I am it*. This can lead to a further misunderstanding, namely that the character of freedom and the understanding of being that this freedom grounds is *egotistic*, that it refers to the subjective understanding of an “I” independent of the existence of an “outside world” and of “other people” distinct from its own subjectivity. However, the opposite is true. What is disclosed in the “transcending” or “exceeding” of freedom is not an isolated I but rather a world that already has other beings and other Daseins. Dasein is not an I, it is being-in-the-world and being-with-others. This means that there is not a “self” that exists before its understanding of the world or of other people; the self only comes to be itself in the world and with others. Dasein only understands itself in its interaction with beings unlike itself. Even the possibilities that define one’s being are not something that one creates from oneself: they are always the possibilities of others, the possibilities of the “they” that one encounters in the world. Thus, the concept of “mineness” does not refer to the possession of an “ego” but rather to the character of being-in-the-world and being-with-others. What is mine in each case is my being-in-the-world and my being-with-others. For this reason, “becoming free,” that is, the radical appropriation of my mineness, does not consist in isolating myself from the world and others, but

precisely in being more authentically in the world and with others. As Heidegger writes in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Metaphysics*, “[i]n choosing itself, Dasein really chooses precisely its being-with others and precisely its being among beings of a different character.”⁷⁸ As the ground of being and time, freedom is the disclosure of the understanding of being, the opening of a world that is in each case mine not because I create it, possess it or even behold it but because *I am it*. Being-with-others and being-in-the-world is *what I am* as this opening of freedom in which I find myself.

Heidegger thus offers an idea of freedom that has no precedent in the history of Western philosophy. This is a *transcendental* freedom that in “freeing” Dasein makes the existence of this being possible. It is, moreover, a *finite* freedom that does not give an infinite number of possibilities among which we can choose, but in fact frees always *particular* and *determinate* possibilities and, in doing so, sets the limits of our particular, finite existence. It is therefore a freedom that, far from giving us the “power” to be our own masters, determines our powerlessness, finitude and impotence. However, it is also the freedom through which we can *become free*, that is, the freedom through which we can come to appropriate and become the thrown, finite being that is in each case freed as the individual’s own project.

⁷⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 190.

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