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MARTIN HEIDEGGER’S CRITIQUE OF FREEDOM

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This is a study of thought and politics of Martin Heidegger. It presents an examination of his understanding of freedom, principally as he expressed it in *Being and Time*, but also considers some of his subsequent essays and lectures, as well as his Rectorate Address. Ever since Heidegger’s public embrace of National Socialism, his defenders and critics have argued about the possible relation between his thinking and his infamous political commitments. While many of his critics have linked his commitments to an alleged lack of understanding of freedom, some of his scholarly defenders have sought to present interpretations of his concept of freedom at odds with his infamous politics, in order to separate his thought from any association with Nazism. The conclusions of these critics and defenders of Heidegger are both mistaken: in *Being and Time* Heidegger sought the meaning of being in the authentic experience of human self-determination revealed by the conscience, which he worked out as “forward running resolve.” It was this militant concept of freedom that grounded his project for a destined community of battle to be championed by a free corps of freedom fighters, and led him to embrace, in the very name of freedom, the tyranny of Hitler’s new Reich. The study of Heidegger’s concept of authentic freedom reveals that, far from lacking any
understanding of freedom, it was rather a central theme and concern of his philosophical
efforts, and that his infamous political commitments were indeed its necessary and
coherent practical consequence. Heidegger’s thought thus poses a more trenchant and
pressing challenge to liberal (and leftist) politics than many of his critics and defenders
appreciate.

There have been comparatively few sustained thematic treatments of Heidegger’s
understanding of freedom in English. This study accordingly hopes to contribute to an
understanding of this central theme of Heidegger’s philosophical efforts, which not only
reveals their necessary connection to his politics, but also promises to improve our access
to the coherent intelligibility of his thought as a whole.
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Note on the Translations

The existing English translations are generally helpful for non-native German speakers such as myself in providing initial access to Heidegger’s oeuvre. In comparison, for example, to the existing English translations of the works of Hegel – compare, for example, some of the very first sentences of Miller’s translation of the Science of Logic with the original – the situation with English translations of Heidegger’s works is incomparably better.

Nonetheless in writing this study I have frequently felt it necessary to produce my own renditions of what Heidegger wrote, (and despite consulting prior translations, and invariably profiting from them in producing my own, the responsibility for the end result is ever mine). There are two principal reasons for this, which are neither entirely unconnected nor simply harmonious. The first is that I have found the existing English translations of Heidegger insufficiently exact for my purposes in this study. The issue here, however, is not merely the pursuit of an ideal of literalness, as important as it ought to be for any translator (though I have certainly striven for it in putting Heidegger’s writings into English), but of the range of meaning of Heidegger’s words. A handy example of this (although there are others) is Macquarrie and Robinson’s translation of Heidegger’s use of Vorlaufen as “anticipation,” rather than as “running forward,” as others have rendered it, and as I have chosen to do as well. This is not to suggest that I believe Heidegger is writing of a physical rather than a mental activity in the relevant passages; it is however emphatically the case that Heidegger employs a verb normally
used to describe physical motion as a name for a spiritual (and not merely spiritual) attitude, or being towards, death.

The example of Vorlaufen leads us to a second, connected reason for my production of my own translations of Heidegger’s German. In several cases Heidegger chooses, at least in the works I consider in this study, to deploy language that has undeniably warlike and even military associations, which are not infrequently obscured in published translations. In the case of Vorlaufen, “running forward,” especially into the possibility of death, can, for example, call to mind soldiers charging the positions of the enemy, whereas “anticipation” does not and cannot. Leading these associations to the front in translation is undeniably an interpretive choice, one which may itself even strike some readers as ‘forcible,’ or ‘violent,’ but it is one which I believe to be justified by the militant character and content of Heidegger’s own concept of freedom.

None of this is to say that I have not made compromises with the existing English translations: Where the coinages of published translations are sufficiently close (as, for example, Macquarrie and Robinson's rendering of Heidegger’s uses of Seinkoennen as “potentiality-for-being”) I have chosen to retain them in my quotations of Heidegger's texts while employing my own preferred rendering (in the case of this example, “can-be”) in explaining and interpreting the passages in question.

All of this can, and with unfortunate frequency unavoidably does, make for some rather unfelicitous English. I freely confess this defect for which I can only offer a weak and imperfect remedy. More elegant English translations of all of the works of Heidegger discussed in this study are already available. The reader may well wish to
keep them ready to hand.

Regarding the works of authors other than Heidegger, I have found it less needful to produce renderings which depart significantly from previously published translations, and the reader should generally find them more readily recognizable and intelligible.
Note on Citations and List of Abbreviations

Throughout this study there are a number of primary sources which are referenced several times or even very frequently. I have chosen to employ abbreviations of the titles for many of these sources (works of Heidegger in particular) when I cite them in the body and footnotes of this study. They are listed here in alphabetical order. A few primary sources, cited only once or rarely, and all of the secondary literature I consider in this study, are referenced in a more traditional format. A full bibliography can be found at the end of this study.

In citing primary sources I have attempted, as far as possible, to enable the reader to consult not only the English edition listed here, and in the bibliography to this study, but other editions as well, and, especially in the case of Heidegger’s works, the original text: in making reference to Heidegger’s works, though the translations contained in this study are my own (see the previous note above), I cite not only a published English translation but a German edition (excepting “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” for which I cite only the page numbers of the German edition); in citing works of Nietzsche I refer to numbered sections (and only when the source section is otherwise clear, as in the case of Zarathustra’s speech, “On Free Death,” do I list page numbers of a specific published edition); when referring to Hobbes’ Leviathan, I cite both the page numbers of MacPherson’s Penguin edition together with those of the original printing included therein.


Epigraph

*My concept of freedom.* – The worth of a thing lies sometimes not in that which one achieves with it, but in that which one pays for it – what it *costs* us. I give an example. Liberal institutions immediately stop being liberal, as soon as they are achieved: there is later no more aggravating and more thorough harm to freedom than liberal institutions. One knows indeed, what they accomplish: they undermine the will to power, they are the levelling of mountain and valley elevated to a moral standard, they make small, cowardly, and pleasure-seeking – with them the herd-animal triumphs every time. Liberalism: in plain words, herd-animalization... These same institutions, so long as they are still being fought for, produce entirely different effects; they then in fact encourage freedom in a powerful manner. Looked at more exactly, it is war that produces these effects, the war for liberal institutions, which as war lets the illiberal instincts last. And war educates to freedom. Then what is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility. That one holds fast to the distance that separates us off. That one becomes indifferent to tribulation, hardship, privation, even to life. That one is ready to sacrifice human beings to one’s cause, oneself not excepted [abgerechnet]. Freedom means that the manly, the war- and victory-happy instincts have dominion over other instincts, for example, over that for ‘happiness.’ The liberated [freigewordne] human being, and how much more the liberated spirit, tramples underfoot the contemptible sort of well-being of which shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats dream. The free human being is a warrior. – According to what does freedom
measure itself, among individuals as among peoples? According to the resistance that
must be overcome, according to the trouble that it costs to remain above. One has to seek
the highest type of free man there, where the highest resistance has to be overcome: five
steps away from tyranny, close to the threshold of the danger of servitude. This is true
psychologically, if one here comprehends among the ‘tyrants’ the unyielding and terrible
instincts, which challenge the maximum of authority and discipline against them – most
beautiful type Julius Caesar – ; this is also true politically, if only one remarks its course
through history. The peoples who were worth something, became worth something,
ever become thus under liberal institutions: great danger made something of them
which earned deep respect, danger, which first teaches us to know our aids, our virtues,
our defences and weapons, our spirit, – which forces us to be strong... First principle: one
must have it needful, to be strong: otherwise one never becomes it. – Those great
greenhouses for strong, for the strongest kind of human being that there have been
hitherto, the aristocratic communities in the manner of Rome and Venice, understood
freedom exactly in the sense how I understand the word freedom: as something that one
has and does not have, that one wants, that one conquers...

Introduction

A. Modernity and the Politics of Freedom

Today in the West, and by no means only in the West, individual freedom is regarded as a, perhaps even the, principal ideal and aspiration of human life, and, consequently, also as the fundamental principle of government, and the deepest basis of the legitimacy of any political order. It has not, however, ever been thus. The ancients regarded, not personal freedom, but the cultivation of virtue as the highest end of political life. The city described in Plato’s Republic is expressly designed to present the very image of happiness and justice, neither of which is understood as simply commensurate with the liberty of its citizens. The regime that Aristotle presents in his Politics as the best which can be hoped for in practice, though not best simply, is moderately democratic; he defends it, however, not for the freedom it permits its citizens, but for the participation in virtue that it allows. In circumstances where compromises with practical exigencies are not needful, however, the influence of popular freedom in political life falls away: freedom is notably not the characteristic feature of the simply best regime (which, though it requires ideal circumstances for its realization, is to set the standard for political understanding) described at the conclusion of the Politics. Largely exempted from the ordinary necessities of politics that almost every city must confront, its government has, unsurprisingly, a distinctly undemocratic character. The advent and spread of Christianity in ancient and medieval times did little to augment the role of freedom in the authoritative opinions and political life of Europe. Though the new religion may have championed virtues that were different from those encouraged by its
pagan predecessors, its opinion of the relative weight of freedom and virtue in the best human life remained fundamentally unchanged. The Roman Church sanctioned the reign and succession of the feudal aristocracies that ruled over the inhabitants of Europe after the collapse of the Western Empire.

It is only with the advent of modern theories of politics that freedom achieves its contemporary status in the West and around the world as the self-evidently highest end and supreme organizing principle of our life in common. Modern political thought begins with or inaugurates a transformation of the traditional understanding of the rightful place of freedom in politics. Machiavelli initiated a spiritual war against the Christian religion (together with the ancient philosophy that it pretended to have absorbed and surpassed), and by extension the hereditary aristocratic order sanctioned by the Church, by means of which it perpetuated its temporal dominion. The thinkers who took up and furthered Machiavelli’s revolutionary scheme heeded his advice to new princes to found their states upon the people, who hope only to live free. To this end these thinkers laid the groundwork of a new political order that promised the people greater liberty: greater security of their lives and property, greater freedom from the interference of religious or secular authority in their daily lives and business, greater freedom to believe and even to profess what they wished, subject to the requirements of the maintenance of the civil order. In short, the modern philosophers conspired to free the people to pursue happiness, and the means, as they understood them, to acquire it without the interference of the strictures of the Church, enforced by the power of the feudal nobility, that sought to promote Christian virtues, or at least to suppress vice and sin. The effectual result of
the success of the modern conspiracy was the appearance of the first great modern commercial empires.

The modern innovation, of course, did not rest there. Later philosophers, from Rousseau and Kant, to Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, criticized the new commercial order and the authority of its characteristic type, the man of business, the *bourgeois*. They did not, however, countenance a return to the *ancien régime* and the restoration of the spiritual supremacy of (genuine) Christianity, but remained committed to the innovation of the earlier moderns, even as they progressively tried to reform, or even lead revolts against, its practical results. In having done so, in their underlying attachment to freedom (howsoever they understood it) they thereby revealed their fundamental modernity. Though they may dispute its character and meaning, this commitment to the political freedom of the human individual characterizes all specifically modern intellectual and political movements, up to and including so-called ‘postmodernism.’

This commitment to individual human freedom also characterizes the thought of Martin Heidegger, the last great modern thinker of the twentieth century. Indeed at its core Heidegger’s thought is nothing other than the most uncompromisingly radical assertion of the self-administration of the human individual in the history of modern political theory. As soon as we become aware of this fact, however, or at the very least when we learn about Heidegger’s own practical political commitments, we are confronted with what must at first strike us as paradoxical, or even absurd: in 1933, Martin Heidegger, the most uncompromising philosopher of freedom in the history of modern thought, not only did not resist, but indeed positively and enthusiastically...
endorsed the breakout of National Socialism and its seizure of power in Germany. We nonetheless might be inclined to believe, as some have in fact argued, that his support of Hitler’s regime was the product of some particular atavistic personal commitment, extraneous to the real core of his philosophical efforts, for how could any thought that champions the cause of individual freedom lead anyone to embrace fascist tyranny? However great his error, it would not itself properly carry weight in our judgement of his thought. Alternatively we might take this fact for a kind of self-refutation, for what champion of human freedom, if he understood himself at all, could resolutely commit himself to serving such a dictatorship? Heidegger must have lacked any truly thoughtful understanding of the meaning and requirements of freedom; his own political choices thus become sufficient reason for dismissing his thought out of hand. While both of these alternative views confront the apparent contradiction between Heidegger’s thought and his involvement with the Third Reich, the conclusions they each draw are equally mistaken. The difficulties with each of these alternatives can most readily be seen through a brief survey of their representatives in the controversy concerning the relation between Heidegger’s thought and politics.

**B. Defenders and Critics of Heidegger’s Understanding of Freedom**

Although Heidegger’s understanding of freedom often comes up in the already vast scholarship on his thought and politics, there have been comparatively few sustained
thematic treatments of it in English.\footnote{1} Many of the more helpful studies of the political implications of Heidegger’s thought that have appeared over the last two decades, such as those authored by James Ward,\footnote{2} Gregory Fried,\footnote{3} and Charles Bambach,\footnote{4} consider the issue of freedom only briefly and as derivative of what they take to be deeper concerns and themes. Johannes Fritsche’s study of the political meaning of Heidegger’s notion of historical destiny (which sets a standard for careful attention to his language that few others can even hope to match) examines the climactic passages of Heidegger’s interpretation of the authentic meaning of existence in \textit{Being and Time}, but pays less attention to its connection to the rest of the work, or its place in his overarching account of freedom.\footnote{5}

\footnote{1} I am of course omitting consideration of scholarly works on Heidegger’s thought that do not also expressly concern themselves with his politics. This is not to say that the more helpful examples of these works have nothing to tell us about Heidegger’s understanding of freedom. Theodore Kisiel, for example, has produced an enlightening interpretation of Heidegger’s \textit{Sein und Zeit} as a “Kairology of Being,” and has noted the importance of freedom both in Heidegger’s characterization of authentic existence and as a possible connection between that characterization and his politics:

> Freedom for death, freedom for fate, freedom for the world-historical, freedom to dissolve and resolve resolution according to the ‘momentous’ demands of the temporally particular situation: One begins to see why Heidegger could later point to these pages... to justify his own ‘world-historical’ decision to speak fatefully and ‘momentously’ for his time; and one could wonder what ontic-existentiell attitude is lurking in the talk of ‘letting oneself be free for one’s death by shattering against it, so that once can at once let oneself be thrown back upon its factical there... in handing down its inherited possibility to itself’ (SZ 385).

Kisiel does not develop that thought further in that place, and it would be unfair to reproach him for it, since that thought reaches beyond the scope of his archaeology of the development of \textit{Being and Time}. Cf. Theodore Kisiel, \textit{The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time} (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1993), pp. 152, 421, 438.


\footnote{5} Johannes Fritsche, \textit{Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger’s Being and Time} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
This is not to say that the issue of freedom in relation to the political implications of Heidegger’s work has been overlooked. Some of Heidegger’s critics have alleged that his involvement with National Socialism in the 1930s was a result of an inadequate grasp of what human freedom is and requires. Karl Jaspers went so far as to conclude that, “Heidegger doesn’t know what freedom is.”6 Karl Loewith and Herbert Marcuse portray Heidegger’s thought as placing a premium on decision without developing any positive standards for choice.7 Richard Wolin, echoing Jaspers’ verdict, likewise portrays Heidegger’s thought as a kind of decisionism with “a lack of material criteria.”8 These critics all assert that Heidegger emphasized self-assertion without any particular substantive content or limits. Heidegger's thought is an ‘empty decisionism,’ and it was this arbitrary character of his voluntarism that left him open to seduction by an authoritarian political movement which violently proclaimed its boldness and resolve.

Conversely, some scholarly defenders of Heidegger’s work have sought to divorce his thought from his nefarious political commitment precisely on the ground of his understanding of freedom. Fred Dallmayr insists that dwelling on Heidegger’s tenure as rector of Freiburg University is “both lopsided and unfair,” and argues that Heidegger’s post-metaphysical concept of freedom furnishes a ground for “human

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solidarity (or socialism).”

Echoing Dallmayr, Mark Tanzer argues that Heidegger’s work represents a rethinking of the traditional notions of freedom, a rethinking that cannot be reduced to mere decisionism or arbitrary voluntarism. While John McCumber concedes the depth of Heidegger’s involvement with Nazism, he endeavours to extract from Heidegger’s work a path of liberation from Western oppression. Leslie Paul Thiele goes so far as to excoriate Heidegger for involvement with National Socialism on the very ground of his concept of freedom.

Leo Strauss presents yet a third account of the role of freedom in Heidegger’s thought and its relation to politics. In discussions of Heidegger’s teaching Strauss indicates both the pride of place that freedom occupies in it, while also suggesting that Heidegger’s enlistment with National Socialism followed directly from his serious considerations of the matter. Speaking of the origins of Heidegger’s thought Strauss writes: “Existentialism begins then with the realization that as the ground of all objective, rational knowledge we discover an abyss. All truth, all meaning, is seen in the last analysis to have no support except man’s freedom.”

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10 Tanzer, pp. 12, 32 (note 60 to p. 26). Unlike Dallmayr, McCumber, and Thiele, Tanzer is expressly concerned “to bury a red herring, not to call off the dogs” (p.13), that is, only to refute assertions of a link between Heidegger’s concept of freedom and his involvement with Nazism, not with rehabilitating Heidegger’s thought.
(now self-conscious) ‘ground’ of Heidegger’s own; freedom is and remains the basic issue for Heidegger’s thought, the ground of which links it to his earlier modern predecessors. Elsewhere Strauss asserts that it is furthermore Heidegger’s working out and appropriation of his experience of this abyss that lead him to commit himself to the politics of National Socialism: “There is a straight line which leads from Heidegger’s resoluteness {one of Heidegger’s own terms for authentic freedom in Being and Time} to his siding with the so-called Nazis in 1933.”¹⁴ The basic issue for Heidegger’s thought, the confrontation with the groundlessness of existence, is the same issue that drove his political commitments. According to Strauss’ interpretation Heidegger’s thought represents a far more serious challenge than many of the other critics and defenders of Heidegger appreciate.

If Strauss’ interpretation is correct, both of the first two basic interpretations of Heidegger’s thought contain important grains of truth, yet are each predicated upon a basic misunderstanding of it. While the critics of Heidegger’s thought I have named rightly affirm a connection between central themes in Heidegger’s thought and his involvement with National Socialism, they fail to see that it was not a lack of any understanding of freedom, but rather the development of the question of the authentic meaning of human freedom at the core of his thought that produced it. They therefore underestimate the difficulty that Heidegger’s work poses to us. The simple invocation of earlier modern understandings of freedom is not a sufficient rejoinder to Heidegger’s political commitments because those commitments are grounded in a radical critique of

the earlier modern understandings. On the other hand, although those who have attempted to defend Heidegger’s thought against his critics on the ground of the understanding of freedom it contains rightly sense its importance in his thought, their defence betrays a profound misunderstanding of the particular content of Heidegger’s concept of freedom. The underlying difficulty with all their interpretations of it can be briefly expressed in relation to Dallmayr’s assertion that attention to Heidegger’s rectorate is “both lopsided and unfair.” Dallmayr wants to portray Heidegger as a philosopher of freedom (a portrait which Dallmayr clearly assumes is also a self-evident exculpation of Heidegger’s thought of any responsibility in his controversial political biography), and yet Heidegger’s inaugural speech as rector justified his embrace of National Socialism in the very name of self-determination or freedom. The attempt to dissociate an ‘other,’ better version of Heidegger the thinker from his practical historical commitments only succeeds in concealing the real force of the paradox that we confront when we learn the details of the case. While we can be grateful to these defenders of Heidegger for calling our attention to the importance of freedom in his thought, they fail to appreciate the consistency of Heidegger’s thought and politics, and therefore also, in the cases of Dallmayr, McCumber, and Thiele, the scope and power of the authentic

5, p. 3, cited by Fried, p. 11.
15 Dallmayr, p. 205.
16 Cf. e.g. SA 15:

Out of the resolve of the German student body to stand firm to the German fate in its uttermost emergency, comes a will to the essence of the university. This will is a true will, provided that the German student body through the new student law [Studentenrecht] places itself under the law [Gesetz] of its essence and therewith first of all places limits around this essence. To give oneself the law [Gesetz], is the highest freedom.... The concept of freedom of the German student will now be brought back to
challenge he poses for the political agendas for which they attempt to conscript his thought. Turning to Heidegger’s understanding of what freedom means does not truly resolve the controversy but can only reveal the radical dimensions of the problem.

Through pursuing the question of the meaning of being Heidegger sought to work out and appropriate an authentic understanding of human self-determination. His resulting concept of freedom led him to embrace the politics of the far right, and he even justified his embrace of Hitler’s new regime in the name of freedom itself. The apparently disparate, contradictory facts of his thought and his political biography indeed rather form a unity. Martin Heidegger the philosopher of freedom is Martin Heidegger the National Socialist. His infamous political commitment cannot be dismissed as the result of some extraneous atavistic conviction, but presented itself the product of his commitment to freedom. Nor does this fact amount to a self-refutation of Heidegger’s thought. His work presents a scathing and trenchant critique of modern mass society and the liberal democratic notion of liberty, and elaborates a more radical concept of freedom, the practical consequence of which is a (distinctively modern) militant politics of the far right. The notion that Heidegger’s politics could amount to a self-refutation is merely the product of reigning liberal democratic and leftist prejudices which deny the possibility of any thoughtful account of human freedom by the partisans of the radical right. While the sway of fascist politics in Europe is thankfully only the palest shadow of what it was in 1933, Heidegger’s work continues to exercise great influence both inside and outside of the academy. If we lack any satisfactory defence against the charges of Heidegger’s

its truth.
philosophical assault, then can we be confident that liberal government yet continues to endure through anything other than mere force of habit and fortuitous accident? The fact that Heidegger’s thought is now disseminated in a form that tames or disguises its original and authentic political force is not a justification for complacency. We ignore the compelling critique of modern mass society and representative government at the core of Heidegger’s philosophical efforts only at our peril.

C. Overview of the Present Study

This is a study of Heidegger’s thought and politics, centred on his concept of freedom, as he elaborates it in Being and Time, and in subsequent essays and lectures. In the course of this study I shall argue that this concept of freedom, the essential character of which he describes as a running forward into death, forms the vital core of Heidegger’s thought. It is thus neither apolitical, nor ‘ideologically neutral.’ The centrality of this concept of freedom, which results in a politics of resolute self-assertion, indeed rather demonstrates the basic continuity between Heidegger’s theoretical pursuit of the question of the (authentic) meaning of being and his infamous practical engagement with Nazism. Coming to grips with the basic intention of Heidegger’s work in this way accordingly may help us to turn from the debates about the possible connection between his philosophy and politics (which have raged on and off ever since he enthusiastically threw his lot in with Adolf Hitler’s new regime in 1933), to the more important question concerning the response that Heidegger’s critique of freedom demands.
Chapter 1 of this study begins with a preliminary defence of the notion that freedom is a—and perhaps even the—central concern of Heidegger’s efforts in *Being and Time* and in his subsequent essays and lectures. The pursuit of the question concerning the authentic meaning of being must, according to Heidegger, become an analytic or interrogation of human freedom. I then turn to the problem that emerges at the opening of the second division of *Being and Time*, the problem of grasping freedom as a whole. It is this problem which opens the interpretation of the source and meaning of authentic freedom, the theme that Heidegger pursues throughout the remainder of the work. In the course of setting out the problem that freedom poses for the pursuit of the meaning of being, I have also provided summaries of the discussions of the terms of Heidegger’s existential interpretation, developed earlier in the analytic of *Being and Time* and which continue to be important, not only in the context of the problem that opens the second division, but throughout the rest of the work. While I largely attempt to follow the steps of Heidegger’s argument in the second division of *Being and Time* (which nonetheless leads us beyond that work to “What Is Metaphysics?” and finally his Rectorate Address), I should note that throughout this study I have not hesitated to draw upon Heidegger’s subsequent work to bring out the sense of particular passages where I have believed it to be helpful.

There are broadly speaking four steps to Heidegger’s response to the problem of freedom: the development of an existential concept of death as being towards death, the elaboration of the everyday fugitive attitude towards it, and the project of an authentic alternative (discuss in chapters 2 and 3); the interpretation of the conscience as the
practical revelation of the possibility of authentic existence, at bottom a resolved
charging towards death, a summons to the war of existence (chapter 4); the return to
history for the transmission of the particular possibilities of resolve, the site of the battle
of existence, for which the resolute must constantly fight (chapter 5); the plan for the
cultivation and discipline of a new heroic officer class who will renew the fight for
freedom, intimated in Being and Time but further worked out in Heidegger’s subsequent
statements of his plans for university education (chapter 6).

Chapter 2 turns to Heidegger’s discussion of death in the first chapter of the
second division of Being and Time. In order to grasp any being as a whole, it is
necessary to define its end and limits. The end or limit of human freedom is death. It is
the interpretation of the phenomenon of death therefore that will make human freedom
intelligible. As opposed to every other being that ends or dies, the human being
determines itself, and ever already comports itself towards its end. Grasping freedom as
a whole thus requires the development of a properly existential concept of death. What is
essential to it, according to Heidegger, is not the mortality of the human being’s animal
body, but how death determines our understanding in going about our lives. Death
reveals itself as the basic possibility of existence which frames all the others. It emerges
as the possibility that is most our own, and which defines the essence of our freedom.

Chapter 3 examines Heidegger’s analysis of the vulgar or inauthentic
understanding of death, as it presents itself in everyday speech, and his contrasting
existential project of a pure or authentic being towards death. We ordinarily run away
from any express understanding of death into the immediate urgencies of our common
business and the fragmented distraction of modern mass society. In so doing, we surrender our original self-determination to the dispensation of the anonymous crowd. As the possibility which is most our own, death and our comportment towards it defines the freedom or unfreedom of our existence. Authentic freedom in Heidegger’s presentation fundamentally consists not in evading any express understanding of death’s constant threat, but rather in anxiously yet steadfastly confronting it head on, in what Heidegger calls “running forward into the possibility.” Heidegger’s trenchant critique of our everyday, inauthentic evasion of death and the consequent averageness of our common existence, together with his project of running forward, constitutes an attack upon modern mass society, and most particularly upon liberal democracy, the spiritual foundations of which, at least as elaborated by earlier modern thinkers, epitomize the inauthentic evasion of death.

The further steps of Heidegger’s interpretation of the authentic meaning of freedom in *Being and Time* will all prove to be only further developments of this project of an authentic being towards death. The militant consequences of the authentic concept of freedom inhere in the existential interpretation. The practical possibility of an authentic freedom (being towards death), according to Heidegger, is revealed by the conscience, which also turns out to be the experience which is the source of his teaching. Chapter 4 discusses Heidegger’s interpretation of the conscience, as the anxious revelation of the essential nothing of the Dasein and the practical possibility of running forward. Heidegger’s radical, existential interpretation of the phenomenon of the conscience aims not only to defend it against biological and psychological explanations.
of it, but also to do away with conventional or “vulgar” interpretations of the conscience as the voice of god, as a warning or reproving voice that speaks primarily about the moral character of particular deeds, or of indebtedness or moral obligation to any particular person or people. The conscience certainly speaks of guilt, but it is the guilt of the essential nothingness or groundlessness of our factual existence, the “thatness” of freedom which we did not originally choose but for which the conscience demands that we assume responsibility as a whole. We become primordially responsible for ourselves, but also only to ourselves, beyond all the claims of (everyday) morality. When its meaning is fully worked out, the experience of the conscience calls us to the steadfast repetition of ourselves in all our thatness, indeed the whole of our existence, right up to the end, in a “forward running resolve.” The conscience calls us not to the peace and security of the modern liberal state but to confront the perpetual threat to us arising out of the whole of being and embrace the war of existence. While Heidegger agrees with earlier modern thinkers that man’s right life is founded upon the properly moral attitude towards death, he not only critiques the opinion about it that they taught, but proclaims that a properly free existence consists in the comportment towards death exactly opposite of the one they sought to inculcate. In a further echo of the earlier moderns, the militant being towards death that Heidegger holds to be authentically free, indeed the \textit{sine qua non} of all authentic freedom, will also prove to be the animating spirit of his politics.

Chapter 5 turns to Heidegger’s discussion of history as the source of the possible content or identity of the happening of the authentic self. History proves to be the happening of the self-determination of the human being. Assuming responsibility for the
thatness of our existence, for who we already are, requires taking ownership of the understanding of ourselves and of the world that has come down to us from the past, and repeating the authentic possibilities of existence that it contains. Those authentic possibilities however have been concealed and distorted by the reigning averageness of mass society. The summons of the conscience to a forward running resolve demands that we recover our freedom through the reconquest of history and the creative appropriation of the administration of our inheritance. In the free seizure of the heritage that it yet is, the authentic freedom of existence reveals itself as a freedom for the tasks bequeathed to it by fate. The reconquest of history by no means happens as the isolated deed of a particular individual. Freedom always finds itself existing with others. The authentic freedom for fate recovers itself only in a shared struggle. Through their participation in the fateful fight for their inherited yet self-chosen tasks Heidegger’s corps of resolute freedom-fighters together constitute a new organic folk-partnership. Since authentic freedom happens only in its constant reconquest, this destined nation is and must be a militant community of battle prepared for the perpetual spiritual (but by no means merely intellectual) warfare that it requires. Heidegger’s embrace of National Socialism after Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933 was certainly prepared by his projection of an authentic ethnic battle community, for his description of the fateful battle to recover the repeatable possibilities of the past for the destiny of the Volk was consonant with the way in which the National Socialists and the members of the Sturmabteilung expressed their own understanding of their political movement. This is not to say that Heidegger’s infamous political commitment was merely the product of broader currents in German political
culture: Heidegger was open to fascism and embraced Hitler’s regime on the ground of the content of his concept of authentic freedom.

At the close of the chapter on history, Heidegger intimates a project of conscripting the universities for the cultivation and discipline of successive generations of a new heroic officer class, to lead the perpetual total war against the whole of what is, a war that, according to his understanding, the happening of authentic freedom requires. Chapter 6 begins with Heidegger’s discussion of the authentic or conscientious meaning of science in *Being and Time* before turning to his project for the university as he outlines it in his first public lecture as a professor at the University of Freiburg, and in his inaugural address as its rector. Heidegger’s practical project for the university to train new generations of conscientious leaders in the battle for freedom is not, in his own presentation, in conflict with the pursuit of science. All theory is grounded in and arises from pre-theoretical comportment and understanding. The most primordial knowing, and therefore all science worthy of the name, is rooted in the anxious self-exposure to the nothing inherent in the world; that is to say, in the experience of the conscience. The recovery of that basic experience and the transformation of the university into the site of the cultivation of the conscience as Heidegger radically interprets it (the authentic being towards death of forward running resolve) is thereby also the creative recovery of the furthest beginning of science in all its original force. Science again comes into its own only when the university is transformed into a community of battle. Toward this purpose Heidegger sought to channel and discipline the enthusiasm of the National Socialist student youth, in whom he doubtlessly thought he glimpsed the awakening breakout of a
new resolve and the authentic concept of freedom that he drew from it. That concept of freedom ends in a perpetual total war against the whole of what is. Heidegger would later be disappointed by the realities of National Socialist politics, yet he never renounced the understanding of freedom at the core of his thought or his speech on “The Self-Assertion of the German University.”

While Heidegger’s political commitments and the controversy surrounding them motivate investigation, and certainly form the backdrop for this study, they do not exhaust the genuine stakes of any examination of his thought. The most serious question for us is most truly not whether Heidegger’s thought leads us to the doorstep of fascism (vital though that question is, and however crucial answering it may be for understanding the meaning of his work), but whether his thought, irrespective of its tyrannical consequences, is fundamentally correct. For if Heidegger’s account of human freedom is right, then, like it or not, his politics are simply the practical consequences that we must face. Before we are able to confront this question, however, we must first grasp the authentic contours of Heidegger’s account, and it is this necessary but merely preliminary task with which this study principally concerns itself. I have endeavoured, to the limits of my abilities, to treat that account both as sympathetically and as critically as possible. While I have not refrained from critiquing and even condemning portions of Heidegger’s teaching that I examine in this study, my primary concern has been simply to understand his work. I do believe, however, that a definitive response to Heidegger’s project is not only necessary, but indeed both possible and available. I have accordingly not only attempted to indicate those points at which Heidegger’s philosophical assault appears
vulnerable to counter-attack, but I conclude my examination of Heidegger’s account of freedom by taking up the contemporary response to his thought that strikes me as the most immediately promising.
Chapter One: The Question of Being and the Problem of Freedom

It is the argument of this study that Heidegger’s particular concept of—and concern for—human freedom animates the heart of his philosophical endeavours. While I would argue that this statement remains true of Heidegger’s thought even up until the end of his life, this study will concentrate principally on *Being and Time*, together with his subsequent lecture courses in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and his inaugural address as rector of Freiburg University. Attention to Heidegger’s understanding of and concern for freedom not only helps make his work coherently intelligible, but also (as paradoxical as it may at first seem) makes clear—or rather, is itself—the necessary and intimate connection between Heidegger’s way of thinking and his involvement with National Socialism. Since Heidegger’s thought in *Being and Time* and elsewhere presents itself, however, not as concerned with human freedom, but as inquiring into the meaning of being, some initial defense of the suggestion that freedom is a (or even the) central concern of his thought is clearly necessary. According to Heidegger’s deepest intention, the inquiry into the meaning of being can and even must become an inquiry into freedom.

The pursuit of the question of the authentic meaning of being through the analytic of human freedom in the first division of *Being and Time* leads to an apparent impasse in the argument. Securing an answer to the question of being requires grasping human freedom as a whole, and yet it always appears essentially ‘unfinished,’ and consequently seems to elude any thorough or primordial interpretive grasp. Heidegger attempts to resolve this apparent impasse in his investigation through an examination of death as the end, and therefore as the limit-situation of freedom. This discussion yields a properly existential
concept of death as a continual being towards it, which is to make possible a total grasp of the human being, and clarify or render intelligible the meaning of human freedom.

The second part of this chapter concerns itself with the context and aims of Heidegger’s discussion of death in as they are presented in the opening section of the second division of Being and Time, in order to lay out the character of Heidegger’s argument and the meanings of the terms by which he orients his existential interpretation of human freedom, by way of setting the stage for an examination of the development of the existential concept of death in the following chapter of this study.

A. Being and Time as Analytic of Human Freedom

Being and Time announces itself as a response to a peculiar, even troubling question to which we have no answer, but one that has yet nevertheless ceased to disturb us. “Have we today,” Heidegger asks, “an answer to the question concerning that which we authentically mean with the word ‘being’?” His reply reveals the rhetorical nature of this question: “In no way [Keineswegs].” Heidegger asserts, therefore, that “it is valid to raise anew the question about the meaning of being” (BT 19/SZ 1). This peculiar question concerning being, “which drove ancient philosophers into unrest” (BT 21/SZ 2), has ceased to perplex us, to the point where it no longer even occurs to us to ask about it: “Are we then today even perplexed not to understand the expression ‘being’?” Again:

17 Macquarrie and Robinson translate this instance of heute with “in our time.” As translation, this is too precipitous by half; as interpretation, it may not go far enough. For a discussion of what Heidegger have in mind here by “today” (though without explicit reference to the first sentences of Sein und Zeit), see ST 22/SWF 27.
“In no way.” Therefore, as a necessary part of his self-appointed task of posing again the question of the authentic meaning of being, Heidegger must reawaken an understanding for the question (BT 19/SZ 1). It would not be too much to claim that this reawakening is intended not only to effect a rekindling of a “battle of giants concerning being” (BT 21/SZ 2; cf. also BT 487-488/SZ 437) but also a profound transformation in the self-understanding of his readers, nay, a liberation of his readers—or at least of those readers who are ready to answer Heidegger’s strident call to arms.

Being and Time thus presents itself as an attempt to raise once more the question of the meaning of being. As Heidegger presents it, the essential philosophical importance of the question about the meaning of being is not to be underestimated: “The understanding-of-being forms the basic problem of metaphysics in general. ‘What does ‘being’ mean?’ is the basic question of philosophy simply” (MFL 136/MAL 171). Any ontological enterprise, any and all philosophy (assuming that all philosophy is basically ontology), will remain confused so long as it has not conceived the question of the meaning of being as its most basic task (BT 31/SZ 11); Being and Time therefore lays claim to the title of “fundamental ontology” (BT 34/SZ 13). According to Heidegger, the retrieval of the question of the authentic meaning of being is therefore the retrieval of the authentic question of philosophy. It quickly turns out, however, that the question of being is a rather peculiar question, and working out the question of being demands careful preparation in order to find the right way to come to grips with it. We cannot pursue the question of the meaning of being in the same manner that we seek to understand any genus, species, or particular being that we may encounter, because being in general is not
one particular being, or even all beings together. Rather it is ever the being of the
particular beings, as both what and how they ‘are’ (BT 26/SZ 6-7). Since being in
general can only be reached through the interrogation of particular beings—precisely
because being is always the being of some particular being—the question arises as to
which of the beings can provide the best access to being in general. The question of
being is also necessarily peculiarly self-reflexive. As inquiring is itself a way of being,
Heidegger’s inquiry demands “the making transparent of a being - of the inquiring
[being] - in its being” (BT 27/SZ 7). Even if we do not authentically know what being
means, we still just as certainly possess a vague, average, and, so to speak, everyday
understanding of being (BT 25/SZ 5). The truth of this claim is demonstrated by the very
fact of Heidegger’s inquiry: in order to ask about the meaning of being, we must have
some access to being, must somehow already ‘know’ what being ‘is’ (BT 25/SZ 5-6). An
understanding of something like being must therefore belong to the being of the ‘human
being,’ without which such inquiring would not even be possible (BT 25/SZ 5). The
human being provides the way across the apparently unbridgeable chasm between the
inquiry into the particular seiende and the concept of Sein ueberhaupt. Being and Time
would remain essentially groundless if it did not also attempt to clarify the condition for
the possibility of inquiring into the meaning of being in general (BT 31/SZ 11).
Heidegger’s inquiry must therefore take up the problem of, that is to say, interrogate, the
human being itself, the being that somehow understands something like being.

The human being is not just one being among others, but is the being with an
understanding of being. The question concerning the authentic meaning of being is thus
“nothing other than the radicalization of a belonging-to-the-Dasein-itself essential
tendency-of-being - of the pre-ontological understanding of being” (BT 35/SZ 15). The
human being therefore provides the “condition for the possibility of all ontologies” (BT
34/SZ 13). The human being is accordingly the being that Heidegger’s inquiry must take
as its ‘subject’:

Sought is the answer to the question about the meaning of being in general
and prior to that [vordem] the possibility of a radical working out of this
basic question of all ontology. The exposition [Freilegung] of the horizon,
however, in which something like being in general becomes first of all
[zunaechst] understandable, is equal to the reconnaissance
[Aufklaerung] of the possibility of the understanding of being in general,
which itself belongs to the constitution of the being that we name Dasein
(BT 274/SZ 231).

Being and Time, Heidegger’s revival of the question of being, announces itself as a
response to our lack of an answer to the question of the authentic meaning of being.

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18 In ordinary usage “Aufklaerung” means “clearing up” or “enlightenment”; Macquarrie and Robinson
render it as “clarifying.” In aviation or military use, however, it means “reconnaissance.” My
translation of “Aufklaerung” as “reconnaissance” in this context might therefore appear as willful or
even ‘violent.’ I believe that this ‘violence’ is justified, in order to bring out the character of
Heidegger’s text, given the military tone of the language of both the later sections of Sein und Zeit and
in subsequent lecture courses (to say nothing of “The Self-Assertion of the German University”). I
discuss some examples of Heidegger’s militant and even violent language, in the examination of his
existential interpretations of death and conscience, his elaboration of an authentic historicality, and the
program he lays out for the future of the university in his Rectorate Address, in the chapters below. For
other examples of the military character of his language, both in and after Sein und Zeit, see Johannes
Fritsche, Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger’s Being and Time (Berkeley:

19 Heidegger elsewhere provides a more straightforward statement of the relation of the question of being
to the question of man:

Because it belongs to the essential constitution of man to understand being, the
question of being... is a question, even the question, about man himself....The basic
question of philosophy, the question of being, is in itself, rightly understood, the
question of man; it is, rightly understood, a question concerning man, which lives
hidden in the history of philosophy and in it will move further, but which has to be
brought to light anew in each moment [in jedem Augenblickneins Licht gestellt sein
will]. (MFL 16/MAL 20-21)
Reaching an answer about the meaning of being—especially given our lack of understanding of the meaning even of the question itself—requires that the question of the meaning of being be worked out radically. To work out this question radically is to investigate the very possibility of understanding anything like being, an understanding that is rooted in the being of the human being. Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, the inquiry into the authentic meaning of being, thus necessarily becomes an investigation of the being of the human being: “fundamental ontology... must be sought in the existential analytic of the Dasein” (BT 34/SZ 13). Working out the question of being therefore naturally means to “also make headway with a task which is scarcely less pressing than that of the question of being itself - the task of laying bare that a priori basis which must be visible before the question of ‘what the human being is’ can be discussed philosophically” (BT 71/SZ 45).

The use of the term “das Dasein” (which in common German usage usually means simply “(the) existence,” and literally merely “(the) being-there”) to name the human being is only an implicit indication of Heidegger’s explicit rejection of the traditional answers, indeed the very ground of all traditional answers, to the question of man’s essence or nature, as hypokeimenon, as substance, or as subject (BT 71-72/SZ 45-46). This is no less radical a break with the tradition than his rejection of the traditional

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definitions of what being ‘is.’ The existential analytic of *Being and Time* aims to transform the reader’s understanding, not only of the meaning of being, but also of the meaning of being human: if the understanding of something like being forms the essence of the Dasein in the human being, then to transform that understanding of being, to reawaken an authentic understanding of being, is therefore also authentically to transform the human. This study will accordingly also concern itself with Heidegger’s attempt to revolutionize our understanding of “‘what the human being is’” as it bears on his understanding of human freedom. Since Heidegger identifies man’s essence with freedom, this revolution in the understanding of the human being will therefore also be a revolution in the understanding of what it means to be free.

The inquiry into the meaning of being “is allowed no as-you-like idea of being and actuality” of the human being, “however so ‘self-evident’” (BT 37/SZ 16); nor can it be “constructed out of one concrete possible idea of existence” (BT 69/SZ 43). To take arbitrary fancies or a particular way of life as a model of the essence of the human would risk the inquiry going astray in its very beginnings, not only about the being of the Dasein itself, but about “the exposition [Freilegung] of the horizon for the most primordial being-interpretation [Seinsauslegung]” (BT 38/SZ 17). Being in general is reached authentically not through taking over accidental notions, but only through the self-interrogation of the inquiring Dasein. According to Heidegger, the matter itself guides this consideration, since the

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21 Why this is so will become clearer when we turn to Heidegger’s analysis of the tradition and the understanding of being as ‘presence-at-hand’ (see below, p. 34 and following). Suffice it to say for now that our everyday ‘self-evident’ ideas about the Dasein’s being involve conceiving its being as, at
Dasein constantly understands itself in terms of a way of life that it has chosen. The Dasein is the being with an understanding of being. With that understanding of being, its own being is disclosed to it, and with that disclosure, it is “thereby ontically marked out [ausgezeichnet], that for this being [diesem Seienden] in its being [Sein] it concerns this being [Sein] itself.” As such, it always comports itself in some way towards its existence, that is, the existing Dasein is a self-determining being (BT 32/SZ 12). The Dasein understands its own being in terms of the way it comports itself towards its existence, that is, in terms of a possibility that it has chosen: “The Dasein always understands itself out of its existence, of a possibility of itself, to be itself or not itself. These possibilities the Dasein has either chosen itself, or it has got into them, or ever already grown up therein” (BT 33/SZ 12). Whether the Dasein has deliberately chosen or only stumbled into the possibility that it, so to speak, inhabits, the Dasein is itself fundamentally free. It dwells essentially not within the mathematically analyzable present-at-hand space of the modern physical sciences, but within possibilities of existence. As a consequence, only the Dasein can determine the “how” of its existence: “Only the particular Dasein decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting. The question of existence is always only cleared up through the existing itself” (BT 33/SZ 12).

Authentic philosophy, according to Heidegger, the existential interpretation of the Dasein, “never wishes to accept any power saying [Machtspruch]” about these
possibilities (BT 360/SZ 312). Even to wish to do so would, according to Heidegger, be contrary to the requirements of philosophy, and thus impossible for the authentic philosopher, insofar as he remains true to his essential tasks. From its beginning the inquiry of Being and Time implicitly obeys what Heidegger, shortly after its publication, described in The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic as the fundamental requirement of philosophy: “Only {he} can philosophize who is already resolved to grant free dignity to the Dasein in its radical and universal-essential possibilities” (MFL 17/MAL 22).

Choosing possibilities—that is to say, freedom—is the only “self-evident” idea of the Dasein’s being that will be applied to it, and indeed taken as the point of departure for the existential analytic of the Dasein;22 Heidegger refuses to predicate his existential analytic on any judgement about human nature other than its freedom. In other contexts Heidegger even identifies the essence of man as freedom, and seems to go so far as to use these terms interchangeably.23 The existential analytic of the Dasein is in fact an analytic

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22 In this connection it may be worthwhile to note that Being and Time is an analysis neither of ‘deliberation’ nor of ‘consciousness’; Heidegger’s analytic of human freedom is neither an analysis of decision-making nor of the ‘structures’ or ‘laws’ of human thought. See Martin Heidegger, “Introduction to ‘What Is Metaphysics?’”, Walter Kaufmann trans., PM 282-4/ Wm 201-3.

23 Cf. e.g. MFL 20/MAL 25; further examples can be found at MFL 139/MAL 175, MFL 185/MAL 238, MFL 192/MAL 247-248, FCM 19/GBM 28. The equation of man’s essence with freedom, together with the formal description of that freedom as ‘choosing possibilities,’ that is to say, the equation of man’s essence with freedom, and with freedom alone, suggests that Heidegger’s thought begins, at least, as relativism: while he characterizes human existence as choice, he seems unwilling to judge, or provide a basis for judging particular choices as either good or bad, or right or wrong. This is not to say that relativism is Heidegger’s last word. Commenting on Heidegger’s thought, Leo Strauss writes that, “Existentialism admits the truth of relativism, but it realizes that relativism, so far from being a solution or even a relief, is deadly. Existentialism is the reaction of serious men to their own relativism.” (Leo Strauss, “An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism” in The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss: Essays and Lectures. Selected and Introduced by Thomas L. Pangle. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 36.) While Heidegger may be unwilling to endorse some choices as better than others, he can and does endorse some choices as freer, as more genuinely one’s own, than others. Whether this uneasy solution is a genuine answer to the problem or in fact an evasion of it remains a real question—is calling some choices freer or more authentic not also to call them better?
of freedom. Freedom first becomes visible in *Being and Time* as a capacity for choice, but (as we shall see) Heidegger understands this capacity for choice as possible only on the ground of the Dasein’s fundamental freedom. While philosophy cannot decide the how of the Dasein’s existence, it can and should lay out the two constant and fundamental possibilities of the Dasein, which can either authentically ‘choose’ itself, or inauthentically flee the burden of its freedom into the average everydayness of *das Man*.

*Being and Time* seeks to expose the horizon “in which something like being first of all becomes understandable” (BT 274/SZ 231). We may now provisionally say that the horizon within which being becomes intelligible is freedom. And indeed this is what Heidegger himself subsequently proclaims in his 1930 lectures on the essence of human freedom: “Freedom is the condition of the possibility of the manifestness of the being of beings, of the understanding of being” (EHF 205/WMF 303), as both the ground and limit of that understanding. What philosophy authentically seeks, in asking the question of the meaning of being, is freedom. “Fundamentally the question concerning the essence of freedom is the basic problem of philosophy, if the leading question thereof otherwise lies enclosed in the question concerning being” (EHF 205/WMF 303; cf. also MFL 20/MAL 25, MFL 24/MAL 32). Thus, to inquire after the meaning of being (when, according to Heidegger, that inquiry understands itself correctly) is to inquire into human freedom: “Thus is the question concerning the essence of human freedom the basic question of philosophy, in which even the question of being is rooted” (EHF 203/WMF 300). The question concerning being is only a path to grasping the meaning of freedom. The inquiry into the meaning of being can and must become an inquiry into the being of
the human being; in turn this inquiry into human being is in fact an inquiry into freedom, or, more precisely—since Heidegger accepts the “fact” of human freedom and asserts it without question as the basic human essence—an analytic of human freedom. Only through an analytic of human freedom can we hope, according to Heidegger, to arrive at the meaning of being. To understand Heidegger’s pursuit of the concept of being in general in *Being and Time* and his subsequent lecture courses, it is accordingly necessary to grasp his understanding of freedom.

A truly thorough demonstration of the thesis that Heidegger’s concept of and concern for human freedom shapes the core of his philosophical efforts would require a commentary on the whole of *Being and Time*, and beyond. Furthermore, the assertion that an understanding of and concern for human freedom shapes the core of Heidegger’s philosophical efforts, naturally leads us to the question, how does Heidegger understand freedom? I will accordingly not attempt such a commentary in these pages, but rather focus on specific sections of *Being and Time* that best serve to illuminate Heidegger’s particular understanding of human freedom and the relation of that understanding to the rest of his inquiry, centered on his discussion of being-towards-death. By this route I hope to take, as it were, a shortcut to the goal of a thorough commentary, by developing an examination of Heidegger’s particular concept of freedom that is both more specific and more concrete than could be achieved in a survey of the entire work. The examination of this concept will equip us for the question of the connection between

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24 Although the centrality of freedom in Heidegger’s thought has generally gone unnoticed, Leo Strauss has provided a vivid formulation of its importance: “Existentialism begins, then, with the realization that as the ground of all objective, rational knowledge we discover an abyss. All truth, all meaning, is
Heidegger’s thought and politics.

The genuine justification of this choice will emerge in the course of this study, but for now, in anticipation of its results, I will assert that being towards death forms a, and even the, essential moment in Heidegger’s concept of human freedom. According to Heidegger, living a free human life depends on whether and how one chooses to face up to death. The analysis of being towards death, so central to the analytic of *Being and Time*, contains the ground of Heidegger’s critique of modern mass society, or rather, is his genuine critique of the freedom of liberal government as an ‘inauthentic’ or false freedom. He contrasts this false freedom with the project of a genuine freedom, the core of which is an authentic comportment towards death that Heidegger will call “forward running resolve [vorlaufende Entschlossenheit].” These sections moreover reveal, on the one hand, the source or origin of Heidegger’s teaching in *Being and Time*, and, on the other—especially when put together with sections of Heidegger’s subsequent lectures and essays and his inaugural lecture as Rector of Freiburg University—the connection of that teaching to his controversial political commitments.

This study will show, on the one hand, that Heidegger’s particular concept of freedom informs the whole of his teaching, at least as he presents it in *Being and Time*; on the other, the consequences of that concept include a politics that is not only anti-liberal, but which definitively belongs to the radical right, and therefore, practically speaking in the Germany of *Being and Time*’s “today,” definitively National Socialist. That is to say: Heidegger’s controversial political choices were not the product of

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seen in the last analysis to have no support except man’s freedom” (Ibid.).
personal convictions, which were extraneous to his philosophical endeavours, nor is his embrace of National Socialism in the name of freedom merely some strange paradox, a self-refutation, or a reason, in itself, for dismissing his thought. Rather, Heidegger’s political choices were a direct and necessary consequence of that basic experience from which he derived his concept of freedom and which drove his philosophical endeavours. This experience makes intelligible the apparent contradiction between his concern for human freedom and his embrace of National Socialist dictatorship. Through an examination of Heidegger’s discussion of being-towards-death, this study thus aims to contribute to the understanding of both his concept of freedom and its consequences, which have so rarely been a central focus of English-language studies of his thought.

Having justified our choice of freedom as the theme of this study of Heidegger’s thought, shown in a provisional manner that a study of his concept of freedom must start with his discussion of being-towards-death, and, in anticipation of the results of this study, identified that conception of freedom, centered in being-towards-death, as the wellspring both of his teaching as a whole and of his embrace of National Socialist politics, we now begin our examination of Heidegger’s discussion of being-towards-death, starting with its context and explicit aims within the argument of *Being and Time*.

B. The Context and Aims of Heidegger’s Discussion of Being Towards Death

Heidegger does not enter into his discussion of being towards death simply for its own sake, but rather turns to it in response to a particular problem in his analysis which
emerges at the close of the first division of *Being and Time*: the problem of getting the Dasein as a whole into the inquiry’s grasp, which means, ultimately, the problem of the clarification of the meaning of human freedom. At the conclusion of the first division of *Being and Time* and the preparatory fundamental analysis of the Dasein, Heidegger has clarified the constitution of the Dasein, the being with an understanding of being, through the exposition of the phenomenon of care; and if care is the primordial state of the Dasein’s being, then “the meaning of being must be able to be defined [umgrenzt].”

Heidegger then suddenly calls into question the results of his preparatory analysis:

> But *is* with the phenomenon of care the most primordial existential-ontological state of Dasein’s being disclosed? Does the lying in the phenomenon of care structural manifoldness give the most primordial totality of the being of the factical Dasein? Has the investigation up to this point at all got the Dasein *as a whole* into view? (BT 273/ SZ 230)

At first these questions, which are in effect a condensed summary of the considerations which open the second division of *Being and Time*, and lead to Heidegger’s discussion of being towards death, seem incongruous, for Heidegger has already, at a number of points since the beginning of the work, insisted that the being of the Dasein be seen and grasped as a whole (SZ 41, 53, 181). The opening section of the second division (“The Outcome of the Preparatory Fundamental Analysis of the Dasein, and the Task of a Primordial Existential Interpretation of this Being”) contains Heidegger’s initial explanation of why and how the results of the analysis of the first division can and even must come into question as regards their grasp of the Dasein in its wholeness. This explanation in turn justifies the resort to the analysis of the phenomenon of death for the means to the resolution of this problem.
1. Summary of the Problem

This opening section begins with a question consistent with its title: “What has been gained through the preparatory analysis of the Dasein, and what was sought?” It accordingly provides a short restatement of the aim of the existential analytic of the Dasein and its results up to this point. Heidegger’s reconsideration of the results of the analytic reveals their deficiency in comparison with its aims and shows the necessity of developing a truly “primordial” interpretation of the Dasein. Only a primordial interpretation of the Dasein can hope to expose thoroughly the structure of the horizon within which anything like being becomes understandable. A primordial interpretation of the Dasein requires grasping it as a whole, and yet the results of the existential analytic in the first division of Being and Time seem to preclude entirely any possible grasp of the whole Dasein. It is in response to this problem, then—the problem of grasping a possible wholeness of the Dasein’s being (that is, of human freedom), for the sake of reaching the deepest and most extreme horizons of being’s intelligibility, an exposition prerequisite to the radical working out of the question of the meaning of being—that Heidegger turns to an analysis of death.

2. Being-in-the-World and the Disclosedness of the Dasein

Heidegger begins with what the analytic has gained: “We have found the basic state of the thematic being, being-in-the-world, whose essential structures center in
disclosedness” (BT 274/SZ 231). The basic state of Dasein’s being is “being-in-the-world.” The Dasein is the being which somehow always already understands something like being. Along with that understanding, not only “the understanding of the being of those beings which become accessible within the world” but also “an understanding of something like a ‘world,’” is given to it (BT 33/SZ 13). A world has already been disclosed, has already been laid open to the Dasein that dwells within it, even if it never expressly takes any notice of it (BT 105/SZ 75). This constant prior disclosure of a world finds expression, according to Heidegger, in our ordinary ways of speaking about the human being:

The ontically figurative talk of the lumen naturale in man means nothing else than the existential-ontological structure of this being, that it is, in the manner, to be its there. It is ‘illuminated’ means: cleared in itself as being-in-the-world, not through another being, but thus, that it itself is the clearing. (BT 171/SZ 133)

With the ‘fact’ of the being of what we ordinarily call the human being, a world has always already opened up around it. This awareness is no mere accidental ‘property’ of its being. The ‘human being’ is not some being that ‘also’ possesses or experiences this awareness, but it is or goes about its being precisely in terms of this world that has somehow revealed itself around it. We know, furthermore, of many other beings within the world that exhibit no awareness of the world, indeed we know of no other being whose understanding matches our own. Without this awareness it would no be what it is, but some other being instead. This awareness of the world is therefore essential to the

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25 The results (and the terms Heidegger uses to encapsulate them) are not only important for understanding the immediate problem of a grasp of the whole Dasein, but will be important for the rest of this study; accordingly I will take the opportunity here to refer to earlier passages in Being and Time.
being of the human being, the being that Heidegger names the Dasein. The essential constitution or structure of the Dasein therefore articulates itself as a being-in-the-world. The term “‘world’” is therefore “ontologically no determination of the beings, that the Dasein essentially is not, but a character of the Dasein itself [selbst]” (BT 92/SZ 64). That is to say, “{t}he being which is essentially constituted by being-in-the-world is itself in every case its ‘there’” (BT 171/SZ 132). The Dasein, as being-in-the-world, ‘is’ its world, in such a way that the world is constantly already disclosedly laid open before it.

Heidegger continually insists that being-in-the-world is constantly a whole, upon the “unitary” character of this being-in-the-world that determines us, indeed, that we simply are. The “constitution” of this unitary phenomenon nevertheless possesses a “plurality [Mehrfaltigkeit] of constitutive structural moments.” Heidegger’s study of this phenomenon therefore attempts to bring to light these moments individually, by way of emphasis, while yet grasping their connection to the others (BT 78/SZ 53). First of all, being-in-the-world is a being-in [In-sein] characterized by an “inhood [Inheit].” This inhood is not the ‘insideness’ of one present being in relation to another, as we are wont to think of in our ordinary speaking about the beings that we encounter within the world, as, for example, when we observe “the water in the glass,” or “the garment in the cupboard.” Here the expression ‘in’ means, “the relationship of being of two beings extended ‘in’ space to one another in regard to their place in that space.” This ordinary way of thinking and speaking about being-in does not fit the kind of being that characterizes the Dasein. Being-in as “a constitution of being of the Dasein,” the being

which are helpful for shedding light on their meaning.
whose essence is existence, must in its case rather be understood as “an existentiale.”
The being-in of the Dasein is therefore not “the being-present-at-hand of corporeal thing
(human body) ‘inside’ a present-at-hand being,” as if the world were merely a giant
storage box that contains, among other things, the human being. It is precisely this
ordinary way of thinking about the human being and the world that naturally leads to the
understanding of freedom as a lack of substantial constraint. According to Heidegger, the
problem with this understanding is not that it is logically incorrect, but rather that it rests
upon an inappropriate or inauthentic understanding of ‘what man is.’ Primordial or
authentic freedom simply cannot be grasped on the basis of a concept of the human being
as one more merely present being (alive, to be sure, and somehow endowed with speech
and reason) among others, all of which fill up a whole ‘world’ consisting of merely
present space. The being-in of the Dasein is “primordially” rather a “residing [wohnen]”
or a “dwelling [sich aufhalten],” and its ‘location in space,’ its being-at, is rather most
deeply a familiarity, a trust, a looking-after. The being-in of the Dasein means,
primordially or essentially, a dwelling familiarity. “Being-in is thus the formal existential
expression of the being of the Dasein, which has the essential constitution of being-in-
the-world.” (BT 78-80/SZ 53-54)

This dwelling of the Dasein, as a familiarity with the world, is also a familiarity
with the beings within the world among which it finds itself. From its primordial being-in
follows essentially a “‘being-alongside’ [>>Sein bei<<] of the world,” a being-

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26 Heidegger writes: “...>>an<< bedeutet: ich bin gewohnt, vertraut mit, ich pflege etwas; es hat die
Bedeutung von colo im Sinne von habito und diligo.” Macquarrie and Robinson’s footnote is helpful
for the sense both of this statement and of the paragraph as a whole to which it belongs.
alongside which has the “sense of going up into the world” or of a “being absorbed in the world [des Aufgehens in der Welt].” Just as in the case of being-in, this being-alongside, as an “existential” of the Dasein, cannot be understood as “anything like the being-present-at-hand-together of occurring things.” The world with which we are somehow always already familiar is no merely present being. Consequently: “There is not anything like the side-by-side [>>Nebeneinander<<, ‘next-to-one-another’] of a being called ‘Dasein,’ with another being, called ‘world.’” If Dasein and world were two such merely present beings, there would then still need to be an account of how the Dasein could be aware of anything like a world, could encounter not only other particular beings, but indeed anything like a world in the first place. Indeed two beings that are merely present can never truly be “‘alongside’” or “‘touch’” one another at all. “{A} being can only touch a present-at-hand being within the world, if it has the way of being of being-in - if with its being-there already something like world is uncovered to it, from out of which {a} being can manifest itself in touching, in order thus to become accessible in its being present-at-hand.” The world is authentically not a merely present if overwhelmingly large container for other merely present beings, but is rather the condition for the possibility of any encountering of anything merely present, indeed of any being whatsoever, and is only with that understanding of being which exists as being-in (BT 80-81/SZ 54-55).27

27 According to Heidegger the problem of how a ‘subject’ reaches outside itself to grasp any knowledge of an ‘object’ is a false one, but only because the subject is improperly conceived as one more merely present-at-hand being inside a ‘world’ which is similarly conceived as independently existing mathematically divisible present-at-hand space (BT 87/SZ 60).
The human being is fundamentally not a present-at-hand being, to which the properties of ‘life,’ ‘reason,’ and so on attach themselves, but rather is primarily something like an ‘awareness,’ an already understood disclosure of a world, the having-been-laid-open of a clearing. The “human being,” the Dasein, is the metaphysical being; it is the condition of the possibility of any encountering of beings, to say nothing of any knowing grasp of them:

Only for a thus existentially cleared being does the present-at-hand become accessible in the light, {or} hidden in the dark. The Dasein brings its there by its nature [von Hause aus] along with it; doing without its {there}, it is not only factically not, but not at all the being of this essence [das Seiende dieses Wesens]. The Dasein is its disclosedness. (BT 171/SZ 133).

What is first for us is not our existence as an animal body, as a merely present being amongst other present beings, but the clearing of our there revealed before us. Bodiliness may be an “organizing factor” for this understanding, but the awareness of ourselves as embodied, as existing in and as isolated animal bodies, is derivative of, is indeed only possible at all on the basis of, the primary disclosedness of being-in-the-world, to which dispersion into bodies belongs as an inherent possibility (MFL 137-138/MAL 173).

To be sure, the Dasein is also present within the world, and it “can be taken with a certain right within certain limits as only present [Vorhandenes].” The ‘human being’ undeniably inhabits an animal body. In order to understand, and properly reckon with its physical and biological characteristics, properties, and requirements, it can quite necessarily and legitimately be grasped as merely present, when, for example, an engineer goes about designing a car seat for an infant, or medical researchers inquire into the causes and remedies for a disease. The Dasein is grasped in this manner, however, by
means of “a complete disregarding” of its proper essence, “the existential constitution of being-in.” On the other hand, Heidegger insists, the Dasein has its “own manner” of “presence-at-hand.” This particular presence of the Dasein, Heidegger calls “its facticity.” We always somehow understand ourselves in our “ownmost being,” the possibility of that existence which is ever mine, “in the sense of a certain ‘factual being-present.’” This present fact of the Dasein is however of a different order from the presence of any merely present being: “And yet the factuality of the fact of the own Dasein is ontologically basically different from the factual deposit [Vorkommen] of a kind of rock.” We always somehow sense this essential difference, if however only unclearly. This particular factuality of the Dasein authentically “becomes accessible” not by overlooking or abstracting from, but rather “only” through the express “understanding of the specific structures of Dasein.” Indeed, Heidegger insists, we can “only at all” come to grips with the peculiar, “involved [verwickelte]” factuality of freedom “as a problem”—of whether this problem is of a theoretical or of an eminently practical character Heidegger makes no mention here—“in the light of the already worked out existential basic states of the Dasein.” The fact of freedom first becomes intelligible only through the existential interpretation of the being of the Dasein. The possibility of freedom can never be understood by first conceiving the human person as present at hand and then trying to discern how freedom might somehow ‘attach’ to it. In order to understand how freedom can exist as a ‘fact,’ the interpretation must start with and from the possibility of freedom itself. Once the existential interpretation has set out the basic constitution of being-in-the-world, it will indeed even become intelligible how the Dasein
“can understand itself as arrested in its ‘destiny’ with the being of the beings that it encounters within its own world” (BT 82/SZ 55-56). As we shall see when we arrive at Heidegger’s discussion of the historical character of the Dasein, in Being and Time freedom paradoxically will work itself out in the end as a kind of fate or destiny (BT 435-436/SZ 383-384).

The involved or complicated structure of the facticity of the Dasein shows itself in the diversion of “its being-in-the-world” into a “multiplicity” of “determinate ways of being-in,” of a manifold of determinate possibilities in which it goes about its being, whether it is, to cite Heidegger’s examples, “having to do with something, producing something, attending and looking after something, making use of something, giving up and letting something get lost, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining...”. Each of these possible activities of the Dasein are determinate modes of “concern,” which must be “essentially” the way that “being-in-the-world” is “towards,” or confronts, and deals with, its world (BT 83-84/SZ 56-57). This world is, moreover, “ontologically no determination of the beings that essentially the Dasein is not, but a characteristic of the Dasein alone [selbst].” This “‘wherein’ a factic Dasein as this {being} ‘lives,’” which is with the understanding of being, or rather, is itself the understanding or clearing of being, is therefore an “existentiale,” a way of the being of the Dasein in which it goes about its being (BT 92-93/SZ 64-65). The existential interpretation initially brings to light the phenomenon of the world, the dwelling familiar looking-after of the Dasein, “within the horizon of the average everydayness as the nearest way of being of the Dasein” (BT 94/SZ 66), in which it is
absorbed in the manifold ways of concern that Heidegger has already elaborated. It begins with our “dealing [Umgang] within the world and with the innerworldly beings” (BT 95/SZ 66-67).

In “a methodical preliminary remark [Vorbemerkung],” Heidegger observes that for our everyday activity in the mode of “manipulating, using concern,” any being within the world that it handles, and of which it makes use, is precisely “thereby not {the} object of a theoretical ‘world’-knowledge.” These beings are most properly “accessible” in themselves, not in the leisurely observation the kind of presence and properties that belong to them after the manner of theoretical contemplation, but “in a putting oneself into such concern”; or rather, “taken strictly,” since in the first instance “the everyday Dasein is already always in this manner,” the proper phenomenological access to those beings that we deal with in our everyday concern, consists in resisting and keeping at bay those “pressing [sich andraengden] and concurrent [mitlaufenden] tendencies of interpretation” which are, or have become, so to speak, ‘second nature’ to us, and which “conceal the phenomenon of such concern and at the same time [in eins] therewith all the more ... how it {the being encountered by concern} is encountered by itself in the concern for it.” These interpretive tendencies cover over the genuine being of concern and its dealing with what it encounters because our going about our everyday common business is characterized precisely by an immediate, unreflective, and thus pre-theoretical relation to the beings with which we concern ourselves. Heidegger makes plain the character of this relation with the observation that, “for example: opening the door, I make use of the latch.” When I turn the latch to open the door, I do so almost without thinking about it;
indeed often when I am intent upon the affairs with which I concern myself, later I cannot actually even remember turning the latch to open the door, even though I know that I must have done so in order to reach the place at which I have subsequently arrived. In any case, precisely what I do not do when I make use of it to open the door, is examine the latch in terms of its present look, and discern the properties that must accordingly adhere to it, nor do I do so, even when it is broken and fails to work according to my expectation, and I consequently set about trying (incompetently) to repair it (BT 95-96/SZ 67). Indeed, the less we draw back and analyze the beings we encounter in concern in terms of their “‘look’ [>>Aussehen<<],” and the more, rather, that we use them without reflection, “the more primordial the relation to it becomes, the more unconcealedly it is encountered as that which it is.” For any equipment “to be exactly authentically ready-to-hand,” it must precisely not obtrude itself upon our understanding, but “as it were, withdraw itself [sich gleichsam zurueckzuziehen]” into inconspicuousness, and offer itself to us in such a way that we can make use of it without giving it a second thought (BT 98-99/SZ 69).

3. The Worldhood of the World

The first analyses of the worldhood of the world in Being and Time accordingly take the side a certain absorption in the activity of practice against theoretical contemplation. At first glance, given the very title of Heidegger’s treatise, this affinity must strike us as oddly self-contradictory, or at least highly paradoxical. While “the
being [das Seiende]” (in this case the one encountered in and by concern) is the “prior and accompanying theme [das Vor- und Mitthematische]” of the existential interpretation, nonetheless “being [das Sein]” is in fact its “authentic theme” (BT 95/SZ 67). Is not the existential interpretation as such not also interpretation? Will it not, like prior interpretations of the world, thereby obscure the very phenomenon it seeks to grasp? How can the practical absorption in the phenomena of the everyday be captured by any interpretation even the phenomenological-existential one? And indeed, granted that this can be accomplished, how can the proper descriptive analysis of the sphere of our everyday activity finally lead us to the concept of being in general, the very object of theory par excellence?

First, it is not interpretation as such that must be resisted, but particular tendencies of interpretation that, as it were, press themselves upon us, tendencies towards an inauthentic understanding of being, that, according to Heidegger, are rooted in our absorption with the very phenomenon that the existential interpretation seeks to describe, namely, the world of our everyday concern. A properly phenomenological interpretation

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28 Of course, in subsequent lectures and essays the “authentic theme” seems to change from being to freedom (cf. MFL 24/MAL 32). I say only ‘seems to change’ because it is part of the argument of this study that freedom is already the authentic theme of Being and Time itself; not ‘instead’ of, or to the exclusion of being, but because, at a minimum, in Heidegger’s own understanding, one cannot speak of being without speaking also of freedom. Naturally one can speak of the being of particular beings, like trees or mountains, without speaking of freedom, but one cannot speak of the understanding of being in general without speaking of freedom, because the understanding of being inheres in the being or constitution of the human being or the Dasein. The essence of the human being, according to Heidegger, is freedom. Freedom represents something like the condition for the possibility of the understanding of being. (We can only speak of the being of particular beings by virtue of understanding something like being in general, that is to say, ultimately only on account of our essential freedom.) Freedom proves to be another word for (although it is not identical with) the understanding of something like being in general; the recovery of what we authentically mean by the word ‘being’ is therefore the recovery of our authentic freedom. In later works, themselves self-interpretations of Being and Time, Heidegger will of course declare the question of freedom more fundamental.
that holds at bay the interpretive tendencies that obscure the phenomenon of the world
can thereby aspire to the working out and appropriation of the understanding of being that
defines being-in-the-world, and therewith to a concept of being in general. We might
say, then, that the existential interpretation initially takes sides against theoretical
contemplation, in order to arrive at a superior theoretical understanding, having worked
out the concept of being in general that so eluded all previous thinkers over the course of
the history of philosophy. Yet just as the phenomenological interpretation of any being
encountered in and by our everyday dealings does not concern itself with the theoretical
knowledge of its properties or “characteristics,” but only with “a determining of the
structure of its being,” so too Heidegger’s phenomenology, as an “investigation of
being,” does not confront being in general as an object of theory, properly so called. In
the final analysis, the existential interpretation is rather “the autonomous and express
completion of the understanding of being,” and, to be expressly clear, this does not
represent its adequate theoretical comprehension, but, according to Heidegger, rather (so
to speak) the ‘perfection,’ the furthest possible development or expression of the pre-
thetical or pre-ontological understanding “that ever already belongs to the Dasein and
is ‘living’ in any dealing with being [mit Seiendem].” The authentic intention of Being
and Time is thus not the development of a theoretical science of being, but the cultivation
of the practical primordial “‘knowledge’” somehow already contained in (but not
expressly understood by) everyday concern, that exists prior and even in the absence of
any theoretical comportment towards the ‘world’ (a phenomenon which, according to
Heidegger, all theory, properly so called, finally and necessarily misunderstands); and,
indeed, the cultivation of this primordial knowing (as we shall see) in a most extreme and radical direction (BT 95-96/SZ 67).

By and large the beings that we encounter in the mode of everyday concern are, “one” might say, “things.” The idea of thinghood, however, carries with it “an implicitly anticipated [unausdruecklich vorgreifende] ontological character,” from which notions of “substantiality, materiality, extendedness, side-by-sideness, and so forth,” in short, the whole ontology of mere presence, presses itself upon us, and covers over the properly handy character of what, for everyday concern, is handy precisely in its handiness. More precisely, then, what we come across ingoing about our everyday business should rather be called “equipment,” a name that, while certainly capable of being grasped in terms of the ontology of presence, nonetheless brings immediately to the fore what, in the first instance, these beings are for us, and therefore also what they are authentically in themselves, that is to say, as equipment. The distinctive character of equipment as such is that it is for some particular doing of concern. “In dealing [Umgang] writing equipment, sewing equipment, work-, transportation-, and measuring equipment are encounterable [vorfindlich].” Every one of these items of equipment is for something, that is, we understand it unreflectively as having a definite purpose and function in relation to some particular doing of our everyday business. “Equipment is essentially ‘something in order to...’ [>>etwas, um zu .<<]” (BT 96-97/SZ 67-68).

The meaning of the purposive character of equipment as such is that of “an assignment [Verweisung] of something to something.” This assignment does not, however, ‘subsist’ indifferently on its own. That to which it has been assigned carries
with it, or rather, is itself a further assignment. “*One* equipment taken strictly never ‘is.’
To the being of equipment, a whole of equipment ever always belongs, wherein it can be
this equipment that it is.” It is the whole context of equipment, which we somehow ever
already understand, if only dimly and ‘without thinking about it,’ that assigns the
meaning of any particular item that we encounter (BT 97/SZ 68). Even the ‘finished
product’ that we endeavour to produce or procure in our everyday concern has its
meaning within this series of assignments: “The work to be produced as the *whereto*
[Wozu] of hammer, plane, needle has likewise the way of being of equipment. The shoe
to be produced is for wearing (footgear) [Schuhzeug], the finished clock for telling the
time.” (BT 99/SZ 71) The result of this analysis of authentic character of equipment is
that the world is ‘made up of,’ or more precisely it shows itself in its worldhood as, a
whole context of assignments: “Being-in-the-world amounts to, according to the
interpretation hitherto: the unthematic circumspective absorption in the assignments
constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of the whole of equipment.” The condition for the
possibility of this absorption in our everyday business is the prior disclosedness of the
context of assignments, the pre-ontological “familiarity with world,” that is, the glimmer
of an understanding of something like being in general. It is only on the ground of this
prior trust (or, if you will, having been entrusted) of or familiarity with the world that it is
at all possible to encounter anything like the handy tool (BT 107/SZ 76).

The worldhood of the world as the condition for the possibility of everyday
dealing is nonetheless capable of further definition in relation to the encounterability of
any particular being. Heidegger proceeds to ask, “How can the world let the ready-to-
hand be encountered?” In short, what precisely is the enabling character of this condition of possibility? Heidegger restates the question in a way that gives us a glimpse of his answer, which he works out more fully, first in section 18, and then in section 31 of *Being and Time*: “The analysis hitherto has shown: the innerworldly encountered has been set free [freigegeben] in its being for concerned circumspection, taking account. What does this previous setting free [Freigabe] amount to, and how is it to be understood as ontological distinction [Auszeichnung] of the world?” Any encounterable ‘object’ of concern, any being whose being is determined by handiness, has been set free for the assignment of its ‘in order to...’ It therefore more exactly “has in itself the character of *assignedness* [Verwiesenheit],” and “is assigned to something as this being that it is.” As a being it accordingly has, in its being, “its involvement [Bewenden] in something,” in for example purpose of the production of a work, together with the other equipment and materials that it requires. The “possible concretion” of this involvement “is ever prescribed” by a definite range of “serviceability” and “usability,” or rather, these characteristics are just this involvement itself. Anything handy has already been set free for an assigned involvement, indeed it itself is nothing other than this assigned involvement. Therefore: “The character of being of the ready-to-hand is *involvement* [Bewandtnis].” (BT 114-115/SZ 83-84)

Anything handy is handy, that is, assigned to its possible involvement, in terms of the prior discovery of a whole of equipment. This must be true of any item of equipment, and therefore of the whole of equipment itself, which must accordingly be characterized as a “totality of involvements [Bwandtnisganzheit].” The involvement of anything
handy has been assigned in terms of this totality of involvements. “Which involvement it has with a ready-to-hand {being}, that is ever prescribed in terms of the totality of involvements.” This totality of involvements is nevertheless not an endless hermeneutic spiral, because if we trace out the totality of involvements, we find that it “itself however goes back lastly to a whereto [Wozu] in which it has no further involvement,” that is, the totality of involvements ultimately refers back to some purpose, that we might speak of as a final end, in terms of which, and for the sake of which, it itself is at all. In Heidegger’s example, with the being of the hammer “it has an involvement in hammering.” This hammering has the possible involvement of “making fast,” which in turn has the possible involvement of “protection against bad weather,” that is, “for the sake of the sheltering of the Dasein.” The involvement of the hammer finally refers back to an involvement without any further reference, beyond this sheltering of the Dasein, and is therefore not assigned to some further handy being in the dealings of concern but rather to the Dasein itself, “for the sake of a possibility of its being.” That is to say, the “primary wherefore” of the totality of involvements is a “for-the-sake-of-which [Worum-willen],” that “always pertains to the being of the Dasein, for which, in its being, it is essentially about this being itself.” The totality of involvements that make up the worldhood of the world refers back to some human purpose and therewith ultimately derives from human freedom. The involvement of anything handy, indeed of the whole of assignments, is an assigning, a “‘letting-be-involved’ [>>Bewendenlassen<<],” a ‘doing’ or setting free of (human) freedom (BT 116-117/SZ 84).

It is this letting-be-involved of freedom that supplies the answer to the problem of
how the world can let anything handy be encountered, of what the prior setting free of anything handy amounts to. In our practical everyday dealings, “letting be involved signifies... letting a ready-to-hand {being} be so and so, how it already is, and therewith it is thus.” The “ontic meaning” of this doing is at the same time “in principle [grundsätzlich] ontological,” and supplies the ground for Heidegger’s interpretation of the “previous setting-free” of what we encounter within the world. This prior liberation, which is a “previous letting ‘be,’” is neither a creation nor a production of the encountered being, but the “discovering” of what is “ever already ‘being’ [>>Seiendes<<] in its readiness-to-hand.” This is “exactly not,” according to Heidegger, the attribution of a value to a being which is “‘first of all’ only just present ‘worldstuff,’” but the “letting be encountered of this being thus as the being [so als das Seiende dieses Seins begegnen lassen]” that it ever already is. “This a priori letting-be-involved,” the ontological liberation of the being, indeed of the totality of involvements that ‘make up’ the whole of the world, is accordingly “the condition of the possibility herefor [dafuer], that {the} ready-to-hand [Zuhandenes] is encountered,” and therewith for the possibility “that the Dasein, in the ontical dealing with {any} thus encountered being, can thereby let it be involved in the ontical sense.” This ontological liberation, the freedom of the understanding of being, thus shows itself as the condition for the possibility of anything like the dealing of our common everyday business. It is this condition to such an extent that it represents “the setting free of everything [jedes] ready-to-hand as ready-to-hand,” irrespective of “whether it thereby, taken ontically, is involved [sein Bewenden haben],” whether or not it is ‘actually’ put to work at some task; the prior ontological liberation of
the whole is in no way conditioned by, nor does it correspond to, our setting to work of or with particular items of equipment, or materiel (BT 117-118/SZ 85).

The prior ontological liberation of anything handy happens “only on the ground of the prior discovery [Vorentdecktheit],” (or more precisely, as Heidegger quickly amends, since “discovery” is a term that should only be applied to beings that the Dasein is not, the “previous disclosure”), “of a totality of involvements.” This prior discovery is only possible on the ground of, or is itself, our prior “ontological” grasp of and relation to something like ‘world.’ That is to say, the previous disclosure of the totality of involvements “is nothing other than the understanding of world,” an understanding that “belongs to” (or perhaps is even identical with) “the essential content” of that understanding of being that inheres to (and again, perhaps is even identical with) the being of the Dasein. This understanding (of something like being in general), that conditions the setting free of any being for its ‘ontological’ involvements, accordingly encompasses the “whereby” and “wherewith of involvement,” the “where to,” and final “for-the-sake-of-which,” to which the whole of the totality of involvements “lastly goes back” (BT 118-119/SZ 85-86).

The choice of human freedom structures the disclosedness of the totality of involvements, of the whole of the world. This whole set of involvements, relations, and human purposes, “all that must have been disclosed previously within” the range of “a certain intelligibility [Verstaendlichkeit].” This act of the understanding of “a context of relations” happens in terms of a “potentiality-for-being [Seinkoennen],” the can-be of its existence. Whether it has chosen this possibility “expressly or implicitly,” whether it is
“authentic or inauthentic,” for the Dasein, its chosen way of life is about its very being, and it orders the whole of the disclosedness of its there. In terms of this can-be, “for-the-sake-of-which it itself is,” it “has assigned itself to an in-order-to,” the chosen purpose of its existence which orders and directs the involvements, the “thereto,” “whereby,” and “wherewith,” in and with which it busies itself. We do not, according to Heidegger, exist also outside of and apart from these possibilities, but rather we entirely inhabit them, such that they structure the beings that we are, indeed who we are, which includes our world. The inhabited possibility “wherein” the human being “previously understands itself in the mode of self-assigning,” that is, in self-submission to the appointed tasks that follow in accordance with its chosen can-be, is the purpose or meaning of the prior disclosedness of the whole. This “wherein” of possibility is itself already “the phenomenon if the world,” whose “structure” or “worldhood” derives from the task-setting understanding of the Dasein, elaborates all possible “significance.” It is the ‘human being,’ or rather the understanding of being that belongs to the being of the Dasein, that is, or more precisely gives, the compass and measure of any and all possible things. The world that we inhabit, which in the final analysis is not a previously ‘existing’ sheerly present manifold of extended space, but rather no more, and no less, than a system of references and relations that constitutes an elaborate web of meanings, that moreover is itself only a way of being of the Dasein, and therefore has no ‘ground,’ or more precisely, no condition for its possibility, beyond human possibility itself, beyond primordial possibility as such (BT 119-120/SZ 86-87).
4. Existence and Understanding

The first division of Being and Time sought to provide an interpretation of the Dasein that would grasp the structural whole of being-in-the-world in its “totality.” The totality of this “structural whole” shows itself as what Heidegger calls “care” (BT 274/SZ 231). Heidegger determines the structure of care in this manner: “The formal existential totality of the Dasein’s ontological structural whole must therefore be grasped in the following structure: the being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-being-already-in-(the-world) as being alongside (beings encountered within-the-world)” (BT 237/SZ 192). The Dasein is always beyond itself (BT 236/SZ 191-192), always finding itself in a world that has already been disclosed, in a clearing that has already been laid open, surrounded by beings which it encounters within that clearing. In elaborating the context of Heidegger’s discussion of death in Being and Time and the problem to which it responds, it is the first item of the care structure, the “ahead-of-itself,” the Dasein’s “beyond itself,” which most concerns us. The remainder of Heidegger’s survey of the results of the preparatory analysis of the Dasein summarizes this primary and most essential item of the care structure.

Heidegger then recapitulates how the being of the Dasein revealed itself as being in the world, as disclosedness, and finally as care. “The analysis of this being took for guide, what was determined by way of anticipation [vorgreifend] as the essence of the Dasein, existence” (BT 274/SZ 231). At the opening of the preparatory analysis of the Dasein, Heidegger characterized the being to be analysed in this manner: “In the being [Sein] of this being [Seienden] this {being} itself comports itself towards its being. As
being [Seiendes] of this being [dieses Seins], it is delivered over to its own being. It is
*being* that it is ever about for this being itself” (BT 67/SZ 41-42). The being of the
Dasein, as defined by existence, has a curiously circular and self-reflexive character.

This way of characterizing the Dasein has the consequence that,

The ‘essence’ of this being lies in its to-be.... *The ‘essence’ of the Dasein lies in its existence*. The characteristics exhibitable in this being are therefore not present-at-hand ‘properties’ of a so and so ‘looking’ present-at-hand being, but ever possible ways for it to be, and only that. All being-thus of this being is primarily being [Sein]. (BT 67/SZ 42)

In the opening of the second division, Heidegger elaborates the meaning of this crucial
term “existence” as a formal indication that “the Dasein *is* as understanding potentiality-for-being, for which it, in such being, is about the latter as {its} own” (BT 274/SZ 231).

In the Dasein’s existence there is thus an essential connection between understanding and self-determination.

Together with “state of mind,” the understanding primordially constitutes the
being of the there. This there is always given in an act of primordial understanding. That Dasein *is* its disclosedness thus means that its being-there is constituted by understanding:

The Dasein is existingly its there, means first of all: world is ‘there’; its *being-there* is being-in. And this is likewise ‘there’ and indeed as that for the sake of which the Dasein is. In the for-the-sake-of-which, existing being-in-the-world is disclosed as such, which disclosedness was called understanding. (BT 182/SZ 143)

To claim that the Dasein is its there implies that the world ‘is there’ too: the being-there of Dasein is being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is there as the for-the-sake-of-which of the Dasein. The for-the-sake-of-which discloses being-in-the-world, and this
disclosedness of being-in-the-world is Dasein’s primordial understanding. Dasein understands its world through, and in terms of, this for-the-sake-of-which:

In the understanding of the for-the-sake-of-which, the significance grounded therein is co-disclosed. The disclosedness of the understanding, as that of the for-the-sake-of-which and of significance equally primordially, pertains to the entirety of being-in-the-world. Significance is that on the basis of which the world as such is disclosed. (BT 182/SZ 143).

The understanding of the for-the-sake-of-which discloses being-in-the-world; as such it also discloses Dasein’s world, that is, it discloses the web of significance out of which its world is constituted. Only on the ground of the significance disclosed in the understanding of the for-the-sake-of-which is the world disclosed to the Dasein. The disclosure, both of the for-the-sake-of-which and of significance, in the understanding of the Dasein, is therefore the condition for the Dasein to exist both as being-in-the-world and in such a way that in its being, it is about its own being (BT 182/SZ 143). The understanding of the Dasein is not only the condition for the possibility of the disclosure of the world, but also manifests as bound up with the possibility of the Dasein’s self-determination, its freedom, its possibility as such. The structure of this primary disclosedness means that any being in the world must be determined by freedom.

The disclosure, at once both of significance, and of the for-the-sake-of-which in and with the Dasein, means that it exists as being-in-the-world, which, in its being, goes about itself. The Dasein, as being-in-the-world, is both the having-been-laid-open, the clearedness, of its there, and the being that is or goes about itself. This unity of disclosedness and existence, that is to say, of freedom and world, in the being of the
Dasein finds its ground in the relation between the understanding and possibility.  

Heidegger notes that even in our ordinary use of the word understanding in speaking about beings, when we say we understand something, we also mean thereby that we are capable of doing or using it:

We sometimes use in ontical speech the expression ‘understanding something’ with the meaning of ‘being able to manage something,’ ‘being a match for it,’ ‘being able to do something’ [>>einer Sache vorstehen koennen<<,>>ihr gewachsen sein<<,>>etwas koennen<<] (BT 183/SZ 143).

As the disclosure of significance and the for-the-sake-of-which, the Dasein’s primordial understanding pertains not to the capacity to perform or use this or that action or being, but rather to the whole of being-in-the-world as the constitutive state of the Dasein’s being (BT 78/SZ 53); this understanding grounds Dasein’s being as “can-be”:

The competence in understanding as existentiale is no what, but being [Sein] as existing. In the understanding lies existentially the kind of being of the Dasein, as potentiality-for-being [Seinkoennen]. Dasein is not something present-at-hand, which yet possesses as extra, being able to do something, but it is primarily being-possible. (BT 183/SZ 143).

Because the Dasein is its disclosedness through the understanding of significance and for-the-sake-of-which, it exists as a “potentiality-for-being,” as a can-be, that is to say, as the possibility of freedom.  

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29 Cf. MFL 185/MAL 238: “A for-the-sake-of-which, a purposiveness [Umwollen], is however according to its essence [wesensmaessig] only possible there, where there is a willing [Willen]. Now insofar as transcendence, being-in-the-world, makes up the basic constitution of the Dasein, being-in-the-world must also be primordially bound up with or derived from the basic feature of Dasein’s existence: namely, freedom. Only where {there is} freedom, {is} there a purposive for-the-sake-of, and only {here is} there world. Briefly put: transcendence of the Dasein {i.e. being-in-the-world} and freedom are identical!”

30 Subsequently in Introduction to Metaphysics, Heidegger offers an elaboration of the meaning of can: “To be able [Koennen] no longer means to lavish and to squander from high overflow and from mastery of energies, but only the practicing of a routine learnable by anyone, always combined with a certain
Possibility permeates all of the structures of human existence. The characteristics and structural moments of the Dasein’s being ‘fundamentally’ or essentially are not present-at-hand properties and the Dasein itself is not to be understood as a present-at-hand being; rather the characteristics of the Dasein’s being “are ever possible ways for it to be” (BT 68/SZ 42):

Dasein is ever what it can be, and how it is its possibility. The essential being-possible of the Dasein, pertains to the characterized ways of the concern with the ‘world,’ of the solicitude for the others, and in all these, and always already to the potentiality-for-being towards itself, for the sake of itself. (BT 183/SZ 143)

All of our dealings with others and our worldly business of ‘making a living’ are thus to be primordially understood neither as present-at-hand beings, nor even as relations between present-at-hand beings which attach to them as ‘properties,’ but rather as lived possibilities. Possibility, as the essence of the Dasein, even defines the way that the Dasein (as can-be) comports itself towards itself, or, rather, possibility is itself the ground for Dasein to be able to comport itself towards itself in the first place. Only because possibility defines human existence is Dasein the being that goes about itself.31

As the Dasein’s primordial ontological characterization, possibility does not mean a fanciful may-be, or “a free-floating potentiality-for-being in the sense of the liberty of

amount of sweat and expense” (IM 48/EM 35). ‘Can’ in Heidegger’s interpretation originally or authentically means a kind of masterful dynamism, which has now deteriorated to mere skill development and certification. Nonetheless, whether its competence represents dynamic magnanimity or only the discipline of mere training, the Dasein can in each case recognize this definition of its existence in its habitual experience of itself.

31 Heidegger takes care to differentiate the possibility that defines the being of Dasein from the logical and traditional understandings of possibility. The can-be that defines the Dasein’s existence is different “both from empty logical possibility, and from the contingency of something present-at-hand.” That sort of possibility stands indeed beneath actuality and necessity. As existentiale, possibility is “the most primordial and ultimately positive way in which the Dasein is characterized ontologically” (BT 183/SZ
indifference” (BT 183/SZ 144). The Dasein ever already exists, not out of or through arbitrary whims of its own, but “has already got itself into definite possibilities,” for which it is more or less capable, and which have a determinate content; that is, it already inhabits a ‘way of life.’ Existing as a can-be in its possibilities, “it is constantly waiving possibilities of its being, or else it seizes upon them and makes mistakes” (BT 183/SZ 144). The Dasein, as an existing can-be defined by possibility, has been cast into particular possibilities, about which it is in its being: “But this means that the Dasein is being-possible which has been delivered over to itself – thrown possibility through and through” (BT 183/SZ 144). Thrown into existence, the human being is yet defined by self-determination. Dasein has ever already been thrown into a definite possibility, which, strictly speaking, it did not choose, but in terms of which, against which, or out of which it determines itself in its essence as an existing can-be, as possibility, that is, as freedom. Human life is making choices, and human existence is best, or “authentically,” understood, according to Heidegger, not as the activity of a fixed or unchangeable present-at-hand nature, to which various properties accrue, which shape and determine its permanent conditions and limits, but rather as an abiding understanding can-be. This understanding can-be determines itself in terms of the possibilities and decisions that confront it in going about the business of being, and it is this essential self-determination that determines the shape of all human experience. This is not to say, however, that the possibilities of human life are unlimited. Every Dasein is, in its freedom, thrown into definite possibilities. It is from out of this cast of definite possibilities that the human

143-144). Of this sort of possibility, possibility as existentiale, it can be said, according to Heidegger,
being determines itself in terms of the existential structure of its being.

Nor is the primordial act of understanding in and through which the world is disclosed to be confused with a capacity that lies within the human being’s power, subject to its choice or deliberation. Heidegger’s teaching in *Being and Time* should not be confused with a kind of ‘solipsism.’ The disclosure of significance, and the discoveredness of every being within the world, are ultimately grounded in a “towards-which,” for the sake of which Dasein is, and out of which it understands the world. That the world is disclosed in the for-the-sake-of-which, which is itself a possibility of Dasein’s being, could suggest that the very disclosure of significance and of the whole world somehow lies within the scope of Dasein’s discretion, that even the world itself is somehow essentially within Dasein’s competence: in short, that by willing a different end, the human being can, as it were, ‘choose its world.’ That the world as world is disclosed in terms of human purposes and through human understanding does not, however, mean that the disclosure of the world is itself subject to human choice. According to Heidegger, quite the contrary is in fact the case: the Dasein always exists within the prior disclosedness of a world, which means that “Dasein has, in so far as it *is*, ever already submitted itself to an encountered ‘world,’ and this *submission* belongs essentially to its being” (BT 121/SZ 87). Far from placing the world under the Dasein’s power, the prior disclosure of the world through the understanding of the for-the-sake-of-which is itself rather the condition for the freedom of the Dasein’s possible can-be. It is only on the basis of the understanding that Dasein exists as a possible can-be, to the

that it stands higher than actuality (BT 63/SZ 38).
extent that only through the understanding, that is, in terms of the prior disclosure of the clearing into which it has been thrown, does the Dasein have any knowledge of the possibilities within its grasp:

The Dasein is in the manner that it has ever understood, or not understood, that it is to be thus or thus. As such understanding it ‘knows’ what it is at with itself—that is, with its potentiality-for-being. This ‘knowing’ does not first arise from an immanent self-perception, but belongs to the being of the there, which is essentially understanding. (BT 184/SZ 144)

The understanding of the for-the-sake-of-which is at once the condition for Dasein to exist as a possible can-be, and the limit of the Dasein’s essential freedom as the disclosure which shapes the possibilities that are revealed to it, and the clearing within which those possibilities play themselves out.

Having shown that in the primordial understanding there is an essential connection between the disclosedness of the world of the Dasein and its essential freedom as a can-be existing within factual possibilities, Heidegger presses on to work out the structure of the understanding more rigorously. The understanding discloses being-in-the-world as a whole, such that the human being sets free its can-be for its own possibilities:

The understanding as disclosure pertains always to the whole basic state of being-in-the-world. As a potentiality-for-being, being-in is ever potentiality-for-being-in-the-world. The latter is not only qua world disclosed as possible significance, but the setting free of the innerworldly itself sets this being free onto its possibilities. (BT 184/SZ 144)

The ready-to-hand alongside the Dasein within the world is uncovered as it relates to the Dasein’s own possibilities. Any discovered being within the world already ‘contains’ a towards-this and an in-order-to of its usefulness, and therefore also ultimately the for-the-
sake-of-which of the uncovering Dasein, in terms of which the Dasein understands itself and its world. Not only the totality of involvements of everything ready-to-hand, but ultimately even the whole of the natural world is uncovered only on the basis of a prior disclosure of their possibility – even the most primordial knowledge of nature is therefore not of necessities but rather of possibilities:

That which is ready-to-hand is discovered as such in its serviceability, its usability, and its detrimentality. The totality of involvements revealed as the categorical whole of a possible interconnection of the ready to-hand. But even the ‘unity’ of the manifold present-at-hand, of nature, can be discovered only if a possibility of it has been disclosed. (BT 184/SZ 144)

The understanding of the for-the-sake-of-which and of significance that make up the worldhood of the world, reveal the structure of the world wholly in terms of possibilities; the there that the Dasein is, articulates itself entirely as a structure of possibility.

5. Understanding as the Project of Possibilities

All this presses Heidegger’s inquiry toward the question of the precise connection between the understanding as “the existential being of Dasein’s own potentiality-for-being” and the possibilities revealed through the Dasein’s primordial understanding: “Why does the understanding - whatever may be the essential dimensions of that which can be disclosed in it - always press forward into possibilities?” (BT 184/SZ 145). That is to say, why does the Dasein, as a can-be, always somehow get itself into, and exist within, possibilities? It presses forward into possibilities because the understanding is defined by the existential structure which Heidegger names the “project [Entwurf].” In
the understanding, as the existential being of the Dasein’s can-be, the Dasein does not merely reveal possibilities of being, but has always already been thrown, or throws itself into those possibilities. The understanding casts the Dasein’s being “both upon its for-the-sake-of-which, and upon significance, as the worldhood of its current world.” The thrown project of the understanding makes up the having been laid open of the clearing of the there. It both throws the Dasein into its clearing and lights it up in such a way that it gives the Dasein’s can-be ‘room to manoeuvre,’ to ‘play itself out’: “The project-character of the understanding constitutes being-in-the-world with regard to the disclosedness of its there as there of a can-be. The project is the existential being-constitution of the leeway [Spielraum] of the factual [faktischen] can-be” (BT 184-185/SZ 145). This project is the condition for, or rather is identical with, the possibility of human freedom, and it discloses or reveals the entire web of meaning or significance that makes up the whole of its there, that is to say, the world. “All truth, all meaning” authentically has “no support except man’s freedom.”

As the thrown possibility that the Dasein is, it is thrown into the project. As this thrown project, the Dasein does not understand itself in the first instance in a detached existence, in its sheer physical presence, which is only subsequently confronted with possibilities. The project of the Dasein’s primordial understanding is not a deliberative choice that the Dasein makes once it has ‘collected itself’ and ‘got its bearings’ in the world. Rather it is with the disclosure of the world, that is, with the Dasein’s being as

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The projecting has nothing to do with a comporting oneself towards a thought-out plan, in accordance with which the Dasein arranges its being, but as Dasein it has already projected itself, and is, as long as it is, projecting.” The Dasein, as Dasein, has always already projected its being, or more precisely, the Dasein exists in and as project, such that it is itself nothing more than this project of its own being. It has always already thrown itself into its for-the-sake-of-which and the totality of involvements of its world; that is to say, it understands itself in terms of the possibilities into which it has thrown itself. This is not to say, however, that the Dasein, understanding itself in terms of possibilities which it has projected, itself immediately grasps those possibilities “thematically,” that is, as possibilities. On the contrary, doing so robs the projected of “its very possibility-character, and... pulls it down to a given intended content [Bestand].” Grasping possibilities “thematically” brings them before us only as a given stock of intentions, the way that we see the written contents of an agenda. The Dasein’s possibilities are ‘given life,’ are made possible, only by existing within them. The Dasein’s primordial project is not the conscious grasping of possibilities as possibilities, but precisely this enabling of possibilities in their possibility: “the project in throwing the possibility throws it before itself as possibility and as such lets it be.” In its project-character the understanding is the self-empowering self-determination of Dasein’s can-be “in which it is its possibilities as possibilities.” The free essence of the human being is a continually projected and projecting potential (BT 185/SZ 145).

That the Dasein exists in and as an understandingly projected can-be means that any attempt to conceive its being in terms of presence-at-hand necessarily fails to achieve
an adequate grasp of that being, because conceiving the Dasein’s being in terms of sheer presence fails to grasp the possibility-character proper to existence. When the existential project of the understanding is compared with the being of the Dasein conceived in terms of sheer presence—that is, when the Dasein’s primordial understanding is interpreted as something like the imaginative faculty of a “rational animal”—it must appear to be more than it ‘really’ is at any given point, as somehow also encompassing further possibilities which are nevertheless not yet actual: “On the grounds of the kind of being, which is constituted through the existential of the project, the Dasein is constantly ‘more’ than it factually is, if one wanted to and if one could register it as present-at-hand in its stock of being [Seinbestand]” (BT 185/ SZ 145). The possibilities projected in the understanding are, however, not still-outstanding things not yet present-at-hand, which the Dasein continually shoves ahead of itself. On the contrary, the understanding, and therefore also the possibilities projected in it, are with the existence of the Dasein (BT 183-184/SZ 144; BT 185/SZ 145). The Dasein is “never more than it factically is, because to its facticity potentiality-for-being belongs essentially” (BT 185/SZ 145). The Dasein’s thrown factual ‘that-it-is’ includes, and is always essentially articulated in terms of, its existence as ‘can-be.’ In its freedom the Dasein is defined by being-possible; its being must be conceived in terms of the whole range of the disclosedness of the projected understanding. The Dasein is not somehow ‘more’ than its being conceived as sheer presence; rather it is never less than the full scope of possibility laid open in the clearing of the there: “The Dasein is however as being-possible also never less {than what it factically is}, that is to say, that what it is not yet in its potentiality-for-being, it is
existentially” (BT 185-186/SZ 145). All of the possibilities which are ‘still outstanding’ for the Dasein are, in so far as they are disclosed, in fact already included in the projected understanding as the being of its existing can-be.

The project of the understanding constitutes what might be called the primordial awareness that every human being in the first instance is, the Dasein’s existential ‘sight.’ This sight, which the Dasein ever is, throws the Dasein’s being into the basic possibilities of its being:

The understanding in its project-character makes up [aus] that which we name the sight of the Dasein. The with the disclosedness of the there existentially being [seiende] sight is the Dasein equally primordially according to the indicated [gekennzeichneten] basic manners of its being as circumspection [Umsicht] of concern, consideration [Ruecksicht] of solicitude, as sight towards [auf] being as such, for the sake of which [umwillen dessen] the Dasein ever is, how it is. (BT 186/SZ 146).

This ‘sight’ does not correspond to seeing with the eyes of the body, nor is it a faculty of ‘the intellect’ by means of which the Dasein somehow grasps beings ‘outside of it’ in their merely present substance. The Dasein’s existential sight is rather the laying open of a field of possibility, which “corresponds to the clearedness [Gelichtetheit] as which we characterized the disclosedness of the there.” From its inception the tradition of philosophy—not incorrectly according to Heidegger—“has been oriented primarily towards ‘seeing’ as a way of access to beings and to being.” Dasein’s existential sight frees beings within the world such that “it lets the being accessible to it be encountered unconcealedly in itself.” In order to grasp the beings as they are, the Dasein must grasp them precisely as beings. That it grasps the beings as beings means that the Dasein must somehow already understand being itself. The Dasein, as the projected understanding of
the there that it is, ever already exists within an understanding of something like being as such (BT 187/SZ 147).

In the sight of the projected understanding which reveals the beings within the clearing as they are, the Dasein also necessarily somehow already understands something like being in general: “In the projectedness of its being upon the for-the-sake-of-which and at the same time upon [in eins mit der auf] significance (world) lies disclosedness of being in general” (BT 187/SZ 147). Although the Dasein certainly does not, with the mere fact of its existence, grasp being as a concept, it constantly exists within an understanding of being, which “is already taken for granted,” and without which it could not project itself upon its possibilities and its world (BT 187/SZ 147). In this way the understanding of being essentially constitutes the being of the Dasein as projected can-be in the world: “the kind of being of the essential project of being-in-the-world has the understanding of being as constitutive [Konstitutivum] of its being” (BT 187 / SZ 147). Without an understanding of something like being, the human being would not exist as the Dasein. Equally, the thrown fact of the Dasein’s being shows itself as the very condition of the possibility of the understanding of being. The understanding of being plays itself out within, through, or more precisely as, the clearing of the there. Only a free being understands being. Only a being which understands being can be characterized by freedom. The question of being is inextricably the question of

33 Cf. MFL 189/MAL 244: “Here, however, is the origin of ‘possibility’ in general: Only through freedom, only a free being [Wesen] can, as transcending, understand being - and it must do so in order as such to exist, i.e., to be ‘among’ and ‘with’ beings”; and MFL 192/MAL 247: “In other words: the world described primarily by the for-the-sake-of is the primordial totality of that which the Dasein, as free, gives itself to understand. Freedom gives itself to understand; freedom is the primal understanding, i.e., the primal project of that which it itself makes possible. In the projection of the for-
freedom, and vice versa.

The being which essentially is as an existing can-be within the projected understanding of the world is also constituted by mineness: “The being, being in such a way [dergestalt seiend], I am ever myself” (BT 274/ SZ 231). Not only is the Dasein the being that is about its being, but each Dasein has this being to be, takes upon itself its possibility, in one way or another (BT 68/SZ 42). The Dasein’s free essence is always articulated as a self, that is to say, as an ‘I.’ In my freedom I, and only I, decide the way and manner of the being that is ever mine to be. Freedom as self-determination is a perpetual question, a constant burden that falls upon each of us uniquely, to answer and to shoulder. It is no ‘property’ which somehow attaches to a merely present being, but a continually chosen doing or happening. The Dasein as freedom is essentially only this abiding projected potential.

6. Care as the Structure of Existence and the Problem of Wholeness

Heidegger has interpreted the projected existing mineness of the Dasein’s being (the projected understanding of can-be in the world) in its “totality of being-in-the-world as a structural whole ... as care” (BT 274/SZ 231). The fundamental characteristics of this totality of the Dasein are revealed through working out the disclosedness of the basic mood of anxiety [Angst] in the final chapter of the first division of Being and Time. The interpretation of the disclosedness of anxiety “shows the Dasein as factically existing the-sake-of as such, Dasein gives itself the primordial commitment [Bindung].... The totality of the commitment residing in the for-the-sake-of is the world.”
being-in-the-world.” On the basis of this disclosure Heidegger asserts that the
“fundamental ontological characteristics” of the Dasein are “existentiality, facticity, and
being-falling” (BT 235/SZ 191). Accordingly, care, “the formal existential totality of the
Dasein’s ontological structural whole,” articulates itself as “ahead-of-itself-being-
already-in-(the-world) as being-among (beings encountered within-the-world)” (BT
237/SZ 192).

The interpretation of care, moreover, reveals precisely the unity of the structural
moments of the Dasein’s being: “The working out of the phenomenon of care procured
an insight into the concrete constitution of existence, that is into its equally primordial
connection with the facticity and the falling of the Dasein” (BT 274/SZ 231). These
moments of the Dasein’s being (existence, facticity, falling) and the corresponding items
of the care structure are not merely components of Dasein’s being which may be
indifferently shoved together or separated, "but in them weaves one primordial
connection, which makes up the sought totality of the structural whole" (BT 235/SZ 191).
The Dasein’s being is defined by existence; that is, it “is a being for which, in its being, it
is about its being” (BT 236/SZ 191). Existence clarifies itself as Dasein’s primordial
understanding throwing its being into its possible for-the-sake-of-which: “The ‘it is
about...’ made itself clear in the being-constitution of the understanding as of the self-
projecting being towards the ownmost potentiality-for-being” (BT 236/SZ 191). That the
Dasein is about its being means that Dasein projects itself towards its ownmost can-be, a
possibility of itself “for-the-sake-of-which the Dasein ever is, how it is,” and with which
it has “ever already compared itself.” This self-project of the understanding into a
possible for-the-sake-of-which, with which the Dasein compares its being, reveals the
Dasein as constantly beyond itself in the way it comports itself towards itself: “Being
towards the ownmost potentiality-for-being means however ontologically: the Dasein is
in its being ever already ahead of itself.” The Dasein’s essential ‘it is about...’ structures
itself, as it were, ‘surpasses itself,’ as a being-ahead-of-itself (BT 236/SZ 191-192).

The Dasein is not ahead of itself merely in the detached isolation of a pure ‘ego’
that ‘deliberates’ or lays plans for the future, but its basic state is being-in-the-world; the
Dasein is ahead of itself as being in an already disclosed world:

Being ahead of itself does not signify anything like an isolated tendency in
a worldless subject, but characterizes being-in-the-world. To being-in-the-
world, however, belongs the fact that it has been delivered over to itself -
that it has ever already been thrown into a world. (BT 236/SZ 192)
The Dasein has ever already been thrown into a world and, as such, into a world to which
it has been abandoned. Indeed, its being has been delivered to itself, it is about its being,
by virtue of this sheer abandonment. The Dasein’s primordial understanding (as we saw
in Heidegger’s analysis of the constitution of the there) projects its being upon its for-the-
sake-of-which and upon significance. Significance, as the worldhood of the world, is not
something else upon which the Dasein also or ‘additionally’ projects itself, but the
totality of the involvements of the there always refers back to a ‘for-the-sake-of-which’
as an ultimate ‘in-order-to.’ The significance which makes up the clearing of the there is
lit up by a final purpose of the Dasein that inheres in its being: “The whole of reference
of significance, as which constitutes worldhood, is ‘made fast’ in a for-the-sake-of-
which.” The Dasein’s ‘it is about...,’ as projected being-ahead-of-itself, ever already
includes the disclosedness of its there. This primordial connection “means no welding
together of a present-at-hand ‘world’ of objects with a subject,” but is rather “the phenomenal expression of the primordially whole constitution of the Dasein.” In care, as the structural whole of the Dasein’s being, existentiality both ever includes and indeed “is essentially determined through facticity” (BT 236/SZ 192).

The Dasein, as ahead-of-itself-being-already-in, projects itself as can-be in the clearing of its there. It is always already among beings with which it concerns itself, and within this clearing, it frees the beings it encounters in their possible significance: “factual existing of the Dasein is not only generally and indifferently a thrown potentiality-for-being-in-the-world, but is always also already absorbed in the concerned world.” Factual existing, our each going about the project of our being, ever includes and determines itself in terms of the Dasein’s falling ‘into’ the world of our concern: “In the ahead-of-itself-being-being-already-in-a-world lies essentially co-included the falling being among the concerned innerworldly ready-to-hand.” As factically existing, the Dasein is absorbed in its concern with the beings among which it finds itself and its inauthentic everyday way of being with one-another, in the self of das Man (BT 220/SZ 175-6). The Dasein’s fundamental ‘it is about...’ is thus primordially connected with its ‘that it is’ and its ‘absorption in...,’ such that its existence already implies and includes facticity and falling, and the Dasein’s free essence forms one primordial whole which Heidegger grasps as the structure of care. We have now come to the conclusion of Heidegger’s summary of the results of the preparatory analysis of the Dasein in the first division of Being and Time (BT 236-237/SZ 192).

In the first division of Being and Time Heidegger purports to grasp the whole of
the Dasein in its freedom as care. How, then, and why does the being of the Dasein, which Heidegger had asserted had been grasped in its wholeness, once again become a question? In brief, this totality again becomes a problem from the perspective of the question at which Heidegger’s treatise aims, apparently in terms of the very result of the inquiry itself. To repeat, the analytic of *Being and Time* seeks to work out the question about the meaning of being. Being, according to Heidegger, ‘is’ only with the understanding of being; or, at least, we only gain access to the concept of being through our understanding of it, since being in general is not merely one more being among the beings which we can encounter within the world. To work out the question of being is therefore to expose the horizon within which being becomes intelligible. It is only we ourselves, the ‘human beings,’ who possess an understanding of anything like being as part of the structure of our being. As we have seen, it is therefore the being of the human being that must be interrogated and interpreted in order to work out the question of being. Heidegger seeks not only to work out this question, but to work it out in a thorough manner. The understanding of being must not only be clarified, it must be clarified thoroughly, that is, radically. This can only be accomplished through the primordial interpretation of the Dasein: “Understanding of being as essential being-moment of the Dasein, however, lets itself be radically clarified only then, when the being, to whose being it belongs, has been interpreted primordially in itself with regard to its being.” This only raises the question, however, of what Heidegger means by a primordial interpretation of the Dasein’s being. Does the interpretation of the Dasein’s being as care constitute such a primordial interpretation? What means can afford us the assurance of
its primordiality? What does ‘primordiality’ even mean? (BT 274-5/SZ 231)

7. The Essence of Interpretation and the Problem of Primordiality

Heidegger responds to this question with an argument about the nature of his philosophical endeavours: “Ontological investigation is a possible kind of interpreting,” and any interpretation, as interpretation, is “the working-out and appropriation of an understanding” (BT 275/SZ 231). In its primordial understanding, the Dasein projects its being upon its for-the-sake-of-which within the already laid open clearing of the there. This project is itself one of the possibilities of the existing can-be that the Dasein is: “The projecting of the understanding has its own possibility, to develop itself. The development of the understanding we call interpreting. In it the understanding understandingly appropriates what it understands [sein Verstandenes].” (BT 188/SZ 148) This interpreting is the self-development and self-appropriation of the understanding, and ultimately of freedom’s primordial project. We commonly, or at least sometimes, think of interpretation as adding to our store of knowledge about what we interpret, to the extent that we even gain understanding in the first place only through interpretative investigation. According to Heidegger, precisely the opposite is the case. “Interpreting is grounded existentially in the understanding, and the latter does not arise through the former. The interpreting is not the acquiring of knowledge of the understood, but the working out of the possibilities projected in understanding.” (BT 188-189/SZ 148) As the disclosedness of the world, the Dasein exists entirely within the horizon of the
clearing of the there. Interpreting must therefore be entirely grounded in the primordial understanding, which, together with mood, constitutes the Dasein’s world. Interpretation can only be carried out on the ground of this understanding. Bound within the horizon of the there, it cannot yield extra knowledge about any possible ‘object’ of interpretation not already included within the primordial disclosure of the world. All interpreting interprets beings within the world in their being. It therefore has the structure only of revealing “something as something” (BT 189/SZ 149). In the case of the ready-to-hand, we take apart the assignment to which it has been referred, its in-order-to. When we interpret the being of a being, in the first instance we answer the question about its being with “the concerned interpretative answer: it is to...” that is, in relation to its possibility for us (BT 189/SZ 149).

Interpreting is furthermore not an act in which human beings impose an involvement upon something which already merely ‘sits there,’ but rather exposes the interpreted being of the being in its being. The beings ‘are there’ only in and through the interpretive disclosure of the understanding:

It does not throw, as it were, a ‘signification’ over the naked present-at-hand, and does not stick it with a value; but with the innerworldly encountered as such, it ever already has an in the understanding of the world disclosed involvement, which through the interpretation is laid out. (BT 190-191/SZ 150)

All interpreting develops itself against the background of a prior disclosure of a totality of involvements in the understanding. This totality of involvements, of course, need not be continually and ‘consciously,’ theoretically or scientifically understood, either as possible significance, or in the unity of its wholeness: “This totality need not be grasped explicitly
by a thematic interpretation. Even if it has undergone such an interpretation, it recedes into an understanding which does not stand out from the background” (BT 191/SZ 150). Any interpretation accordingly operates ever within this background, which it possesses as a previously disclosed framework, or fore-structure, which grounds and shapes it as interpretation: "Every interpretation has its fore-having, its fore-sight, and its fore-concept" (BT 275/SZ 232). That is to say, every interpretation is ultimately only the working out and appropriation of a determinate ‘for the sake of,’ a possible final end or purpose that it somehow already ‘is’ or ‘has.’

The Dasein always interprets anything from out of a ‘prepossessed’ projected background totality of involvements. As grounded in fore-having, the interpretation explicitly exposes, and makes more fully its own, the somehow already understood involvements to which a being has been previously assigned within the possible totality of significance. “This {interpretation} is grounded in every case [jeweils] in a fore-having [Vorhabe]. It moves itself [bewegt sich] as appropriation of understanding in the understanding being towards an already understood totality of involvements.”

Interpreting, as the self-appropriation of the understanding, brings to light the background involvements of the interpreted being, which are always already somehow understood, though not explicitly grasped, in and with the being of the there: “The appropriation of the understood, but still wrapped up, carries out the revelation always under the leadership of an outlook [Hinsicht], which fixes that in view of which the understood should be interpreted” (BT 191/SZ 150).

Interpretation is grounded in the revelation of appropriation. The appropriation
reveals the involvements of the interpreted being under the direction of a particular viewpoint. Interpreting is always directed in terms of the Dasein’s existential ‘sight’ towards a possible totality of significance, which ‘sees’ the interpreted in terms of a definite range of meaning; a range of meaning ultimately disclosed by the primordial project of the understanding. What any interpretation possesses in advance is had through a prior ‘seeing’ of the ‘object’ of interpretation. All interpretation is, therefore, “grounded in a foresight, which ‘introduces’ [>>anschneidet<< - lit. ‘cuts into’] what has been taken into fore-having [das in Vorhabe Genommene] on the basis of a determinate interpretability” (BT 191/SZ 150).

This foresight of the to-be-interpreted allows it to be explicitly conceptualized through interpretation. Dasein’s foresight of the ‘object’ of interpretation is guided by a prior determination of the range of interpretability belonging to what is to be interpreted. This range of interpretability is determined by a preconception about the object of interpretation: “the interpretation has already finally [endgueltig] or reservedly [vorbehaltlich] decided itself for a determinate comprehensability [Begrifflichkeit]; it is grounded in a fore-grasp” (BT 191/SZ 150). This advance grasp does not guarantee the adequacy of the interpretation; it can possibly force upon the being to be interpreted concepts that do not fit the measure of its kind of being. Only if the fore-grasp is drawn from the being itself will the interpretation unveil the interpreted being in a manner adequate to its measure; that is, reveal it as it is ‘in itself’ (BT 191/SZ 150).

Interpretation in this manner discloses or reveals the meaning of the interpreted being. The meaning—“that wherein the understandability of something maintains
itself”—of any being revealed through interpreting as the self-appropriating of understanding articulates itself ever in terms of this fore-structure: “Meaning is the through fore-having, foresight, and fore-concept structured upon-which of the project, in terms of which something as something becomes understandable” (BT 193/SZ 151). All interpretation as interpretation moves within this fore-structure of the Dasein’s projected understanding. This fore-structure of interpretation reveals the paradoxically circular character of the understanding: “All interpretation which is supposed to contribute understanding, must already have understood the to be interpreted” (BT 194/SZ 152). According to Heidegger, this circle of the understanding is not the ‘vicious circle’ of logical tautology, nor should it be seen as an inescapable flaw in the structure of human reason, in the face of which any attempt at scientific knowledge must founder. As “the expression of the existential fore-structure of the Dasein itself,” of the Dasein’s own circular being, it is rather the necessary structure of the possibility of the understanding interpretation, and indeed the condition of the very “possibility of most primordial knowing” (BT 195/SZ 153). What we require here is the recognition of “the basic conditions [Grundbedingungen] of possible interpretation” and “its essential conditions of execution [Vollzugsbedingungen]” (BT 194-195/SZ 153). Science should not attempt to circumvent this circle of the understanding, the condition of the possibility of interpretation, but rather grasp it in its essential structure in order that it might ascend to the level of rigour and the primordiality of knowing that are authentically possible for it: “The decisive thing is not to come out of the circle, but to come into it according to the right way” (BT 195/SZ 153).
Science takes hold of this possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing only by entering the circle of understanding correctly and fruitfully, through a phenomenology which lets the beings themselves show themselves in themselves from themselves, and interprets them in the light of what has been thus revealed:

In the circle a positive possibility of most primordial knowing conceals itself, which has certainly [freilich] been grasped in a genuine [echter] way only then, when the interpretation has understood that its first, constant, and last task remains each time not to let itself present fore-having, foresight, and fore-grasp through fancies and popular conceptions [sich jeweils Vorhabe, Vofsicht, und Vorgriff nicht durch Einfaelle und Volksbegriffe vorgeben zu lassen], but in the working out of which to secure the scientific theme in terms of the things themselves (BT 195/SZ 153).

In order to secure the theme of research, and to avoid using arbitrary notions and popular ideas as an inappropriate ‘pretext’ for its fore-structure, interpretation first needs to clarify and secure that fore-structure in terms of the being of the interpreted being alone. In Heidegger’s presentation the notions of common sense and the opinions carried by our ordinary speech are by no means a self-evidently reliable way of access to the truth. They may even obscure rather than reveal the most thoroughgoing knowledge of the interpreted being available to human understanding, and science may safely consult them only on the basis of a direct and genuine access to ‘object’ of its inquiry. This genuine access can be obtained only through a basic experience of the being to be revealed:

If interpreting [Auslegung] becomes, as interpretation [Interpretation], an explicit task for a research, then the totality of these ‘presuppositions,’ which we name the hermeneutical Situation, needs a previous clarifying [Klaerung] and securing, out of and in a basic experience of the to be disclosed ‘object’ (BT 275/SZ 232).

Ontological interpretation is to “expose [freilegen]” the Dasein’s being “with a view to its
being-constitution,” and it can therefore only be carried out on the basis of a basic experience of the Dasein itself. The Dasein must be brought into the fore-having “through a first phenomenal characterization to which all coming after steps of the analysis conform themselves.” Heidegger first points out the Dasein in its everydayness (BT 69/SZ 43-44). These steps must also be led by a fore-sight of the kind of being proper to the Dasein; from the first the Dasein’s being is sketched out in terms of its ‘it is about...’ in its ever-mineness (BT 67-68/SZ 41-42). Together the fore-having and the foresight yield the fore-grasp of the Dasein as being-in(-the-world), the essential structure of which has been interpreted as care (BT 275/SZ 232).

A primordial interpretation of the Dasein, however, demands not merely a first phenomenal sketch of the Dasein’s being in its everyday existence, but “it must itself explicitly make sure of it, whether it has brought the whole of the thematic being into the fore-having.” The first phenomenal sketch of the Dasein, however well grounded in the phenomena, is thus insufficient for a truly primordial interpretation: “The fore-sight upon being must rather meet this with regard to the unity of the belonging [zugehoerigen] and possible structure-moments” (BT 275/SZ 232). The interpretation can properly conceptualize the possible unity of the Dasein’s being only on the ground of getting the whole of the Dasein into its grasp; failing to do so would risk misinterpreting its being, and therewith the very horizon of the understandability of being in general, which ‘is’ somehow inherent to the constitution of the Dasein itself. Despite repeated insistence that the Dasein’s being be seen in its unity, Heidegger’s Dasein-interpretation has, by the opening of the second division of Being and Time, not yet provided itself with express
assurance of the wholeness of its grasp. It has only taken for granted the unitary wholeness of the Dasein that it has asserted. The existential interpretation must therefore acquire assurance that the provisional result of the preparatory analytic indeed grasps the whole Dasein. The first step for the interpretation to acquire such assurance is therefore to ask the question with which Heidegger closes the first division of Being and Time: “Has the hitherto investigation at all brought into view the Dasein as a whole?” (BT 273/SZ 230).

The answer to this question can only be ascertained through a review of the hermeneutical situation of the analytic of the Dasein up to this point. Heidegger turns first to the foresight of his investigation. The interpretation of the Dasein has been guided from the start by the idea of existence, “which we determined as understanding potentiality-for-being for which it is about its being itself.” This understanding can-be is, however, “free for authenticity, or inauthenticity, or the modal indifference of them.” So far Heidegger’s Dasein-analytic has “restricted itself” to the inauthentic and undifferentiated modes of the Dasein’s being. While it was initially necessary to “reach a concrete determination of the existentiality of existence along this way,” the interpretation will not grasp the Dasein’s being as a whole as long as it has not also brought it to light in its possible authenticity: “Existence means potentiality-for-being - but also authentically.” Without the inclusion of a possible authenticity, “the existential interpretation-leading foresight” can not meet the criterion for interpretive primordiality (BT 275-6/SZ 232-3).

Nor can the fore-having of the existential interpretation lay claim to primordiality,
since it has so far not made certain that in everydayness it has grasped the whole of the Dasein’s being, that is, “this being from its ‘beginning’ to its ‘end.’” Indeed, not only has the interpretation not made certain of this grasp, but Heidegger confesses that, “it even becomes questionable whether {the having of the whole being} is reachable at all and whether a primordial ontological interpretation of the Dasein must not fail - on the kind of being of the thematic being itself.” First, everydayness is the being of the Dasein between its birth and its death. Beginning with everydayness, the interpretation has the ‘middle’ of the Dasein’s being, but not its framed finite whole. More importantly, the essence of the Dasein is existence. The Dasein exists ever as can-be. Heidegger now asserts that, “if existence determines the being of the Dasein, and its essence is co-constituted through potentiality-for-being, then the Dasein must, so long as it exists, potentially-be [seinkoennend] ever something not yet being.” Any being so constituted appears to be essentially ungraspable in its possible totality, and therefore especially ‘designed’ or constituted to thwart any attempt at a primordial interpretation of its being (BT 276/SZ 233). The existential interpretation of the Dasein consequently not only cannot yet assure itself of its primordiality, but we must even doubt whether a primordial interpretation of it is possible at all. Up until the second division of Being and Time, Heidegger has explicitly grasped the Dasein neither as a whole, nor in its possible authenticity. These inadequacies must be rectified—that is, the Dasein must be grasped in its possible authentic wholeness—if the existential interpretation of the Dasein is to achieve the primordiality required for exposing the horizon within which being in general becomes understandable (BT 276/SZ 233).
But what is going on here? Why does Heidegger now appear to reverse his earlier position? In the analysis of understanding, we have already seen Heidegger’s emphatic insistence that the Dasein, as understanding can-be, already includes existentially what it is not yet. Heidegger’s earlier claim, that the Dasein’s can-be is with the being of existence (which therefore already includes its not-yet), amounts to no more than a dogmatic assertion. If freedom is the essence of the Dasein, then its everydayness is freedom’s inauthentic expression. In confining itself to an analysis of the Dasein in its inauthentic everydayness, Heidegger’s inquiry so far, despite exposing the Dasein’s inauthentic everyday existence in which one normally stays unconsciously absorbed, remains within the horizon of the inauthentic understanding of freedom that governs this everydayness. In the inauthentic averageness characteristic of das Man, the one, the Dasein exists groundlessly in a chattering, curious, ambiguous “downward plunge.” It floats along in a detached fashion, never dwelling anywhere, but, in its distraction, drifts from one disposable novelty to another, constantly consuming them and plainly ‘understanding’ them, without ever concerning itself with ‘real’ or primordial understanding. It deludes itself with the tranquil assumption that it leads a “full and genuine ‘life,’” while, in fact, the continual bustle of its life alienates it from its ownmost can-be, that is, from the possibility of its authentic existence. Assuming that it is able “to own, or rather, to reach everything,” it moves from one possibility to the next, without authentically participating in any of them. In short, it exists irresponsibly in an idle ‘freedom’ of a ‘now this, then that...’ It appears that there is always something still outstanding in its being, and indeed, in its fragmentary distraction, it does not and cannot
exist as a whole can-be (BT 214-223/SZ 170-179).

It remains to be shown that, and how, the Dasein’s being, as existing can-be, existentially is already its ‘not yet.’ Indeed on the ground of how freedom is understood in inauthentic existence, one will never be able to grasp the Dasein in its totality. Yet one more novel possibility, not yet realized, constantly lurks around the corner. In order to rectify this problem, the interpretation must grasp the Dasein in a way that is not beholden to its fragmentary inauthentic everydayness; that is, it must be grasped in the possibility of its authentic existence. The essence of the Dasein, however, is freedom. Authentic existence is only the authentic manifestation of the Dasein’s essential freedom. Grasping the Dasein’s authentic existence therefore amounts to bringing to light and working out a primordial concept of freedom, in and through the interpretation of a basic experience of the Dasein in its authentic freedom.

8. The Authentic Concept of Freedom and the Existential Interpretation of Death

Having revealed the inadequacy of the interpretation and the problem of grasping the Dasein as a whole, that is, the problem of freedom, Heidegger now sets out the path to its resolution. The rest of section 45 projects a path to the clarification of the meaning of human freedom, that is, to the authentic concept of freedom. The purpose of reaching such a concept is to grasp the Dasein in its possible wholeness. The interpretation must therefore “especially first of all raise the question about the potentiality-for-being-a-whole of this being”; that is, it must raise the question of what it means to grasp the
Dasein as a whole (BT 276/SZ 233). In terms of our everyday understanding of human freedom, there is, in the Dasein’s being, always something lacking and yet to be realized: “In the Dasein, so long as it is, something ever still stands out, which it can and will be” (BT 276/SZ 233). The very end of the Dasein, that is, death, belongs within the range of what stands out in its being. As its end, death “limits and determines the ever possible totality of the Dasein.” If Heidegger’s inquiry is to reach an (authentic) understanding of the meaning of being, it requires a primordial interpretation of the Dasein which grasps its being in its ultimate wholeness. This can only be achieved through an analysis of the end of being-in-the-world. Freedom, and therefore also ultimately being in general, can only be reached through looking into death (BT 276-277/SZ 234). If the discussion of death is to clarify the Dasein in its possible totality, then it must have a phenomenally adequate concept of it as the death of the Dasein:

The being-at-end of the Dasein in death and therewith the being-whole as this being can however be suitably phenomenally included in the discussion of the possible being-whole only then, when an ontologically sufficient, that is, existential concept of death has been gained. (BT 277/SZ 234)

For a being with the project-character of Dasein, “death is only in an existential being towards death.” The existential structure of being-towards-death shows itself as indeed the “ontological constitution” of the Dasein’s whole can-be. Through the working out of this existential structure, the interpretation arrives at the possibility of bringing the whole of the Dasein into its fore-having. The elaboration of the existential structure of being towards death is, however, only a more radical interpretation of the phenomenon of care (BT 277/SZ 234).
In order also to have the Dasein in its possible authenticity, the interpretation must reveal the Dasein authentically in its whole can-be, that is, in its authentic being-towards-death. If the Dasein’s authenticity is to be interpreted in a suitably phenomenal way, then the Dasein must itself, and from itself alone, “present the possibility and manner of its authentic existence.” According to Heidegger it is the conscience that testifies to the possibility and manner of the Dasein’s authentic can-be. Like death, conscience, too, “demands” a suitably phenomenal interpretation, that is, “a genuine existential interpretation.” The conscience, interpreted in terms of what it discloses—that is, interpreted conscientiously—shows itself precisely, and indeed as nothing other than an authentic being-towards-death; that is, in the conscience, the Dasein presents itself from itself and to itself in its authentic wholeness (BT 277/SZ 234).

This interpretation of the disclosure of conscience will nonetheless unsurprisingly not overturn the inquiry’s prior grasp of the Dasein’s being. Authentic being towards death shows itself “as {a} mode of care.” The disclosure of the whole of the Dasein, through the authentic concept of freedom, will rather deepen and expressly ground Heidegger’s existential analytic of the Dasein. Through the conscientious interpretation of conscience, Heidegger’s inquiry “assures itself of the constitution of the Dasein’s primordial being”; and in working out and appropriating what the conscience discloses, the interpretation has thereby prepared “the phenomenally sufficient ground for a prordial interpretation of the meaning of the Dasein’s being” (BT 277/SZ 234). The existential interpretation of the conscience prepares the way for the primordial interpretation of the Dasein’s being as temporality, and therewith also the interpretation
“of time as of the possible horizon of every understanding of being at all [ueberhaupt]” (BT 19/SZ 1).

As interpretation, Heidegger’s inquiry sets itself the task of not allowing its fore-structure to be presented by popular fancies, but only by the ‘thing itself.’ It must therefore secure its fore-structure in and through a basic experience of the disclosed object. At the close of the first division of *Being and Time*, the interpretation has grasped the structural whole of the Dasein as care. The interpretation can only be expressly certain, however, of having the whole of the Dasein, by explicitly laying out that grounding experience in and through which it has secured its scientific theme, in such a way that it demonstrates that and how it has disclosed the Dasein in its possible wholeness. To show that the interpretation has grasped the Dasein as a whole, obviously requires that, in its grounding experience, it has already grasped the whole Dasein: the interpretation must have already understood what is to be interpreted. *The Dasein is, however, only disclosed as a whole by the conscience; therefore, the conscience must itself be the basic experience in and through which Heidegger’s Dasein interpretation clarifies and secures its hermeneutical situation.* The existential interpretation of the conscience is not merely the analysis of an extraneous human experience which is supposed to stand surety for the rest of Heidegger’s inquiry, whose genuine ground lies elsewhere; it is rather the self-revelation of the inquiry’s leading experience, by means of which it makes itself transparent in its source or origin.\(^\text{34}\) It is the existential or

\[^{34}\text{I am ‘factically’ indebted to Michael Ehrmantraut for this insight. Cf. Ehrmantraut, *Heidegger’s Philosphic Pedagogy*, p. 317-318, n. 33. Others have arrived at it as well; I address their work appropriately below.}^\]
conscientious interpretation of what the conscience discloses which supplies the ground or justification of Heidegger’s enterprise. The conscience now shows itself as the authentic ground of Heidegger’s inquiry, as the basic experience in and through which it has clarified and secured its object, as that which has indeed silently guided the interpretation from the outset. *Every item of Heidegger’s Dasein-interpretation is an interpretive elaboration of what the conscience silently discloses.* The discussion of death and the existential interpretation of the conscience themselves attest to its originary disclosure of the essence and structure of the Dasein, and make it possible to show that its authentic disclosure is the font from which the whole of *Being and Time*, from start to finish, springs. In short, *Being and Time* reveals itself as the self-interpretation (of the Dasein, as disclosed by the experience) of the conscience. The essence of the Dasein as disclosed by the conscience, however, is freedom: the inquiry into the **authentic** meaning of being arises out of, understands itself in terms of—or more precisely, is the self-appropriation of—a, or even the, primordial experience of freedom. To show that in which this authentic or primordial experience of freedom consists, that and how it guides the whole of Heidegger’s inquiry, and the necessary political consequences of its authentic concept, is the ultimate goal of our examination of the extended discussion of death in the second division of *Being and Time*, to which we now turn.
Chapter Two: The Existential Concept of Death

The express purpose of Heidegger’s discussion of death in the second division of *Being and Time* is to bring the whole of the Dasein expressly into the fore-having of the existential analytic, to bring to light the significant totality of the human being that we somehow already ‘understand’ but rarely expressly confront. Heidegger begins by confronting the full scope of the problem of grasping freedom as a whole, laying out the reasons, drawn from the very result of the analysis of the first division of *Being and Time*, his interpretation of the being of the Dasein as care, which seem to rule out any possible experience of the Dasein as a whole, and therefore also any possible primordial interpretation of its being. Care is that “which forms the totality of the structure-whole of the Dasein.” The “primary moment” of care, that is, both its first item and the one most essential to its structure, is the “ahead-of-itself.” The Dasein’s ahead of itself means that it “exists ever for the sake of itself,” that is, for the sake of what it will become: “‘As long as it is,’ right until its end [bis zu seinem Ende] it comports itself towards its potentiality-for-being.” That the Dasein constantly comports itself towards its future can-be “says indeed unambiguously” that there is constantly something missing in the Dasein’s being, “that in the Dasein always still something stands out, which as potentiality-for-being of itself has still not become ‘actual.’” On the basis of the kind of being of the Dasein, it thus appears impossible to grasp it in its existing actuality—what it yet ‘is’ at any point—as a whole, because the structure of that existence ever points to an unrealized future possibility of its being: “In the essence of the basic constitution of the Dasein lies

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35 Concerning the meaning of Heidegger’s expression ‘fore-having,’ see page 74 of the previous chapter.
accordingly a constant unfinishedness” (BT 279/SZ 236).

When the Dasein’s being is no longer characterized by this unfinishedness, when it “exists’ in such a way that simply nothing more is still outstanding in it,” it is ‘finished,’ “it has already for this very reason become no-more-being-there,” a becoming which amounts to the “annihilation of its being.” The end of the Dasein’s unfinishedness, as the end of existence is, naturally, death. Once the Dasein has become a ‘finished’ whole, it no longer exists in the world—existence is itself even defined by this unfinishedness—and “as a being it becomes then never more experienceable” (BT 280/SZ 236). Heidegger emphasizes here that “the impossibility of experiencing the Dasein ontically as existing whole [als seiendes Ganzes]” is not the fault of the limitations of human intellect, but seems to have its root in the being of the Dasein itself: “What thus can never first be, how an experiencing pretends to grasp the Dasein, itself principally eludes an experienceability.” On the basis of the argument that Heidegger here sets out, it appears that no experience of the Dasein can grasp it as a whole, because, once whole, it ceases to exist as a revealable being within the world; the Dasein, as Dasein, ceases to be accessible to human experience. So long as the Dasein exists, it seems never to be complete, and just as soon as it appears to become complete, it is no longer. It can never be experienced in its totality, because even before it has become whole, it has disappeared. In order to meet the requirements of primordiality, Heidegger’s inquiry must first somehow grasp the Dasein as a whole in a basic experience that can ground the existential interpretation of Being and Time. If no experience can grasp the Dasein as a whole, then the inquiry must give up not only any
hope of a primordial interpretation of its being, but also any thorough exposition of the horizon of being’s understandability, and therewith the possibility of answering the question concerning the meaning of being in general (BT 280/SZ 236).

The ahead-of-itself, as the first and most essential moment of care, can neither be deleted nor ignored. “The ‘ahead-of-itself’ does not let itself be struck out as essential structure-moment of care” (BT 280/SZ 236). Faced with the choice of abandoning the interpretation of the Dasein as freedom, Heidegger adamantly refuses: the understanding as such, which necessarily includes the understanding of being in general, is essentially bound up with the freedom of Dasein’s essential for-the-sake-of-which. To attempt to overcome the apparent impasse, into which the inquiry has fallen, by abandoning the interpretation of the Dasein as freedom, would amount to abandoning entirely his inquiry into the meaning of being in general. The argument about the impossibility of experiencing the Dasein as a whole, which Heidegger here sets out, is nonetheless not unassailable, and he proceeds to ask a series of connected questions about the adequacy of the foregoing argument concerning the ‘ahead-of-itself’ and its apparent consequence, the impossibility of a primordial interpretation of the Dasein’s being. Has the impossibility of such an interpretation been asserted on the basis of “merely formal argumentation”? Or, more seriously, “was the Dasein at ground not unconsciously [unverstehens] posited as a present-at-hand, ahead of which a not-yet-present-at-hand constantly shoves itself?” Put another way: “Has the argumentation taken [gefasst] not-yet-being and the ‘ahead’ in a genuinely existential sense?” That is to say, has it understood Dasein’s “‘end’ and ‘totality’” in terms of the specific kind of being of
existence? Has death itself been understood here not as a “biological” but as an “existential-ontological” phenomenon of the Dasein, “indeed at all a suitably securely delimited meaning [umgrenzte Bedeutung]?” If not, Heidegger asks, “And are then indeed all possibilities exhausted, to make the Dasein accessible in its wholeness?” (BT 280/SZ 236-237).

If this argument has been “merely formal,” if the Dasein was unconsciously understood in terms of presence-at-hand, and if, therefore, not-yet, ahead, end, totality, and death have not been understood in the genuinely existential manner appropriate to the Dasein’s being, then the inquiry has indeed not exhausted every possibility of making the Dasein accessible in its wholeness, that is, definitively ruled out the possibility of a basic experience which discloses the Dasein as a whole. While the argument Heidegger sets out here indeed shows that the understanding of the Dasein as presence-at-hand, that is, the Dasein conceived in terms of the inauthentic understanding of being (which is to say, the inauthentic understanding of freedom) cannot grasp the Dasein as a whole, such an argument cannot rule out the possibility that a properly existential understanding of the Dasein’s ahead-of-itself, grounded in an authentic experience of the Dasein—that is, an authentic experience of freedom—could so grasp it. Consequently, Heidegger proclaims: “These questions call for answer, before the problem of the totality of the Dasein can be eliminated as null.” The question concerning the possible totality of the Dasein is in fact two questions: an “existentiell” question “about a possible whole-potentiality-for-being,” and an “existential” question “about the being-constitution of ‘end’ and ‘totality.’” These questions harbour the “task” of a positive analysis of “existence-phenomena” which the
inquiry up until now has left aside; in the first instance this is “the ontological characterization of the Dasein-measured being-at-end,” and (what amounts to the same thing) “the winning of an existential concept of death.” For the Dasein death is authentically not merely the present advent or not-yet-present eventuality of its factual demise, but a continual existing being towards death as the limit-situation of its thrown can-be. The authentic grasp of the end proper to the Dasein’s kind of being, the existential concept of death, will both demonstrate the ontological (that is, existential) possibility, and describe the existential contours, of a basic experience that reveals the Dasein as a whole, in a manner consistent with the manifold of care, such that it is compatible with, and even demands, an authentic understanding of the Dasein’s essential freedom; in turn the existential concept of death and the authentic concept of freedom point forward towards the existentiell or practical possibility of an authentic being towards death, at odds with the inauthentic understanding of human freedom that grounds our average everydayness (BT 280-281/SZ 236-237).

The path to this existential concept of death begins in section 47 of Being and Time, with a discussion of the way in which we mostly initially encounter the phenomenon of death, the ‘experience’ of the death of others. The analysis of this experience shows that the Dasein can never gain direct access to an experience of ‘actual’ death, either of its own, or through the ‘substitute’ of an encounter with the death of others. As an existential phenomenon of the Dasein’s being, death is constituted by existence and evermineness. Death is ‘something’ that is a constant possibility of the Dasein’s own being, that it must ever confront by itself alone. The only path to any
ontological understanding of death is consequently as an existential concept.

This existential concept of death must first be secured in a negative fashion. Death represents both the end and totality of the Dasein, but through our ordinary or inauthentic understanding of these concepts, common notions of end and totality that do not fit the kind of being proper to the Dasein may inadvertently impose themselves upon the interpretation of its death. The concepts of end and totality as they apply to the Dasein must therefore first be purged of these inappropriate common notions, in order to prepare a suitably existential interpretation of the death-phenomenon. Death has furthermore previously been interpreted in biological, psychological, and theological terms. While these interpretations are not phenomenally baseless, they all rest upon concepts of death that have not been properly and expressly clarified. The existential interpretation of death accordingly claims a priority over these other interpretations of the phenomenon, which lack a basic clarification of the ‘object’ of their investigations. That ‘object’ reveals itself as the uttermost, unrelatable, unoutstripable not-yet of the Dasein, which limits and frames the whole of its can-be, the possibility wherein it is simply about the being of the Dasein as such. Death is the horizon that reveals the meaning of freedom, the horizon that makes the freedom of the human being intelligible in its possibility. Projecting its choices into the future, the Dasein is constantly ahead of itself, towards possibilities that it is not yet. The final not yet of the Dasein, however, is death. Unlike every other human possibility, the Dasein comports itself towards its death not merely from time to time, but always, even if it does not do so expressly or ‘self-consciously.’ Death is the end that the Dasein somehow already constantly ‘has’ and
towards which it continually comports itself, even if it lacks any express factual knowledge of death. Thought through to the end, freedom presses forward towards its limit in death as the clarification of its possibility. In the scope of its horizon death thus frames and determines every other human possibility. The proper concept of death thus promises a grasp of the whole of freedom. In Heidegger’s existential interpretation, the Dasein is dying so long as it exists, and therefore is as a continual being towards death. The existential concept of death reveals itself, however, as only a more penetrating interpretation of the structure of care.

A. The Experience of the Death of Others

To the limits of our merely human knowledge, the Dasein is denied any experience of its own death, since death is the liquidation of the being of the Dasein, and its ‘wholeness’ in death precludes the possibility of experiencing it: “The arrival at wholeness of the Dasein in death is simultaneously loss of the being of the there. The going-over to no-more-Dasein lifts the Dasein straight out of the possibility, to experience this going-over and to understand it as experienced” (BT 281/SZ 237). In the ‘wholeness’ of death the Dasein is no longer there; that is, it is no longer the having been laid open clearing of its there. With the disappearance of the clearing, the Dasein no longer remains within the field of experienceability; as the clearing of the there, it was indeed itself this very field. More precisely, however, the matter does not admit the certainty to which Heidegger at first appears to pretend. As long as we ourselves have
not reached our ‘wholeness’ in death (and lack any testimony of deceased others, from after their death, as to how the matter stands) we cannot, strictly speaking, know that the death of the Dasein lies outside the field of any possible experience (assuming that knowing in this case must rest on access to death in an experience of it). At any rate Heidegger’s next sentence is more cautious, and seems to admit that his assertion of the impossibility of experiencing one’s own death ultimately rests on supposition: “Such certainly likes to remain denied to the respective Dasein concerning itself” (BT 281/SZ 237). What we do know is that the experience of death likes to remain concealed from us so long as we persist in and as the possibility of being-in-the-world.

If the Dasein, as being-in-the-world, is denied an experience of its own death, the death of others readily presents itself to us as a possible substitute. In light of the impossibility of experiencing its own wholeness in death, “so much the more urgent is yet the death of others.” The mysteriousness of death’s terror makes the experience of the death of others all the more compelling for us. In encountering the death of others, “an ending of the Dasein” becomes “objectively’ accessible.” Through the encounter with the death of others, “the Dasein can, especially as it is essentially being-with with others, gain an experience of death.” The objective access to death in this experience, according to this alternative approach to the problem of wholeness, thus seems to promise to “make possible an ontological delimitation of the Dasein-totality” (BT 281/SZ 237). The reconnaissance of an authentic concept of human freedom begins, as it were, at a funeral. The Dasein of others is in death also no-more-Dasein; that is, death is the annihilation of their being-in-the-world. When another dies, his no-more-Dasein, as
Heidegger rather starkly puts it, “is [gleichwohl] still - understood extremely - a being in the sense of only-still-present-at-hand of an encountered body-thing.” In its most immediate form, the death of others is an experience of the transformation of the Dasein of others, or of another living being, into merely corporeal presence-at-hand: “At the dying of others the remarkable being-phenomenon can be experienced, which lets itself be determined as change-over [Umschlag] of a being from the kind of being of the Dasein (or of life) into no-more-Dasein” (BT 281/SZ 238).

This striking characterization of the change of life into mere corporeality nonetheless does not grasp the whole of the phenomenon of death. The merely present corpse, “seen theoretically,” remains a “possible object for pathological anatomy, whose tendency of understanding remains oriented to the idea of life.” In the corpse we do not encounter a non-living thing, in the sense of a natural thing such as a rock, or manufactured equipment, such as a hammer or a motorcycle, but rather a previously alive unliving thing (BT 281-282/SZ 238). Nor does even this elaboration of death—the change of a living being into a corpse, which persists as a possible object of the medical and forensic sciences, and now even as possible material for use in organ transplants—capture the full phenomenon of the end of human life. “The ‘deceased’... who has been torn away from those ‘remaining behind’ [den >>Hinterbliebenen<<] is object of ‘concern’ in the manner of funeral celebration, of burial, of the cult of graves.” For those survivors who concern themselves with “mourning-remembering staying,” the deceased is not merely an “environmentally ready-to-hand equipment” to be used in the activity of their concern, but they “are with him, in the mode of honouring solicitude.” While “the
deceased himself is no more factically ‘there’” as being-in-the-world, “those remaining can still be with him,” within the clearing of the ‘there’ that the deceased has lost, or more precisely, that the deceased himself, so far as we know, no longer is or shares (BT 282/SZ 238).

With this final elaboration of the experience of the death of others, Heidegger nevertheless concludes that the death of others cannot provide the basic experience of wholeness that the inquiry requires to secure the primordiality of its Dasein-interpretation. Those ‘remaining behind,’ that is, those Daseine persisting as being-in-the-world do not as such experience the loss of being-in-the-world that is the coming to an end of the deceased himself: “The more suitably the no-more-Dasein of the deceased is phenomenally grasped, so much the more plainly it shows itself, that such being-with with the dead exactly does not experience the authentic being-come-to-the-end of the deceased” (BT 282/SZ 238-239). Those remaining are ‘with’ the deceased in the world whose being he has lost, but, remaining in the world, they precisely do not experience his end, his loss of being-in-the-world. They do indeed experience death as a loss, but in their experience of loss, “the loss of being as such which the dying one ‘suffers’ does not become accessible,” no more than death, as loss of being (as opposed to the pain and torment of the body that can precede it), is accessible, is experienceable by the one who dies: with the loss of being there is for the one who dies as such no more suffering, or, indeed, anything else. In short, our experience of the death of others is not an experience of their death, but of our loss at their passing away: “We do not experience in the genuine sense the dying of others, but are at most always only ‘there alongside.’” The death of
others therefore cannot serve as a substitute for the experience of coming to an end denied us in our own case. Since “the question stands concerning the ontological sense of the dying of the dying as a being-possibility of his being,” the ‘experience’ of the death of others “is able to give neither ontically nor ontologically that which it supposes to be able to give” (BT 282-283/SZ 239).

The idea that the death of others can serve as a substitute, arises out of “the opinion, that Dasein may be replaced as you like by others, so that, what remains unexperienceable in one’s own Dasein, becomes accessible in someone else’s [am fremden].” That this opinion does not grasp “the kind of being of the Dasein” nonetheless does not mean that it is “groundless.” By and large, or as Heidegger is fond of saying, “first of all and mostly,” it is even quite correct. That it does not hold in the case of death reveals yet more about death’s special distinctiveness as a phenomenon of the Dasein, and shows how it must be grasped in order to be properly—that is, authentically—understood. Representation is a frequent possibility, and even a common necessity, of our everyday life: “To the possibilities of being, being-with-one-another in the world belongs indisputably the representability of one Dasein by an other.”

Representability is a constant possibility of human life in common, and living together, the Dasein going about its tasks “in the everydayness of concern” makes “manifold and constant use” of this possibility of representation, including not only the “refined [abgeschliffenen] modes of the public with-one-another” but also in “possibilities of concern” determined by occupation, social class, and age. The various modes of this representability are employed in an average way by the Dasein which, absorbed in the
everyday world, “understands itself” and any other “first of all and mostly” according to its customary concerns—an attitude which Heidegger summarizes as, “‘{o}ne is’ that which one does.” The Dasein in its everydayness understands itself, that is, determines its being, primarily in terms of a doing, which in most cases is conceived in terms of an occupation or profession. In the first instance, the Dasein says of itself, for example, ‘I am a teacher’ or, ‘I am a judge’ or, ‘I am a master builder’ and so on. In these and other professions, from an everyday point of view, what matters for the performance of the occupation is not which particular Dasein carries it out, but only that whoever goes about the business at hand has the necessary skills, which have become standardized in systems of degrees and certifications. In terms of these tasks and requirements, one Dasein is therefore in principle entirely replaceable by another, to the point where the bearers of ‘qualifications’ and ‘skill sets’ are seen as merely one more material factor to be managed in the successful operation of our private and public enterprises, an attitude concisely summed up in the phrase ‘human resources.’ In this sphere of everyday operation, “representability is not only possible in general, it belongs even as constitutive for with-one-another.” This possibility of representation is necessary and even indispensable for our common everyday existence: “Here the one Dasein can and even must within certain limits ‘be’ the other.” Modern mass society simply requires such representation for the continued viability of its operation, and within these certain limits, the notion of representability is undeniably correct and even necessary (BT 283-284/SZ 239-240).

When it comes to death, however, the matter stands very differently. The representability of one Dasein by another, which is not only possible but even
indispensable for the operation of our everyday business, entirely fails in the case of
death: “this possibility of representing breaks down completely if it is about the
representation of the possibility of being, which makes up coming-to-an-end of the
Dasein, and which as such gives to it its wholeness.” The representability of the Dasein
fails in the end because the with-one-another of a common human co-existence is
ultimately powerless against the possibility of death: “None can take away from the other
his dying.” This is not to deny that particular human beings in dire situations can, of
course, sacrifice their lives to preserve those of others. “Someone can certainly ‘go to his
death for another.’ That means however always: to offer oneself for the other ‘in a
determinate business.’” On a sinking ship a father may give up his place in a lifeboat and
drown so that his wife and children might live on. In a desperate battle a soldier may
throw himself on a grenade to spare the lives of his comrades. For all the nobility of their
sacrifices, however, they neither make the father’s family immortal nor the soldier’s
comrades invulnerable. The sacrifice does not annul death’s possibility, but at best only
postpones its inevitable necessity. Death stands as the inescapable fate that every human
being must in the end face by himself: “Each Dasein in particular [jeweilig] must take
dying upon itself alone.” Death is a possibility that relates uniquely to the Dasein as an
individual, such that it even can be said to ‘belong’ to its possibility, as a constant, most
certain, and inalienable ‘possession’: “Death is, so far as it ‘is,’ according to its essence
ever mine.” Concerning death, which makes up the wholeness of the Dasein, “there is
according to its essence no representing” (BT 284/SZ 240, emphasis mine).36

36 This insight about death forms the core of Heidegger’s critique of the modern representative
Death’s inescapable evermineness makes its possibility not only especially pressing, but the threat it poses to the Dasein’s being, to its possibility in its entirety, means that death is for us ever a genuinely ‘existential question’: “And indeed it signifies a peculiar possibility of being, wherein it is about the being of the ever own Dasein simply.” Death now emerges as a special, even the uniquely special, possibility of the Dasein. Not only is death the possibility of the Dasein’s wholeness, but it especially brings to sight the essential ‘it is about...’ of the Dasein. In the face of the possibility of death, wherein it is purely a question of the Dasein’s being as such, we most clearly glimpse the Dasein in the essence of its existence. Freedom’s self-determination comes to sight most clearly when set off against the limit-situation of its possible annihilation (BT 284/SZ 240).

In Heidegger’s analysis death has now come to light as a genuinely existential Dasein-phenomenon, that is, death now “shows itself” as “constituted ontologically through evermineness and existence,” the two characteristics of the Dasein sketched out, on the basis of Heidegger’s introduction, as basic guides for his preparatory analysis of the Dasein (BT 284/SZ 240; BT 67/SZ 41-42). The attempt to make Dasein’s end accessible through the encounter with the death of others represents one more failure to grasp it in its proper character. While the attempt to make the being-whole of the Dasein accessible through the encounter with the dying of others has failed, this failure has the positive outcome that death must be seen simply as “an existential phenomenon,” and that Heidegger’s inquiry “is thus forced into a purely existential orientation.” This

government; the discussion of that critique, however, must wait upon the conclusion of our examination
existential orientation to death is the final—and, according to Heidegger, the only true or authentic—possibility for making the Dasein accessible as a whole: “The only remaining possibility for the analysis of death as dying, is either to form a purely existential concept of this phenomenon, or else forgo any ontological understanding of it.” The purely existential analysis of death forms the last and truest hope for grasping the Dasein in its wholeness, that is to say, for a primordial interpretation of the Dasein, for radically clarifying the understanding of being, for the exposing the horizon of freedom within which something like being in general becomes understandable (BT 284/SZ 240).

If existence, the ‘it is about ...,’ is definitive only for the essence of the Dasein, then the death of the Dasein, understood as a properly existential phenomenon, must be sharply distinguished from the death of “the merely-living.” Even when we grasp hold of death “physiologically-biologically,” according to Heidegger, “the medical concept of the ‘exitus’” does not work out to the same as the concept of the “perishing” of the merely-living. What is more, meanings of death, end, and totality, as conceived in terms of “another kind of being (presence-at-hand or life),” and thus phenomenally inappropriate to the death of the Dasein continually and insidiously “threaten to confuse the interpretation of the phenomena, even the very [ja schon] first suitable presentation of it.” A properly existential concept of the death of the Dasein can therefore only be achieved by a prior clarification of the ontological meaning of end and totality in relation to it. This ontological clarification of the possible meanings of end and totality is accordingly the focus of the next section of Heidegger’s inquiry (BT 284-285/SZ 240-241).

of Heidegger’s elaboration of the full existential concept of death.
B. The Preliminary Clarification of End and Totality in Relation to the Dasein

The clarification of the existential meaning of end and totality, “which as ontological determinations of the Dasein should lead to a primordial interpretation of this being,” in relation to the death of Dasein amounts to “the turning down” of the unsuitable ““variations’” of the concepts of end and totality which spring unbidden into the interpretation of the death of the Dasein. The uniqueness of the Dasein’s kind of being means that there is no other being that can serve as a substitute in the analysis, from which the proper concept of the Dasein’s not-yet can be suitably deduced. Section 48 of Being and Time accordingly takes the form of a series of contrasting examples that refine, in a negative way, our understanding of the possible end and totality peculiar to the existence of the Dasein. This turning down of the meanings of end and totality unsuitable for characterizing something like the Dasein’s kind of being clarifies “the understanding for end and totality” in their existential variants, in order to “guarantee the possibility of an ontological interpretation of death.” Heidegger adds that this “can not mean” that “the existential concepts of end and totality are to be gained by way of a deduction”; rather, “it is valid to take the existential meaning” of death from the Dasein itself and “show how such ‘ending’ can constitute a being-whole of the being that exists” (BT 285-286/SZ 241-242).

What has been gained from Heidegger’s discussion of death so far “lets itself be formulated in three theses”:

1. To the Dasein belongs, so long as it is, a not-yet which it will be—the constant outstanding. 2. The to-its-end-coming of the ever not-yet-at-end-being (the according to its being removing of the outstanding) has the character of no-longer-Dasein. 3. The to-end-coming includes within itself a mode of being simply unrepresentable for the particular Dasein. (BT 286/SZ 242)

The first two of these theses emerged in the provisional characterization of death at the opening of Heidegger’s discussion. The first way of characterizing death arose out of the inauthentic understanding of Dasein’s being, that is, of freedom, and stands as the ground for the apparent impossibility of grasping the Dasein as a whole. The third arose out of the discussion of the encounter with the death of others as a possible substitute theme for making the Dasein accessible in its wholeness. It is the first of these three theses, which is most related to the concepts of end and totality, that Heidegger is principally interested in interrogating through a discussion of their various meanings. The characterization of the ahead-of-itself as a constant not-yet, interpreted in turn as something constantly outstanding, a constantly missing piece of the Dasein’s being, stood as the ground of the apparent impossibility of grasping the Dasein as a whole. The confirmation or rejection of this characterization as appropriate to the Dasein’s kind of being, that is, as suitably existential, is therefore the most pressing task for the clarification of the concepts of end and totality in their existential variants: either it will show the impossibility of any ontological understanding of death, and consequently also of being in general, not only along the path of Heidegger’s inquiry so far, but even simply; alternatively, the rejection of the interpretation of the not-yet as something outstanding will pave the way for a genuinely existential—that is, authentic—understanding of the Dasein’s end and totality, the possibility of grasping the Dasein as a whole, the primordial interpretation of human
freedom, and its exposition as the horizon within which being in general becomes understandable.

Heidegger does not dispute the “uncross-ouable” incompleteness “in the Dasein” which only “finds its end with death”; what is indeed questionable is the interpretation of the constant not-yet that ““belongs”” to Dasein “as outstanding [Ausstand].” The interpretation of the Dasein’s not-yet as something outstanding has not yet been proved appropriate to the existential phenomena of a being with the kind of being of the Dasein. It must therefore be asked: “With regard to which being do we speak of outstanding?” We speak about something outstanding in connection with “that which indeed belongs to a being, but is still missing.” Something can be missing or outstanding only on the ground of a deeper or prior “belongingness.” Heidegger observes, for example, that we speak of “the rest of a yet to be received debt settlement” as outstanding. The remaining balance or ‘outstanding portion’ of the debt, for the one to whom it is owed, is not yet to be had. The repayment “as removing the outstanding” means that the balance of the debt comes in, “whereby the not yet as it were is filled in, until the owed sum is ‘together.’” By “outstanding” we therefore mean the “not yet being together of the belonging together.” The outstanding balance of the debt, which has “the same kind of being as the already ready-to-hand,” is for the creditor not yet ready-to-hand. The receipt of the outstanding balance of the debt “does not modify the kind of being” of what has already come in: “The remaining un-together is paid off by a cumulative piecing-together.” The being about which we speak as outstanding, or having something outstanding, thus “has the kind of being of the ready to hand” (BT 286-287/SZ 242).
The interpretation of the not-yet of the ahead-of-itself as something outstanding must consequently be rejected at unsuitable to the kind of being of the Dasein. “Missing as outstanding can in no way determine ontologically the not-yet which as possible death belongs to the Dasein,” because the Dasein is simply not the kind of being that can be rightly understood in terms of readiness to hand. The wholeness of the Dasein, as a ‘final togetherness’ “does not constitute itself through a continuing piecing-on” of ready-to-hand being. Moreover, with the final repayment, though the debt disappears as debt, the returned sum neither disappears nor ceases to be ready-to-hand. Indeed, it is authentically to hand for the creditor only when it has been fully repaid. For the Dasein by contrast, when it is “first together” and “its not-yet has filled itself in,” it “precisely then” ceases to exist as the Dasein. Outstandingness thus shows itself as an inappropriate way of interpreting the not-yet which “ever already always... belongs” to the Dasein (287/243). With the rejection of this unsuitable interpretation of the not-yet as “still outstanding piece,” the assertion, on the basis of the structure of care, of the impossibility of a primordial interpretation of the Dasein has been rejected also, and the possibility of making the Dasein accessible in its wholeness has thereby been securely reopened.

Contrasting examples of yet other beings further serve to give greater precision to the understanding of the not-yet that belongs to Dasein. A not-yet belongs to the being of the moon: “One can for example say: in the moon the last quarter still stands out, until it is full,” and as it waxes, “the not-yet diminishes.” In contrast to the Dasein, however, the moon is “always already present-at-hand as a whole.” More precisely, though “the moon even as full is never to be wholly grasped,” the moon’s not-yet “signifies... in no way a
not yet *being* together of the belonging parts,” but rather has to do “only” with “the perceptual *grasping*” of it. In the case of the not-yet of the Dasein, by comparison, we are not concerned with the perceptual grasp of what is already present but still concealed; its not yet “‘is’ not yet ‘actual’ at all.” It is thus a question of the “*being*” of this not-yet and its proper concept. The Dasein’s not-yet means that it “must as it itself *become* what it not yet is.” In order to determine the not-yet of the Dasein more precisely, it must be compared to other beings, “to whose kind of being becoming belongs” (BT 287/SZ 243).

Becoming belongs for example to the being of a ripening fruit. In the ripening the not-yet of the fruit is “in no way pieced on as not-yet-present-at-hand.” The fruit “brings itself to ripeness,” and its not-yet diminishes as it approaches its fruition. Unlike the sum that has come in and the remaining balance of the outstanding debt, the fruit is not indifferent to its ripeness as some other merely present thing or property that could be added to it. The not-yet of the unripe is rather “the specific kind of being” of the fruit, which “ripening it *is.*” The unripe not-yet “has already been included in its own being” in such a way that it even constitutes the being of the fruit. The fruit is precisely as a ripening (BT 287-288/SZ 243-244). Like the fruit, the Dasein “*is* also, so long as it is, ever already its not-yet”; the not-yet is included in the Dasein’s being in such a way that it even constitutes it. Although the meaning of the not-yet of the Dasein and that of the unripe fruit “formally” agree in this respect, nonetheless their “comparison indicates...essential differences.” While the ripeness of the fruit represents its fulfillment, this is hardly true of the Dasein in relation to its death. While one might say that, “{t}he Dasein has indeed with its death ‘fulfilled’ its ‘course’ [seinen >>Lauf vollendet<<],” it
cannot be said that it has “therewith also necessarily exhausted its specific possibilities.”

Death does not coincide with the Dasein’s fulfillment; rather the Dasein can die long before it has fulfilled its ‘promise,’ or even long after it has exhausted its genuine possibilities: “Mostly it ends in unfulfillment, or else disintegrated and used up.” The end and wholeness of the Dasein in death are indeed very far from constituting its perfection (BT 288/SZ 244).

That the death of the Dasein does not of necessity coincide with its fulfillment makes the question of its meaning as end “more urgent,” and Heidegger brings up a number of other examples of ending, from the stopping of rains and roads, to the completion of a painting “with the last stroke of the brush,” to the consumption of a loaf of bread. All of these beings, however, even the earlier examples of the debt, the moon and the apple, have the kind of being of readiness-to-hand or presence-at-hand, rather than the specific existence of the Dasein. The contrasting examples of ending in their cases has certainly helped to refine the conceptual grasp of the Dasein’s peculiar kind of not-yet: unlike the already collected portion of the outstanding debt, the Dasein is not indifferent to its not-yet and its end; unlike the moon’s fullness it is not a question of the perceptual grasp of the Dasein’s end and totality but of its being; unlike the ripening of the apple, death is not the fulfillment of the Dasein. For all the light they shed on the meanings of end and totality which are and are not suitable to the Dasein’s kind of being, however, none of the modes of end and totality exhibited in these examples can suitably be applied to death as a properly existential phenomenon of the being of the Dasein. In every case their being is defined either by handiness or sheer presence. The Dasein, by
contrast, not only “is already its not-yet,” but therefore also “is already its end.” The Dasein’s being, as being or going about the project of its understanding, is not only defined by a constant not-yet which belongs to it, but thereby it also somehow already ‘has’ its death:

The ending which we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify Dasein’s being-at-end, but a being towards the end of this being. Death is a way to be, which the Dasein takes over as soon as it is. ‘As soon as a man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die.’ (BT 289/SZ 245)

The Dasein has its death as its uttermost not-yet, which it is about to such a degree that in the face of its possibility it becomes purely a matter of its being as such. The Dasein constantly comports itself towards the special possibility of its end, and it has been thrown into this possibility even from the very moment of its birth.

With the expression “being-towards-the-end” and its brief elaboration in this section, the glimmer of a genuinely existential concept of death appears for the first time in Heidegger’s analytic. This nascent existential concept of the Dasein’s end must be worked out in detail if death is to become ontologically intelligible for us:

Ending, as being towards the end, requires its ontological clarification in terms of the kind of being of the Dasein. And presumably also out of the existential determination of end the possibility of an existing being of the not-yet, which lies before the end, first becomes understandable. (289-290/245)

As an existential phenomenon of the Dasein, death, as being towards the end, must be conceptualized in a way appropriate to the Dasein’s existential essence; we have already encountered Heidegger’s assertions that death demands a genuinely existential interpretation. We have also already seen a connection between death and freedom, and
indeed that in the face of death’s possibility, the “it is about...” comes to sight most clearly. Heidegger now brings to light that connection and its implication for the understanding of freedom in the working out of the existential concept of death, with the suggestion that the elaboration of an existential concept of end will clarify the being of the Dasein’s possible not-yet. Death is the Dasein’s uttermost not-yet. The clarification of death as this uttermost not-yet, through the elaboration of its existential concept, is therefore also the clarification of the horizon of the not-yet, and therefore of the not-yet as such. The not-yet is itself an interpretation of the ahead-of-itself, which expresses the fundamental character, the essence, of the Dasein, namely existence, the human being’s “it is about...,” its self-determination, its freedom (67-69/41-43). That is to say: according to Heidegger, the existential clarification of the Dasein’s end, which is the clarification of its not-yet as such, is, as the exposition of the horizon of human freedom, therefore also the clarification of the very essence of freedom itself. In the existential interpretation of death the Dasein’s essential freedom first becomes intelligible.

The existential interpretation of death furthermore clarifies what it would mean to grasp the Dasein as a whole: “The existential clarification of the being towards the end will also give us for the first time the adequate basis for delimiting the possible meaning of the talk of a totality of Dasein, if indeed this totality is to be constituted by death as the ‘end’” (BT 290/SZ 245). The existential interpretation of death is to make human freedom understandable for the first time. But meaning, according to Heidegger, “is that wherein the intelligibility [Verstaendlichkeit] of something maintains itself” (BT 193/SZ 151). The existential interpretation of death is the disclosure of the meaning of human
freedom. The disclosure of the authentic meaning of freedom will therefore also yield the answer to the question of the possible constitution of the wholeness of a being whose essence is centered in freedom. This answer will prepare the way for a primordial interpretation of the Dasein’s being and, in turn, the exposition of the horizon within which something like being becomes understandable. Here, now, from Heidegger’s own hand, and not merely in subsequent lecture courses, or later self-interpretations, but even from the text of Being and Time itself, we have it that the existential interpretation of death, as the clarification of the authentic meaning of human freedom, is to provide the ground for the exposition of the horizon within which being becomes intelligible. Freedom is the source of the understanding of being, and its proper conceptual clarification—the interpretation that renders it understandable for the first time—is therefore also necessarily the exposition of the horizon of the understanding of being in general. Heidegger’s claims for the existential interpretation of death both demonstrate the central importance of freedom in his thought, asserted by way of introduction at the beginning of this study, and justify our selection of his analysis of death as a locus for the discussion of his understanding of freedom. What is chiefly of note, however, within the scope of the more immediate theme of this study, is that the existential interpretation of death promises to resolve the problem of human freedom (BT 290/SZ 245).

With the attempt to understand the totality of the Dasein, “from the starting point of a clarification of the not-yet, via the characterization of ending,” Heidegger’s inquiry has not yet grasped the Dasein as a whole. Heidegger has nevertheless rejected the interpretation of the not-yet, “which the Dasein ever is,” as “outstanding.” Death must be
understood, not as an oncoming event, not as the Dasein’s being-at-end, but rather in “an unequivocal orientation to the being-constitution of the Dasein,” that is, existentially, as a being towards the end. Through the turning down of the variations of not-yet, end, and totality inappropriate to the Dasein’s being, the “unequivocality is however negatively secured.” This “positive existentially analytical [existenzialanalytische] interpretation of death and its end-character” must now be guided through “the hitherto gained basic constitution of the Dasein,” that is, “the phenomenon of care.” Death, as a phenomenon of the Dasein, must be made intelligible in terms of the structure of care, or not at all (BT 290/SZ 246).

C. The Priority of the Existential Interpretation of Death

Heidegger, however, is not yet finished with that negative securing of the existential interpretation. The following section, (“The Distinction of the Existential Analytic of Death Over Against Possible Other Interpretations of the Phenomenon”), continues to reinforce the “unequivocality of the ontological interpretation of death” by bringing “explicitly to consciousness” that after which it “can not ask,” and about which it “can be expected in vain” to provide “information and instruction.” Heidegger now proceeds to distinguish his existential analysis of death from biological, psychological, and theological investigations of the phenomenon of death (BT 290/SZ 246).

Death, “in the widest sense, is,” of course, a “phenomenon of life.” The broader category of life “must be understood” as incorporating the “being-in-the-world” of the
Dasein. Life therefore “can only be ontologically fixed in privative orientation to the
Dasein”; that is, the ‘human being’ can be “observed as pure life,” but doing so
necessarily entails abstracting from the full manifold of its essence: the “biological-
physiological formulation of the question” means in practice that the Dasein is dragged
“into the district of being which we know as {the} world of animals and plants.”
Certainly this field represents a very rich and even very useful domain of scientific
research: from it “data and statistics about the duration of life of plants, animals, and
men” can be obtained, the “connections between duration of life, propagation, and
growth let themselves be known,” and the “‘kinds’ of death” and even its causes can be
researched. Nevertheless, in every case “an ontological problematic lies at the ground”
of this kind of research into death. Every “ontical investigation of death has always
already decided” in favour of particular “fore-concepts of life and death” which “are
operative” for it: a particular way of conceiving death always works more or less
implicitly in this biological research. While these concepts have been “more or less
clarified,” they “need a prior signalling [Vorzeichnung] through the ontology of the
Dasein.” According to Heidegger, the ontological investigation of the Dasein is “ranked
ahead [vorgeordneten]” of the “ontology of life,” that is, any and all biological
investigations of life and death, at least when it comes to the field of the present inquiry,
the radical investigation of fundamental ontology (BT 290-291/SZ 246-247).

This assertion implicitly rests on an argument made much earlier in section 10 of
Being and Time, which the present section recapitulates. There Heidegger argued that,
“{i}n the ordering of the possible comprehension and interpretation, biology as a science
of life is founded in the ontology of the Dasein, even if not entirely in it.” On its face this claim seems absurd. Does all biological science rest upon a finished ontology of the Dasein? This raises the possibility that there has as yet been no biology. Yet surely the long progress in the study of biology, and the advances in the medical sciences which have followed upon it, entirely refute such a claim? Heidegger’s real point, however, is that any study of biology rests upon the understanding of being. The Dasein, according to its essence, is ever already ‘ontological,’ even if it has not as yet developed any formal ontology, or ever engaged in it at all. “Life is a kind of being of its own [eine eigene Seinsart], but essentially only accessible in the Dasein.” The point is not that the human being is the only being that is alive, or the only possible object of any biological study, but that ‘life’ as a possible object of knowledge is only accessible through the human understanding. The ontology of the Dasein, as the thoroughgoing clarification of that understanding of being, therefore stands ‘prior’ to (but not chronologically before) any and all biology. Nonetheless this qualification should not blind us to the fact that the teaching of Being and Time represents a radical ‘de-corporealization’ of our understanding of what the human being ‘is’ (BT 75/SZ 49-50).

In the Dasein’s case, the “ontology of life accomplishes itself by way of a privative interpretation.” Such an ontology “determines that which must be, that something like yet-only-living [Nur-noch-leben] can be.” According to Heidegger, the Dasein differs from other living beings not only in degree but essentially in kind. There is an essential chasm separating man and animal. Accordingly, the Dasein “is ontologically never thus to be determined, that one posits it as life (ontologically
undetermined) and over above this yet something else” (BT 75/SZ 50). Specifically, the human being is not to be understood first as life, subsequently endowed with intellect, as “animal rationale, something living which has reason” (BT 74/SZ 48). On the one hand, such definition fails to adequately clarify and determine the being of its life; on the other, such a definition fails to grasp the Dasein’s being when it determines it in the privative orientation of the ontology of life, and then seeks to make good the inadequacy of this approach by adding on speech or reason as an extra. The Dasein should rather be grasped from the beginning in its own proper essence—namely, in the dignity of its freedom—rather than through an inadequate fusion of a hodgepodge of perspectives. The death of the Dasein must accordingly, and even especially, be grasped in terms of its specific character of possibility for which the death of animals can naturally serve as no substitute.37 One might suspect, however, that what is gained here in precision is made up for by a corresponding and perhaps even greater loss, namely that the determination of ‘what man is’ in terms of a unitary essence erases the tension between, for example, the

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37 Superficially there is a resonance of Heidegger’s emphasis on the central importance of death for the practice philosophy with the teaching of Plato’s Socrates that “those who happen to have gotten in touch with philosophy in the right way devote themselves to nothing other than dying and being dead” (Plato’s Phaedo, Translation, Introduction and Glossary, Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, Eric Salem (Newburyport: Focus Publishing/R Pullins Company, 1998) 64A, p. 34). But with their seriousness about death, the similarity in their teachings about it ends. The analysis of death in Being and Time is indeed emblematic of the anti-Socratic character of Heidegger’s teaching. For Plato’s Socrates, the death of the human being is simply one instance of passing away, and thus to be understood in terms of the generation and corruption of plants and animals (Phaedo 70D, p. 43). Socrates’ hard-headed being towards death is grounded in natural science. For Heidegger death is not to be understood as the physical event of the corruption of an animal body, but as a continual possibility of the end of existence, towards which the Dasein, in its freedom, ever comports itself. Heidegger denies the priority of natural science for the understanding of death. Authentic certainty about death will prove to derive not from scientific knowledge, but resolute conviction (see below, p. 157 and following, and the conclusion of chapter 4). For a succinct, if imperfect, comparison of what Plato’s Socrates and Heidegger say about death, cf. James M. Demske, Being, Man & Death: A Key to Heidegger ([Lexington, Ky.]: The University of Kentucky Press, 1970), pp. 5-7.
claims of reason (to say nothing of justice) and the demands of the body. In the case of
despair, one might wonder whether Heidegger’s teaching goes so far as to suppress what
makes death a pressing concern for us, even as it trades on it, namely, the pain and terror
we commonly associate with it. Finally, one might even wonder whether a teaching that
tries purposefully or otherwise to suppress or deny that tension, does not therewith also
help, whether unintentionally or perhaps even deliberately, to prepare the way for a
politics that imposes the most extreme demands upon its participants.

However all of that may be, within the ontology of the Dasein itself, “the
existential analysis of death” must be “ranked behind [nachgeordnet] the characterization
of the basic constitution of the Dasein” (BT 291/SZ 247). The analysis of the Dasein’s
death certainly must be carried out in terms of its own kind of being. Heidegger has
termed the death of anything merely alive “perishing” (BT 291/SZ 247; cf. BT 284/SZ
240-241). As a living being, “the Dasein ‘has’ its death physiologically according to its
life [seinen physiologischen lebensmaessigen Tod]” but as “co-determined through its
primordial kind of being.” As a being that is not merely alive, the Dasein does not die in
the manner of animals and plants, that is, it “never perishes [verendet nie].” The Dasein
rather ‘is’ constantly towards its death, a way of its being that Heidegger designates as
“dying [Sterben].” Even when the Dasein ends “without... authentically dying [stirbt]”—
that is, without being, that is, comporting itself, toward its death in an authentic manner—
it “does not simply perish,” but rather ends in “demising [Ableben].” The Dasein can
come to its end only while it is towards its death. While “{m}edical and biological
investigations of demise” can produce ontologically meaningful results, they can do so
only “if the basic orientation for an existential interpretation of death is secured” (BT 291/SZ 247).

Not only is the existential interpretation of death prior to “all biology and ontology of life,” but it is moreover prior to “all biographical-historical and all ethnological-psychological investigation of death.” These approaches to the matter invariably amount to a “‘typology’ of ‘dying.’” Any study of death in these manners, any “characterization of the conditions and ways in which demise is ‘experienced,’” be it biographical, historical, ethnological, or psychological, no less than the biological investigation of death, “already presupposes the concept of death.” A psychology of death at best grasps “the ‘living’ of the ‘dying,’” but not—no more than does the encounter with the death of others—the ontological meaning of death for the being of the dying Dasein. When the Dasein dies, authentically or not, it does not die “with and in an experience of its factual demise.” Ethnological studies of death in other cultures and “among primitives” may “illuminate” not only how they deal with death, but even “the understanding of Dasein”; but the interpretation of that understanding “already requires an existential analytic and a corresponding concept of death” (BT 291-292/SZ 247).

The existential interpretation is also unconcerned with a “theology” or “theodicy” of death. The existential interpretation of death is concerned with death only as the end of being-in-the-world, and, Heidegger claims, makes no “ontical decision” either about what may be “‘after death,’” or about the immortality of the soul. The existential interpretation of death “remains purely ‘this-worldly,’” confining itself to the analysis of death as the end of the Dasein here (BT 292/SZ 247-248). One might reasonably
wonder, however, about the extent to which the existential interpretation of death is in fact compatible with all theological teachings or indeed any theological teaching at all. Heidegger himself readily confessed his atheism elsewhere.38 Doesn’t the postponement of the theological question amount to a rejection of the traditional theological approach to the issue? Is the scientific abstraction from religious teachings about death, and moreover, without a proper hearing of what can be said on all sides of the question, not tantamount to a denial of those teachings? And isn’t that precisely a question to which, one way or another, one would want an answer? We might wonder whether the existential analytic of *Being and Time* fails properly to pursue the question of what may be after death because Heidegger already presupposes the answer he prefers, in accordance with his own particular ‘existentiell’ commitments?

In Heidegger’s defense one can at least say this much: in the first instance we do not confront death with the benefit of religious instruction about it, or indeed with any answers to the questions which human beings naturally ask in response to it. Initially we encounter death’s mysteries without any palliatives for its horrors. Whether true or not, religious teachings about death therefore represent interpretive responses to the primary phenomenon itself. And even with the benefit of those teachings, the belief in which

38 Cf. MFL 165 n. 9/MAL 211 n. 3: “It is preferable to put up with the cheap accusation of atheism, which, *if it is intended ontically, is in fact completely correct* [emphasis mine].” Heidegger counter-attacks with pointed questions which not only cast doubt on the character of the faith of his theistic accusers, but also on the character of his own admitted atheism: “But might not the presumably ontic faith in God be at bottom godlessness? And might the genuine metaphysician be more religious than the usual faithful, than the members of a ‘church’ or even than the ‘theologians’ of every confession?” I shall later return to the question of the possible religious grounds of Heidegger’s professed atheism when in discussing the existential interpretation of the conscience, and finally in Heidegger’s Rectoral Address. Regarding the character of Heidegger’s questioning, see pp. 317-318 (including note 84), 515-522, and 534-537 below.
must, according to their proper self-understanding, rest on faith, a serene comportment
towards death is at best a difficult proposition, given the obvious terror and considerable
pain that its possibility not infrequently holds for us; not only non-believers but even
deeper pious men, too, have been known, from time to time, to flee in terror from burning
buildings. Consequently, to pursue the interpretation of the death-phenomenon, without
first pursuing the question of a possible afterlife, but seeking rather to confront squarely
the unalloyed phenomenon itself, before taking refuge in religious teachings about death
is even a more courageous and forthright response to the phenomenon. Indeed, it is
arguable that we can only understand the genuine meaning of those teachings on the basis
of a genuinely adequate understanding of the phenomenon itself.

Certainly one would want to know whether there is anything after death, but if it
is a matter of knowing, then one first needs to know what death is before inquiring about
what may come after it. Looking properly into this question therefore requires a
thorough grasp of what death is as the end of the Dasein as being-in-the-world: “With
sense and right it can even be at all methodically, securely asked, what is after death,
only then when this is conceived in its full ontological essence.” One can only genuinely
understand what it means to ask about a possible afterlife on the basis of a genuine grasp
of the meaning of death. Theological treatments of death thus also employ concepts of
life and death that require an existential interpretation of death for their clarification.
Indeed, “whether such a question”—what may be after death—“at all represents a
possible theoretical question” cannot even be decided prior to the completion of the
existential interpretation of death. In the final analysis, the existential interpretation aims
at the exposition of the horizon within which something like being in general becomes understandable; that is, as it appears within the range of what is discloseable within the being of Dasein, within the laid open clearing of the there. In other words, Heidegger’s inquiry expressly confines itself to the limits of the experience of human understanding, which any genuine answers to the theological questions about death manifestly lie beyond. While one might reproach Heidegger for failing to deal with these questions in a prior or subsequent inquiry, or what is the same, for effectively confining the scope of his thought to the horizon of the present investigation, to ask Being and Time itself to treat these questions within the field of its inquiry, is therefore simply an unreasonable expectation (BT 292/SZ 248). Furthermore, beyond the theological questions about death, a theodicy of death as an “evil” depends upon knowledge of beings as a whole, which itself depends on the answer to the question of the meaning of being in general; to offer any theodicy of death prior to the completion of the inquiry of Being and Time would thus be grossly premature (BT 292/SZ 248).

Heidegger has now shown to his satisfaction that “the existential analysis is methodically ranked before the questions of a biology, psychology, theodicy and theology of death.” Though when “taken ontically,” that is, in comparison both to our full, ‘concrete’ understanding of our existence, and to these scientific approaches to the question, “its results show the peculiar formality and emptiness of all ontological characterization,” the existential analysis nevertheless also reveals “the rich and complicated structure of the phenomenon.” As the Dasein “never becomes accessible as present-at-hand, because being-possible belongs in its own way to its kind of being,” we
can never “simply read off the ontological structure of death,” as we could of a present-at-hand being whose characteristics and properties can be readily discerned through the pure contemplation of how it looks in its sheer presence. Neither can Heidegger’s interpretation “hold on to an accidental and randomly devised idea of death,” that is, force upon the Dasein an idea of death essentially inappropriate to its kind of being. “This arbitrariness [Willkuer]” can be “restrained,” however, “through a foregoing ontological characterization [Kennzeichnung]” of the way in which death “enters into the average everydayness of the Dasein”: death must therefore be analyzed in terms of the structure of that everydayness. Heidegger here admits that “existentiell possibilities of being towards death” correspond to the existential interpretation of death, but insists that this “lies in the essence of all ontological investigation” (BT 292-293/SZ 248). The existential analysis must consequently reject all ties to any particular existing stance toward death: “All the more expressly must the existential concept determination go together with existentiell uncommittedness, especially in relation to death, in which the possibility-character of the Dasein lets itself be revealed most sharply” (BT 293/SZ 248-249). By looking into death, the possibility of which is purely a question of the Dasein’s being, we can catch a clear glimpse of the Dasein’s ‘it is about...,’ precisely because death shows the Dasein most starkly in its essence as possibility, as an existence which is ever mine. Only because death discloses the Dasein so clearly in this way can the existential interpretation of death stand as the clarification of the Dasein’s not-yet, that is, make intelligible the authentic meaning of its freedom. The existential analysis must expressly renounce any commitment to particular comportments and attitudes in its
concept formation, and this applies especially in the case of death, which discloses the
Dasein most clearly as possibility. Nonetheless the existential interpretation of *Being and
Time* is hardly ‘value neutral’ as concerns the existentiell possibilities of our being
towards death.

Here we first begin to glimpse the problem of the political intentions and
consequences of Heidegger’s thought in *Being and Time*. By rejecting external
existentiell commitments, the existential analysis determines its concepts simply in terms
of the disclosure of the phenomena themselves: “The existential problematic aims only at
the setting forth of the ontological structure of the being towards the end of the Dasein”
(BT 293/SZ 249). This should not at all be taken to mean, however, that the existential
interpretation of death is equally compatible with any and all existentiell possibilities of
being-towards-death, nor that Heidegger’s rejection of all existentiell commitments in the
concept-formation of the existential interpretation represents either the disinterested
neutrality of what is commonly taken to be a properly ‘objective’ science or the
transparent disingenuousness of an ulterior political agenda. As we shall see, so much
the more purely does the existential interpretation of death focus on its own genuine
disclosure of the phenomena themselves, so much the more does Heidegger’s inquiry
sharpen its own resonance with a *singular* existentiell possibility of the Dasein’s being-
towards-death: hearkening to the call of conscience in the authentic freedom of its
forward running resolve. Our study of the existential interpretation of the Dasein as
being towards death, and of the conscience as the testimony of this possibility in its
authenticity, will continue to suggest and unfold both the practical political consequences
of Heidegger’s thought and the basic experience of the Dasein which is its existentiell source. The full clarification of the relation between existentiell commitment and existential interpretation must nonetheless await an examination of Heidegger’s discussion of method at the conclusion of the existential interpretation of the possibility of an authentic being towards death (that is to say, the development of an authentic concept of freedom).\textsuperscript{39}

D. The Existential Ontology of Death

Having negatively secured the way for an unequivocally ontological approach to death, Heidegger turns at last to the task of the positive existential interpretation of the phenomenon. That positive interpretation begins with the anticipation of death’s ontological meaning “as being-towards-the-end” in terms of “the basic constitution of the Dasein,” the “necessity” for which emerged at the conclusion of the “considerations of totality, end, and the outstanding” in section 48 (BT 293/SZ 249; cf. BT 290/SZ 246). This means that death must be interpreted in terms of the structure of care, which was “made secure as the basic constitution of the Dasein.” The structure of care has worked itself out as “ahead-of-itself-already-being-in (the world) as being-alongside (innerworldly) encountered beings.” This structure gathers together in one “the fundamental characteristics of the being of the Dasein.” The “ahead of itself,” “already-being-in,” and “being-alongside” respectively express the Dasein’s existence, facticity, and falling. The interpretation of death in terms of the care structure amounts to

\textsuperscript{39} See below, Chapter 4, pp. 306 and following.
analyzing it in these basic grounding terms: if it is true that death “belongs to the being of the Dasein in a distinctive sense,” as Heidegger had asserted earlier, “then it must”—when conceived as being towards the end—“let itself be determined in terms of these characteristics.” The interpretation of the not-yet, “and with it the uttermost not-yet,” as outstanding “was turned down as inappropriate” to the Dasein’s kind of being because it implicitly conceived that being either as handy or as sheer presence; instead, in the case of the Dasein’s being, “Being-at-end [Zu-Ende-sein] means existentially: being towards the end [Sein zum Ende].” Death is ‘something’ that the Dasein constantly ever is towards: “The uttermost not-yet has the character of something towards which the Dasein comports itself.” What is most important about death is not the fact that we die and the event of our death, but our understanding (or misunderstanding) of that fact, and the way we consequently relate ourselves towards death’s possibility. As soon as the Dasein exists, it is, that is, it comports itself towards “the end” which “stands before” it (BT 293/SZ 249-250).

Heidegger observes that “[t]he character of standing-before does not distinguish death actually [fuer sich],” and that “even this interpretation could yet lie close to the supposition that death must be understood in the sense of an impending [bevorstehenden], environmentally encountered event.” He accordingly takes pains to lay out the peculiarly distinctive sense in which death stands before the Dasein as its end. Death does not stand before us, as may “a storm, the remodelling of a house, or the arrival of a friend”; it does not stand before us as any being that is “present-at-hand, ready-to-hand, or there-with {the Dasein}.” There are, furthermore, other possibilities
that may stand before the Dasein at one time or another, “for example a journey, a confrontation [Auseinandersetzung] with others, a renunciation of such which the Dasein itself can be”: particular possibilities of its own being, “which are grounded in its being-with with others.” Death does not stand before us even in the sense of any of these eventualities. The end does not stand before the Dasein only at this or that particular time, as a future, not-yet present, but merely transient event. Death stands before the Dasein rather as a constant possibility of its being: “Death is a possibility of being, which the Dasein itself ever has to take over.” It is no mere accident that happens only sometimes within the world, as the result of the occurrence of another present being, like the arrival, the storm, the remodelling, the journey, or the argument. It is with the being of the Dasein itself, irrespective of any and all other beings within the world, because it structures the being of the being whose being is being-in-the-world. The possibility of death therefore stands as the Dasein’s most constant, most inalienable, and thus, truest, ‘possession’: “With death the Dasein itself [selbst] stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-being.” The Dasein ‘owns’ its death as the can-be which is most its own. This most its own possibility, moreover, is about, is a question of, the Dasein’s possibility tout court, its very being as such: “In this possibility for the Dasein it is about its being in the world simply. Its death is the possibility of no longer being-able-to-be-there [Nicht-mehr-dasein-koennens].” Only because death’s most radical possibility is the annihilation of the Dasein’s existence does it stand as the question, the ‘it is about...’ purely of the Dasein’s being. That it is simply a question of the Dasein’s being itself means that it is also a question of the Dasein’s being alone: “If the Dasein stands before
itself as this possibility of itself, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-being. Thus standing before itself, in it all relations to other Dasein are undone [geloest].” Finally, the Dasein’s “ownmost, unrelatable possibility,” stands before it “at the same time” as its “uttermost.” The strict inalienability of death’s constant possibility means that “as potentiality-for-being the Dasein is not able [vermag... nicht] to outstrip [zu ueberholen]” it. Death stands before each one of us as “the possibility of the simple impossibility of Dasein” (BT 294/SZ 250).

With this determination of death’s proper possibility-character, the interpretation has brought to light the distinctive way in which its end impends for the Dasein, and the way in which death is grounded in the ahead-of-itself of the care structure, such that the Dasein’s ahead-of-itself is even most clearly seen in the face of the possibility of death. Death stands before us uniquely as most our own, to be confronted alone, without any possibility of escape: “Thus death reveals itself as the ownmost, unrelatable, unoutstripable possibility.” Death, as being towards the end, is founded on the Dasein’s essential self-disclosure: the “existential possibility” of death “is grounded therein, that the Dasein is essentially disclosed to itself and indeed in the way of the ahead-of-itself.” The Dasein only comports itself towards its death on the ground of the ahead-of-itself, which is in turn grounded upon its being disclosed to itself in the project of the understanding. Only through the self-understanding disclosed to it along with the understanding of being, ‘is’ the Dasein towards its end, that is, as being towards death. Conversely, it is only in and through the possibility of (being towards) death itself that the Dasein’s ahead of itself reveals itself most clearly: “This structure-moment of care
has, in being towards death, its most primordial concretion.” The fore-signalling of how the ahead-of-itself reveals itself in death is also the preliminary clarification of the Dasein’s not-yet. In working out this most originary ‘actualization’ of the ahead-of-itself, the Dasein’s being towards the end becomes more meaningful and therefore more intelligible (BT 294-295/SZ 251).

The second item of the care structure, being alongside, expresses the Dasein’s essential facticity, “that it, delivered over to itself, has ever already been thrown into a world” (BT 236/SZ 192). Facticity reveals itself in the phenomenon of the Dasein’s end as thrownness into death. Death is ever a possibility of the Dasein’s being. There is in the Dasein’s being a not-yet that it constantly already ‘is,’ up to and including its uttermost possibility. The Dasein therefore constantly already ‘is’ its death, that is, ever already has its death as a constant possibility of its being: “The Dasein does not procure the ownmost, unrelatable, and unoutstripable possibility for itself [Die eigene, unbezuegliche und unueberholbare Moeglichkeit beschafft sich aber das Dasein...] subsequently and occasionally in the course of its being.” The Dasein does not become capable of dying only on particular occasions or in certain circumstances, as if only the elderly, daredevils, soldiers, and the terminally ill were in danger of passing away. Death is instead a possibility that the Dasein as such has ever to take upon itself: “Rather, if the Dasein exists, it has also already been thrown into this possibility.” This thrownness into death does not depend upon it, and indeed most of the time the human being goes through life ignorant of the threat of death’s constant possibility: “That it has been delivered over to its death, and this therewith belongs to being-in-the-world, the Dasein has thereof first
of all and mostly no express or even theoretical knowledge [Wissen].” Even had the Dasein such knowledge, in comparison to any express or even theoretical knowledge of death, the Dasein gains more originary and more urgent access to death through the basic mood of anxiety: “Thrownness into death reveals itself to it more primordially and more impressively in the state-of-mind of Angst” (BT 295/SZ 251).

The fundamental attunement of anxiety, in terms of which Heidegger in the first division of Being and Time derived the structure of care, now also shows itself as that which reveals to the Dasein its essential thrownness into death. The proper character of the mood of anxiety is revealed in the wherefore and about which of its anxiousness. While the Dasein can be afraid in the face of this or that particular threatening being, the “wherefore of Angst is no innerworldly being,” and is therefore “completely indeterminate.” There is nothing “which is ready to hand or present at hand within the world,” no being at all which “functions” as the focus of anxiety, “as that wherefore Angst dreads [sich aengstet].” For the Dasein in the grip of anxiety, everything within the world loses its significance. Because there is no being before which anxiety is anxious, there is “also not a determinate ‘here’ or ‘there’ from which the threatening nears.” The threat comes from nothing and nowhere, and is therefore equally somehow pervasively everywhere we turn. This nothing and nowhere does not mean, according to Heidegger, that the mood of anxiety is itself nothing, that is, properly understood as meaningless, or that, in the grip of the mood of anxiety, the Dasein has itself ‘lost its grip’ or the world, and it is therefore only a mental or psychical disturbance of the organism. In the face of the nothing and nowhere of anxiety, every particular being within the world loses its
meaning. In anxiety, the Dasein stands before the world in its naked worldhood: the “full insignificance” of everything within the world “rather means that... on the ground of this insignificance of the innerworldly, the world in its worldhood yet uniquely obtrudes itself.” It is facing the world itself that ‘makes,’ or is the primordial source of anxiety. The world, however, is not the whole of mathematically analyzable space, but is rather the totality of significance that is only with the being of Dasein. The world thus “belongs ontologically essentially to the being of the Dasein as being-in-the-world.” That in the face of which the Dasein is anxious is the disclosedness of its own being-in-the-world: “wherefore Angst dreads, is being-in-the-world itself” (BT 230-232/SZ 186-187).

Anxiety is not only anxious ‘in the face of...’ but it is also, as anxiety, anxious about something, that is, ‘for the sake of....’ The indeterminacy of the threat that arouses anxiety means that it “cannot penetrate threateningly to this or that factically concrete potentiality-for-being.” The insignificance of everything within the world means that the Dasein cannot understand itself “in terms of the ‘world’ and the public interpretedness,” but only in terms of the naked fact of its existence, that is, its being-in-the-world as such. That for which the Dasein is anxious is therefore its being-in-the-world: “about which Angst dreads, is being-in-the-world itself” (BT 232/SZ 187). Anxiety is anxious in the face of the world, simply about the Dasein’s can-be: “The wherefore of this Angst is being-in-the-world itself. The about-which of this Angst is the potentiality-for-being of the Dasein simply” (BT 295/SZ 252). The world belongs to the Dasein’s being as being-in-the-world, and its can-be is not the empty possibility of a wordless ‘subject’ (as if such a thing were truly even possible), but always a can-be in a world: the Dasein’s can-be is
being-in-the-world. Anxiety about its can-be is anxiety about its being-in-the-world. That wherefore and that about which the Dasein, as anxious, is anxious, are one and the same. “That, *about which Angst dreads*, reveals itself as that, *wherefore* it dreads: being-in-the-world” (BT 233/SZ 188).

Gripped by the basic mood of anxiety, the Dasein is disclosed to itself in such a way that it is simply about its can-be. In the face of the nothing of the world, it becomes for the Dasein a question of its being-in-the-world as such: “*Angst* individualizes the Dasein into its ownmost being-in-the-world, which as understanding [als verstehendes] essentially projects itself upon possibilities” (BT 232/SZ 187). Anxiety thus discloses the Dasein in the pure possibility of its thrown project, that is, “*Angst discloses the Dasein as being-possible*” (BT 232/SZ 188). In the face of death it is a question simply of the Dasein’s existence. The about-which of anxiety and the ‘it is about...’ of death are one and the same. Whether the Dasein grasps it expressly or not, in the grip of anxiety the Dasein is brought before the possibility of its death. The fundamental mood of anxiety therefore reveals not only the Dasein’s having been thrown into its world, but equally primordially its thrownness into death. The mood of anxiety is therefore anxiety before the Dasein’s most distinctive possibility: “*Angst before death is Angst ‘before’ the ownmost, unrelatable, unoutstripable potentiality-for-being.*” Anxiety, according to Heidegger, is not at all the same as fear in the face of particular circumstances that appear as if they will bring about one’s factual demise, but is rather purely “the disclosedness thereof, that the Dasein exists as thrown being *towards* its end.” The *existential concept* of death now “makes itself clear [verdeutlicht sich],” in Heidegger’s formulation, “as
thrown being towards the ownmost, unrelatable and unoutstripable potentiality-for-being.” Conversely, we can say that the development of the existential concept of death is only the interpretation of the working out and appropriation of the disclosedness of the clearing in the fundamental mood of *Angst*. Being-in-the-world is authentically a being towards death (BT 295/SZ 251).

The third item of the care structure is falling, expressed as being-alongside. The Dasein’s falling reveals itself in the death phenomenon as a fleeing before it. The Dasein has ever to take the possibility of death upon itself. The Dasein, as soon as it exists, and with that existence, *is* ever towards its death; it ever exists *as* such being towards the end. Being towards death, as such, is not a matter, or a phenomenon, of the Dasein’s consciousness or will, but rather the constitution of its being: “Being towards the end does not first arise through some attitude which occasionally emerges, nor does it arise as such an attitude; it belongs essentially to the Dasein’s thrownness, which reveals itself in a state-of-mind (mood) thus or thus.” Being towards death does not originate with the Dasein being gripped by some particular state-of-mind or mood, and end with its passing. State-of-mind and mood only reveal *that* the Dasein has been thrown into death, and the *how* of its factual being towards death, while it is in their grip. Being towards death does not depend on any factual knowledge about death. As regards being towards death, our knowledge (or ignorance) of death’s possibility is merely part of the different ways of comporting oneself towards it. Although “there are many who, first of all and mostly, do not know about death” this fact does not show that “being towards death does not belong to the Dasein universally,” but only that “first of all and mostly, the Dasein covers up its
ownmost being towards death, fleeing in the face of it,” that is, in the face of the constant threat revealed in and by anxiety (BT 295/SZ 251).

The Dasein is not only thrown into existence, but falls into an absorption in the beings with which it may concern itself: “factual existing is not only... a thrown potentiality-for-being-in-the-world, but it has always likewise been absorbed in the world of its concern” (BT 295/SZ 252; cf. BT 236-237/SZ 192). In falling, the Dasein flees in the face of the uncanny nothing “towards” what is handy, that is, into an absorption with the possibilities of everyday concern, “as the beings, alongside which [dabei] concern, lost in das Man, can live [sich aufhalten] in calmed familiarity” (BT 233-234/SZ 189). The mood of anxiety discloses both the fact of this absorption with the world and that the Dasein thus busies itself in order to conceal from itself the nothing of its existence. The nothing of that existence is death. In its absorption with the world, the Dasein flees not only before the unhomeliness of its existence, but before death’s uncanny possibility: “In this falling being-alongside, fleeing from uncanniness announces itself; and this means now, a fleeing in the face of one’s ownmost being towards death.” The Dasein’s being towards the end, “first of all and mostly,” is characterized by falling (BT 295-296/SZ 251-252).

Having shown how existence, facticity, and falling, the fundamental characteristics of the Dasein’s being, reveal themselves in the phenomenon of death, Heidegger can now affirm that they “characterize being towards the end” and, in so doing, “are therefore constitutive for the existential concept of death.” The first part of the existential interpretation that, according to Heidegger, death demands, has now been
completed with the conclusion of the preliminary analysis of death in terms of the Dasein’s basic constitution. “As regards its ontological possibility, dying is grounded in care” (BT 295-296/SZ 251-252). Indeed, on the ground of what the preliminary sketch of the existential concept of death has yielded about the care-structure—namely, the witnessing of "the most primordial concretion" of the ahead-of-itself in being towards death, and the interpretive deepening of the understanding of the facticity and falling of the Dasein as thrownness into death and fleeing before death—it is even tempting to conclude that, according to Heidegger, the Dasein is being towards death, that is, that the meaning of care is most properly intelligible, most thoroughly understood, as being towards death. It should therefore come as no surprise that this later turns out expressly to be the case (BT 378/SZ 329).

While Heidegger has laid out in a “preliminary sketch [Vorzeichnung],” the contours of the existential concept of death, in his introduction to the discussion of death, he asserted that “a whether indeed phenomenally grounded first preliminary sketch [Vorzeichnung] of the being of this being is not enough.” In echo of that assertion he now states that this “preliminary sketch of the connection between being towards death and care does not suffice.” The existential concept of death, expressed in the phrase being towards the end, is grounded in care. If it could also be shown that being towards death makes up the wholeness of the Dasein (to whose being a constant not-yet ever belongs), then Heidegger’s existential analysis of the Dasein would have assured itself of the primordiality of its interpretation of the being of the Dasein as care (BT 296/SZ 252). If Heidegger’s interpretation can indeed acquire the phenomenal assurance that it has thus
got the whole of the Dasein into its grasp, it will therewith have prepared the ground for the answer to the question concerning the meaning of being in general. For such phenomenal assurance, however, a preliminary sketch is insufficient. In order to be certain of its grasp of the Dasein as a whole, the interpretation must not only reveal how care, as being towards death, can constitute the wholeness of the Dasein, but it must encounter “the unity of the belonging and possible structure moments” (BT 275/SZ 232) of such being towards the end. In the present analysis, this unity is precisely the “connection between being towards death and care.” If indeed “care is... the totality of the structural whole of the Dasein,” and there is an essential connection between care and being towards death, such that the latter can serve to confirm that in care the existential interpretation has grasped the whole of the Dasein, nay, if care is essentially being towards death, then this also presupposes that “being towards death belongs primordially and essentially to the being of the Dasein.” If this connection is to serve as the phenomenal evidence for the wholeness of the grasp of the care structure, and if being towards death indeed belongs to the original essence of the Dasein, then it “must above all become sightable in the nearest concretion of the Dasein, its everydayness” (BT 296/SZ 252). The existential analysis of everyday being towards death, and the project of the formal outlines of an authentic being towards death in contradistinction to that everyday or inauthentic comportment, will begin to reveal the concrete political implications of Heidegger’s understanding of the meaning of human freedom that is so central to his philosophical endeavours.
Chapter Three: Being towards Death

Having sketched out the contours of an existential concept of death, Heidegger next turns to the analysis of the idle talk that expresses the everyday or inauthentic understanding of death, in order to show that being towards death limits and determines the structure of human freedom even in its everyday concretion. The analysis of the everyday talk of death not only establishes the concrete connection between care and death, but also deepens and rounds out Heidegger’s analysis of death as an existential possibility. The everyday talk of death moreover reveals itself as the condition for the possibility of the dictatorship of the average that rules modern mass society (especially liberal or bourgeois mass society). Death, as the ownmost can-be of freedom, is that possibility of freedom which is ever mine. In acquiescing to the public talk of death, the human being is alienated from the most essential possibility of its freedom. It therewith surrenders its original self-administration to the dispensation of das Man, the anonymous ‘one’ of the average mass, and therewith abdicates any genuine responsibility for its own existence. The existential concept of the end sets forth the moments of death that the Dasein, for the most part in the grip of the average understanding, conceals from itself and evades. The existential concept of death thus represents Heidegger’s authentic critique not only of the everyday or inauthentic understanding of death, but also of the averageness of mass society, the spiritual heart of whose rule rests in our everyday flight in the face of death into the distractions that our common business affords us. Finally, Heidegger sets out the formal outline of an authentic being towards death that he names
“running forward,” the express understanding of death that any true human freedom must confront, and in which indeed all true freedom must consist.

A. Everyday Being towards Death

The existential interpretation of death must now “orient itself to the earlier gained structures of everydayness,” the temptation, tranquilization, and alienation which characterize the average falling existence of the Dasein, as the first step in the proof that the elaboration of the care structure has grasped the being of the Dasein as a whole, even if the Dasein in its everydayness does not yet exist as a whole can-be. As being towards death, the Dasein “comports itself towards itself as a distinctive potentiality-for-being” (BT 296/SZ 252). In its possibility, the Dasein’s being reveals itself as defined by a constant not-yet. The Dasein is ever this its not-yet, and it already ‘has’ death, its uttermost not-yet, as its ownmost can-be. The Dasein constantly is its death. As long as it is, it is dying. In its possibility, the Dasein comports itself towards itself, such that for it, its existence is ever about its being. As being towards death, the Dasein comports itself towards the death that it already somehow ‘has,’ as its uttermost possibility; that is, in being towards death the Dasein comports itself not towards something not-yet present, but towards itself. The Dasein’s “self” is “‘only’ a way of the being of this being”; the human “‘substance’” is nothing more than the persistence of an ‘inhabited’ possibility of existence, a disclosed understanding that projects itself (BT 153/SZ 117). The “self” towards which the Dasein comports itself in its everyday existence “is the one [das Man],
which constitutes itself in the public interpretedness, which expresses itself in idle talk [Gerede]” (BT 296/SZ 252). By ‘idle talk,’ Heidegger means to indicate “a positive phenomenon which constitutes the kind of being of the understanding and interpreting of the everyday Dasein.” The everyday self exists in and as idle talk, which governs and expresses the shared understanding of the meaning of our everyday common life: “The Dasein is first of all and within certain limits constantly delivered over to {this interpretedness}, which regulates and distributes the possibilities of the average understanding and the belonging state of mind.” The idle talk about death is its public interpretedness, which governs the everyday understanding of death according to its average intelligibility. The proof that even in its everydayness the Dasein continually comports itself towards its death must begin with the idle talk about it (BT 211/SZ 168).

The “fundament” of any interpretation is found in the Dasein’s “understanding [Verstehen].” Any understanding, as understanding, “is also always found in a state of mind [befindliches], that is, attuned.” Not only is the Dasein about its being, but it is so because it projects itself upon possibilities which it has, more or less clearly, somehow already understood. That the Dasein is about its being means that it goes about its understanding: the Dasein is toward its death one way or another in and as an understanding of it. The ‘fact’ of death derives its importance for us from our understanding that we must die. More important than this ‘fact’ of death is our understanding of it. The real issue is how we understand that fact, and how we live our lives in the light of that understanding. Heidegger therefore looks to such idle talk to “make manifest” how “the everyday Dasein interprets its being towards death for itself.”
The everyday idle talk about death, as the everyday interpretation of death, is to reveal the understanding that is its fundament: how and with what mood *das Man* understands its death, and how it accordingly comports itself towards death on the ground of that attuned understanding (BT 296/SZ 252).

1. The Public Interpretation of Death as Eventuality

In its ordinary public “everyday with-one-another” way of being, the Dasein “knows’ death” as a continual occurrence, as the event or “case of death’ [>>Todesfall<<].” We encounter instances of death now and then in the course of our daily business, as when a “neighbour or stranger [Nächste oder Fernerstehende] ‘dies.’” We even ‘know’ that people we have never met, be they just down the street or around the globe “are dying’ daily and hourly.” In this way we encounter death, that is, we ‘understand’ it “as a well-known innerworldly occurring eventuality [Ereignis].” Such an interpretation keeps death in the “characteristic inconspicuousness” of our everyday encounters. The everyday self of the Dasein, *das Man*, by understanding death as an “eventuality” which it periodically encounters, “has also already secured an interpretation for this eventuality.” Whether we talk about death in the most direct way, or in a “fugitive” manner speak about it delicately, or euphemistically, all of our talk “wants to say: one dies at the end one day also, but for now [zunächst] one remains oneself unaffected [unbetroffen].” Our speech about death reveals that in our everyday way we understand it “as an indeterminate something,” which “must first of all [allererst] happen
[eintreffen] somewhere [irgendwoher],” but for ourselves and those close to us in our everyday with-one-another, it has not yet arrived, that is, it is “not yet present-at-hand, and therefore unthreatening.” In our everyday talk about death, we interpret death as an event occurring ‘somewhere out there,’ in which we are not involved, and which therefore is none of our concern. “The ‘one dies’ spreads the opinion, death strikes [treffe], as it were, the one.” With this everyday interpretation of death, we turn away from death as our ownmost possibility, and conceal from ourselves its constant threat. “The public Dasein-interpretation says: ‘one dies,’ because therewith every other and oneself can talk himself into: ever not exactly [nicht gerade] I; for [denn] this one is the no-one.” Our everyday interpretation of death allows us to talk ourselves into the belief that, while indeed ‘one dies,’ the one who dies is never I myself. In relegating death to an encountered eventuality, whose ‘subject’ or target is the impersonal ‘one,’ we deny that death threatens anyone in particular. We attempt to convince ourselves that nobody is the necessary target of death’s threat. In this interpretation death “is levelled off to an occurrence,” that “belongs to no-one in particular [eigens]” (BT 296-297/SZ 252-253).

2. The Ambiguity of the Public Interpretation

With the interpretation of death as the occurrence of a merely present eventuality, its genuine being is made ambiguous, and death’s authentic character as the Dasein’s most constant, inalienable ‘possession’ is concealed. Indeed our everyday speech about death presents the paradigmatic case of the ambiguousness of everyday idle talk. “If ever
ambiguity owns idle talk, then {it is} this talk of death. Dying, which is essentially unrepresentably mine, is turned into a publicly occurring eventuality, which the one encounters.” When we interpret death as a present-at-hand or not-yet-present-at-hand occurrence, we speak about it “as {a} constantly occurring ‘case.’” This talk about dying as a case of death “gives it out” as being “always already ‘actual’ [>>Wirkliches<<].” In focusing on the actuality of the event of death, the everyday interpretation of death not only obscures its “belonging moments of unrelatability and unoutstripability” (which mean that it can be neither passed off nor avoided), but indeed its very “character of possibility.” Through this ambiguous interpretation of death in idle talk, the Dasein loses itself, that is, its ownmost can-be, and submerges itself in the irresponsible, inconstant inauthenticity of das Man: “With such ambiguity the Dasein sets itself in the position, to lose itself in the one [das Man] with regard to a distinctive, to-its-ownmost-self-belonging potentiality-for-being.” How the Dasein interprets death, and how it therefore comports itself towards it, whether it faces up to it in an authentic manner, or flees in the face of it, is the sufficient condition, that is, the condition, for its possibility to exist authentically or inauthentically. For Heidegger, the question of how we ought to live, the question of man’s right life, is answered by the extreme case, that is, by death, and how we comport ourselves toward it.40 Consequently, the moments of everyday averageness are set into starkest relief in the phenomenon of being towards death (BT 297/SZ 253).

40 As we shall see, Heidegger’s teaching mirrors that of the early moderns in this regard, although he draws different and even opposite conclusions about the proper attitude to our own mortality.
3. The Temptation of the Public Interpretation

Not only the ambiguity, but the temptation, the tranquilization, and the alienation of our everyday talk show themselves most clearly in being towards death. That the Dasein constantly presents to itself the public interpretedness of death, and therewith the possibility of losing itself in *das Man*, only reveals the temptation involved in this everyday interpretation. “If however the Dasein itself in idle talk and the public interpretedness presents to itself the possibility, to lose itself in the one, to fall into groundlessness, then that says: the Dasein prepares for itself the constant temptation to falling” (BT 221/SZ 177). The predisposition of the Dasein to conceal death’s authentic essence from itself reveals the tempting character of the way death is publicly interpreted: “The one gives right and raises the temptation, to cover up for itself {its} ownmost being towards death” (BT 297/SZ 253).

4. The Tranquilization of the Public Interpretation

The everyday interpretation of death is tempting because it offers the possibility of a tranquilization about death. This interpretation of death which conceals its authentic character so rules our everyday common human life that we speak in the mode of this interpretation of death—as a not yet present public eventuality that may therefore yet still be avoided—even to the dying themselves:

This covering-up evasion before death dominates everydayness so stubbornly, that in being-with-one-another the ‘neighbours’ often still keep talking the ‘dying’ into believing that he will escape death and soon again
When we do speak of death to the dying, or more precisely, those for whom death’s threat seems imminent, we characteristically do so as if there were still hope that they may escape death’s clutches, and even soon may rejoin us in our everyday common business, untouched and untroubled by death, forgetting about the unrelatable and unoutstripable nature of its threat. We even believe that in speaking about death in such a manner, that in our denial of the possibility of their death, we avoid distressing and even give comfort to the ‘dying person.’ By speaking in this way to the ‘dying,’ we hope to “bring him back into the Dasein,” to pull him back fully into his being with us in our untroubled everyday existence, and that this way of talking about death “helps him still to conceal completely” the authentic character of “his ownmost, unrelatable possibility of being.” With this interpretation of death (as a not-yet present at hand eventuality), the inauthentic existence of *das Man* “in such a way takes care of a constant tranquilization about death” (BT 297-298/SZ 253). By means of this tranquilizing interpretation of death we persuade ourselves in our everyday lives of “a growing unnecessariness with regard to the authentically minded [befindlichen] understanding” (BT 222/SZ 177), that we have no need of any authentic comportment towards death; in the first instance, that we have no need to look into death, or indeed pay it any mind at all.\(^{41}\) This tempting tranquilization about death forms the core of how *das Man* accommodates the Dasein (BT

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\(^{41}\) This everyday attitude towards death, as Heidegger portrays it, is perfectly consonant with the wisdom of the early modern philosophers. Cf. e.g. Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, Translated by W. H. White, Revised by A. H. Stirling. (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2001), p. 212. (Fourth Part: Of Human Bondage, Proposition 67): “A free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is not a
by suggesting that we ‘take it easy,’ and need neither trouble ourselves about death, nor shoulder the burden of our existence.

Contrary to our belief that we console the ‘dying’ with our ‘solicitude,’ we nonetheless attempt just as much, and even most of all, to console ourselves and attempt to maintain our inauthentic interpretation of death in the face of an impending ‘demise’ which contradicts the characterization of it as coming in the end, but not right now. Even when someone actually ‘dies,’ das Man, with its tranquilized interpretation of death, makes sure that “the publicness still is not to be disturbed in its concerned carefreeness and be alarmed.” The purpose of the inauthentic interpretation of death which regulates our everydayness is to secure us in our common tranquilized existence against the phenomena that threaten to disturb our care-free life and to contradict the idle talk about death which maintains it: “One sees indeed in the dying of others not rarely a societal inconvenience, if not even tactlessness, from which the publicness should be saved.” The inauthentic everyday self, das Man, in its interpretation of death which diverts us from facing our deaths, “sets itself, however, at the same time... into right and respectability [Recht und Ansehen] through the tacit regulating” which governs how we are supposed to be, the attitude we ought to have, towards death (BT 298/SZ 253-254). The publicness of das Man governs “all interpretation of world and Dasein, and keeps right in everything,” because it “obscures everything and gives out the thus covered up as the familiar and accessible to everybody” (BT 165/SZ 127). That is to say, the fugitive attitude towards death presents itself as the respectable and even as the properly moral meditation upon death but upon life.” I am indebted to Nasser Behnegar for bringing this statement of
attitude towards death. “The mastery of the public interpretedness of das Man” rules, by its “noiseless decree,” that the mood which is proper for one to have about death, and “out of which the attitude towards death is to determine itself,” is not that anxiety which discloses its authentic threat, but an “indifferent tranquility over against the fact that one dies.” Fundamentally, the everyday interpretation of death means to suppress the mood of anxiety: “The one does not let courage for anxiety before death arise.” In its ruling interpretation of death, das Man aims rather at “the transformation of this anxiety into a fear before an oncoming eventuality” (BT 298/SZ 253-254).

Spinoza to my attention.  

This interpretation of anxiety as the fear of an oncoming event is also the general drift of Hobbes’ presentation of anxiety. He writes that, “… it is impossible for a man, who continually endeavoureth to secure himself against the evill he feares, and procure the good he desireth, not to be in a perpetuall solicitude of the time to come” (L 169/52). Anxiety is consequently, according to Hobbes, the fundamental mood of human existence:

“… So that every man, especially those that are over provident, are in an estate like to that of Prometheus. For as Prometheus, (which interpreted is, The prudent man,) was bound to the hill Caucasus, a place of large prospect, where, an Eagle feeding on his liver, devoured in the day, as much as was repayred in the night: So that man, which looks too far before him, in the care of future time, hath his heart all the day long, gnawed on by fear of death, poverty, or other calamity; and no repose, nor pause of his anxiety, but in sleep.” (L 169/52)

Human prudence leads us to worry about the evils that the future may hold. Hobbes admits that the future is uncertain, and any expectation or prediction about it “is but Presumption” (L 97/10). The very uncertainty and indeterminacy of the future means that our foresight can only continually find reasons for anxiety. Hobbes insists that the mood of anxiety does not reveal the indeterminate threat of the future, but rather insists that anxiety in every case latches onto particular causes: “This perpetuall feare, always accompanying mankind in the ignorance of causes, as it were in the Dark, must needs have for object something” (L 169-170/52, emphasis mine). The implication of Hobbes’ teaching is clear: we can put our anxiety to sleep through greater knowledge of the causes of future dangers, while distracting ourselves from peering too far ahead into the future, which means, finally, not to think about our ultimate fate, even as we assure ourselves that we have averted any causes of immediate mortal danger. Hobbes’ teaching about death thus concurs with that of Spinoza. The worst of the causes of mortal fear is the threat of violent death at the hands of another. It is to avert such an eventuality that we establish and maintain a sovereign representative that will defend our lives and property, in order to assure ourselves “of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live” (L 190/64). The fear of death is both the condition for the possibility of losing oneself in das Man, and the moral foundation of liberal government as elaborated in Hobbes’ thought. Heidegger’s critique of the everyday interpretation of death must also strike at that foundation. Certainly, the everyday self of das Man is not
5. The Alienation of the Public Interpretation

Everyday opinion would have it that ‘‘thinking about death’’ is a sign of “cowardly fear” and “insecurity.” When anxiety has been “made ambiguous” in idle talk as “fear,” it is then “given out as weakness,” and as hardly the attitude of a serious, confident person. For das Man, death is a not yet present public eventuality; when its threat actually arrives, fear may be the appropriate response, but when its threat is remote, there is ‘actually’ nothing to worry about. Anxiety, however, is the fundamental mood wherein “the Dasein is brought before itself as delivered over to the unoutstrippable possibility.” The Dasein, in its freedom, exists ever as possibility. This possibility, contrary to the implications of the inauthentic interpretation of death, is one which the Dasein can indeed never truly evade, is also the possibility which is most its own, and which, therefore, it most is. Accordingly, “‘the cultivation of such a ‘superior’ indifference’ towards death as demanded by the dictatorship of the public, “alienates the Dasein from its ownmost unrelatable potentiality-for-being” (BT 298/SZ 254). In the development of this tranquilized comportment, the human being is alienated from its most essential possibility, that is to say, from itself as such. In alienating the Dasein from its being towards death, the everyday talk about death “closes off from the

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a exact correlate of the enlightened subject of Leviathan, for while the latter has clear reasons for laying down the original right of self-governance and submitting to the rule of the state, the consent of the former to the dictatorship of the public is only semi-conscious at best. The everyday regime that Heidegger describes is a decayed Hobbesianism. But if one accepts the basic thrust of Heidegger’s authentic critique of the public interpretation of death, then a more robust Hobbesianism, more fully conscious of the ground of its way of life, offers no better defence against his assaults.
Dasein its authenticity and possibility” (BT 222/SZ 178). The everyday interpretation of death alienates the Dasein from its ownmost possibility, and it is for this reason that it not only represents the inauthentic interpretation of death but is indeed as such the condition for the very possibility of inauthenticity. In our everyday existence, we comport ourselves towards ourselves in a flight from our ownmost selves, alienated from the most essential possibility of our freedom (BT 298/SZ 254).

The existential interpretation has shown how the everyday evasive talk of death as a not yet present public eventuality is characterized by temptation, tranquilization, and alienation. These three moments of our everyday talk of death epitomize the “‘falling’” inauthentic existence of the Dasein. “Everyday being towards death” is a falling being towards death, and “is as falling, a constant flight before it.” In everydayness “being towards the end” is in the “mode” of an “evasion before it,” in which the Dasein conceals its death from itself by “reinterpreting” and “inauthentically understanding” it. The Dasein “factically always already dies, that is, is in a being towards its end,” and in order to suppress its knowledge of this “fact” which is primordially disclosed to it in the mood of anxiety, “it recoins death as an everyday occurring case of death among others, which in any case assures us more plainly, that ‘one oneself’ indeed still ‘lives’” (BT 298/SZ 254). The public talk of death re-interprets it as a not yet present eventuality, in order to avoid getting into the authentic ‘facts’ of the ‘case.’ Such consideration would only endanger the reassurance that idle talk provides us (BT 165/SZ 127).

The consequence of acquiescing in this interpretation of death is alienation from our ownmost possibility and the surrender of our authentic existence. As soon as the
Dasein gives in to the tempting, alienating talk of death being passed around, ‘one’ falls into the public interpretedness, the understanding of man and the world that define and regulate the inauthentic existence of das Man. The “‘publicness’ die Oeffentlichkeit” of das Man is characterized by “‘d’istantiality, averageness, and levelling down.” This manner of our common way of life concerns itself with reducing all possibilities to what may be represented in and by an interchangeably average existence: “For the one it is in its being essentially about this {averageness}.” Das Man keeps watch over all, and what prevails only does so with its permission: it “maintains itself factically in the averageness of that which belongs to it, of that which one lets be valid and which not, of that to which one grants success, and to which one denies it.” The indistinguishable members of the average mass decide “what can and may be ventured.” The jealous eye of “this averageness” vigilantly “watches over everything exceptional which urges itself forward [jede sich vordraegende Ausnahme].” The everyday existence of the common crowd is coloured by a pervasive and vigilant envy. The result of this watchful envy is the reduction of everyone and everything to the common average, the “levelling down of all possibilities of being.” Every kind of hierarchy, everything difficult, special, dignified, or rare is paved over by the tribunal of public opinion: “Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Everything primordial is glossed over overnight as long known [bekannt]. Everything struggled for becomes handy. Every secret loses its force.” The publicness of das Man “is insensitive to all differences of levels and genuineness” and therefore never really comes to grips with what it claims to interpret. All the accomplishments of culture, discovery, and
knowledge become at best the already known, unremarkable, and even disposable
material of our everyday business, to be consumed and discarded at our whim. The mass
of meagre souls who flood the faceless crowd seek even to pass judgement over and
appropriate the products of human greatness, to which they have no authentic right, even
as they seek to eliminate any continued genuine possibility of such greatness, by pressing
the understanding of every human possibility into the stamp of the average everyday (BT
165/SZ 127).43

43 This tendency to level everything down to the average is also the consequence of the institution of
government constructed along the lines of Hobbes’ political science. Hobbes teaches that human beings
create or maintain a sovereign representative in order to escape or avert the natural human condition,
which is “a warre, as is of every man, against every man,” where human life, in the absence of
agriculture, industry, and commerce, can only be “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (L 185-
186/62). The creation and persistence of government is the conclusion and maintenance of a peace
treaty among its subjects. The necessary terms of this peace, that Hobbes euphemistically calls “the
Lawes of Nature” accordingly determine the character of the regime that ensues from it (L 188/63). All
these laws of nature derive from the “Right of Nature,” “the Liberty each man hath, to use his own
power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life...” (L
189/64). Hobbes' three central laws of nature are the ninth, “against Pride”; the tenth, that commands
modesty, and the eleventh, that commands “Equity.” For the sake of peace, the sovereign’s subjects
must all acknowledge one another as natural equals, either because they actually are, or believe
themselves to be so, and consequently will not suffer peace except upon equal terms. “The breach of
this Precept is Pride.” From this confession of natural equality it follows that none of them may reserve
to themselves any right that they would not grant to all the others. Those who violate this law are
“Arrogant men” (L 211/76-77). The consequent principle of (distributive) justice that follows from
these laws, made authoritative through the practice of the “Judges, and Arbitrators” established by the
sovereign, is “Equity”: “the equall distribution to each man, of that which in reason belongeth to him”
(L 212/77). Universal equal rights (together with keeping contracts made) become the very principle of
bourgeois justice. The last of Hobbes’ natural laws that concerns us in this context, is the fifth, called
“Mutuall accommodation, or Compleasance,” that commands “That every man strive to accommodate
himselfe to the rest.” The subjects of the sovereign ought to make themselves like all the others, regular
and sociable. Those whose “asperity” and “stubbornness” make them “cumbersome,” may conversely
“be left, or cast out of Society” and its protections. “The observers of this Law, may be called Sociable,
(the Latines call them Commodi;) The contrary, Stubborn, Insociable, Froward, Intractable.” (L 209-
210/76) The liberal sovereign aims at the formation of subjects who are uniformly “modest, and
tractable” for the sake of their own comfortable self-preservation (L 215/79).
6. The Public Interpretation and the Dictatorship of the Average

In the grip of this average publicness, the Dasein concerns itself with “distantiality [Abstaendigkeit],” the difference among the possibilities within and as which we exist, “whether that difference is merely one that is to be evened out,” or we seek to “catch up” to the others whom we have “lagged behind,” or mean to maintain “some priority over them” and “keep them suppressed” (BT 163-164/SZ 126). In thinking of ourselves, we think only of others.\(^4^4\) We keep an ear out for what people are saying about us and them. The everyday ‘community’ of our average bourgeois existence is characterized by a pervasive mistrustful surveillance:

> The being-with-one-another in the one is not at all a self-contained, indifferent side-by-side-ness, but an intent, ambiguous watching-one-another, a secret and reciprocal listening-in on one another. Under the mask of the for-one-another plays an against one-another. (BT 219/SZ 175)\(^4^5\)

The community of \textit{das Man} is only a sham. We continually compare ourselves with others, in the first instance, in terms of our deficiency or priority in our common concerns. We understand ourselves merely in terms of the everyday possibilities that we have in common with others, for which every Dasein is interchangeable with every other.


\(^{4^5}\) Cf. Strauss, \textit{The Political Philosophy of Hobbes}, pp. 56-57: “Descartes begins the groundwork of philosophy with distrust of his own prejudices, with distrust above all of the potential \textit{deus deceptor}, just as Hobbes begins interpreting the State and therewith morality by starting from men’s natural distrust. It is, however, not Descartes’ morals, but Hobbes’s, which explains the concrete meaning and the concrete implications of fundamental distrust.” Heidegger pays far greater attention to Descartes than to Hobbes not only in \textit{Being and Time} but indeed over the whole of his work. We may judge it a theoretical defect of Heidegger’s thought that he pays insufficient attention to Hobbes’ politics. Nevertheless we must admit that, practically speaking, such attention was unnecessary, for Heidegger’s critique of \textit{das Man} and the inauthentic talk of death that ‘grounds’ its way of being still manages to
In the grip of this pervasive mistrust we fail to understand ourselves in our *ownmost* possibilities; existing inauthentically, we do not project ourselves upon that can-be which is most our own. We *are* not ourselves. Through this secret listenting-in on one another, we put ourselves in “*subjection* [Botmaessigkeit] to others”:

{The Dasein} *is* not itself, the others have taken being away from it. The wishing [Belieben] of the others has the everyday possibilities of being of the Dasein at its disposal. These others are however not *determinate* others. On the contrary, any other can represent them. What is decisive is only the inconspicuous, already taken over unknowingly [unverstehens] from the Dasein as being-with, mastery [Herrschaft] of the others. One belongs to the others oneself and strengthens their power...

In understanding ourselves in terms of the others, we place our possibilities at their disposal, or more precisely at the disposal of *das Man*, ‘the one’; that is, we become just ‘one’ more of them, in becoming one of them, we enhance their power to make every other human Dasein just ‘one’ more. Each becomes interchangeable with every other; every one of these ‘others’ has been absorbed into the ‘one’ of *das Man* (BT 164/SZ 127).

Not only does the everyday interpretation of death govern how we are to understand and, accordingly, comport ourselves towards death, but in taking over that everyday interpretation of our ownmost possibility, the invisible dictatorship of *das Man* gains dominion over how we live our lives *tout court*. This inauthenticity is no mere ‘property’ of the Dasein, but a way of life. The mastery of the others not only disposes the possibilities of the particular Dasein, but submerges it in the indistinguishable average crowd of mass society:

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*strike at the spiritual heart of liberal politics, at least as Hobbes articulates them.*
... In the utilization of public means of transport, in the use of the news service [Nachrichtenswesens] (newspaper) is every other like the other. This being with one another dissolves {one’s} own Dasein completely into the kind of being of ‘the others,’ so indeed, that the others in their differentiability and expressness disappear more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability the one unfolds its authentic dictatorship. We enjoy and amuse ourselves, as one enjoys; we read, see, and judge about literature and art, as one sees and judges; we also however pull ourselves back from the ‘great crowd,’ as one pulls oneself back; we find ‘shocking,’ what one finds shocking. The one, which is nothing determinate and which all, though not as sum, are, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness. (BT 164/SZ 126-127)

In Heidegger’s account the dictatorship of das Man reveals itself, though indeed ‘invisible,’ and itself without any apparent material seat of government, laws, courts, or police, as the genuine ruling ‘regime’ of our everyday inauthentic common human life, which reduces the Dasein to an anonymous part of a great faceless human mass. This dictatorship is so pervasive and insidious, that it even governs our revulsion at the character and effects of the mass society it goes about creating and maintaining. Heidegger depicts das Man as a persistent, intangible almost sui generis ‘convention’ or ‘agreement,’ through which the Dasein is continually led to give the everyday interpretation of death, and therewith the inauthentic existence of das Man, its continual, if ‘unconscious,’ consent—nay, its surrender—through which the ownmost possibility of itself, its genuine selfhood, is suppressed in the anonymous unity of the one.46

46 The dissolution of original self-government in the corrosive uniformity of das Man is fundamentally consistent with the intention of Hobbes’ political teaching. Writing of the foundations of government, he asserts that, “The only way to erect such a common power... is,” for the prospective subjects,

“...to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will: which is as much to say, to appoint one man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himselfe to be Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be Acted, in those things which concerne the Common
The Dasein, having surrendered its particular will to the corrosive unity of
everyday publicness, no longer authentically stands to account for anything; indeed
having surrendered its possibilities to the disposal of das Man, it can no longer take
responsibility for its existence at all. The ambiguous character of das Man is such that, as
it were, its pervasive disembodied force haunts our everyday common life: it “is involved
everywhere [ist ueberall dabei],” but without anyone being able genuinely to confront or
come to grips with it, for as soon as “the Dasein presses for decision,” das Man “has also
already always crept itself away.” The ‘one’ itself refuses to answer for itself, “yet
pretends to [vorgibt] all judgements and decisions.” In this way, the average publicness
of das Man “takes away answerability from the particular Dasein.” If asked to account
for their everyday doings, the faceless mass of ‘others’ invariably point to the dictates of a
‘one’ which is everywhere and yet nowhere to be found to be called to account:

\[\textit{Das Man} \text{ is able, as it were, to afford that ‘one’ constantly appeals to it. It}
\text{can most easily answer for everything, because it is no one who needs to}
\text{vouch for something. It ‘was’ always the one [Das Man >>war<< es}
\text{immer], and yet it can be said, it has been ‘no one.’ In the everydayness}
of the Dasein, most \{things\} come about [wird das meiste] by that about
\text{which we must say, it was no one. (BT 165/SZ 127)}\]

Peace and Saftie; and therein to submit their Wills, every one to his Will, and their
Judgements, to his Judgment. This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a real Unitie
of them all, in one and the same Person, made by Convenant of every man with every
man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, I Authorise and give up
my right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this
condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like
manner. (L 227/87)

This basic intention of Hobbes’ \textit{Leviathan} finds graphic expression in the engraved title page of the first
dition of \textit{Leviathan}, which depicts a titanic monarch, composed of a multitude of almost identical, or
nearly indistinguishable, and for the most part faceless men, lording equally over both town and
countryside. A more perfect illustration of Hobbes’ political intentions is difficult to imagine;
conversely, one could hardly ask for a better portrait of \textit{das Man} and the dictatorship of the public as
Heidegger expresses it in \textit{Being and Time}. 
Our common everydayness is completely determined by this deep and pervasive irresponsibility. We live as ‘one’ lives, the same indistinguishably average lives that all ‘others’ do. No one genuinely does, thinks, or decides for himself. *Das Man*, as it were, chooses and decides for us, and we are left to look back and wonder, when and if indeed we give thought to it at all, how the course of our lives ran as it did.

The insidious levelling down of all possibilities in public life cannot even finally be understood as a conflict between the few and the many, but only as a struggle of a ubiquitous corrosive averageness against every exceptional human being and possibility. The spiritual force of this inauthentic publicness moreover is an existential tendency that inheres in the very being of the Dasein itself: “*Das Man is an existentiale and belongs as primordial phenomenon to the positive constitution of the Dasein.*” The dictatorship of *das Man* is not the articulation of ‘the many’ attempting to enforce their will upon ‘the elite,’ but ultimately a spiritual conflict in the heart of the Dasein’s essential structure. The struggle of a few against the great mass of ‘others’ is only the external manifestation of an internal fight that the particular Dasein wages for or against its authentic self. This primordial phenomenon, which is a permanent feature of the very constitution of the Dasein’s being, nonetheless “has itself again different possibilities for its concretion according to the measure of the Dasein [seiner daseinsmaessigen Konkretion]” (BT 169/SZ 129). Modern mass society is only one way for *das Man* to elaborate itself as a human possibility; the constitution of the Dasein permits various articulations of this essential tendency across the course of human history. While *das Man* is a permanent possibility of our existence, the public power of its dictatorship is neither simply an
unchanging, nor an unchangeable, feature of that existence. “{The} forcibleness and expressness of its dominion can historically change.” Heidegger’s most straightforward implication seems to be that the strength and insidiousness of the power of das Man can change in time, that is, over the course of human history, so to speak accidentally, apart from any human will or decision. Heidegger’s deeper intimation, however, is that the control of das Man over our existence together can change historically [geschichtlich], that is (as we shall later see in chapter n), in the happening [Geschehen] of human freedom that manifests itself as that authentic historicality which continually recaptures its history [Geschichte], as the site of its freedom, from the overcoming public interpretedness. Read in light of his subsequent exposition of historicality, Heidegger is rather suggesting here that the dictatorship of the public might even be somehow overthrown in the future through the re-conquest of human freedom.

The corrosive conformity and irresponsibility of our common inauthentic existence has its source, ‘the condition of its possibility,’ in the public everyday interpretation of death. In submitting itself to the “vulgar” inauthentic interpretation of death, the Dasein surrenders any responsibility over its death as its ownmost possibility. The examination of everyday falling being towards death through the analysis of the interpretation of death given out and passed around by das Man (through which the Dasein is first of all shorn from its authentic self) is thus also a description of the essence, or spiritual heart, of its rule. Heidegger’s contempt for the irresponsible superficiality of our common everyday lives is rooted in his analysis and critique of our everyday attitude towards death that reveals it as an inauthentic tranquilized alienation from our ownmost
possibility. The critique of the everyday attitude towards death is thus Heidegger’s genuine or authentic critique of the society of the homogenous mass that he expresses in his discussion of the everyday common existence of das Man earlier in the fourth chapter of the first division of Being and Time.

In defence at least of the liberal democratic versions of modern mass society, we might rejoin to Heidegger’s critique that liberal politics, at least, has allowed for extensions of liberty and possibilities of self-cultivation and self-expression that are almost unprecedented in the prior course of human history. Liberal government permits us, with remarkable toleration, to ‘express ourselves,’ to hold and defend any opinions whatsoever, as long as they are compatible with the maintenance of a civil peace. Yet however much one might be inclined to defend liberalism in those terms, the fact remains that those freedoms and liberties occur entirely within, indeed are only possible upon the ground of the dominion of the falling flight before death and the consequent meek sociability of our common life, of the success of the sovereign representative in first rendering its subjects modest and tractable.47 The ‘freedoms’ of that life are gained only on the ground of surrendering any authentic responsibility for ourselves. And however contemptible Heidegger’s portrait of the average existence of das Man may be, his genuine critique of our everyday common life is not primarily a critique of its conformity, but rather, at bottom, of the public interpretation of death and the inclination that drives it, and of the basic existential tendency to evade and conceal from ourselves the authentic character of death as our most essential possibility. If our inauthentic

47 See notes 42, 43, and 46, above.
everydayness is contemptible, it is so in the first instance because of the understanding of death that grounds and determines it. If the averageness of das Man is petty and irresponsible, it is so only as a result of the tranquilized, alienated, and above all fugitive attitude towards our ownmost can-be that it epitomizes. The shirking meanness of everyday life, according to Heidegger, essentially lies in the cowardice of its falling flight from death. It is accordingly not conformity as such to which Heidegger objects (as we shall see, he positively endorses the right kind of regimentation, indeed in the fullest and most literal sense of the word), but the kind of conformity that the inauthentic understanding of death produces: the ‘herd-animalization,’ the pervasive meek domestication, and the insidious power of the dictatorship of average publicness. In the final analysis it is the inauthentic understanding of death that grounds the corrosive conformity of das Man, of which liberal mass society represents but one possible expression, which is the deeper target of Heidegger’s critique.\footnote{Since Heidegger asserts that das Man is an existential possibility that inheres in the very structure of the Dasein’s being, liberalism, it must be emphasized, can hardly be the sole object of Heidegger’s critique. Fleeing in the face of death, covering over its authentic character with an inappropriate interpretation that transforms anxiety about its indeterminate possibility into the fear of a not yet present determinate end, and letting oneself fall back into the pressing business of everyday life are possibilities that, according to Heidegger, inhere in the constitution of the Dasein itself. Hobbes’ political project to provide for the commodious self-preservation of the multitude is possible only on the basis of the interpretation of death as a not-yet-present event, the causes of which we may discern, and the eventuality of which we can therefore postpone, by careful calculation and prudent means. The essential inclination of the Dasein to conceal the authentic character of its ownmost possibility, to pervert the fundamental anxiety into the fear of (violent) death, provides the ground of the modern liberal teaching of the legitimate ends of government. It is this deeper ground, and not liberalism simply, that is the genuine object of Heidegger’s critique. But as much as inauthentic existence represents a permanent possibility of the Dasein, it is nevertheless equally certain that liberal politics represents an extreme manifestation of that possibility, for with the advent of liberal government, the fugitive understanding of death that interposes the urgencies of our everyday business ahead of death’s possibility becomes the express purpose, that is, the legitimate end of government. Liberal politics expressly spreads and justifies the inauthentic understanding of death as not yet present eventuality. We live in the midst of forgetfulness both of death’s authentic character and of authentic
In laying out the interpretation of death which rules the everydayness of the Dasein as a “falling flight before death,” Heidegger has succeeded in showing that “also das Man itself is determined ever already as being towards death, even then, when it is not explicitly engaged in ‘thinking about death.’” Even in the tranquilized existence of the everyday, under the rule of an interpretation of death which means to suppress anxiety in the face of it, the Dasein is, nevertheless, still about death as its ownmost possibility: “For the Dasein it is also in average everydayness about this ownmost, unrelatable, and unoutstrippable potentiality-for-being, if also only in the mode of concern of an untroubled indifference against the uttermost possibility of its existence.”

Everydayness is towards death as a tranquilized indifference. More precisely, the connection between death and care is “sightable” in a preliminary way in inauthentic everydayness, that is, how our ordinary falling existence reveals itself as a flight before death. The “setting forth” of the inauthentic interpretation of death that rules our everyday attitude towards death “gives however the assignment” to “secure the full existential concept of being towards the end” (BT 298-299/SZ 254-255).

So far Heidegger has only made the preliminary sketch of the existential concept of being towards the end visible in the nearest concretion of the Dasein’s existence. The understanding of the meaning of being. The basic principles of liberal government and their spread through ‘popular enlightenment’ are in no small part to blame for this oblivion. If, as Heidegger claims, the meaning of being, and more fundamentally of human freedom, can only be reached by looking into death, that is, through an appropriate interpretation of it, then its pursuit demands clearing away the obscurations of the inauthentic understanding, and the clarification of its genuine possibility. This clarification, elaborated as the existential concept of death, undermines our everyday understanding of death as a not yet present eventuality, and consequently the interpretation that grounds our common way of life. While one’s average loyalty to liberal government is not, therefore, uniquely the object of Heidegger’s critique of das Man in Being and Time, it nonetheless remains one of its immediate targets and potential casualties.
full existential concept of death is still lacking; it therefore remains to secure this full concept. This task can be accomplished by means of a “more forcible interpretation” of our everyday “falling” comportment to death as an “evasion before it.” Having adequately revealed that before which the Dasein flees, Heidegger moves to let the full way in which we normally understand our deaths to show itself against the background of the wherefore of flight. Out of the everyday understanding—interpreted as a fleeing before death—the full existential concept of death can now be made to unveil itself by means of this reverse course. Up until this point in the analysis of the falling interpretation of death, Heidegger has (for the most part) expressly interpreted “solely the ‘one dies’ as such.” So far, being towards death “has been defined as being towards one’s ownmost, unrelatable, and unoutstripable potentiality-for-being”; and in “the existing being towards this possibility,” as being towards death, the Dasein “brings itself before the simple [schlechthinnige] impossibility of existence.” To complete the interpretation of everyday being towards death, and thereby win the full existential concept of death, Heidegger now takes up the rest of the interpretation of death that he imputes to the idle talk that rules our everyday existence (BT 299/SZ 255).

7. The Certainty of Death

The everyday talk of death readily seems to understand death as somehow certain: “In the ‘also one day, but provisionally not yet’ everydayness admits something like a certainty of death.” Even fleeing death in the grip of the falling interpretation of death,
“Nobody doubts that one dies.” Despite the show of certainty about death’s eventual arrival, Heidegger questions whether the idle talk about death includes a genuine understanding of death’s certainty: “this ‘not doubting’ does not need to contain already the certainty in itself, which corresponds to that as which death in the sense of the characterized distinctive possibility enters [hereinsteht] into Dasein.” The everyday talk of death is ‘certain’ of death, but only according to the way it has been publicly interpreted: “Everydayness stops [bleibt... stehen] with this ambiguous admission of the certainty of death—in order to lessen it, covering up dying still more, and to make thrownness into death easier for itself.” This merely apparent ‘certainty’ about death is only part of our everyday evasive concealment of the authentic character of death’s possibility from ourselves (BT 299-300/SZ 255-256).

The implication of the “also one day, but provisionally not yet” holds contradictory conclusions. The idle talk about death admits its certainty, but it does so only in order to further conceal death’s true character from itself, and therefore cannot be authentically certain of death: “The covering up evasion before death according to its meaning can not be authentically ‘certain,’ and yet it is.” Heidegger’s interrogation of this ambiguous everyday ‘certainty’ of death begins with an assertion about what it means to be certain: “Being-certain of a being means: to hold it for true as true.” Truth in turn means “uncoveredness of the being.” The truth of any being is how it shows itself to us when whatever conceals its essence from us has been stripped away. “All uncoveredness however is grounded ontologically in the most primordial truth, the disclosedness of the Dasein.” All truth as uncoveredness springs from the being of the
Dasein as disclosedness, which is rooted in the understanding of being that plays out in and as the having been laid open clearing of its there. As this disclosedness, the Dasein is as truth: “Dasein is as disclosed-disclosing and uncovering being essentially ‘in the truth.’ Certainty however is grounded in truth or belongs equally primordially to it.”

Certainty is essentially founded in the primordial disclosedness of the Dasein. Like truth, certainty has both a primary and a derivative meaning. The “primordial” sense of truth amounts to “being-disclosing,” which is a way of the “behaving of the Dasein.” Its second meaning, “derived” from the primordial sense of truth, is the “uncoveredness of beings.” “Correspondingly,” the primordial meaning of certainty amounts to “being-certain as {a} kind of being of the Dasein,” the certainty of the disclosedness of the (disclosed and disclosing) Dasein, from which is derived the second meaning of certainty, the “‘certainty’” of “the being of which the Dasein can be certain” (BT 300/SZ 256).

One genuine manner of certainty, that is, the way in which the Dasein is certain, Heidegger calls “conviction [Ueberzeugung].” We ordinarily understand conviction primarily as a human attitude, as the belief of a human being, which may or may not be well founded in the phenomena with which it is concerned. Conviction is, for Heidegger, a true mode of certainty, in which the Dasein is certain of beings according to how they reveal their being, in which it “lets itself determine only through the testimony [Zeugnis] of the uncovered (true) thing itself [Sache selbst] its understanding being towards this.” More fundamentally that any inauthentic ‘certainty’ about the world, which understands being merely as handiness or as sheer presence, in the mode of true certainty, the Dasein submits the judgements of its understanding to the evidence of ‘what stands there.’
Certainty, as “holding-for-true,” can be a “maintaining-oneself-in-the-truth,” if such certainty “is grounded in the uncovered being itself, and as being towards {the} thus uncovered being has become transparent to itself with regard to its appropriateness to this,” that is, if having uncovered the being about which it is certain, it has genuinely and thoroughly understood its own being towards this being. Such a certain grasp “is lacking in the arbitrary fiction, or in the mere ‘opinion’ about a being.” Only on the ground of a genuine uncovering of the being it is towards, can the Dasein grasp its truly appropriate way of comporting itself towards this being: only in both a genuine disclosure or uncovering of the being itself, and a genuine express self-understanding of being towards it, does any holding-for-true meet the standard of authentic certainty. Holding-for-true, maintaining-oneself-in-the-truth, and becoming transparent to itself are, however, like the essential disclosedness of existence, possibilities of the Dasein’s own being. The Dasein as authentically certain, can submit its understanding to the uncovered beings that stand within the range of its discloseness, only on the ground of a prior clearance of its own being that has made it transparent to itself precisely as this disclosed and disclosing being. The testimony of the beings themselves reveals itself only on the basis of a previous and more fundamental uncovering, a prior illumination or revelation that happens within the being of the human itself, an originary conviction that ‘fires’ or ‘animates’ the projected understanding of the Dasein (BT 300/SZ 256).

Heidegger’s understanding of the human being, the Dasein, reverses the way we ordinarily think about truth and certainty, at least as regards the truth and certainty of death. We normally understand the justification of any assertion about beings to lie in its
adequacy to the beings in question; only on this basis do we consider that someone has
the truth of the matter. Similarly, we usually consider anyone’s certainty justified only
on the basis of the truth of its view of the beings themselves. Our certainty about beings
finds its final justification in the certainty of the beings themselves. According to
Heidegger, however, the true right or justice of any claim about the truth lies, ultimately,
not in the beings about which it makes its claim, but in the being of the being, the human
being, the Dasein, which first of all stakes it. While “the kind of truth and therewith the
certainty themselves vary” both in “the differentiation of beings,” and by the nature of
“the leading tendency and extent” of the Dasein’s disclosedness, their variation with the
differentiation of beings does not in any way mitigate their primordial connection to
disclosedness: the differentiation of being and the differentiated beings themselves are
encounterable only within and in terms of the Dasein’s disclosedness. Truth and
certainty are entirely relative to how, and how far, the Dasein’s world has been laid open
in the project of its for-the-sake-of-which. Heidegger’s remarks here about certainty and
truth expressly remain “restricted to an analysis of the being-certain over against death”;
this analysis nevertheless “presents in the end a distinctive certainty of Dasein,”
distinctive because it is an authentic being-certain of the Dasein about itself as it is
disclosed to itself, a self-certainty of the Dasein, according to Heidegger, both in its
ownmost possibility, and as a whole can-be (BT 300/SZ 256).

In this connection it is noteworthy, not to say remarkable, that it is conviction
[Ueberzeugung] that serves as the example of genuine or authentic certainty in this
context. We normally associate the meaning of conviction with people’s moral, political,
or religious opinions, as a measure of their commitment to the beliefs that they have embraced. In English, as in German, we associate conviction [Ueberzeugung] with, for example, the convinced [ueberzeugt] adherent, the dedicated [ueberzeugt] supporter, and the devout [ueberzeugt] religious believer. We do not, by contrast, typically associate conviction in quite the same way with knowledge or science except secondarily as derivative of its particular results. To be sure, a scientist or scholar may be convinced by a sound argument or by the results of an experiment, but their persuasiveness hardly reaches, or results in, the conviction that we normally associate with devout religious faith. To the extent that such conviction enters into knowledge or science, it ultimately does so on the basis of opinions about the rightness or goodness of the enterprise of knowledge or science as a whole, and, broadly speaking, the moral or political opinions which may inform the enterprise of the particular scientist, which in the first instance are never, and could never be, established solely by science itself. Any passionate scientific conviction about arguments or results therefore trades on the conviction of those extra-scientific opinions. Heidegger’s present elaboration of the comportment of conviction certainly nonetheless does resemble a scientific attitude, to the extent that it “lets itself determine only through the testimony [Zeugnis] of the uncovered (true) thing itself [Sache selbst] its understanding being towards this”; indeed it bears a striking resemblance to the very maxim of phenomenology itself, “‘to the things themselves’!”

It should come as no surprise that this receipt of testimony is not the comportment
of a so-called ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ observer that we ordinarily take to be the attitude of the genuine scientist. The foundation of any interpretation is the understanding of the Dasein, which is always attuned by a state-of-mind. Even what is usually taken for the genuine scientific attitude is determined by a mood: “But also the purest theoria has not left all moods behind itself; even for its regarding [Hinsehen] the only still present-at-hand shows itself in its pure appearance [Ausssehen] only then, when it can let itself come towards it in tranquil tarrying with...” (BT 177/SZ 138). The tranquilized mood that Heidegger in Being and Time associates with theoria, is the same attunement which das Man, through its evasive interpretation of death, dictates to the Dasein in its falling everydayness as the proper attitude towards death. In its tranquilized everyday concern, the Dasein does not truly understand its end, but rather even covers up the authentic character of its possibility. While the calm observation of the theorist is appropriate to interpreting beings in terms of how they look in their sheer presence at hand (BT 88/SZ 61), precisely this comportment and interpretation are, according to Heidegger, exactly characteristic of the way the Dasein misunderstands death in the grip of its falling inauthentic everyday existence and are warrant for suspecting that understanding our death through, for example, the examination of the death of animals, is at best ambiguous in its results as regards an authentic understanding of the phenomenon for us. According to Heidegger, a genuine interpretation of death’s authentic character cannot be reached through this sort of tranquil observation. The understanding that grounds such an interpretation must rather be of such a character as to tear off the concealments and distortions with which the inauthentic Dasein veils its ownmost possibility.
Furthermore, the interpretation of death is not the interpretation of some other being that we encounter as either handy or merely present in the world around us, but is rather a possibility of the Dasein’s being itself. In being towards death, the Dasein comports itself towards its ownmost possibility, that is, towards its authentic or essential freedom as such. In interpreting death, we interpret ourselves (and any transformation of our interpretation of death is accordingly a transformation of our self-interpretation, and therewith also of the ‘it is about…’ of our self-project.) The testimony which must ground any sufficient holding-for-true as that which determines our understanding comportment towards the interpreted being must come from the human being itself, from the Dasein alone. The testimony which grounds the interpretation of death is thus not the evidence of anything in the ‘external’ world, but primarily an attuned understanding of the Dasein which projects itself precisely as being towards death. The attunement or mood that authentically brings the Dasein before its death is Angst; the understanding that gives testimony to the authentic character of death’s possibility will testify in a mood, not of tranquilized concern, but of earnest anxiety. It is therefore no accident that Heidegger mentions conviction in this context as an example of adequate certainty. The Dasein gains an authentic understanding of its ownmost possibility in the grip of a passionate resolve. This understanding of death will have the courage of conviction; in the decisive respect the consequent authentic comportment towards death will show itself as courageous self-exposure to its threat. Heidegger’s analysis of death will accordingly reveal “a distinctive certainty of Dasein.” We note provisionally that the earnest conviction [Ueberzeugung] which is the genuine mode of being-certain [gewiss-sein]
about death is given attestation [Bezeugung] by the conscience [das Gewissen].

Heidegger’s phenomenological method, the motto of which expresses itself in the phrase, “to the things themselves!”, thus shows itself as an appropriate—perhaps even the uniquely appropriate—vehicle for the interpretation of what the conscience authentically discloses. Heidegger’s rejection of *theoria*, concerning what is for him the most crucial question of our existence, in the end rests not on scientific grounds—he in no way disputes the results of medical and biological investigations of the phenomenon, as far as they go (BT 290-291/SZ 246-247)—but on the ground of earnest conviction of an anxious resolve, that is to say, upon a determination of the will. We have already learned that the existential concept of death is also to make human freedom intelligible. It is the earnest conviction of the basic experience of the conscience that is the fundament of Heidegger’s authentic concept of human freedom.\(^{49}\) It is against the backdrop of authentic certainty of the earnest conviction of the conscience, everyday ‘certainty’ about death is to be made to show its true character, as an inappropriate or false ‘certainty’ about death that amounts to mere opinions about it, since the Dasein, having fallen prey to absorption in the distractions of the everyday, is not certain of its death according to the testimony of the phenomenon itself, but rather conceals and reinterprets it by way of fleeing it.

Absorbed in our falling everyday concern, we comport ourselves toward death by fleeing from it, in an evasive concealment of its authentic character: “The everyday

\(^{49}\) Cf. BT 277/SZ 234: “The conscience [Gewissen] however gives the testimony [Bezeugung] of an authentic can-be.... This existentiell possibility however tends according to the meaning of its being to the existentiell determinateness by being towards death.”
Dasein covers up for the most part the ownmost, unrelatable and unoutstripable possibility of its being.” Just as much as the Dasein is “in the truth,” it is also for the most part, “in the ‘untruth.’” The everyday certainty about death, as “such a covering up of being towards death” is accordingly not “an uncertainty,” but “an inappropriate holding-for-true”: not a doubting that death comes, but a false certainty about it. In the everyday interpretation of death, founded on “‘one’” understanding death as a now present or not-yet present “environmentally encountered eventuality,” Heidegger writes, “the certainty related thereto [die hierauf bezogene Gewissheit] does not meet” death as “being towards the end.” The everyday interpretation of death surely claims a certainty about death. “One says: it is certain that ‘death’ [>>der<< Tod] comes.” Despite this claim of certainty about death, “the one overlooks that, in order to be able to be certain of death,” I myself “must ever be certain” of death as the can-be which is inalienably mine. In saying “death is certain” the one “plants therewith in the Dasein the show, as of being itself [als sei es selbst] certain of its death.” The “ground” of this apparent certainty about death is not “a merely mutual persuasion,” but the “undeniable ‘experience-fact’” of the “daily” encounter with the “‘dying’ of others.” This way of understanding death and its consequent ‘certainty,’ “betrays itself then, when it attempts, even critically, foresighthedly [vorsichtig], and, that is to say, appropriately, to ‘think’ about death.” The very attempt to think about death with such critical foresight, that is, with prudent caution, and the belief that this is indeed the appropriate way to think about death, betrays an understanding of death as a continually occurring eventuality that is not-yet present for oneself, which might be somehow averted, however temporarily, through ascertaining its
causes (BT 301/SZ 256-257).

When the Dasein thinks about death in the mode of critical foresight, it arrives at an empirical ‘certainty’ of death, by which it can cover up the authentic certainty which belongs to death, in order to divert itself with the distractions of its everyday concern. Falling everydayness understands death as a continually encountered occurrence. Based on the overwhelming number of observable cases, it seems as if, and one must therefore suppose, that every human being must die: “All human beings, so far as one knows, ‘die.’” From the cases we ‘experience,’ however, the most that can be concluded is that a very great probability ultimately attaches to death: “Death is for every human being in the highest degree probable, but indeed not unconditionally ‘certain.’” In the strictest sense, the encountered 'experiences' of death indicate an “‘only’ empirical certainty”—and therefore not an a priori certainty—of death. These particular cases do not impart a certainty of death as such, that is, “the highest certainty, the apodictic, which we reach in certain districts of theoretical knowledge.” On the ground of an understanding of the Dasein’s end as an innerworldly event, one can never arrive at a genuine certainty of death; nor according to Heidegger can we arrive at an apodictic certainty of death by means of any theoretical science. Even if such theoretical certainty of death were possible, it would not reach the primordial certainty of death arrived at in authentic understanding (BT 301/SZ 257).

However that may be, such a “‘critical’ determination of the certainty of death” bears the marks of the “characteristic” everyday misunderstanding of death and “misjudging of the kind of being of the Dasein and of the belonging-to-it being towards
death,” of which it is itself an interpretation. Heidegger’s critique thus in a certain sense rests on a more rigorous grasp of the requirements of knowledge. The empirical cases of death can indeed tell us nothing about the certainty or uncertainty of death: “That demise as an oncoming eventuality is ‘only’ empirically certain, does not decide about the certainty of death.” While “{c}ases of death may be {the} factic motive for it, that the Dasein first of all becomes attentive to death,” the cases of death one encounters in others have nothing to say about the certainty of one’s own death, as the unrelatable and unoutstripable possibility of my existence. “Remaining in the empirically characterized certainty,” the Dasein can therefore never become authentically certain of death, that is, certain of it “as it ‘is,’” in its authentic character. (BT 301/SZ 257)

While “in the publicness of the one” we “apparently” speak “only of this ‘empirical’ certainty of death,” we nonetheless do not “at ground” understand death “primarily and exclusively” as a future eventuality, as an “oncoming case of death.” In our falling existence we are “indeed differently certain” of death than we might want “to have true in purely theoretical consciousness.” This “‘otherwise,’” this deeper certainty of death, is what our ordinary existence “for the most part conceals from itself.” Das Man prescribes an indifferent tranquility towards death. With this prescription, and in such a tranquilized attitude—“the ‘anxiously’ concerned, apparently anxietyless superiority in the face of the certain ‘fact’ of death”—our inauthentic absorption in our everyday concern “admits a ‘higher’ than only empirical certainty” of death. In suppressing anxiety in the face of death, we confess despite ourselves that we sense death’s authentic certainty. We ‘know’ about the empirical ‘certainty’ of death, but fail
to be certain of it as our ownmost possibility: “One knows [weiss] about certain death, and all the same ‘is’ not authentically certain of one’s own.” In our “falling everydayness” one senses, one “knows [kennt] the certainty of death, and yet evades being-certain,” one covers up death's true character, and flees any comportment which authentically confronts its genuine certainty. This concealing “evading” and flight, however, “attests phenomenally, from that wherefore it evades,” the authentic character of death, which “must be conceived as one's ownmost, unrelatable, unoutstripable, certain possibility” (BT 301-302/SZ 258).

8. The Indeterminacy of Death’s When

In our falling everyday existence we admit a certain ‘certainty’ of death, the better to divert ourselves into the distractions of our everyday concern. According to the public interpretation of das Man, “death comes certainly, but temporarily not yet.” What this interpretation gives with one hand, it takes away with the other; at the same time that it seems to admit a certainty of death, “with this ‘but’” it “denies certainty to death.” When the public interpretation says that death comes “‘temporarily not yet’” it does not merely deny death’s certainty. This claim about death in which it “is postponed to ‘sometime later’” is also “a self-interpretation of the one” through which our ordinary everyday self “refers itself to that which first of all yet for the Dasein remains accessible and concernable,” to the ordinary business of our everyday common human life, with which we busy ourselves to distract us from the thought of death’s certain possibility.
“Everydayness presses into the urgency of concern and divests itself [begibt sich] of the fetters of a weary ‘inactive thinking about death.’” In postponing death to sometime later and distracting itself with the pressing business of life, *das Man* “covers up the peculiar feature [das Eigentümliche]” of certain death, “*that it is possible in any blink of the eye [Augenblick].*” By covering up the certainty of death, the public interpretation of *das Man* also conceals “the indeterminacy of its when”; it “evades” death’s indeterminacy “because it confers determinacy to it” with the interpretation of its possible arriving as ‘temporarily not yet.’ Death’s possibility is determinately ‘not now.’ The careful prudence and postponement of our everyday comportment towards death do “not mean [bedeuten] to calculate the when of the arriving [Eintreffens] of the demise,” because “‘t’he Dasein would sooner flee before such determinateness.” Our falling existence “determines for itself the indeterminacy of certain death” only in order to immerse itself in “the clear urgencies and possibilities of the nearest everyday” (BT 302/SZ 258).

Heidegger has now both completed the interpretation of everyday being towards death as a falling flight before it, and arrived at the “full existential ontological concept of death.” In its everyday lostness in *das Man*, the Dasein comports itself towards death in a tempting, tranquilized alienation from its ownmost possibility, which covers up death’s indeterminate certainty. The everyday interpretation of death shows itself, in contrast to earnest conviction, as an inappropriate way of holding death for true, and thus, as an inadequate way of being certain of it. The everyday interpretation of death is thus a mere opinion about death, by means of which the Dasein forfeits responsibility for its ownmost
being and loses itself in the falling everydayness of das Man.\textsuperscript{50} The full existential concept of death accordingly “lets itself now... be delimited [umgrenzen]” as “\textit{the ownmost, unrelatable, certain and as such indeterminate, unoutstripable possibility of the Dasein}.” This possibility exists, not as an innerworldly encounterable eventuality which is not yet present for oneself, but only in and as the comportment of the Dasein itself towards its end (BT 302-303/SZ 258-259).

9. The Concrete Connection between Death and Care

With the full existential concept of death, the existential interpretation has completed the first step towards grasping the Dasein as a whole. The analysis of “the existential structure of being towards the end stands in the service” of the elaboration of “a kind of being of the Dasein, in which it, \textit{as Dasein}, can be \textit{whole},” that is, how a free being defined by the ahead-of-itself possibility of existence can exist as a whole can exist is such a way that it does not abdicate the responsibility for the administration of its own thrown project. Even in its falling existence, “the everyday Dasein \textit{is} ever already also \textit{towards} its end.” Inauthentic everydayness is as being towards death. It always comports itself towards its end, it “comes to terms with its death constantly, although

\textsuperscript{50} The public interpretation of death, which represents the condition of the possibility for the Dasein to lose itself in \textit{das Man}, also presents the paradigmatic example of idle talk as such: of a groundless\textit{ “passing the word along”} that ‘understands’ death “without previous appropriation [Zueignung] of the thing.” In presenting death as a not-yet present eventuality, idle talk is a “closing off [Verschliessen]” of the phenomenon, and with the “obviousness and self-assurance” of its interpretation it assures us that we have no need of coming to grips with ‘the thing itself.’ By acquiescing in and passing along this idle talk about death, the Dasein participates in the “average intelligibility” of death, and is “uprooted” and alienated from its ownmost possibility, and becomes absorbed in the groundlessness of everyday distraction (cf. BT 211-214/SZ 167-170).
'fugitively.'” Even this flight before death “indicates” that the Dasein does not come to its end, which is “concluding and determining” for its “being-whole,” only in the eventuality of its actual “demise.” The Dasein, even existing in the possibility of fleeing its death into falling everyday concern, already ‘has’ its end. Its very being “always already” contains “the uttermost not-yet of itself” as its final possibility, ahead of which all other possibilities lie. Existing in the possibility of “being towards its death [zu seinem Tode seienende],” the Dasein already ‘is’ its end. Neither the interpretation of the not-yet of the existing Dasein’s ahead-of-itself “as still outstanding,” nor the consequent “formal inference” from that interpretation, “rightly insist on [besteht ... auf ... zu Recht]” a constant “untotality [Unganzheit]” in the Dasein’s being. Neither the not-yet, nor the ahead-of-itself which grounds it, nor the totality of the care-structure, of which the ahead-of-itself of existence forms the essential moment, pose any genuine obstacle to the possibility of grasping the Dasein as a whole: “The phenomenon of the not-yet, taken over from the ahead-of-itself, is, as the care-structure in general, so little an authority [Instanz] against a possible existent being-whole, that this ahead-of-itself first of all makes possible such a being towards the end” (BT 303/SZ 259). With the removal of this objection to a possible being whole of the Dasein, the existential interpretation has, however, not yet expressly grasped the Dasein as a whole, but only opened the way to a positive examination of “the problem of the possible being-whole” of the Dasein, which “rightly exists, if care as basic constitution of the Dasein is ‘connected’ [>>zusammenhangt<<] with death, as the uttermost possibility of this being.” Heidegger has now sketched out such a connection between care and death, but as yet this only
shows both the legitimacy of the question of the possible being-whole of the Dasein, and the proper path to its resolution in the examination of the connection between death and care. In order for the problem of the possible being-whole of the Dasein to be rightly resolved, Heidegger must both set out the existential character, and indicate the practical possibility, of an authentic being-whole. The first step in this resolution is the project of the possibility of an authentic being towards death. This project of an authentic being towards death will, moreover, set the condition for the possibility of the overthrow of the dictatorship of the public and the recovery of the authentic freedom and original self-government of the Dasein. The grasp of human freedom in its authentic unity is not merely the means to the clarification of the meaning of the word being, which we no longer understand, but is rather the first step on the road to a revolution in our political self-understanding, insofar as we accept that human freedom sets the standard against which every way of life must measure itself (BT 303-304/SZ 259-260).

B. Heidegger’s Existential Project of an Authentic Being towards Death

So far we have seen how and why Heidegger turns to the development of an existential concept of death as the way out of the apparent impasse into which the existential interpretation (the self-interpretation of freedom) had fallen at the end of the first division of Being and Time. The working out of such a concept of death as the ownmost, unrelatable, certain, indeterminate, and unoutstrippable possibility of the Dasein is intended to clarify the meaning of human freedom as the horizon of the
possibility of the understanding of being. In our average, everyday existence we comport ourselves towards death by fleeing from it, covering over its authentic character with inappropriate interpretations, and distracting ourselves from its constant threat with the immediate necessities of our everyday business. Heidegger has still to disclose the possibility in and through which we gain a basic experience of our essential freedom. If we put ourselves in the position of losing ourselves in \textit{das Man} as soon as we allow our understanding to be determined in terms of the public interpretation of death, then any liberation from our subjection to its public dictatorship must be fundamentally determined by a rejection of its inauthentic understanding of death. Any experience which returns us to our original freedom must lead us to recover our possibilities, not least of which our ownmost possibility, from the disposal of \textit{das Man}, and therewith the original authenticity of our existence. This experience will therefore tear away the concealments of \textit{das Man}, by revealing to the Dasein its ownmost possibility in accordance with Heidegger’s existential concept of death. The formal outline of the possibility of such an experience of ourselves in our primordial freedom will accordingly be an \textit{authentic being towards death}.

Heidegger writes that, “\{f\}actically the Dasein maintains itself first of all and mostly in an inauthentic being towards death.” The very pervasiveness of the inauthentic comportment towards death poses a problem for the project of the existential possibility of an authentic being towards death. If the Dasein never really faces its death, or, what works out to the same thing, such a comportment can never be made manifest to others (and thus makes no difference in \textit{how} it is, in its being), then the attempt to project an
authentic being towards death would be a “fantastical undertaking.” So far the factual existence of an authentic being towards death remains a “questionable existentiell potentiality-for-being.” The project of an authentic being towards death requires “instructions” in order to acquire the “phenomenal legitimacy” to avoid “an only poetizing, arbitrary construction.” Most obviously this authentic wholeness must not be an arbitrary construction in order to grasp fully the Dasein’s being as the means to the answer to the question concerning the authentic meaning of being. It must also be emphasized, however, that the grasp of an authentic being towards death in *Being and Time* is an emphatically practical concern. The project of the whole can-be of the Dasein is not intended for the edification of the reader, but is rather to be offered as an effectual possibility of human existence (BT 304/SZ 260).

Fortunately, “the now set ontological task”—the existential project of an authentic being towards death—is able to “let itself be given prescriptions [Vorzeichnungen]” by the interpretation of the Dasein up to this point in the inquiry, “which press its fore-having into a secure road.” The analysis of the everyday being towards the end and the existential concept of death together provide the necessary instruction for the project of an authentic being towards death: Heidegger’s investigation has determined the “existential concept of death” and “therewith that towards which an authentic being towards the end should be able to comport itself,” that is, how any authentic being towards death must understand its end. Additionally, Heidegger’s descriptive interpretation of “inauthentic being towards death” has revealed “how authentic being towards death can not be.” The “positive and prohibitive instructions” yielded by the
existential concept and the everyday falling flight from death, respectively, provide the secure way along within which “the existential structure [Bau] of an authentic being towards death must let itself be projected.” Within the horizon of the injunctions yielded by Heidegger’s phenomenological description of the falling, everyday understanding of death, the existential concept of death will lead us to an authentic being towards death. The existential concept of death indeed prescribes what an authentic being towards death is to comport itself towards, that is, how the Dasein authentically understands its ownmost possibility. The pure understanding of the existential concept of death yields the formal outline of any possible authentic existentiell comportment towards death. This existential concept of death is therefore necessarily in principle also the authentic concept of death; the forthright or conscientious interpretation of the existential concept of death would necessarily lead one to an authentic understanding of death; and vice-versa. As we have seen, this existential concept of death is also to clarify the meaning of the Dasein’s intrinsic ‘not-yet,’ that is, to make human freedom intelligible. In terms of this concept the formal outlines of an authentic or primordial experience of human freedom can be made to reveal themselves. The existential concept of death, which is also the authentic concept of it, exposes the horizon for the authentic concept and meaning of freedom (BT 304/SZ 260).

The existential project of the structure of an authentic being towards death will represent the completion of the clarification of the ontological connection between death and care. The basic structures of the Dasein’s constitution converge in “disclosedness”; the being of the human being “is constituted... through a conditioned [befindliches]
understanding.” The elaboration of a properly authentic being towards death requires the examination of our everyday opinions about death, but not because those common opinions somehow contain, in an unclear way, the truth about death. Common opinion, according to Heidegger, does provide a gateway to the truth, but only in a negative way, as the untruth about death that any pure understanding of it must abjure, and, in the first instance, tear away. More fundamentally, the existential concept of death does not, strictly speaking, begin with common opinion, but with and in the basic experience of human freedom disclosed by the call of conscience. It is only in terms of the revelation of the conscience that the common understanding of death can be called the inauthentic understanding of death: “Inauthenticity has possible authenticity for ground” (BT 303/SZ 259). As we shall see, the dictatorship of the inauthentic understanding of death only becomes visible at all according to Heidegger, through the testimony of the conscience. Against the backdrop of this testimony the inauthentic understanding of death presents an attitude towards death that, according to Heidegger, any authentically moral attitude towards death cannot share.

If an authentic understanding of death cannot project itself in the manner of inauthentic everydayness, then it follows that any possible “\{a\}uthentic being towards death can not make way before the ownmost unrelatable possibility, and in this flight cover up and reinterpret it after the common sense of the one [fuer die Verstaendigkeit des Man umdeuten].” Any possible authentic understanding of death must not flee but squarely face the certain possibility of death. To project “an authentic being towards death” accordingly means to “set forth the moments” of an “understanding” that is a
“non-fleeing and non-covering-up” being towards death, consistent with its existential concept. Having itself squarely faced and exposed the moments and authentic character of death’s possibility, Heidegger’s inquiry is already in principle an authentic being towards death. The express project of such an authentic comportment is thus only the forthright working out and appropriation of Heidegger’s own basic position (BT 304-305/SZ 260).

1. Being towards Death as Pure Possibility

Heidegger emphasizes above all that being towards death is a comporting of the Dasein towards a possibility of its own being, noting that “first of all it is valid to characterize being towards death as a being towards a possibility, and indeed towards a distinctive possibility of the Dasein itself.” Any authentic being towards death must understand its end in its proper possibility-character. While “being towards a possibility,” especially “in the field of the ready to hand and present at hand,” often means “being out for something possible [ein Mögliches] as being concerned for its actualization,” any authentic being towards death cannot have this character. Concernfully “being out for” an actualization projects itself upon the possible in terms of “making available” and therefore “has the tendency to annihilate” its possibility as possibility in our understanding of it. To understand death in this way would be, therefore, to deny the proper character of its possibility. As “a possibility of being of the Dasein,” the character of death’s possibility is essentially unlike any “possible ready-to-
hand or present-at-hand” being. In the case of death, to be out for “the actualization of this possible being” would be “a bringing about of demise.” By such suicide “the Dasein would deprive itself, however, exactly of the ground for an existing being towards death.” Nor, according to Heidegger, does an authentic being towards death consist in the contemplation of such suicide, or otherwise gloomily pondering the end: “If thus with being towards death an ‘actualization’ of death is not meant, then it cannot mean: dwelling upon the end in its possibility.” Being towards death, in this way, amounts to “‘thinking about death,’” in the sense of “when and how it might actualize itself.” While this sort of “brooding” does not completely deny death’s “character of possibility,” it nevertheless weakens it by calculating how death may become ‘available,’ that is, how it might become a present eventuality. Finally we also comport ourselves towards the possible in the way of expecting it. This comportment towards the possible, just as “being out for,” or “thinking about,” grasps the possible primarily in terms of its future actuality. Expecting is therefore “essentially a waiting for” what is expected, that is, for “its possible actualization” (BT 305-306/SZ 261-262).

All of these modes of being towards the possible primarily comport themselves towards it from the inappropriate standpoint of its possible handiness or sheer presence. Their concern with the possible is derivative of their absorption with actuality; they understand the possible “from out of the actual and back to it.” Any authentic being towards death, by contrast, “has to disclose understandingly” death’s possibility according to its ownmost character; it must grasp death’s possibility “unweakened as possibility,” that is, as a continually impending potential. An authentic being towards
death is not the bringing about of self-annihilation, but a steadfast existing in the face of
death’s sheer, possible threat. In an authentic understanding, death’s possibility “must”
rather be “cultivated as possibility, and in the comportment towards it, be held out as
possibility.” Authentic being towards death, understanding it in its proper existential
class, must hold open the indefinite certainty of death’s possibility, must “comport
itself to it, that it reveals itself in this being and for it as possibility.” In contrast to the
falling understanding that flees death, Heidegger calls being towards death in such a
manner “running forward into the possibility [Vorlaufen in die Möglichkeit]” (BT
306/SZ 261-262).\(^5\)

This running ahead does not understand death’s possibility in terms of its
(possible) actualization. In “coming close [Näherung] to the possible,” this running
ahead is not concerned with making death ‘available,’ or in any manner in the ways in
which one comports oneself towards the handy or merely present, but only with death in

\(^5\) Johannes Fritsche notes that Heidegger’s choice of the phrase “Vorlaufen in die Möglishkeit” (that is
to say, into the possibility of death) has a definite cultural significance in the Germany of 1927. The
phrase ‘running forward into death’ could not but remind a contemporary reader of “the <<Helden von
Langemarck>>, young German students who volunteered to fight, and who charged the Allied trenches
“with the German national anthem on their lips” in November 1914. The sheer futility of their
enthusiastic charge lent them the aura of courageous national martyrs: “In terms of military strategy,
this was sheer suicide and completely counterproductive. Nonetheless, or precisely because of this,
they became the paradigm—the myth in the sense of Georges Sorel’s Reflections on Violence—for all
other German soldiers.” For the conservatives, and especially for the radical right in inter-war
Germany, the Helden von Langemark represented, through their heroic sacrifice, the promise of a
spiritual renewal of the German Volk. cf. Johannes Fritsche, Historical Destiny and National Socialism
in Heidegger’s Being and Time, pp. 1-4. For a helpful history of the student heroes of Langemark, not
only of their reckless charge, but also of its cultural significance in inter-war Germany, cf. Jay W.
Baird, To Die For Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,
1990), pp. 1-13. I maintain, however, (as does Fritsche, whose analysis ultimately depends more on
lexical than on historical erudition) that knowledge of the culture of Weimar Germany, while
illuminating, is not necessary for grasping the basic sense of Heidegger’s choice and use of “Vorlaufen”
in Being and Time (at least when it is translated as “running forward” rather than as “anticipation,” as it
is in Macquarrie and Robinson’s version).
its sheer possibility: “in the understanding coming-nearer, the possibility of the possible becomes only ‘greater.’” The understanding running forward which must characterize any authentic being towards death has nothing to do with any actualization or ‘making available’: “The closest closeness of being towards death as possibility is as far as possible from anything actual [einem Wirklichen].” In running forward into the possibility of death, an authentic being towards death does not cover over death’s true character, in the manner of the everyday interpretation of death passed around by das Man (which understands death as a present or not-yet present event), but ‘sees’ death for what it ‘is,’ a mysteriously indefinite possible nothingness.

The more unveiledly this possibility is understood, the more purely the understanding penetrates into the possibility as that of the impossibility of existence in general. Death as possibility gives the Dasein nothing to ‘be actualized’ [nichts zu >>Verwirklichendes<<] and nothing which it as actual could itself be. It is the possibility of the impossibility of every comporting towards..., of every existing. (BT 307/SZ 262)

Fundamentally, an authentic being towards death does not understand death in terms of a concern with actuality (that is, as an oncoming event, as a present or not yet present eventuality) because death’s possibility shows itself most properly, according to Heidegger, as having nothing whatsoever to do with the actualization of the actual (BT 306-307/SZ 262).

In Heidegger’s presentation, death’s possibility has the dignity of a peculiar purity, devoid (from the standpoint of the particular Dasein that it claims) of any possible actualization, that is, of being the possibility which reveals most purely the proper character of the possible, the possible qua possible, that is to say, death represents the purest revelation of possibility as such. The possibility of death appears to the
understanding which runs ahead as ‘greater and greater,’ that is to say, it reveals itself as such that it knows no measure at all, no more or less.” In the purity of its possibility, death authentically reveals itself as “the measureless impossibility of existence.” Death’s sheer possibility consequently eludes any and all calculation. And yet it is not a merely formal possibility, in the sense of something of which we must admit that it could perhaps be, or happen at some time, but yet has no inner necessity that inclines or presses it to occur, such as (to use an example of Heidegger’s from his lectures on Schelling) “a golden mountain.”

Death is a possibility towards which the Dasein constantly drives, that is nevertheless indefinite, an indeterminate horizon of the clearing of the there. Death is a measureless possibility that inheres in every moment of existence, and which therefore shapes and defines the being of the Dasein. Death’s pervasive threat reveals the self-determination of the Dasein as a fragile finite possibility. All being out for, all dwelling upon, and every expectation, must ‘actually’ fail in the face of death’s immeasurable possibility. Running ahead confronts death “according to its essence,” which, authentically understood, denies us any “foothold in order to look forward to something, ‘to imagine’ for oneself the possible actuality [das moegliche Wirkliche], and so to forget the possibility” (BT 307/SZ 262).

This authentic running ahead is what “first of all makes possible this possibility, and makes it free as such.” Only through running ahead into death’s possibility does the Dasein grasp death’s authentic (im)possibility-character. Death’s pure possibility is only in the free comportment towards it. Only as running forward into death does the Dasein

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52 ST 152/SWF 183.
genuinely exist as being *towards* death, and only then is death’s possibility *set free* for the understanding in its authentic possibility. Running ahead into death is the primordial origin of any possible being towards death as a possibility of the Dasein’s being. The essential moment of the care structure, which makes up the being of the Dasein, is the ahead-of-itself of its essential freedom. The Dasein as essentially free is as such always already running ahead: “Being towards death is running forward into a potentiality-for-being *of the* being whose kind of being is running forward itself.” The essential ahead-of-itself of the care-structure comes most clearly to sight in the face of death’s possibility. Existing authentically as running ahead into death discloses the Dasein to itself as *running ahead as such*, as *essentially* ahead of itself, to the extent that running forward reveals itself as the source and meaning of human freedom. This running ahead into this purest can-be is the ‘limit situation’ of the ahead-of-itself, the exposition of the horizon of human freedom as such, and it is only in the face of this its limit, that freedom becomes intelligible, if indeed it can become so at all (BT 307/SZ 262).

2. Being *towards Death as the Ownmost Possibility*

Death is furthermore not just any possibility, but a possibility of the Dasein’s existence, and it is always inescapably mine. Coming face to face with this possibility in an authentic manner reveals the Dasein to itself as purely being towards death: “In the forward running revealing of this potentiality-for-being the Dasein discloses itself to itself in regard to its uttermost possibility.” That is to say, running ahead into death is a
projecting of the Dasein of itself upon its most extreme, and therefore its ownmost, can-
be, that structures all the others. Death is a possibility that the Dasein ever has to take
over for itself, a possibility of itself upon which running ahead itself projects. Running
ahead into death is neither a reckless charge into suicide nor a grim brooding over the
end, but “proves to be {the} possibility of the understanding of the ownmost uttermost
potentiality-for-being.” The project oneself upon this “ownmost potentiality-for-being”
is, like any project, “to exist” within the clearing which that possibility lights up, “to be
able to understand itself alone in the being of the so revealed being” (BT 307/SZ 262-
263). The uttermost ahead-of-itself of death is determined by evermineness. If taking
over the ambiguous everyday interpretation of death is the sufficient condition for the
Dasein to exist inauthentically, understanding death’s purest possibility in the mode of
running ahead into it, is conversely the condition of any possible authenticity. If “{t}o
the existing Dasein belongs evermineness as condition of the possibility of authenticity
and inauthenticity” (BT 78/SZ 53), then the authenticity of existence consists in the
project upon that possibility which is most my own. That ownmost possibility, however,
is death. The “possibility of authentic existence” therefore begins uniquely with an
unflinching understanding of death’s own constant, immeasurable threat. Charging ahead
to meet that threat head on, the Dasein sets its ahead-of-itself as such free as possibility.
In running ahead into death the Dasein sets itself free for its particular freedom in its
uttermost mineness (BT 307/SZ 263).

Having sketched the manner in which any authentic understanding must be
towards its death, Heidegger now proceeds to “the setting forth of the concrete structure
of running forward into death” in order for its “ontological constitution” to “become sightable.” The “phenomenal delimitation” of authentic being towards death requires that “we determine the characteristics of the forward running disclosure which must belong to it.” In this determination of its concrete structure, running ahead into death becomes “the pure understanding of the ownmost, unrelatable, unoutstrippable, certain and as such indeterminate possibility.” This pure understanding does not mean “gazing [begaffen] at a meaning” in the manner of the pure contemplation usually associated with theoretical contemplation, “but to understand oneself [sich verstehen] in the potentiality-for-being which reveals itself in the project.” In the pure understanding of death the Dasein is brought before itself, that is, to ‘see’ itself, as being towards death, and this means to hurl itself into its existence expressly as this projected being towards death, and to live, to exist, in the light of the clearing which that can-be reveals (BT 307/SZ 263).

First and foremost, the possibility of death determines itself as the “ownmost possibility of the Dasein,” and running ahead into death “discloses to the Dasein its ownmost potentiality-for-being.” In confronting death’s sheer possibility, the understanding that runs forward grasps its ownmost can-be precisely in its character as ownmost, as the possibility which the Dasein ever has to take over by itself; “wherein it is about the being of the Dasein simply.” In authentically running ahead into death, the Dasein projects itself in terms of, and thus takes over for itself, its ownmost can-be, that is, it recovers the dying from which it has been alienated under the dominion of das Man. The Dasein resolves that no other can be its representative when it comes to its death, and thereby recovers the original self-determination of its existence, wherein it “can become
manifest to the Dasein, that it, in the distinctive possibility of itself, remains wrenched away from the one.” That as “running ahead” the Dasein “can ever already wrench itself away” from *das Man*, “only reveals however the factual lostness in the everydayness of the one-self.” It is the pure understanding of death that exposes the ordinarily invisible dictatorship of *das Man*. Authentic being towards death is at once both the revelation of the self-alienation of the Dasein (that is, from the ownmost can-be of its existence), and itself the Dasein’s recovery of itself, as the recovery of that ownmost possibility. With the exposure of the dictatorship of *das Man*, its invisible power over the possibilities of my existence is undone. In revealing death as the ownmost possibility, the pure understanding of death shatters the power of *das Man* over the possibilities of that Dasein who authentically runs ahead. In the pure understanding of death the Dasein becomes free for its ownmost possibility; that is, as running ahead, it liberates itself from the dispensation of *das Man* and sets itself free for itself in the authentic mineness of existence (BT 307/SZ 263).

3. Being towards the Unrelatable Possibility

In disclosing death as the Dasein’s ownmost possibility, which it ever has to take over for itself, running ahead therewith reveals death’s unrelatable character. As the Dasein’s *ownmost* possibility, “death does not ‘belong’ only indifferently” to it, “but it *claims this as individual.*” Death, our most inalienable individual ‘possession,’ is, authentically understood, both possessed and possessing. As much as we each ‘have’ our
deaths, our deaths ‘have’ us. The pure understanding of death’s “unrelatability” undoes all of the Dasein’s relations to others in the manner of everyday being-with; it “individualizes the Dasein down to itself.” This “individualizing” of the Dasein in the authentic understanding of death is not just a disclosing of the Dasein to itself, but “a manner of the disclosing of the ‘there’ for existence.” As running ahead the Dasein frees itself for its world in terms of this primordial individualization, which “makes manifest that all being among that with which it concerns itself [bei dem Besorgten] and every being-with with others fails, when it is about the ownmost potentiality-for-being.” All possible resistance and every human artifice, shatters in the face of death. Against the sheer possibility of certain annihilation, there is no measure or design that can in the end succeed. Every calculation of actuality must fail against its measureless and therefore incalculable possibility. In the constantly impending end, no provision, no endeavour, no safeguard, no security, no cooperation, no social or political organization can save us from death’s undeniable claim.53 Though it reveals “the failing of concern and

53 As noted in the previous chapter, this insight about the impossibility of representation when it comes to death, grounded in its evermineness, is the basis of Heidegger’s authentic critique of the everyday politics of das Man and especially of modern liberalism. Liberal government is grounded in a fugitive concern for self-preservation that leads to the surrender of original self-government and the election of a sovereign power to provide for “the safety of the people”; to represent them in all matters that bear on life and death questions (L 376/175). Liberal government, like every other political scheme, must nevertheless fail in the end, because no one else can represent me when it comes to death, nobody can ultimately take another’s death away from him. Now, Hobbes knew this well, and the citizens of the liberal democracies ‘know’ this, that ‘one will die in the end.’ It must furthermore be readily admitted that Hobbes’ scheme has been remarkably successful: the modern liberal democracies undoubtedly now provide the vast majority of their citizens with the longest life expectancies, and the safest and most commodious existences that have yet been seen across the whole of recorded human history.

As successful as liberal politics has been at postponing death’s ‘actuality’ for its citizenry, however, it nonetheless has not, and cannot have, eliminated death’s constant possibility for anyone. Genuine security is not authentically to be had. Projected against the authentic possibility-character of death, the pursuit of security, and more importantly the principle of self-preservation that grounds it, reveal themselves as ‘ultimately’ (i.e., not ‘eventually someday,’ but in the face of the certain but indefinite and constantly impending possible end) futile. One can certainly exist inauthentically in the
solicitude,” this individualization of the Dasein in the pure understanding of death is not “a cutting away of these manners from authentic being itself.” The authentic existence of the Dasein does not amount to its self-isolation. Concern and solicitude are “essential structures of the Dasein-constitution” which “belong to the condition of the possibility of existence in general.” The Dasein exists authentically, “as concerned being among... and solicitous being with...” only in running ahead into death, that is, when “it... projects itself primarily upon its ownmost potentiality-for-being.” It is only under the force of the pure understanding of death’s sheer possibility that the Dasein projects itself in this way: “Running ahead into the unrelatable possibility forces the running ahead being into the possibility of taking over its ownmost being of itself from itself alone” (BT 308/SZ 263-264).

4. Being Towards Death as the Inescapable Possibility

Disclosing the unrelatable claim death makes upon every individual human being, running ahead into the possibility reveals death as “unoutstrippable.” With the revelation of its unoutstrippable character, running ahead, as the authentic understanding of death’s

[Publicness of the average for the whole of one’s life, which might even be a very long time. But given the ultimate futility of self-preservation, we might ask, at what cost? We purchase the commodiousness of the liberal state only at the immeasurable cost of our most essential possession. The price of the security that liberal society procures for us is nothing less than the surrender of our administration of our ownmost can-be, that is, the original freedom of our authentic selfhood. The existential concept of death accordingly sets before us the decisive question: what is the security of the liberal sovereign and the preservation of our animal natures, which is presented not only as our fundamental right but even as our moral duty (cf. Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, 6:421), really worth, if the price it demands is the forfeiture of our deepest possession, the being towards death that is both the primordial source of human freedom and the ground of our authentic self-government, if in the course of our commodious security, we never truly live for ourselves?]
necessity, *freies* the Dasein for its death. “Being towards it lets the Dasein understand that to give itself up impends for it as uttermost possibility of existence.” As running ahead, the Dasein “does not evade the unoutstrippability as the inauthentic being towards death”—indeed as an authentic being towards death it can neither flee nor disguise from itself death’s authentic possibility-character—“but sets itself free for it [sondern gibt sich *freie für sie*].” The pure understanding of running ahead into the possibility reveals death simply as the Dasein’s inescapable doom. This revelation of death’s irresistible inevitability, transforms one’s being towards it from a falling flight into a forthright acceptance, nay, embrace, of inexorable fate. In the pure understanding of death which Heidegger describes, the Dasein does not fatalistically wait around for death but *exists* in the understanding which, charging forward, it projects. In running ahead the Dasein liberates itself for this its ownmost possibility (BT 308/SZ 264).

With this self-liberation for death, the Dasein sets itself free for reasserting its right to govern itself, for taking full responsibility for itself, that is, for itself as a whole, for itself *as such*. As we have seen, according to Heidegger, the Dasein’s essence is defined by existence, the projection of itself upon the possibilities of its understanding. The Dasein is the being for which it is about its being, which determines itself as a being, that is to say, the essence of the Dasein is freedom. Running ahead into death not only frees the Dasein for its death, but for its authentic self-determination: “The running forward becoming free for the own death sets free [befreit] from the lostness in the chance urging themselves on possibilities, so indeed, that it first of all lets authentically understand and choose the factual possibilities which have lain down ahead of the
unoutstrippable.” As running ahead the Dasein no longer succumbs to the distractions of
the immediate urgencies of everyday concern in the manner of inauthentic being towards
death. Free for its death and no longer projecting itself in terms of the averageness of the
everyday, it wrests back its authentic possibilities of existence not only from the
dispensation of das Man, but from the force of happenstance through which it was first
thrown into them. Freed from the dictatorship of the public, as running ahead the Dasein
enables itself for the first time to authentically choose among and project itself upon, its
possibilities, as they show themselves in the disclosedness of the pure understanding of
death. Running ahead into the possibility, the Dasein liberates itself for free self-
determination, that is, for the freedom of its original self-government over the whole of
its existence. Authentic freedom begins with, and essentially remains, the freedom for
death (BT 308/SZ 264).

This authentic liberation of the Dasein furthermore transforms its comportment
both towards itself and towards others. Along with the freedom for authentic choice
which running ahead makes possible, the pure understanding of death discloses the
finitude of all human possibility. The authentic understanding projects its possibilities in
terms of the pure understanding of death that reveals them, that is, as finite. As running
ahead, the Dasein frees itself “for the ownmost, determined from {the} end, that is to say,
understood as finite, possibilities.” The pure understanding of death “discloses to
existence giving itself up as {its} uttermost possibility.” This revelation “shatters every
insisting upon the ever reached existence.” The revelation of death’s unoutstrippable
character, which breaks the attachment to particular existence and frees it for its death,
grants the Dasein a constant noble grace in the face of the ever-impending possibility of its destruction. Running ahead into the possibility prevents the Dasein from “falling back behind itself and the understood potentiality-for-being,” from losing itself, from failing to live up to both the fullness and the limits of its possibility. Running ahead into death gives to the Dasein an understanding, in the most thoroughgoing sense, of the limit of its possibilities, from which it neither flinches nor shrinks away (BT 308/SZ 264).

Running ahead thereby also discloses when the Dasein has exhausted the limits of its own possibilities. In authentic being towards death, “The Dasein guards itself against... ‘becoming too old for its victories’ (Nietzsche)” (BT 308/SZ 264). Heidegger here makes reference to the penultimate speech of the first part of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, entitled “On Free Death,” the teaching of which is “‘Die at the right time!’” Zarathustra praises his own “free death” to his listeners, “which comes to me because I want {it},” and as a “consummating [vollbringenden] death” is to be “a spur [Stachel] and a promise to the living.” Zarathustra means to die, “victoriously, surrounded by those who hope and promise.” Since Zarathustra has “a goal and an heir,” he wants his death to come “at the right time for {his} goal and heir.” Zarathustra thus praises that death which serves the finite possibilities of his self-set goals. When death is made to serve the tasks of life, then its bitterness becomes a bittersweet triumph for the living, especially in light of what it can be, and so often is: the last gasp of fearful and fragile souls as they cling desperately to life (Z 71-73).

Zarathustra preaches a noble death before one’s hour has passed, at the height of one’s glory, before the decline of one’s powers can make a sad postscript to earlier
“truths and victories.” Those who desire “glory” must learn to “practice the hard art, of at the right time – going,” to depart before they cease to worthy of the glory of their truths and victories, before they cease to evoke the admiration for which they so long. Only a free death befits the free lives of the authentically noble. The free death is a manly death: “Free towards death and free in death, a holy no-sayer when it is no longer time for yes: thus he is an expert at death and life” (Z 72-73). In comparison to a victorious death, Zarathustra teaches that “to die in battle and to squander a great soul” is only second best (Z 72). As Nietzsche well knew and Heidegger so stridently emphasizes, however, the choice of the hour of our death is given only to a very fortunate few, if indeed to any at all. The victorious death which is wreathed in the promise of those left behind is therefore a regulative standard for the judgement of noble deaths rarely achieved in practice, meant as much or more to govern our conduct than as a practically achievable goal.54 In freely meeting death head on, in the manner of running ahead into the possibility, the Dasein averts the danger of becoming too old for its truths and its victories, and only in running ahead does the Dasein achieve the greatness of soul necessary for the noblest of deaths. Indeed, in a certain sense, authentic running ahead is the sufficient condition for dying the noblest death, not only insofar as it is the sufficient condition of the freest human life, but moreover because in the pure understanding of death the Dasein holds itself open to it as its ownmost possibility. Within authentic understanding death always “comes to me because I want {it},” because as holding

54 The victorious death of noble promise first becomes a regulative standard for us on the ground of our desire for fame or to be loved. Once led to that standard, however, at least as Heidegger elaborates it in the authentic understanding, fame cannot but cease to be a motive for us.
myself open to death, as always ready for its possibility in running forward, I can never fail to want it, existing constantly within the horizon of its threat.

Echoing Zarathustra, Heidegger presents the dignified grace of authentic existence in the face of death’s constantly impending threat as accompanied by a respect and even magnanimity in its treatment of, and dealings with, others. Through the understanding of the finitude of possibility, “the Dasein averts the danger... of underestimating the existence possibilities of others, or rather misinterpretingly of forcing them back upon {its} own.” As authentic it neither underestimates the others, nor denies them their own possibilities, but rather holds itself in running ahead “in order so to expose itself to {its} ownmost factual existence [um sich so der eigensten faktischen Existenz zu begeben].” Authentic being towards death accordingly furnishes the condition for the possibility of an authentic being-with: “As unrelatable possibility, death individualizes, but only in order, as unoutstrippable, to make the Dasein as being-with understanding for the potentiality-for-being of others” (BT 308-309/SZ 264). Inauthentic being-with subjects the possibilities of the Dasein to the disposal of others, to the public decrees of das Man. Authentic understanding, by contrast, frees itself from, and lets go of, the envious watchfulness and the jealous stipulations of das Man through which it grinds down “everything exceptional” and suppresses “every priority” (BT 165/SZ 127). Running ahead into death prepares the possibility of an authentic solicitude which does not deprive the others of their possibilities in the manner of das Man, but rather frees them for their care (being towards death); that is, running ahead into death is the condition for the possibility of any authentic human community (BT 158-159/SZ 122). The stress which
Heidegger (and Nietzsche, in the speech of Zarathustra to which Heidegger makes reference) places on the nobility of a free or authentic comportment towards death might lead one to object that what Heidegger is really after in the project of an authentic being towards death, and indeed in Being and Time as a whole, is not a recovery of the Dasein’s primordial freedom, but a recovery of the dignity of the highest human life (however that might be understood) in the face of the corrosive averageness of das Man. The proper theme of this study would therefore be mis-chosen: whatever might be said for the importance of freedom in Heidegger’s thought, the exposition of the horizon of the understanding of being in the discussion of being towards death would ultimately aim at the clarification of the possibility of human nobility. The inadequacy of this objection nevertheless reveals itself precisely in that formulation of its results. In pursuing what we authentically mean by the word ‘being,’ Heidegger’s thought undeniably aims at the recovery of genuine human dignity or nobility. Indeed, as we have seen, shortly after the publication of Being and Time, Heidegger goes so far to assert that, “Only {he} can philosophize who is already resolved to grant free dignity to the Dasein in its radical and universal-essential possibilities” (MFL 17/MAL 22), but even this statement might point to the conclusion that what Heidegger’s thought fundamentally pursues is not nobility, but freedom: over against the rest of beings as a whole, it is freedom that is the unique dignity of the human being. To be sure, authentic human dignity would therefore coincide with, or would even be identical to, man’s authentic freedom; but to set nobility above freedom as the end of the project of authentic being towards death is to ignore how Heidegger arrives at his portrait of the Dasein’s possible nobility. The magnanimity of
authenticity is reached only at the end of, indeed, through or as part of, the clarification of human freedom. Dignity or nobility comes to light in the context of the discussion of, and is understood in terms of, human freedom; that is to say, freedom is the source of whatever nobility is possible for the Dasein, and not vice versa. For Heidegger (and Nietzsche, at least in Zarathustra’s speech, “On Free Death,” and perhaps simply) the authentic or noble human being is not free because he is authentically noble, but noble because he is authentically free.

In enabling the Dasein to understand and choose authentically among its factic possibilities, “running ahead into the unoutstrippable possibility discloses all lain down ahead of it possibilities with {it}.” Running ahead into death therefore contains “the possibility of an existentiell anticipation [Vorwegnehmens] of the whole Dasein.” This anticipation, as understanding, is a self-project of the Dasein upon its can-be in terms of the whole of its being; it is therefore “the possibility to exist as whole potentiality-for-being.” In contrast to the fragmented existence of the average everyday, where we continually hurry from one distraction to the next, running ahead holds out the promise of a way of life that is not divided, but constantly a whole. With the project of the possibility of an authentic being towards death, Heidegger shows (at least to his own satisfaction) the possibility of putting the whole of the Dasein’s being into the forehaverning of the inquiry, in terms of how it is disclosed to itself in authentic existence. The possibility of an existentiell running ahead into death therewith holds out the possibility of a primordial interpretation of the Dasein. Such a primordial interpretation, however, can only be the working out and appropriation of the basic experience of the
understanding that calls itself running forward (BT 309/SZ 264).

5. The Authentic Certainty of Death

However edifying the project of an authentic being towards death may be, it does not represent a superior understanding of the possibility, if it is not also truer; otherwise running ahead into the possibility would represent a noble lie whose dignity was purchased only at the price of folly. The superiority of the authentic understanding of death over the inauthentic understanding contained in its everyday interpretation is, according to Heidegger, shown in the manner of its being certain of death, that is, the way running ahead into the possibility holds death for true, which reveals itself as a more primordial certainty than even that which belongs to the apodictic knowledge of certain realms of the theoretical sciences. The possibility of death, “ownmost, unrelatable, and unoutstrippable,” is also “certain.” Any certainty is appropriate, that is to say, adequate to its ‘object,’ only in terms of a primordial disclosure: “The manner to be certain of it determines itself in terms of its corresponding truth (disclosedness).” The ‘empirical’ certainty, which everydayness admits, in no way grasps the genuine certainty that authentically belongs to death. While factually encountered deaths may first bring our understanding face to face with the phenomenon, they give us nothing upon which we can surely reckon its eventuality in our own case. On the contrary, according to Heidegger the most thoroughgoing investigation of causes and cases of death only reveals ever more impressively that death’s sheer possibility defies all calculation. The certainty
of death is essentially unlike the certainty of any merely present being, because death, as a possibility of the Dasein, in no way belongs to the order of what is merely present. Death is no present being whose “uncoveredness” appears “most purely... for an only looking letting-be-encountered of the being in itself,” that is, death cannot be grasped in any comportment which uncovers beings in terms of their look, and is not best understood through the disinterested contemplation of theoretical science. There is, according to Heidegger, indeed no evidence by which we can gain an apodictic knowledge of death’s certainty. It therefore “belongs not at all in the ordering of grades of the evidences about the present-at-hand” (BT 309/SZ 264-265).

As we have seen, the certainty of any being, that is, about which it may be said, ‘it is certain,’ is, according to Heidegger, derivative of a more original being-certain of the Dasein about the being in question. The certainty of death’s possibility is primordially derived from a (self-)certainty of the Dasein itself. In an ambiguous and difficult sentence, Heidegger writes that, “The Dasein discloses the certain possibility of death, however, as possibility, only so that it, running forward towards it, makes possible for itself this possibility as ownmost potentiality-for-being.”

Death’s possibility is revealed

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55 In Heidegger’s German the sentence reads: “Die gewisse Moeglichkeit des Todes erschliesst das Dasein aber als Moeglichkeit nur so, dass es vorlaufend zu ihr diese Moeglichkeit als eigenstes Seinkoennen fuer sich ermoeglicht.” Either “Die gewisse Moeglichkeit” or “das Dasein” could be taken to be the subject of this sentence; of the two English translations of Seing und Zeit, Macquarrie and Robinson opt for the former, while Stambaugh chooses the latter. Both the sense and the immediate context of this sentence seem to favour Stambaugh’s interpretation, and I have therefore so rendered it.

On the other hand, death is a possibility of the Dasein’s being; any disclosedness of death must therewith be a disclosure of the Dasein’s being. Heidegger emphasizes, moreover, that in the face of the possibility of death “the possibility-character of the Dasein lets itself be revealed most sharply” (BT 293/ SZ 248-248). Macquarrie and Robinson’s translation becomes more plausible when read in light of that assertion. It would then have to be interpreted to mean: “The certain possibility of death discloses the Dasein, however as possibility”—that is, the Dasein, projecting itself in terms of death, discloses itself to itself as possibility—“only so that it”—the Dasein—“running forward towards it”—
as the Dasein’s ownmost can-be and becomes certain only in the running ahead towards it. Running ahead into the possibility is how death is first set free as possibility. “The disclosedness of the possibility is grounded in the forward running making-possible.” To say that running ahead first makes death possible in no way means that the demise of any particular Dasein is only the result of running ahead, as if we could avoid death, as it were, by ‘burying our heads in the sand.’ Death is, existentially, the end that the Dasein already is, a way for it to be as long as it exists. It is in this particular sense that running ahead makes death possible. Death becomes our ownmost can-be only in the project of running forward. Only in the understanding of running ahead does death lay claim to the Dasein’s being as its ownmost can-be; only as running ahead into the possibility can the Dasein authentically die, and only thus can it authentically exist as a whole. Existing in light of death’s constant impending possibility, projecting oneself upon death as one’s ownmost can-be, exacts a constant being-certain of the Dasein as certain of its impending, inescapable doom. “The holding oneself in this truth, that is, the being-certain of the disclosed, demands [beansprucht] more than ever the running forward” (BT 309/SZ 264).

The certainty of running ahead does not belong to the order of certainty of any possible merely present being, but is rather the being-certain of the Dasein of the

the certain possibility of death—“makes possible this possibility for itself as ownmost possibility.” This is to say, through running ahead into the possibility, the Dasein is itself disclosed as possibility, but only in such a manner that its ownmost possibility, that is, the horizon of its possibility, the constitution of its being, its being as such, is disclosed, is made possible, is freed for its possibility as essentially running ahead into death. “The disclosedness of the possibility is grounded in forward-running making-possible” (BT 309/SZ 264). This interpretation would furthermore have the benefit of preserving the connection to the paragraph following; the certainty of the Dasein about death is the being-certain of the Dasein about itself as being-in-the-world.
possibility of its being, of itself as such. “The holding-for-true of death - death is ever only {one’s} own - shows another kind and is more primordial than any certainty concerning an innerworldly encountered being or formal objects; for it is certain of being-in-the-world.” Just as being towards death is not merely one comportment of the Dasein among others, which it can pick up or drop depending on its factical circumstances, but rather frames the whole of its being, holding death for true “claims not only one determinate behaving of the Dasein, but this in the full authenticity of its existence.” Authentic understanding casts every way for the Dasein to be in the light of death’s certain possibility. In projecting itself upon its ownmost possibility, running ahead towards death anticipates the Dasein’s being as a whole, that is, discloses the Dasein in its possible wholeness. Holding death for true accordingly becomes a being-certain of the Dasein about itself in the authentic unity of its freedom: “In the running forward the Dasein can for itself first make certain of its ownmost being in its unoutstrippable totality” (BT 309-310/SZ 265).

Running ahead into the possibility thus shows itself, not only as a being-certain about death, but as the self-certainty of the Dasein. The “certainty which lies settled in the running forward” is of a more primordial order than “the evidence of an immediate givenness of experiences [Erlebnisse], of the ‘I,’ and of the consciousness,” which “must necessarily lag behind” it. In the running ahead of authentic understanding Heidegger purports to uncover a certainty more primordial than any “immediate givenness” upon which his modern predecessors (such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Dilthey, and Husserl) attempted to ground their thought. The certainty of authentic existence is not only of a
more primordial order than that of any merely present being or any formal object, that is, ultimately, than that of any scientific certainty, but also of a more primordial order than the certainty of the philosophical thinking which lies at the ground of modern science, as it were, the ‘Ur-science’ that makes possible, that is the condition of the possibility of, the modern sciences (BT 310/SZ 265).

This authentic self-certainty of running ahead into the possibility is more primordial, not because the earlier interpretations were insufficiently “strict,” “but because {the belonging way of grasping} in principle cannot hold for true that which it fundamentally [im Grunde] wants ‘to have-there’ as true: the Dasein.” According to Heidegger the modern interpretations of these immediate givennesses, however certain in themselves, could never reach the certainty of the ground of these givennesses, that is, the certainty of the disclosedness of the Dasein, “which I myself am and as potentiality-for-being can be authentically only running forward.” These immediate givennesses, which are only ever ways of the Dasein’s being, are not certain in and of themselves, that is, by the very fact of their givenness; the Dasein becomes certain of the being of experiences, of the I, of consciousness, that is, of itself, only in the self-certainty of that understanding which charges ahead into certain death. Authentic existence emerges in Heidegger’s presentation as the hidden ground (that is, the unacknowledged, because forgotten, condition) even of the highest achievements of the philosophical sciences. If knowledge is the coincidence of truth and certainty, then the most primordial knowledge of ‘the human being’ must spring from the authentic self-certainty of the Dasein. This is not at all to say, however, that authentic understanding itself issues in the particular doctrines of
these thinkers, as if running ahead into the possibility were to provide merely a deeper
ground, a more comprehensive justification for, say, Descartes’ Principia Philosophiae,
or Hegel’s Phaenomenologie des Geistes (BT 310/SZ 265).

6. Angst and the Pure Understanding of Death

Finally, the certain possibility of death is also indeterminate. Running forward
into the possibility, as the pure understanding of death, must not conceal from itself the
indeterminateness of death’s certainty. “In the running ahead towards indeterminately certain
death, the Dasein opens itself for a springing out of its there itself, constant threatening.”
As authentic being towards death, running ahead “must hold itself” in the face of this
threat, and not obscure, but even “cultivate the indeterminacy of the certainty.”56
Death’s constant, indeterminate menace is disclosed in the Angst that accompanies the pure
understanding of it. “In it the Dasein finds itself before the nothing of the possible
impossibility of its existence.” Angst “discloses” the constant indeterminate threat of its
“uttermost possibility.” Running ahead into the possibility projects the Dasein in a mood,
which individualizes it in the self-certainty of “the totality of its potentiality-for-being.”
Angst is accordingly the “fundamental mood [Grundbefindlichkeit]” that “belongs to such

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56 Hobbes particularly emphasizes the danger of violent death because it is unforeseen, and it is only
unforeseen mortal danger that is capable of overcoming the passions that lead to the war of each against
all others (cf. Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, pp. 18-21). Heidegger extends this
characterization of death to all its eventualities. Death’s sheer possibility means that it has a peculiarly
indeterminate certainty. Not only violent death, but the arrival of all particular instances or kinds of
death must be unforeseen, because, beyond the sheer fact of mortality as disclosed by fundamental
anxiety, they are unforeseeable. The thought of unforeseen violent danger leads to the fear of death and
the concern for self-preservation that grounds the flight into the civil peace of liberal government; the
pure understanding of death’s sheer possibility leads to the abandonment of any hope of self-
a self-understanding of the Dasein in terms of its ground” (BT 310/SZ 265-266), because, in the manner of its disclosure, “anxiety individualizes the Dasein upon its ownmost being-in-the-world, which as understanding essentially projects itself upon possibilities” (BT 232/SZ 187).

Heidegger accordingly asserts that, “‘being towards death is essentially anxiety [Das Sein zum Tode ist wesenhaft Angst]” (BT 310/SZ 266). Heidegger adds in his marginal notes that being towards death is “not only anxiety,” and not, to be sure, “as a mere emotion” (SZ 444). Running ahead into the possibility rather holds itself in that pure understanding which is attuned by the primordial revelation of thrownness into death. The essential connection between Angst and being towards death is, according to Heidegger, is given “unmistakable, though ‘only’ indirect testimony” by the concern das Man shows to transform Angst before death into fear of an oncoming event, and to dispel this fear through its tranquilized assurances. The “overcoming” of this fear, only betrays its “cowardice before anxiety.” Angst is the primary, original mood of our being towards death. Our ordinary attitude towards death only replaces it by virtue of (imperfectly) suppressing it and paving it over with the interpretation passed around by das Man (BT 310/SZ 266).

Angst, as we have seen, is the ground of Heidegger’s interpretation of the existential structure of the Dasein’s being as care. That very Angst has now revealed itself essentially as being towards death, indeed, as the attunement of running ahead into the possibility. Every interpretation is the working out and appropriation of an preservation and the head on confrontation with its threat in all its obscurity.
understanding. Not only the care structure, but the existential concept of death which is its essential clarification have been drawn from the primordial disclosedness of Angst, or, more precisely, from the pure understanding of death that it attunes. The existential interpretation of death derives from the authentic understanding of death. That is to say, the existential concept of death is itself the authentic concept of death, because it is the result of the self-interpretation of the experience of authentic understanding. The pure, that is, authentic, understanding which comports itself towards death in accordance with the existential concept furnishes the authentic concept of human freedom. However that may be, we must now at least suspect that Heidegger’s interpretation of the human being as care, in being towards that end which it already ‘is,’ has itself been drawn from an authentic understanding whose formal existential outline has now shown itself as running ahead into the possibility. In Being and Time the fundamental anxiety of human existence, the alleviation or suppression of which the invisible dictatorship of das Man over our everyday existence takes almost as its very task, storms back with a vengeance (BT 310/ SZ 266).57

57 Since Heidegger asserts that being towards death is essentially Angst, the interpretation of how anxiety discloses the world is the basic point of contention in Heidegger’s fight not merely with the public talk of death, but also with the teachings of the earlier modern philosophers that ground its expression in the everyday life of liberal governments, or, if one prefers (as Heidegger does), represent some of the most thoroughgoing articulations of the everyday understanding of averageness. According to Hobbes, our foresight and the uncertainty of the future make anxiety the fundamental mood of human existence, but in every case there must always be a particular cause of our worry, an object of our concern about which we are anxious. The experience of anxiety, when it disturbs us, certainly provides us with a motive for finding some particular cause for it, but never of itself suggests or explains its own provenance: the mood of anxiety itself tells us nothing. It discloses a threat, but says nothing about it; it discloses the threat as everywhere and nowhere. That we tend to seek some cause for our anxiety when it disturbs us, that we can continually and endlessly fall upon such ‘causes’ for this mood, does not mean that it only ever has a particular object, but rather that it is readily directed to any and every object as it is to any other. That anxiety can be directed to any object means that it is genuinely directed towards none, and therefore authentically undetermined by the objects of our concern. Heidegger’s
7. The Whole of Running Forward

Heidegger finally provides a stirring and strident summary of the results of the project of an authentic being towards death, the formal outlines of an authentic experience of human freedom and the authentic, that is to say, the more profound, response to the fragility of all human existence: “Running forward reveals to the Dasein the lostness in the one-self \([\text{in das Man-selbst}]\) and brings it before the possibility, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, to be it itself, itself however in the passionate, released from the illusions of the one \([\text{des Man}]\), factual, certain of itself, and anxious \([\text{sich aengstenden}]\) freedom towards death.”\(^{58}\) In running ahead into the possibility the Dasein frees itself from the false assurances of security \([\text{das Man}]\) claims to provide, projects its being upon the utter exposedness of human existence, and prepares itself to confront its death in the full passion of its freedom. Running ahead claims the Dasein in the wholeness of its authenticity. Every way of its being is modified by the project of its understanding upon its ownmost possibility. All the relations of authentic understanding gather themselves in the disclosedness of death as the uttermost possibility: “All belonging to being towards death relations for the full content of the characterized uttermost possibility of the Dasein gather therein to reveal, to unfold, and to hold fast the through them constituted running forward as making possible of this

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\(^{58}\) This is not the first time Heidegger employs the word “freedom \([\text{Freiheit}]\)” in \textit{Being and Time}, but all previous appearances of the word in connection with \textit{Angst} and the choice of the ownmost possibility, a choosing which he now elaborates as running forward.
possibility.” Running ahead sets death free in such a way that the Dasein makes possible its possibility in the unity of its being, in contrast to the distracted fragmentation of modern mass society (BT 311/SZ 266).

The authentic understanding discloses human existence, not as the constant concern to acquire the means to commodious self-preservation, nor even as a restless desire for power after power ceasing only in death, but as a fragile, finite possibility that stands in the face of the world’s indeterminate but constant threat, and which, in the end which it ever already ‘is,’ must finally fail. Human life, authentically understood, exists in continual danger, against which it is ultimately powerless. Just as the essence of inclement weather does not consist merely in thunderstorms but in the known disposition thereto, the essence of war does not consist only in battle, but in the period of time during which there is no assurance against its dangers (L 185-186/62). The pure understanding of death reveals its threat more primordially as a generalized indeterminate menace arising continually out of the world as such. Ominous dark clouds, borne on a chilling wind, loom over the clearing of the there. Heidegger’s teaching about human existence does not, as Theodore Kisiel would have it, merely work out to “life is hard,”59 nor even ‘life is struggle,’ but rather, to borrow the language of Hobbes, ‘Life is Warre’; not, to be sure, the war of each man against every other described by Hobbes, which is only suppressed and domesticated by the liberal state into the competitive bustle to acquire the means to commodious living, but a perpetual war of the Dasein against the whole of the world, against the totality of being, which it must certainly lose at its end, the possibility

59 Cf. e.g. Theodore Kisiel, The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time, pp. 537 n. 15, 550 n. 8.
of which impends in every moment of existence. Running ahead grants to the Dasein precisely the anxious courage for freely meeting its doom, that peculiar courage of the soldier who fights on without hope of victory, who continues to fight in the knowledge that in the end he must nevertheless finally lose.

The authentic project of freedom in the pure understanding of death breaks the dominion of the claims of modern mass society over the Dasein, but the result of this lesson is not a withdrawal from political life, as is the case in, for example, the Platonic and Aristotelian inquiries about justice as such, or about the best way of life. On the contrary, the passionate running ahead into the possibility rather positively propels the Dasein, now free for its death, into a politics of a most extreme (and anti-liberal) character. According to Heidegger, the authentic response to the perpetual war of human existence against the whole of being and the indeterminate certainty of our doom, is not to flee into the ultimately futile ‘security’ promised by the public interpretation of death spread about by das Man, but to meet our fate head on, to charge forward into death’s inescapable possibility. The authentic comportment towards death is not merely the sober, grudging acceptance of the fragility of life and the fact that we all must die, the sort of attitude at which we might arrive on the basis of science, or apodictic knowledge about the necessity of death; running forward into death is rather a passionate embrace of mortality in the fullness of its constant menace. In Heidegger’s presentation, moreover, all pragmatic or eudaemonistic objections to the charging ahead of authentic understanding fail to grasp the radical powerlessness of the human in the face of its doom. Any attempt by the Dasein to cling to its factic existence, however authentic, by
the very fact of its clinging, must slip into an inauthentic flight before death, and thus destroy the very freedom and nobility it was attempting to preserve, even if that factic existence remains ‘preserved.’ The nobility of authentic freedom exacts a constant preparedness for human sacrifice in the face of the continual war of what is. Running forward into death, liberated for the authentic possibilities of existence, the free human being wills its death. Free human dignity dwells only within an authentic understanding of death’s constant threat and the essential finitude of possibility.

The inauthentic existence of das Man denies us the courage for anxiety before death, and grinds down all human possibilities into the averageness of the everyday. It is freedom for death that breaks the subjection to the dictatorship of the averageness of das Man. Everything exceptional and rare arises out of human courage, up to and including the pursuit of the question concerning the authentic meaning of being, which, in Heidegger’s presentation, is the highest and most difficult question of philosophy. According to Heidegger, only in and through the defiant courage of running ahead can we hope to reach the answer to the question about the meaning of being, in the rekindling of the battle of giants over being. The courage of running ahead is the way to the truth; whereas Plato’s Socrates apparently held (even if he never adequately proved) that courage is wisdom, in the final analysis Heidegger actually holds that even wisdom is courage. Courage is not only the virtue that displays human freedom most purely. It now shows itself not merely as the virtue of the citizen and the soldier, or as the peculiar virtue of the authentic human being, but as the authentic human virtue, the virtue of virtues; that

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is, it presents itself here as the indispensably necessary, indeed even as the sufficient, condition for human excellence. “‘All greatness stands in the storm...’”61

The rest of Being and Time is only the further working out and appropriation of the anxious conviction of running forward, the further interpretation of the basic experience of existence that grounds Heidegger’s inquiry into the authentic meaning of being. The experience of the possibility of an existing authenticity, that Heidegger will name resolve [Entschlossenheit] is given testimony by the conscience. When thought through to the end, that resolve reveals itself as an authentic being towards death. The disclosedness of the conscience comes into its own as a forward running resolve. The interpretation of the care-structure of the Dasein as temporality, and the happening of ‘temporalizing’ of temporality as historicality, are all only more penetrating elaborations of the experience of the conscience. An authentic being towards death remains the “hidden ground” of the happening of (authentic) historicality, that is, the resolute recovery of the original freedom of the Dasein through its express inheritance or takeover of the thrown project of its can-be; that is to say, its history or fate (BT 438/SZ 386). The continually more penetrating self-interpretations of the succeeding chapters of Being and Time not only progressively unfold Heidegger’s understanding of the authentic meaning of human freedom and the place of that understanding in the pursuit of the question concerning being, but lay out a plan of action for the instruction of a free corps of freedom-fighters who will fight for and reconquer the site of freedom, in order to unlock the authentic possibilities of existence concealed in the understanding that they thereby

61 SA 19.
inherit, overthrow the public dictatorship of \textit{das Man}, and pave the way for a free or authentic battle-community, whose purpose or end is not the commodious self-preservation of its citizens, but the cultivation of the resolve both to take up and endure the tasks and doom of fate, the discipline of the courage for withstanding the self-exposure toward the demands that its destiny lays upon the \textit{Volk}. The politics of \textit{Being and Time} begins and ends with an authentic being towards death.
Chapter Four: The Existential Interpretation of the Conscience

A. The Conscience as Dasein-phenomenon

With the completion of the project of running forward into death, Heidegger has set out the formal outlines of a primordial experience of human freedom, and therewith “made sightable the ontological possibility of an existentiell authentic being towards death.” Nonetheless this project of “the possibility of an authentic potentiality-for-being-whole of the Dasein” has laid out this can-be “only as an ontological possibility.” Heidegger’s discussion of being towards death “let the Dasein, as it were, itself project itself upon this possibility, without holding before and forcing upon it a ‘particular’ [>>inhaltliches<<] ideal of existence ‘from the outside.’” Nonetheless, insofar as it has presented the possibility of an authentic being towards death merely in its formal existential outlines, it “remains... existentielly a fantastic impertinence [Zumutung].” The sheer existential possibility of an authentic being towards death “signifies nothing” until “the corresponding ontical potentiality-for-being has been proven in terms of the Dasein itself.” The practical possibility of an ‘actually’ existing running forward still needs to be demonstrated. If the Dasein never ‘factically’ exists authentically as a whole, if it never holds itself in a pure understanding of death, then not only is the liberation of running ahead an ephemeral project, but there would be also therefore no factual understanding in terms of which any interpretation could grasp and work out the Dasein's being as a whole, in order to expose the horizon of being's understandability. The question about the authentic meaning of being would then be a hopeless pursuit: being would necessarily remain fundamentally mysterious, and the understanding of being
would elude all attempts to articulate it and grasp it conceptually. Accordingly, the “question about an authentic being-whole of the Dasein and of its existential constitution” yet hangs unresolved, until Heidegger can show how the Dasein “gives testimony of a possible authenticity of its existence” which it even “demands from itself,” and “whether the running ahead towards death projected hitherto only in its ontological possibility stands in an essential connection with the attested authentic potentiality for being” (BT 311/SZ 266-267).

The existentiell possibility of an authentic can-be of the Dasein must be attested by the Dasein itself. The Dasein must, purely from itself, give to itself an understanding of its possible whole can-be, or more precisely, give from itself and to itself an understanding of itself “in its possible authentic existence.” This testimony must arise of its own accord, as it were, ‘spontaneously’ from the essential constitution of the Dasein's being. “The phenomenological demonstration [Aufweis] of such an attestation infers [schliesst] therefore the proof of its origin from the constitution of being of the Dasein in itself.” The existential constitution of the Dasein is care. So far as we can speak about it, the Dasein is defined by existence as the self-determination of freedom. The ontological structure of this activity of freedom is care. To infer the constitution of the Dasein as the origin of the call of conscience is to claim that freedom must be the source of its testimony. That is to say: the call of conscience is the voice of (authentic) human self-determination. Firstly and for the most part, however, the Dasein has fallen away from the original freedom of its existence. In its average everydayness the Dasein is not authentically itself, but has lost itself in the everyday and the self of das Man: “The who
of the Dasein *I myself* for the most part am not, but the one-self.” Its “factual potentiality-for-being,” the ways and possibilities of its being, “the tasks, rules, standards, the urgency and extent [Reichweite] of concernful-solicitous being-in-the-world,” are mostly already at the disposal of the average public. Indeed, the possibilities of the Dasein “have ever already been decided about,” even to the extent that in its dominion *das Man* “hides” its mastery over these possibilities from the Dasein itself. In thrall to *das Man* the Dasein is denied precisely “the grasping of these possibilities-of-being,” that is, the “choice” of the way and manner of its existence. “It remains indeterminate, who ‘authentically’ chooses” (BT 312/SZ 267-268).

It ultimately falls to the Dasein to summon itself out of its absorption in the inauthentic everyday to its proper authenticity. “This choiceless being-taken-along by nobody,” in the dominion of *das Man* over the Dasein is only broken if “the Dasein alone hauls itself back to it itself from the lostness in *das Man.*” In losing itself in the everyday the Dasein surrenders its right of governing itself; it can reclaim its genuine self-determination only through recovering the choice of its ownmost can-be. “This hauling back however must have the kind of being through neglect of which the Dasein lost itself in inauthenticity.” In order for authentic existence to be possible, the Dasein must somehow be able to wrench itself back to its genuine, that is, its explicit and authentic self-determination. The Dasein must not only recover, but make good its neglect of, the choice of its possibility. “The hauling-itself-back [Sichzurückholen] out of the one, that is to say, the existentiell modification of the one-self into the *authentic* being-itself, must carry out itself as catching up with a choice [Nachholen einer Wahl].” This “signifies”
bringing itself back before its ownmost can-be, to its authentic freedom, to “choosing this choice.” The essence of the Dasein is freedom, but in order to exist freely, to appropriate for itself its proper freedom, that is, to be authentically free, it must free itself for its freedom, “deciding itself for a potentiality-for-being from {its} own self.” Only in the choice does the Dasein first become truly free: “In the choosing of the choice the Dasein makes possible for itself first of all its authentic potentiality-for-being” (BT 312-313/SZ 268).62

The existential project of an authentic being towards death has, nevertheless, only sharpened the problem of grasping the Dasein in its freedom: the essential freedom of the Dasein is, paradoxically, set free, or awakened in its possibility, only through a prior self-liberation of the Dasein. Only in authentically choosing does the Dasein become authentically free; only as authentically free can the Dasein authentically choose. The circularity of this argument only seems to beg the question. How, therefore, is the possibility of the authentic freedom of the Dasein made possible? The Dasein must of itself haul itself back out of its lostness, must of itself recover its freedom for itself.

62 Heidegger later wrote in a marginal note to this enigmatic sentence: “happening of being [Seinsgeschehnis] - philosophy – freedom” (SZ 444). The choosing of the choice is not only the authentic can-be of the Dasein, but the existential possibility of its genuine freedom, in or through which happens being (or, if one prefers, the event of the breaking out of the Dasein into being), and which originally grounds the occurrence of philosophy authentically understood. This terse but illuminating note suggests that Heidegger’s thought understands itself as arising out of an experience, radically or authentically understood, of the Dasein in a recovery of the authentic can-be of its choosing. The philosophy that responds to the happening of being is also the liberation of the Dasein for its authentic freedom. That this note finds its place in the margins here suggests that it is the phenomenon, which we know as the conscience, that announces or gives voice to this happening of being. The question thus arises as to the relation between the happening of being and the primordial freedom of the Dasein: does freedom originate in the happening of being, does the understanding of being have its primordial source in the happening of freedom, or is the happening of being itself identical with the primordial freedom of the Dasein? Or does some other relation obtain? This question must be pursued later in this study in its appropriate place.
“Because it however has *lost* {itself} in the one, it must first *find* itself.” The Dasein “must be ‘shown’ to itself in its possible authenticity”: it must show itself to itself in the possibility of its ‘real’ or authentic freedom. “The Dasein needs the attestation of a potentiality-for-being-itself, according to the *possibility* which it ever already *is*.” The Dasein is or exists ever already as possibility. In the first instance, having abdicated its responsibility for its essential freedom and given over its possibilities to the disposal of the others, it is, so to speak, only ‘latently,’ ‘potentially,’ or ‘formally’ (as opposed to authentically) free: even in absorption in the everyday the Dasein exists in its essential freedom, but has surrendered its authentic self-government to the dictatorship of *das Man*. In order to be, to exist, to determine itself in the authenticity of its freedom, it first needs to be shown to itself in the mode of its authentic can-be. As we have learned from Heidegger's introduction to the second division of *Being and Time*, “such attestation” of the Dasein’s authentic can-be “is known [bekannt] to the everyday self-interpretation of the Dasein as the *voice of conscience*” (BT 313/SZ 268).

What, in Heidegger’s interpretation, shows the Dasein to itself in its possible authenticity is called the conscience in the ordinary, inauthentic or vulgar understanding; that is to say, ‘conscience’ is the vulgar name for the experience of the Dasein in its authentic freedom. What is called the conscience in the vulgar understanding is the basic experience of the Dasein in and from which the ontological investigation of *Being and Time* clarifies and secures its hermeneutic interpretation of the Dasein. The experience of conscience (or a particular interpretation of it) is the existentiell experience of the Dasein out of or in response to which Heidegger’s thought understands itself as arising. What is
called the voice of conscience in the vulgar understanding is primordially, that is, in the authentic understanding, the happening of being, to which the pursuit of the question concerning the meaning of being hearkens. Hearkening to its voice, as the choosing of the choice, is, in Heidegger’s thought, the primordial source both of authentic philosophy and authentic human freedom. Only through access to this basic experience, only in and through hearkening to the ‘voice of conscience,’ to the happening of being, is the clarification of the Dasein's essential not-yet—that is, the primordial concept of human freedom in being towards death that exposes the horizon of being's understandability and therefore frames any possible answer which we might reach to the question of what we authentically mean by the word ‘being’—at all possible.

The phenomenon of the conscience is, however, hardly a readily or easily accessible experience; not only its interpretation but even the very ‘fact’ of it has been greatly contested over the long history of the tradition. Heidegger notes the disputes about the ‘‘fact’ of conscience,’” that “its court-function [Instanzfunktion] for the existence of the Dasein has been differently assessed,” and the conflict among the “various” interpretations of “‘what it says,’” all of which, taken together, seem only to point to a great uncertainty about even the very ‘existence’ of the phenomenon. He asserts nonetheless that this very questionability is rather the stamp of its profundity: the great obscurity and confusion surrounding the conscience “should only then tempt into an abandonment [Preisgabe] of this phenomenon, if the ‘doubtfulness’ of this fact in relation to its interpretation did not exactly prove, that here a primordial phenomenon of the Dasein lies before [vorliegt] {us}.” That its fact has been so disputed and its
interpretation so contested only shows, according to Heidegger, how much is at stake in the meaning of its ‘speech.’ A thoroughgoing discussion of Heidegger’s treatment of the phenomenon of conscience would require an examination of it in relation to the history of the disputes about it over the course of the tradition. For our purposes here we are principally interested in how his “analysis places the conscience into the thematic fore-having of a purely existential investigation with fundamental-ontological intent,” and in that analysis as the interpretation of the disclosedness of that existentiell experience which, according to Heidegger, not only attests the practical or “existentiell” possibility of authenticity, but also, in its existential interpretation, is to clarify the

63 Heidegger’s reasoning on this point must initially strike us as extremely odd: why should the doubtfulness even of the existence of the conscience as a genuine phenomenon only demonstrates its primordial character? If the mere doubtfulness of an experience is testament to its primordiality, why not rather choose one of any number of experiences of dubious genuineness, such as religious epiphanies, or vivid dreams? Heidegger never expands on his reasoning here, so at most one can only guess at what drives it. Based on the content of earlier sections of *Being and Time*, and anticipating the results of the discussion at the conclusion of this chapter of the particular experience that grounds the existential interpretation, I tentatively offer the following suggestion:

Heidegger’s analysis of everyday being with one another revealed that first of all and mostly the Dasein is absorbed in the falling existence of *das Man*, which is concerned to level all differences of priority and rank, and its attempts to reduce everything exceptional to the average understanding are characterized by ambiguity. If, as seems to be the case, Heidegger takes the differing interpretations to be the result of the attempts of *das Man* to cover over and render ambiguous the understanding of the conscience, then this would seem to suggest that the conscience might represent a primordial experience of the Dasein. We might still ask, why does Heidegger choose the conscience over other experiences of the Dasein, great love, for example, or profound tragedy, or some other powerful experience that has the capacity to sweep away our casual opinions about ourselves and others, for the disclosure of the possibility of authentic existence?

To this question the following answer suggests itself: It turns out to be the case that the existential interpretation of *Being and Time* is a working out and appropriation of the experience of the call; Heidegger composed this work in the grip of the experience of the call, or in the fresh rememberance of it (concerning this point, see part F of this chapter). The doubtfulness of that experience in the everyday understanding was not first the basis of his choice of the revelation of the call for the exposition of the possibility of authenticity. That dubiousness was rather taken as confirmation of the primordiality of that experience once he was already in its grip, on the basis of what it itself gave him to understand about the everyday lostness in the self of *das Man* and the character of its dispensation. Only on the basis of the revelation of the conscience itself does its ordinary dubiousness become proof of its primordial character, of the weight of what it ‘says,’ and of its authority for our understanding of who we most truly or authentically are.
possibility of human freedom as such (BT 313/SZ 268).

We have already seen Heidegger assert in the opening of the second division of *Being and Time* that “like death, this Dasein-phenomenon thus demands a genuinely existential interpretation” (BT 277/SZ 234). His interpretation of the conscience will accordingly set out “its existential foundations and structures” in order to “make visible the conscience as phenomenon of the Dasein by [unter] holding fast to the hitherto gained constitution of being of this being.” Heidegger claims that the conscience is moreover not merely a particular and fleeting experience, which ‘happens’ to human beings from time to time, even a very special one, but rather a *primordial* experience that is rooted in the very constitution of its essence. The existential or “ontological” interpretation of the conscience, like both the preparatory analytic of the Dasein, and the existential interpretation of death, is, according to Heidegger, prior to the psychological, biological, and theological interpretations of the phenomenon. It both “lies before a psychological description of lived experiences of conscience [Gewissenserlebnissen] and their classification”—because as existential interpretation it sets out the structure of any such possible experience—and “likewise outside a biological ‘explanation,’” because in any such explanation the conscience as such disappears; however sensitive or sophisticated, such biological explanation explains it away, “that is,” it amounts to the “dissolution of the phenomenon.” Biology is especially inappropriate to the interpretation of the phenomenon, because through its interpretive lens the conscience finally even ceases to be visible as a phenomenon at all. The existential interpretation of the phenomenon sides with the conscience as it presents itself against the scientific interpretations of the
phenomenon that diminish or even destroy it as a genuine human experience. First and foremost the existential interpretation of the conscience presents itself as a defence of the disclosedness or revelation of the conscience (BT 313/SZ 268-269).

The existential interpretation of the conscience is also distinguished from the “theological exegesis [Ausdeutung]” which uses it for “proofs of God” or as evidence for “an ‘immediate’ consciousness of God.” Just as the existential interpretation is not an explanation of the conscience in terms of an (inhuman or subhuman) efficient material cause which renders it unrecognizable as a human phenomenon (as is even the case when, for example, it is understood as the epiphenomenal result of the operation of biological processes themselves understood as merely present), neither does it treat it as a means of access to superhuman phenomena which are somehow or other supposed to be its source, which are again ultimately understood in terms of sheer presence. According to Heidegger, what every prior treatment of the conscience has in common is a failure to grasp its proper way of being, which, as the conscience is a phenomenon of the Dasein, is ultimately rooted in a failure to grasp appropriately the way of being which is the Dasein’s own. Heidegger’s interpretation accordingly holds fast to the existential constitution that it gained from its preparatory Dasein-analytic. More precisely, and anticipating the conclusion of our discussion, we may say that the prior failure to grasp the proper being of the Dasein is a product of the failure to grasp properly the primordial phenomenon of the conscience, that is, to really listen to what it authentically discloses: Heidegger’s existential interpretation of the conscience only claims to do better justice to the phenomenon itself, to be more faithful to what the conscience tells us than all prior
interpretations of it, and the sacrifice of the theological interpretation of the conscience follows directly from Heidegger’s fundamental intention (BT 313-314/SZ 270).

The most basic ‘fact’ or “finding” to be noticed about the conscience, that is, before it is examined with “further differentiation,” and from which Heidegger’s “analysis of the conscience takes its departure [Ausgang]” is “that in some way it gives one [einem] something to understand.” In other words, the most basic fact about the conscience is that it “discloses.” It therefore of itself shows that it “belongs therefore in the range of the existential phenomena which constitute the being of the there [Sein des Da] as disclosedness,” that is, to the very center of the basic constitution of the Dasein, to the very structure of the laying open of the clearing. If the conscience is “a primordial phenomenon of the Dasein,” then it must be understood as a primordial expression of the Dasein’s essential disclosedness. It follows that the conscience must be analyzed in terms of the constitutive items of the structure of disclosedness: “state of mind, understanding, discourse, and falling.” Such an analysis does not represent merely the application of these existential structures to one particular instance of disclosedness among many, but rather a more penetrating interpretation of disclosedness as such: “The interpretation of the conscience will rather not only lead further the earlier analysis of the disclosedness of the there, but more primordially grasp {it} in view of the authentic being of the Dasein.” The existential interpretation of the conscience will not only provide a phenomenal demonstration of the attestation of the Dasein's possible authentic existence, but as such an attestation, it will deepen the understanding of those existential structures which themselves set the terms for its analysis. The constitution of finite human
understanding will not merely structure the interpretation of the conscience but that very interpretation will itself disclose a more primordial understanding of human finitude (BT 315/SZ 270).

We are now forced, at the very least, to suspect the existence of a special connection between the conscience and the existential interpretation of the Dasein. The conscience is not a merely external phenomenon of the Dasein (however ‘primordial’ it may prove to be) that the existential interpretation merely happens upon, which can fortunately deepen its self-understanding, and which provides the means to grasp the Dasein in its authenticity and totality, so to speak, ‘from the outside.’ Indeed, it will prove to be the case that it can only serve to lead further the earlier analysis of disclosedness because, in and through Heidegger’s interpretation, the conscience (or more precisely, Heidegger’s radical interpretation of it) even shows itself as indeed the very source of the existential interpretation of the Dasein in the first place. The analysis of the conscience (we may say, again, by way of anticipation) can disclose this more primordial understanding of human finitude because, according to Heidegger, the conscience is itself the primordial disclosedness of the Dasein. That this is the case can be proven, however, only on the basis of an examination of the existential interpretation of the conscience.

Since the existential structures of the basic constitution of “the being which we call Dasein” center in disclosedness, it “is in the possibility for being its there [sein Da zu sein].” Through the essential disclosedness of the Dasein, it is disclosed to itself “with its world.” With the being of the there, “it is there for itself.” It discloses its world to itself
“first of all and mostly” in terms of the immediate business of the everyday, “in terms of the concerned ‘world.’” It projects itself upon its possibilities according to the “public interpretedness.” In thrall to the dictates of das Man, the Dasein listens away to the din of the masses of interchangeable others who make up the great faceless crowd. “Losing itself in the publicness of the one and its idle talk it fails to hear [ueberhoert] its own self in listening to the one-self.” Amidst the cacophony of averageness, the Dasein ‘cannot hear itself think,’ or better, ‘cannot hear itself be.’ Any attestation of a possible authenticity must break this listening away to das Man such that it is able to hear its own self. Such an attestation must free it “from this lostness of the failing to hear itself”; it “must” be such that the Dasein “can first find itself.” For the Dasein to be freed from its subjection to das Man, the “listening away must be broken.” One hearing can only be interrupted or broken by another hearing, by “the possibility of a hearing” that “interrupts” it. The hearing, which is the “possibility of such a break,” is an “unmediated being-called [Angerufenwerden].” This “call” that interrupts “breaks” the thrall of das Man “when it according to its call-character wakes a hearing which in everything is oppositely characterized in relation to the lost hearing.” The call cannot be heard by the hearing that listens away, but rather awakens a hearing through which the Dasein is able to find itself, hearing itself listening away, hearing itself not hear itself. “What gives to understand calling in this manner, is the conscience” (BT 315-316/SZ 270-271).

This call, like any calling, is a “mode of speech [Rede],” and speech “articates [gliedert] intelligibility.” Heidegger does not take this calling merely as a metaphor or analogy for the conscience, “in no way only a ‘picture,’ as for instance the Kantian law
court-representation of the conscience.” The conscience “is not being compared with a call” in this interpretation, but rather “understood as speech in terms of [aus] the for-the-Dasein-constitutive disclosedness.” The conscience is not being compared to a call, as Kant compares it to a court of law, and then ‘analyzed’ in relation to the structure of the other being to which it has been compared by way of analogy, but analyzed as a call, in terms of the existential structure which belongs to speech as a way of the being of the Dasein. The analogies and metaphors that readily suggest themselves to describe the experience of the phenomenon are no substitute for the unflinching analysis of what the phenomenon discloses. These everyday pictures of the conscience (which must be merely inauthentic impositions upon it, if they are not derived from the disclosedness of the call, existentially or authentically understood) must even pervert or evade the authentic content of the call. The call is not merely a metaphor for the conscience, but is itself the being of the conscience (BT 316/SZ 271).

The call of the conscience is a ‘voice’ strangely without any “announcement [Verlautbarung].” Although the utterance of the conscience “factically is never findable [vorfindlich],” its “‘voice’” can however be “comprehended [aufgefasst] as giving-to-understand.” Through dispensing with analogies and comparisons we are brought directly before the phenomenon in all the mysteriousness of its revelation. Without utterance the call noiselessly sends out a summons, which reaches him who has the ‘ears’ to hear it. “In the tendency of disclosing of the call lies the moment of the push, of the abrupt arousal. Called is out of the far into the far. By the call is struck {he} who wants to be hauled back.” The phenomenological interpretation of this experience of the
'voice' of conscience and its “characterization” as call lays out “the phenomenal horizon for the analysis of its existential structure.” This analysis of its existential structure is nothing other than the interpretation—the working out and appropriation—of what the conscience gives to understand. Heidegger's analysis can accordingly present itself as more ‘conscientious’ than all other interpretations of the phenomenon: this existential interpretation, which clears away the everyday misinterpretations of the conscience, and is thus a strict letting appear of the call ‘in itself,’ will let it ‘speak,’ and allow what it authentically ‘says’ to be heard, purely in itself without the interference of the obfuscations of das Man. The existential interpretation is such that the voice of the conscience can speak through it; it not only does not obstruct but positively enables the call to ‘speak’ directly to the Dasein of the reader. In this way the existential analytic of Being and Time places itself in the service of the conscience (BT 316/SZ 271).64

The ‘voice’ of the conscience is a giving to understand, which is to be analyzed in terms of its call-character. “To speech,” which includes the call of conscience as a mode of speech, “belongs the spoken about about-which [Worueber].” The articulation of speech “gives information about something and that [das] in determinate regard.” The speech “draws” what it says, “the spoken [Geredete] as such,” from “the thus spoken about.” In the call, “the spoken about” is the same as “the appealed to,” which is “manifestly the Dasein itself,” a “target [Ziel]” which is yet “indeterminate” but “incontestable.” Along “with the disclosedness of its world” in the project upon for-the-sake-of-which the Dasein is “disclosed to itself, so that it always already understands

64 Cf. Section F, “The Existential Interpretation and the Project of Freedom,” below, pp. 306 and
First of all and mostly the Dasein understands itself in an “everyday-average” way (BT 317/SZ 272). The self is only the way of being of the Dasein; there is nothing, no substratum, behind the self as the way of being of its understanding; “the ‘substance’ of the human it not spirit as the synthesis of soul and body, but existence” (BT 153/SZ 117). It is therefore the Dasein in the self-understanding of das Man, the “one-self [Man-selbst],” the average self-understanding of the “concerned being-with with others” of everyday existence that “is struck by the call” (BT 317/SZ 272).

The call calls the Dasein in its average everyday self-understanding, the self of das Man, to its “own self.” In calling the Dasein to itself, the call completely disregards the everyday possibilities of the “public with-one-another.” The “worldly understanding” of the Dasein “is passed over in this appeal.” In the call directly to “the self of the one-self,” without any respect for the public interpretedness of das Man, “the one collapses [sinkt... in sich zusammen].” The self of das Man exists only in and as an understanding. The power of the call, in ignoring the dispensation of the public, casts down its thrall over the Dasein. “Exactly in the passing over” the call of conscience displays the worthlessness of the average prescriptions and “pushes the keen for public regard one into insignificance [Bedeutungslosigkeit].” According to Heidegger it would be a misunderstanding to suppose that in the call the Dasein is pulled into itself, “closed off” from the “‘external world,’” into “passing judgement [Beurteilung]” on itself as an “‘object,’” into examining the purity of its ‘motives’ or the causes of its behaviour, into moral hand-wringing, or worse, into the psychologist's office. However ‘useful’ for the following.
maintenance of everyday life, these are all in fact inauthentic ways of evading and perverting what the conscience gives us to understand, namely the lostness of freedom’s self-determination in the average self of das Man (BT 317-319/SZ 273-274).

One could rightly ask, however, how it is Heidegger can determine that the call does not summon us to any of the average possibilities of everyday concern, nor to judge ourselves in the ‘court of conscience’? The direction of the summons can be decided with reference to what the call calls. At first the call appears to be singularly unhelpful in deciding this question: “What does the conscience call to the appealed? Taken strictly - nothing. The call asserts nothing [sagt nichts aus], gives no information about world-events has nothing to recount [erzählen].” If indeed “the call dispenses with any announcement,” to the extent that “it brings itself indeed not at all to words,” would this not mean then that every interpretation of the conscience is at least as valid as any other (BT 318/SZ 273)?

In Heidegger’s presentation, exactly the opposite is rather the case: “The lack of a wordly formulation” is not merely “the indeterminateness of a mysterious voice,” but should only rule out the “expectation of communication,” in the manner of a spoken announcement. That the conscience gives no announcement is not a proof of its ‘non-existence,’ nor does it indicate that its giving-to-understand is in any way “equivocal,” but only that it “speaks solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent.” The nothing which the conscience calls precisely rules out its most common interpretations, that of Kant included: “least does it struggle thereafter to open up a ‘soliloquy’ in the appealed to self”; nor does it “put... the appealed to self... up for a ‘trial.’” These ways of
interpreting the conscience amount to nervous chattering evasions of its silent summons, whose target is unambiguous. The nothing that the call calls, when it is properly heard, rather breaks the listening away of the public interpretedness of das Man, through which the Dasein is thereby “summoned to itself, that is, to its ownmost potentiality-for-being-itself,” which does not cut it off from the world of its concerns but is precisely “a calling forth (and 'forward') of the Dasein into its ownmost possibilities.” Though the nothing of the call means that its content is an “apparent indeterminateness” which is subject to “a different interpretation” by each Dasein “according to its possibilities of understanding,” Heidegger nonetheless insists that the call takes “a secure direction of impact [Einschlagsrichtung].” We should note that Johannes Fritsche helpfully observes that Einschlagsrichtung is a specifically military term for the path, which a “bomb or shell” takes on its way to striking its target, “in which it is most effective.” For Heidegger, the call of conscience is a bomb or artillery shell that unerringly drops in out of the blue to strike and shatter the everyday self-understanding and its absorption in the publicness of das Man, rousing the Dasein to the war of existence. For the inauthentic self, hearing the call of conscience is the experience of its annihilation (BT 318/SZ 273-274).

Having set out both the target of the call and the ‘content’ of what it says, Heidegger turns to the final item of his interpretation of the conscience as a call, the identity of its mysterious ‘voice.’ Calling without announcement, the call also gives no indication of its origin. “Not only is the called intended by the call ‘without regard for his person,’ but the caller maintains itself in a conspicuous indeterminateness.” The call

65 Johannes Fritsche, *Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger’s Being and Time,*
itself makes no response to questions about its identity or its source, its “name, condition, origin, or regard.” This silence of the call does not mean that it is ‘nothing’ or ‘noone.’ The reticent silence of the call means to exclude the “possibility of making it familiar for a ‘worldly’ oriented understanding of the Dasein.” The anonymity of the caller is “a positive distinction,” by which it shows its concern solely to give summons, solely to be heard, hearing no questions, brooking no objections. Allowing itself to become familiar, to be reasoned with and interrogated would lessen the starkness of its uncanny appeal, and, in Heidegger’s presentation, questions about the identity of the call are only delay, or worse, a foothold for prevarication by arguing about its demands, and therefore in practice only so much foot-dragging. When it comes to the conscience ‘ours is not to wonder why,’ ours is but to heed and obey (or not). The conscience thus hardly shows itself as an ally of deliberation. The stern demand of its silent voice is not ‘ask why,’ but ‘choose, NOW!’ (BT 319/SZ 274-275).

This characterization of the conscience would seem to constitute an objection to Heidegger’s own existential interpretation. In reply, Heidegger draws a distinction between the hearing of the call, and the clarification of the thrown project of the call and the understanding that corresponds with it. He reaffirms the prohibition implicit in the call, and lends his own voice to the demand of its summons: in practice, when the conscience calls us, its ‘voice’ (which the existential interpretation lets be heard in its purity) must simply be heeded. Heidegger nonetheless does himself pursue this question, and if he therefore seems to exempt himself from both the direct summons of the call and

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 320, (ch. 4 n. 7).
his own admonishment, it is only by virtue of carrying out an existential analysis of the Dasein, for the sake of pursuing the meaning of being in general, for which he claims special warrant. In order to lay out the attestation of the Dasein's authentic can-be (for the sake of exposing the horizon of being's intelligibility), the analysis of the “facticity of the calling and the existentiality of the hearing” cannot be avoided, but is indeed a positive necessity. One might simply conclude that Heidegger claims such warrant merely on the basis of existential analysis as a scientific discipline, as one scientific discipline among others deriving its supposed priority ultimately from its scientific character (BT 319/SZ 275).

But this merely avoids the issue. In the face of the summons of the call, why should any science be presumed to enjoy such priority? Especially in light of Heidegger's admonitions that the call should simply be heeded, such a ‘warrant’ would prove to be totally inadequate. Existential analysis is ultimately one existentiell possibility of the Dasein. How should it be weighed against the Dasein's ownmost possibility? When it comes to the matter of hearkening to the call, even the most rigorous science would constitute only a more sophisticated prevarication, an attempt to drown out or to flee from the call made only more elaborate, and only more inauthentic, by its comprehensiveness and supposed rigour.66 Given that Heidegger sides with the practical authority of the conscience, we must rather suppose that the warrant of

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66 To be clear, this is not to say that Heidegger considers that science as such must constitute an inauthentic evasion of the call. Sein und Zeit itself furnishes the model of an authentic scientific response to the call, and in such works as “What Is Metaphysics?” and “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” Heidegger elaborates further upon the practice of an authentic science that listens to what the call discloses, in contrast to the rootless or inauthentic pursuit of science that characterizes the contemporary university.
existential analysis derives not from its learnedness or from an essentially scientific warrant enjoyed exclusively by the existential interpretation by virtue of its pursuit of the fundamental question of ontology, but rather from a special connection to the call. We have already seen that the existential interpretation of the conscience will let its call be heard in the purity of its ‘voice.’ That interpretation is inadequate as a working out of what the call gives to understand unless it also exposes the identity of the caller, which will indeed prove to be an integral part of its disclosure. Existential analysis gets its warrant in this case not as science, but through the assistance it renders the conscience in being heard through clearing away the misinterpretations, inauthentic and otherwise, of what it gives to understand, and therefore as a vehicle for the call of its ‘voice,’ which testifies to the existentiell or practical possibility of the authentic freedom or self-determination of the Dasein. Heidegger’s inquiry into the authentic meaning of being shows itself, in both defending the existentiell, that is, practical possibility of freedom (to which the conscience attests) and transmitting its demands (as vehicle for the interpretive clarification of the call), as both a ‘metaphysics of morals’ and a ‘critique of practical reason.’ In the existential interpretation, the question concerning the meaning of being therefore shows itself not simply as a theoretical question but as an eminently moral-practical one.

The question of the identity of the voice is quickly answered in Heidegger's interpretation. The caller of the conscience is the Dasein itself. This is not to say that the Dasein is consciously or deliberately responsible for the call, that it is somehow or other in its power, nor is it to say that the call has any other being as its source. Previous
interpretations of the phenomenon have seized upon one side of the experience in order to explain it, but have failed to do it proper justice, and thus in these ‘explanations’ the conscience has only been “explained away.” Either the strangeness of the call has led to an interpretation of the conscience as an “alien power,” for which one supplies a “possessor”—a god—and covering over it as a phenomenon of the Dasein, as a phenomenon without any other apparent source. Or one interprets the call solely in regard to its source in the human being, psychologically or biologically, therewith not only ‘explaining’ the phenomenon, but ‘explaining it away,’ denying to it the status of a primordial human experience (BT 320/SZ 275).

According to Heidegger, both of these interpretations of the conscience “leap over the phenomenal findings too quickly,” on the basis of a “guiding ontological dogmatic thesis,” not only “unexpressed” but also unwarranted, that “what is, that is, as actual as the call, must be present-at-hand.” The existential interpretation that Heidegger develops in these pages, denying this unspoken thesis about being, will attempt to do justice to both sides of the experience of conscience, “to hold fast not only to the phenomenal findings in general - that the call goes out to me coming from me and over me - but also to the ontological preliminary drawing [Vorzeichnung] of the phenomenon lying therein as of one such of the Dasein.” The being of the Dasein is not defined by sheer presence; the being or essence of man is not ‘substance’ but existence. As a phenomenon of the Dasein, the call cannot be understood in terms of mere presence (BT 320/SZ 275-276).

There remains the question, however, of the relation between the experience of the call and the denial that the conscience can be made intelligible in terms of mere
presence. Heidegger has now explicitly moved from the claim that the existential interpretation of the conscience is prior to its theological interpretation, and that the existential structures of the Dasein’s being must necessarily serve as the framework for its interpretation, to ruling out the theological interpretation of the conscience altogether (as was implied at the opening of his analysis): at least as regards the interpretation of the call, existential interpretation now reveals the atheism inherent to its analysis that was earlier only implicit. With what warrant can the existential interpretation claim that the conscience is a phenomenon of the Dasein, that the Dasein is itself the caller, especially in light both of the strangeness of its voice, and of the Dasein’s admitted lack of deliberate responsibility for the call? Heidegger answers that the “‘it’ calls does not yet justify seeking the caller in a being not of the character of Dasein,” and that this can be shown with reference to the constitution of being of the Dasein. The concrete constitution of the Dasein's being (that is, freedom) is care, which elaborates itself in existence, facticity, and falling. Having been “delivered over to existence,” the Dasein ever exists in the facticity of its thrownness, “as {a} being, which, how it is and is able to be, has to be.” This facticity “belongs to the disclosedness of the ‘there.’” While the state of mind that accompanies every understanding “brings the Dasein more or less explicitly and authentically before its ‘that it is and ... has to be,’” only rarely does its mood bring it squarely before its thrownness. “Mostly, however, the mood closes off the thrownness.” In this way the “Dasein flees before this into the relief of the supposed freedom of the one-self,” a ‘freedom’ about which the self of das Man makes a lot of
noise, but in which it divests itself of having to make any authentic choices. The Dasein mostly flees before the “uncanniness” of its thrownness into the faceless averageness of the everyday. Only in the mood of Angst, does “uncanniness reveal itself authentically” and the Dasein authentically come before its thrownness, that is, “before the nothing of the world” (BT 320-321/SZ 276).

The caller of the conscience is the Dasein “which finds itself [sich befindende] in the ground of its uncanniness,” the self from which it has fled, which it has lost in its escape into urgencies of the everyday, and therewith into absorption in the averageness of das Man. As “the bare ‘that-it-is’ in the nothing of the world,” the identity of the caller is indeterminable in terms of the possibilities of the everyday. The conscience speaks in the mode of keeping silent. The caller says nothing because it simply has ‘nothing’ to say. This ‘nothing’ is not the nothing of meaninglessness or of insignificance, but the nothing of the world, the essential nothingness of the thrown existence of the Dasein. This called nothing is thus a summons to return back from its lostness in das Man, to face its thrownness, the “uncanniness” which is “the basic kind of being-in-the-world.” What the call gives to understand, attuned by the essential mood of anxiety, summons the Dasein “to project itself upon its ownmost potentiality-for-being.” Even in its lostness in das

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67 This sentence might be taken as confirmation that Heidegger has liberal democracy more strongly in mind when he speaks of inauthentic existence of das Man and the dictatorship of the public, than I have suggested. In German the connection between the “supposed freedom [Freiheit]” of the average self of das Man and the freedom of liberal government is more obvious, since a German word for ‘liberal’ is freiheitlich. Of course, while liberalism speaks about its way of life in terms of the freedoms it provides, it was not the only type of politics to do so: the social democratic parties of Europe were at one with liberalism in this regard, and even the revolutionary socialism of the Soviet Union also justified itself in terms of freedom. In his Introduction to Metaphysics, referring to the immediate situation of Europe, Heidegger also characterized the Soviet Union as an extreme expression of the dictatorship of das Man: “Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same; the same
Man, the Dasein is unable to completely escape the uncanniness of being-in-the-world, because, finally, it is no more able to escape its forgotten self than the basic constitution of its being. Caller and call are rooted in the very constitution of the Dasein's being: “The conscience manifests itself as {the} call of care: the caller is the Dasein, being-anxious [sich aengstigend] in thrownness (already-being-in...) about its potentiality-for-being.”

Care does not merely structure the phenomenon of the conscience, but shows itself as itself the source, that is, the very condition of its possibility. The conscience now reveals itself as the voice of the structural totality of the Dasein's essential freedom (BT 322-323/SZ 277-278).

Heidegger accordingly concludes that, “there need be [bedarf es] then no resort [Zuflucht] to powers not of the character of Dasein.” Such “recourse [Rueckgang]” to inhuman or superhuman powers is not a phenomenally appropriate working out of the call, but “so little clarifies the uncanniness of the call that it rather annihilates it.”

Supplying the conscience with a superhuman source or possessor of its power obscures the primordial homelessness of the human being, the abandonment of the Dasein to the nothingness of existence, which the call itself proclaims, because the presence of such a superhuman power which would make such demands of us provides a support and therefore a comfort in the face of the abyss of the world. For none of these—neither power, nor support, or nor comfort— in the silent nothing of its call the conscience grants us no warrant for supposing any of these; its mysteriousness only appears to authorize such an interpretation when we failed to hear it authentically. The earlier

hopeless frenzy of unfettered technology and of the rootless organization of the normal man” (IM
“‘explanations’” of the call failed because “one took a look too briefly for the fixing of the phenomenal findings of the call.” Paradoxically, earlier interpretations of the call, precisely by rating the Dasein's being “too low” (either as merely present living being or creature, consigning the call to mere nervous symptom, or even, denying that the Dasein is its source at all), therewith failed to appreciate fully its radical powerlessness in the face of the mysterious threat constantly arising out of the clearing of the there. The earlier ‘explanations’ of the conscience, including and even especially the interpretation of the conscience as the voice of God, were insufficiently conscientious in their interpretation of what the call gives to understand. The theological interpretation of the call must therefore also be discarded, no less than the psychological, anthropological, and biological interpretations of the experience of conscience. Heidegger's interpretation of the call of conscience accordingly surrenders the comforts that theology provides, but it does so on the basis of what the conscience discloses, turning against revealed religion on the basis of revelatory experience (conscience) itself (BT 323/SZ 278). The existential analysis of conscience therefore could be said ‘to sacrifice God for the nothing,’ but it climbs the final rung of Nietzsche’s “ladder of religious cruelty” (BGE section 55) in this fashion precisely because the conscience demands it. The atheism of existential phenomenology thus represents precisely a conscientious abandonment or sacrifice of God. According to Heidegger’s interpretation, the theistic objection to the existential interpretation of the conscience only reveals that the objector has failed to really listen to the call whose status and authority it claims to defend.
Heidegger anticipates the objection that the interpretation of the conscience as an (alien) power (possessed by a superhuman being not of the character of Dasein), is nevertheless a “dispassionate recognition of an ‘objectively findable’ {fact},” but counters that “rightly seen” this interpretation of the call as an ‘objective’ power “is only a flight before the conscience,” a flight from the uncanny silence of the call, and thus in fact an inauthentic response to its summons. The reverence it holds and the right it claims for its objective power is actually “an escape of the Dasein” from “the uncanniness of its being.” This sort of interpretation claims to encounter a power that all must recognise, and to whose guidance everyone ought to submit themselves: “The said interpretation of the conscience gives itself out as recognition of the call in the sense of a ‘universally’-binding voice, which speaks ‘not merely subjectively.’” Carried further according to this interpretation, “this ‘universal’ conscience is exalted to a ‘world-conscience.’” When interpreted as a ‘universal’ or world conscience, however, the call is ‘transformed’ into a “‘public conscience.’” When generalized in this way, all become subject to the ‘conscience,’ to be sure, but in an average way: we heed the call of the universal ‘conscience’ in the same way that every other one heeds it. This universal ‘conscience,’ to which all are equally subject in the same average way, and which therefore goes about, nay, demands, this averageness, is thus indistinguishable from the dictates of *das Man*. In the interpretation of the call as an objective power, the voice of conscience disappears and is replaced by “the voice of the one”; in this ‘universal’ interpretation *das Man* only drowns out and passes itself off as the call, in order to cloak its dictatorship in the authority of the conscience. Even the Christian moral teaching (in
which all are equal before the Lord), and especially the conscience-interpretation of Kant and the morality it founds, with its categorical imperative which stresses the universalizability of its maxims, the criterion of which is *publicity*, are only the average publicness of *das Man*, decked out in the austere garb of righteousness, going about the business of the meek domestication of the faceless mass. Authentically understood, the notion of a public conscience is, in Heidegger’s interpretation, a contradiction in terms. The conscience is rather a radically individual phenomenon of the Dasein, to the extent that it even destroys the power of the dictatorship of the public (BT 323/SZ 278).

The ‘power’ of the conscience and the summons of its call, authentically understood, are in no way universal but rather, as the call of the lost self of the Dasein, alone in the face of the nothing, could not be more particular: “the conscience in ground and essence is *ever mine*.” The call calls both to me alone, calling me to my “ownmost potentiality-for-being,” and “comes from the being, which I myself ever am.” Heidegger's interpretation of the call can once more present itself as more phenomenally appropriate, as an interpretation “which purely follows from the phenomenal character of the call,” as more faithful to the phenomenon, or, what is the same, as a more conscientious interpretation of the call, and therefore a more authentic working out of what it gives. Contrary to the objection that follows from the ‘universal’ understanding of the conscience, Heidegger denies that his interpretation of the phenomenon renders it “‘merely subjective’”: “On the contrary, the inexorability and unequivocality of the call only [erst] thus become free.” The “‘objectivity’” of the call “only retains its right” through the existential interpretation, that “leaves to it its ‘subjectivity.’” It is precisely
this subjectivity “which admittedly [freilich] denies dominion to the one-self.” The ‘subjectivity’ of the call is authentically indistinguishable from the genuine force of its summons. It is thus paradoxically not the existential, but the ‘universal’ interpretation, which denies the conscience its true or rightful force. The ‘objective power’ of the conscience is encountered in its purity only in the fullness of its particularity, in, so to speak, its ‘ipsissimosity’; not in the exposition of universal maxims, but only in a sufficiently formalized existential interpretation. The call of conscience holds the Dasein fully in its grip only by appealing to it in its unique individuality (BT 323/SZ 278).

Having exhibited the conscience “as phenomenon of the Dasein,” in terms of its “ontological constitution,” having analyzed the conscience as the call of care in the to whom, what, and whence of its call, Heidegger's existential interpretation up to this point only “serves as preparation for the task, to make understandable the conscience as a lying-in-the-Dasein-itself attestation of its ownmost potentiality-for-being.” This attestation appears in its “full determinateness” only with the exhibition of “character” that “must” belong to “the to-the-calling-genuinely-corresponding hearing,” that is to say, the way of being of that Dasein which hearkens to the summons of the call. The hearing of the call is nothing more than a manner in which the Dasein projects itself. Consequently, “authentic understanding is not an only attaching itself addition to the phenomenon of conscience,” but rather forms an essential part of the hearing of the call, of the experience of conscience, of the phenomenon of the conscience as a whole. “From the understanding of the appeal and in one with it the full experience of conscience first lets itself be grasped.” Heidegger’s interpretation of the conscience is so far from an
external interpretation (indeed Heidegger denies that this would even be possible) that it explicitly claims to work it out from within an authentic understanding of the call. It follows that the existential interpretation itself can only be fully grasped in an authentic understanding of the appeal, that is, to the extent that the existential interpretation lets be heard (and the reader hearkens to) “what the conscience gives to understand.” The “explicit discussion” of this called understanding can “only” be reached through the guidance of “the analysis of the understanding of the appeal.” In every interpretation of it, the conscience seems to speak unequivocally of “guilt [Schuld].” The first step in making the conscience intelligible as an attestation of the Dasein's ownmost (that is, authentic) can-be, is therefore “to conceive existentially the ‘guilty’ called in the conscience” (BT 324-325/SZ 279-280).

B. The Existential Concept of Guilt

Having mounted a preliminary defence of the interpretation of the conscience as the call of care, Heidegger now circles back again to the call, “in order to grasp phenomenally what is heard in the understanding of the appeal [das im Anrufverstehen Gehoerte].” The conscience calls the self of das Man back to its ownmost can-be. The whence of the summons of the call is the heard in the understanding; the existential concept of the ‘guilty’ which the conscience calls is thus the interpretation of the understanding of this ownmost can-be. This cannot be the interpretation of any “concrete single existence-possibility.” If the existential analysis “rightly understands itself in its
methodical possibilities and tasks,” then it knows that the interpretation of the heard ‘guilty’ is not the uncovering of a single possibility of existence, of the factual content of a particular existentiell choice, but of “what belongs to the existential condition of the possibility of the ever factical-existential potentiality-for-being.” The existential analysis of the ‘guilty’ is the interpretation of the necessary existential structure of any particular way of being to which the call might summon the Dasein. The call is not merely one factual can-be, but it represents the condition for the possibility of any authentic existence as such (BT 325/SZ 280).

The call gives us “nothing” to understand. Out of “the uncanniness of thrown individualization” the call calls the Dasein to the possibility that is most its own, and this “whence” of the call is “disclosed with [miterschlossen]” its summons. The whence and whither of the summons are in fact one: “The whence of the calling in calling forth to... is the whither of the calling back.” The call does not utter commands which are equally valid for all; on the contrary the disclosedness of its summons could not be more ‘personal’ and idiosyncratic: “The call gives to understand no ideal, universal potentiality-for-being; it discloses it as the particularly individualized of the particular Dasein.” The call can only be “fully determined” in its “character of disclosure” when it is understood as a “calling forth call-back.” It is in terms of these results of the existential analysis of the conscience hitherto that the existential structure of the heard ‘guilty’ is to be laid out. As a phenomenon of the Dasein, the conscience is voice of care. The ‘nothing’ that it calls is always understood as somehow pronouncing guilt: despite being “so wholly differently determined,” all experiences and interpretations concur
about "this ‘agreed’ experienced ‘guilty.’” Guilt is a way of the being of the Dasein. If the call has its origin in the being of the Dasein, then the “idea of the guilt” that the conscience calls “must be previously sketched out [vorgezeichnet] in the Dasein”: guilt too must have the structural totality of the Dasein's essential freedom as its primordial source if indeed “an understanding of the essence of guilt is possible.” If the idea of guilt inheres in the very constitution of the being of the Dasein, then we must be able to catch sight of the phenomenon even in its average everydayness. The “trail, which can lead to the revealing of the phenomenon,” must begin with everyday speech. “All ontological investigations of phenomena such as guilt, conscience, {and} death must start in that which the everyday interpretation of Dasein ‘says’ about it.” Even though the inauthentic interpretation of guilt “does not reach the ‘essence,’” it nevertheless bears essential traces of the original phenomenon: “in every seeing-wrong [Fehsehen] lies co-revealed an assignment to the primordial idea of the phenomenon.” Heidegger's interpretation accordingly takes as its “criterion for the primordial existential meaning of the ‘guilty’” the ‘fact’ “that this ‘guilty’ turns up as predicate of the ‘I am.’” The phenomenon of guilt lies in “the being of the Dasein as such”; as the criterion for the existential meaning of guilt, the ‘I am’ leads to the thesis that the Dasein “already, sofar as it ever factically exists, is also guilty.” The guilt of conscience is an interpretation of the existence of the Dasein, of the whole of its being, and thus shows itself as an interpretation of care. Guilt is only another word for freedom in its structural totality (BT 325-326/SZ 280-281).

The existential concept of guilt is to be reached by starting from its everyday sense. Heidegger’s report of the everyday meanings of guilt already reads as a sort of
'genealogy,' beginning with an origin in property and exchange and tracing the development of the idea through its detachment from its original source finally through to its full independence as moral responsibility.\textsuperscript{68} First: “Everyday common sense [Verstaendigkeit]” understands guilt (or more precisely, the “being-guilty” of the Dasein) “first of all” as “‘having debts’ [\textit{Schulden haben}],” that is, in terms of “the claims which others have made as to their possessions,” or in terms of “what is concernable [Besorgbares].” This initial meaning of guilt finds its place in the commonplace contractual relations of our everyday business. Second, the expression “being-guilty” carries the further connotation of “‘being responsible for’ [\textit{schuld sein an}]” in the sense of “being-cause or -author [Ursache-, Urheber-sein] of something, or even ‘being-occasion’ for something.” In this second meaning the idea of guilt separates itself from business exchange and material recompense: “In the sense of this ‘having responsibility’ [\textit{Schuld habens}] for something, one can ‘be guilty’ without owing something to another or becoming ‘indebted’ [\textit{schuldig zu werden}].” As the cause of a coming to pass, one may become culpable even outside the relations of everyday business exchange, in domains of life not immediately connected to the objects of our everyday concern, as, for example, in the responsibility for the care of an older relative, or of a private task (BT 327/SZ 281-282).

\textsuperscript{68} This is of course also Nietzsche’s derivation of the origin of conscience and moral responsibility. Cf. GM2, especially section 4. Heidegger’s treatment accordingly needs to be read in light of Nietzsche’s; given the importance of conscience in the thought of both I regard the question of this relation as of very great consequence for understanding Heidegger’s thought. In these pages the comparison with Nietzsche’s interpretation of the conscience is nevertheless necessarily confined to the extent of its usefulness for the purposes of the present study, which concerns itself with Heidegger’s interpretation of the conscience in the first instance as the interpretation of that basic human experience through which alone the Dasein can be grasped in the totality of its freedom.
Third, these first two meanings of guilt “can go together and determine a comporting which we call ‘making oneself responsible [>>sich schuldig machen<<].’” Only finally in this third meaning which “being-guilty” (now) carries (for us) does it acquire any sense of taking responsibility for something; only in this third meaning do we arrive at guilt in the full sense of moral responsibility, of promise simply, purely independent from the exchange relations of its origin: “The requirement which one fails to satisfy need not necessarily be related to any possession, it can regulate the public with-one-another in general.” Nor need “being-guilty” in this sense come about through “breaking the ‘public’ law”; one can become guilty of causing even very great harm to another without behaving in any way illegally. Furthermore, one can make oneself responsible by assuming moral culpability for guarding and maintaining the continued success of an enterprise or undertaking, prior to incurring any ‘guilt’ in the first two senses, for failing to live up to one’s self-chosen obligations. “The formal concept of being-guilty” that can be derived from these three “vulgar” meanings of guilt “lets itself be determined” as “being-ground for a lack in the Dasein of another, so indeed, that this being-ground itself determines itself in its for-which as ‘lacking’” (BT 327-328/SZ 282).

Heidegger explicitly excludes consideration of the origin of the requirements of the public law and morality, and therefore of being-guilty in relation to any particular requirements of morality. The interpretation of the conscience in Being and Time does not become a clarification of particular (everyday) moral requirements in terms of their possible everyday sources, to say nothing of a critique of those claims in terms of their aims and intentions. In practice the call must simply be heeded; far be it from the
existential interpretation for supplying reasons for putting its authentic demands on trial. Without disputing the legitimacy of the demand of the call, it seeks, rather, the “clarification” of moral guilt as a way of the being of the Dasein through the abstraction of guilt from the ideas of “worthiness for punishment [Strafwürdigkeit], indeed even having debts with...,” ideas which have ordinarily determined or rather confused the understanding of the phenomenon and “pushed aside” its interpretation “into the domain [Bezirk] of concern in the sense of the equalling out balancing up of claims.” As a consequence the vulgar interpretation of the conscience projects the meaning of ‘guilt’ in terms of an absorption in the everyday. The existential interpretation of the conscience is only a critique of inauthentic moralism to the extent that it seeks to tear away the inauthentic distortions and evasions of the call, in order to present its genuine demands in their purity (BT 328/SZ 282-283).

The guilt of the nothing called by the ‘voice’ cannot, according to Heidegger, be interpreted in terms of the standards and requirements of our everyday business. “The idea of ‘guilty’” must rather “be conceived in terms of the kind of being of the Dasein.” The meaning of the guilt of the nothing must be presented in all the force of its existential essence, apart from any considerations of empirical ‘pragmatism.’ Heidegger's interpretation consequently represents a radical rejection of the common sense understanding of guilt, even and especially of what the “vulgar” understanding takes to be its most essential import: whereas our ordinary understanding interprets being-guilty directly in terms of our concernful relation to others, Heidegger's existential analysis interprets being-guilty solely in terms of the constitution of the Dasein alone, in its most
radical individualization. “Towards this purpose the idea of ‘guilty’ must be formalized
to such an extent [soweit] that the vulgar phenomena of guilt related to concernful being-
with with others fall out.” Through this formalization, the “idea of guilt” is both elevated
“above the domain [Bezirk] of reckoning concern,” and “detached from the relation to
any ought and law [Gesetz].” The presentation of being-guilty in its existential purity
thus abstracts it entirely from the ordinary moral concerns that define guilt in the
understanding of common sense, because that understanding of guilt is “determined as
lack, as being missing of something which can and ought to be.” This lack is a mode of
presence: a “not-being-present” of something. The being of the Dasein is defined,
however, not by sheer presence, but by existence, which in “its character of being
remains differentiated from all presence-at-hand.” Being-guilty, as a mode of the being
of the Dasein, must therefore precisely not be interpreted after the manner of the common
sense understanding, an understanding which includes our everyday moral concerns. We
can legitimately speak of Heidegger’s analysis of the call as a categorical ontological
denial of the ordinary claims of ethical life, at least for the hearing proper to the call: in
the existential interpretation the voice of conscience refines out of itself, casts off the
interpretation of the morality of das Man (BT 328-329/SZ 283).

It should be obvious that this injunction in the interpretation of conscience has
very great, even apparently perverse consequences for how, according to Heidegger, we
are to understand its voice. We can say positively that Heidegger liberates the call of the
Dasein’s freedom from the vulgar interpretations of das Man that conceal and pervert its
existential import, most especially the crude interpretation of moral concern as a kind of
ledger-book. Heidegger’s analysis in the first instance frees the Dasein not only from the
conventional morality of contemptible averageness, but also from merely conventional
law [Gesetz], and thus from conventionality as such. The price of this emancipation is
that, in its existential interpretation, the conscience is completely uncoupled from the
moral concerns that ordinarily attach to it, and to which, for the “vulgar” understanding,
it gives voice. In the first instance, Heidegger’s interpretation, in abstracting the
conscience from any relation to our everyday concern, also simply denies the ordinary
injunctions of ethics, and especially the ordinary injunctions of justice, the virtue that
concerns our relations with our fellow human beings. The conscience, authentically
understood, has nothing to do with what we owe to others, but solely with what we owe
to our true selves, or more precisely, to our Dasein in the fullness of its authentic
freedom, to the tasks of our care. In Heidegger's radical formalization of guilt, along
with the vulgar guilt-phenomena, the considerations of the most rudimentary human
decency “fall out” too. What, if anything, will stand in their place in the existential
interpretation, remains to be seen.

While the “guilty” that is somehow understood in the call is not to be interpreted
according to the concept of lack, Heidegger observes that “nevertheless in the idea of

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69 This is not at all to say that in Heidegger’s interpretation, the authentic understanding of the conscience
leads to ‘egoism’ or to selfishness. The voice that calls us to take up the full responsibility for ourselves
alone may also lead us to commit to others, and even to self-sacrifice for their sake. Cf. MFL 190/MAL
245: “Only because the Dasein on the ground of its selfhood can expressly choose itself, can it support
others, and only because the Dasein in being towards itself can understand anything like ‘itself,’ can it
in turn simply listen to a you-self. Only because the Dasein, constituted through the for-the-sake-of-
which, existing in selfhood, only therefore is anything like human community possible.” The point is
rather that in Heidegger’s extreme interpretation, the standards of ordinary justice and even of basic
consideration for our fellow human beings are cast aside, and the demands of the call are grasped in
radically individual, and from the standpoint of ordinary decent opinion, peculiarly amoral terms.
‘guilty’ lies the character of the not.” The responsibility implied in the call of ‘guilty’ would then somehow be a ‘responsibility’ for a ‘not.’ “The formal existential idea of the guilty we therefore determine thus: being-ground for a being determined through a not - that is, being-ground of a nullity [Nichtigkeit].” This merely ontological notness cannot be conceptualized in terms of “any possible or required presence-at-hand [Vorhandenes].” This carries the further consequence that neither lack nor ‘not’ can be attributed to the being of the Dasein on account of some subsequent lack or ‘not’ for which the Dasein is first itself the cause, and as the ground of this ‘not’ it “need not first acquire its nullity from what it grounds [seinem Begruendeten].” Guilt does not first attach itself to the being of the Dasein on the ground of some failure to repay a debt or satisfy a moral obligation: “being-guilty does not result first from an indebtedness, but on the contrary: this becomes first possible ‘on {the} ground’ of a primordial being-guilty.” For this primordial guilt to be made intelligible, it must be interpreted solely according to the existential constitution of the being of the Dasein. The structural whole of that being is care, as the unity of its existence, facticity, and falling. In its factual concretion the Dasein has ever been thrown, and “not of itself brought into its there.” The Dasein does not originate its entrance into the clearing of being. “Existing, it never comes back behind its thrownness, so that it could ever expressly [eigens] first release this ‘that it is and has to be’ from its being-itself [Selbstsein] and lead it into the there.” Nor furthermore does its thrownness in fact “lie behind it as an ... event.” The thrownness of the Dasein is not a prior occurrence, but rather this factuality is with the happening of its freedom, such that it is ever a moment of its being: “the Dasein is constantly - so long as
it is - as care, its ‘that [>>Dass<<].’ That it to say: freedom ever finds itself in and as an already irrupted ‘thatness.’ Just as freedom qua freedom cannot be understood to be the result of some prior material cause, it also cannot be understood as the cause of itself. It always finds itself already entangled in a world of concerns and commitments. The individual human being is constantly “delivered over” to its existence, and it can only be this existence that it is: “it can exist uniquely [einzig] as the being which it is.” The Dasein as Dasein has ever to face the thatness of its freedom. As thrown into the ‘that’ of its care, the Dasein in its freedom “is existingly the ground of its potentiality-for-being” (BT 329-330/SZ 283-284).

The Dasein has been thrown into being the ground of its can-be; there is no other support or basis of its can-be beyond itself alone. Freedom happens originally as a groundless thatness; this groundlessness of the Dasein’s being is the ‘not’ of its thrownness. Its abandonment to existing as this ground is shown in the disclosure of its mood: “Although it has not itself laid the ground, it rests in its weight [Schwere], which the mood makes manifest to it as burden.” This feeling of the burden of existence is the experience of the primordial guilt of its thrownness. The fact of this thrownness forms an intrinsic structural limit upon its essential freedom. Since the Dasein “is never existent before its ground,” it can at most exist “ever only from it and as this {ground}.”

Thrownness, as itself an essential item of the care-structure that articulates the being of the Dasein, is the moment of freedom in which the ‘not’ inheres. This ‘not’ is therefore not to be understood as a lack, “but means a not which constitutes this being of the Dasein, its thrownness.” The purely existential concept of the ‘not,’ as the meaning of
primordial being-guilty, only points to the essential abandonment of the Dasein to itself. The ‘not’ that the conscience calls is therefore only the anxious disclosure of oneself in its naked thatness. The Dasein is thrown into the groundless freedom of the self that it must be, for which there can be no other ground except for its existing (BT 330/SZ 284).

The Dasein can become the ground of its can-be, in that “it projects itself upon possibilities into which it has been thrown.” As ahead-of-itself, the ground of its possibilities always lies unreachably behind the Dasein; as “being-ground [Grundseiend]” its “thrown existing” can only ever “constantly lag behind its possibilities.” As thrown, the Dasein is not and can never become the ground, in the sense of the cause, of itself. That the Dasein has ever its there to be, means that the Dasein ever has to be its there, as itself the project of the clearing of the there. The thrown Dasein, submitted to its world, is abandoned to the possibility of taking over itself as its own ground, of affirming and assuming responsibility for this project that it is, and yet was not itself the prior cause. The self alone has ever “to lay the ground of itself,” a ground over which it “never becomes powerful” or gets control, but of which it nevertheless “existingly has to take over.” Because “Being-ground means thus never to be powerful over the ownmost being from the ground up,” the most that can be hoped is to take over, to assume responsibility for this ground, of which it is not, and can never be, the primordial cause or source: “Not through it itself but released to it itself from the ground in order to be as this {ground}.”

The ground of the Dasein “first springs out from {its} own project”; the Dasein can only cease its falling, as it were, ‘become’ its own ground, and ‘suspend’ itself or ‘hover,’ so to speak, in ‘mid-air’ through shouldering the burden of its existence. It only becomes
the ground of itself in taking over its thrownness, in the express self-project upon its for-the-sake-of-which (the purpose or end of its living), in thus setting itself, as itself, free for the clearing of the there. The only possible existing ground of its freedom is solely the express forthright assumption of the guilt of the possibilities that have, like it or not, been allotted to it alone. Only through fully “being-itself,” is the Dasein “the being of the ground.” This ‘not,’ this purely existential guilt of the Dasein reveals itself as the issue of its being, and it is to this being-ground that care, through the voice of conscience, calls us. “To be the own thrown ground is the potentiality-for-being which it is about for care.” The Dasein assumes responsibility for itself, and becomes its own ground, only and ever in the groundlessness of its self-determination. But we can never hope at all to overcome the guilt of our existence through the very freedom that is itself its ‘source.’ The taking over of being-ground can never be an ‘absolution’ from guilt, but only a constant facing up to the essential ‘not’ of existence. The human being can never escape the guilt of his essence, but only expressly become the self-chosen administrator of his own thrown freedom (BT 330-331/SZ 284-285).

The Dasein is its ground in the facticity or ‘thatness’ of existence, as always already thrown into projecting its being upon possibilities. It follows from this thrown self-project that, as a being-able-to-be, the Dasein “stands ever in the one or another possibility, constantly it is not another and has waived these in the existentiell project.”

The Dasein is burdened not only by the guilt of its ‘that’ but also of its project, “as projecting already null before all which it can project and mostly attains.” The Dasein is ever the project of this ‘not’: the ‘not’ of its thrownness echoes in the nullity of its
existence, in its “being-free for its existentiell possibilities.” Authentic freedom consists precisely in facing up to this nullity of existence, to the guilt of the thatness of existence that inheres in its chosen project: “Freedom, however, is only in the choice of the one [der einen] {existentiell possibility}, that is, in the enduring [Tragen] of the not-having-chosen [Nichtgewaehlthabens] and not-even-being-able-to-choose [Nichtauchwaehlenkoennens] the others.” This essential notness is furthermore “the ground for the possibility of the nullity of the inauthentic Dasein in falling, as which it ever already always factically is.” Therewith the existential interpretation has shown the thorough nullity of the Dasein's structural whole: “care itself in its essence through and through permeated by nullity” such that it becomes manifest that, “The Dasein is as such guilty.” Through the existential interpretation of the call, ahead-of-itself-being-already-in-as-being-alongside “as thrown project” becomes intelligible as “the (null) being-ground of a nullity.” As care, the Dasein is a being-guilty that it discloses to itself in the conscience that is itself the call of care (BT 331/SZ 285).

The Dasein is, in the nullity of its thrown project that structures its essential freedom, its being-guilty as such. This primordial guilt is the ground of the Dasein's ‘ability’ “to load itself with factical guilt,” that is, the “ontological condition” for the possibility “that the Dasein, factically existing, can become owing [schuldig werden kann].” The ontological condition for the possibility of incurring debts, of being responsible, or of violating the laws of the public or of morality, in short, of every publicly interpreted meaning of being-guilty, is only on the ground of the primordial nullity of the Dasein; that is to say, it is “the existential condition for the possibility of the
‘morally’ good and evil.” In the existential interpretation, this deeper ontological guilt is prior to, and more primordial than, any claims of justice or ethics. Indeed, since it is prior in such a way that “morality already presupposes it for itself,” the basic existential guilt of the Dasein shows itself as the condition for every possible morality, that is to say, “for morality in general.” This primordial existential guilt is consequently neither authentically subject to being determined in moral terms, nor, moreover, to moral judgement. What the conscience authentically discloses is, according to Heidegger, not answerable to the everyday dictates of das Man, to what we ordinarily take to be common human decency, nor even to the most elementary demands of justice. If there is any ‘owing,’ so to speak, involved in the existential ‘not,’ it is owed by the Dasein to its (authentic) self alone, to its being, to its essential freedom, whose claim is heard in the voice of the call. In Heidegger's existential interpretation the revelation of the conscience, because it is prior to good and evil, becomes authentically ‘beyond good and evil.’ So far from the conscience being subject to the determination of morality, morality itself rather becomes subject to determination by the primordial revelation of the conscience (as existentially interpreted). What, according to Heidegger, the conscience authentically discloses becomes itself the ground of moral determination. The existential interpretation of what the conscience reveals thus constitutes an authentic revision of moral determination. This revision of morality can be itself only a new moral determination, that is to say, a new (authentic) morality (BT 332/SZ 286).70

70 ‘By implication’ should be emphasized here, because, of course, Heidegger never proceeded to write an ethics of authentic existence. The existential analysis of the conscience is expressly pursued here entirely within the horizon of the question concerning the meaning of being in general. While
The call of conscience “speaks for this primordial being-guilty which belongs to
the Dasein.” Does this mean that the Dasein is only guilty in this experience of guilt,
“only if a consciousness of guilt becomes awake”? On the contrary, that “guilt ‘sleeps,’”
that it is lulled to sleep and suppressed (however imperfectly) by the falling of the Dasein
“reveals only the aforesaid nullity.” Far from the relative rarity of the experience of
primordial guilt constituting an objection to the interpretation of care (freedom’s essential
structure) as being-guilty, Heidegger rather adduces this fact as one more proof of his
interpretation. Existential guilt, the “being-guilty” of the care structure, is “more
primordial” than any experience of, any consciousness of, indeed “than any knowledge
about it.” The conscience, as the summons of care to being-guilty, is only “possible” at
all precisely because the Dasein is both guilty (null) in its ground, and flees from itself
into the distracted bustle of everyday concern (BT 332/SZ 286). Thus the existential
analysis of the conscience “is not a matter of [es handelt sich nicht um] a schematical
application of the there [dort] gained structures {of the there} to a special ‘case’ of
disclosing of the Dasein,” but rather “will only carry further our earlier analysis of the
disclosedness of the there...” (BT 315/SZ 270). The existential structures of the clearing
are articulated in their manifold totality as care. The existential interpretation of the
conscience is thus a further working out and deepening of the disclosedness of the
clearing, and of the interpretation of the being of the Dasein itself as care. That “{t}he

Heidegger never proceeded or rather refused to write an ethics (for an account of this by Heidegger
himself, cf. “Letter on Humanism” in PM 268-276/Wm 353-364), this does not mean, however, that he
considered such a task impossible (Ibid.; cf. also MFL 157/MAL 199), nor that Being and Time lacks an
ethical, or more precisely—since it gives no rules for conduct—a moral, teaching, but concerns itself
first only with the interpretation of that basic experience from which such rules would be derived.
call is the call of care” reveals that “being-guilty constitutes the being [Sein] which we
name care”; that care, as an existing structural totality, is ever factually and essentially a
being-guilty, which silently expresses itself in that fundamental experience, which the
vulgar understanding names ‘the conscience’ (BT 332-333/SZ 286).

Through the anxiety of the call the Dasein brings itself to the identity of its
genuine self-standing. “In uncanniness the Dasein stands together primordially with
itself.” In the mood of anxiety the Dasein comes nakedly face to face with the
nothingness of its existence, with the guilt of the nullity that it ever is and must be. This
guilt indeed “belongs to the possibility of its ownmost potentiality-for-being.” As
existing, the Dasein calls itself to itself in the call. The conscience is the voice of the
essential “it is about...” The guilt of its thatness forms the essential question of freedom.
The silent voice of care calls the Dasein to itself, to take responsibility for its own thrown
being. The call calls the Dasein “forth: into the possibility, itself to take over existingly
the thrown being which it is.” In calling the Dasein forth to self-responsibility, it calls it
“back: into the thrownness,” understood as its “null ground,” the being-guilty which
existence ever is. Authentic freedom does not call us to leaving our past behind.
Genuine self-responsibility does consist in cutting ourselves free of the concerns and
commitments into and as which we have been thrown, but in fully facing up to the guilt
of our freedom, as and how we already are. This possibility was and is never originally
chosen; we are rather primordially thrown into existence, and the guilt of this factuality
can never be overcome or eliminated, even through authentic self-choice. The Dasein as
such is ever guilty, and this guilt of existence can only ever be answered for in constant
self-takeover, in authentic ‘self-possession,’ through owning up to this guilt for which we ourselves are not and were never originally responsible. Authentic freedom exists only as the freedom for something like very fate, as fate’s free choice of itself in the call. The authentic or serious moral response to the situation of our freedom is to embrace fully the existence into and as which we have been thrown, to take up the burden of our care, and hurl ourselves without apology into the thrown commitments of that existence (BT 333/SZ 287).

The conscience calls from the uncanniness of existence to the Dasein alone, summoning it “to that potentially-for-being which I ever already as Dasein am,” to the authenticity of its guilt. “The right hearing of the appeal then amounts [kommt dann gleich] to an understanding-itself in its ownmost potentially-for-being, that is to the projecting-itself upon the ownmost authentic potentiality-for-becoming-guilty.” In this right hearing, the Dasein is as an “understanding letting-itself-be-called-forth” to what is most its own, which is a “becoming free of the Dasein for the call: the readiness for being-able-to-be-called [Angerufenwerdenkoennen].” This freedom for guilt is a readiness for submitting to the demands of doom. “The Dasein is call-understandingly in thrall [hoerig] to its ownmost possibility of existence.” In hearing the call freedom frees itself for taking over the guilt of its fate: “It has chosen itself.” In choosing itself and owning up to its existential guilt, it submits itself to its factual thatness. Authentic self-choice is here indistinguishable from authentic self-submission. The right hearing of the call testifies to the possibility of the authentic self-choice of the ownmost possibilities of its factual existence. This right hearing therefore yields the possibility of authentic
existence of the Dasein that is ever mine, an authentic project that is required for grasping
the Dasein as a whole.\textsuperscript{71} That is to say: the right hearing of the conscience is the ground
of the primordial interpretation of the Dasein, and therewith the exposition of the horizon
within which something like being becomes understandable. Interpretation is ever the
working out and (self-) appropriation of an understanding. The existential interpretation
of \textit{Being and Time} works out and appropriates, that is, springs out of, the experience of
the freedom of the Dasein, given (that is, as it is disclosed to itself) in the hearing of the
call. The question concerning the meaning of being is ultimately nothing other than the
question of the right hearing of the conscience (BT 333-334/SZ 287).

"With this choice"—the choice of itself in its freedom—"the Dasein makes
possible" the essential possibility of its freedom, "its ownmost being-guilty." This
ownmost being-guilty \textit{is} only with the right hearing of the call; for the Dasein absorbed in
the self of \textit{das Man}, it "remains closed off." The "common sense" of everydayness
understands "only satisfying or failing to satisfy [Genuegen und Ungenuegen] with
regard to handy rules and public norms." The inauthentic self of \textit{das Man} fails to
understand the primordial guilt of the Dasein's essence, and interprets being-guilty only
in terms of coming to owe, and becoming responsible in the sense of being the cause of
some thing or event, that is, only in terms of breaking the public law or violating the
norms of the common sense that rules our everyday with-one-another. These violations
or "mistakes" are themselves calculable, and can be made good with appropriate
recompense: "Infractions thereagainst it reckons up and seeks balance [Ausgleiche]" (BT

\textsuperscript{71} Cf. BT 277/SZ 234.
Everyday morality, speaking practically, bourgeois morality, understands guilt inauthentically in terms of a kind of ledger or balance sheet, which means to understand it inappropriately in terms of handiness or mere presence: “Everydayness takes the Dasein as a ready-to-hand {thing} which is concerned, that is, managed and reckoned up. ‘Life’ is a ‘business,’ equally as much whether it covers its costs or not.” The authentic understanding of the call, by contrast, does not rationalize guilt as the debits and credits of a balance sheet, which can never grasp the primordial guilt of freedom. The one who lives authentically needs no balance sheet, because he does not evade the call, and answers to the tasks of his own care alone (BT 336/SZ 289).72

The call of conscience calls the everyday self to its “ownmost being-guilty.” In the right hearing of the call, the Dasein hears that which the conscience gives to understand. The right hearing of the conscience is thus a self-project upon ownmost guilt. This hearing is a choosing: “not of the conscience, which as such cannot be chosen,” but rather “having-a-conscience as being-free for the ownmost being guilty.” The hearing is a liberation for the primordial guilt of its essence. The existential guilt of the Dasein is the condition for the possibility of any indebtedness. The ownmost being-guilty is a possibility that happens only in the project of the hearing. Accordingly, Heidegger concludes: “Wanting-to-have-a-conscience is rather the most primordial

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72 As much as the existential interpretation of the conscience is to clear a path to the authentic understanding of what we mean by the expression ‘being,’ to the answer to the question concerning the meaning of being in general, it also seems to be the case that the clarification or reconnaissance of the meaning of being is necessary for removing the obstacles that the inauthentic understanding poses to the right hearing of the conscience. The task of setting anew the question concerning the meaning of being in general would therefore represent not only the pursuit of the fundamental question of philosophy, but also the basic duty that the conscience commands, if its fundamental ‘intention’ is the revelation of the original guilt that inheres in the heart of freedom. Cf. pp. 266-267 below.
existential presupposition for the possibility of the factical coming-to-owe.” The hearing as the self-project upon its ownmost being-guilty is a “taking action in itself” of the “ownmost self” in and as its self-chosen can-be. “Only so can it be answerable”: only existing in authentic self-choice, that is, in facing up to and taking over the guilt which lies in the depths of its being, does the Dasein become authentically responsible for itself. Only in the right hearing of the call does it come into the authentic dignity of its freedom. This “taking action,” like all taking action, “is factically necessarily ‘conscienceless’” because “on the null ground of its null projection,” which necessarily includes a being with others, it “already has become guilty” towards those others. All taking action is ‘without conscience’ because the Dasein can never balance off the being-guilty which it itself is. The right hearing of the call, as the taking over of ownmost being-guilty, is the recognition that the essential guilt of existence is ineradicable, and that no action can overcome it. Far from being paralyzed with guilt, the Dasein that hears the call gives up on the hope of disburdening itself, and it takes over the burden of its guilt entirely, and alone. In its authentic self-answerability, indeed its godlike self-responsibility, its taking action is therefore, so to speak, ‘conscienceless’; it acts, paying no heed to the dictates of the publicness of das Man, but it takes upon itself “what is nobler - the guilt.” In this way the right hearing “turns into the taking over of the essential consciencelessness within which alone the existentiell possibility persists [besteht], to be ‘good.’” The goodness of authentic existence consists precisely in disregarding the consequences of its taking-action, in terms of the understanding of everyday justice and morality. The

73 GM2, section 23.
authentic working-out and appropriation—both ‘theoretically’ and as a practical possibility—of the idea of guilt leads to a fundamentally unapologetic way of life. As attractive as this edifying portrait of authentic freedom may be at first glance, it has its own, even sinister, implications, at least from the standpoint of everyday moral opinion. However admirable its steadfast independence, it is a self-certain taking-action that pays no serious heed to the injunctions of everyday morals, and therefore also to the considerations even of the most minimal standards of human decency and justice, but listens to the demands of its own inner voice, acting with all of ordinary morality’s zeal, but without any of its restraints. The objections that common moral opinion therefore poses to the existential interpretation of the conscience are what Heidegger turns to confront in the next section of *Being and Time* (BT 334/SZ 288).

**C. The Difficulty of the Vulgar Interpretation of the Conscience**

In section 59 Heidegger now expressly confronts the “vulgar” understanding of the conscience, which he admits appears to be something of an “embarrassment” for the analysis of the call as the testimony of a primordial nullity of existence. The existential interpretation of the conscience appears to have been achieved “with {a} hasty passing over all the findings, which are familiar to the vulgar interpretation of conscience [Gewissensauslegung],” such that “the conscience-phenomenon as it ‘actually’ is” appears no longer recognizable in Heidegger's interpretation. The interpretation of conscience as “the call of care... which summons the Dasein to the ownmost potentiality-
for-being-guilty,” and of the hearing of the call as “wanting-to-have-a-conscience,”
cannot quickly or easily be reconciled with the vulgar interpretation. On the other hand
the “ontological” interpretation of the conscience need not simply be brought into accord
with the vulgar interpretation, which only understands guilt in terms of the business of
everyday concern, and therefore runs up against “a principally ontological suspicion,”
that is, the suspicion of one who hears the conscience rightly, that the vulgar
interpretation contains a “concealment” of the essential uncanniness of being-in-the-
world from which it flees. The vulgar understanding should consequently not be made
the arbiter of the ontological interpretation. The existential interpretation has equally “no
right to disregard the everyday understanding of conscience” and the various “theories of
conscience” which arise from it. “If the existential analysis has exposed the phenomenon
of conscience in its ontological rooting” that is, to the extent that Heidegger's
interpretation has disclosed the primordial conscience-phenomenon, then “the vulgar
interpretations must become intelligible precisely in terms of it,” even or especially in
their concealment of the original phenomenon. If the existential interpretation would
have it that the vulgar understanding covers over the primordial phenomenon itself, it
must be able to show how and why this is the case (BT 335-336/SZ 289-290).

Heidegger sets out four principle objections which might be made to his
interpretation on the ground of the vulgar understanding of the phenomenon: “the
function of conscience is essentially critical”; “the conscience always speaks in a way
that is relative to some definite deed which has been performed or willed”; “when the
‘voice’ is experienced, it is never so radically related to the Dasein's being”; and “our
interpretation takes no account of the basic forms of the phenomenon—‘evil’ conscience and ‘good,’ that which ‘reproves’ and that which ‘warns.’” He deals with these objections in reverse order. The response to the final objection of the vulgar understanding in turn fundamentally resolves all the others; it is therefore this first response that is of primary importance for Heidegger's argument (BT 336/SZ 290).

1. The Priority of the Bad Conscience in the Vulgar Understanding

In all theories of conscience arising from the vulgar understanding, we ordinarily take our bearings from a notion of the conscience as a reproof: “In all interpretations of conscience the ‘evil,’ ‘bad’ conscience has the priority.” Every experience of conscience is “first of all” an experience of guilt. This disclosedness of guilt is understood as an “‘experience of conscience’” that occurs after the commission or omission of a deed. The call is understood therefore as a response to a particular deed or event which has occurred or failed to occur, and “through which the Dasein has loaded itself with guilt” as a consequence. Any inference on this ground that the call is not a summons, is not “a calling-forward [ein Vorrufen],” is, according to Heidegger, nevertheless false. While the call “has its place in the sequence of present-at-hand experiences, and follows after the experience of the deed,” this proves only that the deed is merely the factual occasion for the call (BT 337/SZ 290-291).

Neither the deed, nor the call, nor the guilt are, however, themselves merely present: the Dasein is essentially not determined by mere presence, but determined by
being-in-the-world, that is, by the self-determination of existence—by freedom—the structural manifold of which is care. As the existing manifold of care, the Dasein is ever ahead-of-itself. As a phenomenon of the Dasein, the conscience too must be understood in terms of the structure of its being. “The call has the kind of being of care.” It is a calling back that is at once also a calling forth: “In it the Dasein ‘is’ ahead of itself in such a way that at the same time it directs itself back to its thrownness.” Though the deed is the occasion for the call, and its “voice indeed calls back,” it nevertheless “calls across the happened deed”: it calls us back to the thrown guilt or nothingness of our essence, “which is ‘earlier’ than any indebtedness [Verschuldung],” that is, prior to, and indeed the condition for the possibility of, any deed by which the Dasein might ‘make’ itself ‘guilty’ in terms of the vulgar understanding. The deed may be the factual occasion for the call, but the Dasein can only become guilty on the ground of the essential guilt that inheres in the constitution of its being. Care calls across the deed to the condition of the possibility for any factual moral debt. The call therewith summons it to its “being-guilty,” to the ownmost guilt of its existence “as {something} to be seized,” to take upon itself, and therewith take over in going about the doing of its existence. The voice calls to an “authentic existentiell being-guilty,” which “only ever ‘follows after’ the call, not the other way around” (BT 337/SZ 290-291).

Neither is “the primordial phenomenon” properly characterized by “‘good’ conscience,” interpreted either “as an independent form of conscience,” or “as one founded essentially in the ‘bad.’” As the ‘bad’ conscience reproves the Dasein’s “‘being-evil,’” the ‘good’ (as an independent conscience-phenomenon) would attest to the
Dasein’s “‘being good.’” This ‘good’ conscience is only “a slave of Pharisaism.” Only a truly good (that is, conscientious) man could rightly assert his own goodness, and yet “who would affirm it less than exactly the good?” As good, the good man would be the last to do so. The interpretation of the ‘good’ conscience as an independent phenomenon is therefore not tenable. For the conscientious, the conscience tells of their guilt, never of their guiltlessness. If, on the other hand, the ‘good’ conscience is derived from the ‘bad’ one, it is “determined as ‘experienced lack of the bad conscience.’” This is not, however, the experience of the call, but the “making-certain” that the Dasein has incurred no ‘actual’ guilt, “of my having nothing with which to reproach myself.” This ‘experienced lack of the bad conscience’ is not at all a conscience-phenomenon, but the “tranquillizing suppression of the wanting-to-have-a-conscience, that is of the understanding of the ownmost constant being-guilty.” The ‘good conscience’ is only the suppression of the Angst of the primordial uncanniness of existence. Like the interpretation of the ‘good’ conscience as an independent phenomenon, it is “no phenomenon of conscience at all,” but rather an avoidance and covering over of the call. This ‘good conscience’ is itself the disburdening and accommodation of the Dasein by the falling publicness of das Man. It is therefore rather “the experience of conscience of the everyday Dasein.” The ‘good conscience’ is not derived from the bad, rather the bad conscience “factically orients itself” in terms of the average experience of conscience. The “horizon” of this average experience of conscience is the everyday business of immediate concern: “The everyday interpretation holds itself in the dimension of concerned reckoning up and balancing of ‘guilt’ [>>Schuld<<] and ‘innocence’ [>>Unschuld<<].” The notion of a “forward
pointing-warning conscience” also essentially remains within this same horizon. While it points forward, its warning does not summon the Dasein to its ownmost being-guilty, but rather only assists in keeping this possibility covered up, by aiding in the making-certain of ‘guiltlessness’: “The warning conscience has the function of the regulating of a staying-free of indebtedness [Verschuldungen]” (BT 337-339/SZ 291-292).

2. The Relation of the Call to the Being of the Dasein

The objection that the existential analysis takes no account of the “basic forms [Grundformen]” of the experience (the bad conscience which reproves and the good conscience which warns) thus springs from an ontologically inappropriate interpretation of the Dasein’s existence. The interpretation of the conscience as pointing back to past deeds which it reproves, or pointing forward to future ones against which it warns is only possible on the basis of a prior self-interpretation of the Dasein as a succession of experiences: “Only the closest supposition (der naechste Ansatz) of the Dasein as connection of sequence of an after-one-another of experiences makes it possible to take the voice as something coming after later and therefore necessarily referring back.” In this view the Dasein is only a succession of merely present or no longer present eventualities that run out the course of their occurrence. This interpretation is nevertheless basically inappropriate to the being of the Dasein, whose manifold structure articulates itself as care. “The order of sequence of running out experiences does not give us the phenomenal structure of existing” (BT 337/SZ 291). The Dasein in its freedom
cannot be properly conceived only as a succession of merely indeterminate presence, as in the interpretation that indeed frames the vulgar understanding of the conscience.

“Does not rather an essential kind of being of the Dasein, the falling, show that ontically this being understands itself first of all and mostly in terms of the horizon of concern, but ontologically determines being in the sense of presence-at-hand?” The interpretation of being as sheer presence is characteristic of falling, and is what we ordinarily (generally and inauthentically) mean by the expression ‘being.’ It therefore seems that the existential interpretation rightfully refuses the average experience of conscience as the arbiter of its analysis on the grounds of the superiority of its concept of the Dasein’s being. The logic of Heidegger’s argument would thus appear to be circular: on the one hand, the inauthentic and authentic understandings of being themselves determine the concept of the Dasein and therewith not only the interpretation of the conscience, but also our response to it; on the other, the inauthentic and authentic understandings of being themselves arise from the different responses to the call. Heidegger rejects the everyday interpretation of conscience on the basis of its understanding of being, which itself arises with that everyday experience or interpretation of the call, that is, the falling flight from it (BT 339/SZ 293. cf. also BT 168/SZ 130).

Nevertheless, Heidegger has managed to show that the ideas of conscience which arise from the vulgar experience of it fail to secure a fitting understanding for the interpretation of the phenomenon, but remain within an unclarified horizon of an understanding of being as continual presence. Within this horizon, which suppresses rather than enables the hearing of the call in the totality of its disclosure, “the conscience
is encountered as arbiter and admonisher with whom the Dasein reckoningly pleads [verhandelt].” Despite the seriousness of Kant's analysis—“his concept of morality remains far removed from utilitarianism [Nuetzlichkeitsmoral - lit. ‘usefulness morals’] and eudaemonism”—this critique applies equally (or even especially) to his interpretation, and even to “the theory of value,” which itself “has a ‘metaphysics of morals,’ that is, ontology of the Dasein and of existence, for {its} unexpressed ontological presupposition.” Value theories (and those which are in currency today—‘family values,’ religious ‘values,’ national ‘values,’ democratic ‘values,’ and so on ad nauseam—are just as vulnerable to this critique as those of Heidegger's contemporaries) fail to break out of this average horizon, in so far as they interpret the Dasein merely as a possible object of concern, and this concern is understood in the sense of “the sense of ‘actualizing value’ or fulfilling a norm.” Within this horizon—out of or away from which the voice itself calls us—the conscience can never become “authentically accessible” (BT 339/SZ 293).  

74 At this point a brief comparison of Heidegger’s concept of the relation between the conscience and human freedom to that of Kant is useful, for Heidegger’s interpretation of the conscience is in fact closer to Kant’s than this passage would seem to indicate. Kant understands freedom as a category of causality or necessity, but maintains that the idea of freedom is not given in any possible experience. It is therefore impossible to explain how freedom itself is possible. One can only grasp its incomprehensibility, and defend the existence of its possibility against any and all pretenders to superior knowledge:

For we can explain nothing but what we can reduce to laws, the object of which can be given in some possible experience. Freedom, however, is a mere idea, the objective reality of which can in no way be presented in accordance with laws of nature and so too cannot be presented in any possible experience; and because no example of anything analogous can ever be put under it, it can never be comprehended or even only seen.... Now, where determination by laws of nature ceases, there all explanation ceases as well, and nothing is left but defense, that is, to repel the objections of those who pretend to have seen deeper into the essence of things and therefore boldly declare that freedom is impossible (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals 4:459).
Only by breaking free of the horizon of the immediate urgencies of everyday concern, along with its characteristic consequent understanding of being, can the conscience be authentically heard in the full content of its silent summons. Whatever the status of Heidegger’s theoretical leading question, such a breakout is an important practical consequence of, and perhaps the very intention of, the setting “anew” of “the question concerning the meaning of being” for the sake of recovering “an answer to the question concerning that which we authentically mean by the word ‘being’” (BT 19/SZ 1). If this is the case, then by implication the intention of Being and Time is ultimately not theoretical but eminently practical: Heidegger pursues the theoretical question (indeed in his own presentation the theoretical question par excellence) in the service of a practical or moral purpose. This is not to suggest that the leading question of Being and Time is ‘only smoke and mirrors,’ or merely a theoretical ‘stalking horse’ for an ulterior practical-moral agenda, but that Heidegger saw the clarification of the horizon of the understanding of being as an, or even the, indispensably necessary task for the understanding of his practical ‘project.’ The inquiry of Being and Time is itself also,
albeit expressly, “an ontology of the Dasein and existence”: it too is a “‘metaphysics of morals’”; not a moral inquiry into the conscience which remains a prisoner of its unexpressed and unclarified metaphysical presuppositions (and therewith a prisoner of the public dictatorship of *das Man*), but an express inquiry into the question of being, which is thereby enabled to free the Dasein for an authentic hearing of the summons of the call, and therefore a ‘metaphysics of *authentic* morals’ (BT 339/SZ 293).

### 3. The Relation of Guilt to the Deed

Along with this response to the fourth and third objections, the second also falls away: “Therewith the further objection, the existential interpretation overlooks that the call of conscience ever relates itself to a determinate ‘actualized’ or willed deed, also loses its force.” The everyday horizon of the understanding, which looks at the Dasein as an object of concern and being as sheer presence, interprets guilt only as a consequence of particular deeds, as a matter for reckoning up and balancing off. “That the call often is experienced in such a call tendency,” that it is experienced every day in relation to particular acts “can, on the other hand, not be denied,” but that the experience of the conscience within the horizon of the everyday gains full access to the primordial phenomenon is, according to Heidegger, a dubious assertion. We cannot gain authentic access to the conscience within this everyday horizon, if it is at bottom concerned to suppress and avoid the call and its guilt (BT 339-340/SZ 293).

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*is to say, in the structure of its possibility, in its authentic disclosure of what it means to live free.*
4. The Question of the Critical Character of the Conscience

Finally, the first objection to the existential interpretation that is grounded in the everyday experience, namely, “that the existential interpretation fails to recognize [verkenne] the ‘essentially’ critical doing of the conscience,” also “loses its force” in the face of Heidegger’s response. If the conscience does not merely relate itself to particular present acts, by virtue of which the Dasein only subsequently becomes guilty—if it does not therefore primordially only reprove after the deed or warn before it—then the “doing of the conscience” simply cannot be understood as “‘essentially’ critical.” This misinterpretation arises from “a within certain limits genuine sight of the phenomenon,” because in the call there is “nothing which the voice ‘positively’ recommends and imposes.” The call of conscience gives us ‘nothing’ to understand because it always discourses in the mode of keeping silent. The conscience gives no information that the self of das Man could subject to the reckoning of concern. The call says nothing because it has to disclose the nothing of the inextricable guilt of human freedom. The horizon of the understanding of our everyday concern, “which forces the existing of the Dasein under the idea of a regulable business-process [Geschaeftsganges],” obscures the authentic meaning of what the conscience calls. “A ‘positive’ content in the called is missed from the expectation of a currently useful statement for availably and calculably certain possibilities of ‘action’ [des >>Handelns<<].” The call gives us nothing to reckon with because it is precisely the reckoning of everyday business from which the conscience intends to summon us away. “Similarly the call of conscience does not give ‘practical’ instructions, uniquely therefore, because it summons the Dasein to existence,
to the ownmost potentiality-for-being-itself.” In giving us nothing to understand, the conscience authentically intends to give us to understand only our ownmost nothing. The conscience does not yield any “reckonable maxims” for ethical practice, but calls the Dasein back to its uncanniness and forward into the “factual taking-action” of its “ownmost possibility” (BT 340-341/SZ 293-294).

Having set out an interpretation of the conscience as the call of care and the guilt which it calls, and defended it against the objections grounded in the everyday experience of the phenomenon, that is, having defended the practical possibility of the genuine freedom of an authentic existence, it now remains for Heidegger to lay out “the existential structure” which “as such lies in the authentically hearing understanding of the appeal,” that is, of the to-want-to-have-a-conscience, and finally to gain its “fully adequate interpretation,” to show its connection with the possibility of an authentic being-towards-death (BT 341/SZ 294).\(^\text{75}\)

\(^\text{75}\) We might rightfully question whether Heidegger’s interpretation of the conscience, however, has indeed overcome the embarrassment that the “vulgar” understanding of ordinary moral opinion poses for it. Despite all the explanation that the existential interpretation offers of about the distortions in the inauthentic understanding that arise from its evasion of what the conscience “authentically” reveals, does not the fact remain that the “vulgar” understanding remains closer to the real experiences of the phenomenon, despite all of Heidegger’s attempts to explain it away? After Heidegger is done with his violent interpretation of the phenomenon, is it indeed still recognizable to us as the call of conscience? For all the power of Heidegger’s interpretation, the fact of the “vulgar” understanding of the conscience abides. Does not Heidegger’s admission at the close of this section that, “Seriousness is in the vulgar experience of the conscience not less possible than unseriousness in a more primordial understanding of conscience” (BT 341/SZ 295), represent indeed a confession of this fact?

Heidegger can doubtless respond that this is ‘primordially’ or most deeply a matter of interpretation. The existential or authentic interpretation of the conscience demonstrates its superiority through the greater primordiality of its disclosedness; that is to say: the existential or conscientious interpretation of the conscience justifies itself through grasping freedom in the unity of its wholeness, a wholeness that necessarily eludes the vulgar experience of the conscience. Heidegger claims that the existential interpretation does not merely pass judgement on “the existentiell ‘moral quality’” of anyone who understands the call inauthentically, so long as they are morally serious, because authentic seriousness is not merely a matter of a clever grasp of the existential interpretation (Ibid.). But if they are morally serious, must Heidegger not expect them to join in with his own more conscientious
D. The Authenticity of Resolve and Running Forward Into Death

In order to grasp the Dasein in its wholeness (not merely as a formal totality but as an existing whole, but, that is to say, in the full unity of its freedom), and therewith ensure the primordiality of the existential interpretation, for the sake of exposing the horizon within which the understanding of something like being in general happens, the Dasein must be brought to light in its possible authenticity, the testimony for which must come from the Dasein itself. The summons of the call to the ownmost can-be of existence “is grasped in the hearing which understands the call undisguisedly in the sense intended from it itself.” This hearing is a way of existing; as a projecting taking-action it “gives first the phenomenal content [Bestand]” of the understanding of the call, it “represents phenomenally” the authentic possibility to which the call gives summons. The “existential structure” of this authentic can-be “must be exposed” in order to “press forward” to “the basic constitution of the authenticity of its existence disclosed in the Dasein itself.” The understanding of the appeal, “as an understanding of oneself in one's ownmost potentiality-for-being,” is “a way of the disclosedness of the Dasein,” which is accompanied by a state of mind and expresses itself in discourse. Understanding the appeal, the “wanting-to-have-{a}-conscience,” is a self-projection upon “the ever ownmost factual possibility of the potentiality-for-being-in-the-world.” The can of this possibility, this “potentiality-for-being,” is disclosed to the Dasein only in the hearing,
that is, it “has only been understood in the existing in this possibility.” How, then, are we to understand this possibility, that is, how can we gain access to the experience of the disclosedness of the call? The call calls out of the thrown nullity of existence, and “discloses the own Dasein in the uncanniness of its individualization.” The voice of the call is attuned by the mood of anxiety, through which “the uncanniness co-revealed in the understanding becomes genuinely disclosed.” In and with the “anxiety of conscience” the Dasein “has been brought before the uncanniness of itself.” Hearing the call, it faces with the primordial guilt of its existence, with the nothingness of its freedom. “Wanting-to-have-a-conscience becomes readiness for Angst” (BT 341-342/SZ 295-296).

This readiness for anxiety discourses in the mode of “reticence.” The conscience is not, as it were, a court of law, in which the Dasein is brought to justice by an accuser and, for its defence, given counsel against the ‘charge’ for which it is ‘tried.’ In the authentic hearing of the silence of the call, the Dasein returns “into the stillness of itself” (BT 342-343/SZ 296). Calling out of the soundlessness of uncanniness, the conscience ‘speaks’ primordially in the mode of reticent silence. Through its silence the conscience lets it be known that it “must have something to say,” that it must have “an authentic and rich disclosedness of itself” to offer the Dasein. Indeed it “can ‘make {the Dasein} understand’” (BT 208/SZ 165) its ownmost possibility through that very silence, which “does away with idle talk [schlaegt >>das Gerede<< nieder]” (BT 342-343/SZ 296) and “articulates... the understandability [Verstaendlichkeit] of the Dasein so primordially, that it gives rise to [entstammt] the genuine ability of hearing [das echte Hoerenkoennen]” (BT 208/SZ 165). This genuine hearing is a hearkening, in which the Dasein denies itself
any appeal against the summons of the call, any “counter-speech” in which it might defend itself against “that which the conscience says,” the constant fundamental guilt of its existence. “The call represents [stellt... vor] the constant being-guilty, and thus hauls the self back out of the loud idle talk of the understandability of *das Man*” (BT 342/SZ 296). When it comes to the inner court of the conscience, any insistence by the accused upon its ‘rights’ under the ‘due process of law’ is only vain, inauthentic resistance against, and evasion of, the genuine summons of the call. In Heidegger’s interpretation these ordinary, reasonable demands of (liberal, and not only liberal) justice are out of order because the conscience does not try, but rather commands, enjoining us to take over of the nothingness of the self-projection of our existence. We have no rightful recourse to defence against its charges; that is, the jurisprudence of the conscience is rightfully (authentically) autocratic because, as existing, we are already guilty. In the authentic hearing of the call one must simply heed its summons and submit to its verdict. The conscience ‘sentences’ us, according to Heidegger, because we have ever already somehow been ‘sentenced’ ourselves by the guilt of our being (the conscience is the call of care), but of which we are ourselves nevertheless not the ‘cause.’ Our genuine or authentic ‘right’ (an autocratic right over the whole of our existence) derives solely from our obedience to the demand of the call that we take responsibility for the nothingness of our freedom. Perhaps this denial of the rights of due process in the court of conscience should not also be taken as a denial of their rightful place in ‘actual’ law-courts; but, is to deny the authenticity of these considerations in the internal court of the conscience not also implicitly to impugn their worthiness in external ones, in courts of law, and, indeed,
to indict the ultimate legitimacy of the liberal democratic law itself? One cannot but come to this very conclusion on the basis of Heidegger’s critique of the common publicness of the everyday as the dictatorship of *das Man*, which robs the Dasein of its self-responsibility and regulates the means for the inauthentic evasion of primordial guilt.

The disclosedness of “wanting-to-have-*a*-conscience,” that is, “the reticent, ready for anxiety, self-projecting upon the ownmost being-guilty” is the disclosedness of the understanding of “resolve [Entschlossenheit].” In the disclosedness of resolve the Dasein is hauled or hauls itself before the “primordial truth” of existence. Only with the existence of the Dasein ‘is there’ truth; as the condition for the possibility of truth, the disclosedness of the understanding is the primordial ‘locus’ of the truth. As disclosed and disclosing, the Dasein is ever already ‘in the truth,’ and the disclosedness that it ever already is, is the “truth of existence.” This disclosedness of the understanding is obviously not this or that particular truth, “no quality of the ‘judgement,’ nor at all of a determinate comporting”; it is rather “an essential constituent [Konstitutivum] of being-in-the-world as such,” which “must be conceived as fundamentally existential.” The clearing of the there in the disclosedness of the understanding is the field of the self-projection of existence. Resolve is a way of the disclosedness of the clearing of the there. The disclosedness of resolve is the “most primordial” truth of existence, while it is the “truth of the Dasein” which is “authentic.” The essence of truth is the essential freedom of the Dasein (BT 343/SZ 296-297).

This resolve is not the disclosure only of this or that being, but the disclosedness of the totality of involvements of the Dasein and world. The resolve that individualizes
and projects the Dasein upon its ownmost possibility “as authentic self-being,” does not “detach” it “from its world.” Rather, it brings the Dasein face to face with its thrownness into its there. In the choice of its constant being-guilty, the Dasein projects itself upon the possibility of its ownmost can-be, as the for-the-sake-of-which of its being. The project of this for-the-sake-of-which grounds the understanding of significance, the disclosedness of the world, which sets free a totality of involvements, in terms of which every other being within the world, everything handy or merely present, and every ‘other’ which is there with it (BT 343-344/SZ 298). This understanding of significance, “itself sets this being free for its possibilities” (BT 184/SZ 144). Resolve, as a manner of the disclosedness of the Dasein, liberates the Dasein for its authentic possibilities as they are lit up in the clearing of the there in its self-project upon its essential nothingness. “Out of the for-the-sake-of-which of the self-chosen potentiality-for-being the resolute Dasein sets itself free for its world.” Any disclosedness, as disclosedness, is a setting free of the Dasein; as the most primordial disclosedness of the Dasein, resolve is also its most primordial liberation. In the disclosedness of resolve, the Dasein liberates itself ‘of its own accord’ to shoulder alone the burden of its authentic freedom (BT 344/SZ 298).

Disclosedness is constituent of existence. It is a, indeed the, way of being-in-the-world, of the self-determination of human possibility; that is, of freedom. With the disclosedness of resolve the Dasein projects itself into a factical, existing taking-action. “Resolve brings the self straight into the current concernful being alongside {the} ready-to-hand and pushes it into solicitous being-with with the others.” The resolute disclosedness attested by the conscience not only projects the Dasein authentically upon
its possibilities of concern (that is, it projects those possibilities in terms of its ownmost can-be), but this testimony also discloses the others with and among whom the Dasein exists in their authentic possibilities. Resolve is not only the authentic liberation of the Dasein for itself (i.e. for its freedom), but becomes also the liberation of the others for authentically being themselves. “The resolve towards itself brings the Dasein first into the possibility, to let the co-being [mitseienden] others ‘be’ in their ownmost potentiality-for-being and to co-disclose this in the leaping forward-liberating solicitude.” The call of the conscience to authentic resolve is not, finally, a ‘merely individual’ or private affair. Resolve “does not isolate” the Dasein into “a free-floating I.” In the individualization of resolve the Dasein does not secretly smirk at others in the smug superiority of ‘enlightenment,’ nor does it merely ‘look on’ in the mode of a neutral, ‘detached’ observer, and leave the others to their illusions. The moral independence of resolve sets the Dasein free from the frame of the concerns of our common everyday business, but it does not liberate it from its concern for being-with, that is to say, from all political concern. The testimony of the conscience, while ‘beyond good and evil,’ does not liberate the Dasein from all moral-political concern, but rather propels it towards a certain kind of radical political action: the resolute man becomes an emancipator of his fellows, an authentic ‘freedom fighter,’ for and with those others who also have the ears for hearing, against the inauthentic tyranny of das Man (BT 344/SZ 298).

In resolve the Dasein wrenches itself from its lostness, such that it itself is no longer with the others in the mode of the publicness of das Man; the resolute Dasein is towards them in terms of the possibilities revealed in the testimony of the conscience. It
does not hide from them their lostness in das Man, but dispenses with the idle talk of our everyday business. In wrenching itself out of its own lostness, the resolute Dasein is alienated from the everyday understanding. The resolute one becomes something alien to the others, but this alienation is not merely negative. In resolve the Dasein wins for itself the uncanny force of its authentic freedom. Through its reticence it can ‘summon’ the others to their own resolve: “The resolute Dasein can turn into the ‘conscience’ of the others.” It cannot make the others hear, nor can it resolve for them, but only prepare the possibility of their answering the stifled anxious voice of their care, by silently leaping ahead, paying no heed to the incessant chatter of everyday curiosity, in order to reveal to them their lostness in das Man, and the authentic possibilities of existence which this lostness conceals (BT 344/SZ 298). It should also be emphasized that the paradigm of authentic action in this regard is not conversational persuasion but active reticent demand. Being the conscience of others has as much or more in common with taking-action than with pleading.76

Resolve, so far from trying to suppress the ‘asperity’ of the others and press them into the indistinguishable mass, rather intends to disclose the others in their ownmost possibilities, to free them for shouldering the burden of their freedom. In forsaking and repudiating the jealous watch of the average crowd, the authenticity of resolve holds out the possibility of a free being-with-one-another, in contrast to the corrosive levelling down of the dictatorship of das Man. The resolve attested by the call of the conscience shows itself as the condition for the possibility not only for the authentic individuality of

76 See pp. 269-275 above.
the Dasein, but also as the condition for the possibility of any authentic community with
the others. “From the authentic self-being of resolve springs first of all the authentic
with-one-another, not rather from the ambiguous and jealous stipulations and talkative
fraternizing in the one and from that which one wants to undertake.” In setting itself
free for its world in the disclosedness of resolve, the resolute Dasein also sets the others
free for their own possibilities; its disclosedness is a project, its project is a taking-action,
its taking-action is, not least importantly, a reticent call to the others to self-responsibility,
and therewith to liberate themselves from their lostness in the distractions of the everyday
business and the tranquilizing public interpretedness of *das Man* (BT 344-345/SZ 298).

This disclosedness of resolve is always temporal and particular: “Resolve is,
according to its ontological essence, ever that of a current [jeweiligen] factual Dasein.”
In Heidegger's existential interpretation, the conscience is not, as we have seen, the voice
of a god, or the revelation of eternal moral laws, but only the summoning of the Dasein,
by the Dasein itself—this contingent, finite, transient being—to project itself upon the
nothingness of its ownmost possibility. The disclosedness of resolve, as the call of care,
is thus entirely ‘relative’ to this particular Dasein, which factically I ‘am.’ “The essence
of this being is its existence. Resolve exists only as understanding-self-projecting
resolution [Entschluss].” Resolve could indeed well be conceived as the example *par
excellence*, as the ‘archetypal’ case of the self-projection of the understanding, as that

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77 Johannes Fritsche helpfully interprets this passage as a rejection not only of liberal government
grounded on a social contract (“ambiguous and jealous stipulations”) but also of socialist politics
grounded on class solidarity (“talkative fraternizing”). Cf. Johnnes Fritsche, *Historical Destiny and
National Socialism in Heidegger’s Being and Time*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)
pp. 275-276 (n. 25 to p. 97).
disclosedness wherein the essential self-choosing of the Dasein, the self-determination of the primordial freedom of existence reveals itself most clearly, precisely through the purely formal character of its existential structure:

But whereupon [woraufhin] does the Dasein resolve itself [entschliesst sich]\(^78\) in the resolve? For what [Wozu] is it to resolve itself? Only the resolution itself makes it possible to give the answer [Die Antwort vermag nur der Entschluss selbst zu geben]. (BT 345/SZ 298)\(^79\)

The resolution of the authentic hearing of the call could not therefore be more particular. Resolve, though it determines itself as a resolution, is likewise not merely a decision for particular readily handy possibilities. To interpret this resolve as only “a taking-up grasping-for proposed and recommended possibilities,” Heidegger proclaims, “would be a complete misunderstanding of the phenomenon.” The resolution of wanting-to-have-a conscience is rather the disclosedness of authentic possibility itself. This disclosedness, as the project of itself upon the for-the-sake-of-which of its ownmost nothingness, is, at once and ‘consequently’ also the understanding of a totality of significance, of the world in its worldhood in terms of that authentic for-the-sake-of-which, the constant, inescapable guilt of existence. Resolve, as disclosedness, is a manner of the revelation of the whole of being. It is the understanding of the totality of the world in terms of the Dasein’s ownmost can-be, the determination of what is practically, authentically, possible: “The resolution is precisely first the disclosive projecting and determining of

\(^78\) At least according to the seventeenth edition, and not erschliesst sich, as Macquarrie and Robinson have it; however, given the close connection between disclosedness and resolve in Heidegger’s mind – resolve is the authentic manner of the Dasein’s disclosedness – this difference has no impact on the authentic understanding of this sentence, and is even instructive.

\(^79\) Though the context favours Macquarrie and Robinson’s translation of this sentence (and how I have likewise read it), it could be alternatively rendered as: “The answer makes it possible to give only the resolution itself.”
the current factical possibility” (BT 345/SZ 298).

Heidegger’s existential interpretation of the conscience (and by extension the teaching of *Being and Time*) is thus precisely not merely an empty ‘decisionism,’ for which any ‘commitment’ whatsoever will do. While the silent voice of conscience demands that one make up, now, for shirking the burden of the guilt of our essential freedom, and it indeed gives no information, no handy criterion (let alone eternally present standard) for choice, neither is any resolution simply arbitrary, for the resolve attested in the call is at once the authentic revelation of the world in the totality of its genuine possibility. Although the essence of truth is freedom according to Heidegger, this does not mean that all choices are equal, that every choice, as choice, is equally true. Resolve can never be an arbitrary decisionism because the disclosedness of world and Dasein is not subject to its *caprice*, any more than is the existential structure of its own being. Disclosedness is ever the self-submission of the Dasein to a world for which it has freed itself. In resolve the can-be of the Dasein comes into its own: as the (self-) determination of authentic possibility, the disclosedness of the conscience most closely resembles a kind of pre-theoretical wisdom or prudence. The revelation of the call thus shows itself as a *more primordial* equipping than the guidance of any instruction or maxim for practical action could possibly give by itself. In expecting such ‘useful’ communication one misses the full ‘content’ of what the ‘voice’ silently reveals, the presentation of the genuine possibilities of its current existence. Only in facing up to the nothingness of itself does the Dasein arrive at its fullest competence over the whole of its existence. By contrast, it is the pre-fabricated, ‘universal’ ideals of *das Man* that are
empty.

Unlike the traditional (and inauthentic) interpretations of the conscience, and indeed also unlike prudence itself, however, the conscience in its existential (authentic) interpretation projects and determines the factically possible only in its possibility; while it has everything to say about ‘can,’ beyond the authentic self-choosing of resolute self-assertion (authentic being itself) it has nothing to say about ‘ought,’ beyond the demand to face up to the ownmost guilt of existence. The call gives no a priori guidance apart from existence itself in all its factual contingency. “To resolve belongs necessarily the indeterminacy, which characterizes every factic-thrown potentiality-for-being of the Dasein.” As a consequence, resolve “is certain of itself only as resolution” in the certainty of its radically contingent particular choice (BT 345/SZ 298).

Nevertheless the particular “existentiell” indeterminacy of resolve “has all the same its existential determinacy.” The existential content of resolve, “the for-what [das Wozu],” has been given by the existential structure of the being of the Dasein itself, “has been ontologically fore-indicated [vorgezeichnet] in the existentiality of the Dasein in general,” that is, “as potentiality-for-being in the manner of concernful solicitude.” The care structure equally includes the moments of facticity and falling. Because the being of the Dasein is determined by falling, not only is it, as disclosedness, ever already ‘in the truth,’ but as absorbed with the objects of its everyday common business, it is also factually ‘in the untruth’: “it holds itself with equal primordiality in the truth and in untruth.” Resolve, as the “authentic truth” of the Dasen's existence, “appropriates untruth authentically.” Even as resolve wrenches the Dasein from its lostness in das Man, it
reveals inauthenticity as an inherent possibility of its being. “The Dasein is ever already
and soon perhaps again in irresoluteness [Unentschlossenheit]” in the sense of “being-
surrendered to the dominant [herrschende] interpretedness of the one.” The disclosedness
of resolve reveals, “insofar as resolve at all gives authentic transparency to the Dasein,”
that first of all and mostly the Dasein surrenders itself to that tranquilizing average
understanding that alienates it from its ownmost can-be, and jealously regulates the with-
one-another of the immediate urgencies of the everyday, “in which no one resolves and
which has always already decided [beschlossen].” Resolve discloses that this public
interpretedness, “the irresoluteness of the one,” which “remains all the same in
dominance [Herrschaft],” such that “even the resolution remains dependent [bleibt...
angewiesen] on the one and its world.” Even as it reveals the factual subjection of our
possibilities to the dispensation of das Man, the particular resolution of decided in the
disclosedness of resolve remains fundamentally dependent on the everyday opinions that
it passes around. Resolve cannot undo the tyranny of the average at a stroke, but only
reveals the public world of das Man in a new light. Nevertheless das Man still cannot
“impugn the resolute existence” (BT 345-346/SZ 298-299).

The irresoluteness of das Man cannot impugn the resolute precisely because
resolve projects the whole of the world in terms of its ownmost possibility, which it has
snatched back from the regulation of the average understanding of the everyday. In
resolve the Dasein liberates itself from the tranquilizing illusions of the public
interpretedness. As the authentic (and therefore the most primordial) truth of existence,
resolve discloses how matters ‘really’ stand in the factual situation wherein the individual
Dasein finds itself. The disclosedness of resolve is a summons to the ownmost possibility of existence. In terms of this possibility the Dasein projects its understanding of self and world. The summons to the ownmost being-guilty is therefore also a summons to an authentic understanding of world-possibility: resolve “calls us forth into,” that is, brings us face to face with the truth of “the situation.” Just as the understanding of being ‘is’ only with the existence of the Dasein, so too the leeway of possibility, the clearing of the there, ‘is’ only the project of the understanding upon the for-the-sake-of-which. The Dasein is ever its disclosedness; conversely that disclosedness ever ‘exists’ only as itself the project of freedom. “The situation is the ever in resolve disclosed there, as which the existing being is there.” The “situation” is not a pre-existing “framework,” an already present reality which the Dasein only first of all ‘sees’ in the mode of a resolve that lets the scales fall from its eyes. It is rather a distinctive disclosedness of the there which exists only “through and in” the authentic hearing of the testimony of the call (BT 346-347/SZ 299-300).

This disclosedness of the authentic situation of existence is exactly what the average understanding of the everyday public suppresses. “For the one, on the other hand, the situation is essentially closed off [verschlossen].” The authentic situation of existence, as the disclosedness of the there in resolve, is only in and through the self-project of the Dasein upon its ownmost being-guilty; for the self of das Man the situation is not. The public self of das Man “knows only the ‘general situation’ [die >> allgemeine Lage<<].” The average self of the everyday “loses itself” in the ready “opportunities” that readily present themselves. Our common everyday business is nothing other than a
reckoning up of these ‘opportunities.’ The everyday self of das Man fails to recognize the accidental character of these ‘opportunities,’ “which it... gives out for {its} own achievement.” In our everyday bourgeois lives we are ‘bootstrappers.’ We believe that we ‘make something of ourselves,’ that we ‘work our way up in the world,’ solely through our own merit and effort. We fail to appreciate the inextricable contingency of our lives, the essential nothingness of our thrown existence; we fail to see that, at bottom, human life is something like fate (BT 346-347/SZ 300).

Only the resolution of resolve upon the ownmost possibility, into which it has been thrown, discloses the authentic situation of the clearing of the there: “Resolved for the there, as which the self, existing, has to be, the current [jeweilige] factical involvement-character of the circumstances discloses itself to it.” Resolve lacks existentiell determinacy because it is always relative to the being of some particular factually existing Dasein. It only determines itself in a resolution because it ‘is’ the resolve of the Dasein that is ever mine, which ‘I am’ and have to be. The question, “What should I do?” is one that only particular individuals can answer for themselves. This does not mean that the ‘whereto’ of the resolution is up to the arbitrary discretion of the Dasein, or that every possible ‘resolution’ is genuinely a resolution (that is, a real manifestation of resolve); that which we understand in our average everyday manner as ‘resolution’ rarely rises to the level of authentic resolve. In authentic resolve the Dasein projects itself upon its one ownmost possibility, to be the factually existing there into and as which it has been thrown (BT 346-347/SZ 300).

Freedom ‘exists’ only in the choice of one possibility; and not in the choice of any
one possibility, but in the free projecting of the human being upon that possibility which is most is own. As resolute the Dasein resolves itself for its thrown there, the there that it has to be; it resolves itself for the thrownness of its existence in all its sheer factual contingency. What “we call accidents [Zufällen]” can only “befall [zu-fallen]” those who are resolute. Only as resolute can these ‘accidents’ authentically “fall to” the Dasein; only in wanting to have a conscience, in facing up to the nothingness of existence, in the free self-choice of its ownmost guilt, do the ‘contingencies’ of existence fall to it and genuinely become its own. The readiness of the Dasein for hearing the call becomes a readiness for, a freedom for, something like the fate of its there. “Resolve brings the being of the there into the existence of its situation.” Resolve, as the disclosedness of the situation of the there, “embraces [umgrenzt] the existential structure of the in the conscience attested authentic potentiality-for-being, of the wanting-to-have-a-conscience.” The conscience, as the authentically heard call of care, “holds forward no empty existence-ideal,” but “summons” the Dasein forward to the resolve to the ownmost possibility of the thrownness of its there (BT 346-347/SZ 300).

The voice of conscience, the call of care, is a summoning forth into the situation of existence in and through the authentic revelation of the clearing of the there. The conscience discloses no eternal moral laws, gives no practical information or injunction, no ready rule with and by which we can reckon, but, when heard rightly, ‘only’ brings us face to face with our authentic situation. Morality presupposes the conscience; it cannot pass judgement upon what the conscience discloses because it is derived from it as its ‘ground.’ In this understanding, every interpretation of the conscience therefore discloses
or at least implies the morality that follows from it. The morality of the existential interpretation of the conscience is emphatically situational: it would hardly be too much to say that the ‘ethics’ implicit in *Being and Time* is the ‘situational ethics’ *par excellence*. The morality of Heidegger’s interpretation is not situational in the vulgar sense of pragmatism, nor even that conventionalism which recommends, ‘when in Rome...’ (all of which place restraints on human action, even as their misinterpretations or indeed outright dismissals of the conscience cover over the authentic understanding of the phenomenon), but rather in the sense that the conscience reveals *only* the horizon of authentic possibility of the thrown project of the there in its sheer contingency.

The disclosedness of resolve reveals the primordial truth of existence unfettered from the constraints of the tranquilizing illusions of the public interpretedness of the everyday. It *becomes* itself—or better, it hurls itself, it unleashes itself—in its resolute self-projection into the situation of its clearing. “The existential interpretation of the understanding of the appeal as resolve reveals the conscience as the in the ground of the Dasein way of being, in which it - attesting the ownmost potentiality-for-being - makes possible for itself its factical existence.” As resolute the Dasein takes over its ownmost being-guilty such that it becomes its own thrown ground within the horizon of its authentic possibility. In taking responsibility for the *whole of its* existence, the possibility which it *has* to be, it enables, it frees itself, for its ownmost can-be, for its thrownness into the situation of its world; it readies itself for the freedom of its fate. This enabling disclosure is not the result of some theoretical faculty that presents possibilities to be subsequently taken up in practice; nor is resolve merely some more decisive
practical comportment. Resolve is rather a primordial self-project which, as the project of the understanding upon its authentic for-the-sake-of-which, at once discloses a totality of possible significance, and as a taking-action goes about, that is, sets itself to work in and as the factual possibility in terms of which it understands itself. It is thus a basic mode of the whole of existence, equally prior to thinking and acting. “Resolve does not set itself first, taking cognizance, before a situation, but has already set itself into it.” In the self-projecting of resolve “the Dasein acts already.” The being of the Dasein is articulated primordially in the care structure. As the structural whole of the Dasein, care is prior to both theory and practice. Resolve is the essential care of the Dasein in the mode of its existential authenticity. “Resolve however is only the concerned [gesorgte] in care and possible as care authenticity of this itself” (BT 347-348/SZ 300-301).

E. Forward Running Resolve

At the close of section 60 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger has completed both the existential project of the possible authentic wholeness of the Dasein as running forward towards death, and an existential interpretation of the Dasein's own existentiell testimony of its possible authentic can-be as resolve. In order to successfully resolve the problem of the apparent impasse which opened the second division of the work, and which drove the initial turn to the existential analysis of death, Heidegger must, according to the program which concludes that analysis, show an “essential connection” between the projected “ontological possibility” of running forward towards death and the “attested authentic
potentiality-for-being” (BT 311/SZ 267). A mere amalgam of the existentially projected and existentiell attested possibilities simply cannot be accepted as an adequate resolution of the apparent impasse. “An external binding together [Zusammenbinden] of both phenomena forbids itself from itself [verbietet sich von selbst].” This would amount to no more than an arbitrary insistence that resolve express itself as running forward, the ontical imposition of an ontological fabrication, without any demonstration that, in terms of its essence, resolve authentically wants to become and express itself as a running forward (BT 277/SZ 234).

The only way forward must therefore be a working out and appropriation of the existentiell attestation of resolve as authentic being towards the end. Resolve must reveal itself as authentic being towards death, as running forward resolve: “Yet {it} remains as the methodically uniquely possible way, to go out from the phenomenon of resolve attested in its existentiell possibility, and to ask: does resolve in its ownmost existentiell tendency of being itself point forward to forward running resolve as its ownmost authentic possibility?” With such an interpretive demonstration Heidegger’s inquiry could claim for itself the proof of its primordiality. Resolve will prove to “have brought itself into its authenticity first” in the project of itself upon its “uttermost” possibility of being. Only then will its “authentic truth” acquire its “authentic certainty.” Not only does the disclosedness of resolve attested by the voice of conscience authentically turn out to be an authentic being towards death, but it indeed proves to be nothing more than such a running forward towards death. All that the conscience discloses, in Heidegger’s interpretation, is the certain if indefinite inevitability of the constantly impending end. It
does not call us to stare death in the face as proof of our faith, or for the sake of the moral law. It summons us only to confront the guilt that inheres in the very structure of human freedom, the nothingness at heart of the world, and the doom that continually impends for each of us in the clearing of the there (BT 349-350/SZ 302).

When it has been "‘thought through to the end’ according to its ownmost tendency of being,” the authentic possibility of resolve attested by the voice of the conscience “can experience an existentiell modalization through being towards death,” such that it “leads to [fuehrt auf] authentic being towards death.” Resolve is a “reticent self-project upon the ownmost being-guilty.” The Dasein is essentially guilty in the sense of a “null being-ground of a nullity.” This guilt of its nothingness inheres in the thrown structure of existence, and “allows [laesst] neither augmentation nor diminution.” In Heidegger's interpretation, the Dasein is, as we have seen, therefore not guilty only as a consequence of particular presently occurring events (violations of the public or moral laws), but it ‘is’ ever guilty “so long as it is.” Resolve discloses the Dasein in its constant essential being-guilty, and as resolute the Dasein projects itself upon it: “Wanting-to-have-a-conscience resolves upon this being-guilty.” Resolve is only authentically itself when it “has become so transparent” that it understands and projects itself upon the essential guilt of its being “as constant,” when it ‘knows itself’ as guilty throughout the whole of the disclosedness of its existence.\footnote{Cf. BT 186-187/SZ 146.} To understand this guilt as constant, the Dasein must understand itself as unavoidably guilty ‘for the rest of its life’; it must disclose itself to itself as a whole can-be, or more precisely, in its whole can-be-guilty.
“This understanding however makes itself possible only insofar as the Dasein discloses to itself the potentiality-for-being ‘right up to its end.’” The Dasein is ever already its end. It always has its end as existentially “being towards the end.” The condition of the possibility of the self-project upon constant ownmost guilt is an expressly understood being towards its end, a charging ahead into death. Resolve comes into its own properly resolute character, precisely as running forward. It “does not merely ‘have’ a connection with running forward as an other of itself”; it is not completed or ‘perfected’ by the addition of another comportment that is foreign to it. Resolve, rather, according to its ownmost essence turns into the possibility an authentic being towards death. “It harbours in itself authentic being towards death as the possible existentiell modality of its own authenticity” (BT 353/SZ 305).

Not satisfied with this derivation, however suggestive, Heidegger proceeds “phenomenally to elucidate [zu verdeutlichen] this connection” between being-guilty and being towards death in the very structure of the disclosedness of resolve. Resolve is a “letting oneself be called forward to one's ownmost being-guilty.” This “guilty” is, according to the being of the Dasein, not “an abiding property” of a merely present being, but an existing can-be, the constant “existentiell possibility of being authentically or inauthentically guilty.” In the interpretation of this understanding, “being-guilty must therefore, because belonging to the being of the Dasein, be conceived as potentiality-for-being-guilty.” One should even say that, according to the disclosedness of the conscience, not only must being-guilty be so conceived (i.e. as can-be), but, indeed, because resolve discloses the Dasein as ever an existing being-guilty, its “potentiality-for-
being,” that is, the can-be of the Dasein as such, must be conceived as “potentiality-for-being-guilty.” As disclosedness of possible significance, resolve reveals the Dasein as a constant being-guilty; as understanding (and the Dasein always understands itself in terms of possibilities) it projects itself upon this possibility: “Resolve projects itself upon this potentiality-for-being, that is, understands itself in it.” The understanding of resolve “holds itself authentically” in this “primordial possibility” only when it “is primordially what it tends to be.” Resolve can be authentically guilty only as an authentic being-towards-death. It is precisely in the understanding of running forward that the Dasein is disclosed in itself most purely as possibility. Accordingly only “first as running forward” does resolve comport itself towards itself as possibility, as can-be, that is, precisely as being-guilty. “Resolve first understands the ‘can’ of the potentiality-for-being-guilty [Schuldigseinkoennens] if it ‘qualifies’ itself as being towards death” (BT 353-354/SZ 305-306).

The primordial guilt of the Dasein is the being the ground of a nullity. In the self-project of resolve upon its ownmost being-guilty, “the Dasein takes over authentically in its existence that it is the null ground of its nullity.” Death, “conceived existentially,” is the “possibility of the impossibility of existence”; or in other words, the “simple [schlechthinnige] nullity of the Dasein.” As ahead of itself the Dasein is already its not-yet, and this means it already has its end; it is already its death. As care the Dasein is ever already dying. “Death is not added on [angestueckt] to the Dasein with its ‘end,’ but as care is the Dasein the thrown (that is, null) ground of its death.” The Dasein sees or explicitly comes before this sheer nullity of itself only in the comportment of running
forward: “The nullity primordially dominating throughout the being of the Dasein reveals itself to it itself in authentic being towards death.” Only as running forward into death does the Dasein “make manifest” to itself the ownmost primordial thrown guilt of its essence. Death and guilt are only two different manifestations of the same phenomenon: the primordial nothingness of existence. “Care harbours death and guilt equally primordially in itself.” The Dasein only authentically takes over the ownmost guilt of its essence, by projecting itself upon, and in terms of, the thrown nothingness of existence. Only as running forward ‘can’ the Dasein exist in the possibility of an authentic being-guilty. Resolve and running forward become what they authentically are only as each other. Each harbours within itself a phenomenal connection to the other ‘as its ownmost authentic possibility.’ Heidegger accordingly claims the warrant to speak of a single authentic comportment, a “forward running resolve,” attested by the call of conscience (when authentically, i.e. conscientiously, heard), which is the possibility of the Dasein existing (both) authentically (and) as a whole. “Forward running resolve understands first the potentiality-for-being-guilty authentically and wholly, that is, primordially” (BT 354/SZ 306).81

81 We should note in passing that Heidegger’s footnote at the bottom of Sein und Zeit page 306 deserves especial attention. Heidegger there continues to elaborate on the distinction drawn earlier between existential analysis and theological problematic (cf. SZ 48-49, 179-180, 247-248, 269). The note here casts further light on the programmatic atheism of the existential analytic of Being and Time. Heidegger here takes (further) pains to differentiate the analyses of existential ontology and theology: “The primordially belonging to the constitution of being of the Dasein being-guilty is to be wholly distinguished from the theologically understood status corruptionis.” According to Heidegger theology “can find” in the primordial existential guilt of the Dasein “an ontological condition for its factical possibility.” One must wonder, however, whether theology would itself accept the priority of the existential analytic (or, conversely, whether the jig isn’t up for any theology which accepts or concedes such a priority). Nevertheless one can say that the existential analysis has a certain priority insofar as it begins with the being of the human being. The guilt “of this {theologically understood} status” by contrast not only remains a “factual indebtedness of an entirely peculiar kind [von voellig eigener
Heidegger phenomenally unfolds the inner connection between resolve and running forward in terms of the existential project of an authentic being towards death as an understanding being towards the ownmost, nonrelational, unoutstripable, certain, and indefinite possibility of the Dasein. The silent voice of conscience “takes the words away from the common-sense [verstaendigen] idle talk”(BT 343/SZ 296), reveals the Dasein’s “lostness in das Man,” and “hauls the Dasein back to ownmost potentiality-for-being-itsself.” Running forward resolve is towards the end in “an understanding being towards death” as the “ownmost possibility” of the Dasein, such that its “own potentiality-for-being becomes” not only “authentic” but “wholly transparent” (BT 354/SZ 307; cf. BT 307/SZ 263, BT 317/SZ 272). The project of the understanding is the existential “sight” of the Dasein. The Dasein also ever understands itself in terms of the possibilities upon which it projects itself. With and as the disclosedness of the clearing of the there, the
Dasein also ‘sees’ itself: “The sight, which primarily and on the whole relates itself to existence, we call transparency [Durchsichtigkeit].” This transparency refers to “‘self-knowledge’”: not the observation and analysis of a merely present “self-point,” but “an understanding seizing of the full disclosedness of being-in-the-world throughout all [durch... hindurch] its essential constitution-moments” (BT 186-187/SZ 146). In the disclosedness of (forward running) resolve the Dasein is hauled back before the most primordial (because authentic) truth of existence; existence, however, is the essence of the Dasein. In forward running resolve the Dasein becomes fully transparent to itself and it accordingly arrives at the most primordial self-knowledge: in this disclosedness, it therefore understands its own can-be-guilty “authentically and wholly” throughout all its constitutive moments (BT 354/SZ 306).

The understanding self-projection upon death as the ownmost possibility discloses the Dasein in its radical individuality. “In the appeal the call of conscience passes over [uebergeht] all ‘worldly’ prestige and possibilities of the Dasein. Relentlessly it individualizes the Dasein to its potentiality-for-being-guilty which it demands [zumutet] of it to be authentically.” The existence or being-guilty of the Dasein is fundamentally characterized by ever-mineness. As a possibility of the Dasein into which it has always already ever been thrown, death is simply my own. The call reveals the nothingness of existence as a possibility, which no one can ever ‘really’ take away from me. “The unbroken sharpness [Schaerfe] of the essential individualization to the ownmost potentiality-for-being reveals running forward towards death as the unrelatable

removed as Heidegger would have it from the revelation of Christian theology, and therefore also
possibility.” I can be authentically guilty only by shouldering alone the burden of my existence, convinced of its finitude, and running forward into death (BT 354/SZ 307).

Understanding the call is a “wanting-to-have-a-conscience,” the constant choosing of “having-a-conscience as being-free for the ownmost being-guilty” (BT 334/SZ 288). The understanding of resolve is “the readiness for appeal [Anrufbereitschaft] to the ownmost being-guilty,” for the nothingness of the existence, as and into which it has been thrown. The disclosedness of resolve reveals the can-be as ever a can-be-guilty. The ownmost non-relational possibility “determines the factual Dasein before each factual indebtedness and after its payment [Tilgung].” The existence of the Dasein is accordingly in its very possibility essentially a “prior and constant being-guilty.” The ownmost being-guilty is “first... uncovered in its priority when this is enlisted [hineingestellt] in the possibility which for the Dasein is simply unoutstripable,” that is, the constant priority of the essential ‘guilty’ of the Dasein only shows itself as such when its priority has been joined to the constant possibility of death. Only when the Dasein projects itself out of and upon its ownmost possibility in its constant priority—when it projects itself as thrown into death—does being-guilty reveal itself in its proper priority. It is thus tempting to say that according to Heidegger the essential guilt of the Dasein is the guilt (or nothingness) of its death. In submitting itself to this constant prior being-guilty the resolute Dasein makes its existence unoutstripable in its authenticity: “When resolve, running forward, has hauled in [eingeholt] the possibility of death into its potentiality-for-being, the authentic existence of the Dasein can be outstripped

whether the existential interpretation ultimately is itself philosophically comprehensible.
by nothing more.” In resolving itself to run forward towards this ownmost possibility the Dasein achieves the authentic ‘guiltlessness’ of its existence. It frees itself for its finite possibilities such that its can-be can no longer be overtaken by the ‘guilt’ of the average public interpretedness. It projects itself upon a primordial being-guilty prior to, and so untouchable, by and unanswerable to, the ‘conventional’ or everyday claims of public morality and justice. In its genuine answerability the resolute Dasein answers only to the authentic demands of its own care (BT 354-355/SZ 307).

Resolve reveals the truth of the ‘human condition,’ the authentic situation that confronts the ‘human’ as human, that is, as and in the finite possibility of freedom.

“With the phenomenon of resolve we have been led before the primordial truth of existence”: that is, when the Dasein heeds the summons of the call and projects itself upon the ownmost, non-relational, unoutstripable possibility of existence, it is disclosed to itself most unconcealedly, most transparently, i.e. authentically. With this authentic self-transparency the Dasein discloses itself to itself primordially, and therefore also precisely as this disclosed and disclosing being: “Resolved [Entschlossen], the Dasein has been revealed to itself in its current factical potentiality-for-being, in such a way that it is itself this revealing and being-revealed.” Only in and as the disclosedness of resolve does the Dasein reveal itself to itself, understand itself and project itself, precisely as itself the disclosedness of the clearing of the there, as the finite possibility of the understanding of being, that is, the horizon of being’s understandability. “To the truth belongs a holding-for-true ever corresponding to it.” To the primordial self-disclosure there must therefore correspond a similarly primordial self-certainty. “The primordial
truth of existence demands an equally primordial being-certain as itself-holding [Sichhalten] in that which resolve discloses.” This being certain of itself is the “express appropriation” of the disclosedness or self-revelation of resolve. “It gives itself the current factical situation and brings itself into it.” The situation is (as we have seen) accordingly not an already merely present ‘terrain’ which “waits” upon the disclosedness of resolve for its first proper “grasping,” but the clearing of the there which “is only disclosed in a free... resolving [Sichentschliessen].” In and through the revelation of resolve (and only in and through it) the Dasein is its situation. Conversely, the situation is only in and as the free project of resolve. Running forward, the authentic can-be of resolve, is certain of itself as itself the clearing of its there (BT 355/SZ 307).

The being-certain of running forward resolve “ought [soll] to hold itself in the through the resolution disclosed” situation (as itself this disclosedness). The self-holding of this being-certain in the fullness of what is disclosed is thus a constant facing up to the situation of its existence. This certainty “can not stiffen [versteifen]” about its situation. Its free self-resolving is “undetermined beforehand,” and accordingly “must understand, that resolve according to its own disclosing-meaning must be held free and open for the current factual possibility.” Authentic resolve is not merely stubborn insistence upon an arbitrary decision, and in this way the description of Heidegger’s teaching as a decisionism, or even as an empty decisionism, fails to capture it in its authentic character. This certainty is not, therefore, merely a closing off (as freedom in the choice of its one ownmost possibility), but rather as much or more a self-holding open to, and as, its possible clearing in the fullness of its threatening character, a free self-exposure to the
fate of its there. Running forward resolve must accordingly be “holding-itself-free for its possible and ever factically necessary takeback [Zurücknahme],” not as the taking back of resolve in the sense of “falling back into irresoluteness”; the “resolute holding itself free for the takeback,” as constant staring the situation in the face, rather “is the authentic resolve to the repetition of itself [zur Wiederholung ihrer selbst],” precisely in the face of the constant threat arising out of its clearing. With this resolve to self-repetition “the lostness in irresoluteness has been undermined [untergraben].” The certainty that resolves “to hold itself free constantly,” accordingly holds itself free “for the whole potentiality-for-being of the Dasein.” To expose oneself constantly to the situation of existence, to repeat oneself in the face of fate, ‘right up to the end,’ as it were, is to free oneself for being existentially, that is to say, for ‘living,’ in the certainty of being-whole (BT 355-356/SZ 307-308).

The authentic certainty of resolve is inextricably bound up with the certainty of the thrown fate of the there. Certainty is given to resolve only in order for it to comport itself with certainty towards its ownmost possibility as a certainty. “This constant certainty is guaranteed to resolve, only so that it comports itself to the possibility, of which it can be simply certain.” Conversely it is through explicitly comporting itself towards the certain possibility of death that resolve achieves the authentic certainty of itself. Death is the most certain possibility; indeed, one is tempted to say, the only certainty of human life according to Heidegger’s teaching. Holding itself before death as certain imparts certainty upon the whole of resolve. “In its death, the Dasein must simply ‘take back’ itself.” Death is the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all: the
possibility of death is about the possibility of existence as such; that is, the possibility of existence tout court. “Constantly certain of this, that is, running forward, resolve attains its authentic and whole certainty.” Only through projecting itself upon death, the distinctively certain possibility of itself that permeates the whole of can-be, does the resolute Dasein achieve primordial certainty as such, that is, about the whole of its existence (BT 356/SZ 308).

Just as the Dasein, as its disclosedness, is ever in the truth, it is also “however equally primordially in the untruth.” While forward running resolve is certain of its disclosedness, constantly repeating its possibility in the face of the fate of its there, it also “gives to it at the same time the primordial certainty of its closedness [Verschlossenheit].” Forward running resolve reveals that first of all and mostly the Dasein has lost itself in the irresoluteness of das Man, and discloses this lostness as “possible from the ground of {its} own being.” Holding this self-disclosure for true, the Dasein “holds itself open” for this “constant” and “co-certain” possibility. In its authentic self-transparency, the resolute Dasein sees that only it itself, as resolute, can determine itself, can give determinacy to its own being: “The transparent to itself resolve understands that the indeterminacy of the potentiality-for-being ever only determines itself in the resolution upon the current situation.” The can-be of the Dasein is always first of all and mostly indeterminate. Indeterminacy simply must “dominate through and through” any “being which exists,” that is, any being which goes about its being, whose being is determined by freedom. And lost in the irresoluteness of das Man, the Dasein surrenders its authentic self-determination, drifting in its indeterminacy from one
accident to the next (BT 356/SZ 308).

The Dasein only understands this indeterminacy “however at all,” only truly ‘sees’ itself in this manner while in the grip of an authentic “being towards death,” in which its own “indeterminacy wholly manifests itself.” Death’s constant certainty is indeterminate. The authentic understanding of death goes about its being in the certainty of the indeterminacy of its possibility: “Running forward brings the Dasein before a possibility which remains constantly certain and yet every moment indeterminate in that, when the possibility turns into impossibility.” This indeterminacy of death limits, embraces, and therefore determines the whole of existence as its ‘limit.’ In and by projecting itself upon this constant indeterminacy of its being, which would seem to frustrate any whole grasp of it, the Dasein rather paradoxically arrives at its whole self-certainty. “{Running forward} makes manifest that this being has been thrown into its limit-situation, resolved for which the Dasein attains its authentic whole-potentiality-for-being [Ganzseinkoennen]” (BT 356/SZ 308).

Both the disclosedness of resolve and its existentiell modalization as running forward are deeply attuned by the fundamental mood of Angst. Angst is anxious both about and before being in the world, in the face of a constant threat arising out of the situation of the clearing that is nevertheless nothing and nowhere: a generalized threat which cannot be encapsulated by any particular, determinate present being or cause. “The indeterminacy of death discloses itself primordially in anxiety [in der Angst].” In the face of this indeterminate threat “primordial anxiety strives to expect [trachtet... zuzumuten] resolve of itself.” The silence of Angst authentically demands a running
forward resolve. Primordial *Angst* can perhaps be temporarily suppressed, but never finally stifled. The indeterminacy of the threat disclosed by *Angst*, because it surpasses every particular determinacy, “clears away [raeumt... weg] every concealment of the abandonment of the Dasein to itself.” The silent voice of *Angst* calls over and past the everyday business and average public interpretedness in which we lose ourselves, and individualizes us down to our ownmost can-be. The constant threat of the there is ever mine to confront, and no one can take my dying away from me. As my most genuine ‘possession,’ my death is simply mine to face by myself. *Angst* brings us directly before the nothingness of ourselves. It is, according to Heidegger, this indeterminate nothingness which limits, determines, and therefore ‘finally’ makes intelligible the existence of a being which is ever going about its being, a being whose essence is a primordial freedom that defies the average ‘intelligibility’ of inauthentic concepts. “The nothing anxiety brings before [Das Nichts, davor die Angst bringt], reveals the nothingness, which determines the Dasein in its ground, which itself is as thrownness into death” (BT 356/SZ 308).

With the revelation of thrownness into death through the primordial anxiety—which attunes both the silent voice of the conscience, and the running forward into death which is the authentic freedom of the Dasein—Heidegger concludes the phenomenal demonstration of the connection between resolve and authentic being towards death. The phenomenal working out of resolve has revealed the unity of resolve and the authentic being towards death “towards which resolve tends of itself;” in the “moments of modalization” which characterize death as that possibility which is ownmost, unrelatable,
unoutstripable, certain, and indeterminate. Resolve “is authentically and wholly what it can be,” that is, it comes into its own and becomes fully itself, “only as forward running resolve.” This phenomenal exposition of the self-modalization of resolve into an authentic being towards death is at the same time the clarification of such running forward as a possibility of the Dasein: “the interpretation of the ‘connection’ between resolve and running forward first achieved the full existential understanding of running forward itself.” The full working out of the project of resolve achieves the understanding of the breakout of running forward as an ‘ontic,’ ‘factual,’ or existentiell possibility, that is to say, a practical possibility, of the Dasein's being. “Hitherto it could be valid only as ontological project.” The phenomenal elucidation of the connection between resolve and running forward reveals the authentic being towards death not as Heidegger's own ‘ontological invention’ (which would therefore constitute a baseless ‘ontical imposition’), but “now it shows itself” as “the mode of an in the Dasein attested existentiell potentiality-for-being,” a possible mode upon which resolve projects itself “if otherwise it understands itself authentically as resolved.” Running forward is only the irruption of the project of resolve come into its own authenticity. Heidegger's earlier injunction that authentic being towards death is not a “dwelling upon the end in its possibility,” not an isolated anxious brooding about “when and how it might actualize itself” in the idle manner of the Buddhist monk or the caricature of a coffee-house existentialist now comes into its truth: “The authentic ‘thinking about death’ is” no more and no less than “wanting-to-have-a-conscience become existentiell self-transparent.” The voice of the conscience calls in the mode of silent reticence. Strictly speaking, it says ‘nothing,’ or,
more precisely, it tells only of the nothing. In saying nothing it sweeps away all of the
everyday chatter by means of which the Dasein flees before its death, and communicates
the ‘guilt’ of the nothingness of existence, as and into which it has been cast. This
nothingness of existence is simply the abiding and unoutstripable ownmost possibility of
death. The communication of the call is a summons to stare this possibility directly in the
face. The authentic hearing of the call, the wanting to have a conscience of anxious
resolve, is thus nothing other than a charging forward into the nothing, in an express,
and therefore authentic, being towards death (BT 356-357/SZ 309; cf. BT 277/SZ 234,
BT 305/SZ 261).

With the working out of the full, authentically understood phenomenal content of
resolve as a running forward, the existential interpretation arrives at an existentiell
possibility of the Dasein, which understands itself as a whole. “If resolve as authentic
tends towards the mode delimited through running forward, but running forward makes
up the authentic potentiality-for-being-whole of the Dasein, then in the existentiellly
attested resolve an authentic potentiality-for-being-whole of the Dasein has been co-
attested” (BT 357/SZ 309). The interpretation of this can-be has revealed it as only the
authenticity of the care structure itself. It has accordingly revealed forward running
resolve as a possibility of the Dasein which is self-transparent in its “authenticity and
totality,” and arrived therewith at the phenomenal assurance of “the required
primordiality” of its “hermeneutical situation,” of the care structure as a ground for the
possible interpretation of the meaning of the being of the Dasein, and therewith the
exposition of the horizon of the meaning of being in general (BT 358/SZ 310-311).
At the opening of the second division of *Being and Time*, the issue of the Dasein's totality was treated in a merely academic sense, “as if,” Heidegger writes, “it were merely a theoretical, methodical question of the analytic of the Dasein, arisen from the troubling about a complete ‘givenness’ of the whole Dasein.” The resolution of the matter of the possible being-whole is *not* simply theoretical, but, as we now learn, an eminently practical question: “*The question concerning the potentiality-for-being-whole is a factic-existentiell {one}.*” We may therefore speak both of a merely formal and of a deeper, authentic question of the totality of the being or freedom of the Dasein. The analysis of resolve is authentically not merely a ready tool for the overcoming of the apparent impasse in which the inquiry found itself at the end of the first division, to be set down again once the Dasein is presently seen as a whole and the phenomenal ground of a primordial interpretation secured. The initial formal presentation of the question indeed “had its right,” but its “merely ontological-methodical” treatment only has its justification through a “ground” that “goes back to an ontical possibility of the Dasein.” The merely formal question of the possible wholeness of the Dasein finds its ground in the factual or ontic question of that possible wholeness, indeed in the existing project of that possible wholeness. The genuine or authentic question is therefore rather a matter of this ontical possibility itself. “*The Dasein answers it as resolved*” (BT 357/SZ 309). According to Heidegger, the Dasein is not a merely present being, of which resolve would provide some particular variety for the researcher then to observe and analyze it in its manifold properties. It is a being ever going about the self-determination of its being, right through to its end. It is therefore rather up to the inquiring Dasein to answer the question for
itself. Gaining the access to the Dasein in its authenticity and totality, as required for the primordial exposition of the horizon of being in general, is thus a matter of the inquiring Dasein being or becoming authentically resolute, that is to say, in the mode of charging forward. And how could it be otherwise, if according to Heidegger, interpretation is ‘only’ ever the “working out and appropriating of an understanding”? (BT 275/SZ 231).

The question of the Dasein’s own possible totality cannot therefore be authentically answered by the merely formal or external analysis of resolve. Interpretation is always the working out and appropriating of an understanding. It is emphatically the case that the inquiring Dasein must answer the existentiell question of its possible being-whole understanding as itself resolute, because the disclosedness of resolve, “in which it brings itself to and before itself,” of necessity “must remain ontically and ontologically unintelligible to the everyday, common-sense [verstaendigen] Dasein-interpretation of the one.” The interpretation of resolve cannot be ‘proven’ theoretically since the criteria and concepts derived from inauthentic existence cannot grasp that can-be which remains essentially outside the average intelligibility prescribed by the impersonal dictatorship of das Man (BT 357/SZ 309).

Though it can neither be proven nor disproven with reference to theoretical concepts derived from the everyday public interpretedness, the possibility of (forward running) resolve nevertheless “has need of protection before the grossest perversions,” distortions and misunderstandings of the phenomenon which result from its average unintelligibility. Heidegger emphasizes here that running forward resolve “is no way out, invented in order to ‘overcome’ death” and “no world-fleeing isolatedness”; nor, on the
other hand, is it “a flying over existence and its possibilities expectation” in which the Dasein skips ahead to the end. It is rather, in Heidegger's terse summary of the existential analysis of the call, the authentic “following the call of conscience.” The obedience to its summons—bringing itself before itself in bringing itself face to face with death as its ownmost possibility—“sets free for death the possibility to become powerful for the existence of the Dasein and at ground [im Grunde] to destroy every fugitive self-concealment.” The power of the ownmost possibility over existence dispels every means by which the Dasein covers over its own thrownness into death. So far from being a way out, running forward resolve is a self-submission to its fate in all its unoutstripable certainty. It does not flee the world into a hermetic existence, but having stripped itself of its illusions it brings itself “into the resolve of ‘acting.’” Emphatically this-worldly and “illusionless,” it is not a wild-eyed idealism but “springs from the sober understanding of factic basic possibilities of the Dasein.” The resolute comportment towards death is thus neither, on the one hand, a fatalistic resignation, nor, on the other, an unrealistic hope to surpass death or get it under its power, but “the sober anxiety which brings before the individualized potentiality-for-being,” a self-liberation of the Dasein for its essential finite freedom. This freedom is not ‘noumenal’ or other-worldly, but emphatically this-worldly. Forward running resolve is the self-liberation of the Dasein from the busy press of the continual distractions of the everyday; in resolve, the Dasein, in the grip of an “unshakeable joy,” chooses and projects itself upon the authentic possibilities of the situation of the there that it is (BT 357-358/SZ 310).
F. The Existential Interpretation and the Project of Freedom

With the demonstration of the connection between resolve and running forward, Heidegger has prepared the way for the “phenomenal exposition of temporality,” that is, the interpretation of the authentic temporality of care as the horizon of the understanding of being in general. At the opening of the demonstration, he writes of the inquiry of *Being and Time*, as an interpretation of the Dasein, that “its steps must let themselves be led wholly [ingesamt] by the idea of existence.” In the case of the demonstration of the connection between the hearing of the call and authentic being towards death, this requirement “means... nothing less than the demand to project these existential phenomena upon the existentiell possibilities fore-indicated in them, and existentially ‘to think {through} to the end’ these {possibilities}” (BT 350/SZ 302-303). In its formality the existential interpretation expressly contains no concrete idea of existence. Heidegger’s analysis of the Dasein nonetheless presages particular existentiell possibilities, that is to say, practical choices for existence. Despite the apparently empty formality of the *existentialia*, they nevertheless indicate practical possibilities to the *inquiring Dasein*, which, as factically existing, has ever already been thrown into possibilities which it somehow understands. Elsewhere Heidegger explains that the character of these “concepts” which are “formally indicative” consists in that “they ... to be sure according to their essence ever point into a concretion of the individual Dasein in man, but never bring this along already in their content” (FCM 296/GBM 429). 82 Heidegger's Dasein-analytic, despite, or rather, precisely through the purely formal
character of the categories of its analysis, cannot fail to suggest (but yet can only
suggest), a particular existentiell content: the formal existential analysis of the
disclosedness of conscience as resolve to the ownmost being-guilty—testimony to the
existentiell possibility of authenticity—cannot but suggest a factual resolution. Such
resolution, when ‘thought through to the end’ in a properly (authentically) existential
manner, reveals itself as a running forward. The “working out of running forward
resolve” is the demonstration of the “existentielly possible authentic potentiality-for-
being-whole” of the Dasein. So far from “an arbitrary construction” of Heidegger's
ontological inquiry, this working out, in its appropriation, “turns into an interpretive
liberation of the Dasein for its uttermost existence-possibility.” This step (the
interpretation of forward running resolve) reveals the “ownmost methodical character” of
“the existential interpretation” as such (BT 350/SZ 303). The inquiry into the meaning of
being in general through the exposition of the horizon of being's intelligibility in the
existential interpretation of the Dasein has, as the ownmost, that is, the most proper or
authentic meaning of its method, the liberation of the Dasein; a liberation, it must be
stressed, according to the authentic concept of freedom, a freeing of the human being for
the finitude of its own existence. The authentic “wherefore” or intention of Heidegger's
retrieval of the question of being is to set free the everyday man of the average mass for
charging ahead into death.

The question of being in its authentic meaning is no bloodless academic question,
no mere “business of a soaring speculation about the most general of generalities” (BT

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82 The entire passage leading up to this statement is instructive.
29/SZ 9), as it appears to the common understanding, but has pointed and radical consequences for how we understand ourselves (“the question of ‘what man is’” (BT 71/SZ 45)), and project ourselves upon the shared possibilities of our common existence, that is, for political life. Having written Being and Time according to this emancipatory intention (and having chosen the means accordingly), we can infer that Heidegger chose the pursuit of the question of being—the question that he judged “not just any one [doch keine beliebige]” (BT 19/SZ 2) but “rather the most principle [prinzipiellste] and most concrete question” (BT 29/SZ 9)—as the indispensably necessary task for rousing the reader from his everyday distraction to his ownmost, essential freedom. To understand how and why this is the case, that is, to comprehend the character of the relation of existential interpretation to its emancipatory intention, we must proceed to Heidegger’s express discussion of method (“the clarification of the methodical possibilities, requirements, and limits of the existential analytic in general”) in section 63 of Being and Time which, according to its stated intention, “secures for its ground-laying step, for the revelation of the meaning of being of care, alone [erst] the necessary transparency” (BT 350/SZ 303). At the close of the working out of forward running resolve, Heidegger now admits that “a determinate ontical grasping upon [Auffassung] of authentic existence, a factic ideal of the Dasein”—an ideal of a resolved running forward—has grounded the whole of his ontological interpretation from the very outset; the initial presentation of the inquiry of Being and Time is not its authentic beginning. Rather, it authentically originates in the conscientious working out and appropriation of what the call gives to understand. This “now demanded methodical consideration” is a “more penetrating
unfolding” of this ideal, formally characterized as running forward resolve, and its grounding role in Heidegger's inquiry in its “positive necessity.” Heidegger's consideration of method in section 63 is a justification of the experience of forward running resolve as the ground of the existential interpretation as such (BT 358/SZ 310).

Heidegger begins this methodical consideration by returning to the survey of the hermeneutic situation which opened the second division of Being and Time, having resolved the apparent impasse which divides the work as we have it. Since “forward running resolve” has “made phenomenally sightable” both the “possible authenticity and totality” of the Dasein, the “hermeneutic situation,” that is, “the whole” of its “presuppositions,” “has received the demanded primordiality.” All interpretation is guided by a fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-concept. The Dasein has been “primordially” grasped as a whole, because its authentically whole can-be “has been put into the fore-having”: the existential analysis of resolve has revealed the possibility of an authentic existentiell wholeness, which the hermeneutic situation of the inquiry expressly lacked at the opening of its second division (BT 358/SZ 310-311).

The fore-sight of any interpretation fixes upon what is grasped in the fore-having and appropriates it for a “determinate interpretability.” The “leading fore-sight” of the existential interpretation, “the idea of existence,” the self-determination of the Dasein, that is, the presupposition of man’s essential freedom, “has through the clarification of the ownmost potentiality-for-being gained its determinacy.” The essential freedom by which Heidegger initially characterized the Dasein, the constant not-yet of its existence has first been made understandable through the existential analysis of death. With the
disclosure of an authentically whole can-be, the inquiry brings into its fore-sight the running forward into death which forms the condition of the possibility of that authenticity in terms of which the existence of the Dasein is to be interpreted. The fore-sight of the inquiry now ‘sees’ the authenticity it expressly lacked at the opening of its second division (BT 358/SZ 311).

Forward running resolve, as the authentic understanding of the experience of conscience, discloses the limit of the authentic human situation and therewith exposes freedom in the condition of its possibility, that it to say, in its determinate intelligibility. With this determinate intelligibility the structure of the how of freedom’s possibility becomes susceptible to conceptualization. The interpretive working out of forward running resolve as a possible existentiell authentic wholeness reveals “the concretely worked out structure of being of the Dasein.” Along with this is revealed “its ontological peculiarity [Eigenart] over against all present-at-hand {things}.” The essence of the human being is simply incommensurable with any handy or merely present being. Heidegger's earlier injunctions against the presentation of the Dasein in terms of sheer presence receive their authentic justification in the revelation of resolve in its most extreme form. Through the appropriation of this disclosedness the uniqueness of its essence “has become so distinct, that the fore-concept for the existentiality of the Dasein has a sufficient articulation, in order to lead securely the conceptual working out of the existentialia.” The working out of forward running resolve has given the “transparency” to that fore-concept of the essential freedom of the human being necessary for the appropriately conceptual interpretation of its existential structure, the exposition of the
how-structure of freedom’s possibility, that is, the interpretation of the meaning of the being of care (BT 358-359/SZ 310-311; cf. BT 191/SZ 150, BT 275-276/SZ 232-233).

Having surveyed the resolution of the apparent hermeneutic impasse which opened the second division of *Being and Time*, Heidegger now turns to the consideration of the methodical character of his existential analytic, which takes up the remainder of this section of the work. He writes here that “the hitherto run through way of the analytic of the Dasein turned into the concrete demonstration of the initially [eingangs] only casual [hingeworfenen] thesis: the being which we ever ourselves are, is ontologically the farthest.” The Dasein, the human being, first of all and mostly ontologically misunderstands itself, having lost its authentic self-knowledge in the distractions of the everyday. “The ground thereof,” the ‘cause’ of this self-forgetting, “lies in care itself.”

This self-forgetting is only possible in a being which is open to such lostness in its very essence. The Dasein flees in the face of itself into the pressing bustle of the everyday, and this “falling being alongside the closest concerned {things} of the ‘world’” which “leads the everyday interpretation of Dasein” obscures its ownmost can-be. In so doing it denies “to the to-this-being directed ontology the appropriate basis” (BT 359/SZ 311).

Any ontology that would present the Dasein in a phenomenally appropriate (that is, a “primordial”) manner must accordingly fight against the falling existence which governs our everyday self-understanding: “The exposition of the primordial being of the Dasein must rather be wrestled from it *in the countermove* to the falling ontic-ontological tendency of interpretation.” Existential interpretation, in the analysis of the being which stands as its proper ‘subject,’ must fight against the predominant tendency of that very
being itself for the sake of uncovering the existential structure of its primordial freedom. In struggling against the predominant tendency of the Dasein's average self-interpretation, it is imperative that its analyses “show how in the Dasein itself the concerned intelligibility of the potentiality-for-being and its disclosure, that is, foreclosure [Verschliessung] has taken possession [bemaechtigt]” (BT 359/SZ 311).

The predominant foreclosing tendency of the Dasein's self-understanding thus reveals the character that any interpretation, which would uncover its being in a primordial, that is, phenomenally appropriate manner, must have. The phenomenon itself, the “kind of being of the Dasein,” requires, indeed “demands,” that ontological (i.e. existential) interpretation fight against its own tendencies of understanding, “that it itself conquer the being of this being against its own tendency of foreclosing.” From the point of view of the average understanding, the fighting demanded of the existential interpretation means that it must necessarily appear violent: “The existential analysis has therefore for the claims or the moderation and tranquilized self-evidence [Selbstverstaendlichkeit] of the everyday interpretation constantly the character of a forcibleness [Gewaltsamkeit].” While it “distinguishes ... especially the ontology of the Dasein,” such forcibleness “is suited to ... every interpretation”; any interpretation, as “self developing understanding,” articulates itself in “the structure of projecting.” Interpretation seeks to project beings in terms of a possible significance, to uncover thereby the beings in the truth of their being (precisely this uncoveredness or nakedness). The truths of interpretation “must always first be wrestled from the being” that is taken as the theme. In Heidegger's presentation, truth is only to be won through the violence of an
interpretive attack on the beings under question. “The respective factic uncoveredness is, as it were, always a rape [Raub].” Interpretation, as the development of understanding, is ever an assault upon, a forcible denuding and seizing of the beings to be interpreted. “Paramenides’ goddess of truth” only lets her secrets be won by the more ferocious. If, according to Heidegger, this is true of all beings, it is emphatically true in the case of the interpretation of the Dasein, because it continually hides itself from itself according to the predominant tendency of its self-understanding (BT 359/SZ 311, cf. BT 265/SZ 222).

The violence of Heidegger’s manner of investigation (the existential interpretation) raises the question of the direction of its project, of the “proper [eigene] leading and regulation” of the existential interpretation, that is, how “ontological projects” determine “the phenomenal appropriateness for their findings.” If “ontological interpretation projects presented being [Seiendes] onto the being [Sein] proper to it,” how does it ensure that it “touches upon the being [Sein] at all”? In the case of existential interpretation, the predominant self-concealing tendency of the Dasein only compounds the problem of the assurance of phenomenally revealing its genuine being. Such assurance requires the “clarification of the analytic of the Dasein” (BT 359/SZ 311-312).

The existential interpretation, as the ontological interpretation of the Dasein, is only the radicalization of a basic tendency of “self-interpretation” which inheres in the being of the human being itself. Along with the “discovering of the ‘world’” and

83 The connotation of Raub is not necessarily or even primarily sexual violence. I have nevertheless adopted this somewhat ‘forcible’ translation (from the point of view of ‘average’ dictionary standards) since I believe it helpfully brings out the ‘mood’ of the passage and the extremely predatory character of interpretation as Heidegger describes it, a tearing off of the concealments with which the being clothes itself, and seizing it in its nakedness. It is moreover not entirely without precedent: the title of Benjamin Britten’s 1946 opera, for example, set in English as “The Rape of Lucretia” appears in
“concern,” the “Dasein understands itself factically always already in determinate existentiell possibilities.” To the extent that it grasps its possibilities as possibilities, the Dasein glimpses itself as an existing being. “Existence is, whether expressly or not, whether appropriately or not, somehow understood.” The structure of the project is such that “every ontic understanding” ‘knows’ about existence, “if even only pre-ontologically.” The Dasein always already somehow understands itself in terms of the existential characteristics which have guided the inquiry from the outset. The existential interpretation, like all prior inquiries into “‘what man is,’” is “prepared [vorbereitet] through the kind of being of the Dasein already” (BT 360/SZ 312).

Given that the existential interpretation, including its leading idea of existence, is prepared or made possible by the very self-projecting being of the Dasein, the question remains as to how existential interpretation acquires any certainty that it takes hold of the genuine albeit concealed essence of the Dasein. That self-interpretation as such is a human possibility does not settle the question of the whither of its directedness. “Yet all the same, from where,” Heidegger asks anew, can we “take away” an idea of “what makes up the ‘authentic’ existence of the Dasein?” Like all interpretation, the existential interpretation requires “an existentiell understanding,” without which it “remains groundless [bodenlos].” Heidegger’s existential analytic of the Dasein can only, and therefore must, grow out of the soil of its own existentiell understanding. Such a particular, existentiell understanding, which as project necessarily includes “an ontical grasping upon of existence,” is thus a ‘positive necessity’ for grounding the existential

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German as “Der Raub der Lucretia.” I am indebted to Susan Shell for the suggestion of this translation.
interpretation. Heidegger’s particular (ontic, existentiell) concept of existence “may be possible,” but does not claim “to be binding for everyone.” The inquiry into the authentic meaning of freedom foreswears from the first the publication and legislation of universal maxims for thought and action. “Existential interpretation will never want to take over a power-talk [Machtspruch] about existentiell possibilities and obligations.” Existential interpretation grounds itself in a particular human possibility; the understanding out of which it develops can become authoritative only through the project of the own Dasein itself (that is, through the Dasein letting it become authoritative for its project, submitting itself to its authority in its project), because in its essential freedom (existence), the Dasein ever has its being to be (BT 360/SZ 312).

The ‘optional’ character of existential interpretation nevertheless does not exhaust, but indeed only sharpens the question of the direction of its interpretive violence. If existential interpretation is grounded in an existentiell possibility that is simply one among many, which is only possible and not binding, what assurance can it give that its violence is not merely arbitrary? Why is this one manner of existence authoritative for fundamental ontology, and from where does it derive this authority? “But must it not justify itself in regard to the existentiell possibilities, with which it gives to the ontological interpretation the ontic ground [Boden]?” (BT 360/SZ 312). Or, on the other hand, is such justification necessary? Is it even possible at all?

Heidegger asks, pointedly: “If the being of the Dasein essentially is potentiality-for-being and being-free for its ownmost possibilities, and if it ever only exists in the freedom for them or in unfreedom towards [gegen] them, is then the ontological..."
interpretation able to {do} [vermag] otherwise than to lay for ground ontic possibilities and project these upon their ontological possibility?” The being of the Dasein is such that it ever exists within particular existentiell possibilities. No superhuman, or more precisely, ‘supra-possible,’ perspective is at all available to interpretation. If, as Heidegger claims, no god’s eye view, indeed, no perspective which transcends the existence or self-determination of the individual human being, is available to interpretation, then its horizon is exactly equal to the horizon of the existentiell possibility in terms of which it understands itself and as which it projects itself. The existential interpretation, as the development of particular human understanding, can therefore only interpret itself from out of and in terms of these particular possibilities, even as it projects them in their ontological condition. As the Dasein, the being of the human, furthermore, “mostly interprets itself from the lostness in the concern of the ‘world,’” then the existential interpretation, which is “the in the countermove... gained determination of the ontic-existentiell possibilities,” will be, precisely through its violence, the “appropriate way for its disclosure,” for projecting the Dasein upon its being. Heidegger therefore proclaims: “Does not then the forcibility of the project turn into a respective [jeweiligen] freeing [Freigabe] of the undisguised [unverstellten] phenomenal content [Bestand] of the Dasein?” The project of existential interpretation is at once a (violent) exposing of the being which the Dasein conceals from itself, and therewith a liberation of the Dasein for the genuine possibilities of that being (BT 360/SZ 312-313).

This demonstration of the necessity for the violence of the existential interpretation, grounded as it is in a particular, and merely possible existentiell
possibility, is not yet also the justification of its direction. “The ‘forcible’ presentation [Vorgabe] of possibilities of existence may be methodically demanded, but does it let itself be taken away from free wish [Belieben]?” As other possibilities are equally ‘optional,’ what ground is there for choosing among them apart from our caprice? More precisely, even if the possibility of the existential interpretation is prepared in the being of the Dasein itself, and the violence of its project frees its self-concealed being, since (like all interpretation) a particular, merely possible existentiell understanding must form the horizon of its project, what prevents its violence from being merely arbitrary? Heidegger again replies with more questions: if existential interpretation “bases [zugrundelegt]” its analysis on “forward running resolve as existentiell authentic potentiality-for-being,” an existentiell possibility to which “the Dasein itself” as care—“indeed from the ground of its existence”—calls itself. Are we really entitled to call “this possibility then as you like [beliebige]” if the Dasein from its very being calls itself to it? Is “the way of being” wherein the Dasein “comports itself towards its distinctive possibility, death” merely “accidentally seized upon”? In other words, can we rightly say that the ownmost possibility of death is arbitrarily chosen for the clarification of the possibility of freedom? Ultimately the issue of the justification of forward running resolve as the existentiell ground of the existential interpretation turns on the status of death for human existence, according to Heidegger's resolute demand: “Has being-in-the-world a higher court [Instanz] of its potentiality-for-being than its death?” If existence (the self-determination of freedom) is or supplies the measure of everything, up to and including the whole of being itself, if the project of existentiell understanding is the source of all meaning, is
there any higher court for the can-be of the Dasein, than that possibility wherein it is simply about the possibility of existence as such? (BT 360-361/SZ 313).84

The existential interpretation ‘lays for ground’ forward running resolve as the authentic existentiell can-be. Forward running resolve now explicitly shows itself as the existentiell understanding from which it takes its “determinate ontic concept of authentic existence.” The existential interpretation accordingly projects the being of the Dasein in terms of the disclosedness of forward running resolve. All of this is to say, running forward resolve is the “factic ideal of the Dasein” which “lies at the ground” of the existential interpretation (BT 358/SZ 311), not an “ideal of existence” forced upon it “‘from outside’ [>>von aussen<<]” (BT 311/SZ 266), but one to and for which the Dasein itself gives testimony. Though Heidegger disputes both the interpretation of Kant (and others) of the conscience as the voice of God, and his description of it as a court of law with a prosecutor and a defence counsel as inauthentic perversions and thus evasions of what it authentically discloses, nevertheless he too asserts, to use Kant's language, a

84 Theodore Kisiel interprets this question as an instance of Heidegger continuing “to express doubts about the radical comprehensiveness” of the now “ontically founded ideal” of forward running resolve, despite the fact that, as Kisiel correctly observes, “‘{t}his kairological paradigm governs the remainder of the book” (indeed, he argues that it governs the whole book even from its very beginning); cf. Kisiel, pp. 436-437. It is certainly true that the teaching of Being and Time is by no means intended to become a new dogmatism; indeed in The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, Heidegger describes philosophical knowing as a “floating between certainty and uncertainty” (FCM 19/GBM 28). I contend that Kisiel’s interpretation nevertheless represents a misreading, for Heidegger’s question here represents a reply, even his most pointed reply, to the question that opens the paragraph in which it occurs: “The ‘violent’ presentation [Vorgabe] of possibilities of existence may be methodically demanded, but does it let itself be taken away from {our} free wish [Belieben]?” This opening question is presents itself as an objection to Heidegger’s method. Heidegger’s reply, though expressed as a question, is not an expression of doubt on his part, perhaps as a consequence of conceding the objection contained in the first question, but rather a counter-question made to this objection, a kind of counter-attack made in defense of the method of the existential interpretation, which is therefore intended at least as much as a rhetorical question, as it is intended as a genuine question. Heidegger sets up a kind of questioning confrontation with the objector in order to provoke the reader to ask the questions for himself, to decide whose questions are the more telling, and therewith to decide the outcome of the fight
priority of the jurisdiction of practical reason as over against the theoretical science. In projecting the being of the Dasein in terms of the experience of the disclosedness of forward running resolve (the attestation of the Dasein's possible authenticity, authentically interpreted), the existential interpretation affirms the authority of the conscience, when 'heard' conscientiously, as the highest court of the existence of the Dasein. Conscientiously heard, the conscience says ‘nothing,’ but simply summons the Dasein face to face with the finitude of its possibility. The authentic hearing of the call simply works out to running forward into death. The existential interpretation of death is therefore nothing other than the authentic (conscientious) concept of freedom. Death, and death alone, is (authentically conceived) the sole rightful arbiter of human existence.

Interpretation, as a way of being-in-the-world, ever arises out of, and is therefore grounded upon, some particular existentiell understanding. The Dasein only gains access to a particular understanding by existing within that possibility itself, and this is emphatically true in the case of its possible authenticity, in the face of which the Dasein first of all and mostly flees. In submitting itself to its authority, existential interpretation cannot therefore stand above or outside the disclosedness of the call. But the conscientious hearing of the voice of conscience (hearing it as it wants to be heard, hearkening to the call in the purity of its silence) is nothing other than understanding it according to its existential interpretation. Since existential interpretation takes its concept of authentic existence from forward running resolve, it necessarily follows that Heidegger himself wrote the existential interpretation of *Being and Time* from out of, and in terms for himself.
of, an authentic hearkening to the summons of the call, and here by Heidegger's own confession, it now emerges that the inquiry of *Being and Time*, from start to finish, springs out of the experience of conscience authentically (conscientiously) interpreted; that is to say, from an existentiell authentic being towards death. The existential analytic, thus grounded on the *experience* of running forward resolve, projects the authentic existence of the Dasein in its ontological possibility. The existential interpretation, in its ownmost methodical character (that is, *as such*), is the project (from out of the experience of existentiell authenticity, in forward running resolve) of the primordial freedom of the Dasein in the conditions of its possibility. The meaning of *Being and Time*, according to its deepest (authentic) intention, is the clarification, under the authority of the conscience, of the self-determination of existence, the making intelligible of how freedom is possible. This making intelligible is conversely the working out of the project of a resolute running forward, that is to say, the exposition of the meaning of human freedom purely according to its authentic concept.

Though the objections to death as the highest court of existence may have been reduced to silence, more questions concerning the method of the existential interpretation remain. Even if “‘*t*he ontic-ontological project of the Dasein upon an authentic potentiality-for-being-whole may indeed be not just-as-you-like [unbeliebig],” it can still be asked, “does the... existential interpretation therewith already justify itself?” Does not the fact remain that it works out of “a ‘presupposed’ idea of existence in general,” a “posited concept of existence” by which “the steps of the analysis of inauthentic everydayness have regulated themselves”? Indeed, Heidegger demands, “‘*h*as not
already all, even if dimly, been illumined through the light of the ‘presupposed’ idea of existence?” It seems now that everything hangs on the idea of existence that has guided the existential interpretation from the outset. This idea has itself been presupposed from somewhere, from some particular existentiell understanding. The question of the justification of the ground of the inquiry therefore returns, centered on the question of the justification of the idea of existence, the very presupposition of the idea of human freedom. Without an answer to this question, it might be wondered whether the “first project” of the interpretation has been indeed “directionless [fuehrungslos].” Heidegger “in no way” grants the accusation contained in the objection he here anticipates. The rest of the section consequently stands as his defence not only of the inquiry of Being and Time hitherto, together with its presuppositions, but of the existential interpretation as such, starting with a justification of the “right” of the idea of existence, the ‘presupposed’ understanding of freedom that grounds Heidegger’s whole teaching (BT 361/SZ 313).

Heidegger replies to the question concerning the idea of existence that the “formal indication of the idea of existence” at the root of existential interpretation “has been led by the understanding of being lying in the Dasein itself.” The idea of existence, from which Heidegger draws his formal concept, inheres in the essential disclosedness of the Dasein. Through this understanding the human being always already somehow glimpses its essential freedom: “Without any ontological transparency it reveals nevertheless: the being, which we call Dasein, am I ever myself and indeed as potentiality-for-being, for which it is the issue [dem es darum geht] to be this being.” With the being of the Dasein, the disclosedness of being-in-the-world, the Dasein is disclosed to itself as well; with the
understanding of being the Dasein also understands, and that is to say, projects its own being. Existence is characteristic of that being whose being is ever ahead of itself. With the ‘actual’ existence of the human being, it always already somehow understands itself as existing. To whatever degree it misunderstands itself, failing to recognize the essential distinction between its own being and everything only handy or merely present, “even if the Dasein indeed first of all understands existence as reality,” nevertheless “it is not only present-at-hand but has ... ever already understood itself.” For further evidence for this grounding claim, Heidegger points to the existence of ‘primitive’ humanity giving a “mythical and magical interpretation” of its being. Only the self-projection upon possible significance in terms of a for-the-sake-of-which can, according to Heidegger, provide for the possibility of the Dasein existing “in a mythos” and preoccupy itself with “its magic in ritual and cult.” The explanation for these possibilities can by contrast never be adequately built up out of the ontology of sheer presence.85 Having taken its cue from this understanding of being that, according to Heidegger, inheres in the being of the Dasein as Dasein, the existential interpretation describes only the structure of existence as such (that is, its pure concept). “The posited idea of existence is the existentielly non-binding fore-sketch of the formal structure of the understanding of Dasein in general.” Though inhering in the being whose formal structure it describes, it is not existentielly binding because only the Dasein itself in its freedom ‘decides,’ as it were, its self-interpretation in the self-project of its being (BT 361/SZ 313).

85 The existential interpretation has in this way far more affinity for the ‘irrational’ understandings of myth and cult than almost all earlier modern thought, to the extent that it might even (within certain limits) be called a rehabilitation of mythology.
It is this apparently existentially neutral idea of existence which has directed the existential interpretation in its “preparatory analysis of the closest everydayness” through “to the first conceptual definition of care.” This concept “enabled the sharpened grasping” both of existence itself and its essential connection “to facticity and falling,” that is, its thrownness and absorption with its objects of everyday concern. The care-concept brings into sharper relief the essential difference between the Dasein and all other beings, such that it yields “the basis for a first ontological distinction of existence”—“the substance of the human”—“and reality.” Of course, it is not simply the case that the interpretation arrived at the structure of care merely through the analysis of everydayness, but rather finally through the interpretation of the fundamental mood of Angst, which, not incidentally, attunes both the understanding of running forward and the disclosedness of the conscience (which, conscientiously, existentially, or authentically interpreted indeed has no determinate content beyond Angst itself), and which, according to Heidegger, the averageness of the everyday does everything in its power to distort and suppress. It far rather looks as if Heidegger is not entirely forthright in his present attribution of the development of the care concept to the guiding formal, existentially neutral idea of existence. And if this attribution is indeed correct—that the development of the care concept has been guided primarily by the idea of existence—does this not give reason for suspecting the very existentiell generality of the idea of existence itself, since the idea of existence has directed the development of the care concept through the working out and appropriation of that fundamental Angst which das Man expends so much effort to suppress? It is Angst that reveals the Dasein as being-possible. It is the
interpretation of the disclosedness of Angst that exposes the Dasein as ahead of itself, and which achieves its most primordial concretion as an anxious running forward into death (BT 361-362/SZ 314).

In his very next sentence Heidegger anticipates such suspicions. However “formal and existentially non-binding,” the leading “idea of existence,” he is forced to admit, “hides within itself already a determinate even if unpretentious ontological ‘content.’” The idea of existence, “just as the there-against delimited [abgegrenzte] idea of reality,” necessarily “‘presupposes’ an idea of being in general.” Though the Dasein as such possesses an understanding of being, it somehow ‘knows’ what being ‘means’ as the horizon within which it ‘lives’ or, more precisely, exists, it remains at a “vague” or “average” level; we do not “know” what being means without an “ontologically clarified idea of being in general.” This clarification can only be achieved through the interpretive “working out of the belonging to the Dasein understanding of being.” Any “primordial” grasp of the understanding of being, however, requires a “primordial interpretation of the Dasein”; such a primordial interpretation must begin from the formal idea of existence. All interpretation is, however, only the working out and appropriation of an understanding. The understanding that grounds the primordial existential interpretation must somehow already contain within itself the formal idea of existence. Is not then the argument of Being and Time, Heidegger asks, fundamentally circular, merely presupposing what it sets out to prove? (BT 362/SZ 314).

This circularity, as noted in “the analysis of the structure of understanding in general,” is not ‘vicious’ but “belongs to the essence” of all understanding as such.
Heidegger nevertheless returns to the question of circularity for the sake of “the
clarification of the hermeneutic situation of the fundamental ontological problematic.”
The adequacy of the objection that the inquiry has already ‘presupposed’ what it sets out
to ‘prove’ rests on the question of the authentic character of the ‘presuppositions’
themselves. The objection to the ‘circular argument’ of the existential interpretation
“according to the rules of the ‘logic of consequence’” that Heidegger here anticipates has
no genuine ground, because it rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of the character
of the presuppositions of the existential interpretation. The idea of existence is
emphatically not “a proposition [Satz] from which... we deduce further propositions
about the being of the Dasein.” The presupposing or “pre-setting-out [Voraus-setzen]” of
the idea of existence is rather an “understanding projecting.” The idea of existence is
rather a formal indication of possibility, the possibility of possibility, of existentiale, as
such, upon which the Dasein projects its being in order to interpret it as such, a
presupposition which the existential interpretation “conceives and brings ... to more
penetrating unfolding.” The existential interpretation, through “developing such
understanding” forces “the to-be-interpreted” to expose itself, such that it “lets” it “first
itself come to word” (BT 362-363/SZ 314-315).

The objection to the circular argument of the existential interpretation reveals
itself as the product of the inauthentic understanding. The insistence on “the avoiding of
the ‘circle,’” while making a show of the “highest rigour,” is only an attempt to abjure
“the basic structure of care.” The basic intention of this objection is identical to the basic
intention of das Man. Human existence as such ‘subsists’ as project: “Primordially
constituted through it, the Dasein is ever already ahead-of-itself.” Thrown into existence, the Dasein, not just from time to time but continually, “has projected its existence upon determinate possibilities,” and any such project presupposes ideas of existence and being, albeit without any ontological clarification. If, Heidegger demands, “all research,” including that which “wants to develop and to bring to concept the understanding of being belonging to existence,” is and must be “a way of being of the disclosing Dasein,” then how can it dispense with “essential projecting”? The average intelligibility, ruled by the public interpretation of das Man, preoccupies itself with the handy and merely present, and (mis)understands itself in terms of these ways of being. Existence is not a static property of a merely present or “factual” being, from which further analytic judgements can be derived. And indeed, “factual” beings “can be experienced only then, if being has been already understood.” The ‘logic of consequences,’ which the “‘charge of circularity’” takes as its ground, itself fundamentally depends on the hermeneutic circle and the understanding of being. The insistence on ‘factual’ analysis in opposition to ‘subjective’ understanding (which itself betrays a conceptual dependence on the ontology of presence) thus amounts to an attempt “to rid itself of an understanding of being.” This is again consistent with the basic intention of das Man. The intelligible project of the average seeks to suppress fundamental Angst, to rob the Dasein of its care, to dispose of the understanding of being in general. Heidegger’s statement here casts into stark relief the essential unity of the disclosedness of Angst and the understanding of being, and therewith the ‘ontological’ consequences of the intention of das Man to suppress this primordial Angst. We may also therefore say that, according to Heidegger,
any attempt to pursue anything like the question of the meaning of being in general must set itself at odds with the spirit that ‘animates’ mass society. (The most extreme formulation of this factual concern of average intelligibility naturally would be that matter in motion is the sum of all that is.) An awakening of the suppressed understanding of being (which, to the intelligibility of the average, therefore necessarily appears “forcible”) in this way not only requires but is identical with the ‘violent’ liberation of the human Dasein from its lostness in the inauthenticity of the everyday (BT 363/SZ 315).

The existentiell understanding with its ‘circular’ projective structure constitutes the hermeneutic situation, the inescapable and insurmountable horizon of all interpretation, including the existential. Interpretation cannot therefore hope in any way to “overcome” it (BT 363/SZ 315). “What is decisive is not to come out of the circle but to come into it according to the right manner.” Interpretation misunderstands itself unless it rather embraces the hermeneutic circle, and only through such embrace does it come into its own. Since interpretation can only be grounded on the circle of understanding (which is nothing other than “the expression of the fore-structure of the Dasein” itself), it must itself secure the fore-structure of its hermeneutic situation, and project itself, precisely as the development of this understanding, in order to come into its own in its genuine possibility: that is, to ‘live up’ to its authentic task. Indeed, the right entering holds forth “a positive possibility of the most primordial knowing,” one which “conceals itself” inside the circle. This primordial possibility “admittedly [freilich] has been grasped in a genuine way,” it ‘exists,’ “only then, when the interpretation has understood”—that is, when the human being who has taken upon himself the possibility
of interpretation has understood—“that its first, constant, and last task remains ... to secure the scientific theme,” and it is to do so “in the working out” of its fore-structure “out of the things themselves [den Sachen selbst].” The express understanding of this task requires first ‘seeing’ the fore-structure, which only becomes ‘visible’ through the working out and appropriation of the project of the understanding (BT 195/SZ 153).

Interpretation must seize upon its own hermeneutic situation in order to truly reveal the interpreted being in its being. If it is to do so, it must purge its hermeneutic fore-structure of the suggestions of “fancies [Einfälle]” and “folk concepts [Volksbegriffe]” (BT 195/SZ 153). The problem, according to Heidegger, is not that these opinions are a distorted view of the truth. In like manner to other modern thinkers before him Heidegger rejects the idea that we can ascend to knowledge of ‘what man is’ by beginning with our common sense opinions. Neither is it the issue that what we say we ought to do blinds us to the effectual truth of human nature, nor that the reach of human reason exceeds its grasp and requires critical discipline before it can know itself, nor even that everyday opinions are (as they must be) culturally or historically conditioned, and thus cannot be taken for the source of an ‘objective’ human science, which must therefore find some other ground. Each of these orientations has “‘presupposed’” too much for the possibility of ‘transcending’ the circle of understanding and therefore “too little” as regards their interpretation of the human being itself. The problem is rather that these opinions, however confused and contingent, serve dominant tendencies of the Dasein's being that move in a definite direction: fleeing in the face of the burden of its authentic freedom. Any interpretation which orients itself solely by the
terms of everyday speech must remain entangled in the falling public understanding, that is, the (according to Heidegger) inauthentic notion of being as presence-at-hand which has determined all of Western philosophy since Plato. When it comes to the interpretation of the Dasein, however, this concept of being is ontologically inappropriate, and any analysis which remains dependent upon it will not grasp the proper essence of the Dasein, but only echo the ‘self-evident’ notions of average intelligibility, by means of which it hides from itself. If “one” grasps Dasein worldlessly, if “one” analyzes its “‘life’” but disregards death's central importance for existence, if one abstracts “‘a theoretical subject’” and only consequently turns to consider its “‘ethic,’” “in order to fill it out ‘on the practical side,’” then one fails to grasp it in the wholeness of its existence, to get “the full glimpse of the circular being of the Dasein.” ‘One’ cannot ever grasp (and so interpretively make intelligible) an existing not-yet (that is to say, the essential freedom of the Dasein) in terms of the everyday, ‘self-evident,’ and average self-project of the Dasein. In order to understand the freedom of the human being, we must simply begin from the assumption of freedom itself; not only theoretically, as a ‘postulate’ but practically, in shouldering its burden (BT 363-364/SZ 315-316).

Any interpretation, like the existential, which sets for itself the task of achieving the most primordial knowing of ‘what man is,’ of revealing the hidden primordial structure of the Dasein, can only ‘live up’ to the requirements of that task through seizing upon its fore-structure within a primordial disclosure of the interpreted being. “The effort [Bemuehung] must rather aim thereupon [darauf] to spring primordially and wholly into this ‘circle’ [>>Kreis<<] in order to secure for itself at the start of the analysis of Dasein
the full glimpse of the circular being of the Dasein.” The existential interpretation must endeavor to leap into the circle of understanding so that its fore-structure, its hermeneutic situation, will somehow already ‘have’ the Dasein in a primordial manner. Since the understanding has the structure of a project, to already somehow ‘have’ the Dasein primordially in the circle of its understanding is to project the Dasein primordially. To project the Dasein primordially is to project it as a whole, which means, according to its proper ontological character, to project it in the finitude of its possibility, that is, finally, in terms of its death. To project the Dasein, as itself the being which is ever mine to be, in terms of its death, means to project my own self in terms of the ownmost possibility of death, that is to say, to exist within an existentiell understanding of the finitude of my own possibility. Primordial self-knowledge requires primordial self-having, existing disclosed to myself as a whole can-be. The Dasein discloses itself to itself as a whole through the call of conscience; the existentiell possibility of wholeness attested by the conscience is forward running resolve. Heidegger accordingly concludes that, “{w}ith the exhibition of running forward resolve the Dasein, in regard to its authentic totality, has been brought into the fore-having.” It is this “authenticity of the potentiality-for-being-self,” the wholeness of authentic existence, which trains the fore-sight of existential interpretation upon “primordial existentiality,” and it is this primordial “fore-sight” that “secures the proof of the appropriately existential conceptuality.” The authentic disclosedness of the Dasein is the primordial truth of existence. Primordial self-knowledge, the interpretation of the meaning of care—that is, making freedom intelligible to itself, freeing it for its freedom, the very aim of the endeavour of the
existential interpretation—is thus nothing other than the interpretation (working out and appropriation) of the disclosedness of the conscience (BT 363-364/SZ 315-316).

One might still object at this point that Heidegger's considerations of method are hardly reassuring as an answer to the problem of the particular existentiell ground for an interpretation which aims at a transcendent horizon. Heidegger has admitted after all that the very idea of existence, in spite of its formality, conceals a determinate ontological content, and that it itself depends on an understanding of being, which in this case means an authentic (if 'pre-theoretical') understanding of being, an authentic project, a “factic ideal,” which grounds the existential interpretation entirely from the outset. Nowhere in the rest of section 63 has Heidegger assuaged any concern about a particular ‘worldview’ being taken as the ground for the sighting of a transcendent horizon. The conscience reveals the Dasein to itself primordially; the conscience alone stands surety for the primordiality of its disclosure, to which the hearing of the call alone grants access. The everyday understanding does not ‘see’ what the conscience discloses; for it, the authentic situation of existence is simply ‘invisible.’ For all Heidegger's forswearing of ‘power talk,’ how are we to avoid the conclusion that existential interpretation is itself only the arbitrary self-assertion of a particular understanding, a self-assertion, moreover, which amounts to the forcible (interpretive) rape of the human being which it takes for its ‘scientific object’?

The characteristics (existentialia) of existence and evermineness that form the starting point of existential interpretation (BT 67-68/SZ 41-43) are indeed drawn from the disclosedness of forward running resolve. In the possibility of death existence and
mineness are seen most purely (that is, by an understanding which confronts its end rather than fleeing from it, in an authentic being towards death, in a running forward) (BT 284/SZ 240). Death is the possibility wherein it is about my possibility as such. It is both inalienably ever mine (however much I try to flee from it), and brings me before the sheerness of my existence in all its naked thatness. Even if the idea of existence has been drawn from the disclosedness of running forward, nevertheless in our falling everyday way, despite concealing our deaths from ourselves, despite initially and mostly operating within an (inauthentic) understanding of being as mere presence, we still somehow understand ourselves in terms of existence and mineness. It is up to me to fulfill my social obligations, to choose my ‘lifestyle,’ to choose and maintain myself in the practice of my profession, and so on. On the ground of the ordinary understanding, however, this idea of existence cannot make sense of itself, since its not-yet is ever somehow ‘still outstanding.’ If forward running resolve is not ‘binding’ or ‘necessary’—since as existentiell possibility it exists only in the project of the Dasein, that is, it depends on the purely contingent choice of its freedom—neither is it simply an arbitrary ground for the existential interpretation. According to Heidegger, as we have seen, the conscience, on the one hand, inheres in the being of the Dasein, and in its call it calls itself to hear; on the other it is the experience of the conscience which can clarify the being of the not-yet, the essential self-determination that we somehow ‘know about’ even in thrall to the everyday, that is to say, it is the experience of the revelation of the conscience conscientiously interpreted which makes intelligible how freedom is possible. Forward running resolve justifies itself as the ground of existential interpretation as that
experience which can make the Dasein intelligible to itself in its freedom. It is thus that Heidegger’s factic ideal “secures the proof of the appropriately existential conceptuality.”

It is in the existentiell understanding of forward running resolve that Heidegger’s initial presuppositions of existence and evermineness find their ground. Indeed the whole of the existential analysis of the Dasein (the entire interpretive project of Being and Time), beginning from these ‘presuppositions,’ consequently sets out “what man is” according to the disclosedness of the conscience, conscientiously—that is, radically, existentially—interpreted. 86 While Heidegger’s own statements make this conclusion

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86 As I have already noted, I am ‘factically’ indebted to Michael Ehrmantraut for this particular insight. Cf. Ehrmantraut, pp. 317-318, n. 33:

In this respect, existential-ontological discourse is like the strange “discourse” of the voice of conscience. Both that which is spoken to, and that which speaks, are “conspicuously indefinite” in a manner which repels the “listener” from his familiar worldly self-understanding. In the treatment of conscience, Heidegger says that “when Dasein interprets itself in terms of that with which it concerns itself, the call passes over what Dasein proximally and for the most part, understands itself as ... Not only is the call meant for him to whom the appeal is made ‘without regard for persons,’ but even the caller maintains itself in conspicuous indeterminateness. If the caller is asked about its name, status, origin, or repute, it not only refuses to answer, but does not even leave the slightest possibility of one’s making it into something with which one can be familiar when one’s understanding of Dasein has a ‘worldly’ orientation” (SZ 274). There are other notable similarities between the discourse of conscience and existential-ontological discourse. In (negatively) “passing over” the familiar “worldly” self-understanding, both the call of conscience and existential discourse “address,” and thereby disclose, the self as something which “is in no other way than being-in-the-world” (SZ 273). Indeed, both kinds of discourse disclose Dasein in its facticity (thrownness), existence (“ownmost can-be”), nullity and falling (i.e. both disclose das Man as das Man) (SZ 283-288). Of course, if the existential-ontological interpretation of conscience tells us what the conscience itself makes known, it may seem pointless to highlight these “similarities.” On the other hand, if one takes seriously Heidegger’s characterization of the existential analytic as the “self-interpretation of Dasein,” which “lets that which is interpreted come to word for the very first time,” and if, in this light, one considers the “similarities” between the discourse of conscience and existential-ontological discourse, similarities with regard to “who speaks,” “who is appealed to,” “who is passed over,” “what is made known,” and “how this is disclosed,” —then a paradoxical but compelling possibility presents itself. In short, existential-ontological discourse is not merely “like” the discourse of conscience it rather is itself the discourse of conscience—indeed the most extreme fulfillment of the discourse of conscience. To be sure, in order to
unavoidable, it nevertheless demands concrete proof. The complete, that is, thorough proof of this ultimately unavoidable thesis would nevertheless take us far beyond the scope of our present study, i.e. in the final analysis it would represent, and therefore authentically demand, a commentary on the whole of Being and Time. I shall consequently restrict myself to sketching out a summary of such a proof which

substantiate this thesis, it would be necessary to explain, first, what Heidegger (?) means in describing conscience as something that discourses by keeping silent, and, second, why this is something from which one should not expect “anything like a communication” (SZ 273). On the other hand, in light of the fact that, on its own terms, existential-ontological interpretation has its “root” in authentic existentiell understanding ... it is clear that an authentic “hearing” of the call of conscience must be a primordial source of the work.

While I readily concur that the existential interpretation of Being and Time is the most extreme fulfillment of the discourse of the conscience, nonetheless in suggesting that the existential interpretation is itself the discourse of the conscience, I believe Ehrmantraut makes a claim that is insupportable, given the difficulties that his subsequent qualification addresses. For the existential interpretation to be itself the discourse of the conscience, would mean that “Heidegger’s ‘speech’ itself is indistinguishable from silence.” This is in fact Rosen’s position (cf. Stanley Rosen, Nihilism: A Philosophial Essay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. xvii; compare Stanley Rosen, The Question of Being: A Reversal of Heidegger (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 211). This interpretation is nevertheless absurd. For speech, qua speech, even ‘trivial’ or ‘meaningless’ speech, is ipso facto distinct and distinguishable from silence, even ‘pointed’ or ‘meaningful’ silence. In order to ‘save the phenomenon,’ we might rather say that the conscience is the ‘ground’ and source of the existential interpretation, which serves as the vehicle of its disclosure or revelation. Heidegger’s task in writing Being and Time would therefore have consisted, not in reconciling speech with silence, but in developing a speech that would not interfere with, that could indeed transmit, along with its communication, the authentic silence of the call, that is to say, the peculiarly empty, but for that very reason, highly suggestive, language of formal indication. Theodore Kisiel accordingly suggests that,“(Kairology and formal indication will together constitute the most essential, but largely unspoken, core of BT itself)”(Kistel, p. 152; For an instructive discussion of the discourse of formal indication, cf. Ehrmantraut, pp. 319-323). In his own way, Johannes Fritsche has understood something similar, in connection with section 74 of Being and Time, and from there to the whole of the work, in his discussion of it as a kind of “picture-puzzle” with the inherent possibility of a “Gestalt switch.” Indeed Being and Time is not neutral to this possibility which it contains, but is itself an attempt to bring it about; to transmit the call faithfully, presupposes having heard it authentically, and is itself therefore an attempt to liberate the reader or student. “The talented students join their master to form the invisible church of those Daseine that are <<authentically {themselves} in the primordial individualization of the reticent resoluteness which exacts anxiety of itself>> (BT 369; SZ 322), and whose <<reticence>> (BT 318; SZ 273) has been stressed throughout the section on conscience as a characteristic of authentic Dasein in contrast to the idle talk that passes among ordinary and inauthentic Dasein (BT 434; SZ 382). The talented students then wait for the situation to unconceal themselves and to turn the heads of the fallen Daseine. ...” Cf. Fritsche, pp. 218-219 and the accompanying note on pp. 339-341. On the question of Heidegger’s attempt to transform the human being into the Dasein, see below pp. 335-347.
Heidegger provisionally defines the "basic constitution" of the being determined by existence and evermineness as “being-in-the-world” (BT 274/SZ 231). The wherefore of Angst is no particular being but rather the nothing and nowhere of the world as such, in its worldhood. It is the mood of Angst which “discloses primordially and directly the world as world,” which the understanding of the everyday overlooks precisely in its worldhood. Angst thus discloses the Dasein precisely as being-in-the-world, as both the “wherefore” and “about which” of being anxious (BT 231-234/SZ 186-190). Both the disclosedness of the conscience, and its existentiell modalization into an authentic being towards death, forward running resolve, are attuned by the fundamental mood of Angst (BT 321/SZ 276, BT 310/SZ 265-266, BT 356/SZ 308). The initial presupposition of the basic constitution of the Dasein as being-in-the-world finds its ground in the Angst of forward running resolve.

The fundamental moment of the unitary phenomenon of being-in-the-world is being-in as such. The analysis of being-in as such reveals that the being “essentially constituted by being-in-the-world, is itself ever its ‘there.’” Freedom's fate is to exist as the being of its world, as the leeway of the clearing of the there: “The Dasein is its disclosedness” (BT 171/SZ 132-133). The authentic hearing of the conscience calls the Dasein into the truth of its there. “Resolve brings the being of the there into the existence of its situation” (BT 347/SZ 300). Not only does running forward resolve take over the authentic situation of its existence, but furthermore in authentic wanting to have a
conscience, “the Dasein has revealed itself,” indeed precisely and expressly as “this revealing and being revealed” (BT 355/SZ 307). In hearkening to the revelation of the conscience the Dasein can clearly ‘catch sight’ of itself, as itself this cleared clearing. Brought before the naked ‘fact’ of itself as this disclosedness in the face of the constant threat of the there, the Dasein which hearkens to the call ‘sees’ or understands itself as the project of that understanding upon possibilities of existence. The thesis that the Dasein is its disclosedness, and the existential analysis of the structures of the disclosedness of being-in-the-world (the worldhood of the world and the primordial spatiality of the there, and the analysis of the there as there in the attuned understanding, projecting itself upon the for-the-sake-of-which, developing itself in interpretation), and indeed the very assertion of the essentiality of the understanding of being, ultimately find their ground in the revelation of forward running resolve.

The existential interpretation brings the inquiring Dasein face to face with its factic lostness in the ‘self’ of the everyday. The Dasein according to its ontological character is never a ‘what’ but rather properly a ‘who’ (BT 71/SZ 45). The everyday ‘who’ is the average self of das Man. Through the call of the conscience and the authentic being towards death attested by the disclosedness of resolve, when ‘thought through to the end,’ the Dasein can wrench itself from the public interpretedness of das Man (which alienates itself from its most essential possibility, in understanding death merely as a not-yet-present event) (BT 315-316/SZ 271, BT 345/SZ 299, BT 354/SZ 307). “The understanding of this ‘ability’ [>>Koennens<<] reveals however only the

existential interpretation. See the preceding note above.
factic lostness in the everydayness of the one-self” (BT 307/SZ 263). For the Dasein lost in *das Man*, its “authentic dictatorship” is concealed in “inconspicuousness” and “unascertainability” (BT 164/SZ 126). Only in the authenticity of running forward does the Dasein ever at all “see” the invisible dictatorship of the average “one” together with its own “subjection [Botmaessigkeit]” thereto (BT 164/SZ 126). Heidegger's existential analysis of “everyday being-with” and the everyday self of *das Man*, ultimately finds its existentiell ground in the authentic experience of the revelation of the conscience.

Finally, there is the interpretation of the Dasein’s being as care. The “working out of the phenomenon of care,” as we have seen, is the analysis of “the concrete constitution of existence,” of the “connection” of existence “with the facticity and the falling of the Dasein”. That is to say, the care-structure encapsulates “the totality of this structural whole,” the unity of the existential structures of being-in-the-world (BT 274/SZ 231). Care, if it indeed forms “the primordial constitution of being of the Dasein,” itself forms the horizon of being’s intelligibility, and therewith also for the definition of the answer to the question of the meaning of being in general (BT 273/SZ 230). The very structure of care, however, has itself been drawn from the disclosure of the fundamental mood of *Angst* (BT 235/SZ 190-191). It is *Angst* that reveals the Dasein as “being-possible,” uncannily “delivered over” to itself in the midst of beings, initially and mostly fleeing before that uncanniness into an absorbed preoccupation with the beings which ‘surround’ it (BT 232-234/SZ 188-189). The structure of this possibility revealed by *Angst*, which articulates itself as existence, thrownness, and falling, works itself out as “ahead-of-itself being-already-in... as being-alongside” (BT 237/SZ 192). Again, the fundamental mood,
“which can arise in the most innocuous situations,” and which the everyday average flees and covers over but can never entirely suppress (BT 234/SZ 189), is the very mood that attunes the project of authentic being towards death, the disclosedness of the conscience, and the forward running resolve that is its authentic meaning. To interpret oneself as care is finally to understand oneself expressly as being towards death. The existential interpretation of the being of the Dasein as care finally finds its ground in the existentiell project of forward running resolve. Indeed, perhaps we are consequently even entitled to speak of forward running resolve as the source of the very interpretation of the human being as Dasein. Heidegger himself subsequently confirms this suspicion in his lectures on logic from the summer of 1928: “To put it another way, attaining the metaphysical neutrality and isolation of the Dasein as such is only possible on the basis of the extreme existentiell *involvement* [extremen existentiellen *Einsatzes*] of himself the one who projects” (MFL 140/MAL 176).

It consequently should come as no surprise that it is itself the authentic truth of forward running resolve which offers the assurance that the working out of the care-structure represents a primordial interpretation of the being or essence of the ‘human being,’ that is to say, of freedom. This ‘proof’ of the primordiality of existential

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88 *Einsatz* is another word which Heidegger uses which has a military meaning that should not be overlooked in this context. While Heim renders this word as “involvement,” in ordinary usage it can also mean an inserted component or part, such as an ‘insert’ in a magazine, an insert in a piece of clothing, a table leaf, or an entry in music; it can also mean the use or employment of something, and therefore also action, something which is at stake, or risk (according to my dictionary, “etwas unter Einsatz seines Lebens tun” = to risk one’s life to do something). It can also mean an action or operation in the military sense. In his discussion of historicality in chapter five of *Being and Time*, Heidegger speaks of the Dasein as the *Einsatzstelle*, the place of action, for the exposition of the problem of history; in his rectorate address, he describes the free bond of defence service (“*Wehrdienst*”) as the spiritual cultivation of “tightened through discipline readiness for action right to the last [durch Zucht
interpretation (that is to say, the assurance that the care structure drawn from Angst grasps the whole of the Dasein, through the existential interpretation of death and conscience, the disclosedness of which is itself attuned by Angst) is no more a ‘circle’ than the interpretation of the Dasein according to a ‘presupposed’ idea of existence, but rather a ‘more penetrating’ unfolding of its ownmost interpretive ground. It is furthermore this assured primordial interpretation of the Dasein’s being as care which will serve as the ground for the interpretation of temporality as the horizon of the understandability of anything like being. Forward running resolve is not merely one experience ready-to-hand among others, that Heidegger only ‘picks up’ and ‘uses’ in order to resolve the apparent impasse of the inquiry which opens the second division, and sets down again once it has been resolved. Forward running resolve is rather the basic or primordial experience of human freedom, that is both able to make it intelligible, and stands as the existentiell ground of the existential interpretation (“the exposition of the a priori that must be sightable if the question, ‘what the human being is’ is to be able to be discussed philosophically,” the knowledge of humanity in its original sources, which is necessarily the primordial or authentic self-knowledge of the Dasein), the ground which originates and determines the whole of Heidegger’s Being and Time from start to finish. The hermeneutic situation of Heidegger’s ontological interpretation is the authentic situation of forward running resolve (BT 71/SZ 45).89

By this conclusion I do not wish either to claim or to imply that Heidegger’s work is simply reducible to its existentiell ground. Elsewhere he asserts, with characteristic extremism: “The more radical the existentiell involvement, the more concrete the ontological-metaphysical project; but the more concrete this interpretation of the Dasein is, the easier the principle misunderstanding of the existentiell involvement [Einsatz] being what is essential and unique as such, whereas it rather just manifests itself...
In order, finally, to understand the emancipative project of *Being and Time*, the connection of the existential interpretation to its intention to liberate the Dasein “for its uttermost possibility of existence,” we must return again to the exposition of its methodical character. As we have already seen, Heidegger writes that the existential interpretation, through “developing such understanding,” forces “the to-be-interpreted” to expose itself, and “*lets*” it “*first itself come to word*.” The existential interpretive project of *Being and Time* uncovers or, better, exposes the human being, according to the experience of the conscience radically understood, as the Dasein, cast into the uncanny feeling of its primordial freedom. The existential interpretation, in forcing the Dasein to interpret itself *as such* in this manner, brings the human to ‘see’ itself and indeed, as project, before the choice of itself: “*therewith it decides from out of itself, whether it as this being has [hergibt] the constitution of being upon which it was disclosed in the project in a formally indicated manner [formalanzeigend]” (BT 362-363/SZ 314-315). This deciding from out of itself about its being is nothing other than the choice of itself, in terms of how the conscience discloses that being. The existential interpretation, as the radical working out of the existential understanding or experience of, the revelation of the call, is, as project, the hauling back of the inauthentic fugitive of the everyday mass before the court or authority of the conscience. Indeed only as the conscientious working out of what the conscience discloses can the existential interpretation *demand* that we

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in the project, in its indifference to the particularity of the person” (MFL 140/MAL 176). (Regarding the word ‘Einsatz,’ see the previous note.) The project of *Being and Time* (the existential interpretation, as the formalized analysis of existence) exceeds or transcends Heidegger’s own factic, particular, existentiell understanding or ‘involvement,’ however extreme, and indeed, this is precisely the fundamental intention of the work.
“project these existential phenomena upon the in them fore-indicated existentiell possibilities, and existentially ‘to think through to the end’ these {possibilities}” (BT 350/SZ 302-303). The reader of Being and Time cannot, of course, experience Heidegger's conscience, which was the silent call of his care. The reader can only be dragged before its court to the extent that he ‘shares’ in the conscience, that he has a conscience of his own. The existential interpretation can only be this hauling back because if the individual Dasein exists as care, whose call the conscience is. The formalized interpretation of the existential analytic is a letting ‘speak’ of the own conscience of the Dasein through it to the Dasein itself. Indeed, if forward running resolve is the source of the very concept of the human being as the Dasein, then we are even entitled to speak of the liberation of the existential interpretation as itself the attempt at a transformation of the ‘human being’ into the Dasein through the rape of the bourgeois subject.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{90} Macquarie and Robinson’s translation of Raub as “robbery” might be more felicitous in other contexts. In his “Letter on ‘Humanism’” Heidegger writes that, “The human is not the lord of beings. The human being is the shepherd of being. Human beings lose nothing in this ‘less’; rather, they gain in that they attain the truth of being. They gain the essential poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by being itself into the preservation of being’s truth.” In the understanding of the bourgeois, who imagines himself the lord of beings, the call of being must appear as a dispossession or a robbery, or to split the difference, an act of rapine. (The bourgeois being, in the case of Being and Time, “factically,” “first of all and mostly” the existing human type who reads it (and even also ‘originally’ the one who writes it, or more precisely, who will write it after surrendering himself to the demands of the call).) By contrast the shepherd of being understands that he has attained, or more appropriately, has been liberated for, the pastures of Sein, “the free space in which freedom conserves its essence” (PM 260, 262/Wm 342, 344). In the experience of Angst the human being, or more precisely the reader who is in the first instance the bourgeois, is stripped to the core of its essence: “We ‘float’ in anxiety.... Only the pure Da-sein is still there, in the thorough unsettling [Durchschütteterung] of this hovering, wherein it can hold itself to nothing [darin es sich an nichts halten kann]” (WIM 88-89/Wm 112). In other words: “The Dasein becomes ‘essentially’ in the authentic existence which constitutes itself as forward running resolve.” The Dasein must be forced to be free; more precisely, the human being must be forced to be the Dasein, or, rather, the human being (the being which understands itself as the human being) must be forced in order for the Dasein (the being which (now) understands itself as the Dasein) to become free. This violation is the doing of the conscience, which is (according...
This same conclusion (that Heidegger’s project represents an attempt to transform the bourgeois subject into the Dasein) receives explicit support from the lecture course published as *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, where, according to John Caputo, Heidegger opened up about the true intention of his thought.\(^9^1\) In that lecture Heidegger asserts: “*Philosophy happens ever in a fundamental attunement* [Grundstimmung]” (FCM 7/GBM 10). Accordingly, the “fundamental task” of the lectures “now consists in the awakening of a fundamental attunement of our philosophizing” (FCM 59/GBM 89).\(^9^2\) This evocation of an attunement is no trivial matter of presentation, or only of rhetoric, but has the most far-reaching consequences for how we understand ourselves: “The awakening of the attunement and the attempt to work up to this remarkable {task}, coincide in the end with the demand for a complete change of our conception [Auffassung] of man” (FCM 62/GBM 93). If “attunement is... the *fundamental manner of how the Dasein is as Dasein,”* then the awakening of attunement means “to grasp the Da-sein as Da-sein, {or} better, to let the Da-sein be how it is or can be as Da-sein” (FCM 67-68/GBM 101-103). Heidegger further writes that to awaken a fundamental attunement, “to question concerning *this fundamental attunement*” is “to liberate the

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91 Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, p. 52f, cited by Fritsche in *Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 341, n. 6 to p. 218

92 In these lectures, in contrast to *Being and Time*, the fundamental attunement that Heidegger seeks to awaken is profound boredom rather than *Angst*; in no way, however, does this imply a foreswearing of the centrality of the authenticity of resolve, either in these lectures, or subsequently. Though it begins with boredom, Heidegger’s lecture course on the fundamental concepts of metaphysics ends in enthusiasm and terror (cf. FCM 366/GBM 531-532).
humanity in man, the humanity of man, i.e. the essence of man, to let the Dasein in him become essential.” Heidegger explains that “{t}he liberation of the Dasein in man” means “loading upon man the Dasein as his ownmost burden,” because “{o}nly {he} who can truly give himself a burden is free”; and it requires that we “summon the courage of mood [Mut]” for existing with, for withstanding this burden. The task of philosophy is accordingly “to help bring to word that about which the Dasein wishes to express in this fundamental attunement” (FCM 166-167/GBM 248-249; cf. also FCM 172/GBM 255-256). Consequently Heidegger can say that to liberate the Dasein in man means, “to transform the humanity of us human beings ever into the Da-sein of our selves” (FCM 350/GBM 509). If philosophy is ever attuned, concerned to awaken the courage for mood, a concern that amounts to the demand for a thorough change in how we understand ourselves, and if attunement is the fundamental way of the being of the Dasein, then the philosophy that questions concerning fundamental attunement, and which is therefore “a fundamental way of the Da-sein,” which “first [erst] lets the Da-sein turn into that which it can be,” which frees the Dasein in the human being, and indeed “makes up the fundamental happening of the Dasein” (FCM 22/GBM 33-34), must be an assault upon our ordinary or vulgar self-understanding: “in philosophizing the Da-sein in man directs the attack upon man” (FCM 21/GBM 31), upon the self-understanding of the being which understands itself as a ‘human being’ (“an animal gifted with reason” (FCM 62/GBM 93)). This transformative philosophizing only appears as violence from the standpoint of our “vulgar understanding” that “does not see the world for beings” (FCM 347/GBM 504). Authentically understood what is at stake in this attack is at once both
“nothing less than the freedom of Dasein as such,” which “is only in the self-setting-free [Sichbefreien] of the Dasein” that is, in “{t}he self-liberation of the Dasein [{d}as Sichbefreien des Daseins]” (which “happens ever only if it resolutely discloses [sich entschliesst] itself to itself i.e., discloses itself [sich erschliesst] for itself as the Da-sein”) (FCM 149/GBM 223), and the “winning again” of the “primordial dimension of happening” of philosophy itself, “in order to ‘see’ all things once again more simply, more starkly, and in a more persistently” (FCM 23/GBM 35), the understanding of being, the “happening of world-formation” (FCM 351/GBM 509). It is only through this resolute transformation of the human being into the Dasein that the primordial happening can be retrieved: everyday understanding “cannot even understand that that which philosophy deals with only at all discloses itself within and from out of a transformation of the human Dasein” (FCM 292/GBM 423). It is only through the transformation of the human being into the Dasein, through the conscientious hearing of the call of being or freedom awoken by thinking the issue through to the end, that the question of the humanity of man finds its ground. Like the question concerning the primordiality of the existential interpretation, the question concerning the authentic understanding of being and freedom is answered practically by the resolute Dasein.

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93 Cf. IM 13/EM 9-10: “It is completely correct and in the best order {to say}: ‘You can’t do anything with philosophy.’ Wrong is only to believe therewith the judgement about philosophy is at an end. There comes namely still a little postscript in the shape of a counter-question, whether, if we can set about nothing with it, might not philosophy in the end set about something with us, provided that we engage ourselves with it?”; ST 10-11/SWF 12: “That the necessity of philosophy authentically does not let itself be grounded and that philosophy never lets itself be attacked, is for its inner essence an advantage, {but} for its external position always [jederzeit] a disadvantage. Its claim can never cast off the appearance [Schein] of the arbitrary - never, so long as philosophy meets us as something which just also is among the many things that man pursues [betreibt] - , so long as we only take notice of philosophy and do not allow ourselves to be transformed through it, so that we comprehend that
The project of primordial self-knowledge is at once the possibility of authentic (self-) emancipation: the existential interpretation, as a primordial interpretation of the being of the Dasein, is thus, in its character as interpretive self-project, a way of forcing the human being to become free for the choice of its genuine being or existence, that is, the authentic self from and toward which the conscience calls, and which is as an express being towards death. The contested terrain of the gigantomachia peri tes ousias, the question concerning the meaning of being is itself the self-understanding of the Dasein. The ‘battle of giants over being’ is, in its authentic intention, a battle for the conscience of the Dasein itself, between Heidegger’s own thinking and the inauthentic understanding, (epitomized for example by the teaching of Hobbes). The ‘demonstration’ of the existential interpretation, in a similar fashion to that of Hobbes’ teaching in Leviathan, is rather the ‘decision’ of the Dasein itself, that is, it depends on the human being ‘forced’ to admit that the structure of its being is as it has been interpretively disclosed. The motto or demand, of Being and Time, like that of Leviathan, amounts to “Nosce teipsum.”94 In Heidegger’s presentation, the call, and therewith also its existential interpretation, can only demand that we face up to the war of existence and choose ourselves as thrown into death. The rape of the bourgeois subject only occurs finally, so to speak, with its ‘consent,’ with the freely chosen submission or surrender of

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its empty everyday ‘I’ to the authoritative violence of the call. The existential interpretation cannot finally make the Dasein free. The authentic existentiell understanding of the being of the Dasein, put into words as care, and the understanding of “authentic meaning of being” (BT 62/SZ 37) whose temporal horizon care is, finally depends upon the honest choice of human freedom. It is finally up to each individual human Dasein to free itself for its freedom, which can be won only through its constant self-overcoming, through continually surrendering itself to the “harshest self reflection,” (SA 9) indeed to its ‘spiritual’ (self-) torture. True freedom exists only through the self-chosen self-abnegation of the everyday self, so to speak, the self-imposed auto da fe of the bourgeois subject. This result is of course (at the very least) highly paradoxical: precisely and only through the experience in which the human being turns against itself can it win for itself the wholeness of its original freedom.

The existential interpretation of Being and Time, as the working out of itself of forward running resolve, is the retrieval of the the authentic understanding of being, or more precisely, of the understanding of being as such, of which everyday intelligibility seeks to rid itself. It is the “primordial and authentic truth” of “forward running resolve” which “must guarantee the understanding of the being of the Dasein and of being in general.” According to Heidegger, the source of that understanding is, conversely, man’s

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95 I speak here, of course, only of the occurrence of the spiritual rape of the bourgeois subject, of the transformation of the human being into the Dasein. I intend by no means to suggest that those who refuse to hearken to the silent voice of the call are left in peace, as it were, ‘unmolested’ by the authentic freedom fighters. There is ample evidence to conclude that the enthusiasm of the resolute—who affirm their thrown and yet self-chosen possibilities without qualification or regard for the demands of ‘vulgar’ average morality or ‘common’ decency—expresses itself, indeed must express itself, in violence and terror.

96 Cf. also Rousseau, Emile, note to p. 100, and TI, “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” section 41.
primordial freedom. The question concerning the meaning of being is therefore equally the quest for a way of making freedom intelligible in its primordial essence. “The most primordial and basic existential truth, for which the problematic of fundamental ontology strives in preparing the question of being in general, is the disclosedness of the meaning of being of care” (BT 364/SZ 316). While the leading question of Heidegger’s inquiry is the question of the meaning of being, its deepest, fundamental or authentic theme is the question of freedom (EHF 205/WMF 303). The reawakening of the question concerning being, and the consequent hermeneutic clarification of the authentic meaning of being is at once the recovery of authentic human freedom, in both cases in forcible countermove to the ordinarily invisible domination of the average mass. (Indeed in a subsequent marginal note to Being and Time Heidegger goes so far as to elaborate the Angst of “the primordial individualization of the reticent exacting anxiety of itself resolve” as itself the “clearing of being as being [Lichtung des Seins als Seins]” (SZ 322, 445).) Heidegger's attempt to rekindle the battle concerning being is a call to arms for a war of liberation fought against the dictatorship of das Man for the sake of the recovery of man’s primordial freedom. Those who have the ears to hear, who hearken to what the call gives to understand, will, each in their own way, project themselves upon this spiritual war for the liberation of the Dasein. The remaining chapters of Being and Time that concern us in the course of the present study lay out plans, both of the terrain upon which this war is to be fought, and for the training of the free corps of freedom fighters who will wage it.
Chapter Five: The Politics of Freedom of Being and Time

The authentic understanding of death attested, according to Heidegger, by the call of conscience and primordially experienced as a forward running resolve, reveals itself as the practical ground of the existential interpretation of Being and Time. The intention of Heidegger’s work, the reawakening of an authentic understanding of being (BT 19/SZ 1), shows itself as a battle for the conscience of the Dasein, as an attempt to recover man’s essential freedom from its lostness in the everyday, clarified by the existential interpretation of death, and articulated as ‘care’ (being towards death), that finally relies for its demonstration upon the reader being compelled to admit that it reveals the primordial structure of his being. If the reader has been convinced by the existential interpretation, then he has only to fall in with Heidegger’s plans for the re-conquest of human freedom in the face of the war of existence, and project himself upon his ownmost can-be. The question then naturally arises, upon what will the Dasein project itself? That is to say, if the Dasein has been wrenched out of its absorption in the averageness in the mass society, then what will define the character of its way of life? To answer this question it is first necessary to return to the basic principle of the activity of the forward running Dasein, that is to say, the moral attitude that underlies its existence. In the passionate awareness that its death is possible at any moment, the resolute Dasein is cast back upon its there, and upon its thrown thatness, that is to say, upon the self that it already is and has to be. The ‘that’ of this thrown self is made up by a past that the Dasein carries along with it. The anxiety of the conscience casts the Dasein back upon
the matter of repeating this thrown self, this past that it has been, right up to its end. This past is primarily an understanding of the world that the Dasein has inherited, an overcoming interpretedness into which it has somehow already got itself. This understanding is, however, always first of all and mostly given over to it by the publicity of the average mass, which concerns itself with levelling and obscuring every primordial truth. The resolute Dasein must therefore first win back the content of its authentic ‘identity,’ the concern of the self-administration of its can-be, from the reigning vulgar understanding of the past which the Dasein has been and ever is. The history of the Dasein shows itself as the terrain for the prosecution of the ‘battle of giants concerning being,’ the struggle for the authentic freedom of the Dasein. The recovery of the authentic freedom of the Dasein accordingly becomes the re-conquest of its history through a spiritual usurpation of the administration of its heritage. The resolute Dasein re-conquers this past in order to creatively unlock the authentic possibilities which it reveals, and loyally repeat them into the future, right up to the limit of its freedom. Running forward into death turns into the freedom for taking over the fate of the Dasein’s thrown history. The authentic past can only be continually re-won through the constant shared battle for it together with others. This loyalty to and perpetual, total war for the past that the resolute Dasein ever already ‘is,’ emerges as the principle of an authentically free political community, a ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ that continually renews itself through the constant struggle of a free corps of freedom-fighters for the destiny of the nation. While Heidegger dissented from the biological racism of National Socialist party doctrine, this project of perpetual war for the destiny of the Volk, grounded in the authentic experience and concept of human
freedom that grounds the teaching of *Being and Time*, echoes the militant attitude towards history and community championed by Hitler’s Stormtroopers. Towards the conclusion of *Being and Time*, Heidegger intimates a project of transforming the character of the universities, in order to train the elite cadres that will re-conquer and repeat the destiny of the Volk into the future. The discussion of authentic historicality in *Being and Time* leads us beyond that work to the issue of Heidegger’s university politics.

A. Freedom’s Authentic Self-constancy

The existential interpretation has now revealed itself as a bold attempt to retrieve humanity’s primordial freedom. Initial appearances notwithstanding, *Being and Time* is, in its very beginnings (the authentic experience of the conscience), a deeply political book, the teaching of which (the existential interpretation of death in particular) strikes at the heart of the dictatorship of the average that invisibly rules modern mass society (both in its liberal and socialist versions). Heidegger’s thought reveals certain similarities with the philosophy that gave rise to, and grounds, modern liberal democracy, even as his work shows itself as radically opposed to its reign: like the political philosophy of the earlier moderns, Heidegger’s thought is an individualism, the central principle of which is a particular moral attitude towards death (albeit one that is directly the opposite of the moral attitude towards death at the core of the thought of early modern thinkers like Hobbes and Locke); like the earlier moderns, Heidegger’s project aims at the transformation or conquest of human nature (or, more precisely, of the essence of
humanity) as least as much as it intends to describe that nature. Heidegger’s radical opposition to the rule of averageness is, however, a merely negative formulation of the political consequences of his thought. We cannot claim to comprehend his project unless we are able to give a coherent account of the kind of politics (the particular way of life, and the kind of social order or regime that maintains it) that positively follows from that authentic experience of human freedom (the call to run forward into death) which grounds the existential hermeneutic of *Being and Time*. This assertion needs to be justified by a summary of our results thus far, however, before we turn to the question that it contains.

The existential interpretation is a hermeneutic phenomenology of the self-determination of existence, that is, of human freedom. In the second half of the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that this “hermeneutic of the Dasein... as an analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding line of all philosophical questioning at the point wherefrom it springs and whereto it strikes back [zurueckschlaegt]” (BT 62/SZ 38). The intention of *Being and Time* is not simply theoretical but even pre-eminently practical. The existential interpretation originates, as it must, in a particular existentiell understanding—a factual ideal of existence—and in turn reflects back upon it, as it must, in the existence of that reader who is compelled to fall in with the existential interpretation. This express claim of Heidegger’s could not be otherwise without self-contradiction. Existence is ever ahead-of-itself: as understanding can-be, it *is* as project. This equally remains true of the existence of the reader whose self-understanding is transformed by existential interpretation, who chooses his authentic self in squarely
facing up to the war of existence into which he has been thrown. To transform the selfunderstanding of the Dasein is to transform its project of the possibility in and as which it understands and maintains itself. To alter its project is simply to change the Dasein itself, whose very ‘substance’ existence alone is. The Dasein furthermore ever already exists as being-with with others; according to Heidegger the ‘human being’ is essentially political: existence ever already ‘articulates’ itself in community with others, even if first of all only in an average everyday way. Broadly speaking, to change how it is is to change how it is with others, the understanding it communicates to the others, how it reveals them to themselves in their possibilities; and, as running forward, the Dasein resolves itself to action. Any change in the project is thus at least potentially a project for political change. It is therefore hardly an extrinsic imposition upon the intention of Heidegger’s work to inquire into the positive project and the ‘practical’ consequences of his teaching; such a question is rather demanded by that very teaching itself. Accordingly we begin to ask about the politics that arise from (or are coincident with) the transformation of the human being into pure Dasein.

This politics derives from the meaning—the “whereupon” of the project (BT 371/SZ 324)—of authentic self-choice. This authentic self-choice is demanded by the experience of a disclosedness which Heidegger calls “the conscience.” According to Heidegger’s interpretation, the fundamental Angst of the conscience hauls the Dasein back before the nothing of its freedom, in order that it may choose itself as, and in the face of, its ownmost possibility. This meaning, however, ‘subsists’ only in and as existence, in how the resolute Dasein chooses to ‘live,’ or more appropriately (but which
amounts to the same thing), how it chooses to die. In his analysis of being-with, Heidegger writes of an “leaping ahead-liberating solicitude [Fuersorge]” (BT 344/SZ 298)—the possibility of which finds its ground in forward running resolve—which will “leap ahead” of those others with whom it shares a common existence, in order “to give back” their “care” to them by making them authentically “transparent” to themselves in their being, that is to say, as care. This authentic being-with intends to liberate them, to free them for their freedom, which finally becomes authentically intelligible as being towards death (BT 158-159/SZ 122). As the very interpretation of the Dasein as care (being towards death), the existential analytic now shows itself as an example, perhaps even the paradigmatic example, of such authentic solicitude. The resolute interpretation of Being and Time, according to its ownmost intention, thus itself “can turn into the ‘conscience’ of others” (BT 344-345/SZ 298). The authentic intention of the existential interpretation is accordingly “the... liberation of the Dasein for its uttermost possibility of existence.” To set the Dasein free for its death is at once to set it free of the average dictatorship of das Man that ordinarily holds it invisibly in thrall. Running forward does not detach or isolate the Dasein but throws it into action, which will of necessity be an activity with others. The meaning of authentic self-choice therefore maintains itself in a politics of resolve. We therefore ask: what, then, are the ‘positive’ political consequences of the experience that makes the possibility of freedom intelligible? The existential interpretation, and the disclosedness of the conscience from which it springs, reject the ‘individualism’ of the average mass and its corrosive conformity in favour of the authentic individualism of the... –of the what? What does Heidegger’s politics of
authentic freedom concretely look like?

Any account of the concrete politics of *Being and Time* must begin with its interpretation of genuine human freedom, the authentic self-determination that is both the essence of ‘what man is,’ and the principle of the activity of the Dasein. The authentic intention of the existential interpretation is to liberate us for our finite freedom by revealing the disclosedness of the conscience in all the forcefulness of its purity. The conscience, according to Heidegger, is finally the ground of all morality. *Pace* Heidegger’s denials, we may therefore speak with a certain justification of Heidigger’s project of freedom as a morality, and of *Being and Time* as a moral teaching, though not, to be sure, with the same content as the universal morality of *das Man*, since the existential interpretation launches a revolt against the dictatorship of the faceless mass. Just as the basic ‘principle’ or rule of thought and action of the falling Dasein absorbed in the inauthentic publicness is to flee in the face of death, the principle of thought and action of authentic resolve is rather to charge headlong towards it. We may speak therefore of two competing basic moral principles, characterized by two diametrically opposed attitudes towards death: “*to seek Peace*” (L 190/64) and to flee into the (according to Heidegger, illusory) security of the inauthentic unity of the average mass along with all its comforts; or to recognize the war that existence fundamentally is, and to face it head on.

These two opposite attitudes towards death are set into stark relief by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*. In the condition of mere nature as portrayed by Hobbes, where the war of each against the rest prevails, it is reasonable to suppose that sovereign power or
rule was (and is) first created by “Acquisition” rather than “Institution,” that is, broadly speaking created by force rather than covenant (L 228/88). Hobbes writes that rule “acquired by Conquest, or Victory in war” is nothing other than “the Dominion of the Master over his Servant.” In the first instance two men wage a struggle to the death with one another (even if the number is more than two the possible results are in principle the same). The ‘first’ political community, so to speak, is formed, and the war of each against the rest ends only when one of the contenders submits (or, if more than two, all other contending parties submit). “And this Dominion is then acquired to the Victor, when the Vanquished, to avoyd the present stroke of death, covenanteth either in expresse words, or by other sufficient signes of the Will, that so long as his life, and the liberty of his body is allowed him, the Victor shall have the use thereof, at his pleasure” (L 255-256/103-104). The principle of the existence of the (one who becomes) master is the will to risk his life in the fight, the will to continued self-assertion in the very face of death; whatever the perogatives and pleasures of mastery, he only maintains himself as such through his continued willingness to take up the fight. The principle of the (continued) existence of the (one who becomes) servant is the fear of death; the servant keeps his life on the condition of his foreswearing both the war and to any right beyond the mere preservation of his life, that is, on the condition of his continued surrender. We may therefore speak of a ‘master morality’ and a ‘servant morality’ or, more crudely, a ‘slave morality.’

97 In fact on L 256/104 Hobbes explicitly draws a distinction between the servant who, granted “his corporall liberty” serves by consent (and therefore from duty) and slaves who serve only “to avoyd the cruelty of their task-masters”; he expressly denies that the conquered belong to the latter class. In The
to describe the attitude that should be inculcated in the subjects of the sovereign power.

“As in the presence of the Master, the Servants are all equal, and without any honour at all; So are the Subjects in the presence of the Sovereign. And though they shine some more, some less, when they are out of his sight; yet in his presence, they shine no more than the Stars in the presence of the Sun.” The morality that Hobbes intends to bring about, in the first instance in the man who reads *Leviathan* and accepts its teaching, in the last instance in universal humanity, is a morality of peace. The morality of the liberal bourgeois is in principle no different from the morality of the servant (L 238/93; cf. also L 385-386/180).

The project of *Being and Time*, as the liberation of the Dasein for its ownmost possibility, thus reveals itself as Heidegger’s attempt to bring about a restoration of a master morality against the reigning tyranny of the servant morality of the faceless, average mass exemplified by Hobbes’ bourgeois subject. But whereas in Hobbes’ account, the original masters wagered their lives for gain or glory with the expectation of victory—that is, out of pride—Heidegger’s new ‘master’ charges ahead with the certain conviction that he must finally lose everything. The fundamental *Angst* of existence discloses a situation more perilous than the war of each against all others described by Hobbes in *Leviathan*, a constant threat that, thought through to the end, reveals only our continually impending, inescapable doom. Human life authentically understood is a perpetual war against the whole of what is, that we are each and every one of us fated.

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*Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel likewise speaks of a master [Herr] and a servant [Knecht]. It is Nietzsche and Heidegger who, writing from the perspective of a new master morality, subsequently collapse or deny this distinction.
finally to lose. From the comparative humiliation of our powers that results from confronting the authentic situation of human existence there nevertheless emerges a kind of defiant pride: if death's constant possibility is indeterminate and unavoidable, then it must simply be confronted head on, while fighting to the last. Through this radicalization of the thought of death that leads the everyday self to flee into the distractions provided by the publicness of *das Man*, the morality of the servant turns into its opposite. The new 'master' does not face the war of existence in order to enslave others—indeed he foreswears all "power talk"—but, conversely, fights to free the others for the ownmost possibility (death) and thereby liberate them from the invisible tyranny of the average faceless crowd. The dominion of the new 'master' is a spiritual leadership which "springs ahead" in order to give others back their care, to bring them back to their authentic selfhood, to free them for their freedom; that is to say, to give the others to understand themselves as running forward into death. This is not to say that in authentic solicitude all the antagonisms of the Dasein are overcome, but rather that even in its struggles the resolute master is and remains a forthright champion of authentic freedom.

This authentically free existence of the Dasein lies in the constant assumption of responsibility for the burden of its essential or primordial freedom. The tyranny of *das Man* "takes away answerability from the particular Dasein" (BT 165/SZ 127). In inauthentic existence the Dasein, fleeing into "the supposed"—supposed because false—"freedom of the one-self," surrenders its genuine self-government (BT 321/SZ 276). Swept up in the fragmentary existence of the everyday, caught up in its constant bustle from one thing to the next, the Dasein cannot be responsible for anything. "For the
absorption in the everyday multiplicity and the rapid succession [Sichjagen] of the concerned, the self of the self-forgetting concerned-I [Ich-besorge] shows itself as constantly selfsame, but indeterminate-empty simple” (BT 368/SZ 322). About anything that happens in the common existence of average publicness, it must simply be said that “it was no one” (BT 165/SZ 127). The apparent ‘individuality’ of inauthentic existence is, in fact, only an evasion of the genuine individuality of its ownmost can-be. “The one-self says most loudly and most frequently I-I, because it at ground is not authentically itself, and evades its authentic potentiality-for-being” (BT 369/SZ 322). In its lostness in the urgencies of the everyday the Dasein is constantly not its own self but rather exists only as the ‘self” of das Man, the no one and nobody of the average everyman.

In contrast to the constant non-self of the amorphous mass of nobodies, the Dasein also ‘possesses’ the possibility of authentic self-constancy as the condition of the possibility of its inauthentic self-lostness. “Only a free being [Wesen] can be unfree” (MFL 191/MAL 247). Only a being which can freely exist as itself can fall away from itself and lose itself. “The constancy of the self in the double sense of stable [bestandigen] steadfastness is the authentic counter-possibility to the nonself-constancy of the irresolute falling.” The Dasein comes into its genuine selfhood only in and as the running forward of resolve, indeed: “Existentially ‘self-constancy’ signifies nothing other than forward running resolve.” The Dasein, in its freedom, can only be authentically itself, when it projects itself upon, and in terms of, that death that is its ownmost possibility. Existence comes into the fullness of its evermineness uniquely through projecting itself upon the possibility which is unavoidably and inalienably my own. “The
Dasein is authentically itself in the primordial individualization of the reticent, exacting anxiety of itself resolve.” Only that fundamental Angst which attunes the disclosedness of forward running resolve individualizes Dasein out of the non-self of the amorphous faceless mass into the authentic identity of its own ‘who’ (BT 369/SZ 322).

To be wrenched out of the self of das Man is to be wrenched out of one’s everyday ‘identity,’ to give up saying ‘I’ in the everyday, average, but fundamentally empty way that the everyone of the mass says ‘I.’ In the individualization of the Angst of authentic wanting-to-have-a-conscience the Dasein simply falls silent. “The authentic being-itself says as keeping silent [als schweigendes] precisely not ‘I-I,’ but ‘is’ in the reticence the thrown being as which it authentically can be” (BT 369-370/SZ 323). In the reticence of resolve the Dasein ceases to say ‘I’ but silently first becomes its I, is I, does I. Forward running resolve communicates its own (and not only its own) authentic selfhood in and through the silence of its reticence. Only in the readiness for sacrifice, for giving itself up for death does the Dasein come into the selfhood of existence; as running forward freedom frees itself for its possibility. Only in ceasing to say ‘I,’ in the abnegation of the empty ‘identity’ of its inauthentic everyday self, in the shattering of the false freedom of its bourgeois ‘individualism’ against the authentic claims of death—in surrendering its ‘I’ to death—does the Dasein achieve the fuller and more radical freedom of the individuality—not expressable as ‘I’ but only in silence—of its authentic selfhood. “And only being-able-to-listen [Hoerenkoennen] into the far brings about for the Dasein as self the awakening to the response of the co-Dasein in whose company [im
Mitsein] it can give up [darangeben] its I-hood so as to win itself as an authentic self.”

The resolve of running forward furthermore clarifies, like the existing being of the not-yet of freedom, the phenomenon of the self. “The existential-ontologically grasped phenomenon of authentic self-choosing [Sichselbstwaehlens] brings to light, in the most radical way, the metaphysical selfhood of the Dasein...” (MFL 190/MAL 245); “Selfhood is to be discerned existentially only in one’s authentic potentiality-for-being-one’s-self, that is to say, in the authenticity of the being of the Dasein as care.” The primordial phenomenon of the self is the otherwise groundless self-repetition of (resolute) existence. “The self, which the reticence of the resolved existence reveals, is the primordial phenomenal ground [Boden] for the question concerning the being of the ‘I.’” Only the grasp of this primordial root of the question of the ‘I’—the authentic experience of human freedom that makes its possibility intelligible—can clarify the meaning of selfhood. Only the inquiry which springs out of the experience of running forward is therefore authentically in a position to try the issue of the ontological structure of the Dasein’s selfhood. “The phenomenal orientation to the meaning of being of the authentic potentiality-for-being first puts {us} in the position to discuss what ontological right can be assigned to substantiality, simplicity, and personality as characters of selfhood.” The existential interpretation thus reveals itself as the interpretive recovery of the authentic ‘identity’ of human freedom, which is not an “unwaveringly present self-thing,” but a continual, yet temporally finite, self-assertion of a project in its possibility. Freedom’s self has all of the ‘solidity’ of spirit, or of a thunderstorm; authentically understood, its

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‘substance’ vanishes ‘into thin air.’ Freedom does not require the ground of a ‘self-substance’ for its existence; that is, “Care does not need to be founded in a self.” The “existentiality” of care rather “gives the ontological constitution of the self-constancy of the Dasein.” The conclusion of Heidegger’s interpretation is therefore necessarily that care is not a phenomenon of the self, but that the self is itself only a phenomenon of care. “The fully conceived structure of care includes the phenomenon of selfhood” (BT 369-370/SZ 322-323). This startling inversion of our everyday way of thinking about our ‘selves’ is nevertheless only the working out of the implications of Heidegger’s summary of the results of the analysis of the first division at the outset of section 45: “In {care} the being of the Dasein lies included [beschlossen]” (BT 274/SZ 231). Put another way, freedom is not the ‘property’ of the human self, that is, the freedom proper to the ‘human being’ is not a quality of a present thing (the human ‘subject’); rather the self is only a possibility that is the property of freedom.99  Freedom, as the essence of the human being, is rather the happening or irruption of self-administration that finds itself thrown into the midst of beings, and into a way of life, an understanding which it projects into the future right up to its extinguishment. Freedom has no prior ground, but persists only in and as this self-project.

If the self authentically has no ground but itself and is, that is, endures, only in the finite self-assertion of that resolute Dasein which has surrendered the empty I-hood of its average subjectivity to the authority of the call, then it follows that there is no “subjectum (hypokeimenon)” (BT 72/SZ 46) that stands under the self as grounding ‘substance,’ and

99 See note 104 below.
which guarantees the unity of its identity “in the changing of comportments and lived
experiences [Erlebnisse]” (BT 150/SZ 114); in short, the self is authentically “neither
substance nor subject” (BT 351/SZ 303). The decisive importance of this existential
interpretation of the self should in no way be underestimated. This resolute self-concept
presents itself as diametrically opposed to the absolute concept of the *Phenomenology of
Spirit*. Through this result, Heidegger can claim access to an experience of the self which
lies outside the traditional interpretation of the self throughout the whole of philosophy
from Plato to Hegel, an experience of freedom which escapes the conceptual framework
of that absolute knowledge which completes the working out of the problematic of
ancient ontology (not only according to Hegel, but according to Heidegger also) in the
grasp of “the true, not as *substance*, but just as much as *subject*.“¹⁰⁰ Thus, even as
Heidegger concurs with Hegel that the task of philosophy has been brought to an end,¹⁰¹
he lays claim to the ‘ground’ of an original experience of being or freedom that opens up
a horizon of interpretation lost to the tradition, which, as it were, goes behind the
tradition; which is itself not susceptible to being absorbed into the dialectic through
which philosophy transforms itself into cybernetics¹⁰²; and which perhaps holds out the
possibility of another inception for thinking¹⁰³; in the language of *Being and Time*, the
reawakening of “the dispute concerning the interpretation of being” and the authenticity

¹⁰⁰ PhS 10.
¹⁰² Ibid.
¹⁰³ In his inaugural speech as rector of Freiburg University, Heidegger speaks of recapturing the Greek
beginning of philosophy. Later, for example in his lectures on Schelling, he will speak of a first Greek
beginning of philosophy, and another, future inception of philosophy; cf. SA 13; ST 3-4/SWF 4-5. For
the relation of this new beginning of philosophy to an experience or mood very like *Angst*, and to being
of the understanding of being that inheres in the essence of freedom (BT 487/SZ 437).

In his 1930 lectures, later published under the title *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger formulates this conclusion even more sharply: “If however we have to seek freedom as the ground of the possibility of the Dasein, then it is itself, in its essence, be more primordial than man.” This later formula likewise leads to the inversion of our ordinary understanding of freedom as a ‘property’ of man: “Human freedom now no longer means: freedom as a property of man, but the other way around: man as a possibility of freedom. Human freedom is freedom, so far as it breaks through in man and takes him up into himself, thereby making him possible” (EHF 93/WMF 134-135). Freedom as the essence of existence is (ontologically, as the condition of its possibility) prior to the ‘human being.’ Care, so to speak, organizes itself factually into a self, into particular human ‘selves.’ Freedom projects itself, disperses itself, disseminates itself, or better, if the word itself were not overtly technological, ‘broadcasts’ itself (perhaps one might even say ‘radiates’), as the Dasein, which frees itself for its freedom only in the authentic experience of resolve. It is important to note in this context that Heidegger emphasizes elsewhere (e.g. in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*) that neither freedom, nor the care structure (that is, ‘how freedom is possible,’ the structural manifold of its possibility), nor even the concept of the Dasein “prior to every factual concretion,” are to be understood as “a large primal being,” which somehow in its presence ‘underlies’ (and therefore ‘grounds’) the existence of the particular human being. The Dasein is rather “the metaphysical isolation of the human being,” for whom freedom is constitutive. “The basic metaphysical essence of
metaphysically isolated Dasein is centered in *freedom*” (MFL 137-139/MAL 171-175). This also in no way implies that, in the resolve of running forward, the Dasein somehow gets its essential freedom ‘under its power,’ but rather merely that it liberates itself for existing as the free being which it can be, for the freedom into and as which it has been thrown, that it places itself under the authentic rule of its freedom. “*Man is only an administrator* of freedom, only one who can let be the freedom of the free in the manner of the freedom which has fallen to him [in der ihm zugefallenen Weise Freiheit] so that, by {and} through man, the whole contingency of freedom becomes sightable” (EHF 93/WMF 134-135). The human being does not ‘possess’ freedom as a ‘property’ but at best participates in freedom as possessed by it: “... the resolute disclosedness [Entschlossenheit] is however not a present-at-hand condition that I possess [habe], but ... resolute disclosedness rather the other way around possesses [hat] me” (FCM 295/GBM 427). Authentic freedom is not the license of empty everyday I-hood but the grounding, resolute self-administration of a radically contingent finite being. The ‘human being’ becomes authentically free not through the independent thinking and self-sufficiency prepared by liberal education, but only by submitting itself to the demands of the situation disclosed by the conscience, that is, to the serious tasks of its existence.

Only in the running forward of resolve furthermore does the Dasein become constantly itself. The substance of ‘man’ according to Heidegger consists solely in

104 Cf. ST 9/SWF 11: “For freedom here counts not as the property of man, but the other way around: man counts at most as the property of freedom. Freedom is the encompassing and penetrating essence, in which man becomes man only when he is anchored there. That wants to say: the essence of man is grounded in freedom. Freedom itself however is a determination, which transcends all human being, of authentic Being in general. So far as man is as man, he must participate in this determination of being, and man is, insofar as he carries out this participation in freedom.”
existence. The self endures or persists in its authentic constancy only in the self-repetition of its project, of which it is not itself originally the cause. As thrown, freedom has groundlessness at its core; as thrown into death, the Dasein confronts the future end of its existence. The Dasein in its essential freedom is accordingly not only framed, but pervaded by nothingness, as a unity of the abiding groundlessness of its origin (which inheres in the way of life is has grown up into, but for which it is not originally responsible), and the persistent threat of its annihilation in death (which hangs over every future possibility of existence). As resolute, the Dasein takes over the guilt of this essential nothingness of its existence. Running forward resolves itself upon its self-repetition before the unoutstripable nothing of itself, and frees itself for repeating itself in the face of its certain doom, right up to the end. In this resolve to itself upon its authentic can-be in the face of the whole of what is, freedom comes into the self-constancy [“Selbst-staendigkeit”] of its independence [“Selbststaendigkeit”]. Forward running resolve is thus the coming into existence of a being which is deeply answerable or responsible for itself from the ground of its essence, because as resolute the Dasein arrogates to itself the ‘basis’ of its nothingness, and becomes thereby its own ‘ground.’

“Freedom gives itself to understand; freedom is the primal understanding, i.e., the primal project of that which it itself makes possible. In the project of the for-the-sake-of as such, the Dasein gives itself the primordial commitment [Bindung]. Freedom makes the Dasein in the ground of its essence, responsible [verbindlich] to itself, {or} more exactly: gives to itself the possibility of commitment. The whole of the commitment lying in the for-the-sake-of is the world. In accordance with this commitment, the Dasein commits itself to a potentiality-for-being towards itself as potentiality-for-being-with with others in the potentiality-for-being among present-at-hand things. Selfhood is free responsibility for and toward itself.” (MFL 192/MAL 247)
Only in and through the authenticity of resolve can the Dasein genuinely stand surety for the whole of existence. Only the new ‘master,’ through a superhuman, nay, even god-like self-responsibility, authentically acquires for himself (that is, comes into his own as a being with) “his own independent protracted will and the right to make promises,” right up to the limits of his finitude.105

The whole of existence ‘is,’ furthermore, as the whole of being-in-the-world, the totality of the disclosedness of the clearing. The fate of the Dasein is to be this its disclosedness. Running forward resolves to hold itself in the situation (the clearing of being as revealed by the nothing). The self-repetition of authentic existence is the resolve to the repetition of the revelation of the situation. In order to appreciate the full extent of authentic resolve’s claim to self-responsibility, it must be understood that with this authentic will to repetition the human being as Dasein takes responsibility, as it were, for its clearing, indeed for the clearing as such, that is, for the whole of being; not, however, as the proprietor (to say nothing of the creator) but rather as the steward or husbandman. “The human being is not the lord of beings. The human being is the shepherd of being.” Conversely, the human being becomes this shepherd, however, only in hearkening to the call, in its transformation into resolute Dasein. The clearing of being, “the realm of the truth of being” which authentic Dasein conserves is itself “the free space in which freedom conserves its essence.” The human Dasein only becomes this shepherd because it far more ‘conserves’ or itself as free, that is, maintains itself in the self-administration

105 GM2 section 2.
What ‘is’ it that running forward resolves upon repeating? What is the formal content of the self-constancy of the Dasein which has chosen itself? The meaning of self-constancy shows itself in the “upon which” of authentic care. Forward running resolve is, briefly, “being towards the ownmost distinctive potentiality-for-being.” Death, as the ownmost possibility, is a possibility of the Dasein itself. Running forward is a way in which the Dasein is disclosed to itself. In running forward the Dasein comports itself towards itself. It is not a factual ‘acceleration’ of dying but an understanding project of itself. Any being towards death “is only thus possible, because the Dasein can at all come towards itself in its ownmost possibility, and put up with [aushaelt] the possibility in this letting-itself-come-towards-itself as possibility, that is, exist.” The possibility of death thus reveals “the primordial phenomenon of the future.” This primordial future is not “a now, which, not yet become ‘actual,’ sometime [einmal] first will be.” The authentic future ‘is’ in the Dasein expressly coming towards itself in death. Running forward “makes the Dasein authentically futural.” Authentic existence repeats itself into the future. In its authentic futurity, “forward running resolve understands”—that is to say, projects—“the Dasein”—here this means the Dasein as a whole, in the totality of its freedom.\footnote{Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” PM 260, 262/Wm 172, 174. It is worth noting that while Heidegger’s metaphor in the “Letter on Humanism” speaks of guardianship, it speaks of being, and not beings, and it thereby neither excludes use, nor consumption of the part, nor even a very great culling of the whole of beings (to say nothing of the warlikeness and cruelty such a slaughter would require) for the sake of the whole of being. Moreover the conservation of the authentic revelation of the clearing is also or indeed especially the constant disclosedness of the there in its threatening character. Heidegger’s bucolic imagery should not blind us to the fact that according to the authentic understanding our situation is to say the least hardly harmonious in relation to the whole. Heidegger’s thought should therefore neither be confused with a facile or gentle environmentalism, nor taken as grounds for such.}
existence—“in its own essential being-guilty.” To project its ownmost guilt “means to take over being-guilty existingly” (BT 372-373/SZ 324-325). This ownmost being-guilty is the nothingness which “permeates through and through” the manifold of care in its entirety. “The Dasein as such is guilty” (BT 331/SZ 285). The project of ownmost guilt is the project of existence as a whole; to project the Dasein in its essential guilt is to take responsibility for the whole of that existence. The notness of existence arises from the essence of the Dasein as thrown project (i.e. as care “in its essentially twofold structure of the thrown project” (BT 243/SZ 199)). Projecting oneself upon one’s primordial guilt means taking over one’s thrownness, “as to be {the} thrown ground of the nullity” (BT 373/SZ 325). The conscience hauls the Dasein before the choice of itself. In summoning the Dasein to choose it brings it back to itself, to itself as thrown “in order” - as Heidegger explained earlier in the interpretation of guilt in section 58 – “to understand {this thrownness} as the null ground which it has to take up into existence” (BT 333/SZ 287). Taking over itself as being-guilty therefore means not only to take responsibility for itself as project, but also for itself as thrown.

First of all and mostly the Dasein, as thrown, has not chosen itself, but has grown up into, or otherwise got itself into ‘self-evident’ possibilities of existence, which it has somehow taken over from somewhere or someone else. The conscience calls the Dasein to make up for not choosing. Choosing itself as “making up for not choosing [Nachholen einer Wahl]” (BT 313/SZ 268) is taking responsibility for its unchosen thrown self. Expressed in terms of the inauthentic understanding of time, this making up for not choosing is a making up for not choosing earlier, in its past. This past is moreover not
merely a once present but now vanished point in time, but persists with the existence of 
the Dasein. “The Dasein is ever in its factual being, how and ‘what’ it already was. 
Whether expressly or not, it is its past” (BT 41/SZ 20). In the “ever... already was,” 
which expresses the facticity of its thrownness, the Dasein ever already is still the past 
which it has become. As the being which goes about its being, the Dasein is the existing 
‘history’ of its self-determination. Only through the persistence of the past in the 
thrownness of its essence can the Dasein be at all guilty. Authentic making up for not 
choosing is therefore the express choice of its past, to be its past expressly in all the 
factuality of its thrownness. “Taking over [Uebernahme] the thrownness, however, 
signifies to be authentically the Dasein how it ever already was” (BT 373/SZ 325). In 
lectures given soon after the publication Being and Time Heidegger provides a clearer 
formulation the meaning of choosing oneself as thrown: “In the express self-choosing lies 
according to {its} essence the full self-commitment [Selbsteinsatz], not there, to where it 
not yet might be, but there, to where and how it, qua Dasein, always already is, insofar as 
it exists” (MFL 190/MAL 245). Authentic self-choice is the self-binding self- 
commitment to one’s own existing self (which becomes self in the fullness of its selfhood 
only in and through this choice). To choose oneself thus is to will oneself as one is, as 
one has become. In willing one’s becoming one makes oneself answerable for it: 
assuming the guilt of thrownness means making oneself answerable for who one has 
become ‘now.’ This as yet unchosen self is the whole of its groundless existence up to 
the moment of choice. The authentic self-choice of forward running resolve is simply the 
Dasein taking over the guilt for, taking sole responsibility for, the whole of its ‘past.’ As
the thrownness of the Dasein this “ever already was” is not as what ‘used to be present and is no longer’ but the whole of the existence into and as which it has been thrown. To choose oneself authentically is to affirm, as the World War I veteran and Freikorps fighter Albert Leo Schlageter did in the face of his trial and execution at the hands of the French, “I take full responsibility for everything I have done.”

In the authentic choice of itself the Dasein resolves to be the own thrown ‘past’ that it is, the existing been which it has become. “The take-over of the thrownness is however only thus possible that the futural Dasein can be its ownmost ‘how it ever already was,’ that is, its ‘been’ [>>Gewesen<<].” In forward running resolve the Dasein takes over itself as the existence of its thrownness, such that it, so to speak, becomes its thrownness; this “I have-been” of thrownness itself forms the condition of the possibility of the Dasein being brought back to itself by the conscience. Forward

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108 Heidegger’s German regrettably makes for some rather funny sounding English at this point. Gewesen is the past participle of Sein, ‘to be.’ While somewhat less accurate, ‘was’ might be a more felicitious translation in this instance, but would result in the even more unfortunate ‘was-ing’ as a translation of gewesende later in this passage. I have found no other more felicitious English expression to stand in for this word that would not also be an interpretation of it which might interfere with Heidegger’s meaning. Macquarrie and Robinson’s translation of gewesende provides an illustration of this point. They render it as “in the process of having-been,” which is certainly more felicitous, but has the problem of connoting that the Dasein is a process of the present slipping into the past; the ‘beening’ of the Dasein is rather its past reaching out into the present, the recurrence of the possibilities of the past in the situation of the clearing. I have thus opted to let ‘been’ and ‘beening’ stand as translations of Heidegger’s
running resolve, as the existential possibility wherein the Dasein exists as a whole can-be is the authentic appropriation of the thrown ‘past’ which the Dasein first of all and mostly ‘is’ only inauthentically. “Authentically futural, the Dasein has authentically been. Running forward into the uttermost and ownmost possibility is the understanding coming back upon the ownmost been.” Only in the shattering of its falling everyday faceless ‘I-ness’ which loses itself in the distractions of its everyday business, against the claim of the uttermost not-yet of death, does the Dasein expressly understand itself as thrown, that is, open itself to the claim of the authentic past, and project itself in its beenness. “Dasein can only authentically have been [gewesen sein], so far as it is futural. The beenness in a certain manner springs from the future.” Only living in the face of the constant threat arising out of the clearing of its there (the primordial phenomenon of the future) forces the Dasein first to become truly serious about the thrown freedom as which it exists. The past, as it were, is authentically encounterable (that is, not as once here but now gone, as something that is and can be left behind, but as one’s own thrown beenness) only in the disclosedness of the situation, and ‘exists’ only in the resolve of running forward. This thrown being revealed in the clearing of the situation ‘extends’ behind the lifetime of the factually existing Dasein, which has always ever already been thrown into possibilities that it did not first create. Expressed in terms of the inauthentic understanding of time, these possibilities in turn were themselves given over to the been existences that preceded the current factual Dasein, and so on, back into history all the way to the beginning of the West. This past—not just part of what has been, but the

_Gewesen and gewesende_, respectively, and to offer this note by way of clarification.
whole of its past, the past that it always ever already ‘is’—persists or ‘beens’ in and as the revelation of the situation (BT 373/SZ 325-326).

Forward running resolve projects itself in its beenness, that is, exists as the whole of its thrown ‘past,’ in the “taking action” of the disclosedness of the ‘present’ situation (BT 373/SZ 326). Running forward resolves to keep repeating the thrown been of itself right up to its end. Its fundamental mood authentically demands the continual self-assertion of its thrownness in the face of its finitude: “…anxiety brings back to the thrownness as possibly repeatable” (BT 394/SZ 343). The self which it repeats is its factual existence in all of its thrownness. Authentic existence is the continual making-present, the authentic futural repetition of the whole of its past in the situation. “Futurally coming back upon itself, resolve brings itself presently [gegenwärtigend] into the situation. The beenness springs from the future in such a way that the been (better, beening) future releases from out of itself the present” (BT 374/SZ 326). The thrown situation of the clearing ever already somehow includes or contains the whole of the past, such that it indeed is the presencing of the been past in and as the present there. The resolve which frees itself for its freedom, for taking responsibility for the whole of being, takes responsibility for its authentic repetition as the continual repetition of the disclosedness of the thrown clearing of the there. “Resolved the Dasein has brought itself back out of falling exactly in order to be ‘there’ all the more authentically in the ‘moment of vision’ [>>Augenblick<<] into [auf] the disclosed situation” (BT 376/SZ 328). As the free resolve to the repetition of the thrown clearing, it resolves to repeat the self which maintains or holds open that thrown whole. In taking responsibility for the whole of
thrown existence, in its god-like assumption of the guilt of the whole, the Dasein in its 
authentic—expressly finite, forward running—freedom (assuming it fully comprehends 
the meaning of its choice, that is, that it has authentically chosen) of its essence wills the 
continual recurrence of all that has been, of everything that was and is, because, as 
resolute, it wills itself.109

The unity of this ‘movement’ or taking-action Heidegger names “temporality,” 
and it has such a unity finally in the existing self-chosen self of the Dasein, that is to say, 
in its primordial freedom (BT 374/SZ 326). This unity of care is itself, however, made 
possible only by temporality; neither is temporality a being any more than care is merely 
present. As ahead-of-itself-being-already-in as being-alongside, care reveals itself as the 
existing unity of future, past, and present, which therefore cannot be authentically 
conceived as a sequence of now-points, but as the finite existence that temporalizes itself 
as the presencing or clearing of a futural past (BT 375-378/SZ 327-329). This temporal 
beening “reveals itself as the meaning of authentic care” (BT 374/SZ 326). As that 
wherein the intelligibility of authentic self-choice maintains itself, this authentically 
temporal or historical comportment, upon which running forward resolves itself, will be 
the meaning of authentic existence; it will summarize, in short, Heidegger’s politics of 
freedom in Being and Time. Accordingly for our purposes here we are for the most part 
uninterested in Heidegger’s repetition of his analysis of everydayness in terms of

109 Cf. Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Translated, with Commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: 
Vintage Books, 1974), section 341, and BGE section 56. For my understanding of this point I am 
indebted to Susan Shell. As we have earlier noted, this moment of vision is the “uttermost counter-
phenomenon” to the irresponsible absorption in the fleeting distractions of the everyday; cf. BT 397-
398/SZ 347.
temporality (save insofar as it incidentally further clarifies the concept of authentic temporality), except for Heidegger’s pursuit of an existential concept of science in section 69b, which I will discuss in preparation for taking up the question of the continuity of Heidegger’s Rectorate Address with the project of *Being and Time*. For now we shall turn to Heidegger’s discussion of historicality for further elaboration of the concrete political consequences of his understanding of freedom.

**B. The Problem of History as the Reconquest of Freedom’s Wholeness**

In the interpretation of “temporality as the primordial condition of the possibility of care” (its exposition as the horizon of freedom) and the repetition of beenness (beening) as the how of freedom’s possibility, Heidegger’s inquiry “seems” to have “reached the demanded primordial interpretation of the Dasein.” Nevertheless, Heidegger admits that now “a difficult consideration awakes”: although existential interpretation has revealed forward running resolve as the manner in which the Dasein exists as a whole can-be, it remains a question whether the analysis has unveiled the being-whole of the Dasein in regard to the being of its wholeness (BT 424/SZ 372). The Dasein, as existing, is finite, and projects itself ever in terms of its death. Anything finite is defined by limits. The limits of the Dasein, which exists not only finitely but

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110 This is not to imply that temporality is some higher being or prior ground, or some necessary relation that constrains human freedom or governs its operations in space. Temporality does not ‘exist’ prior to care. On the contrary: only ‘where’ ‘there is’ freedom - only ‘when’ freedom exists – ‘is there’ time. Temporality can be the structure of freedom, that is, form the horizon of human possibility, only because, primordially, freedom as thrown project temporalizes itself: freedom irrupts as time; in other words, freedom is time.
temporally (BT 380/SZ 332), will be a ‘beginning’ and an ‘end.’ Up to this point the existential interpretation has had express regard only for the ‘end’ of the Dasein (death), which “taken formally” is “only the one end which closes round [umschliesst] the totality of Dasein.” Until section 72 of *Being and Time* the whole Dasein has been expressly presented only “‘facing forward’” in the “‘one-sided’” futurity of being towards death. Now the neglected “other ‘end,’” which “is the ‘beginning,’ the ‘birth,’” which has come to light, as it were, ‘obscurely,’ in the moment of thrownness which articulates itself in the factuality or thatness of having been (BT 425/SZ 373). That is to say, the “Problem of History [Geschichte]” (the titular theme of section 72), must be taken up expressly and appropriated by Heidegger’s existential-ontological interpretation (now the existential-temporal interpretation (BT 408/SZ 356)), in a manner (by no means coincidentally) analogous to the self-appropriation of authentic freedom.

The Dasein is emphatically not “a sequence of experiences ‘in time.’” The idea of such a sequence inevitably conceives the Dasein as a merely present entity that somehow traverses a series of timepoints or ‘nows.’ From this concept it follows that “only the ‘in the current now’ present-at-hand experience is ‘authentically’ ever ‘actual’”; by contrast experiences which are “past” or “only oncoming” can only be “no more or not yet ‘actual.’” If the being of the Dasein is understood as consisting in such a sequence, then it has been implicitly conceived, “whether one likes to have it true or not,” as a series of present nows, as “an ‘in time’ present thing,” no matter how one conceives the peculiar persistence of such a ‘self.’ A similar result occurs when one conceives of the self as “a framework [Rahmen]” which experience “fills up.” Since the Dasein is determined not
by mere presence but by existence, its being ought not to be conceived as a sequence or (what amounts to the same thing) a framework of experiences (BT 425-426/SZ 373-374).

The Dasein must rather be grasped in its primordial unity, as a finite totality between the limits of birth and death. Existence, primordially or authentically understood, forms a whole, which is not stretched through a series of “phases of momentary actualities” on “a somehow present-at-hand track [Bahn] and stretch ‘of life,’” but rather one which “stretches [erstreckt] itself in such a way, that in advance its own being has been constituted as stretching [Erstreckung].” The primordial unity or wholeness of the Dasein exists fully between birth and death as the limits of its finite essence. Its primordial whole constantly ‘fills up,’ or better, has ever already completely ‘filled up’ every ‘moment’ of its existence. The Dasein is constantly the whole of the “‘between’ which relates to birth and death” because this between “already lies in the being of the Dasein” as the temporal unity of care. The limits of existence themselves persist in every ‘moment’ of existence. Just as death, as we have seen, adequately (according to Heidegger, existentially) understood does not “have [eignet] the way of being of the not yet present-at-hand but oncoming outstanding thing [Ausstandes],” so too birth is authentically “not and never something past [ein Vergangenes] in the sense of the no longer present-at-hand.” Just as death’s indeterminate certainty is unoutstripable, the Dasein also never leaves the origin of its birth behind. “The factic Dasein exists as born [geburtig], and as born it also already dies in the sense of being towards death” (BT 426/SZ 374). This is the existential formulation of the assertion quoted by Heidegger earlier in section 48 that, “As soon as a man comes to life, he is at once old enough to
die” (BT 289/SZ 245). Death is (at least) coeval with birth. Constituted by thrownness, the Dasein never outlives its birth. Determined by its limits, the Dasein ever is its birth and death: “Both ‘ends’ and their ‘between’ are, as long as the Dasein factically exists, and they are how it is only [einzig] possible on the ground of the being of the Dasein as care.” Both ‘ends’ are ever with the Dasein, because they inhere in the structural articulation of its manifold essence. “In the unity of thrownness and fugitive or forward running being towards death, birth and death ‘hang’ ‘together’ according to the measure of Dasein [daseinsmaessig]. As care the Dasein is the ‘between’ [Als Sorge ist das Dasein das >>Zwischen<<].” Freedom is, that is, determines itself as structured by the temporal ends of existence, ‘within,’ or better, as the totality of their between (BT 426-427/SZ 374).

The meaning of the existence of the Dasein, is temporality: temporality is that wherein the intelligible unity of structural manifold of care maintains itself. Temporality must therefore likewise be the “possible ground” of the between of care, which is to say that it must be possible to make intelligible (if it is possible to do so at all) the possible unity of existence (which is essentially a temporal phenomenon), that is, the possible whole can-be of the between, in terms of temporality. “The ontological clarification [Aufklaerung] of the ‘connection of life,’ that is, the specific stretching, mobility [Bewegheit], and tenacity of the Dasein must accordingly be developed.” The beening of the ‘between’ is the temporal motion of this tenacious extension. This beening of the ‘between,’ “the specific mobility of the stretched self-stretching” is the historical “happening [Geschehen] of the Dasein.” The interpretation of the structure of the
extended self-extension of the happening that is the being between of care is the working out of how it is at all possible for a being to be historical, that is, for the Dasein to determine itself ‘in the course of history.’ Authentically understood the Dasein is its history. Indeed the project or self-determination of its freedom as temporality is nothing more than the happening of history: “The exposition of the structure of happening and its existential-temporal conditions of possibility signifies the gaining [Gewinnung] of an ontological understanding of historicality [Geschichtlichkeit].” Indeed this interpretation of the existential-temporal conditions of the historical character of existence, that is, of its happening, is itself the exposition of how history is, strictly speaking, at all possible. In fine, only a free being can and must be historical, because only with the existence of freedom ‘is there’ history. The ontological clarification of this self-stretching being is the concrete working out of the primordial ‘occurrence,’ or better, ‘occurring,’ of the happening of freedom. The exposition of the happening-structure of historicality is thus only a more penetrating making-intelligible of the existing possibility of human freedom (BT 427/SZ 374-375).

The problem of making human freedom specifically intelligible is the problem of grasping it in its possible wholeness. This was the problem that opened the second division of Being and Time (BT 274-275/SZ 231-232), and it is the continuing concern that inaugurates Heidegger’s explicit turn to the question of history (BT 424-425/SZ 372-373). The existential interpretation is grounded in the fore-having of an existentiell understanding. The question of freedom’s possible wholeness is itself accordingly one that is “factic and existentiell,” and answered by the Dasein “as resolved” (BT 355-
From out of the self-constancy of resolute self-repetition the existential interpretation claims to grasp the Dasein in its possible wholeness. Heidegger now adds that, “With the analysis of the specific mobility and tenacity which own [eignen] the happening of the Dasein, the investigation comes back... to the question concerning the constancy of the self, which we determined as the who of the Dasein.”

The pursuit of the interpretation of (the meaning of) care as temporality it thus not separate from the question of the Dasein’s genuine selfhood or identity but authentically understood is rather a further elaboration of that question. “Self-constancy is a manner of being of the Dasein and is grounded therefore in a specific temporalizing of temporality.”

The tenacious mobility of existence, the temporal self-stretching of the Dasein, is the condition for the possibility of any connection of life between birth and death. The self-stretching of the Dasein thus forms the ground of the self-repetition of existence. The clarifying exposition of the “structure of happening” is thus only the further working out of the wholeness of that possible self-constancy in terms of which freedom first becomes at all authentically intelligible to itself (BT 427/SZ 375).

The problem of history is finally an elaboration of the problem of self-constancy as the occurrence in time of the ‘temporalization’ of the who of the Dasein. The site of the investigation of the problem must find its place accordingly: “If the question concerning historicality leads back into these ‘sources’ [>>Urspruenge<<], then therewith already has been decided about the site [Ort] of the problem of history. It is not to be sought in history [Historie] as the science of history [Geschichte].” The “basic phenomenon of history” is not the study of history or even its recording, but the ground
which makes such ‘history’ at all possible, that is, the “historicality” of the Dasein, which as it were grows from the soil of the temporality or happening of freedom. With reference to the justification of the method of the existential interpretation in section 63, Heidegger insists that, “If historicality itself is to be lit up [aufgehell] in terms of temporality and primordially in terms of authentic temporality, then it lies in the essence of this task, that it lets itself be carried out only on the path of a phenomenological construction.” The being of the Dasein itself, because it conceals itself from itself, precisely therefore demands of any ontological interpretation of itself that it conquer its own being despite such self-concealment. If historicality represents a primordial phenomenon of the Dasein, it must be wrenched free out of its concealment against the prevailing tendencies of the average mass which close it away from the understanding: “The existential-ontological constitution of historicality must be conquered against the foreclosing [verdeckende] vulgar interpretation of the history of the Dasein.” The breakthrough to the primordial phenomenon itself will prepare the way for, indeed, prepare the breakout of, the questioning concerning the historical character of the Dasein: “Therewith the place of action [Einsatzstelle] for the exposition [Exposition] of the ontological problem of historicality has been designated.” The self-interpretation of resolve now begins to break into increasingly warlike language. Einsatzstelle is a military term that designates the site of an operation, the position where an attack will be executed. As we have seen, Heidegger’s questions are, in their authentic intention, confrontational; that is, as much as they are questions they are also attacks.111 The

111 Regarding the character of Heidegger’s questions, see note 88 to the previous chapter.
bombshell of the conscience awakens the Dasein to the essential war of existence. The assumption of the guilt of its freedom is the repetition of its factual thatness. The understanding of having been must not merely be affirmed, but first of all seized with interpretive violence. The site of the problem of history is to be a site of an organized assault, a site, ‘as it were,’ of military conquest. The question concerning historicality, in Heidegger’s presentation, is a sort of commando action or even planned offensive aimed at the primordial sources to which the question leads us back. If we have let ourselves be persuaded by Heidegger’s conscientious account of ‘what man is,’ then we have now simply to join in with the assault on these sources, to fight for the reconquest of our primordial freedom under his authentic leadership. As we have seen, the site of the problem of history is finally the primordial phenomenon of history, the historicality or free happening of the Dasein that first makes history at all possible. The exposition of the problem of history, the question concerning historicality is therefore the reconquest of the lost freedom of the Dasein against the opposition of the understanding of the vulgar faceless mass. Just as only wrested truth is primordially true, so too freedom authentically ‘is,’ that is, retains its essential force, only as forcibly seized. Freedom is authentically “something one has and does not have, something one wants, something one conquers...” 112 Freedom is (that is, authentically exists) only in its self-overcoming; it genuinely persists only in its own continual, nay, perpetual self-conquest (BT 427-428/SZ 375-376).

The site of the assault of the question of history, the reconquest of our freedom “is

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112 TI, “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” section 38.
designated by that which is primordially historical.” The true essence of history is ordinarily closed off by the average understanding, whose obstructions the existential interpretation must break through, and win past, if it is to reconquer the primordial phenomenon. In any event, Heidegger’s inquiry “begins,” as it must, with the everyday way in which the idea of history shows itself to us. Its “examination [Betrachtung]” starts “therefore” from the “characterization [Kennzeichnung]” of the everyday meanings of “the expressions ‘history’ and ‘historical.’” ‘History’ (in German as in English) ambiguously refers to “both the ‘historical actuality’ [>>geschichtliche Wirklichkeit<<] and also the possible science of it.” Heidegger excludes out of hand the “meaning [Bedeutung] of history in the sense of science of history.” What the existential interpretation primarily intends to reconquer in the first instance is not the study or interpretation of history, which is already removed from the primary phenomenon, but the essence of the thing itself, the primordial happening of the Dasein. Only the authentic appropriation of the primal existential phenomenon of history (beening) provides the ground for the evaluation of the proper place and purpose of any possible study of the past; only after the breakthrough to the original beeing of the Dasein will Heidegger turn to the question of the historical sciences. Accordingly he concentrates for now on the meanings of history ordinarily familiar to us in the sense of ‘historical actuality,’ which refer to “this not necessarily objectified being itself.” Heidegger discusses four principal meanings of history according to the everyday understanding that make up the vulgar interpretation of history in terms of sheer presence. First, history is understood primarily in terms of a passing away. It “is understood as something past [Vergangenes]”:
“something or other” which “belongs already to history,” is therefore “no longer present,” having vanished ‘into the mists of history.’ Alternatively, something may belong to history without yet having disappeared, but nevertheless ceasing to be actual, that is, “without ‘effect’ [>>Wirkung<<] on the ‘present.’” Conversely, history can mean a vanished past which is “all the same still having after-effects.” In the first sense, history or “the historical” means “the past [das Vergangene]” that “is understood in a positive or privative relation of effect to the ‘present’ in the sense of the actual ‘now’ and ‘today.’” In the everyday interpretation, the primary meaning of history is a past, understood within the horizon of the sheer presence, in terms of actuality, of a possible making-present in the present ‘now’ of today (BT 429-430/SZ 378).

The further meanings of history follow from the “preeminent use” of history as still effectual (or no longer effectual) past presence. The second meaning that Heidegger discusses is derived from the first meaning of ‘history’ as ‘past.’ A ‘present’ being can, so to speak, have a past which it carries along with it even today. “What ‘has’ a ‘history’ [Was eine >>Geschichte hat<<] stands in the connection of a becoming.” A being which, having a past, stands in a becoming, “can at the same time ‘make’ such,” that is, itself also make history. History becomes “a ‘connection’ of events and ‘effects’ [einen Ereignis- und >>Wirkungszusammenhang<<],” a process of becoming in which “the past has no special priority” (except insofar as it is the ‘cause’ of an ‘effect’). The term history can therefore furthermore designate this very connection itself, “the whole of being which changes ‘in time,’” the “region” within which historical becoming determines itself. History becomes the realm of “the developments and destinies of
human beings, human groupings and their ‘culture,’” of “the essential determination of
the existence of human beings through ‘spirit’ and ‘culture.’” History becomes the
‘sphere,’ the room or leeway of the making-present historical appearance. The historical
is in the end understood as the ‘result’ of this becoming, the product of developed
existing culture which is itself the now made-present effect of the connection of causes
and events throughout ‘history’: “... finally the handed down as such counts [gilt] as
‘historical’ whether it is known historically [historisch erkannt] or taken over as self-
evident and hidden in its derivation” (BT 430-431/SZ 378-379).

Having set out four meanings of history (in the sense of historical actuality)
according to the average understanding, Heidegger now recombinesthese meanings into
a single interpretation of the phenomenon: “If we take the called four meanings
[Bedeutungen] in one, then {the following} results [ergibt sich]: history is the in time
occurring [sich begebende] specific happening of the existing Dasein, so that in being-
with-one-another, ‘past’ and at the same time ‘handed down’ and still-working happening
counts [gilt] as history in the emphasized [betonten] sense.” In our common everyday
business, the happening of history is understood as a connection of past events and
effects (which ‘are’ no longer) which yet continues to make present, to have effects in the
now of today through the yet present results it has produced. These four meanings of
history in the average understanding share “a connection,” in that “they relate to the
human being as the ‘subject’ of events [Ereignisse].” The point of attack for the question
of the essence of history is accordingly designated by the everyday interpretation as the
human being itself. The vulgar interpretation somehow understands the human being as
the effecting constituent, the worked ‘substance’ or matter of history, as the connection of actual events and effects. Even in the everyday understanding, the human being dimly shows itself as the condition for the possibility of any history as such (BT 431/SZ 379).

The average understanding itself designates the human being as somehow the ground of historical occurrence, and thus as the site of action for the authentic interpretation of history. The issue then becomes how the human being is related to the historical events it thus somehow ‘grounds,’ that is, the appropriate concept of the character of this condition. The series of questions that now follow are accordingly intended to make further inroads towards the interpretive (re)conquest of this condition (the very essence of history), the objective of the action of chapter 5 of *Being and Time*. Towards this aim Heidegger sets questions which prepare attacks against the average understanding of history at three crucial points, for which the others serve as clarification of the terms of engagement. First, how is it that the events of history ‘take place’: “How is the character of happening of these {events} to be determined?” More to the point, “Is the happening” of history indeed, as the vulgar interpretation conceives of it, “a series of processes, a changing appearing [Auftauchen] and disappearing of occurrences?” Second, and following on this question, how does “this happening of history belong to the Dasein?” If indeed the happening of history is a flux of merely present events and effects, then how is the relation of history to the Dasein as the subject of events to be understood? “Is the Dasein to begin with [zuvor] already factically ‘present-at-hand’ in order to then occasionally get ‘into a history’?” Is the human being sometimes historical,
and sometimes not? Does it stand presently prior to, apart from, as it were, ‘outside’ of history’s happening? “Does” it somehow only “become” historical by virtue of being ‘mixed up’ in historical “circumstances and occurrences,” with mechanical ‘forces’ of history which are also themselves merely present? (BT 431/SZ 379).

The genuine alternative, forcefully asserted by Heidegger, is to conceive the whole of historical happening as grounded in the ‘how’ of the primordial structure of freedom’s possibility: “Or is the being of the Dasein first of all constituted through the happening, so that, only because Dasein is historical in its being, something like circumstances, occurrences, and destinies are ontologically possible?” Self-administration forms the condition for any history whatsoever, for the possibility of history as such, and the whole of historical occurrence. The realm of history is distinguished from nature solely by virtue of this ground in human freedom. On this understanding, history is authentically grounded in freedom, and essentially different from everything in nature, not because the human being somehow performs ‘spontaneous’ actions which nevertheless produce present effects which play themselves out ‘in time’—understood this way, freedom is only another kind of causality with present effects, albeit itself ‘uncaused’—but through the how of freedom itself, that is, the essential temporalizing of existence. The happening of history can be grounded in freedom only because freedom primordially is history (BT 431/SZ 379).

Finally, Heidegger asks, “Why does the past exactly have an emphasized [betonte] function in the ‘temporal’ characterization of the ‘in time’ happening Dasein?” If the happening of history is grounded in the temporalizing of freedom, that is, in the
factual existence of the Dasein, from where does the past derive such priority in the understanding of history? It is with this priority of the past that Heidegger commences his (re)conquest of history: since “history belongs to the being of the Dasein” which “is grounded in temporality,” the straightest course is therefore “to begin the existential analysis of historicality with the characters of the historical which manifestly have a temporal meaning.” By means of this “sharper characterization of the remarkable priority of the ‘past’ in the concept of history,” the existential interpretation will “prepare the exposition [Exposition] of the basic constitution of historicality,” as Heidegger now names the structure of the essential freedom of the Dasein (BT 431/SZ 379).

Heidegger turns to the handiest example of the historical, the “‘antiquities’ kept in the museum” that “belong to a ‘past time,’” and were formerly ready for the Dasein of that time, “and are all the same still present-at-hand in the ‘present.’” Any such antiquity is “not yet past,” since it has not yet vanished, and yet is somehow still historical. It does not become historical simply by virtue of being kept in a museum; it is first acquired for the museum at all because it is already an “object of historical interest,” that is, it has become historical before, perhaps even long before it became an object of antiquarian study. Nor has it become historical by virtue of physical decay which can indeed “continue even during the being-present-at-hand in the museum.”¹¹³ The antiquity was an item of use in an earlier time, which is still present but no longer handy. Equipment

¹¹³ We could add, though Heidegger himself does not, that objects of concern can indeed be entirely obliterated in the course of time without ever becoming historical. The techniques of modern science have even become quite adept, not only at the preservation of antiquities, but even, within certain limits, their restoration. When a museum restores the appearance of an item in its keeping, does that object thereby cease to be ‘historical’?
does not however become historical simply by falling out of use: no one from the Royal Ontario Museum came calling when my mother stopped driving her 1980 Honda Civic, nor would anyone sensibly claim that the museum staff was neglecting its duties by not doing so. Conversely, “many household heirlooms” which are “still today in use” have nevertheless somehow already become historical. The question of the historical character of ‘objects of historical interest’ cannot finally be answered within the framework of the average interpretation that understands being as sheer presence. They are however “all the same, no more what they were.” “What,” then, Heidegger asks, “is ‘past’?” (BT 431-432/SZ 380)

Even if the historical is physically unaltered by time, it has somehow changed for us. What has changed ‘in’ objects that have become historical is what assigns them their character as items of use. Equipment is ever encountered within a totality of significance. What is past in the antiquities is precisely this former totality of significance, “the world within which they, belonging to a context of equipment, were encountered as ready to hand, and used by a concerned being-in-the-world Dasein.” The disclosedness in terms of which they were encountered, the clearing where and within which they were handy, is gone. “The world is no more. The formerly innerworldly of that world however is still present-at-hand.” What is historical remains as an uncanny echo of a past world that has otherwise vanished. The past is primordially a world that has been. It is this relation to a vanished world (which we somehow yet sense) that forms the condition for any object of concern to become an historical artifact. The attack of the question cannot end there, however, since “‘w’orld is only in the manner of the existing Dasein.” How then are we
to understand “the being-no-more of world” if world is never merely present but is only through the existence of the Dasein? Although the “historical character of still preserved antiquities” derives from “the ‘past’ of the Dasein to whose world they belonged,” the Dasein itself “can never be past,” in the sense of “now no more present-at-hand or ready-to-hand.”” Though finite, its being cannot ‘adequately,’ that is, authentically be understood in these terms. The Dasein, “if it is, exists.” That which has ‘passed away’ cannot itself be historical, because it no longer exists. If the Dasein disappeared entirely then, strictly speaking, there would no longer be any history: the past only persists in the present through the persistence of the Dasein. The Dasein which has passed away has become historical for us with the being-no-more of the significant totality of its there. This significant totality is no longer a living world, nor has it simply disappeared. “No more existing Dasein” therefore “is in the ontologically strict sense not past but been-there [da-gewesen].” If the historical character of any object is derived “from a been world of a been-there Dasein,” then the Dasein itself is “the primarily historical” (BT 432/SZ 380-381).

This conclusion of the first stage of Heidegger’s assault accordingly leads to the next, to the question of how history belongs to the being of Dasein, to the question of the basic constitution of historicality. The historical character of antiquities derives from the having been of what is primarily historical, of the Dasein that is the ‘subject’ of history. One could take this to imply that only the Dasein which has passed away becomes historical, when it is no longer. This easy conclusion is nevertheless false, as Heidegger indicates through a series of pointed questions: “But does the Dasein first become
historical thereby, that it is no more there? Or is it not exactly historical as factically existing? *Is the Dasein only been in the sense of the been-there, or is it been as making-present-futurally, that is in the temporalizing of its temporality?*” The (re)conquest of the essence of history does not end, but rather only truly begins with the designation of the Dasein as the source of history. Heidegger now attacks the relation of history to its being itself. The assertion that “‘the Dasein is historical’” does not relate to “the human Dasein” as “the primary ‘subject’ of history,” understood as “a more or less important ‘atom’ in the working of world-history,” or “the plaything [Spielball] of circumstances and events” (something which, Heidegger insists, “no one denies”). Rather the question at issue relates to the Dasein as the very ground of history as such: “the thesis: ‘the Dasein is historical’... sets the problem: *how far and on the ground of which ontological conditions does historicality belong as constitution of essence to the subjectivity of the historical subject?*” The essence of the Dasein, however, is freedom. This is, accordingly, to ask how, and to what extent, history inheres in the existence of freedom, and indeed, is itself the very happening of freedom (BT 432-434/SZ 381-382).

C. The Essence of History as the Happening of Authentic Freedom

Having exposed the “existential basic constitution” of the Dasein in terms of temporality, and broken through the everyday interpretation of history that obscures the primal phenomenon, the existential-temporal interpretation can now “only first” come to grips with the “problem” of its thatness – “its *facticity*” - as a “determination of being” of
the Dasein “in the light” of the structure of temporality. This more penetrating unfolding of the “concept of facticity” will expose how it “includes [beschliesst in sich]” the possibility that “an innerworldly being,” determined by “being-in-the-world” as is the Dasein, “can understand itself as arrested in its ‘destiny’ with the being of the beings [dem Sein des Seienden] which it encounters within its own world.” We may thus anticipate that the working out of the problem of history, which is only the working out of this concept of facticity, or, to speak in terms of temporality, of the past or of having been, will reveal how the Dasein can understand itself in terms of, and bound up with, a destiny. The ‘thatness’ of freedom is only authentically grasped as the destiny to which Heidegger alluded in his preliminary characterization of the being-in. The authentic freedom or happening of the Dasein is the freedom of and for its historical destiny (BT 82/SZ 56).

The Dasein has been designated by the interrogation of the everyday interpretation of history as that which is primarily historical. If this result holds true, then the Dasein itself is the primordial source of history, the condition of the possibility of anything like history. As this source, history is only with and through the existence of the Dasein. Heidegger, however, with characteristic extremism, pushes this consequence much further. Not only is the Dasein the condition for the possibility of history, but it is so because it is historical through and through, because it is historical in the core of its essence: “The Dasein has factically ever its ‘history’ and can have such because the being of this being is constituted by historicality.” This most extreme articulation of the assertion that “the Dasein is historical” does not, however, manifestly follow from the
reasonable proposition that the Dasein is what is primarily historical (the condition of history’s possibility). The “intention” of the pursuit of the question of the degree to which historicality must “belong” to the Dasein as its “essential constitution [Wesensverfassung]” - the exposition of “the ontological problem of history,” that is, the existential interpretation of the historicality of the ‘historical subject’ - is accordingly “to justify this thesis,” that historicality constitutes the essence of the Dasein (that is to say, of freedom) (BT 433-434/SZ 381-382).

In preparation for the interpretation of “the basic constitution of historicality,” which is equally the justification of historicality as the essential articulation of human freedom and its interpretive reconquest, Heidegger once again recapitulates the results of the existential (now existential-temporal) interpretation: “The being of the Dasein has been delimited as care. Care is grounded in temporality.” This essential temporalizing of the basic self-determination of the Dasein thus sets the site for the battle for the liberation of history’s basic ground: “Within the compass [Umkreis] of this we must accordingly [sonach] seek a happening, which determines existence as historical [das die Existenz als geschichtliche bestimmt].” Conversely, the seeking of this happening, “the interpretation of historicality,” the reconquest of primordial history, “at ground proves to be only a more concrete working out of temporality” (BT 434/SZ 382), only a sharper and more penetrating unfolding of the temporal structure of existence; or, as Heidegger writes in his introduction to the problem of history: “The existential project of the historicality of the Dasein brings to revelation [zur Enthuellung] what already lies enveloped [eingehuellt] in the temporalizing of temporality” (BT 428/SZ 376).
The analysis of the basic constitution of historicality has its roots in an historical project, that is, an existentiell self-understanding of the Dasein as historical. Temporality itself, the interpretation of the meaning of being of care, was “revealed first with regard to the manner of being of authentic existing, which we characterized as forward running resolve” (BT 434/SZ 382). As we have seen, it is precisely the authentic experience of freedom in its finitude that led Heidegger to proclaim that, “Temporality reveals itself as the meaning of authentic care” (BT 374/SZ 326). Indeed (as we have seen) not only the working out of the meaning of care as temporality, but the very interpretation of the Dasein’s being as care itself (and indeed the whole of Being and Time), springs from an experience of freedom in the disclosedness of the call, grasped in a radically conscientious manner as forward running resolve. The existential project of historicality is accordingly only a more radical self-interpretation of that resolve, the existentiell understanding of which grounds the existential-temporal interpretation of the Dasein. The resolute disclosedness of the situation is however at the same time a taking-action. The interpretation of historicality within the compass of temporality, the reconquest of the essence of history, will therefore at once also be a more concrete phenomenological description of the taking-action of the authentically free, of “an authentic happening of the Dasein” in the manner of its possibility. The interpretive reconquest of the essence of history thus equally turns out to be the self-conquest or self-overcoming of authentic freedom. This assault on the essence of history, the reconquest of the happening of the Dasein, through which it authentically ‘takes over’ or appropriates its own temporal stretching, that is, the self-conquest of authentic resolve, must itself be the authentic
happening of the Dasein. It is this authentic happening which both grounds the whole of
*Being and Time*, and for which the existential interpretation accordingly transmits the
summons; it is accordingly to this most concrete description of the action of resolve that
we must look for the politics of freedom of *Being and Time* (BT 434/SZ 382).

Having revealed the interpretation of historicality as only a further working out
and appropriation of the temporality of forward running resolve Heidegger further repeats
the results of the existential analytic which laid the ground for the interpretation of
temporality as the meaning of care. The conscience, as the call of care (being towards
death), provides the existentiell attestation of an authentic can-be of the Dasein (in and as
which the ‘human being’ first of all understands itself as anything like pure Dasein).
This authentic can-be Heidegger names “resolve,” which “has been determined as the
reticent, anxiety-ready self-projecting upon the own being-guilty.” This authentic can-be
of the Dasein “gains its authenticity as forward running resolve,” that is, as an authentic
(express) being towards death (the authenticity of care itself), the existential possibility
wherein freedom first becomes intelligible to itself as a whole, that is, in and through
which the ‘human being’ first experiences itself, understands itself, projects itself - that is
to say, *exists* - in its possible wholeness, as a possible whole. As resolute the Dasein
projects itself upon “the own guilt” of its thrownness into death. As running forward the
Dasein not only frees itself for its death but resolves to be the being which it is and as
which it has been thrown; that is, to repeat itself in the face of certain doom, to project the
whole of its been right up to its end: “In {forward running resolve} the Dasein
understands itself with regard to its potentiality-for-being, in such a way that it goes
under the eyes of death [dass es dem Tod unter die Augen geht], in order thus wholly to
take over the being, that it is itself, in its thrownness.” The Dasein, moreover, as
constituted by its understanding, is its disclosedness, is ever the clearing of its there. The
taking over and repetition of its thrownness is accordingly the taking over and repetition
of the clearing of the there as and into which it has been thrown. This means to take over
the there, its there, as it has been revealed by the conscience, the Angst of which first
expressly reveals anything like clearing or world as such. In the authentic hearing of the
call the Dasein resolves to confront, and to keep confronting itself with, its uncanny
abandonment to the world in the fullness of its harshness, the authentic response to which
is charging to meet it head on. “The resolute take-over of the own factic ‘there’ signifies
at the same time the resolution in the situation.” The self-repetition of authentic resolve
is both a holding open of, and a holding itself in the face of, the situation revealed by the
conscience - the doomed war against the whole of being that human existence
authentically ‘is’ - in all its deadly seriousness (BT 434/SZ 382-383).

As to the question of what the forward running Dasein resolves itself upon,
Heidegger wrote earlier in the analysis of resolve that only the factual resolution can give
the answer. In the current context of the interpretive reconquest of the essence of history,
this judgement yet holds. “Whereto [Wozu] the Dasein ever factically resolves itself, the
existential analysis is not able [vermag... nicht...] to discuss in principle. The present
[vorliegende] investigation excludes yet even the existential project of factical
possibilities of existence” (BT 434/SZ 383). The existential interpretation of history, as
the exposition of the condition of its possibility, the basic constitution of historicality,
must remain silent about the particular possibilities of resolve. The existential-temporal interpretation that is rooted in the disclosedness of the call conscientiously heard, that is, the authentic self-experience of freedom, is in its deepest intention the liberation of the Dasein for the freedom of its ownmost possibility. To prescribe particular possibilities would not be to haul the reader before the authority of his conscience but rather to confute or even cover over its authentic revelation of his own situation; not to “leap ahead” in order “to give back” to the other his care, by making him “transparent to himself in his care” (being towards death), thereby enabling him “to become free for it”—a leap which forms the condition of the possibility of an authentic existence together “which sets free the other in his freedom for himself”—but to “leap in” and take it away (BT 158-159/SZ 122), to “deny to existence nothing less than the very possibility of taking action” (BT 340-341/SZ 294): in short, to make the other “dependent and dominated” rather than to liberate him. Loyal obedience to the authority of the call and the emancipatory intention of the “leaping ahead-liberating solicitude” that springs from it, demand precisely that existential interpretation not transgress this formal injunction (BT 344/SZ 298).

While the existential-temporal interpretation must in accordance with its deepest intention deny itself the project of particular factual possibilities, it equally must, as the working out and appropriation of the structure of the Dasein, expose the existential source of its possibilities of existence. “Nevertheless it must be asked, whence in general can be drawn the possibilities upon which the Dasein factically projects itself.” This question is identical with that concerning the ground of history, the source of any
factually authentic existence: in the context of the exposition of the basic constitution of
historicality, the issue is the existential source of the factual content of any resolution as
such, upon which the resolute Dasein, running forward, resolves itself, the font of the
particular whereupon of the taking-action of the possible authentic happening of the
Dasein. Authentic being towards death may indeed form the condition of any authentic
existence as such, but it does not thereby provide the particular factual content of an
authentic existence, the possibility of which is ever mine. “The forward running self-
projecting upon the unoutstripable possibility of existence, death, guarantees only the
totality and authenticity of resolve.” Running forward is the possibility of the Dasein
becoming an authentically whole can-be, but it cannot thereby exhaust the particular
content of the possibility of this ‘can.’ The possibilities for repetitive self-assertion
cannot themselves simply be deduced from the possibility of death. “The factically
disclosed possibilities of existence are nevertheless [aber doch] not to be inferred
[entnehmen] from death. And this so much the less as the running forward into the
possibility signifies no speculation about it, but exactly a coming-back upon the factic
there.” Forward running resolve may constitute the self-revelation of how it authentically
stands in the situation, but it does not first create the clearing of the there as such. The
express understanding of dying gives nothing to the Dasein, in terms of which its
essential freedom could determine itself. Death is simply the possibility of the
impossibility of any existence whatsoever, and thus gives nothing to the Dasein which it
could actualize or realize. Its measureless indeterminacy cannot in principle disclose any
particular ‘for what’ of existence. Running forward only casts the Dasein back upon its
there and therewith upon the issue of its existence as such (BT 434/SZ 383).

The authentic hearing of the call reveals to the Dasein not only the nothingness of its death but also the guilt of its thrownness, that forward running resolve goes under the eyes of death in order to take over. The authentic project upon its own being-guilty is a making up for not choosing, in and by taking over responsibility for the nothing inherent in its thrownness, which, as itself stretching along, it can neither ever leave behind nor ever overcome. The call demands that I make myself answerable for the whole of my existence, that I exist constantly, that I repeat myself as the thrown being which I have to be, and only as which I can be. Since death cannot itself disclose any particular possibilities for resolve, Heidegger accordingly now asks: “Ought perhaps the takeover of the thrownness of the self in its world to disclose a horizon from which existence tears away its factic possibilities?” As Heidegger here re-emphasizes, this thrown horizon is furthermore something that “the Dasein never comes back behind.” It therefore appears as if the been of freedom’s past, as its horizon, sets the possibilities of the authentic happening of forward running resolve. Lest “we” (those who have joined in on the assault upon the essence of history for the sake of the reconquest of the primordial (authentic) happening of the Dasein) “decide over-hastily” the question of the horizon of the whence of “authentic possibilities,” “we” first “must secure for ourselves the full concept of this basic determinateness of care.” Heidegger accordingly briefly repeats the results of the existential interpretation as concerns the been of thrown already-being-in. This is not to say that the question is an ‘open’ one, but is rather, to repeat, an assault: the thorough reconnaissiance and securing of this preliminary objective prepares the way for
the attack on the primary phenomenon, on the essence, of history. The prior seizing of
the full concept of thrownness sets the horizon for the explicit working out and
appropriation of the temporal stretching of existence, the interpretive reconquest of the
Dasein’s been happening (BT 434-435/SZ 383).

The Dasein, as can-be, has ever been thrown into a world that it shares with
others. The world of the Dasein is a with-world. “Thrown, indeed, the Dasein has been
handed over to itself and to its potentiality-for-being, but indeed [aber doch] as being-in-
the-world. Thrown, it has been assigned to a ‘world’ and exists factically with others.”
In the first instance the Dasein, in its everyday being-with-one-another, flees in the face
of its thrownness and ‘subjects’ itself to the everyday averageness of das Man. “First of
all and mostly the self is lost in the one” (BT 435/SZ 383). This inauthentic averageness
is an interpretation of the Dasein that dominates and “regulates” its every possibility (BT
41/SZ 20). The jealous watchfulness and ambiguous with-one-another of das Man
obscures every genuine possibility of understanding with its concern to reduce everything
to the level of the faceless mass. “It understands itself in terms of the possibilities of
existence which ‘circulate’ in the each time [jeweils] contemporary ‘average’ public
interpretedness of the Dasein. Mostly they have been made unrecognizable by the
ambiguity, but are yet [aber doch] familiar” (BT 435/SZ 383). The received public
interpretedness of das Man nevertheless “transmits” these ambiguously familiar
possibilities to the thrown Dasein. This interpretedness accordingly forms the horizon of
possibility not only of the inauthentic existence and the self of das Man, but of the Dasein
as such. “The Dasein, in its current manner to be and accordingly also with the belonging
to it understanding of being in a coming-over interpretation of Dasein, has grown up into and in it. In terms of this it understands itself first of all and within a certain compass [Umkreis] constantly” (BT 41/SZ 20). The revelation of the authentic situation in and by the call does not replace but only “modifies” the disclosedness of the world to which the thrown Dasein has been assigned (BT 344/SZ 297). The inauthentic public interpretedness also accordingly forms the horizon of authentic existence, albeit as appropriated in light of the constant self-project upon the ownmost possibility of death. “The authentic existentiell understanding so little escapes from the coming-over [ueberkommenen] interpretedness that it ever, in terms of it, and against it, and after all again for it, seizes the chosen possibility in the resolution” (BT 435/SZ 383). The forward running resolve that wrenches the Dasein free of the grip of the invisible dictatorship of das Man and its illusions liberates the Dasein to be able to choose authentically for the first time, by freeing the genuine transmitted possibilities from their levelled obscurity. The authentically free human being thus resolves itself both struggling against, and yet in terms of, the interpretedness by which it, in the first instance, has been overcome, and from which it, even in the radical individualization of its authenticity, never escapes. Finally, in being authentically the thrown being which it has to be, in the express takeover of its thrownness, the forward running Dasein resolves itself for this interpretedness: in taking over the guilt of its thrown past (in repeating itself and willing the recurrence of everything which has been) it affirms the over-coming public interpretation of the Dasein and the world. This is not to say that the resolute Dasein is ultimately only a more enthusiastic member of the average public, or that it
affirms the public interpretedness simply as it has received it. The pure understanding of
death necessarily transforms the ‘content’ or common opinions of that interpretedness,
even as it resolves itself ‘in terms of it.’

The rest of the interpretation of historicality in section 74 is only a more
penetrating elaboration and working out of this enigmatic formulation of the authentic
seizing of possibility from the horizon of everyday averageness, as “in terms of it, and
against it, and after all again for it.” The coming-over contemporary interpretedness
constitutes the lingering ‘presence’ of the ‘past’ in the current ‘now’ of the ‘present,’ or
more authentically, the persistence of what has been in the clearing, into and as which the
Dasein has been thrown. “The Dasein is ever in its factic being, how and ‘what’ it
already was. Whether expressly or not, it is its past.” This inescapable interpretive
horizon accordingly constitutes the common tradition that imposes itself upon the Dasein,
the heritage with which, as thrown, it must contend. The comportment of the resolute
towards this inherited tradition determines the authentic happening of the Dasein, the
genuine occurrence or taking-action of human freedom. The interpretation of
historicality as the working out and appropriation of this comportment is thus the
reconquest of man’s original freedom. If the Dasein “in the ground of its being has been
determined by historicality,” then, as Heidegger notes, “the insight is unavoidable
[unumgaenglich]” that the inquiry of Being and Time “is itself characterized by
historicality.” If, as has been argued, the whole of Heidegger’s inquiry springs from an
experience of authentic human freedom (running forward resolve), an experience that is
to make that freedom intelligible to itself, then that inquiry must itself not only arise out
of, but must be itself an expression of the authentic happening of the Dasein, perhaps even its most radical expression. The pursuit of the question of the authentic happening of Heidegger’s thought necessarily carries us beyond the present discussion of the existential analysis of history, and even beyond Being and Time itself, to the question of Heidegger’s university politics. For now it is necessary to return to the examination of the authentic attitude to the inherited tradition (BT 41-42/SZ 20).

Running forward draws the factual possibility upon which it seizes from the horizon of the tradition into which it has been thrown. “The resolve, in which the Dasein comes back upon itself, discloses the particular factic possibilities of authentic existence in terms of the heritage [aus dem Erbe] that it as thrown takes over” (BT 435/SZ 383). We ever and always move within the field of an inherited past, which ‘exists’ as an overcoming world-interpretation; in Heidegger’s presentation it is simply impossible for us to extract ourselves from, to leave behind, the ‘history’ or common opinions that continue to constrain the field of our existence as the horizon of its possibilities. What can be changed, however, is our understanding of, and comportment towards, that tradition. Ordinarily, that is to say, when it has lost itself in the vulgar faceless crowd, the Dasein unthinkingly allows its can-be to be regulated and dominated by the everyday possibilities into which it has fallen by ‘birth’ or chance (BT 33/SZ 12), and likewise its understanding and self-interpretation, by the “self-evidence” of the traditional averageness that “takes away from it the own leading, the questioning and choosing” (BT 42-43/SZ 21). Though its inherited interpretedness sets the terms even of authentic resolve’s revelation of existentiell possibilities—there is authentically no other possible
source of its own existence-possibilities besides the over-coming public interpretedness in the midst of which it finds itself—this resolve nevertheless holds out the possibility of liberation from the “domination” of the tradition over its existence. “The resolute coming-back upon thrownness hides in itself a self-handing-over of coming-over possibilities, but not necessarily as coming-over” (BT 435/SZ 383). Having been radically individualized ‘right down to itself’ by the experience of Angst that reveals it as thrown into death, stripped of its absorption in our common everyday business, and liberated for the choice of its ownmost possibilities, the resolute Dasein bequeaths to itself the authentic possibilities of the tradition, but stripped of their over-coming character, and no longer as traditional. That is to say, the resolute return to thatness is a (violent) re-interpretation both of the public understanding and of the possibilities that it transmits. In taking responsibility for the whole of the thrown there of its clearing, the Dasein appropriates to itself, one is even tempted to say usurps, from the tradition itself the administration (stewardship, husbandry) of the history that constitutes its authentic inheritance. Elsewhere Heidegger proclaims that in authentic questioning—and, we can infer, also in the field of authentic choice—we have not only the “privilege” but even the “responsibility of all descendants,” that we “must turn into,” speaking metaphorically, “the murderers of the forefathers,” and all descendants, as descendants, “even stand under the fate of a necessary murder”; or, in other words, the prerogative and authentically inescapable obligation, which stands so far outside of our choice and will that it confronts us as sheerly as a perpetual historical necessity, to destroy the immediate paternal authority of the tradition as tradition (EHF 27/WMF 37; cf. also MFL 155/MAL 197).
The affirmation of everything that was and is, to the limits of our finitude, including the over-coming interpretation of the Dasein and world, is paradoxically also a taking up of arms and a particidal rebellion against that interpretation and its dictatorship.

The over-coming interpretedness of tradition thus yet determines, but no longer shackles, the project of the authentically resolute Dasein who now freely chooses for itself among the possibilities that the tradition gives over to it. The *authentic* inheritance of the past, which is the free ‘patricidal’ dispensation of its estate by the heir himself, is possible only in and through that running forward which breaks the immediate grip of the interpretedness of the average public and the absorption in its everyday urgencies. Only he who has lost everything, that is to say, only he who has been stripped down to the nakedness of his essential freedom, can authentically inherit anything. Just as only wrested truth retains its primordial force, and freedom authentically exists only in its forcible self-conquest, so too—since the attack on the essence of history is itself the reconquest of freedom’s authentic happening—only a freely seized inheritance is a genuine inheritance. Authentic freedom persists only in the appropriative self-handing-over of the inheritance of the tradition into and as which it has been thrown. Conversely, the genuine perpetuation of the tradition, its persistence ‘across time,’ the inner core or authentic happening of history that ‘occurs’ outside and beyond the average interpretation of history as a course of merely present events and effects in time, essentially comes to be in and as the thrown project of resolve. “If everything ‘good’ [>>Gute<<] is legacy [Erbschaft], and the character of ‘goodness’ [>>Guete<<] lies in the making-possible of authentic existence, then the handing-over of a heritage [eines Erbes] constitutes itself’
ever in resolve.” Resolve concerns itself with the legacy of the tradition only in terms of
the naked thatness of the can-be of its own thrown project. That everything good is
legacy does not necessarily imply that every legacy of the tradition is good. The legacy
of the heritage is not good in itself, that is, as tradition, not to be revered for anything that
it provides which we might understand as utility or benefit, but only insofar as it hands
over authentic possibilities of existence for resolve to understand and seize, as it makes
possible or allows for freedom’s genuine self-administration (BT 435/SZ 383-384).

Having been liberated by the radical individualization of running forward to lead
itself in questioning and choosing, authentic resolve does not merely unreflectively
submit itself to and take up the possibilities which ‘come naturally’ to it by the force of
whatever accident. “The more authentically the Dasein resolves, that is, understands
itself unambiguously in terms of its ownmost, distinctive possibility in running forward
into death, the more unequivocal and more unaccidental is the choosing finding of the
possibility of its existence” (BT 435/SZ 384). The choice of the expressly found and
seized possibility of existence transforms what is ordinarily, that is, among the vulgar
faceless mass, an arbitrary matter of chance, for example, of ‘birth’ or some other
accident, into something necessary through the ground or cause of the will. The
inauthentic existence understands the heritage of its past, whether it comports itself
towards it positively or negatively, as a restraint, as (in Hegel’s words) “that which it
itself has not done” (PhS 227, cited in IRH 220). Factically speaking, authentic resolve
also regards its past, in the first instance, as that which it itself has not done, as a set of
possibilities that it itself did not create by its own doing or choice. In taking
responsibility for the whole of existence, in taking over the burden of the guilt of its
thrown past, in the repetitive assertion of its being there in the face of the nothing,
authentic resolve actively and expressly wills the recurrence of that past, of the having
been which it is, and makes it its own genuine ‘deed.’ In and through its authentic
freedom it becomes its own ‘cause’ and thereby supplies an ‘aposteriori’ ground for the
accident of its past, ‘ex post facto.’ The past therefore becomes necessary, or loses its
arbitrary character, in proportion to how far the Dasein has been liberated for being itself,
for the possibility of its ownmost freedom, that is, in proportion to how far it resolves
itself to run forward into the possibility.

It is furthermore uniquely by the express self-project upon death that the thrown
been of existence loses its accidental character. “Only the running forward into death
drives every accidental and ‘provisional’ possibility out. Only the being-free for death
gives to the Dasein the goal simply and pushes existence into its finitude.” Opening itself
to the constant threat arising out of the clearing of its there ‘sharpens the gaze’ of the
Dasein, and focuses it upon the essential task of its ever own existence. It is, accordingly,
this express understanding of death, this “seized finitude of existence,” in which the
Dasein chooses its ownmost, that is, its serious, task, that its existence is purged of its
inauthentic empty directionlessness and superfluous distraction, “the endless multiplicity
of the self-offering closest possibilities of comfort, taking lightly, and shirking” (BT
435/SZ 384). In the project of running forward “the Dasein becomes free from” the
temptations of the “busy curiosity” of inauthentic existence, “the ‘incidentals’
[>>Zufälligkeiten<<] of being-entertained [Unterhaltenwerdens], which” it “primarily
procures for itself from the occurrences of the world” (BT 358/SZ 310) that is, in terms of the ontology of the present and the “vulgar understanding of history” that follows from it (BT 429/SZ 378). The project of its own finitude liberates the resolute Dasein from the dominance of this vulgar understanding, and it no longer tolerates its own absorption in the endless novel irrelevancies of our everyday business in light of its self-chosen goal.

The Angst of running forward “liberates from ‘null’ [>>nichtigen<<] possibilities and lets become-free for {the} authentic {ones}” (BT 395/SZ 344). In the Angst of running forward the resolute Dasein liberates itself for the singular task of its finite existence, that is to say, its true or authentic freedom, which itself “is only in the choice of the one {existentiell possibility}, that is, in the enduring [Tragen] of the not-having-chosen [Nichtgewaehlthabens] and of not-even-being-able-to-choose [Nichtauchwaehlenkoennens] the others” (BT 331/SZ 285).

This goal with which the forward running Dasein tasks itself is one that it has handed over to itself from the possibilities disclosed by the over-coming interpretedness which it takes upon itself. This self-chosen singular task, which nevertheless also has been prepared by its inherited past, can thus with equal right be characterized as “its fate [seines Schicksals]”; the singularity of this task of the particular Dasein, which drives out all accidental distractions, is accordingly “the simplicity of its fate.” This liberation of itself in running forward into death for the free and constant self-submission to the fate of its heritage is thus the structure or basic constitution of the authentic happening of human freedom simply. “Therewith we designate the lying in authentic resolve primordial happening of the Dasein, in which it, free for death, hands over itself to itself in an
inherited, but all the same chosen possibility.” This happening of freedom in which the handing over of a heritage constitutes itself is itself the very essence of history. The authentic occurrences of our lives happen outside the sequence of merely present events and experiences. The human being finally becomes intelligible to itself as the ‘subject’ of history only through the experience of the authentic temporality of running forward into death. In direct contrast to our ordinary notion of freedom as independence from necessity or fate, the (authentic) concept of human freedom that arises from this experience finally works itself out as the happening of fate: authentically understood, freedom is fate, and authentic freedom for fate. Only primordially as historical happening, as fate through and through, can the Dasein encounter the power of fate in the historical happening of the clearing of its there. “The Dasein can only therefore be struck by great misfortunes [Schicksalsschlagen, literally ‘blows of fate’], because it, in the ground of its being, in the characterized sense, is fate.” The Dasein only experiences the particular occurrences of the war of existence as ‘fated’ through its self-submission to its inherited task in the authentic revelation of its situation. Holding itself in the anxious awareness of its abandonment to the situation of its world and its arbitrary and threatening character, only the happening of authentic resolve, as fate, can experience fortune and misfortune in the fullness of their unintelligibly arbitrary character. “Fatefully existing in self handing-over resolve, the Dasein has been disclosed as being-in-the-world for the ‘obligingness’ [>>Entgegenkommen<<] of the ‘happy’

114 The New Oxford Dictionary of English, for example, defines freedom as “the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint,” with a further sub-sense defined as “the power of self-determination attributed to the will; the quality of being independent of fate or necessity.”
[>>glücklichen<<] circumstances and the cruelty of accidents.” Fate is conversely not the product of the involvement of the particular Dasein with the occurrences or accidents of history, as the inauthentic understanding has it, but uniquely through the free self-submission of the Dasein to its inherited task. “Through the collision of circumstances and events fate does not first arise. Even irresoluteness has been driven about by them, and still more than the one who has chosen, and can nevertheless ‘have’ no fate.” The human being who has surrendered the right to govern himself to the averageness of das Man has no fate, because, deprived of his self-responsibility and lost in the public interpretedness, he cannot take over his own thrown been, therewith freely handing over to himself the possession of—‘possessing’ and being-possessed by—his authentic inheritance, that is to say, the serious task of his heritage (BT 435-436/SZ 384).115

Only the resolute one can, by contrast, enter into the dignity of his fate, since only through the freedom of running forward does anything like fate become possible. That is to say, fate ‘exists’ only in, and therefore is itself, the happening of charging ahead towards the end. Heidegger now repeats the results of the analysis of running forward resolve as what it means to ‘have’ fate, as itself the happening of fate, in terms of the radical individualization or metaphysical isolation of the ‘human being,’ into and as pure Dasein. Authentic being towards the end “lets death become powerful in itself,” and thus “understands itself, free for it, in the own superior power [Uebermacht] of its finite freedom.” In the express understanding of death the Dasein understands itself as a whole and its freedom as finite. In freeing itself for death, its now clearly finite freedom

115 BGE section 231.
becomes a ‘superiority’ to death, a superiority which does not consist in its ability to
overcome death through the force of its existence, but rather in its mastery of itself in and
as an express being towards death. In letting death “become powerful” in its existence, in
projecting itself in the light of the indefinite certainty of its end, in expressly choosing
itself as thrown into death, it enters into a free relation towards its end: when it projects
the whole of its existence against the most extreme revelation of death’s constant and
unoutstripable threat, it ceases its covert domination of the self-determination of the
Dasein (BT 436/SZ 384). This its authentic freedom is accordingly not “invented in
order to ‘overcome’ death,” as an actual “escape” from it (BT 357/SZ 310); the Dasein
rather grasps its death, by charging into its possibility, in order to recover the authentic
freedom of its original self-administration, that is, “in order... to take over the impotence
[Ohnmacht] of the abandonment to itself, and to become clear-sighted for the accidents of
the disclosed situation,” to see those accidents as accidents, to hold itself freely open and
exposed to the authentic situation of its existence, and to determine itself freely in it. In
the project of running forward, the Dasein becomes free for the fate of its there, the
freedom for which “ever only is in the having-chosen of the choice” of itself, in its
abandonment to its assigned world, to the situation of the clearing in the fullness of its
menace (BT 436/SZ 384).116

116 Macquarrie and Robinson note in their translation of Sein und Zeit that, “It should perhaps be pointed
out that ‘Ohnmacht’ can also mean a ‘faint’ or ‘swoon,’ and that ‘Hellsichtigkeit’ is the regular term for
clairvoyance.’ Thus the German reader might easily read into this passage the suggestion of a seer’s
mystical trance” (BT 436, n.2). Johannes Fritsche helpfully contests and corrects this suggestion in his
Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger’s Being and Time, with this comment:

This explanation is somewhat misleading. I have never met anyone who thought of a
faint when reading the sentence with <<Übermacht>> (<<superior power>>) and
As we have already seen, however, Heidegger stresses that the radical individualization of the Dasein cuts it off neither from the fact of its common life, nor from the being-with that inheres in the structure of its essence. The disclosedness of the world “sets free” other beings within the world which also have the “kind of being” of Dasein (BT 154/SZ 118), so that they can be “encountered” in their “Dasein-with in the world” (BT 156/SZ 120); since the Dasein is its disclosedness (BT 171/SZ 133), its being-there is also essentially a being-with. The authentic revelation of the situation, as a way in which its world, the clearing of its there, is disclosed to existence, likewise only “modifies... the disclosedness of the Dasein-with of the others,” such that it “determines solicitous being-with with the others now from out of their ownmost-potentiality-for-being-their-selves.” The revelation of the situation “pushes” the resolute “into solicitous being-with with the others,” a being-with which “first” enables it “to let the being-with others ‘be’ in their ownmost potentiality-for-being” and “to co-disclose this,” to reveal the others to themselves in terms of their ownmost can-be, “in the leaping forward-

<<Ohnmacht>> (<<powerlessness>>) (SZ 384; BT 436). It might be the case that when going <<right under the eyes of death>> (BT 434; SZ 382), some inauthentic Dasein faints. However, authentic Dasein certainly does not do so, and in the sentence on Uebermacht and Ohnmacht Heidegger is definitely talking about authentic Dasein. Furthermore, the adjective <<hellsichtig>> is used in the sense of <<clear-sighted>> or <<keen-minded>>, and less often in the sense of <<clairvoyant,.>> The regular German adjective equivalent to the English <<clairvoyant>> is <<hellseherisch,.>> The related abstract noun, Hellsichtigkeit, is used in the sense of <<clear-sightedness>> or <<keen-mindedness>>, and only secondarily in the sense of <<clairvoyance,.>> Even the German noun and verb for <<(to be) clairvoyant,.>> that is, <<Hellseher>> and <<hellsehen,.>> mean not only <<clairvoyant,.>> and <<to be clairvoyant,.>> but often <<someone who sees clearly,.>> or <<to have a keen mind,.>> The abstract noun related to those two words is <<Hellsehen,.>> (clairvoyance) or <<Hellseherei,.>> (<<During periods of what one calls Enlightenment it is not that easy to make one’s living by Hellseherei,.>>). I have never encountered any native speakers of German who read into this passage <<a suggestion of a seer’s mystical trance,.>> nor do I recall having once come across such an interpretation in the German literature on Sein und Zeit.
liberating solicitude.” In short, in the revelation of the situation, “the resolute Dasein can turn into the ‘conscience’ for the others,” disclosing them to themselves in such a way that their consciences can speak through its revealing-acting, disclosing them in the nakedness of their own Dasein, bringing them before the Angst of their thrownness into death (BT 344/SZ 297-298).

Accordingly, the authentic existence of the Dasein is a co-happening together with other Daseine. The solicitude that frees them for their care, that is, for (express, authentic) being towards death, becomes a liberating of the others for the freedom to face up to their fate. “If however the fateful Dasein as being-in-the-world exists essentially in being-with with others, its happening is a happening-with and determined as destiny [Geschick].” Destiny in Heidegger’s authentic understanding is accordingly not merely—as the dictionary, the manual of the understanding of everyday speech has it—the irresistible power of ‘fate’ that determines in advance the sequence of merely present events of our lives and history, but the possibility of an authentic existing together, of an authentic Dasein-in-common: that is, of a genuinely free political community. This authentic happening, which ‘transpires’ outside of and beyond the ordinary sequence of historical occurrences, is therefore hidden from, and inconceivable in terms of, the inauthentic understanding of being and its ontology of mere presence. “Therewith we designate the happening of the community, of the nation [der Gemeinschaft, des Volkes].” According to Heidegger’s further clarification of this possibility, the authentic happening together of a truly free community is the community of the Volk, of the nation, of a single people, an ethnic- or folk-community. According to Heidegger’s teaching in
Being and Time, the compass of the authentically free human community is identical with, and can accordingly never transcend, the limits of the *ethnos*. And also not *solely* according to Heidegger: in the context of this passage, the co-happening of authentic freedom, it is hard to imagine that the *we* which designates here is a merely formal expression for Heidegger, and not far rather already the voice of the ‘conscience’ of a collective resolve which understands and projects the “*Gemeinschaft des Volkes*” as destiny (BT 436/SZ 384).  \(^{117}\)

The sudden, surprising (because unprecedented) appearance of the *Volk* here demands explanation. Why precisely does the *Volk* define the happening of our common destiny? To be sure, political nationalism was hardly a novel phenomenon at the time of Heidegger’s writing. Its appearance is nevertheless novel here in the context of the existential hermeneutic of *Being and Time*. Whence its special provenance in the existential-temporal interpretation? The *Volk* defines the happening destiny because, like it or not, I always find myself, that is to say, running forward and wrenched from my lostness in the average, I come back upon myself ever already, at least according to the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, there in the midst of, as itself a belonging ‘member’ of, a nation which structures the own thrown been that I am and have to be.  \(^ {118}\) The *Volk* forms

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\(^{117}\) It could well be said that to understand *Being and Time* is to comprehend the sequence of meanings of Heidegger’s uses of the word “we.”

\(^{118}\) Later in his life Heidegger would take a different view, persisting in his resolve to recover and repeat the beginning of philosophy, or prepare the ground for another beginning for thinking, while noting that the *Volksgemeinschaft* no longer persisted as a possibility. In 1966, in a conversation with *Der Spiegel*, Heidegger remarked: “But today, and today more resolutely than ever, I would repeat the speech on the ‘Self-Assertion of the German University,’ though admittedly without referring to nationalism. Society has taken the place of the nation [*Volk*]. However, the speech would be just as much a waste of breath today as it was then.” One might wonder if the disappearance of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a genuine possibility is not one of the principle reasons for Heidegger’s estimation that the repetition of his speech
the horizon of the authentic or free community because the *Volk*, with its language, its
customs, and its traditions, forms the horizon of the over-coming or traditional
interpretedness of Dasein and world, which clears the leeway within which the freedom
of existence plays itself out. The understanding has ever already been determined by a
total ‘folklore’ in the widest, strongest, and most primordial possible sense of the word,
which shapes and guides the project of the Dasein upon its possibilities. The *Volk*
therefore represents the outermost limits of the thrown been or heritage that the resolute
Dasein fatefully hands over to itself. The primordial happening of fate is rooted in the
‘soil’ of the *Volk*. The constant take-over of the guilt of the whole of existence, the own
thrown been of the clearing of the self, works itself out as the resolved handing-itself-
over of the finite freedom of the Dasein to the destined task of its fate, to the (authentic)
history of its people. The freedom for fate works itself out as the freedom for the destiny
of the *Volk*.

This destiny of the *Volk* is an existential or ‘spiritual’ happening of the project of
the understanding, which cannot be conceived in terms of the ontology of presence, and
therefore bears little relation to the (often crude) biological understanding of ethnicity,
conceived either in terms of a genealogical or racial substratum or ‘nature.’ Since the
Dasein is no merely present being, but rather one that exists, the heritage of the *Volk* is
not a biological or racial heritage (indeed it is only in terms of the over-coming

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would be only a further waste of breath (see note 171 below). Cf. “Der Spiegel Interview with Martin
Heidegger” in Guenther Neske and Emil Kettering, eds. *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism:
Questions and Answers*, Trans. Lisa Harries and Joachim Neugroschel. (New York: Paragon House,
1990), p. 46. The editors note that the text of the interview “was corrected using Martin Heidegger’s
own copy” (Ibid, p. 41), and the three sentences I have quoted from the interview do not appear in the
translation of the interview by Maria Alter and John D. Caputo published in *Philosophy Today* 20
interpretedness of the thrown been that such concepts have any meaning at all), and its
definition in these terms belongs to the inauthentic self-interpretation of the Dasein. The
happening of the Volk is not the motion of merely present biological ‘natures’ across a
series of time points, but authentically the free self-handing-over of a shared heritage, an
act of testament and inheritance which occurs outside the merely present sequence of
inauthentic time. Destiny, as the happening of the Volk, accordingly does not first arise
from the present combination and interaction of merely present particular fates. “The
destiny does not consist of [setzt sich nicht aus... zusammen, literally: does not put itself
together out of...] individual fates, as little as the being-with-one-another can be
conceived as an occurring-together of several subjects.” Just as the essential being-with
of the Dasein belongs to the environing clearing of its there, and can therefore only be
‘adequately’ conceived in terms of the worldhood of the world, that is, in terms of the
disclosedness of its projecting understanding, so too destiny as the happening of the Volk
can only be rightly conceived in terms of the world. In and through running forward the
(essential) being-with of (the disclosedness of) the Dasein becomes a fateful co-
happening, a shared resolve for the authentic possibilities bequeathed by the tradition. As
the over-coming interpretedness, the heritage of the Volk structures the very clearing of
the there. The world of the Dasein is ever a bequeathed or inherited world. The leeway
of the clearing in which freedom plays itself out together becomes, in the authentic
revelation of the situation, a destined field of fateful happening (BT 436/SZ 384).

It is, accordingly, precisely as this destined field of fateful happening, that das

Volk can be the object of Gemeinschaft, the theme, business, and goal of community (that is, of authentic community). As the field that determines the happening of our freedom, to which we have ever been assigned, delivered over, and abandoned, the Volk is our ownmost common (possessing and possessed) ‘possession.’ It is the heritage of the traditional interpretedness which structures the totality of significance, and therefore also the disclosedness of the there, the disclosedness that we are, which we constantly are about. This heritage then represents, at the ‘deepest’ level, the genuine shared business of existence, rather than the various ways in which we collectively ‘make a living,’ and work, or re-work, the stuff of the ‘world’ in order to do so. Indeed the political economy, which we ordinarily think of as our common business, only has any meaning at all in terms of the over-coming interpretedness of our heritage, on which our everyday business thus trades in secret. In contrast to the “distance,” “reserve,” and “mistrust” that characterize the average “being-with-one-another” of the practice and employment of the immediate urgencies of our everyday common concern, up to and including the business of whole countries and empires—indeed in contrast to liberal politics as such, the politics of mistrust par excellence—the Volk represents the possibility of authentic community, wherein each is not employed in the same enterprise in a mere alliance of convenience, but commits themselves to the same goal, “the common self-employment [Sicheinsetzen] for the same object [Sache] determined in terms of the ever own seized Dasein.” In Heidegger’s presentation, this is the possibility of an “authentic bond [Verbundenheit],” which “first makes possible the right objectivity [Sachlichkeit],” an authentic matter-of-fact-ness or businesslike-ness directed to the common cause, and “which sets free the
other in his freedom for himself” (BT 159/SZ 122).

The Volk is not a pre-existing, underlying being or ‘substance’ that grounds the being of the Dasein, but an inherited understanding that structures the disclosedness of the world, and which persists only with and through the existence of freedom. The Volk only authentically happens, only comes into itself as a Volk, in and through the freedom for fate which projects itself and breaks out as a running forward into death. The community of the nation, the Volksgemeinschaft that is its destiny, only happens in and through a shared authentic existence, a resolute being towards death. The Volk and the Volksgemeinschaft only ‘happen,’ only authentically are, with and through the existence of those who heed the call of conscience, and free themselves for their fate in and through running forward. That is to say, the destined heritage of the Volk is not equally the property of all members of the people of the nation, but the special provenance solely of those few authentic Daseine who hold themselves in the pure understanding of death and give themselves over to the re-conquest of their history.119 The character of the ‘nationalism’ of Being and Time is accordingly neither democratic nor populist. In this respect the destiny of the Volksgemeinschaft is the authentic counterpoint to the dictatorship of the average that rules the everyday publicness of modern mass society. In contrast to the dispensation of das Man that rules through a ubiquitous consensus which robs the Dasein of its care (being towards death) and reduces everything excellent and all differences of rank to the average level of the faceless mass, the Volksgemeinschaft is the

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119 In his discussion of the Nazi appropriation of the “Helden von Langemark,” Jay W. Baird notes that the SA men who understood themselves as loyally following the example of their past heroes proclaimed in all earnestness over the graves of the fallen that “we ourselves are Germany.” Cf. pp. 444-445 below.
breakout of a select vanguard of resolute Dasein who take upon themselves the grave
tasks of fate, and are willing to expend themselves in carrying them out, to spring ahead
of the others who are with them, to give them back their care (being towards death), and
induct them into their free community. This community is emphatically not a modern
democracy of the liberal or socialist mould, but rather something like a militant,
autocratic ‘aristocracy,’ the scope of which is not defined by popular sovereignty but by
the shared understanding of the call, whose principle is neither comfortable self-
preservation nor universal brotherhood, but self-sacrifice for the destiny of the Volk.

So far from arising from the combination of individual fates, destiny is what first
makes individual fates possible, as the very condition of their possibility. As the over-
coming interpretedness, which discloses the world, which reveals the clearing of fateful
happening, and which finally has its roots in the soil of the Volk, destiny is indeed an
irresistible power that determines the (ever own) fate of the (ever own) world, that is, our
fates, ‘in advance.’ “In the being-with-one-another in the same world and in the resolve
for determinate possibilities the fates have been guided already beforehand.” Fate, which
is ever my own to be in resolve, has, as fate, been determined by, and as such belongs to,
the destiny of the Volk. This guidance, however, only comes into its own through the
collective resolute choice of the authentic legacies of the tradition. Destiny is not an ever
present force that is constantly working, and always equally effective regardless of our
choice. Just as authenticity is only in running forward, and the handing-over of a heritage
only constitutes itself in resolve, so too destiny constitutes itself, that is, is only, in the
happening of fate, the common resolve to the legacies of the inherited past, the free
collective self-submission to the authentic tasks offered up by the heritage. The destiny of the fateful community of the *Volk* only happens in its repeated collective assertion against the constant threat of the there, in the face of the continual war of existence. “In communication and in battle the power of destiny first becomes free.” The *Volksgemeinschaft* must be openly fought for, and it is only in resolute collective disclosure and struggle that it realizes itself. Indeed the *Volk* itself cannot be properly conceived as some pre-existing merely present being that is first revealed by, and somehow grounds the collective struggle; rather we must say that the *Volk* first of all *happens* only in and as that collective struggle. The war for the destiny of the *Volksgemeinschaft* is itself the creative happening of the *Volk*. The destiny of the folk-community, the fateful happening of the nation is, fundamentally, a battle-community that renews itself as each new cohort steps forward to take up the fight, in a series of creative appropriations and repetitions of the been-there paladins of the *Volk* in fighting loyalty and following. “The fateful destiny of the Dasein in and with its generation represents [macht... aus] the full authentic happening of the Dasein.” The authentic happening of freedom, the self-project upon the ownmost possibility of existence, finally works itself out as the shared continuous battle—to put it bluntly, a *war* together with those others with whom the resolute ‘we’ has grown up—for the destined heritage of the *Volk* (*BT 436/SZ 384-385*).

This, then, represents Heidegger’s justification of the thesis that the being or freedom of the Dasein “is constituted through historicality.” The primordial happening of freedom is fate, the self-administered inheritance of its own thrown heritage. This
happening, which makes up the very essence of history, is only possible on the ground of care. “Fate, as the powerless, self placing-in-readiness for adversities superior power of the reticent, anxiety-ready self-projecting upon the own being-guilty, demands as ontological condition for its possibility the constitution of being of care, that is, temporality.” Historicality belongs to the ‘subjectivity’ of the ‘historical subject’ as the constitution of its essence, on the ground of the ontological condition of the primordial temporality of the war of and for its freedom. As temporal, freedom ‘is’ historical. It organizes itself, articulates itself, manifests itself, it happens as history, that is to say: freedom is history. Historicality can be said to belong to the subjectivity of the historical subject only because the ‘subject’ itself authentically belongs to the destiny of its history as the horizon of its possibility (BT 436-437/SZ 385).

Care, in the structure of its essence (existence or freedom), is the condition for the possibility of anything like fate because it requires for its existence the combination, or rather the primordial unity, of the phenomena of the Dasein which have been the successive ‘objects’ or themes of the existential interpretation in the second division of Being and Time, the analysis of which has revealed them both as grounded in, and indeed permeating, the very structure of care, and prepared the way for the interpretation of the meaning of that structure as temporality.

Fate as the powerless, placing itself in readiness [sich bereitstellende] for adversities superpower of the reticent, anxiety-ready self-projecting upon the own being-guilty requires as ontological condition of its possibility the constitution of being of care, that is temporality. Only if in the being of a being death, guilt, conscience, freedom, and finitude dwell together equally primordially in such a way as in care, can it exist in the mode of fate, that is, be historical in the ground of its existence (BT 436-437/SZ 385).
This is not yet an express summary exposition of the condition of the possibility of fate in terms of the structure of temporality itself. This testimony only further prepares that exposition, given in the paragraph immediately following. In this terse statement Heidegger gathers together the phenomena of authentic care in a manner that, in accordance with its structure (“ahead-of-itself-already-being-in-a-world” (BT 236/SZ 192)), recapitulates the movement of the argument of the second division (the more penetrating authentic elaboration of the totality of freedom in its wholeness). The movement of that argument both reveals the phenomena of care according to the relative priority of the moments of the structural whole of care—the “‘ahead-of-itself’” is the “primary moment of care” (BT 279/SZ 236)—and encapsulates the temporal movement of authentic freedom in its primary futurity (BT 376/SZ 327, BT 378/SZ 329).

This sequence does not yet expressly refer to the temporal interpretation of the structure of care but to its “phenomenal... content” in forward running resolve (BT 374/SZ 326). The structural manifold of the essential self-determination of the Dasein is care. It ever already exists in and as a thrown project. As a unity, the items of project and thrownness are ‘present’ in every moment of care. The primary item of the care structure is the ahead-of-itself, which forges ahead towards its end as its ownmost clarification. The authentic self-project of the Dasein (that is to say, the sine qua non of any authentic existence) is an express being towards death, an understanding of itself as “‘thrown into death,’” to the extent that Heidegger can even identify death and care: “Care is being towards death” (BT 378/SZ 329). Radically individualized by its charging ahead into the possibility of death, the Dasein comes face to face with the nothingness of
itself, and the possibility of being its thrown self authentically in the face of the indefinite certainty of its utter annihilation. This thrown nothingness is the essential guilt of existence, which the Dasein can never redeem, escape, or overcome. The authentic experience of already-being-in is the express *project* of being-guilty. Heidegger’s statement quoted in the previous paragraph (“Only if in the being... its existence” (BT 436-437/SZ 385)) reaffirms the centrality of the conscience as the primordial experience of man’s authentic freedom. The experiences of continual being towards death and constant being-guilty are authentically gathered together in the revelation of the conscience, which ‘is’ only in the experience of the call. It is this experience of the call (authentically, primordially, that is, conscientiously interpreted as the call of care) that reveals to the Dasein the inescapable, because essential, death and guilt of its existence in their unity. In the moment of this experience the Dasein grasps itself in the authentic freedom of its existence, which is not ‘infinite,’ because ‘limitless,’ but rather essentially finite (because, grasped authentically, it *is* its own limit). In the moment of the call the Dasein understands that it only “exists finitely [*endlich*]” (BT 378/SZ 329).

Only a being primordially determined by death and guilt can ‘have’ anything like fate, the taking over of essential guilt in charging ahead into death. Death and guilt are themselves furthermore the authentic phenomenal ‘expressions’ of the temporal unity of care, ‘expressions’ that, since temporality is not itself a being, are of course identical with its happening as the whole can-be of the Dasein. “Only [*a*] being, which essentially in its being is *futural* [*zukunftig*], so that it, free for its death [*in*] shattering itself against it, can let itself be thrown back upon its factic there, that is, only [*a*] being, which as
futural equally primordially has been, can, handing over to itself the inherited possibility, take over the own thrownness and be momentarily [augenblicklich] for ‘its time.’” As the temporal unity of death and guilt disclosed in the situation, care primordially is fate. Temporality, as the meaning of authentic care, is the condition for the possibility of fate. “Only authentic temporality, which is at the same time finite [endlich], makes anything like fate, that is, authentic historicality, possible.” Only in the express revelation of the finitude of its freedom can the Dasein understand itself in terms of fate. Fate is the primordial meaning of the being of care, the upon-which of the project of the ‘human being’ rightly or authentically (conscientiously) understood in the abandonment of its freedom (that is, as Dasein). The appeal of the conscience that summons us to the ownmost freedom of our existence now reveals itself as the call, nay, the call to arms, of fate, to war for the shared destiny of the Volk, a destiny which authentically happens only in the perpetual battle for it. The call of conscience, authentically understood, is the conscription for this fight. It is then this existentiell experience of the conscience, as the spiritual boot camp for the war for the existence of the Volk, which grounds the whole of the existential interpretation. It is the experience of the conscription of fate (of which Heidegger’s pursuit of the question concerning the authentic meaning of being is itself only the working out and appropriation) that yields being towards death as the authentic concept of human freedom. The politics of freedom in Being and Time, a radical (and anti-liberal) politics of being towards death, is therefore authentically, and inescapably, a militant politics of national destiny (BT 437/SZ 385).

The rest of section 74 serves as clarification of the happening or projecting taking-
action of fate, that is, of its new freedom-fighters, of destiny’s self-chosen soldiers. As running forward the Dasein is cast back upon its thrown there, in order authentically to take it over. In mood, and *a fortiori* in anxiety, the Dasein confronts its merciless abandonment to the thrown disclosedness of its there in its sheer thatness. “The pure ‘that it is’ shows itself, the whence and the whither remain in the dark.” The Dasein can never get back behind its thrownness, which, primordially as fate, must ultimately remain fundamentally mysterious. It is precisely the essence of freedom’s thrownness that the whence and whither of existence remain obscure: were they revealed to us the being of the there could not experience itself as thrown, nor, finally would the essence of that being be (could its essence determine itself as) freedom. Indeed in their obscurity the *that* obtrudes itself all the more certainly. The pursuit of the ‘source’ of the authentic possibilities of the tradition, as the tracing of their genealogy to the events and circumstances which ‘gave rise’ to them, cannot hope to achieve what it wants, that is, to clarify them in their primordial whence, not only because freedom’s thrown can-be fundamentally cannot be made intelligible in terms of merely present causes and events, but because it belongs to the essence of freedom that the whence of its *that* remain fundamentally obscure. “Even if Dasein is ‘secure’ in the faith [Glauben] of its ‘whither’ or thinks in rational enlightenment in order to know about the whence, all that winds up to nothing against the phenomenal facts of the case, that the mood brings the Dasein before the that of its there, as which it stares back at [entgegenstarrt] it in unyielding mysteriousness.” Even were it possible for the sources of the tradition to become authentically transparent for us, its over-coming, authentically fateful character would
remain unaltered. The over-coming tradition structures the disclosedness of the there that the Dasein ever already is and has to be. There is no possibility of stepping outside of the heritage of the tradition, because as itself the leeway of the clearing, the Dasein is its past. The condition for going back to the past in a positive or productive manner is running forward. This positive approach to the past can only be the confrontation with its impenetrable obscurity. Indeed, one could go so far as to say that the primordial origin is and remains as that mysterious abyss. This is not to say that the sources of the tradition are not susceptible to a violent genealogy. Heidegger’s own activity, his interpretations of the history of philosophy shows impressively just how far back into the tradition authentic interpretation can productively reach. The fact that remains, however, that Heidegger’s thought in the end confronts a happening of being that it cannot explain, and which therefore remain fundamentally mysterious to it. Nor does Heidegger’s thought claim to stand outside the tradition. The project of the destruction of the history of ontology rather claims only to claw as far back into the past as it can, in order to retrieve and repeat the possibilities that it conceals (BT 173-175/SZ 134-136).

Resolve accordingly cannot represent the possibility of breaking out of the tradition, nor does resolve of itself grant the Dasein any factual knowledge of its history, that is, of its inherited, authentic possibility in its origin. In the revelation of the situation to which resolve has been delivered, and which forms the horizon of the clearing of existence, the Dasein still confronts the over-coming interpretedness it in its brute factic thatness. The horizons of the clearing repel all attempts to see beyond them, and remain impenetrably mysterious. Freedom’s origins finally, and necessarily, remain shrouded.
“The thrownness, before which the Dasein can indeed authentically be brought, in order to understand itself in it authentically, nevertheless remains closed off to it with regard to its ontic whence and how. This closedness however is in no way only a factually subsisting not-knowing, but constitutes the facticity of the Dasein” (BT 399-400/SZ 348). The closedness of thrownness is not an ignorance or lack which could be rectified by a corresponding knowledge or enlightenment, because there is no such knowledge which ‘corresponds’ to the ‘matter’ of the whence of the origin. Such knowledge is furthermore not required for fate to happen: “That resolve expressly knows about the provenance [Herkunft] of the possibilities upon which it projects itself, is not necessary” (BT 437/SZ 385). The battle for the authentic possibilities of the past is not primarily an historical or archaeological investigation of how the happening of freedom has been guided beforehand. The happening of authentic historicality does not concern itself with a more penetrating study of the past, either as an end in itself, or in order first to arm itself with a been to throw itself back upon, or, what works out to the same, in order to acquire or recover a ‘ground’ for its otherwise groundless existence through historical erudition. The authentic historicality of the Dasein accordingly first of all need neither concern itself with scientific history, nor with conventional antiquarianism. We already ‘have’ the interpretedness of the tradition, or rather, authentically speaking, it already possesses us. The taking-over of thrownness in the self handing-over of the heritage is becoming its own thrown ground, taking responsibility for existence, the self-administration of freedom, in all its sheer groundlessness.

What is possible is the transformation of the attitude of the Dasein towards the
past which is its heritage, and the preparation of “the possibility of fetching [holen] the existentiell potentiality-for-being upon which it projects itself expressly from the handed-over understanding” (BT 437/SZ 385). First of all and mostly, the Dasein takes over the ‘self-evident’ possibilities of existence that have been given to it by the average public interpretation of das Man. In the temporality of the Dasein (that is to say, in the radical individualization of forward running resolve of which temporality is the existential interpretation), however, wherein the express understanding of death is cast back upon its there, there lies nevertheless the possibility of alienating the Dasein from its immediate absorption in the over-coming interpretedness, of stripping the over-coming interpretedness of the ‘tradition’ of its ordinary self-evidence in order that it may expressly choose, that is, hand over to itself, the authentic possibilities of its heritage.120 Charging forward into the possibility, the resolute Dasein resolves to repeat itself in the face of its certain annihilation (BT 355/SZ 308). “In running forward the Dasein fetches itself again forth [holt...wieder...vor] in the ownmost potentiality-for-being. The authentic having-been [Gewesen-sein] we name repetition [Wiederholung]” (BT 388/SZ 339). In its revelation of the “naked Dasein” and the “empty mercilessness” of the world

120 In light of the sentence immediately prior to this one, one could interpret the passage as merely suggesting that resolve need not be a repetition. This seems to be supported by Heidegger’s characterization of repetition as a “mode” of resolve in the following paragraph (BT 437/SZ 386). This interpretation can no more be supported in the present case than it can be in the case of the connection between resolve and authentic being towards death as a hidden “mode” which it harbours within itself. As we have seen, resolve becomes what it can be, is authentically itself, that is, is resolve, only as running forward (BT 352-357/SZ 305-309). Similarly, resolve, as resolve, brings the Dasein before its thrownness in order that it take over it and be the particular Dasein that it is and has to be (BT 346/SZ 300). The taking-over of its thrown self is the repetition of itself (BT 355/SZ 308), which is only in the constant self-assertion of its can-be, and which is ever a possibility of the over-coming interpretedness that structures its thrown there (BT 435/SZ 384). The resolute assumption of responsibility for the whole of the existence of its there is a fateful repetition of itself. Authentic historicity is only an explicit working out and appropriation of what is already contained in the project of resolve, that is, the
in their sheer thatness, the fundamental mood of *Angst* “brings back to thrownness as possibly repeatable” (BT 393-394/SZ 343). The thrown been that the Dasein ever already is, is a possibility of itself within the compass of the disclosedness of the overcoming interpretedness. The express choice and constant reassertion of its thrown self in forward running resolve becomes the repetition of a possibility of existence, which the Dasein hands over to itself from the ‘traditional’ heritage of the *Volk*. Running forward comes up against the thatness of the handed-over heritage as heritage, and expressly chooses its authentic possibility as bequeathed to it in and by the heritage, not unthinkingly or unconsciously, and not because so bequeathed, but rather freely in the fullness of the express understanding-project of who it must be. “The coming-back upon itself, self handing-over resolve then turns into the repetition of a coming-over possibility of existence” (BT 437/SZ 385).

Running forward charges back into its ‘past’ history, in order to retrieve its authentic possibilities for repetition in its ‘present’ situation. “The repetition is the express handing-over [Ueberlieferung], that is, the going back into possibilities of the been-there Dasein.” As regards the heritage of the tradition, running forward resolves itself “in terms of it, and against it, and after all again for it.” The authentic attitude towards its inherited past is an attack on the past, not in order to negate or surpass it, but to ‘recapture’ for itself the current respective authentic possibilities of existence, the experience of the been-there project of understanding, which the heritage both contains and conceals, to wrest them from that heritage by force in order that they may exist again disclosedness of the conscience, conscientiously understood. Resolve is or becomes itself only as fate.
‘now’ in the situation of the clearing, as its ownmost possibilities. The past is to be made to yield up possibilities for emulation, which are not external ideals to be imposed upon existence from outside, but arise from itself as ‘practically’ repeatable in the situation of the clearing. These possibilities for authentic emulation are particular factual possibilities, that is, of individual historical Dasein that has been there. The choice of these possibilities is accordingly the choice of a hero who was, who is nevertheless a hero for the war of existence in the ‘present’ situation of the current, factic resolute Dasein.

“The authentic repetition of a been possibility of existence - that the Dasein chooses for itself its hero [seinen Helden] - is grounded existentially in forward running resolve; for in it first of all the choice is chosen, which makes free for the battling succession [Nachfolge] and loyalty to the repeatable.” In the repetition of been possibility through the choice of its hero, running forward reveals its loyalty to the past. Like the traditional heritage, the hero, however, is not revered for his own sake, for his past deeds in themselves, that is, on their own terms or as the tradition presents them, and which the resolute Dasein now merely re-enacts, in the sense of merely making them once again present, but because his example discloses what is possible in the present, that is, repeatable, not ‘merely’ formally, by anyone, but for us. ‘His’ been there, repeatable possibilities are the own repeatable possibilities of resolve; resolve’s repetition of its hero’s possibilities is ‘also’ only its authentic repetition of itself (BT 437/SZ 385).121

121 The been hero in this case is not merely an exemplar or an admirable ideal. The German Held and the English ‘hero’ are not precise equivalents. The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines ‘hero’ as, “a person, typically a man, who is admired or idealized for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities: a war hero.” While the meaning of the ‘hero’ in English includes the idea of someone who has pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, this is not true of the German Held.
The authentic glory of the heroes of the past is thus not the dignity of their particular historical achievements (understood merely as yet or no-longer present) but lies in the examples and tasks they set for the freedom-fighters of the future, who follow the heroic examples of the past out of loyalty to themselves (as themselves existingly this past), but whose choice of themselves must authentically be the faithful battle for the hauling back of the been existences of the past in order to project them into their ‘tomorrow.’ Running forward, liberated from the everyday illusions of and about the tradition, factically resolves itself for its own most serious task, which it hands over to itself from its ‘past’ hero. Authentic repetition is ‘grounded’ in forward running resolve, because its repeating only happens in and as running forward; conversely, forward running resolve authentically works itself out precisely as a radically individual,

The self-made man, however, is actually the opposite of a German •<<Held>>• and of the •<<Helden>>• (SZ 385; •<<hero>>• BT 437) in •Being and Time•. A German Held is not someone who distances himself from the tradition in order to realize himself in his individuality; rather, he is someone capable of forgetting himself, of putting his entire being into the service of the common good, and of •<<sacrificing>>• himself for it. Or—more precisely and in terms of the logic of transfiguration—a Held even finds his self-fulfillment in self-sacrifice for the common good (Johannes Fritsche, •Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger’s Being and Time•, p. 212-213; cf. also his notes 59, 60, 57, 54 to chapter five of that work).

Fritsche notes, furthermore, that, “The paradigmatic case of a German Held in the twenties were the •<<Helden von Langemark>>• who subjugated themselves to and sacrificed themselves for what they regarded as the common good, higher than themselves and an end in itself, the Volksgemeinschaft, which will reward them for their sacrifice” (Ibid., p. 323, n. 60 to p. 213). The •<<Helden von Langemark>>• that, Fritsche notes, were the paradigmatic case of “running forward into death” (see note 50 on page 180 above) were also the paradigmatic case of the German •Held•. Heidegger’s existential analytic elaborates a series of closely connected concepts in its exposition of what the conscience authentically reveals. The running forward of authentic resolve already contains the taking over of the repeatable possibility of the been •Held of the Volk• (cf. Fritsche, pp. 17-18), because in running forward into death the authentically resolute Dasein already implicitly repeats the possibility of the •Held• who was (even if it does so ‘only’ in a ‘spiritual’ manner).

While Fritsche under-emphasizes the role freedom plays in the resolute Dasein’s sacrifice of its inauthentic personality and its repetition of the thrown been—its submission to the disclosedness of the conscience is the choice of itself, and its submission to the tasks and fate laid upon it by the destiny of the •Volk• is also a creative appropriation of its past—his work sets the standard for attention to
‘spiritual’ or existential (at minimum spiritual, and perhaps, or far rather even certainly, not merely spiritual, since the authentic existence of resolve is always already a doing) warfare (a warfare waged by no means, however, in practical isolation) for the authentic recovery of its history, for the winning back of the destiny of its heritage. The authentic happening of freedom, which frees itself for the constant war of existence, is a fighting: not only for the retrieval of its inherited fate, against the vulgar understanding of the ‘past’ that conceals it, for the yet ‘living,’ that is, repeatable, possibilities of its history, which are themselves the existences of the company of the been paladins of the Volk; but in the very repetitive following of their possibilities, which either present fighting examples themselves, or must be (re)interpreted as such in the ominous dark light of the authentic situation of its clearing.

This re-interpretive appropriation of the historical possibilities of the heritage in the light of the authentic future, in the takeover (in the ordinary or ‘traditional’ understanding of the heritage, a patricidal usurpation) of the past, that is, the self-administration, essential to the going-back of repetition, of the legacy of the heritage by its heir himself, determines the extremely novel political character of the action of running forward (that is, of the freedom of the Dasein in its possible authenticity). We have already seen that the project of freedom of Heidegger’s Being and Time, as a liberation of the human Dasein for its ownmost possibility, for the authentic freedom for the constant war of existence, is necessarily also a self-consciously revolutionary project, which, in its authentic intention, strikes at the very foundation of the modern mass society

Heidegger’s use of language.
in both its liberal and socialist elaborations: the inauthentic flight in the face of anxiety into the tranquilizing but illusory security promised by the liberal state, or the utopian future promised by socialist brotherhood, and the corresponding surrender of my right to govern myself (that is, the authentic self-administration of my freedom) to the public dictatorship of das Man. In its return to the past for the creative appropriation of the possibilities of the tradition (the free self-submission to the inherited task of its fate outside of the sequence of inauthentic time), the happening of authentic being towards death in its historical taking-action paradoxically appears, at first glance, as both radically conservative and radically innovative.

The resolute war for the future destiny of the Volk in the fateful repetition of the possibilities of its past should not be confused with the romantic nostalgia for an earlier, and somehow ‘better,’ time. The resolute project upon the repeatable, been possibility of the hero is not authentically intended to make his Dasein ‘present’ once more, or “to actualize it once again.” The attitude of authentic historicality towards the past is rather remarkably and frankly unsentimental. Everything that formerly was actual and is present no longer, indeed the disclosedness of the there, the world of the been there Dasein in terms of which it was, is irretrievably gone. By contrast, as thrown, the Dasein is its past. Everything of genuine ‘value,’ everything necessary for authentic existence, it yet ‘has.’ Resolve’s return to the past, and repetition of been possibilities of existence in the self-inheritance of the task of its fate, is not undertaken with the intention of recreating what has gone before, a past world which has now been lost to time, an attempt which would be as unnecessary as it is futile. “The repetition of the possible is neither a
Authentic repetition is as far as possible from a desire to ‘go back’ to a past, a longing for what has been lost and which is now out-of-date and obsolete. The doing of authentic resolve is very far from romantic nostalgia, and it would be a mistake to characterize Heidegger’s politics in these terms (BT 437/SZ 385-386).

Repetition, as the relentless project of resolve, is itself proof enough against whatever charm the past may hold for it. “The repetition, springing from a resolute self-projecting, does not let itself be persuaded by the ‘past,’ in order to let it, as the formerly actual, merely recur [wiederkehren].” The Dasein that resolves to repeat itself right up to the annihilation of its possibility, is not cast back upon its thrown there only to fall pray to the ‘values’ and arguments of the tradition for its perpetuation. As resolute, the Dasein is shorn from any attachment to the tradition as tradition, that is, for its own sake. For the resolute understanding, the goodness of its thrown heritage consists solely in the possibility of its disclosing its own authentic possibilities of resolute existence. Authentically recaptured, the over-coming interpretedness carries within itself the possibility of revealing to the resolute Dasein a been possibility which is or can become the ownmost task of its existence. It is the authentically or conscientiously uncovered past that ‘communicates’ or gives resolve to understand what is to be done. Going back into the past discloses the been existence of the hero not to re-actualize a prior present, but in order that authentic resolve should shoulder the burden of, and battle to follow, the currently repeatable possibility of its unfinished task. The disclosure of the been existence of the hero turns into the demand that we heed its call to arms for the future and
take up again the fight for the heritage, for the destiny of the Volk. “The repetition rejoins [erwidert] rather the possibility of the been-there existence.” In and as repetition resolve meets the silent demand of the disclosed been possibility of existence, as it were it ‘looks its hero in the eye,’ and commits itself to carrying out its task, choosing to live up to, handing over to itself the fate which the over-coming gives over. Indeed in Heidegger’s German, either “{t}he repetition” or “the possibility of the been-there existence” could be the subject of this sentence. In the happening of fate the authentically resolute Dasein and its been hero, so to speak, reticently return each other.

In the understanding of authentic resolve, as much as the Dasein reciprocates the possibility of the been existence, the resolute one imagines that its chosen hero of the past affirms and approves of its appropriation of the past, which restores or unlocks its true meaning, even as the resolute Dasein reinterprets the been-there possibility of existence in light of its current factual situation. So far from having a “conversation with the past,” to say nothing of offering “a sort of rebuke to the past,” as Macquarie and Robinson mistakenly suggest in their interpretive note to this passage, resolve, reticently, is simply “reciprocative” (without any “rejoinder”) and enlists itself in the battle for the (creatively repeatable) possibility of its past hero, thereby appropriating to itself its

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122 For a striking (if perhaps ‘prejudicial’) illustration of this reciprocal return of the been-there hero and the resolute Dasein, cf. Claudia Koonz, *Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2003), p. 225. The cover of *Die Brennessel* for March 26, 1935 reproduced by Koonz, depicts a member of the SA locking gazes with the spectre of a First World War German soldier. In the caption, it is the “Front Soldier” who speaks, proclaiming that, “‘Your spirit restores my honour!’” Koonz’s comment on the image explains the meaning of the SA man’s repetition of the fallen soldier’s existence: “a ghostly soldier spoke to a new generation, and a Stormtrooper pledged revenge against the Treaty of Versailles.” Though the front and the trenches are gone, the Stormtrooper creatively repeats the fighting existence of the soldier of the front, vowing to fight for the destiny of the nation, and restore it to its rightful place, cancelling the humiliating peace that ended the war.
ownmost, fated task. The past is not a dead hand that holds back the possibilities of the present; it is not a limitation on our freedom, but rather the destining of the authentic or truly free possibilities of our situation (BT 437-438/SZ 386).¹²³

In affirming the fate of its thrownness, forward running resolve is equally a negation of the vulgar tradition in its ‘self-evident’ character, which commonly dominates everyday existence. The authentic return to the past, the attack on the past for the sake of the fetching-again and fighting repetition of the been project of the hero, is accordingly through and through a fight against the average public interpretedness which ordinarily presents itself as the ‘real’ past. “The returning [Erwiderung] of the possibility in the resolution is however at the same time as momentary [auguiblickliche] the disavowal of that which in the today works itself out as ‘past.’” The recapitulation of the authentic possibilities of its history is a violent rejection of the inauthentic ‘past,’ which, in the vulgar understanding, parades itself as the past as such. In the moment of the revelation of its situation, running forward frees itself from the security of the illusions of das Man. The chief illusion from which it frees itself in the choice of its project is the vulgar interpretation of history and the levelled ‘understanding’ of the heritage which

¹²³ The interpretation of this passage hangs upon the meaning of “erwidert” here. Johannes Fritsche notes that, “The German verb <<erwidem>> can have several and even contradictory meanings. Only a careful examination of the context will show what Heidegger meant.” Fritsche demonstrates that in this passage, “erwidert” implies neither a “conversation with the past” nor a “rebuke” to it (BT 438). Here “erwidert” does not imply an act of “negation,” but rather one of “submission” (Fritsche, p. 27). Cf. Fritsche, pp. 7-28. Especially in light of the translators’ comments on this passage in Being and Time, Fritsche’s discussion is essential to grasping its authentic meaning. Nonetheless he does underemphasize the role of freedom in the movement of authentic historicality. Authentic repetition cannot simply be a self-submission to the past, because Heidegger asserts that “repetition neither abandons itself to the past [dem Vergangenen], nor does it aim at a progress” (BT 438/SZ 386). While the resolute Dasein may submit itself to the been possibility, it first interprets that possibility for itself, becoming or making itself the administrator of the estate of its heritage (which it somehow already ‘is’). In the understanding of authentic resolve, it does not submit itself to the past as something it is not, but
holds sway among the vast faceless mass. It does not cast off the judgement of the average in order to cast off its past altogether, but rather to restore it to its proper rank, to ‘bring it back to life,’ in the only mode of existence it can have, a constant reassertion even into the face of utter annihilation (BT 438/SZ 386).

The revolutionary project of authentic resolve is accordingly not only an attack on the very foundations of modern mass society, but upon what we might call ‘traditional’ or ordinary conservatism as well. “The repetition abandons itself neither to the past, nor does it aim at an advance. Each is indifferent for the authentic existence in the moment of vision.” The past is worthy of veneration only insofar as it reveals, or can be made to reveal, possibilities of authentic existence. Conversely, true or genuine loyalty to the past subsists not in the antiquarian veneration of the heritage either as heritage, or on the terms in which it has been given over, nor of its mere ‘memory,’ but to the lives, or more primordially, to the been there existences that ‘lived’ it, who indeed ‘were’ history’s primordial happening. Real loyalty to the past is loyalty to the authentic tasks of those who have been there, tasks and loyalty that need to be fought for. Conventional conservatism is ultimately only a hollow veneration of the mere trappings of the past, a futile clinging to the ‘outdated’ and ‘obsolete,’ that both forgets that the heritage authentically persists only in the constant belligerent reassertion of it, and, in looking to the past as a kind of ‘present’ ground for existence, obscures its own authentic groundlessness. In the revelation of the moment running forward is indifferent both to the traditional attachment to the past and to the ‘progress’ of liberal and socialist politics,
because it represents a violent reaction against both alike. The situation of thrown existence rather authentically demands a radical or ‘extremist’ conservatism, what might be dubbed a warlike ‘primordialism’ that fetches again and creatively appropriates the projects of the been heroes of the Volk in order to ‘reanimate’ its heritage, and this heritage authentically ‘exists’ only in and as the perpetual open battle, nay, the total war, for it (BT 438/SZ 386).

Heidegger emphasizes furthermore that what we might call an ‘extremist primordialism,’ this warlike politics of the retrieval of the ordinarily covered-over primordial happening or authentic history is finally not concerned with the past but with the future, the primary moment of the authentic temporality of resolve. “If however fate constitutes the primordial historicality of the Dasein, then history has its essential weight neither in the past, nor in the today and its ‘connection’ with the past, but in the authentic happening of existence, which arises [entsprirgt] in terms of the future of the Dasein” (BT 438/SZ 386). The battle for the heritage of the Volk, which is also necessarily a fight against the regime of modern mass society, however ‘retrogressive’ it may appear to its inauthentic, liberal or socialist enemies, is neither a nostalgic conservative desire for an earlier time, nor a violently ‘reactionary’ attempt to ‘turn back the clock’ and recreate a lost age. The battle for the heritage is a constant life and death struggle for the destiny of the Volk, the spiritual task or mission of the nation laid upon them by their heroic ancestors, given over to them to take up and carry into the future. Destiny’s fateful soldiers do not look backwards in longing, but resolutely face forwards in readiness, indeed resolutely charge forward towards the goal or end of their history. “Its own past –
and that means always that of its ‘generation’ – does not follow after the Dasein, but goes ever already ahead of it” (BT 41/SZ 20). So far from being a mysterious cause obscured in the deepest recesses of the past, which somehow stretches forward into the present, fate primordially arises first from the (authentic) future of the Dasein.

The conscience that calls us to the authentic happening of our finite freedom is the call of our future past, and the burden of our guilt is the burden of its mission. The primary phenomenon of history, the happening of the Dasein, which is accordingly grounded in temporality, that is, the ‘temporalizing’ of freedom, thus primarily happens in terms of the future. If temporality is the meaning of the being of care, if the authentic meaning of ‘man’ in his essence - that is to say, freedom - revealed by ‘his’ conscience is ‘time,’ the meaning of (the ‘being’ of) history (that is, its happening) is the future.

“History has as manner of being of the Dasein its roots so essentially in the future, that death as the characterized possibility of the Dasein throws back the forward running existence upon its factic thrownness, and so first confers on beenness its peculiar priority in the historical.” The been past achieves its true priority only through the future authentically understood, “that is, the finitude of temporality;” the running forward of that “authentic being towards death” which now reveals itself as the “hidden ground of the historicality of the Dasein.” Karl Loewith reports that Heidegger himself pointed to his own concept of historicality as the basis of his embrace of National Socialism. The ground of that concept now shows itself as an authentic being towards death, that is, the experience of human freedom in the hearing of its call, and the authentic self-concept of

further with this confession of historicality’s hidden ground, we finally come up against the genuine justification for the chosen theme and focus of the present study (BT 438/SZ 386).

Freedom presses forward towards death as the deepest, or most extreme, because ownmost clarification of its possibility. Freedom comprehends itself in confronting its limits finally only in the express understanding of death; that is to say, freedom worked out to its ‘final’ or uttermost ‘conclusion’ becomes freedom for death. The experience of that understanding is the revelation of the conscience, interpreted authentically, that is, faced up to conscientiously. In the throes of that revelation, the Dasein is cast back upon the sheer thatness of its freedom, upon the factic being which it is and has to be, and brought before the constant decision for going about being itself in an authentic manner, in a forthright way which most resonates with its own possibility. Freedom for death becomes constant authentic self-assertion before the inescapable, overpowering danger of the there. The factual thatness of the authentically asserted self is a given over or ‘inherited’ self-understanding. The resolve to the self thus turns into the appropriation, the authentic inheritance of the given self, against the inauthentic concealments of the traditional public interpretedness. Freedom for resolute self-assertion becomes freedom for fate, that is, the self-administration of the dispensation of fate, which ‘is’ only in the loyal fighting for the (self-)inherited past. As inherited, the task of its fate always happens together with others. The co-happening of fate is the communication or shared revelation of, and collective struggle for, the communal heritage that destines it. It is

uniquely running forward into death that is the condition for the possibility of the authentic history of the Dasein, for the primordial happening of freedom’s self-administration (BT 438/SZ 386). The authentic concept of freedom, which first makes it explicitly intelligible to itself, thus works itself out as the constant battle for the very existence of the collective heritage, not only against its inauthentic distortion but against the whole of being itself, in the face of the threat of the there. *True freedom exists only in and as the readiness for this total war.* The authentic intention of the existential interpretation is to free us for this our genuine freedom, to liberate us for the possibility of taking up this war for destiny ourselves, a call to arms for the *Volksgemeinschaft* grounded in the ecstatic temporal openness of the Dasein to the authentic situation of the clearing, revealed in and by the call understood in the fullness of its primordial enthusiasm (FCM 365-366/GBM 531-532).

The conscientious hearkening to the call of care, the possibility of authentic existence that it reveals, and the resolve to the taking over its groundlessness in the finitude of its temporality form “the most elementary conditions which alone make possible a positive going back towards the past in the sense of a productive appropriation [Aneignung] of it” (BT 43/SZ 21). Indeed the most elementary condition for this possibility according to Heidegger is the express understanding of freedom as running forward into death. This most elementary condition for the productive appropriation of the past is not what first *makes* the Dasein historical; as temporal it is always already historical. Its very temporal structure is rather the condition for the express transmission of been, yet repeatable, possibility. “The Dasein does not first become historical in the
repetition, but because it as temporal is historical, it can repetitively take over itself in its history. Hereto [Hierzu] it requires yet no study of history [Historie]” (BT 438/SZ 386). The possibility of the authentic repetition likewise does not require any factual science or even writing of history, nor is authentic being towards death of necessity propelled towards the express scientific study of the past. It forms rather the condition for “the Dasein” to have “opened itself... to the eye for” its “essential historicality” (BT 42/SZ 20). Authenticity has no need first to learn of its essential historicality through the study of history, but coming face to face with its sheer thatness in forward running resolve, it understands that it is itself ever already historical. Authentic historicality is thus “a genuine confrontation with the history that we ourselves ‘are.’”

This is not to say that there are not possible authentic deployments of history (Cf. section 76, especially BT 448-449/SZ 396), but that the finitude of temporality, as the condition for the express understanding of its primordial historicality, is the condition for the possibility of any authentic interpretation of history. The over-coming interpretedness of the heritage that structures the “disclosedness of the there” already contains the “disclosedness of being in general” which it “has already taken for granted” (BT 187/SZ 147). The “{e}xpress {r}etrieval [Wiederholung] of the {q}uestion concerning {b}eing” (BT 21/SZ 2), that is, the authentic meaning of being, and the pursuit of that question through “an historical [historischen] destruction of the history [Geschichte] of philosophy” (BT 444/SZ 392) is accordingly only the highest, most spiritual expression of authentic historicality. Metaphysics transformed or creatively

125 Martin Heidegger, “Karl Jaspers’ Psychology of Worldviews,” PM 4/Wm 5.
inherited as the historical project of fundamental ontology becomes, once again, queen or mistress of the sciences through its warlike self-assertion (not through settling the battle concerning being, but rather through awakening it anew). The ground of Heidegger’s repetition of the question of being, and therefore not merely the existential interpretation, but the whole of Being and Time, (and furthermore, it is tempting to suggest, if only as a tentative hypothesis, the whole of his oeuvre), is being towards death, the authentic experience and concept of human freedom. For Heidegger, “philosophy is the most radically free endeavour of the finitude of man” (MFL 10/MAL 11-12), and it is this authentic concept of freedom which he has principally in mind when he subsequently writes that, “philosophy can be carried out [vollziehbar ist] only from freedom and... its execution [Vollzug] is an act of highest freedom itself” (ST 11/ SWF 12). We now know the substantive content of the understanding of freedom that ‘grounds’ Heidegger’s proclamation. It is a basic experience of self and world that “is not the saving coastline but the leap into the tossing boat, where everything hangs upon getting hold of the sail line and looking to the wind.... Solid ground ... lies in seizing questionability,” in standing up to the indeterminate threat which arises out of the situation of the clearing.126 In Being and Time that concept of freedom works itself out as authentic historicality, the fateful warfare for the destiny of the Volksgemeinschaft, in the first instance against the dictatorship of the average that invisibly rules modern mass society, and ultimately against the whole of what is.

To begin with Heidegger’s thought, even as we have done here, and then to proceed towards its political consequences, however necessary that mode of procedure may be, is in a certain sense to put the cart before the horse. To ask whether Heidegger joined in with National Socialism on the basis of his philosophical teaching is to state the question (necessarily) backwards. It is rather the case that his thought already arises from a particular, extremely anti-progressive, radically ‘conservative’ or ‘primordialist’ moral-political understanding. To suggest that his thought is compatible with modern liberal government (to say nothing of its socialist variety), or to deny that there are any political consequences implied in Heidegger’s thought, accordingly represents a misunderstanding of his work. That Heidegger is a ‘philosopher of freedom,’ even that a profound experience and conceptual understanding of human freedom is the authentic source of his thinking about being, can provide no defence to the contrary, on account of its militant

127 To this interpretation of Heidegger’s teaching in *Being and Time* one might object that the liberation of the Dasein from the dictatorship of *das Man* and its average publicness could lead merely to withdrawal from public existence and a quiet life with one’s authentic fellows, rather than to an enthusiastic embrace of fascist politics. The difficulty with this suggestion is that it ignores the moral character of that liberation. While the pure understanding of death is, according to Heidegger, an individualization of the Dasein, it does not free it for the isolation of a merely private life. The call, which leads the Dasein to shatter its inauthentic self against death and retrieve its authentic past in order to repeat the possibility of its been hero into the future, sets the repetition of the authentic past upon the Dasein as the task, even as the very duty of its existence. Through the call the past, as the site of the re-conquest of the freedom, in the shared battle for the realization of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, lays claim to the whole of the being of the Dasein. The resolute Dasein fights for the destiny of the *Volk* as its ownmost duty to itself. This is not to say that the resolute charge forward unthinking and without regard to the circumstances of their factual situation. Coupled with the resolute understanding of the there is a kind of prudence: according to Heidegger, the revelation of the call clearly discloses the authentic possibilities of the current situation of existence, and therefore represents a primordial equipping of the Dasein for its true capabilities. On account of this primordial revelation of its there, the resolute may decide that the situation is not ripe for waging an open fight for its destiny; in such a case it might well retreat to a private existence with a few authentic friends. Fundamentally, however, this is a question of prudence rather than of principle. That destiny’s free company of freedom-fighters might bide their time and carefully choose to act only when the moment is ripe for the breakout of the *Volk* should not mislead us into thinking that the withdrawal from political life is the serious intention of Heidegger’s teaching. The convinced Heideggerian does not search for quiet shelter from the perils of life but
character, an authentic being towards death that works itself out as a running forward into a fateful life and death struggle, a total war for the destiny of the Volk. The question is not whether Heidegger’s political commitments follow from his thought, but whether and to what degree the existentiell understanding, the experience of human freedom which grounds his thought, resonates with the politics of National Socialism.

And resonate with the politics of National Socialism that experience does. The popular legends surrounding the ‘Helden von Langemark’ and Albert Leo Schlageter became part of the mythology and propaganda of Nazism. The Nazis expressly encouraged the nation “‘not to talk about Langemark, but to live Langemark,’” not simply to memorialize the fallen heroes of the war, but to understand their lives in terms of the experience of the front, as a charge forward into sacrifice and death. The Brown Shirts understood themselves as living the fighting spirit of Langemark. In 1932 a group of SA men made a pilgrimage to the graves of their fallen heroes in Flanders, where they claimed to embody “‘the front of the living Langemark,’” and insisted that, “‘... our lives must be like their deed: brave, unselfish, strong, and pure.’” They further asserted their guardianship and responsibility for the spirit of the whole German nation, claiming that, “‘we ourselves are Germany.’” The true Germany persisted uniquely among those who carried the spirit of Langemark in their hearts. This was a claim not merely to represent the German Volk, but to shape the nation, the Germany of the future, according to the experience of trench warfare on the front. “‘They gazed deep into the black of night and

storms out into the war of existence. Cf. SA 14, 19.

greeted the Germany of tomorrow, born in the breasts of the new young nation. They
greet the dead of Langemarc and the German revolution, for which one day they too will
die.'”¹²⁹ The loyal following and repetition of the deeds of the fallen heroes of the front
is a revolution at home to bring about the fighting community of the Volk, which
demands the sacrifice of those who would follow in the footsteps of the been paladins of
the front. The self-understanding of the SA men exemplified the fighting repetition of
the past, the spiritual core of which was an authentic being towards death.¹³⁰

Schlageter’s courageous service in the Wehrmacht during the First World War and, in its
aftermath, as a member of the Freikorps fighting in the Baltic, Upper Silesia, and in the
Ruhr, made his martyrdom at the hands of the French authorities a rallying point for both
conservatives and the radical right in inter-war Germany. While the Nazis initially had
difficulty asserting their symbolic ownership of the mythology surrounding Schlageter’s
life, they claimed nonetheless that Schlageter belonged to them and to them alone.¹³¹

Heidegger took Schlageter’s calm resolve in the face of his execution, like the
heroics of the fallen of Langemarc, as another paradigmatic case of the authentic
comportment towards death for the sake of a future Germany, and he gave addresses on
the examples of Langemarc and Schlageter during his tenure as rector of Freiburg
University.¹³² This is not to say that Heidegger’s thought resonates equally with all parts
of Nazi ideology. Heidegger dismissed Julius Streicher’s virulently anti-Jewish Der

¹³⁰ For another similar example of this attitude towards the past, see note 122 above.
¹³² Ibid., pp. 10, 37.
Stuermer as vulgar “pornography,” and his work bears no trace of the racist biology that was an article of faith of National Socialist ideology, to the extent that his philosophy indeed undermines any notion of human beings as fundamentally biological natures: the substance of the human being is not genetic inheritance or ‘blood,’ but existence.

Heidegger’s thought is by no means reducible to Nazism, and party authorities suspected Heidegger of hewing to his own private version of National Socialism. Nor is it even to say that National Socialism was the only political option in the Germany of his day that echoed his transmission of the demand of the conscience to run forward into death and to take up the fight for the destiny of the Volk. Other parties and organizations of the far right in Germany doubtless would have voiced similar calls to arms for the re-realization of the authentic possibilities of the past, in the loyalty to the heroes of the past, the fight for the destiny of the Volksgemeinschaft. Had no party like the NSDAP come along, Heidegger would have had to invent an ideology very like Nazism, if one purged of its racial obsessions, as the practical consequence of this thought for political life. It was, however, the National Socialists who came to power in Germany, and Heidegger clearly felt that they had some notion of the concept of freedom which he worked out in Being and Time, and continued to develop in his subsequent lecture courses.

Moreover, were one indeed still inclined to suppose, contrary to all evidence, that the summons of existential interpretation to our authentic freedom carries with it no necessary consequences for political life, that it moves only within a sphere of merely personal choice, Heidegger consequently hints at the authoritative ‘principles’ of any

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133 Loewith, “My Last Meeting with Heidegger in Rome, 1936,” in Richard Wolin ed., The Heidegger
authentically free political community in a way which should explicitly disabuse us of any such notion. “The resolve constitutes the *loyalty* of the existence to the own self. As *anxiety*-ready resolve the loyalty is at the same time possible respect [Ehrfurcht] for the unique authority which a free existing can have, for the repeatable possibilities of existence.” For Heidegger, like his earlier modern predecessors, albeit with very different ‘substantive’ content, his concept of freedom sets the standard for the organization of political community. On the one hand, the repeatable possibilities of the past disclosed by the heritage constitute the only possible genuine authority for an authentically human life. On the other, so far from surrendering the right to govern himself for the sake of his own security, the resolutely free man refuses to surrender his free self-administration of the inherited yet chosen tasks of his existence, even or especially in the face of his utter obliteration (BT 443/SZ 391).

It is not the state which provides for my comfortable self-preservation by protecting my life and means to commodious living that rightfully demands my authentic respect and obedience. Nor indeed is it any regime which stakes a claim to rule based on its wisdom or its justice, however prodigious, if ever it should create an essential opposition between its members and its government, if only it should set itself against, or, what works out to the same thing, attempt to set *me* against, the authentic self-administration of my freedom. The over-coming heritage which arrests every member of the *Volk* in its destiny is the sole authentic common ‘possession’ of all, because it harbours within itself the authentic possibility, or fate, of each. The constant battle for,

*Controversy*, p. 142.
and authentic transmission of, the heritage is thus the sole ‘matter’ to which they can bind themselves in common, without prejudice to, and indeed out of loyalty to the freedom of their existence, while yet retaining the full compass of their essential self-determination. I can have no authentic or genuine quarrel with my repeatable possibilities, since they are identical with the possible tasks of my ownmost self. I cannot be authentically set against them myself since, authentically speaking, the self of the Dasein persists only in the constant repetition of its possibility. There can be no conflict between my authentic self and the heritage which harbours my repeatable possibilities because I am them, and they are me. The repeatable possibilities of existence, and thus the authentic heritage of the Volk, are accordingly, from the standpoint of freedom, the sole authority that can rightfully, because authentically, demand my total and unconditional obedience. The Angst which hauls me before the repeatable becomes ‘honourable fear’ of, or reverence for, the repeatable, been me. The authority of the conscience which strips me down to myself and demands that I authentically take over the freedom of my naked thatness becomes, as the call of my essential freedom, the authority that commands my self-submission to the tasks of the destiny of the Volk, which is, finally, no more and no less than the yet living been possibility which I ever authentically am.

The condition for the possibility of such authentically resolute historicality is, to repeat, an existing authentic being towards death, and accordingly only persists with and through the existence of the express project upon death’s possibility. This authentic understanding or experience of freedom is however only ever disclosed by the Angst of the conscience. The liberation for authentic historicality, the setting free of the power of
destiny, requires the constant cultivation and developing of the conscience. The authentic intention of the existential interpretation is a liberating education for authentically free community, an educational task that the Volksgemeinschaft must accordingly itself continue to pursue even after the initial ‘successful’ prosecution of the war for the restoration of destiny’s authority. In connection with the discussion of an authentic science of history which aims at “the authentic disclosedness (‘truth’) of historical existence,” Heidegger cites several passages from letters of Graf Yorck written to William Dilthey, as further clarification of the “analysis [Auseinanderlegung] of the problem of history,” which itself “has arisen out of the appropriation of Dilthey’s work,” and “was corroborated and strengthened” by Yorck’s letters. What immediately concerns us in the context of this study is not, however, the particular origins or genealogy of Heidegger’s concept of historicality, or of his radicalization of Dilthey’s teaching under the influence of Yorck’s correspondence, but the particular content and meaning of the passages he chooses to cite. Especially given Heidegger’s express acknowledgment of their especial importance for the working out of his concept of the primordial happening of the Dasein, these passages (whatever Count Yorck’s own intention) must in the specific context of Being and Time both be understood as emblematic of Heidegger’s own political position, and be interpreted in terms of the conceptual results of the existential interpretation as the working out of, and summons to, the primordial experience of human freedom (BT 449/SZ 397).

Yorck/Heidegger writes that, “‘{t}he practical aim [Abzwekkung] of our standpoint is the pedagogical in the widest and deepest sense of the word.’” This
pedagogical aim is nevertheless not a general education or a universal enlightenment, but by the necessity of the matter itself only the education of a very few: “‘What on the other hand penetrates into the ground of vitality has eluded an exoteric representation [Darstellung], hence then all terminology is not commonly understandable [gemeinverstanden], symbolic and ineluctible [unvermeidlich]. From the especial kind of the philosophical thinking follows the speciality of its linguistic expression.’” From the commonly unintelligible character of philosophy it follows “that communis opinio certainly is nowhere in the truth” but represents only “the sulphurous fumes” which the “lightning” of philosophy “leaves behind.” With its “generalizing half-understanding” the pervasiveness of the communis opinio is indeed even itself an obstacle to the achievement of the truth. This explicitly necessary opposition between truth and common opinion is not for Yorck/Heidegger an occasion for meditating on the necessary limits of philosophical existence, but rather for the deployment of organized state power; not for enlightened resignation but for determined political action: “It would be {the} state pedagogical task to dissolve elemental public opinion and to make possible as far as possible [möglicht] cultivatingly [bildend] the individuality of seeing and looking” (454-455/402-403).

While it is, furthermore, in the service of the truth that the state is to dissolve public opinion, notably but unsurprisingly the means to its science appears here not as reason but as conscience. “Then instead of a so called public conscience - of this radical externalization, consciences of individuals [Einzelgewissen], that is, consciences, would again become powerful” (BT 455/SZ 403). In the context of Being and Time this can
only be interpreted to mean that it is a pedagogical task for the state (that is, the destined state of the *Volk*) to break up, or violently disrupt, the public interpretedness of *das Man* (the heritage levelled into unrecognizability (BT 444/SZ 391)), in order to liberate the few who are ready for the authentic revelation of the clearing in the hearing of the call, that is, for the radical individualization of the disclosedness of existence in and as an express being towards death, for the authentic experience of human freedom. It is then expressly the educational task of the future regime of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to actively cultivate an authentic being towards death, to help force those who *can*, to be free. With the citation of these comparatively terse statements of Graf Yorck, Heidegger suggestively and (if one has eyes for it) starkly announces, albeit only fleetingly (or, one is rather inclined to say, inserts ‘innocuously’ and insidiously, even sinisterly, through his citation of ‘Yorck’s’ suggestion), a project of the seizure of state power (insofar as it must be readily admitted that ‘as yet,’ at the time of either Yorck’s or Heidegger’s writing, the state did not yet ‘do’ this) by destiny’s freedom-fighters (whether ‘loudly’ or ‘quietly’ Heidegger/Yorck neglects to say) and the creation of a new post-liberal modern state, an anti-Leviathan whose ownmost task is not the shaping of common opinion—the political education of all, in order that they may flee death, surrendering their right to self-government in return for the (false) promise of peace, making their wills conformable to the requirements of a cowardly and ultimately illusory security (however commodious)—but rather an assault on common opinion in order to liberate the few capable of living truly free lives for charging ahead into death, for the self-administration of their fates in the face of the perpetual war of existence. This project is nevertheless
only the ‘communalization’ or ‘institutionalization,’ the further elaborated organized political expression of Heidegger’s own project of freedom in Being and Time, the “interpreting liberation of the Dasein for its uttermost possibility of existence,” an elaboration furthermore demanded by the very project itself in its authentic solici
dude (BT 350/SZ 303).

The site where the state carries out its pedagogical tasks is, in the first instance, most obviously the school. To the extent that it pursues science and philosophy, or prepares a place for their free pursuit, it does so specifically within the confines of the university. It is, moreover, where all ranks of the teachers of the state, or of the future Volkgemeinschaft, are themselves educated. It is there, then, that any practical pedagogy “in the widest and deepest sense of the word,” any comprehensive program of state education must begin. Like Hobbes, Heidegger proposes to subvert or co-opt—in Heidegger’s case we might rather say conscript—the universities for his own political purposes.134 The demand that the state disrupt common opinion for the sake of the

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134 There is here yet again a marked contrast with the teaching of Hobbes. While human beings design to escape their miserable natural condition through the creation of a sovereign representative, Hobbes nonetheless admits that the ground of sovereign power cannot be maintained by the exercise of that power, “by any Civill Law, or terrour of legal punishment.” The genuine grounds of sovereign power therefore “have the rather need to be diligently, and truly taught.” If its subjects are ignorant of the grounds of sovereign right, they may resist when the sovereign attempts to exercise it for the common defense (L 377/175). The authority of the sovereign power ultimately rests, not on its overwhelming power but on the awareness of its subjects of the proper grounds of its authority; or more precisely, the sovereign maintains its overwhelming power by imprinting the right opinions upon the “clean paper” of the minds of its subjects (L 379/176). From its institution, the sovereign derives rights necessary to its task of guaranteeing our common peace and security. Its overwhelming power enables it to form the wills of its subjects, and from its obligation to provide for the common safety of those same subjects, it falls to the sovereign “to be Judge of what Opinions and Doctrines are averse, and what conducing to Peace.” It is to control “on what occasions, how farre, and what, men are to be trusted withall, in speaking to Multitudes of people,” and ensure the examination of “the Doctrines of all bookes before they be published.” Censorship is essential to the exercise of sovereignty, since “the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions; and in the well governing of Opinions, consisteth the well governing of mens Actions, in order to their Peace, and Concord” (L 233/91). The political project of the Leviathan...
cultivation of individual consciences is thus the demand that the university, the public site of science, become the site of conscience, that is, the site of the cultivation of an authentic being towards death, the site of the scientific elaboration of the situation of the clearing which the conscience reveals, and therewith of the authentic understanding of being. The task of the university, in Heidegger’s teaching, at least in *Being and Time*, is the discipline and education of successive generations or cohorts of the elite corps of freedom-fighters who will creatively appropriate and repeat the authentic possibilities of the heritage, and who, through their loyal following of the been paladins of the past, will continually re-affirm the destiny of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. We know that Heidegger by his own admission ‘factically’ became involved in politics “by way of the university.”

This statement, out of context, can make Heidegger seem falsely naïve or apolitical; for us it is now equally clear, on the ground of his appropriation of Graf Yorck’s letters in

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They whom necessity, or covetousness keepeth attent on their trades, and labour; and they, on the other side, whom superfluity, or sloth carrieth after their sensuall pleasures, (which two sorts of men take up the greatest part of Man-kind,) being diverted from the deep meditation, which the learning of truth, not onely in the matter of Natural Justice, but also of all other sciences naturally requireth, receive the Notions of their duty, chiefly from Divines in the Pulpit, and partly from such of their Neighbours, or familiar acquaintance, as having the Faculty of discoursing readily, and plausibly, seem wiser and better learned in cases of Law, and Conscience, than themselves. And the Divines, and such others as make shew of Learning, derive their knowledge from the Universities, and from the Schooles of Law, or from the Books, which by men eminent in those Schooles, and Universities have been published. It is therefore manifest, that the Instruction of the people, dependeth wholly, on the right teaching of the Youth in the Universities (L 384/179-180).

At bottom the newly liberal universities are to teach the proper ground of both society and science, the fear of (violent) death that Hobbes finally identifies with the conscience; the university for Hobbes, as for Heidegger, is the site for the cultivation of the conscience. The only principle difference between the teachings of Hobbes and Heidegger in this regard is their different and even opposed understandings of what the conscience tells us. (In connection with the pedagogical character of Hobbes’ political
Being and Time, that Heidegger could equally have gotten involved with the university by way of politics, or more precisely, that he involved himself with the new National Socialist regime out of his commitment to, and political understanding of, the purpose of university education (the pedagogical task of the state),\textsuperscript{136} an understanding predicated on his radical experience of authentic human freedom as an express being towards death, and which he must have thought resonant with, and even presaged by, the new ‘national awakening.’ This is not to say that Heidegger sought to deny knowledge to make room for authenticity, for he also understood this cultivation of running forward as restoring the real meaning of the sciences. The completion of the analysis of the understanding of freedom which grounds Heidegger’s pursuit of being thus leads us to examine his university politics, beginning with his existential concept of science in Being and Time, and culminating in his inaugural address as rector at Freiburg.

\textsuperscript{135} teaching, cf. also Strauss, Natural Right and History, p. 198-200.)
\textsuperscript{136} “Der Spiegel Interview with Martin Heidegger” in Neske and Kettering, eds., p. 53.

Heidegger: During that time {around 1930} I was still completely taken up by the questions that are developed in Being and Time (1927) and in the writings and lectures of the following years. These are fundamental questions of thinking that indirectly also concern national and social questions. As a teacher of the university, I was directly concerned with the question of the meaning of the sciences and, therefore, with the determination of the task of the university...
Chapter Six: The Politics of the University

Heidegger’s analytic of human freedom in \textit{Being and Time}, the existential interpretation of the Dasein, grounds itself in on experience of the conscience that yields the authentic concept of human freedom as being towards the end, transforms the self-understanding of the ‘human being’ into pure Dasein, and expresses itself as a resolute running forward into death, in direct contrast to the everyday flight before it. The existential interpretation shows itself as a call to arms, to win back our original freedom against the reigning tendencies of inauthenticity. The remainder of \textit{Being and Time} sets out Heidegger’s plan for the point of attack, and for the creation of the cadre of freedom-fighters who will continue the assault. The revelation of the conscience casts the human Dasein back upon its factual ‘thatness.’ Its thatness is a can-be, a way of life that it ever already inhabits, an active possibility defined by an understanding of its world, a transmitted ‘interpretedness’ that discloses a field of possibilities, which the Dasein has somehow already grown up into, as its heritage: freedom always finds itself as an inherited thatness, as a set of contingent historical commitments. The revelation of the conscience reveals the abandonment of the Dasein to itself, and brings it before the choice of itself, of resolutely repeating, right to its end, who it has been given to be. The historical tradition in terms of which it understands itself has, nonetheless, ever been given over to the Dasein from the prevailing publicity of \textit{das Man}, which, in its concern for averageness, goes about levelling and obscuring all genuine possibilities of human excellence. The average understanding both transmits and obscures the authentic
possibilities of the heritage. Heidegger accordingly designates the understanding of
history as the site of freedom’s re-conquest.

In connection with the problem of the character of the authentic comportment
toward history, Heidegger discusses letters of Graf Yorck to William Dilthey. Through
his appropriation of Yorck’s understanding of the relation between history and
philosophy, Heidegger sets out a project for the appropriation of the pedagogical
apparatus of the state for dissolving inauthentic common opinion and the educational
liberation of individual consciences against the everyday public ‘conscience’ of *das Man*.
In this manner Heidegger announces his intention to conscript the universities in the
struggle for the primordial freedom of the Dasein. The erstwhile site of the public pursuit
of science will be transformed into the site of the discipline of the conscience for the
resolute repetition of the authentic possibilities of the heritage. In Heidegger’s
presentation, this is not an external imposition upon the university or a corruption of its
purpose, for the education of the conscience is not authentically in tension with the
serious pursuit of essential truth; according to Heidegger, science indeed even finds its
true ground in the resolute disclosure of the there.

Heidegger intimates this connection between science and conscience in *Being and
Time*, in the course of the examination of the temporal structure of care, where he
discusses the emergence of the scientific attitude out of the attitude of everyday concern,
and elaborates this theme further in his first public address as professor at the University
of Freiburg, entitled “What is Metaphysics?” In pursuing this question of the ontological
condition for the possibility of theory in the being of the Dasein, this discussion aims at
the development of an existential concept of science, that is to say, a concept of the origin of science in the freedom of the human Dasein, experienced originally or primordially in the grip of the call of the conscience. The transformation of the university into the site of the discipline of the conscience is not only the means to the further re-conquest of human freedom, but, since the theoretical attitude ultimately finds its ground in the resolve of the Dasein, also the recovery of the original vitality of the pursuit of science. Science finds its ground in disclosedness of the nothing of Angst, through which the human being first breaks out into the whole of being. The serious pursuit of science accordingly requires the cultivation and interpretation of the primordial experience of human freedom.

Through this exposure and development of the experience of the free essence of the human being, the researchers of the university reclaim their rightful title to the administration of the whole of existence. Heidegger finally sets out his understanding of the requirements for this cultivation of the capacity for self-administration, which is necessarily also the capacity for spiritual legislation, in his inaugural address as rector at Freiburg. In Heidegger’s interpretation, genuine self-administration requires that the university be moulded into a community of battle. Science or philosophy finds its original vitality only in the preparation of the freedom for the perpetual war for the destiny of the Volk. However paradoxical they may at first appear to us, Heidegger’s public embrace of National Socialist dictatorship in the very name of freedom and his promulgation of a programme for the university that does away with liberal education are not self-contradictions, but follow necessarily from the fundamental experience of the conscience which grounds his thought. Heidegger’s radical interpretation of the
conscience, stripped of the imputations even of the commonest decency, reduced merely to the disclosure of abandonment to threat of the world, and the self-assertion of the human Dasein against the whole of what is, led him to right up to the doorstep of the new Reich. The political consequences of Heidegger’s thought are not themselves, however, a refutation of his thought, but serve only as a motive for inquiry. Having come to grips with the concrete articulation of his concept of freedom by the end of this chapter, we shall able to assess the adequacy of Heidegger’s understanding, and offer a critique of it at the conclusion of this study.

A. The Existential Concept of Science

1. The Origin of Science in Practical Concern

Before proceeding from the existential interpretation of Being and Time to the further development of Heidegger’s project of freedom, which culminates in his inaugural address as Freiburg University rector, we must first briefly turn to the development of the “existential concept of science” in order to stage any proper discussion of Heidegger’s university politics. In section 69b of Being and Time Heidegger intimates an authentic being towards death as the source of science in the course of an “existential-ontological analysis” of the “‘arising’ [>>Entstehung<<] of theoretical discovering out of circumspective concern.” Theory is not an activity independent of, and separate from, practice, but rather all genuine of authentic science arises from the living question of existence. This analysis represents an inquiry, not about its “ontic history” but into the “ontological genesis of the theoretical attitude,” the
“conditions” for the existential “possibility” of science, “that the Dasein can exist in the manner of scientific research,” the very ground for the existence of science as such. In the context of this analysis Heidegger limits himself to “the change-over of circumspective concern into the investigation [Erforschung] of the innerworldly findable [vorfindlich] present-at-hand”; that is to say, the transformation of our ordinary everyday common business into (presumably primarily) the natural sciences, the emergence of *theoria* out of *praxis*, or, more precisely, out of a primordial structure which ‘grounds’ both of them (BT 408/SZ 356-357).

Heidegger’s discussion of the change-over in this section represents a refinement of his earlier, provisional discussion of knowing as a derivative way of being-in-the-world in section 13 of *Being and Time*, grounded on the subsequent gains of the existential interpretation. The handy suggestion about the existential source of science would be that “the pure looking upon the beings arises thereby, that concern holds back [enthält] itself from any manipulation.” If the “‘arising’ of the theoretical comportment [Verhaltens]” consisted merely in such a holding back, then the emergence of theoria would represent the “disappearing of praxis.” Theory would show itself as a mere tarrying alongside the beings it regards. This result nevertheless obviously breaks down upon further examination. On the one hand, “‘practical’ dealing [Umgang] has its own manner of tarrying” that is itself only “a more precise circumspection,” which “wholly remains arrested by the concerned ready-to-hand equipment”: the inspection of equipment as regards its condition and serviceability, the review of the “‘operation’” in regard to its efficiency, the survey of business accounts for the sake of the strategic
allocation of capital and resources. None of these circumspective activities need have anything ‘to do’ with the theoretical sciences, as long as they go on merely within the interpretive horizon of the operation. On the other hand, “the theoretical research” of the sciences “is not without its own praxis,” from the preparation of the “experiment” and the interpretive gathering of the “result” in physics and biology, to the “grossest manipulations” of “excavation” required by archaeology, to even the use of “writing equipment” for “the ‘most abstract’ working out of problems and fixing of the gained,” for example in the pursuit of pure mathematics, or as in the case of Heidegger’s own activity. Just as the most ordinary praxis does not represent the absence of refraining from manipulation, so theoretical activity “in no way” represents the disappearing of praxis, to the extent that it even positively requires the most elaborate manipulations for the pursuit of its ‘objects.’ Consequently, “where... the ontological limit between the ‘theoretical’ comportment and the ‘atheoretical’ authentically runs” remains hardly at all clear (BT 409/SZ 357-358).

The common opinion now has it, however, together even with the self-understanding of the sciences themselves, that however elaborate the practical operations of science, they nevertheless all serve its final end of disinterested contemplation, and Heidegger accordingly anticipates the reply that all talk of the elaborate practical activities required by the sciences counts for nothing against their aim of achieving a clear knowledge of what is. “One will assert [wird geltend machen] that all manipulation in science only stands in the service of pure observation, of the investigating discovering and disclosing of the ‘things themselves.’” This objection is grounded in the opinion that
the sciences begin from, and constantly work out of, a comportment which concerns itself first and last with achieving a pure beholding of its objects: “‘Seeing,’ taken in the widest sense, regulates all ‘procedures’ and retains its priority.” For the exemplar of this ordinary opinion Heidegger takes none other than Kant, citing the statement in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that the aim of thinking is the “intuition” of its objects. Indeed, Heidegger asserts, this goal of intuition has led the whole tradition of Western philosophy from its very inception: “The idea of the intuitus guides all interpretation of knowledge since the beginning of the Greek ontology until today, whether it may be factically reachable or not.” While Kant may deny that the intuition of the objects of pure reason or of things in themselves is achievable, for that very reason the intuitus remains determinative both for the standpoint of the first *Critique* and for his thought as a whole, and to that extent he sets himself in line with the tradition. Heidegger does not deny “the priority of ‘seeing’” for the sciences according to their own self-understanding, and makes a qualified concession to this objection: the “existential genesis of science must be set out by [bei] the characterization of the circumspection [Umsicht], which leads ‘practical’ concern.” This apparent concession in no way curtails the basic thrust of the argument of this section and the existential concept of science, which represents an attack on the very idea of ‘disinterested contemplation’ for the sake of ‘pure knowing.’ Heidegger’s apparent concession here is only intended to make that assault on the commonly supposed independence of the sciences from praxis all the more devastating (BT 409-410/SZ 358).

The circumspection of concern is a mode of the disclosedness of the world (albeit
not of the world as such in its worldhood). Concern always ‘goes about its business’ in terms of an ever already laid open or cleared totality of significance. “Circumspection moves in the involvement-relationships of the ready-to-hand context of equipment. It stands under alone again the guidance by a more or less express survey [Uebersicht] across the whole of equipment of the respective equipment-world and the public environment belonging to it” (BT 410/SZ 359). Concern already ‘knows’ what such and such equipment is ‘for’ in terms of the ‘in order to’ or intention with which it currently busies itself, and which finally goes back to the primary for-the-sake-of, or purpose in terms of which the totality of significance is at all first disclosed (BT 116/SZ 84, BT 182/SZ 143). “The essential of the survey is the primary understanding of the totality of involvement within which factic concern each time [jeweils] sets to [ansetzt]. The concern-illuminating survey receives its ‘light’ from the potentiality-for-being of the Dasein, for-the-sake-of-which concern as care exists.” The circumspection of concern is itself only possible on the ground of the primordial existential understanding that inheres in the structure of the Dasein’s being by virtue of the essential project of its freedom. Concern always ‘operates’ within the realm or clearing of circumspection, within a world which it has always already interpreted for itself, indeed which ‘is’ only in and as such interpretation. Anything handy is encounterable as such only in and through this prior circumspective interpretation of the world, through the project of the understanding. “The ‘clear’ [uebersichtliche] circumspection of concern brings the ready-to-hand nearer to the Dasein in the respective using and manipulating in the manner of the interpretation of the sighted [Gesichteten].” In the case of practical circumspection this
“nearing” has the character of “deliberation [Überlegung],” whose “peculiar scheme” of “the ‘if-then’ [>>wenn-so<<]” determines the “ways” and “means” which are needful for the purposes of manufacture and “use.” Concern operates within the field of an already laid open deliberative circumspection of the world. The interpretation of the equipment and of objects of concern is, however, already a doing or setting to work prior to any abstract distinction between theory and practice (BT 410/SZ 359).

This interpretive deliberation “illuminates the respective factic siting [Lage] of the Dasein in its concerned surrounding world [Umwelt],” and thus “has the existential meaning of a presenting [Gegenwaertigung],” which in its “bringing-nearer” is neither confined to what is factically merely present, nor “relates itself” in its “envisaging [Vergegenwaertigung]” only to “‘mere representations.’” In the first instance the circumspection of concern grasps the ‘world’ in terms of this existential presentation of deliberation, and, accordingly, primarily encounters everything within that world not in its sheer presence, but in terms of the involvements of its current in-order-to. It understands what it ‘practically’ needs in the context of its doing, even if ‘presently’ unavailable, not through the mediation of a series of image-concepts, but rather immediately. This immediate understanding of concern “is grounded” equally both in the “retaining of the context of equipment,” of a prior interpretive laying open of the clearing, on the one hand, and, on the other, in the “awaiting of a possibility... of a for-what,” in the project of the understanding upon possibility, that is to say, in a mode of the unity of (everyday) temporality (BT 410-411/SZ 359-360).

It is from out of the horizon of this circumspective presentation of the world that
any change-over of practical concern into “theoretical discovering” must occur, that is, the theoretical attitude must emerge from circumspection itself. The equipment manipulated by concern only first expressly comes to sight when it is not adequately serviceable to the task at hand. “In the circumspective use of work equipment we can say,” in Heidegger’s example, “the hammer is too heavy or too light.” In the first case such an assertion is relative to the use or purpose of the hammer, and therefore remains entirely within the deliberative schema of concern, and can only mean that the hammer “is not easy [leicht], that is, it demands force for handling, or it will complicate the manipulation.” Alternatively such an assertion can light up the physical properties of the hammer irrespective of its equipment-character and useful employment, as a “present [vorliegende] being” in this case, that it “has a weight,” which means that it possesses “the ‘property’ of heaviness: it exerts a pressure upon its underlying: with its removal it falls.” When we discover the hammer in this way, we no longer understand it strictly or even at all in terms of the deliberative presentation of concern. “The thus understood speech is no longer spoken within the horizon of the awaiting retaining of a whole of equipment and its involvement-relationships” (BT 412/SZ 360-361).

Instead the tool, in this case the hammer, is now seen, understood, and grasped not “as work-equipment” but as a “bodily thing which is subject to the law of gravity [Schwere].” Taken to its farthest extreme, this way of talking about the hammer no longer relates it to a possible for-what of concern, in terms of its appropriateness or inappropriateness to the task at hand, for which the for-what is finally the measure. “The circumspective talk of ‘too heavy’ or ‘too light’ has now no more ‘meaning,’ that is, the
now encountered being gives in itself nothing with relation to which it could be ‘found’
too heavy or too light.” The examination of its present being and properties becomes
detached from practice. The piece of work-equipment has somehow been transformed
into a thing with mass sheerly present in undifferentiated space. This way of speaking
about the hammer on its own terms can no longer relate the ‘hammer’-thing to any
ordinary human purposes and concerns. When the hammer is no longer projected upon a
for-what, the in-order-to disappears as well, and the circumspective talk about the
hammer no longer has any intelligible meaning for our understanding. Indeed, in this
manner of speaking the task is no longer at hand, and strictly speaking the hammer is no
longer a hammer at all. This transformation of the being of the hammer, of how the
being of the hammer “shows itself,” happens, not because in this way of talking about the
hammer we refrain “from manipulation” - indeed prompted by and in accordance with
this way of speaking we can carry out simple or even very elaborate manipulations of the
hammer to determine its exact mass and position in space - or because “we only disregard
[absehen] the equipment-character of this being” - this way of looking at the hammer is
not merely negative - but rather because “we look ‘anew’ at the encountered ready-to-
hand as present-at-hand.” The transformation in our grasp of the hammer is rather a
result of a modification of the understanding of being which ‘underlies’ all our speaking
about the hammer: “The understanding of being, which guides the concerned dealing
with the innerworldly beings, has changed over.” This change-over is nevertheless not
the unique condition for the genesis of the theoretical attitude. The handy, without losing
its character of handiness, indeed the handy itself as such “can be made the theme for
scientific investigation and determination” in, for example, the sciences of “historical biography” and “economy.” Heidegger accordingly concedes: “The modification of the understanding of being seems to be not necessarily constitutive for the genesis of the theoretical comportment ‘towards the things.’ Certainly – if modification is supposed to mean: change of the understood in the understanding way of being of the present [vorliegenden] being.” Neither the relation of holding back, nor of change-over, hold up under interrogation as the origin of theoria simply. These relations are rather themselves only expressions of a deeper existential origin of science (BT 412-413/SZ 361).

The choice of the example of the physical sciences by no means constitutes a denial of the scientific character of the other sciences, of, for example, of economics, or history, or linguistics. What is involved here is rather the drive to the root of the ontological possibility of any science at all, of science as such, through the interrogation of what is involved in that science which we ‘today’ take to be paradigmatic of science as such, the science that asserts for itself the most thoroughgoing objectivity, and ultimately aims at the most comprehensive account of nature. The existential concept of science could presumably be reached likewise through the interrogation of these other sciences (historical biography, economy), on the paths of understanding appropriate to their methods of study. These sciences are, nonetheless, more obviously related to, indeed the results of ‘subjective’ human needs and concerns. The ‘pure’ theory of physics accordingly represents the difficult case for the development of an existential concept of science, for the demonstration of the emergence of ‘theory’ out of ‘practice,’ or rather of both out of the ‘prior’ underlying structure of being-in-the-world. While modern natural
science gives no account of the human, and therefore no account of the scientist himself, any attempt at a philosophical attack on the question of ‘what man is’ must come to grips with that modern science which has almost become the model for science as such. Indeed, in deriving the existential concept of science from modern mathematical physics Heidegger in this certain limited sense, affirms its pre-eminence as a model for scientific endeavour, even as he aims to provide a superior account of its activity than it itself is able, or even attempts, to offer (BT 412-413/SZ 361; BT 413/SZ 362).

2. The Project of Mathematical Science

In the case of the change-over in the understanding of being from handiness to sheer presence, the place of the hammer “becomes indifferent” and loses any meaning in terms of the involvement-relationships of equipment, such that it becomes “a world-point, which distinguishes itself from no other.” This carries as its consequence the total transformation of the understanding of the world in terms of sheer presence: “the environmentally confined manifoldness of place [Platzmannigfaltigkeit] of the ready-to-hand equipment is modified not only into a pure manifoldness of positions [Stellenmannigfaltigkeit], but the being of the environment is released [entschraenkt] in general.” The understanding now confronts, not the context of equipmental involvement-relationships, the web of worldly significance determined by the purposes of everyday concern, but the sheer manifestness of a world, undetermined by any human concern but rather nakedly and mercilessly present. We can no longer even speak of a whole the
world, but only of an ‘aggregate’ or final sum of the multiplicity of indistinguishable world-points. Our understanding now determines itself in terms of the “guiding clue of the... understanding of being in the sense of presence-at-hand,” that is to say, projects the world as, this uniform field of sheer presence: “The all of the present-at-hand becomes the theme.” Indeed, this is so emphatically the case that the very world of environing nature itself appears as the “‘region’ of the present-at-hand” (BT 413/SZ 361-362).

This understanding is indeed itself the paradigm of modern “mathematical physics,” which, according to Heidegger’s estimation, represents the “classical example for the historical [geschichtliche] development of a science, also even for the ontological genesis” of science as such. Ordinarily we might say that the claim of modern physics to a comprehensive account of the whole of what is, rests on its supremely objective character, and all of the great achievements of physics, which are the most far reaching and impressive gains of any modern science, indeed represent the furthest progress of the modern sciences, rest upon this ground. Its example sets a kind of standard for all other sciences, and even for science in general or as such. Heidegger here does not call into question the scientific pre-eminence of modern physics. The issue then becomes, however, how we are to understand this model objectivity. The objectivity of the science presumably continues to persist in the attitude of its researchers, which we might ordinarily think of as “the higher valuation [Schaetzung] of the observation of ‘facts’ [>>Tatsachen<<],” or perhaps “the ‘application’ of mathematics in the determination of the events of nature [Naturvorgaenge]”: presumably because the more exacting standard of mathematical measurement supplies a ‘factual’ precision which transcends and
corrects all merely subjective experience of the phenomena (BT 413/SZ 362).

Nevertheless, according to Heidegger, these average characterizations fail to grasp what is “decisive” in the comportment of the modern (mathematical) physicist towards the world, namely the “mathematical project of nature itself.” This mathematical project reveals the whole of nature as a continuous, uniform field of sheer presence; it accordingly “discovers previously a constant present-at-hand (matter) and opens the horizon for the guiding view upon its quantitatively determinable constitutive moments (motion, force, place, and time).” In and for this project the human meaning of the world recedes, and every being encountered within the world, together with every space in which it is encountered, becomes in principle the same as every other. Without the qualitative distinctions of the project of a for-the-sake-of-which, the world becomes a uniform field of undifferentiated presence. The only differences which remain among beings within the world so understood are therefore quantitative differences. The ‘objective’ application of mathematical principles to the study of nature now becomes possible, and with the consequent identification of motion, force, place, and time, the project of the world as sheer presence thus ‘logically’ and progressively develops into the mathematical analysis of modern physics, and indeed it is the condition of its possibility. This projected understanding is accordingly itself the deeper ground of the possibility of those characteristics of modern physics - factual observation and mathematical analysis - that the average understanding (correctly) identifies. “Only ‘in the light’ of a nature projected in such a way can anything like a ‘fact’ be found and set up for an experiment regulatively delimited in terms of the project.” The supposed ‘self-evidence’ of the
objective procedures of mathematical physics, together with its so-called disinterested observation and supposedly ‘passive’ reception of experimental results, already rest upon a priori world-interpretation, that is, the rigorous working out and appropriation of the project of the presencing of nature, indeed of the understanding of being as sheer presence. The apparently factual objectivity of modern physics thus depends upon the *active* assertion, that is, upon the imposition of this interpretation, not upon beings which are somehow already present prior to the uncovering of them, but upon the world as such: “The ‘grounding’ of ‘factual science’ only possible thereby, that the researchers understood: there are in principle no ‘mere facts.’” Mathematical physics originally becomes possible through an exertion of the will. Only on the ground of the project of the world as a field of sheer presence can and does the world-interpretation of mathematical physics deteriorate into a self-evident ‘fact’ (BT 413-414/SZ 362).

In the first instance the world does *not* appear as a field of sheer presence susceptible to mathematical analysis. What is therefore truly “decisive” in the scientific project of modern physics is not “the mathematical as such,” which “in its specific exactness” is ordinarily taken as objectively valid “for ‘everyman’”; more fundamental by far is its character as project: a revelation of the world that “discloses an *apriori*” which uncovers the “thematic being” of its investigations. The assertion of this *apriori* reveals its ‘object,’ “how {a} being uniquely can be discovered,” through an ‘underlying’ interpretation of its essential structure, “in the prior project of its constitution of being.” Modern physics, like any science, as a way of the being of the Dasein, is primordially not an ‘objective’ explanation of the events of nature (by means of more or less sophisticated
experimental procedures and mathematical elaboration and analysis of the resulting ‘data’) but the assertion of an interpretive project which first makes anything like a ‘mathematical knowledge of nature’ at all possible. This prior “scientific project,” the self-assertion of the interpretation of the world as pure presence, is an uncovering “of the ever already somehow encountered being,” such that it “lets” the “way of being” which belongs to it “be expressly understood.” The project not only sets out the manner of being of its thematic object, but also determines the ways and methods of scientific investigation. In accordance with this way of being there belong corresponding “possible ways for the pure uncovering of the innerworldly being” that “become manifest” through the project. The prior scientific project, in the final analysis a total project of the whole of nature—“to which belong the articulation of the understanding of being, the delimitation of the subject-area led by it, and the fore-sketching of the conceptuality appropriate to the being”—accordingly works itself out as a “thematization” of the being that science encounters. Only in the thematizing of the project does the being confronted by the researcher become the thematic object of investigation (BT 414/SZ 362-363).137

The thematization of the project determines the mode of being of its chosen theme, and corresponding methods of investigation, for the sake of a pure uncovering. In order for any being to be ‘seen’ by a pure uncovering, it must first be such that it can be revealed in its being by any such comportment. Thematizing thus “aims” is “a setting-free [Freigabe] of the innerworldly encountered being in such a way that it can ‘throw’ itself ‘against’ a pure uncovering”: that is to say, it is the thematization of the project

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137 Cf. BGE section 22.
itself which first transforms the thematic being into an “object.” Only on the ground of the thematizing of a prior world-interpretation is anything like an object of scientific investigation even at all possible. This is not to imply that science “first ‘posits’ the being” or creates its object, rather that it itself first “sets it free thus, that it becomes ‘objectively’ interrogatable and determinable.” This thematizing, objectifying project of world and beings (whether as merely present and therefore susceptible to mathematical analysis as in the case of physics, or in some other way, as in the case of other, different sciences), the idea of which is already somehow contained in the ordinary understanding of science (even or especially in the case of the physical sciences of nature, if only in their original foundations) is thus necessary for the possibility of any science at all. The comportment of the physical scientist towards the thematic objects of his endeavours—in accordance with his end of an “‘intuition’” of the “innerworldly present-at-hand” that he encounters and “objectifies”—“has the character of a distinctive presenting,” of a distinctive way of a bringing-nearer of the beings towards which it comports itself. This distinctive presenting of science, which is also “awaiting [gewaertig]” the possibility of an uncovering of the thematic being, nevertheless “distinguishes itself from the present of circumspection” in that its “discovering” concerns itself “uniquely” about the “discoveredness of the present-at-hand”: whereas circumspection makes present in terms of the for-what of the immediate urgencies of everyday concern and that to-this which is handy for its purposes, the scientist holds himself in a disclosedness of the world in terms of sheer presence. The “awaiting of discoveredness” of the scientist “is grounded existentially in a resolve of the Dasein, through which it projects itself upon the
potentiality-for-being in the ‘truth.’” The deeper condition for the possibility of science, as a “being-in-the-truth,” is the authentic self-project upon the primordial truth of existence, from which all comportment towards beings is finally derived. That is to say: the “project” of modern science “is possible” indeed only “because being-in-the-truth makes up an existence-determination of the Dasein,” because the disclosedness of the conscience belongs to the basic state of “being-in-the-world,” that is, to the essence of freedom (BT 414-415/SZ 363).

As strange and remarkably suggestive as this assertion is, Heidegger refrains from “further pursuing” the “source of science” in the “authentic existence” of the Dasein “here” in the context of the argument of Being and Time, beyond a grasp of “being-in-the-world” (that is, “the basic constitution of the Dasein”) as the basic and necessary “presupposition” for the “thematization” of the sciences (BT 414-415/SZ 363). While it would be undoubtedly possible to develop Heidegger’s thoughts on this connection from the teaching of Sein and Zeit, nevertheless for further candid elaboration of this argument we will proceed to Heidegger’s subsequent development of this theme in “What Is

\[\text{138}\] The assertion that the modern scientific project rests or has its source in the moral or quasi-religious revelation of our situation by the conscience must in the first instance strike the reader as strange or even absurd. This suggestion is less implausible than it might otherwise initially seem. It should be noted that it is consistent with Nietzsche’s characterization of modern philosophy (which originally includes the modern physical sciences) as an historical movement that is “covertly or overtly, anti-Christian,” but “by no means anti-religious” (cf. BGE section 54). More to the point, one may ask how one could come to see the world in the manner of the modern physical sciences. One would have first to be wrenched out of the understanding of the world transmitted by the Christian religion, in order that one experience the whole of being not as the creation of an omnipotent deity, which is therefore intelligible as the product of an intelligent design, but in the sheer meaningless of its ‘thatness,’ that one ‘see’ the world in its sheer ‘thereness’ of its ‘worldhood.’ In short, in order to interpret the world as fundamentally sheer presence (and thence as merely matter, force, and energy) in the manner of the modern sciences, one must have experienced it in a manner not unlike how it is disclosed by the conscience, as Heidegger conscientiously interprets it. Only subsequently does the interpretation of the world as sheer presence cover over the authentic disclosure which originates it.
Metaphysics?” (PM 82-96/Wm 103-122), his inaugural public lecture as professor at the University of Freiburg, delivered in July of 1929 and published that same year,139 wherein he confronts the original ground of the sciences.

B. The Authentic Source of Science in “What Is Metaphysics?”

Heidegger begins “What Is Metaphysics?” by explaining he will not, as might be expected, “talk [geredet] about metaphysics,” and provide a definition of an academic discipline or a general historical overview of its subject area and results. Instead Heidegger chooses to “discuss a determinate metaphysical question” in order for him and his audience to be “so it seems, transferred immediately into metaphysics.” Metaphysics or “philosophy” nevertheless “beginning,” the “peculiarity” of which “requires a preliminary sketch.” The “questioning” of metaphysics is primarily peculiar in that “each metaphysical question always encompasses the whole of the problematic of metaphysics.” Unlike other disciplines, that are more or less further divisible into isolated subfields and themes, which do not necessarily presuppose a grasp of other nevertheless connected aspects of the field of their discipline, the field of metaphysics always somehow forms a primordial unity: “Each metaphysical question ... is ever the whole itself” (WIM 82/Wm 103).

139 PM 380.
1. The Passion for Science

It follows from this primary characterization of metaphysics that the putting of its questions must likewise address the “questioner - as one such” who must be “there within the question,” as himself part of the whole which the question addresses. According to the proper meaning of metaphysical interrogation, the questioner interrogates himself. The putting of the question can be the self-interrogation of the questioner only if he begins to ask with and from himself. Any metaphysical question must therefore itself be asked “from the essential position of the questioning Dasein.” Heidegger’s lecture is accordingly not merely incidentally a lecture by a philosophy professor to other professors and students, but it expressly belongs to the matter of the lecture that it speaks both from and about the existence of the lecturer and his audience: “We are questioning, here and now, for us.” This ‘we’ is a ‘we’ of scholars and students who live and work in the university. If we are truly serious about the university, if our presence and activity here “in the community of researchers, teachers, and students” is not merely an accident but rather our genuine vocation, then knowledge must constitute the essential position of our existence, which must be “determined by science.” If we are truly serious about science, then our commitment to science will be the singular commitment of our existence, which rules and orders all the others. If, by contrast, we were not committed to science, why in all seriousness would we continue our work and study? Indeed, from the perspective of science one could put the question more strongly: by what right would we continue our scientific studies, when they ought to be undertaken with all the earnestness that they deserve? Heidegger accordingly speaks from the essential position of the
serious commitment to science, of science as both possible and necessary, while knowing that what this position presupposes may not properly characterize every member of his audience, when he asks: “What is happening to us, essentially, in the grounds of our existence, when science has become our passion?” The self-interrogation of the questioner (at least in this case) presupposes a passion for science. Or better: metaphysical self-interrogation, in opposition to the supposedly ‘dispassionate’ knowledge of the modern sciences, presupposes precisely passion, and moreover compels us to admit that even the ‘disinterested’ activity of science and the ‘objectivity’ of its results rest upon a deeper, ‘subjective’ interest and even zealous commitment. “What is Metaphysics?” is the self-interrogation of the committed or conscientious scientist (WIM 82/Wm 103).

In the situation of the university of Heidegger’s day (a state of affairs we must admit persists in our time as well), the “disintegrated multiplicity [zerfallene Vielfältigkeit] of disciplines” of the sciences are “held together” merely by “the technical organization of universities and faculties.” This dispersion has progressed so far that indeed within the fields of the individual sciences, their “unified meaning [einer Bedeutung]” is “held up” only by “the practical purpose-setting of the subjects [Faecher].” In such a state of affairs, when the sciences are no longer coherently organized in terms of their own proper content, but only through the external and consequently arbitrary bureaucratic apparatus of the university and its further more or less elaborate division into faculties and departments, it cannot but become clear that “the rootedness of the sciences in their essential ground has died away [abgestorben].”
Heidegger as yet refrains from elaborating the character of this essential ground, but if the suggestion of *Being and Time* still holds, it must work itself out as the authentic existence of the researcher himself. However that might be, when we turn to the mode of proceeding of the particular sciences, “following their ownmost intention [Absehen],” we find the underlying theme of a directed comportment: “in all the sciences we comport ourselves... towards the being itself.” The particulars of this stance may vary with the field of investigation, especially since, in the contemporary understanding, in science “no region has precedence over another, neither nature over history, nor the other way around”; nonetheless we see a “relationship to the world prevailing through all sciences as such” a relation in which the sciences “seek the being itself.” In their seeking the sciences transform the being into a thematic “object of exploration.” Scientific investigation is not just any questioning of beings, but a “grounding determination,” that is, to determine what is essential to them as beings. “In the sciences – according to the idea {of them} – happens [vollzieht sich] a coming-close-by to the essential of all things” (WIM 82-83/Wm 104).

This scientific relation to the world, which seeks the beings themselves, “is carried and guided by a freely chosen attitude [Haltung] of human existence”; the relation of science to the beings that become its objects finally finds its ground in the express choice of human freedom. Unlike the world-relation of “pre- and extra-scientific doing and letting,” which too “comport themselves toward beings [zum Seienden],” that of science is “distinctive [ausgezeichnet],” indeed “{s}cience has its distinction [Auszeichnung],” because “in a way proper to it, it gives the matter itself [der Sache
selbst] expressly and uniquely the first and last word.” This is not to say that the
prescientific and extra-scientific ways of relating to the world do not reveal the beings
with which they concern themselves, and indeed reveal them precisely as they are. The
hammer employed by the carpenter in his everyday dealings, for example, is uncovered
precisely as the being—the hammer—that it is. Nonetheless any other world-relation
uncovers beings for the sake of some practical towards-this, a purpose or end, the
accomplishment of which the relation awaits, and once it is accomplished, such a world-
relation lets the involved beings again recede into the background of involvements. In
practice generally, it is the needs and ends of the for-what that have the first and last
word. What is distinctive and even exceptional about science, by contrast, is that its
intention is uniquely the uncovering of the beings themselves in their essential grounds.
The free attitude of science is accordingly “a peculiarly delimited subjection to the being
itself.” Science paradoxically represents the free self-surrender of the scientist to the
object of his thematic investigations, “so that it will reveal itself to {such objectivity},”
that is, from itself, and in itself, in its essence (WIM 83/Wm 104).

This free self-subjection to beings for the sake of their authentic revelation, which
would seem to constitute an adequate description of the scientific world-relation, is
nonetheless not simply the aim of science. From its originally free stance through its
surrender to the beings, science in its “position of service of research and teaching”
becomes or “develops itself” finally even “into the ground of the possibility of a proper if
indeed limited leadership in the whole of human existence,” that is, a right to the exercise
of a kind of government, understood in the most thoroughgoing sense, and not merely
over the existence of the individual scientist, or even over the entire community of researchers, teachers, and students, but indeed over the whole of existence, which also means over every kind of human existence, that is to say, over humanity as such. On the basis of this initial presentation the comprehensiveness of its rule is accordingly far clearer than the limits of its demesne. The discipline of science becomes the title to the exercise of a comprehensive, albeit ‘limited’—presumably because educational and ‘spiritual’ in character and consequently ‘indirect’—political rule, a claim which one imagines might have surprised his audience. Or must it have indeed? While the classics discounted the rule of science over humanity as a genuine possibility, the scientific project whose foundations were laid the earliest modern philosophers could indeed be—and was—characterized in such fashion. Later disciples of Bacon and Hobbes, the greatest of which included Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, inherited and furthered this project, their distaste (in some cases) for ‘English ideas’ notwithstanding. While this claim must have been surprising to, say, some idly curious and unsuspecting professor of geology, it cannot have struck the more philosophically-minded members of Heidegger’s audience as novel, and Heidegger’s assertion of such a claim reveals, in its way, the continuity of his thought with his earlier modern predecessors (WM 83/104-105).

We have therewith arrived at the authentic theme of Heidegger’s lecture, the free stance of the scientist and its service in research and theory, the (self-) interrogation of which will reveal the ground of science’s possible guardianship of the destiny of humanity. This attitude and service of scientific research “are admittedly [freilich] fully comprehended [begriffen] first then when we see and grasp what happens in the thus held
[gehaltenen] world-relationship.” The description of the world-relationship of science, however adequate it may be as far as it goes, does not nevertheless arrive at the essence of science, which itself can only be grasped from its end, the state of affairs which it produces, the effect of the achieved revelation of science. All theory of knowledge, all philosophy of science, however engaged with the problems which it uncovers and pursues, stops short if it does not follow through to the world which issues from the scientific project. The beginning of science, in the free stance that guides and maintains it, must be grasped from its results. The first and most massive result of the “‘pursuing’” of science is indeed the very world itself, in the sense of the whole of what is; that is, “nothing less than the breakthrough [Einbruch] of one being called the human being into the whole of being, so indeed that in and through this breakthrough the being [das Seiende] breaks open in that which and how it is.”140 Science is the forceful breakout of man into the whole, or, what amounts to the same thing, the breakout of the whole in man. If what is distinctive of man is that he somehow ‘has,’ and ‘operates’ within the understanding of, a world (in contrast, for example, to the worldless rock or plant, or the world-poor animal), then we can say that it is with science, with the original outbreak of science, that the physiological type homo sapiens ceases to be a tool-using bipedal ape and truly becomes ‘man’ or the ‘human being’ proper. Science in this way determines not merely the existence of researchers, teachers, and students of the university, but every human existence: science, simply put, is the origin of specifically human existence, that is

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140 Einbruch can mean the beginning of something in the sense of an “onset,” or the end of something in the sense of a “collapse,” but can also mean a “break-in” in the sense of a ‘break-and-enter’ or a “burglary.” In military terms, it means a “breakthrough” on a particular front.
to say, of existence as such. It is likewise only with science, only with the existence of
the human being—an existence which cannot be understood as a ‘now first being present-
at-hand’ but must be understood as a kind of outbreak of possibility—that the beings
themselves are: the “opening breakthrough [aufbrechende Einbruch]” of the human being
into world “in its manner, helps beings first of all to get themselves [verhilft... dem
Seienden allererst zu ihm selbst]” (WM 83/105).

2. Science and the Nothing

The breakout of the human in and with the happening of science shows the
appropriateness of the human being to the ‘practice’ of science, since, in a certain sense,
the essence of the human being ‘is’ science. “This triple – world-relationship, attitude,
and breakthrough - in its rooted [wurzelhaften] unity brings a blazing [befeurende]
simplicity and rigour of the Da-sein into scientific existence.” To be what we are, not
merely as scientists but indeed essentially as the beings we are, we must therefore
“expressly take into possession for ourselves the thus illuminated [durchleuchtete]
scientific Da-sein,” to work out and appropriate for ourselves the breakout of the human
being into the whole. Our authentic self-appropriation requires the exacting self-
interpretation of the serious scientist as scientist. If we follow Heidegger’s lead in this,
the very task of our essence, according to him, “then we must say: Whereto the world-
relationship goes is the being itself - and otherwise nothing. / Wherefrom every attitude
takes its lead is the being itself - and further nothing. / Wherewith the researching
confrontation in the breakthrough happens is the being itself - and over and above that, nothing.” Each of these sentences is of course ambiguously prone to inversion, to be read as meaning that science concerns itself not only with the beings, but “otherwise... further... over and above that” also with nothing. However much we “wish to know nothing of it,” since it is none of the beings in particular, no thing that science can thematize and with which it can concern itself, nonetheless science “calls upon the nothing for help,” when it seeks to interpret its own activity and the attitude that grounds it, “when science attempts to express its own essence,” or whenever “scientific man secures for himself his ownmost.” In this way, precisely what science casts away, indeed dismisses precisely as “an outrage and a phantasm,” it also requires: “What it rejects, it takes up [nimmt sie in Anspruch].” The question of scientific existence, in Heidegger’s interpretation, is the question of the nothing that science somehow both needs and refuses. If we wish to take free possession of ourselves as determined by science, if as scientists we are conscientious about grasping the tasks of science as the essential tasks of our existence, then we must pursue the question of the nothing (WM 83-84/105-106).

We understand the nothing in an everyday way as “the complete negation of the universality of beings.” How it stands with the nothing can only be grasped “through a basic experience of the nothing,” that is, an experience wherein the totality of beings as negated is somehow given to us, wherein we come before the whole and it offers itself to us in thoroughgoing nothingness. The “finite essence” of our understanding necessarily means that we can “never comprehend absolutely the whole of being in itself”; science itself is compelled to recognize that, for us, an absolute knowledge of the whole “is in
fundamentally [grundsätzliche] impossible.” On the other hand, we nonetheless “certainly,” and constantly, “do find ourselves indeed put in the midst of beings somehow revealed as a whole.” We constantly confront the whole of being even if we cannot comprehend its totality, and even if in our everyday lives it recedes dimly into the background of our understanding. The deep moods of our existence, such as “authentic boredom,” “joy,” and love, all somehow light up the whole according to their respective attunement in which we are “determined by it through and through.” This revelation of the whole in the “feeling [Befindlichkeit] of mood” is “the fundamental happening of our Da-sein,” of the disclosedness as such of ourselves in the clearing of the there. Nonetheless these named moods of boredom, joy, and love “conceal from us,” rather than reveal, “the nothing we seek.” What is required for inquiring into the nothing is an experience of “an attunement that according to its ownmost meaning of revelation manifests the nothing,” which “places us before the nothing,” the negation of the whole of being “in a correspondingly primordial way [entsprechend ursprünglich].” That attunement which brings us to the face of the nothing, familiar from the analyses of Being and Time, is precisely “the fundamental mood of anxiety” (WIM 86-88/Wm 109-111).

The analysis of this fundamental mood in “What Is Metaphysics?” for the most part recapitulates the analysis of anxiety in Being and Time. Angst makes manifest the nothing of the whole of beings “actually – even if rarely enough – only for {a} moment.” This fundamental mood is to be sharply distinguished from that “all too easily setting-in fearfulness” which grips us “always before this or that determinate being,” and about a particular concern. In his terror the fearful one focuses exclusively on escaping the
object of fear; therewith “in striving to save himself from it – from this determinate thing – he becomes uncertain in relation to everything else [auf Anderes], i.e. entirely [im Ganzen] ‘panic-stricken’ [kopflos].” Angst by contrast is not anxious in the face of this or that particular being, or concerning anything determinate. The wherefore and about what of Angst are inescapably indeterminable. In this “uncanny” attunement we come before the negation of the whole of being. “All things and we ourselves sink into an indifference.” In the grip of this uncanniness we feel the indifference of the whole as an oppressive burden, which deprives us of anything to cling to: “There remains no hold.” Angst “leaves us floating,” suspended, as it were, in the midst of the nothing of the clearing, that is, “makes the whole of being [das Seiende im Ganzen] slip from our grasp [zum Entgleiten bringt].” In this slipping away of the whole we therewith also “slip away from ourselves.” In anxiety we come before the nothing of every particular concern, of the particularity of our existence as such: “Only the pure Da-sein is still there, in the thorough unsettling [Durchschüttierung] of this hovering, wherein it can hold itself to nothing [darin es sich an nichts halten kann].” No speech, no “‘is’-saying” could be adequate to the experience of this nothing, however we might “seek to break the empty stillness by an indiscriminate talking.” If we authentically grasp the nothing of the whole unveiled by this fundamental mood, we are reduced to reticent silence. Only subsequently in the wake of this experience do we sometimes find the only words which could be at all adequate to its revelation: “In the clarity of the glimpse [In der Helle des Blickes], which fresh memory carries, we must say: wherefore and about which we dreaded [wir uns aengsteten] was ‘authentically’ – nothing. Indeed: the nothing itself –
as such – was there” (WIM 88-89/Wm 111-112).

If the nothing is to be “interrogated,” this must happen in terms of the revelation of the whole as it is given in “the fundamental attunement of anxiety.” This questioning therefore even “demands” that we cultivate the experience of the mood of fundamental Angst, that we exact Angst of ourselves, indeed, in other words, “that we comprehend [nachvollziehen] the transformation of the human being into its Da-sein, which every {instance of} anxiety lets happen in us.” In order to grasp the beings themselves with which science concerns itself, we must “arrest the nothing evident therein” to which science has recourse when it seeks to determine them. The task of taking express possession of scientific existence demands that we, as scientists, actively seek to transform ourselves into this pure Da-sein. This authentic grasp of the nothing equally “issues the demand, expressly to hold afar the characterizations of the nothing, which have not arisen [erwachsen] in the claims of the same.” The task of our essence calls upon us to protect the experience of the nothing from the vulgar distortions that impose themselves upon its proper rights over our existence (WIM 89/Wm 112-113).

The clarification of the nothing and therewith of science requires the cultivation and interpretation of an experience that cannot be grasped scientifically. The nothing that is revealed by Angst is no particular “being,” is thus no possible “object,” and therefore eludes any attempt to grasp it in those terms. The nothing of Angst is rather in how we encounter the world, and so is “at one with” the whole of being. In the grip of Angst we experience “no annihilation of the whole of beings in itself [keine Vernichtung des ganzen Seienden an sich]” but rather “a slipping away of the whole [einem entgleitenden
im Ganzen],” such that “the whole of being becomes unnecessary [hinfaellig].” In the “enchanted calm” of Angst, “lies a giving way back from...” the nothing of the whole. The “nihilation” of the nothing repels beings into receding, such that it sets beings as such into full relief “first of all.” In Angst the human Dasein floats in “the clear night of the nothing” wherein it stands before “the originary openness of beings as such.”\textsuperscript{141}

Stripped to the purity of its essence in Angst, the Da-sein becomes and confronts “the manifestness of beings in general.” The “originary manifestness of the nothing” is the ground of the possible “transcendence” of the “the Dasein of the human being,” of its being able to “go toward and go into beings,” of any human comportment towards beings at all. “Da-sein means: held-out-ed-ness [Hineingehaltenheit] into the nothing.” The nothing is the very ground of the “freedom” of the Dasein and its authentic “selfhood”; indeed, holding itself in the face of the nothing is identical with the authentic freedom and genuine selfhood of the Dasein (WIM 89-91/Wm 112-115).

The “manifestness of the nothing” is typically obscured through our absorption in the everyday urgencies of our common business, into which we ordinarily flee in the attempt to escape the uncanny revelation of Angst, such that “the nothing is first of all and mostly blocked to us in its originality.” Nonetheless in our lived experience

\textsuperscript{141} Macquarrie and Robinson in their translation of Being and Time render ursprünglich as ‘primordial’; Farrell Krell and William S. Lewis, in their translations of “What Is Metaphysics?” and “The Self-assertion of the German University,” respectively, each employ derivatives of ‘origin’ mirroring Heidegger’s use of Ursprung and its derivatives. In neither case have I felt compelled to alter their usages. The English word ‘original’ has connotations of ‘novelty’ inappropriate to Heidegger’s use of ursprünglich, and I have felt that Macquarrie and Robinson’s choice of ‘primordial,’ especially in the context of Being and Time, to be superior. In the latter two lectures, by contrast, the relation of ‘original’ and like words to a historical primordial ‘origin,’ however it might be understood, is rather clearer and therefore less problematic. In any case, what is important for my purposes here is to note that these different translations refer to the same root German word.
“possibilities of nihilative comportment,” attitudes towards beings which give voice to the nothing of the whole—“the harshness of counter-acting and the sharpness of loathing,” “the pain of failure and the ruthlessness of prohibition,” and “the bitterness of doing without,” “forces in which the Dasein bears its thrownness, even if not mastering {it}”—persistently have their say. This “saturation of the Dasein by nihilative comportment,” Heidegger asserts, only “testifies” to the continually lingering “though admittedly [freilich] obscured manifestness” or ‘presence’ “of the nothing” in the background of our awareness and the project of our understanding, “which only anxiety originarily reveals.” In this sense we might say that, according to Heidegger, Angst is the fundamental, and, as it were, the ‘first’ attunement of our experience, the primordial human mood: “Therein lies however: this originary anxiety in the Dasein is mostly repressed. Anxiety is there. It only sleeps.” This commonly suppressed or sleeping Angst is “constantly at the ready [staendig auf dem Sprunge]” and can break out in us “at any moment [jeden Augenblick],” even in the course of the greatest “triviality” of our existences. Nonetheless we cannot summon the anxious experience of the nothing “through {our} own decision and will.” The breakout of Angst is hardly subject to the compulsion of our choice and striving. “So unfathomably [abgruendig] does finitification [Verendlichung] dig in the Dasein, that the ownmost and deepest finitude denies our freedom.” We can only at best cultivate the conditions, and ready ourselves, for the breakout of the nothing in us, that is, prepare ourselves for the choice of the fundamental freedom of our authentic selves (WIM 91-93/Wm 115-118).

This question of the nothing which encompasses the whole of metaphysics—the
“asking out about beings in order to receive them back as such and in the whole for comprehending” (WIM 93/Wm 118-119) which are only at all unveiled in general, and “according to their ownmost possibility... come to themselves” only in the anxious revelation of the whole “in the nothing of the Dasein”—is also the question of our existence “as essentially determined by science.” According to its self-interpretation “the scientific Dasein” is directed “toward the being itself” and nothing besides. Any comportment towards beings as such is possible however only on the ground of the primordial revelation of the nothing. Thus it obviously follows that, “Only because the nothing is manifest, can science make the being itself into the object of investigation.” Consequently, however much, as scientists, we might wish “to abandon the nothing with a superior gesture,” our “scientific existence is only possible, if beforehand it holds itself out into the nothing.” Science “understands itself first then in that which it is,” that is to say, we authentically understand the essential task of our existence, “the continually newly [immer neu zu] accomplished disclosure of the whole expanse of truth of nature and history,” only “if it does not abandon the nothing,” only when we anxiously confront the nothing in its original manifestness (WIM 95/Wm 120-121).

The primordial manifestness of the nothing in the fundamental mood of Angst is indeed the genuine origin of science itself, its “ground” in the very being or essence of the human Dasein itself.142 Only as they appear in the thorough uncanniness of Angst do

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142 Heidegger’s suggestion stands in marked contrast to the teaching of Hobbes on this score. Cf. Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, p. 26: “Hobbes identifies conscience with the fear of death; only through the knowledge of mortal danger, knowledge which is at the same time a retreat from death, can man be radically liberated from natural vanity, from the natural absorption in the world of his imagination. If this is the case, the fear of death, the fear of violent death, is the necessary condition not only of society but of science.” The thought of unforeseen mortal danger breaks our absorption with the
the beings first show themselves as worthy of inquiry in the manner of science. In the disclosedness of fundamental *Angst* we first confront the “total strangeness” of the whole of being. This “strangeness of the being” according to Heidegger is itself the source of that wonder which leads us to the question of the “‘why’” of beings, and therewith to the doorstep of science. “Only because the why as such is possible, can we in a determinate manner ask after grounds and ground {beings}.” This inquiry into possible grounds is in turn the basis of the title of science to the government of the whole of human existence: “Only because we can question and ground is the fate of our existence given into the hand of the researcher.” Science can only authentically live up to “its essential task,” “if” it “exists from metaphysics,” if in the manifestness of the nothing it anxiously confronts the being of beings. This authentic beginning of science is also the primordial origin of the human being, not of the animal being which becomes ‘man,’ but of human *existence* as such, of the Dasein of ‘man’ simply: “Going out over beings happens in the essence of the Dasein. This going out is however metaphysics itself. Therein lies: metaphysics belongs to the ‘nature of the human being.’ It is neither a subject of school-philosophy nor a field of arbitrary notions. Metaphysics is the fundamental happening in the Dasein. It is the Dasein itself.” If human existence is and begins with the happening of metaphysics, with the breakthrough of the nothing in ‘man,’ and scientific existence becomes what it is only through freely holding itself out into this nothing of fundamental *Angst* that we commonly suppress and evade, then the possibility opens up for science—a

world as our vanity imagines it. For Heidegger, by contrast, the pure understanding of death’s indeterminate and therefore unforeseeable possibility breaks our tranquilized absorption in the world of our everyday concern, and sets us before the mystery of being.
science that freely lives up to the authentic requirements of the tasks it sets for itself—to become once again the vanguard of humanity. The community of researchers, teachers, and students in the university, grounded in the discipline of science, transforms itself (at least in principle) through the cultivation of the readiness for Angst into the site of universal spiritual legislation and command over the whole of mankind.\textsuperscript{143} The limit of this comprehensive leadership of science so far appears only to be the refusal of the manifestness of the nothing to yield to our decision and will (WIM 95-96/Wm 121-122).

We know nonetheless through observation and experience that “the rootedness of the sciences in their essential ground has died away.” The sciences have fallen away from their primordial metaphysical origin into manifold dispersion and triviality, sustained only externally and superficially through the “technical organization” of the bureaucratic administration of the university (WIM 82-83/Wm 104). The contemporary sciences are scarcely able to govern themselves, let alone the whole of planetary humanity. What follows, but remains only implicitly declared in Heidegger’s lecture, is a project for the recovery both of the authentic origin and power of science, “the rootedness

\textsuperscript{143} Just as Heidegger’s ‘nationalism’ in \textit{Being and Time} should not deceive us into thinking that his political teaching is a ‘populism,’ so his attribution of anxiety, the nothing that it reveals, and the science that it makes possible to the essence of the humanity, should not lead us to suppose that the leadership which science is to exercise regarding the destiny of humanity is ‘representative’ or ‘democratic.’ That metaphysics belongs inheres in our Dasein does not imply that it is rightfully the common possession of everyone. While the researchers certainly pursue science in some sense for the benefit of others, they do not expend themselves simply for the sake of the production of an arsenal of knowledge to be given over to universal humanity for its disposal. Science is rather the preserve of the most courageous human beings, who will hold themselves out into the nothing, who will expose, and expose themselves to, the world as it reveals itself to us in the grip of anxiety. The leadership proper to the community of scientists is the dissolution of elemental public opinion to the furthest extent possible, and revelation the authentic truth of nature and history, that is to say, the shaping of human understanding. Their rule is the spiritual aristocracy of human existence and the administration of the tasks of its destiny.
of the sciences in their essential ground,” and therewith also of, ‘so to speak,’ its ‘rightful
title,’ the force of its claim to the spiritual leadership of the destiny of humanity. This
authentic origin can be regained through the comprehensive fulfillment of “the
transformation of the human being into its Da-sein” that occurs in fundamental Angst
(WIM 89/Wm 113). In order to come into its own, scientific existence must
conscientiously hold itself out into the “originary openness of beings,” into the primordial
manifestness of the nothing (WIM 90/Wm 114). It must regain its primoridially free
attitude toward beings, that is, its authentic freedom, by recovering the resolve to charge
forward into death. In order to recover his essential calling for himself, in order to work
out and appropriate the authentic meaning of his existence, the scientist, assuming that he
is serious about science, must become, must endeavour as far as possible to transform
himself into the “lieutenant [Platzhalter] of the nothing” (WIM 93/Wm 118).

Heidegger’s project for the university is the training of an elite conscientious
spiritual corps for the reconquest of our original freedom and the repetition of the battle
of giants concerning being. Science finds its primordial source in authentic existence. It
must therefore become again the preserve of “the basically daring Dasein,” of a new
heroic officer class of scientific researchers which will “expend itself, in order thus to
keep [bewahren] the ultimate [letzte] greatness of the Dasein,” that is, of the fundamental
happening of its ecstatic transcendence of beings, which means, finally, the preservation
and guardianship of the possibility of its authentic freedom (WIM 93/Wm 118). This
project of the possible recovery of both the authenticity of science and its rightful title to
the comprehensive administration of the destiny of humanity is Heidegger’s expressly
self-appointed historical task in the inaugural address of his rectorship at Freiburg, to
which he gave the title, “The Self-assertion of the German University,” and which, on the
basis of its content, forms the spiritual sequel to “What Is Metaphysics?”.

C. The Project of Freedom in the Rectorate Address

1. The Self-Administration of Science

In the first sentence of his inaugural address as rector before the assembled
teachers and students of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger declares that, “The
takeover of the rectorate is the obligation for the spiritual leadership of this university.”
The rector is charged with the care and development of the university’s spiritual capacity
for carrying out the tasks of science. The genuine duty and calling of the rector is
therefore not merely to oversee the bureaucratic apparatus of the university, not mere
administration in an anemically technical sense, but to set the tasks of the communal
scientific existence of the university, and to guide it in carrying them out; that is, the
vocation of the rector is the spiritual administration, in the comprehensive sense of the
thorough direction of the university in its essential activities. Building on the project for
the university that Heidegger outlines in his discussion of Graf Yorck’s letters to Dilthey,
and in “What is Metaphysics?” we might say that as rector Heidegger presumes to give the
officer corps of the university that he intends to create its marching orders (SA 9).

The rector fulfills the spiritual obligation of his post only when he leads the
university to stand up to the genuine demands and requirements of science. This is
possible only if the community of teachers and students understands what it means to live
up to the demands of the serious pursuit of science, and allows its existence to be

determined essentially, that is, in its very grounds, by those very demands. “The

following [Gefolgschaft] of teachers and students awakens and strengthens only from the

ture and common deep rooting in the essence of the German university.” As scientists we

must both grasp the task of our existence and let ourselves be essentially shaped by it.

How then can the rector bring about this education and shaping discipline of the rooted

essence of the university? “This essence, however, comes first to clarity, rank, and

power, when right at the front and at all times, the leaders themselves are {the} led - led

by the inexorability of that spiritual mission which forces the fate of the German Volk

into the stamp of its history.” The following only awakens and strengthens through

rootedness in the essence when the “leaders”144 heed the call of their ownmost essential

task, and shoulder the burden of the thrownness of their existence, to reconquer the

authentic history of their fate, to force themselves—and not only themselves—into the

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144 Heidegger does not say which leaders, presumably the rectors and perhaps, one supposes, other figures

and luminaries of the universities themselves, but while the matter immediately at hand is the university

itself and not the political organization of the state as a whole, and while Hermann Heidegger correctly,

but nonetheless disingenuously, notes in his preface to the address that, “‘Der Fuehrer,’ der

‘Reichskanzler,’ or ‘Hitler’ were not named,” despite all of that it is almost impossible not to think of

“the leaders” as somehow set off against the leader. Furthermore the matter of the spiritual leadership

of the university almost immediately leads beyond the confines of the university to the historical fate of

the Volk. There are strictly speaking three possibilities of political meaning here: (1), Heidegger’s use

of “die Fuehrer” could imply a denial of the Fuehrerschaft of the Fuehrer; or (2), his use of “die

Fuehrer” could constitute an ambiguous assertion of co-leadership on behalf of the leaders of the

German academy, which would further divide itself into possibility (2a), that the primary spiritual

leadership and knowledge of the German spiritual mission rests with the leaders of the university, in

which the state leader(s) might nevertheless somehow participate, but for which politics in the ordinary

sense might still be secondary and even superfluous; and possibility (2b), that the knowledge of the

spiritual mission of the Volk is first of all connected with the seizure of the state by the unnamed

Fuehrer, and the National Socialist revolution is therefore somehow the occasion, or if you will, ‘the

condition of the possibility,’ for the renewed possibility of the spiritual leadership of the university, for

the essence of the university to be unveiled in its proper clarity, rank, and power. From the content of

the address, to say nothing of the circumstances of its delivery, this last possibility was almost certainly

Heidegger’s intention.
historical shape of the *Volk*. The takeover of the rectorate authentically turns out to mean the takeover of the responsibility for the entire historical destiny of the nation (SA 9).

Whether or not the teachers and students of the university “know about this spiritual mission,” for the scientific existence of “the body of teachers [Lehrerschaft] and the student body [Schuelerschaft]” the question is nevertheless about their essential rootedness in the university. This essence only has “genuine stamping force for our Dasein” when we resolve ourselves thoroughly for it, “only then, when we want it from the ground up.” Heidegger adds, rhetorically, “Who would like to doubt about it?” (SA 9). As the teachers and students of the university, it *behooves* us to want this essence, to let our will, to let our whole selves be thoroughly determined in terms of this essence, whatever it might turn out to be. Otherwise, what are we doing here, if science is not serious for us, if we do not go about its project in earnest? We are not *wholly* in earnest about the scientific project if we resolve ourselves for it in terms of some criterion external to the matter itself. On the other hand, ought we to resolve ourselves for science in the face of every external standard of judgement, if it should emerge that science stands in conflict with those standards? Granted that we are the teachers and students of the university, then surely we should resolve ourselves for science, but then one could perhaps quite legitimately ask whether we should be in the university in the first place. Ought we to be scientists at all? Heidegger repeats his answer from “What Is Metaphysics?” over the course of the present address: the origin of the human being is coeval with origin of science; the origin of science in a certain sense therefore *is* the ‘beginning’ of ‘man.’ We are primordially science in such a way that it determines the
very existence of our human Dasein. Science is not merely part of the ‘nature’ of the human, but rather holds ‘human nature’ within itself, as our “fundamental occurrence” or the “beginning of our spiritual-historical Dasein” (SA 11). Whoever forswears science in the name of some alternative human purpose therefore genuinely does not understand what he wants, because it is science, according to Heidegger, that originally sustains all of the properly or fully human alternatives.

Only now that we are prepared (even if only provisionally) to resolve ourselves for the university thoroughly, does Heidegger present to us the content of its essence. The essence of the university that he now sets before us surprisingly (or perhaps this should no longer surprise us in Heidegger’s case, given the central importance of his understanding of freedom in Being and Time and “What Is Metaphysics?”) does not at first glance have anything obviously or directly to do with ‘science.’ Rather, according to the everyday understanding, “one sees the predominant [vorwaltenden] essence-character of the university in its ‘self-administration.’” Heidegger takes his orientation to the essence of the university from a common or ‘vulgar’ opinion which, counter to what one might ordinarily expect, does not emphasize its concern with ‘knowledge,’ but rather yields a peculiarly political determination of its essence, in its freedom or independence from political and religious interference in its organized pursuit of science. Heidegger affirms that its self-administration “should remain preserved,” and therewith also reassures those in his audience inclined to the average public interpretedness of this ‘one,’ and who accordingly must have been disturbed by the National Socialist takeover and the tangible presence of the trappings of the new regime on the occasion of
Heidegger’s inaugural address as university rector. In its self-assertion the German university declares its independence. Nonetheless Heidegger does not rest there, but presses the matter onward, for the mere or unreflective assertion of this independence simply won’t do: “Only - have we also wholly thought it over, what this claim to self-administration demands from us?” The claim of this essential self-administrative character is not mere licence but exacts its own claims in turn upon the teachers and students of the university. “The Self-assertion of the German University” thus presents itself as a serious reflection, or the result of serious reflection, upon the demands of self-administration. Heidegger’s first act of spiritual leadership is to set out for the teachers and students of the university the exactitudes of genuine scientific self-reliance (SA 9).

The demands of self-administration, if indeed they represent its authentic demands, can of course arise only from the genuine content of its concept. How then, it must be asked, does the scientific independence of the university constitute itself? What, then, does self-administration really mean for us? Heidegger answers: “Self-administration actually [doch] means: to set ourselves the task and to determine alone the way and manner [Weg und Weise] of its realization, in order to be solely [selbst] therein what we should be” (SA 9). Genuine self-administration requires that we freely project the for-the-sake-of-which, and, out of the essential disclosedness of that understanding, set the means and the path towards this our projected possibility. In the project of this possibility at such, we thereby go about our being, we do not merely engage in an activity or occupation but determine ourselves in the how of our being, whose essence is existence. Genuine self-administration is essential or authentic self-determination. We
alone set for ourselves the law of our existence, and obey only this self-given law. By way of anticipation we note that Heidegger will proclaim only a few pages later in the address that, “Alone to give oneself the law [Gesetz] is {the} highest freedom” (SA 15).145 The essential character of science and the university is centered in this self-legislation of human freedom. Heidegger’s Rektoratsrede thus works itself out, not only as a serious reflection upon the genuine demands of self-administration, but is itself also his first act of spiritual legislation as rector of the university.

Setting ourselves the law of our existence, we know what we must become, and who we need to be, in order to carry out our own self-given task. If we have resolved ourselves for the self-administration of the university, we must know who we are; we must have achieved the ‘identity’ or authentic constancy of the selfhood of our highest freedom. In answer to this requirement and implication of self-administration Heidegger

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145 Gesetz means law in the sense of man-made or positive law, as opposed to Recht, law that derives from right or justice (Recht) and not simply from human action and will. While any Recht (in the sense of law) must be a Gesetz, not all Gesetze are also Rechte. Right may be earned and justice may be submitted to, but neither can be simply promulgated. Any self-given law must, by definition, be a Gesetz, and so Heidegger’s sentence in this respect is technically correct. The formulation here of the relation of freedom to law is furthermore consistent with Heidegger’s description of the authentic comportment towards the past in Being and Time. Administering its heritage for itself, the resolute Dasein hands itself over to the serious tasks that it inherits from its past, and in so doing, it gives itself the law of its existence. Though hardly surprising, it is nonetheless noteworthy that Heidegger does not say that highest freedom consists in submitting oneself to the demands of justice, or conducting ourselves according to natural right. It is therefore tempting to interpret Heidegger’s proclamation as an assertion of the priority of Gesetz over Recht, of the priority of positive ‘merely human’ law over the ‘eternal’ demands of justice or right (and this is consistent with Heidegger’s interpretation of the conscience). Indeed the deepest demands of humanity do not issue in Recht but rather in Gesetz: in the sentence just prior to the one I have quoted above, Heidegger suggests that, “... the German student body through the new student law [Studentenrecht] places itself under the law [Gesetz] of its essence.”

This suggestion that real freedom consists in self-legislation is not unique to Heidegger, but a common theme of modern political thought. Heidegger’s innovation consists in grounding genuine self-legislation in the resolve to repeat the authentic possibilities of the concealed in our heritage. While the consistency of Heidegger’s formulation with the earlier moderns reveals his work as a particular development of their thought, this fact should neither lead us to assume that Heidegger’s teaching is conformable to a liberal or socialist political order, nor, conversely, to implicate earlier
asks rhetorically, “But do we know then, who we ourselves are, this corporation [Koerperschaft] of teachers and students of the highest school of the German Volk?” We do not yet know who we are; the teachers and students of the German university have not yet arrived at the authentic self-knowledge which genuine self-administration demands. The achievement of this self-knowledge requires of us “the most constant and harshest self-reflection [Selbstbesinnung].” The question of the university likewise places us, its teachers and students, also in question. For the sake of the self-administration of the highest school of the Volk, Heidegger according to his own intention leads the teachers and students to the most exacting reflection upon their own historical existence. In his spiritual leadership of the university, Heidegger tries to make himself the conscience of its teachers and students, to make them transparent to themselves in their care (SA 9).

What we would ordinarily take to be a sufficient understanding of the university and ourselves as its teachers and students, the “knowledge” of its “contemporary condition,” or perhaps “even the acquaintance with its earlier history” is nonetheless in itself not a “sufficient knowing of its essence”; even Heidegger’s own earlier observations about the sciences having lost their essential rootedness are, taken in themselves, inadequate by this standard. This knowledge must remain inadequate so long as it does not strike at us ourselves, so long as we do not let it make a claim upon our being and will: that is, “unless we previously in clarity and hardness bind this essence for the future, in such self-restriction”—the binding of the essence of the university as our essence, as its teachers and students—“wollen [wollen] it, and that we in such wanting

modern thinkers in National Socialist politics.
[Wollen] assert ourselves.” Knowledge of the historical development of the university remains inadequate so long as we fail to understand its history together with its contemporary condition as a demand for spiritual decision. The sufficient knowing of the essence of the university is the positive takeover of its historical essence, which is thereby the self-determination of the teachers and students in terms of that over-coming essence, and therefore finally a hard-headed forward assertion of the university, and of ourselves as determined by its essence, which we have nonetheless chosen to inherit for ourselves. The authentic self-administration of the university is the appropriation and repetition of its historical essence. The sufficient self-understanding of the corporation of teachers and students does not merely depend upon the correct comprehension of the history and essence of the university, but rather upon the strength of their will. The authentic self-knowledge which genuine freedom demands depends decisively upon the project of resolve: “Self-administration lasts only on the ground of self-reflection. Self-reflection however happens only in the force of the self-assertion of the German university.” The spiritual leadership that seeks to prepare the teachers and students of the university for the authentic demands of self-administration must therefore necessarily endeavour to incite them to the most unwavering and nakedly resolute self-assertion. This endeavour is accordingly the rhetorical task of Heidegger’s address. The obligation to the spiritual administration of the highest school of the Volk is thus inescapably the obligation to the self-assertion of the German university as the singular essential task of its authentic freedom. The sole question that remains for Heidegger’s audience is therefore one of practice, “Will we carry it out, and how?” (SA 9-10).
We have therewith arrived at the authentic heart of Heidegger’s Rectorate Address, and the statement of his program for the university in the fullness of his ambitions for his spiritual leadership. As the hard and clear-sighted future binding of its essence, this self-assertion of the university accordingly happens, as “the originary [urspruengliche] common will to its essence.” Heidegger now offers a second characterization of the essence of the university which nonetheless remains a highly political description of its task or purpose, and indeed of the task or purpose of science itself: “The German university counts [gilt] for us as the high school, which from science and through science takes the leaders and guardians of the fate of the German Volk into education and discipline.” Whereas “one sees” the self-administration of the university as its predominant character, whether or not one is engaged in the scientific activities of the university, and perhaps especially so when one stands outside them, this second characterization is a description of its value ‘for us,’ ‘we’ who are its teachers and students following Heidegger’s spiritual leadership. This second characterization does not necessarily stand in contradiction with its claim to self-administration or independence, but nonetheless goes well beyond it, and amounts to the assertion of a claim to the exercise of spiritual leadership or rule not merely over the corporation of the university but indeed, albeit indirectly, over the whole of the German nation. It is the assertion of a claim to the pedagogical task for the creation or cultivation of a new heroic officer class to conscientiously fight for, re-conquer, and guard the authentic history of the Volk. We must further ask whether this claim represents something over and above, and which therefore exceeds the defence of the self-administration of the university,
something external to, and therefore other from, its essential freedom, or whether this
second claim is only a further working out and appropriation of, and therefore continuous
with, Heidegger’s understanding of that freedom (SA 10).

This highly political (in the comprehensive sense of the word) understanding of
the university furnishes an equally comprehensively political notion of science itself.
While Heidegger affirms that “{t}he will to the essence of the German university is the
will to science,” he characterizes this will to science “as will to the historical spiritual
mission of the German Volk as an in its state self-knowing Volk.” Science itself is “that
spiritual mission” which gives the German Volk its historical gestalt. It is a task inherited
from the tradition of that Volk itself. It is not therefore the genuine intellectual preserve
of a few great minds irrespective of national origins (‘the republic of letters’), nor is it
ultimately in tension with the political community of the German nation, but an inherited
collective spiritual mission which serves the self-knowledge of that community as its
ownmost or deepest task. The teachers and students of the university who form
Heidegger’s audience are themselves not merely scientists, but the scientific heirs of the
spiritual mission of German Volk. As concerns their self-assertion, which is inescapably
the self-assertion of the German university, “Science and German fate must especially
[zumal] come to power in the willing of essence [im Wesenswillen].” This willing of
essence, which is the ground of their self-administration as the scientists of the Voll,
therefore means and requires that they both “first [eimmal] expose science to its innermost
necessity,” and “then [zum anderent] stand firm towards the German fate in its uttermost
emergency.” The end of this line, which is also the end of the sixth paragraph of
Heidegger’s speech, is a break marked by a dash, the only such concluding break in the whole of the text of the address. It signals that we have reached the conclusion of the authentic demands of genuine self-administration. The rest of Heidegger’s *Rektoratsrede* is only the elaboration, the further working out and appropriation, of the themes of science and fate that form the way to the self-assertion of the German university so concisely set out in that sixth paragraph (SA 10).

2. The Necessity of Science

Of these two themes Heidegger begins with science and the question of its essential or innermost necessity. It is not enough, according to Heidegger, to “dispute the independence [Eigenstaendigkeit] and presuppositionlessness of an all too contemporary science.” Such a critique, despite having “just about become the appearance of a true trouble about the essence of science,” is insufficient because it is “merely negative,” and, in its “scarcely looking back over the last decades.” It neither knows anything about science as an historical spiritual mission, nor—what is finally the same thing for Heidegger—confronts science as the essential happening of our existence. The contemporary criticism of contemporary science is no longer gripped by science, having lost its rootedness in its essential ground. The true trouble about the essence of science is rather the confrontation with the question of its genuine persistence: “If we want to grasp the essence of science, then we must first go under the eyes of the question of decision: should science still be for us, or should we let it drive off towards a quick end?” The
innermost necessity of science is the necessity of science for us. Science is not something which subsists as a permanent fact: “That science should be at all, is never unconditionally necessary.” (Furthermore, if science is the essential occurrence of our humanity, then it allows follows that human beings should at all, in their specific Dasein, is also never unconditionally necessary.) As a particular, free human striving, it only endures through its continual pursuit, and as the teachers and students of the university, it is uniquely up to us for science either to persist or drive off to its end. We have therefore only to ask ourselves if we want science to endure into the future, and whether we want to stand up to our authentic responsibility for its continued existence. As the teachers and students of the university, this is simply the task of our existence. The burden is ours alone. No one else can or will do it for us (SA 10).

Assuming we decide ourselves for science, that “it should be for us and through us,” then the question for us, the issue of our own existence, becomes, “under what condition can it then truly exist [bestehen]?” Science exists in truth only when we thoroughly resolve ourselves to take over the whole of our existence, as it were, from the ground up, “when we again place ourselves under [wir... uns... unter... stellen] the power of the beginning of our spiritual-historical Dasein.” Science requires that we once again repeat our historical origin. The condition for true science is the condition for our spiritual existence, the origin of our Dasein that also is its origin, “the breakout [Aufbruch] of Greek philosophy.” The origin of the spiritual-historical existence of the teachers and students of the German Volk is no parochial, merely German event, but rather a European and even world-historical event which happened or emerged entirely
outside the popular confines of the German nation. The appearance, both almost of the
human as such, and of science, are coeval with this breakout, wherein, on the one hand,
“Western man stands up out of one nationality by force of its language for the first time
against the whole of being,”\textsuperscript{146} and from which, on the other, in its violent interpretive
interrogation of the whole, science “breathes the force of its essence, assuming,”
Heidegger adds, “that it remains at all still equal to this beginning.” The original
breakout of Greek philosophy stands therefore as a challenge to all of us, but especially to
those who would truly or authentically be the teachers and students of the university. The
project of science is fundamentally not a progress, but rather a continual interpretive
return, a creative confrontational appropriation and an authentic inheritance of its origin,
which is the breakout of human Dasein in the face of the whole (SA 11).

If we take it upon ourselves to stand up to the demands of authentic science, the
challenge of our historical spiritual origin, which is also the ground of our fate, then we
must recover this origin, that is, understand and appropriate it for ourselves in order to

\begin{footnote}{\textsuperscript{146} In \textit{Being and Time} Heidegger asserts that the conscience calls us to communication and battle for our heritage. We are essentially vehicles for the repetition of the authentic possibilities of the past. True freedom is the freedom for the tasks of our fate, the limits of which are defined by the destiny of the \textit{Volk}. The pursuit of the question concerning the meaning of being is, according to Heidegger, only the most spiritual expression of the fight for our history. The \textit{Volk} horizons even the practice of philosophy. In “What is Metaphysics?” by contrast Heidegger presents philosophy as capable of exercising a comprehensive if indirect guidance not merely over the existence of a particular nation, but indeed over the whole of humanity. In “The Self-Assertion of the German University” Heidegger shows that these earlier presentations each reveal only a part of his view of the relation between philosophy and ethnic community. The original Greek beginning was and could be both an essentially Greek and a generally Western event. Philosophy first happens only by virtue of the spiritual power of the Greek language to uncover the nature of the whole. It is therefore a specifically or especially a Greek happening. The spiritual force of that event, however, meant that, despite distortions and dilutions, what the ancients accomplished laid the tracks of Western thought for the next two millennia, even across the advent of the Christianity and modern technology. Heidegger understands the new beginning of science similarly as both a specifically German and a world-historical event. Only the Germans, in Heidegger’s estimation, are up to the risk of exposing themselves to the danger of the whole. Through the creative recovery of the Greek beginning, however, the university claims the right}{\textsuperscript{146}}
repeat it into the future. Accordingly Heidegger seeks “to win back two distinguished [auszeichende] properties of the original [ursprünglichen] Greek essence of science for our Dasein.” To this purpose he begins with a myth, “an old account... that the first philosopher had been Prometheus,” (the same “prudent man” of Hobbes) who stole fire as a gift for humanity against the will of the gods, and was reportedly given over to the continual torture of “the care of future time” for his defiance.  

For this essence of science Heidegger first turns not to a Plato or an Aristotle, but to the poet Aischylos, who put into the mouth of Prometheus “a saying, which speaks out the essence of knowing,” a saying which Heidegger renders as: “‘Knowing however is far less forceful than necessity.’”  

In uncovering and confronting the natural necessities of the world, the techne of the prudent, or the authentic can-be of the conscientious, is nonetheless never able to overcome them. Knowledge in the full sense is conscious of its powerlessness in the face of the inalterability of the harshest necessities of existence (SA 11).

In Heidegger’s radical and violent reading, this saying even “wants to say” that “every knowing about the things remains previously delivered over to the superior power of fate and fails before it.” According to the mythic account Heidegger presents, and the extreme interpretation he gives it, which transforms necessity (presumably the necessity of nature) into fate, the original breakout of science or knowing is not an experience of rational wonder at the remarkable, forceful order of what is, but an experience of

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147 L 169/52.
148 There is manifestly a rather great difference between what we might ‘commonly’ understand this saying to mean, and Heidegger’s violent interpretation of what it ‘wants’ to say, which even transforms its meaning into the opposite of what it ‘ordinarily’ says in our ‘inauthentic’ understanding. This violence is also characteristic of Heidegger’s use of Clausewitz and Plato in his Rectorate Address.
powerlessness in the face of the whole, which is indeed even a quasi-religious experience. In the primordial “care of future time” of that anxiety which is the beginning of science, prior to the calculative (inauthentic) reckoning that its “perpetuall feare... must needs have for object something,”\textsuperscript{149} the necessity of nature is originally experienced as something like fate. Science originally and essentially confronts an overwhelming and ultimately mysterious force, both far more powerful and far less intelligible than any mere ‘necessity’ would admit. Indeed the concern with natural necessities, as the properties and functions of the interactions of beings, conceived as merely present things, from this perspective even represents a falling away from that fundamental dispensation in and from which scientific existence, indeed existence as such, originally breaks out. The innermost necessity of science carries within its own essence a connection with fate, a standing firm before fate, because it is itself the necessity of a confrontation with fate, a fight that the fateful scientific Dasein must know that it must finally lose. If we are to recover the essence of science for our own existence, then we must recover and cultivate this fundamental experience of the world: “Exactly therefore knowing must develop its highest defiance, for which first the whole power of the hiddenness offering opens up, in order actually to fail. Thus being opens itself in its unfathomable inalterability and lends to knowing its truth.” It is, paradoxically, in the facing up to our final failure, in letting ourselves, so to speak, be swept under by the tides of fate that science authentically endures. If we are serious about the existence of science, we must then once again rise up against and engage the whole of what is under the dark skies of the clearing, in the

\textsuperscript{149} L 169-170/52.
face of our certain doom, for the sake of the heroic sacrifice that science authentically
requires (SA 11).

3. The Purpose of Science

Heidegger’s reading of the “saying of the creative impotence of knowing,” this
demand which genuine science makes upon us, runs expressly counter to the ordinary
interpretation of theory, whose origin one similarly attributes to the classical Greek
philosophers, “among whom,” Heidegger observes, “one would like all too cheaply to
find the model for a pure putting itself forward and therewith self-forgetting knowing.”

Heidegger’s interpretation of the original essence of science thus drives him to a
confrontation with this common understanding of the demands and ends of theoria. The
common interpretation of theoria is “the pure examination which remains obliged only to
the matter [der Sache] in its fullness and demand.” One even imagines that the
“examining posture” is an end in itself and for support for this notion one even makes
“appeal to the Greeks.” While Heidegger does not dispute the obligation of knowing to
its matter, he flatly denies the justice of the appeal to the Greek beginning for the idea
that theory is or even should be pursued “for the sake of itself.” This common account of
theory takes no account of the theorist himself. This understanding of science is
incapable of grounding itself. Science is a free pursuit of the human Dasein, whose
existence is not in the first case an expressly scientific one, that is, an existence that is
determined by science as its for-the-sake-of-which. Any account of scientific existence
must therefore take account of the grounds or desires of the human being that lead it to the pursuit of science, the first property of science which we must recover and appropriate for ourselves. Heidegger draws a ground for the pursuit of science in accordance with his chosen example of the myth of Prometheus, as disclosing the beginning of philosophy and therewith also of science: “For first of all ‘theory’ happens not for the sake of itself, but uniquely in the passion to remain close to the beings as such and under their torment.” Science authentically endures only in the repetition of its original breakout, which is precisely this free, passionate, anxious self-exposure to the torture of the whole of being. The model for scientific existence that Heidegger holds out for our emulation is a Prometheus, and not a Prometheus who suffers unwillingly at the hands of the gods as a punishment for his crimes (the theft of fire and the gift of its light to the human beings), but rather a Prometheus who, in subjecting himself to the care of future time in the midst of the whole of being, willfully inflicts his agonies upon himself. Theoretical science is authentically not the ruthlessly rational torture of ‘nature’ which compels her to reveal her secrets, but the passionate self-torture of the existing scientist, who constantly exposes himself to the full danger of the clearing of his there (SA 11-12).

The second property of the original essence of science that, according to Heidegger, we must recover for ourselves is its end or purpose. In the original Greek understanding as Heidegger presents and interprets it, science never authentically happens simply for its own sake. The life of contemplation is not authentically divorced from the concerns of human practice but rather represents their highest culmination: “the Greeks battled exactly thereabouts to conceive and to carry out this considering
questioning as one, indeed, as the highest manner of energeia, of the ‘setting-to-work’ of the human.” In their original understanding, “theory” is thus not divorced from “genuine practice [echter Praxis],” but is rather continuous with it and even indeed stands as its “highest realization.” Their science happened not for its own sake, but, according to Heidegger, for the sake of the engagement of their practical life. The struggle of the Greeks is the struggle to make science the highest principle of organization and cultivation of the whole of their existence as a people. It was accordingly no mere adornment or superfluity of that existence, but represented both the highest expression and discipline of their struggle against the whole of what is. “For the Greeks science is not a ‘cultural good’ but the innermost determining middle of the whole national-state [volklich-staatlichen] Dasein. Science is for them not the mere means for the making conscious of the unconscious, but the whole Dasein sharp-keeping and embracing power.” Science is quite simply the Greeks’ highest development and elaboration, their most sweeping working out and appropriation of the confrontation with the fate of their existence. The original essence of science stands prior to and beyond the common and now self-evident distinction between theory and practice. With the recovery of that original essence, this vulgar distinction is overturned. The overturning of the theory-practice distinction leans in a decidedly political direction. The express consequence of that overturning is a thoroughly and expansively political concept of the purpose and activity of science and the university. This result would seem to be contradicted by Heidegger’s own avowed efforts against the political concept of science of the National Socialists, and the subordination of the activities of the university to party doctrine. What
Heidegger resisted was the subjection of this highest manner of *energeia* to party doctrines and functionaries. He did so, however, not in the effort to preserve the university as a scientific sphere independent from political interference, but rather as the site of the highest political tasks of the state. That is to say: he resisted a *merely* political concept of university education in the name of his own *comprehensively* political concept of university education (SA 12).

4. The Creative Recovery of the Inception of Science

Though the transformations of the world over the intervening course of history since the breakout of philosophy have altered our relation to science and its origin, they have not put its beginning behind us. While “the advance of human doing” over the course of “two and one half thousand years” has undeniably “changed science,” and however far science has been “removed... from its beginning” by the results of the success of Christianity together with the advent of “the later mathematical-technical thinking of the modern age,” these world-historical developments have neither “overcome” nor “destroyed” the “greatness” of the Greek beginning. This greatness of the breakout of science, which “remains its greatest {moment},” rather yet persists: “The beginning *is still.*” That the “essence of science” is now thoroughly worn out, “as it is today,” Heidegger asserts, “despite all results and ‘international organizations,’” only gives further testimony of the persistence of the original Greek breakout. Science could not reveal itself to us at all as “emptied and used up” if the greatness of its beginning did
not somehow still live for us today; science can only appear as emptied and used up in comparison to the accomplishments of its origin (SA 12).

That the beginning still somehow endures for us furthermore means that in its greatness it persists as a challenge and a task for the Dasein of the teachers and students of the university. As the original historical breakout both of our spiritual essence, and of that highest human doing which we have taken upon ourselves as our essential calling, the beginning represents the final what-for, the ultimate and therefore primordial meaning of our lives: “It lies not behind us as the long since been, but it stands before us. The beginning as the greatest has passed over in advance over all coming things and thus over us already also. The beginning has joined in with our future, it stands there over us as the far off order to again catch up with its greatness.” The original breakout of our spiritual essence demands that we once again assert ourselves as the teachers and students of the university, as those for and through whom science exists. The essence of science brings us before the decision concerning who we truly are and want to be, before the choice of our ownmost selves. “Only when we resolutely obey this distant order in order to win back the greatness of the beginning, only then will science turn into the innermost necessity of the Dasein.” The terrible greatness of the breakout calls us to the care of our authentic existence. The breakout accordingly stands for a ‘conscience of science,’ which calls to us, across the success of Christianity and mathematical physics, and all of the everyday urgencies and bustle of the modern sciences, through the greatness of its origin. The repetition of the breakout demanded by the beginning is the authentic resolve to the original essence of science and the university (SA 12-13).
We become ourselves as the scientists of the university only through the recovery and repetition of the origin from which we have fallen away. Without the resolute recovery of this vital origin of the whole of our existence, we fail to expose the authentic need of scientific existence, and might just as well devote ourselves to anything else as persist in the pursuit of science in the trivial, common fashion: “Otherwise it remains a coincidence, which we have gotten into, or the calmed comfort of a dangerless preoccupation with the promotion of a mere advance of knowledges.” We only at all enter into our authentic self-responsibility, and first experience science in its innermost necessity (which, to repeat, is its necessity for us), uniquely in the active repetition of the original breakout. Only in the repetition of the original breakout do we begin to stand up to the deepest demands of genuine self-administration. Only in this repetition do we at once assume full responsibility both for the existence of science and for ourselves ‘from start to finish,’ only then can we truly answer the question of how we got ourselves into our vocation, ‘It was me.’ Science first of all becomes “the grounding happening of our spiritual-national Dasein” only then, when “we obey the distant order of the beginning,” (SA 13) when we decide ourselves for science, when we resolve ourselves for the need of science for us, when we seize upon it as a possibility, and shoulder for ourselves alone the burden of the demand of its possibility as “the questioning standing firm in the middle of the continually self-hiding whole of being” which “knows therewith its own impotence before fate” (SA 12).

The resolute repetition of the beginning is not, and cannot be, however, a simple bringing again, a mere reactualization of the original Greek beginning. The Dasein is not
a fixed or permanent nature but an existing becoming. Our spiritual existing is a historical happening through and through. The German fate is not and could not be simply the fate of the Greeks. The teachers and students’ recovery of the beginning of science is accordingly altered by the subsequent sweep of history and its transformation of our happening. The aftermath of Christianity and modern technology have changed the shape of science for us, because they themselves have transformed our very being. In their aftermath we face a further historical transformation of human existence. “And if our ownmost Dasein itself really stands before a great change, if it is true, what the passionately God-seeking last German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche said: ‘God is dead’—...” This transformation of our essential happening to which Heidegger calls attention is a religious transformation. Although we are the historical heirs of Christianity, we ourselves no longer believe in the Christian religion, having ascended Nietzsche’s ladder of religious cruelty to the point where we have sacrificed God himself for the sake of our faith.¹⁵⁰ We remain conscientious, but our experience of conscience has been fundamentally transformed by the sacrifice of God for the nothing. God no longer speaks to us, and in the call of the conscience we therefore hear not the voice of God but only silence, the deep silence of the nothing of the absent God. The experience of the beginning or breakout of science is for us an experience of that conscience in its current fated historical shape. The transformation of our experience of conscience must accordingly be a transformation of our experience of the breakout. Put another way, if science is indeed “the highest manner... of the ‘setting-to-work’ of the human,” then the

¹⁵⁰ Cf. BGE section 56.
transformation of what is set to work will, indeed must, also change the work (SA 13).

If we are to work out and appropriate for ourselves the necessity of science for us now, we must grasp how this transformation of our existence “this loneliness of man today in the middle of beings” therewith also transforms the shape of science. Science as science demands that we “put into practice [Ernst machen mit; literally: ‘make earnest with’]” the death of God, that is, it exacts the active transformation of ourselves into this new shape, which confronts the whole in and from an experience of naked abandonment to the world, a world now completely stripped of any higher meaning, end, or cause beyond our own (SA 13). Science becomes for us our resolved self-transformation into radically lonely beings; our ‘scientific consciousness,’ the conscience of science, becomes our radical individualization in the face of the whole of what is. What the Greeks encountered as necessity in the original breakout, at once both of our spiritual-historical Dasein and of science in the West, we now experience, stripped both of any purpose or reason, and therefore at once both more overpowering and more mysterious, as indeed something like fate. The radical and violent reading in the Rectorate Address of what Aischylos expresses in the mouth of Prometheus finds its justification in our historical situation, which shapes and determines Heidegger’s interpretation of the original breakout from the very outset, as it inescapably must, if our existence is radically, inescapably historical or fated. We understand the Greek beginning, if we can understand it at all, only from out of our own today. The meaning of the beginning persists for us only in the current historical shape of our Dasein. And only today does science radically and fully become “the questioning standing firm in the middle of the
continually self-hiding whole of being” which “knows therewith its own impotence before fate” (SA 12).

In the grip of our abandonment to a world that confronts us nakedly as fated, science itself becomes a continual self-assertion in the face of a radically mysterious and threatening clearing. “Then the beginning admiring holding out of the Greeks before the beings changes into the completely uncovered being abandoned into the hidden and unknown, that is, the questionworthy.” Science as knowing rather becomes a questioning of a mysterious, “contiually self-hiding” and thus ultimately unknowable whole. In such a state of affairs, questioning ceases to be “only the overcomeable first step towards the answer as knowing,” because the answer continually retracts itself and eludes us. The mysteriousness of the there rather demands a continual beginning again, a continual re-interrogation of the clearing that both reveals and withdraws. The constant self-exposing questioning of the scientist therefore “becomes itself the highest shape of knowing.” Knowing as questioning can only ever be a continual return to the most vital matters for us, and in and as this continual return it “then unfolds its ownmost force of the unlocking of the essential of all things” and “forces to the uttermost simplification of the gaze onto the unavoidable [Unumgaengliche]” (SA 13).

Holding ourselves in the anxious abandonment of this constant questioning, which is itself our own obedience to the distant order of the original breakout of science, we recover “the rootedness of the sciences in their essential ground” and therewith drag them out of the distracted fragmentation of the contemporary university, back to the primordial experience of the freedom of the human Dasein (an experience of the whole), wherein
they find their authentic unity:

Such questioning breaks the encapsulation of the sciences into separate subjects, hauls it back from the endless and goalless dispersion into isolated fields and corners and exposes science again to the fertility and to the blessing of all world forming powers of the human-historical Dasein, as there are: nature, history, language; Volk, custom, state; writing (Dichten), thinking, believing; sickness, madness, death; right, economy, technology (SA 13-14).

It is not necessary to our purpose here to work out fully the order and relation of the latter half of this terse yet sweeping statement of the character of the whole of being. The essential point for us is rather that Heidegger’s suggestion of what is required for the recovery of science in the university today in “What Is Metaphysics?”—the active self-completion of the transformation of the human being into pure Da-sein—is in fact the explicit programme of “The Self-assertion of the German University.” The world-forming powers of the human historical Dasein, from nature to technology, can only be grasped in their authentic meaning on the ‘ground’ of a constant resolute questioning.

With the self-exposure to the whole, science ceases to be a merely academic matter but rather becomes the “grounding happening” that puts the totality of our existence into question. This anxious, abandoned questioning to which Heidegger calls us restores the immediate relation of science equally to the existence of the Dasein, and to the whole of our world, therewith recovering the vitality of science as “the highest ‘setting-to-work’ of the human” (SA 13). The exposedness of the doing of science in and as a resolutely whole can-be recovers a confrontation with the threatened and threatening clearing of the there, the clearing which we are, as a totality, such that it can again become “the continually newly [immer neu zu] accomplished disclosure of the whole
expanse of truth of nature and history” (WIM 95/Wm 121). This anxious, abandoned, self-exposed, yet steadfast questioning which both obeys and creatively repeats the original breakout of science in Greek philosophy, as the constant self-assertion of the scientist in the face of the finally inescapable threat of the nothing of existence, represents the deepest demand of the claim of the university to self-administration. The remainder of Heidegger’s address is only the further working out and appropriation of this most spiritual and most extreme courage that science exacts of us for its recovery.

This recovery of science’s authentic self-administration furthermore reaches beyond the Dasein of the scientist to the existence of the Volk, of the German nation as a whole. As the highest realization of genuine practice, science in its essential necessity for us becomes the total spiritual transformation of the clearing of our shared there. “If we want this essence of science, in the sense of the questioning unprotected standing firm in the middle of the uncertainty of the whole of being, then this will of essence creates for our Volk its world of innermost and uttermost danger, that is, its truly spiritual world.” Through the education and discipline of its leaders and guardians, science brings the Volk before the fate of its naked abandonment to the threat of the whole. Only in the face of the most extreme danger of existence does the spirit of the Volk awaken and grow strong. Only facing of this ultimate danger do we come to “know our aids, our virtues, our defences and weapons.” As the questioning self-exposure to the anxiety of the uncertainty of the world, authentic science is thus itself the spiritual mission of the Volk, the spiritual mission that shatters the tranquilizing dominion of the everyday urgencies of

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151 TI, “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” section 38.
the average mass, and compels the Volk to find its genuine spirit, to take over the 
authentic historical shape—the fate—of its collective existence. The conscience of 
authentic science is to be the means by and through which the ascendancy of the common 
opinions and publicity of das Man is broken for the sake of the constant reconquest of our 
original or primordial freedom (SA 14).

Geist, spirit or mind, must be radically redefined in terms of this resolute 
questioning, in the light of the authentic revelation of the clearing. “‘Spirit’”

[>>Geist<<] is therefore not what we ordinarily take it to be in the interpretation of our 
average understanding, which variously conceives it as “empty astuteness,” or a “non-
binding play of wit”; neither is it “the endless pursuit of rational deconstruction,” or 
perhaps “even world reason” in the ordinary senses of philosophical science and 
theology. Spirit is itself authentically the “originarily attuned, knowing resolve to the 
essence of being (des Seins),” the passion for the torment of the interrogation of the 
whole of what is, the courage for the continually questioning self-exposure to the world 
in all its threatening mysteriousness. The “spiritual world of a Volk” is itself therefore 
not the mere decorativeness of edification—“the superstructure of a culture”—nor, since 
spirit cannot be authentically conceived as mere ‘intelligence,’ is the spiritual world of a 
Volk merely its arsenal of organized utilities, merely ‘equipment’ for tackling the 
problems and urgencies of its common existence, what Heidegger here dubs “the 
gearhouse for usable knowledges and values.” Science is neither merely ideology that 
derives from the more serious concerns of our practical business, nor justified only as the 
ground of a technology to be applied to them. As the anxious naked revelation of the
whole of the clearing of the there, the spiritual world of the *Volk* embraces the whole fate of its collective happening, and penetrates to the very core of its existing: “it is the power of the deepest keeping of its earthly and bloody forces as power of the innermost excitement and widest tremor of its Dasein.” Authentic science in all its danger accordingly gathers and unleashes the fullest spiritual capacities of the *Volk*, in forcing it to summon up its highest defiance in the face of the world as it authentically reveals itself to us in the aftermath of God’s death. “A spiritual world alone establishes greatness for the *Volk*.” Only in and through standing up against the overwhelming threatening meaninglessness of the whole can the *Volk* face up to and continually reconquer the original freedom for its historical destiny. The spiritual world opened up by the resolve for authentic science compels us to stand up to the spiritual mission that inheres in the existence of the university: “For it forces thereto, that the constant deciding between the will to greatness and the not stopping of the decline becomes the pace law for the march upon which our *Volk* has begun in its future history” (SA 14). In this way Heidegger’s authentic science wins back its title to “a proper though limited leadership in the whole of human existence” (WIM 83/Wm 104-105).

The constant resolve for the danger of this fraught, naked questioning which reveals and opens up the world of spirit, that is, the resolve for the spiritual leadership of the *Volk*—assuming that “we want this essence of science”—demands of “the body of teachers” that they charge forward first and furthest into the nothing of the whole, that they “actually advance to the outermost [aeussersten] posts of the danger of constant world-uncertainty.” Only this steadfast holding out “in essential nearness to the torment
of all things” will compel the teachers to “become strong for the leadership [zur Fuehrerschaft]” of the “deepest determination and widest obligation,” and cultivate “the common questioning and communally attuned saying,” that is, press into shape the spiritual-historical existence of the Volk. This leadership, which is essentially “the force for being able to go alone” out into the storm of being forsaking any protection, compels us to gaze upon the matters that are essential for us and rouses us to the historical tasks of our Dasein, through its “selection of the best,” its calling forth of those who are fit to take them up, that is, “the genuine [echte] following [Gefolgschaft] of those who are of new courage” (SA 14).

Nonetheless, according to Heidegger’s understanding of the authentic situation in May, 1933, the teachers of the university have no need “first” to “awaken such a following” in “the German student body [Studentenschaft],” because the students, in the wake of the political ascendancy of National Socialism, are themselves already “on the march.” Who then exactly, one might ask, is doing the leading and who the following? So far from having to rouse the students, the teachers must even first catch up, ‘double time,’ to the new youth movement in order to advance past it and lead the charge. Rather than restrain or moderate the radical students, in his first act of spiritual leadership, Heidegger expressly seeks to press the moderate professors forward, to lead the teachers to charge ahead to catch up with their proper place in the rector’s following. According to his presentation, only on the basis of a radicalization of the professoriate surpassing even that of the radical students, will the teachers be able of the university hope to lead and shape the new movement. The opportunity yet exists for them to take the would-be
leaders and guardians of the German fate into education and discipline, for the student body still “seeks... those leaders, through whom it wants to raise its own determination to the grounded, knowing truth and place it in the clarity of the interpreting-effective word and work.” Any ‘moderation’ of the radical students under Heidegger’s leadership, if it can even be called such at all, through their discipline and instruction, is only purchased on the basis of emulating and surpassing their militant extremism. Unless the professors of the university demonstrate that they can outdo the ‘new courage’ of the movement by leading from the front, they will by implication simply be left to fall in the dust by the wayside (SA 14-15).152

Indeed, as one might well surmise on the basis of the preceding paragraph, it is now expressly the new student movement which ‘factually’ sets the condition for the renewal of the university. The self-assertion of the German university does not happen


*New courage* allows these dangers {indifference and resistance} to be seen clearly. Only it alone opens our eyes to that which is to come and which is now emerging. It forces each teacher and pupil to make up his mind about the fundamental questions of *Wissenschaft*, and this decision is of epochal importance, for on it depends whether we Germans shall remain a people that is, in the highest sense of the word, knowing. The new teaching which is at issue here does not mean conveying knowledge, but allowing students to learn and inducing them to learn. This means allowing oneself to be beset by the unknown and then becoming master of it in comprehending knowing; it means becoming secure in one’s sense for what is essential. It is from such teaching that true research emerges, interlocked with the whole through its rootedness in the Volk and its bond to the State. The student is forced out into the uncertainty of all things, in which the necessity of engagement [*Einsatz*] is grounded. *University study must again become a risk [Wagnis]*, not a refuge for the cowardly. Whoever does not survive the battle, lies where he falls. The new courage must accustom itself to steadfastness, for the battle for the institutions where our leaders are educated will continue for a long time. It will be fought out of the strengths of the new Reich that Chancellor Hitler will bring to reality. A hard race [*Geschlecht*] with no thought of self must fight this battle, a race that lives from constant testing and that remains directed towards the goal to which it has committed itself. It is a battle to determine who shall be the teachers and leaders at the university [*ein Kampf um die Gestalt des Lehrers und des Fuehrers an der Universitaet*].
simply in opposition to National Socialism’s seizure of power, but is rather occasioned by it as the very ground of its possibility. It is precisely in terms of “the resolve of the German student body to stand firm to the German fate in its uttermost emergency” that the renewed possibility of an authentic knowing of the whole of being first again arises, in the shattering of this resolve against the overwhelming power of fate. It is precisely this emergent resolve of the ‘new courage’ of the radical youth that can therefore be forged into “a will to the essence of the university.” In order for this radical student will to effect what it wants, it must subject itself to the essence of its Dasein “through the new student law [Studentenrecht],” which must therefore become, for it, “the law [Gesetz] of its essence.” Its will becomes effective only when it binds itself for the future. However much the student youth might chafe at the demand of this restraint, the self-imposition of these bonds represents in fact the farthest reaching liberty of human Dasein, and indeed prompts Heidegger’s first explicit use of the word ‘freedom’ in the text of his Rectorate Address: “Alone to give oneself the law [Sich selbst das Gesetz geben] is {the} highest freedom.” This discipline of the resolve of the radical student movement is the deeper factual historical condition for the possibility of the authentic self-administration of the university, which is “to set ourselves the task and to determine alone the way and manner of its realization” (SA 15).

5. The Demands of the Free Recovery of the Inception of Science

The demands of the authentic freedom that is itself the original source of scientific
existence is not without consequence for the life of the university. Setting the law for ourselves, while standing firm in the midst of the threatening mysteriousness of the whole, requires the highest human or even superhuman steadfast independence and self-constancy. By contrast the average so-called ‘freedom’ of das Man—and this includes “the calmed comfort” of the academic freedom by means of which the university encourages “a mere advance of knowledges,” indeed this is even the most pernicious manifestation of das Man, as science is authentically the highest setting to work of the human and the resolute revelation of the very whole of being—is only a tranquilizing means of divesting ourselves of the ownmost burden of our existence, that is, of our authentic freedom. “The much-sung ‘academic freedom’ will be rejected out of the German university; for this freedom was false [unecht], because only negative.” The merely negative academic freedom of the liberal university, the freedom from interference in research and teaching that permitted them to deteriorate into merely clever diversions, which “meant predominant unconcernedness, as-you-like-ness of intentions and inclinations, unboundedness in doing and letting,” is only finally an inauthentic avoiding of the fated task of our existence, and of the authentic spiritual mission of the Volk. The university, accordingly, simply cannot be allowed to continue to carry on its business in the average manner of “a dangerless preoccupation” with science. Led by his understanding of the authentic experience of human freedom, the new rector declares the abolishment of the specifically liberal character of the university and the establishment of a new programme of education for the future leaders and guardians of the Volk (SA 15).

This new university programme begins with the “concept of freedom of the
German student,” that is, of the new radical movement, which, Heidegger proclaims, “will now be brought back to its truth.” The realization of our self-set task, the highest freedom of the self-given law of our existence, demands that we be “solely therein what we should be.” The law of freedom exacts that “self-restriction” in which “we... in clarity and hardness bind [umgrenzen] this essence for the future,” demands that we press ourselves into the shape demanded by our ownmost destined mission. The new university programme is accordingly only the positive working out and elaboration of the passionate obligations entailed by the new concept of freedom of the National Socialist students: “Out of it the future binding and service of the German student body develops.” That Heidegger purports to discipline and educate the will of the students in terms of their own concept of freedom implies that he has already thought through that concept, that he has advanced past them, and already stands at “the outermost posts of world-uncertainty.” The concept of freedom that he imputes to the radical students is, of course, already his own concept, having previously worked out and appropriated for himself that understanding out of which it originates, both in Being and Time, and in his subsequent essays and lecture courses. That concept of authentic human freedom is however none other than the authentic historicality of the resolute running forward into death. The programme of “The Self-assertion of the German University” is only the further practical elaboration of the understanding of authentic human freedom, the interpretation of which is the core of Heidegger’s own hermeneutic project, and the source out of which springs the whole of Being and Time (SA 15).153

153 Cf. BT 61-62/ SZ 37.
Heidegger proceeds to present three principal or essential bonds that are to embrace and hold sharp the Dasein of the students for the future as the prospective leaders and guardians of the Dasein of the German nation in its spiritual mission. First, the students are to be bound to “the community of the Volk,” the shared historical happening of an over-coming heritage, which is authentically understood as fate. The ‘organic’ folk community only happens, however, when its members devote themselves faithfully to the same affair in common. The students can accordingly be bound to the Volksgemeinschaft only if the peculiar detachment of academic existence from the practical life of the Volk is shattered and overcome. This requires that the students participate in the “co-enduring and co-acting sharing in the pains, endeavours, and abilities of all estates and members of the Volk.” This demands not the patronizing and condescending ‘leaping in’ of student community service, but the active and mutual honest co-operation of the students in the affairs of the Volk. In a word, the students must be put to work for the nation: “This bond will henceforth be made fast and rooted into the student Dasein through labour service [Arbeitsdienst]” (SA 15).

Having been rooted, through labour, in the practical existence of the new, radical National Socialist folk community, the students are to bind themselves to its defence as the future leaders and guardians of its fate. The Volk confronts the danger of its genuinely spiritual world not in isolation but as one nation among others. It alone can and must lay claim to and stand up for, assert and defend, the greatness and glory of the tasks of its spiritual heritage in the face of the active claims of the others. “The second bond is that {which binds} to the honour and the destiny of the nation in the middle of
the other nation [Voelker].” The Volk stands up for its honour in its willingness to contend for it by struggle, that is, to fight. Its defence of its destiny is its spiritual readiness for the constant threat which hangs over the clearing of the there, the total perpetual war which existence authentically is. The defence of the historical happening of the heritage “demands the secured in knowing and being-able, and tightened through discipline readiness for action to the last,” the warlike determination of its guardians even in the face of certain doom. The student and now the student-worker must yet further become the student-worker-warrior. “This bond will in future embrace and penetrate the whole student Dasein as defence service [Wehrdienst].” The purpose of this military service is manifestly not the merely technical training of the students in the operations and machinery of warfare. Heidegger’s genuine intention for their regimentation is rather the spiritual cultivation of an authentic being towards death. Being prepared for war in the most spiritual sense of the term, the ability to stand fast in the face of the storm of the whole of what is, the threat that hangs perpetually over our there, to hold out in the face of the revelation of the spiritual world of the Volk, is nonetheless manifestly predicated on the cultivation of a spiritual war-readiness and war-likeness in its more prosaic and military forms (SA 15).

Having been rooted in the community of the Volk through labour service and bound to the defence of its destiny through military service, the student body must finally bind itself to “the spiritual mission of the Volk.” In and through its historical happening it “works at its fate.” As this “history,” it “sets” itself “in,” it exposes itself to “the manifestness of the superior power of all world-conceiving powers of the human
Dasein.” In and through this ever-unfinished fateful working, which is authentically its steadfast self-holding out into the storm of the whole, it “wins [erkaempft] its spiritual world for itself ever anew.” The spiritual world of the Volk is not won once and for all through a singular act of resolve, with, for example, the Nazi seizure of power, or Heidegger’s assumption of the rectorship, but must be constantly won over again through the continuous self-assertion of the Dasein. As itself the clearing of being, the Dasein is in this certain sense also the whole. The self-exposure to fate is therewith the confrontation with the danger of the question or mystery of freedom. “Thus set out into the uttermost questionworthiness of its own Dasein, this Volk wants to be a spiritual Volk.” It wants the “knowing resolve to the essence of being,” that most unflinchingly assertive questioning in the face of the continual uncertainty of its world, which is required by a genuinely spiritual existence. In its spiritual aspiration the Volk accordingly “demands from itself and for itself” that the “leaders and guardians” of its destiny themselves express the repeated development of “the highest, broadest, and richest knowing.” As the cohort of these future leaders and guardians, the student body must devote and shape itself for “the hardest clarity” required for persevering in this anxiously abandoned questioning, the highest form that knowing now assumes for us. “A student youth which is venturing early into manhood and spreading its will over the future destiny of the nation, forces itself from the ground up towards the service to this knowing.” The deepest and most essential bond of the practical elaboration of the concept of freedom of the radical students unfolds itself accordingly as its “knowledge service” to the Volk (SA 15-16).
This bond to the spiritual mission of the *Volk*—the essential task of who we are—in the manly devotion to this knowledge service transforms the practical end and character of university education. The justification for the liberal university lies in its practical usefulness, not merely in its technological discoveries, but in the preparation of administrators of its useful knowledge. The pursuit of science decays into the technical training of professional experts. Now, however, the radical students will “no longer” put up with an education that is merely a “hollow and quick training for a ‘noble’ profession [>>vornehmen<< Beruf].” The professions derive their *true* nobility not from the average respectability of their ‘practice,’ but from their participation in the spiritual mission of the *Volk*. The authentic responsibility of the professions is not the mere application of technical expertise for the relief of man’s estate, but rather the stewardship of the “earthly and bloody forces” of the Volk and the cultivation of the spiritual strength of “the innermost excitement and widest tremor of its Dasein,” to “lead the popular-state Dasein” and “watch and hold keen” its essence “in its grounding relations to the world-conceiving powers of the human being [des menschlichen Seins].” The drive to the unified, spiritual world accordingly demands that, “the statesman and teacher, the doctor and the judge, the pastor and the master builder,” the professions through which the *Volk* confronts the world forming powers of our historical existence, be “delivered over [ueberantwortet] to knowledge service,” and, moreover, in their essential ground, that is, not only “these professions” themselves, but also “the education for them” (SA 16).

Science does not stand outside of practice, such that in order to be at all useful it must first be ‘applied’ and degraded to the servile production of skills, tools, and values,
but is rather itself “the highest realization of genuine practice.” The sciences are not, therefore, merely an arsenal of skills and utilities for the professions. On the contrary, rather, “the professions effect and administer that highest and essential knowing of the Volk about its whole Dasein.” The professions acquire their authentic vitality only through their loyalty to the new creative German repetition of the Greek beginning. The essence of science is and can be “for us” no longer “the soothing taking note of essences and values in themselves.” As the anxiously self-exposed questioning of the whole, science has become for us “the severest endangering of the Dasein in the middle of the superior power of beings.” This “questionworthiness of being in general,” the uncertain and threatening character of the clearing of the there, authentically understood, exacts resolute struggle, that is, it “forces labour and battle from the Volk and forces it into its state, to which the professions belong.” The three bonds of service of the student body, “through the Volk to the destiny of the state in the spiritual mission,” that articulate and elaborate its authentic concept of freedom and “are equally original for the German essence” thus form an organic, primordial unity. While the knowledge service to the spiritual mission of the Volk remains the most essential of the three bonds, it both requires and elicits the labour and military service Heidegger sets forth for the students, and exacted of them, in and through the first two bonds, which therefore “are equally necessary and of equal rank.” It is this science, the essence of which is defined by the three bonds of service of the new university programme “whose realization is set for us” as our ownmost possibility, that is to say, our authentic historical task, “assuming that we obey the distant order of the beginning of our spiritual-historical Dasein.” It is this
authentic concept of science—“the with-acting knowing for the Volk, the knowing that holds itself ready for the destiny of the state as one with the knowing for the spiritual mission”—which Heidegger accordingly intended when he characterized the university “as the high school, that from science and through science takes the leaders and guardians of the fate of the German Volk into education and discipline.” This authentic concept of science that shapes the genuine self-administration of our highest freedom unsurprisingly determines the understanding of Heidegger’s address from the outset (SA 16-17, 10).

If we are to carry out and realize this concept of science as our ownmost task, then its essence must acquire “genuine stamping force for our Dasein.” We must press ourselves, that is, the whole of our existence, the entire how of our being, into the ways demanded by the “will to the historical spiritual mission of the German Volk.” That is to say: “Science according to this sense must turn into the shaping power of the corporation of the German university.” In order for this essence to become the mould for existence, the entire corporation of the university, “the body of teachers and the student body,” must let themselves be held in the grip of the revelation of this understanding. When they both “each in its way become seized and remain seized by the concept of science,” the spiritual mission of the Volk comes to rule the life of the university, “in the faculties and in the disciplines.” The faculties and disciplines come into their own only when they stand up to the demands of the spiritual mission and set themselves to work on its terms. The faculties are the basic divisions of the university that organize the education of the professions, which are now answerable to knowledge service for the spiritual mission (SA 17).
Through the faculty the leaders and guardians of the *Volk* confront the forces that shape the world of our existence. Their knowing is a questioning for and with that *Volk* which desires its truly spiritual world, an exposed questioning which creates and reveals that spiritual existence. As the keeping of its earthly and bloody forces, the maintaining of the basic relation of its Dasein to the world forming forces, the faculties set the terms and demands of the continual unveiling of the spiritual danger. Each faculty must therefore cultivate within itself “a capacity for spiritual lawgiving rooted in the essence of its science, in order to shape the powers of the Dasein that harass it into the one spiritual world of the *Volk.*” In the highest freedom of authentic self-administration the teachers and students of the university legislate not merely for themselves, but for the *Volk* as a unified whole. Each discipline likewise comes into its own when it “sets itself” right at the forefront of “the sphere of this spiritual lawgiving.” When this drive possesses the disciplines, the academic isolation of their subject matters breaks down. When they lead and fall into step with the march of the *Volk* in this manner, they lose the character of “external professional training” and regain for themselves the original vitality of the essence of science. They participate once again in the authentic happening of the *Volk*: “In the moment [Augenblick] when the faculties and disciplines start up the essential and simple questions of their science, the teachers and students are also already embraced by the same final emergencies and torments of the national-state Dasein” (SA 17).

Whatever the truth of Heidegger’s later claims that he never sought “to effect only party doctrines” and resisted the demand “to act according to the ‘idea’ of a ‘political
science,"\(^ {154}\) that is, the imposition of specifically National Socialist concepts upon the scientific work of the universities, nonetheless he propounds here a *comprehensively* political concept of science, a concept of science that he describes as springing from, or at least the unflinching elaboration of the resolute concept of freedom of the radical, that is, National Socialist, students. In their resolve Heidegger saw an understanding of freedom in which he recognized his own, and therefore must have thought was amenable to being educated and disciplined, in a like manner to which he himself manfully thought through that understanding to its end. Heidegger saw the beginnings of his own thought echoed in the students (that is to say, in the student elements of the National Socialist movement), and therefore understandably began to hope that in decisive cases the work of dissolving the elemental public opinion of *das Man*, already beginning in the movement, might be carried through, and the way opened to the new inception of science, on the ground of the recovery of authentic human freedom, at which he himself had already been working at least since the composition of *Being and Time*, and to which he might lead the way. In a word, he believed that the breakout of the new movement opened up the practical possibility of carrying through the project of freedom of *Being and Time*. Neither that the resolve of the students was ‘only’ the beginning, nor that Heidegger’s hopes for the radical students and the possibilities of the movement were subsequently dashed, contradicts, or even qualifies, on the one hand, the indispensability

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of this resolute beginning, and, on the other, the consequent essential resonance of his thought with National Socialism or fascism generally.

6. The New University Battle-Community

This authentic task of the historical spiritual mission of the Volk exacts “such a measuring of strictness, responsibility, and superior patience” that it stretches far into the future, to the extent that science and the authentic freedom that it requires becomes a matter of teaching man the future of man as a matter of his will. The original Greek breakout “needed three centuries” to press itself into the form required for the pursuit of its own spiritual task, that is, “the question, what knowing is,” to find for its pursuit “the right ground and ... the secure road.” We therefore cannot know, Heidegger proclaims, how long our authentic historical task will demand for its successful conclusion: “we should not intend that the lighting up and developing of the essence of the German university will take place only in the current or coming semester.” The future of the distant order of the breakout requires, for the sake of this ownmost task of our existence (which shall ultimately transcend it and even far outstrip our particular finite possibilities), that we continually, and right to the last, hold and press ourselves into the form that science exacts of us, that the university acquire its proper “shape and power” for us. The bonds of its authentic self-administration must continually, and “originally,” strike our existence with “one stamping force.” These bonds stamp us for the essence of science or knowing, which therewith has become for us the “resolve to the essence of
being” as “the severest endangering of the Dasein in the middle of the superior power of beings.” We must hold ourselves out into the world as it is revealed by the silent voice of Angst, in the fullness of its meaninglessness, and stand steadfast before its utter mercilessness, in the face of the continually threatening storm of the perpetual war of the whole (SA 17-18).

The spiritual mission is then simply the call to the teachers and students of the university to battle, to the spiritual war for the authentic happening of the Volk. While the teachers of the university “awaken and strengthen the simplicity and width of knowledge about the essence of science,” the unity of knowing with labour and battle, for their part the student body “must force itself up into the highest clarity and discipline of knowledge,” because only then can they “shape the collective science about the Volk and its state into the essence of science.” The students will lead the Volk to its most self-exposed self-assertion. The future guardians of fate paradoxically protect the spiritual world of the Volk through unflinchingly casting the Volk into its severest danger, and establish its greatness by casting its existence into the greatest uncertainty. The teachers and students fundamentally each face up to their ownmost task, they each in their own way become seized and remain seized by the concept of science, only when they become willing to commit themselves to the battle that the clearing of human freedom demands, because, authentically understood, it is: “All wilful and thoughtful capabilities, all forces of the heart and all abilities of the body, must be developed through battle, be increased in battle, and be kept to remain as battle.” Science can truly persist “for us and through

155 Cf. BGE section 203.
us” only in the freedom of and for war. Knowledge service may stand as the most essential bond of the freedom of the German student, but towards the conclusion of Heidegger’s address, the content of Wissensdienst becomes increasingly indistinguishable from the spiritual bond of Wehrdienst. The reawakening of an authentic understanding of being happens only in battle against the whole of being (SA 18).

The authentic community of the university is therefore precisely not the liberal university which shelters the academic license of the teachers and students away from the constant bustle (to say nothing of battle) happening ‘outside,’ but on the contrary that university which cultivates the freedom of the teachers and students in and through the resolute exposure to the danger inhering in the clearing of the there. The authentic community of the university is a “battle community.” Only in battle is the self-administration of the university authentically recovered and preserved: “Battle alone... plants in the whole corporation of teachers and students that fundamental mood, out of which self-limiting self-assertion empowers the resolute self-reflection for genuine self-administration.” The labour service upon which Heidegger spent so little breath now falls away entirely. The essential or authentic work of freedom is the fight. Through battle the university cultivates in its teachers and students both the Angst, and the readiness for it, which form the ‘ground’ of its highest freedom. The readiness for Angst is only the resolute understanding of the voice of conscience, which calls us to that running forward into death which is itself the authentic experience of the freedom of the Dasein. Science thus requires that we commit ourselves to charge forward and without hesitation, even into the face of our certain doom, that, “We choose the knowing battle of
the questioners, and profess with Carl von Clausewitz: ‘I renounce the careless hope of
salvation through the hand of chance.’\footnote{Like the violent use Heidegger makes of his quotation of Aischyllos, and especially like the quotation of Plato’s \textit{Republic} that closes the Rectorate Address, Heidegger manages to transform the intended meaning of Clausewitz’s ‘profession’ even into the opposite of its author’s own intention, in this case as a result of the context in which Heidegger cites it. Here Heidegger’s interpretive violence is far subtler, but no less great. Clausewitz taught that war is a continuation of politics by other means. In principle, then, politics stands above war, which must be tightly constrained to serve political goals. In short, Clausewitz’s teaching is originally a doctrine of \textit{limited} war. Heidegger, by contrast, does not understand war as an extension of politics, but directs his politics towards the war of the whole of being. In short, Heidegger’s teaching is a teaching, not of limited, but of \textit{total} war. His creative appropriation of Clausewitz’s ‘profession’ transforms it from the maxim of a prudent military commander who carefully seeks to fight limited wars in the service of political ends (and who therefore vows not to take gambles that could result in ruin) into the enthusiastic embrace of a total war in terms of which the university and the \textit{Volk} in the new \textit{Reich} will order the whole of their existence.} This authentic being towards death propels us before the choice of “ourselves as a historical-spiritual \textit{Volk} still and again - or whether we no longer want ourselves,” to the constant resolute decision for the responsibility of the thrownness of our history. The German university is to become a new community of masters, the model for the new community of the \textit{Volk}, which, as its officer class, they shall shape and lead into the war. Not only the \textit{Volksgemeinschaft}, but the community of the university too at its core is essentially a \textit{Kampfgemeinschaft} (SA 18, 19).

Heidegger proclaims that in the resolve of the radical students that springs ahead of the teachers and other students of the university, the \textit{Volk} “has already decided” for itself and its spiritual mission, the abandoned, anxious active reinterpretation and creative repetition of the original Greek breakout. Interpretation is, however, ever only the working out and appropriation of an understanding. Only in the grip of that readiness for death, which grounds the resolve to the authentic freedom of our history, can we achieve a comprehensive grasp of the ownmost historical task of this new breakout in its authentic “magnificence” and “greatness.” The “deep and broad level-headedness” of
“the old Greek wisdom” enables us to understand that, “All greatness stands in the storm...” (SA 19). This concluding proclamation, >>Alles Grosse steht im Sturm...<< is of course a wilful translation, which must count as an extremely violent interpretation, of a line of Plato’s Republic: “Ta... megala panta episphale...,” and stands as a concise summary of the character of Heidegger’s creative repetition or appropriation of the original Greek beginning or breakout. The full sentence reads: “For surely all great things carry with them the risk of a fall, and, really as the saying goes, fine things are hard.”¹⁵⁷ Heidegger’s alteration of this passage is consistent with his characterization of the original inception of philosophy and the transformed attitude of the new German Aufbruch. The difficulty of understanding the whole that evokes wonder changes into the threatening tempest of existence that evokes fundamental anxiety. The greatness of the new breakout consists in its fighting self-exposure to the storm of what is; not in the achievements of its knowing, but in its persistent naked questioning of being.

Nor is Heidegger’s choice of this quotation from the Republic arbitrary, for it is a comment on the problem of the relation between philosophy and politics, the question of “{h}ow a city can take philosophy in hand without being destroyed.”¹⁵⁸ In the presentation of Plato’s Socrates, the best regime needs the presence of philosophy for its

¹⁵⁷ Plato, The Republic of Plato, Second Edition, Translated with Notes and an Interpretive Essay by Allan Bloom (Basic Book, 1991), 497 d 9. Schleiermacher’s “widely used translation” (available to Heidegger’s contemporaries as Bloom’s obviously was not), quoted by Johannes Fritsche, renders this sentence into German as “Denn alles Grosse ist auch bedenklick und, wie man sagt, das Schoene in der Tat schwer.” Fritsche translates Schleiermacher’s German version into English as, “For, all that is great is also grave, and, as they say, the beautiful is difficult indeed.” Cf. Fritsche, Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger’s Being and Time, p. 223.
persistence, and yet the public pursuit of philosophy is a grave venture for any regime. While Heidegger acknowledges the danger inherent in philosophy, he presents it as the serious task of the German nation, the spiritual mission of the *Volk*. However uncertain the political venture of philosophy may be, its hazards are equalled or exceeded by the dangers of not risking it: if the teachers and students of the university fail to live up to the demands of the spiritual mission of the *Volk*, then “no one will ask us either, whether we want or do not want {it}, when the spiritual force of the West fails and it cracks at the seams, when the outlived illusory culture collapses into itself and pulls all forces into confusion and lets them suffocate in madness” (SA 19). In Heidegger’s presentation, the dangers of neglecting the national mission, though of a different character, seem to equal the risks inherent to its pursuit.

The spiritual situation in which the teachers and students of the *Volk* find themselves authentically calls for a decision, either to let science quietly drift off, or to risk the charge forward into the uncertainty of the world. They alone face the decision for or against this grave venture: “It stands with us, whether and how far we trouble ourselves about the self-reflection and self-assertion from the ground up and not only casually, or whether we – with the best intentions – only alter the old arrangements and join them to new ones” (SA 19). The renewal of the possibility of philosophy, and therewith also of the science that now appears used up, requires the will to creatively

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159 Ibid., 497 b-d.
repeat the greatness of its original breakout, which is nothing other than the authentic resolve to repeat the deepest possibilities of the heritage of the *Volk*. The self-reflection and self-assertion required for the authentic recovery of science call for a complete spiritual transformation of the organization of the university. Altering the old arrangements, or merely reforming the university to keep it up to date with the times, simply will not suffice. Furthermore, while the immediate issue is only the transformation of the existence of the German university, it itself is to become the site of spiritual legislation for the German *Volk*, and in principle for the whole of humanity. The self-assertion of the German university begins a revolution that will reverberate through the whole of human existence. That self-assertion begins with the transformation of the liberal university into a community of battle, and inaugurates a great spiritual war against the old political arrangements and their illusory culture, which are only the institutional expressions of a decline into a corrosive spiritless averageness.

It manifestly appeared to Heidegger that the resolve for science (or the resolve that could be harnessed by science) and will to the total transformation of existence had already broken out, however, in the National Socialist youth movement. While Heidegger suggests that the goodness of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the National Socialist regime, depends upon its adoption of philosophy, indeed upon its submission to the rule of philosophy, specifically for the education and discipline of the future leaders and guardians of its destiny, in his presentation it is as much or more the case that philosophy required for its rejuvenation the new national breakout, exemplified by the militant

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160 Ibid., 497 d 5-6.
resolve of the radical students. As the highest ‘setting to work’ of the human, the most spiritual expression and cultivation of the forces of practical life, science or philosophy in Heidegger’s presentation depends for its vitality, for “the force of its essence” (SA 11), upon the naked self-assertion of youth, the vigour of their courage set loose from the restraints of conventional morality and ‘eternal truths,’ unleashed ‘beyond good and evil’ into an absolute freedom that expresses itself inevitably in enthusiasm and terror, and which finds its only limit in its extinguishment in death. The investigation of the whole of being is finally derivative of, and ultimately subordinate to, the self-submission to destiny, the confession and forceful imposition of the spiritual bedrock of our essence, the ultimately unteachable opinions and commitments that have been given over to us by the dispensation of fate, and which, speaking authentically, we ever already simply ‘are.’

The philosophy or science that follows Heidegger’s lead makes itself the adjutant of arbitrary, uninstructed (because unteachable), and belligerent conviction.

It is characteristic of Heidegger’s understanding of human freedom and its dignity, an understanding which stands at the core of his thought, that heneglects the fine or the beautiful and concentrates solely on greatness, and that he transforms its risk and hardship into the storm of what is, the confrontation with the difficulty of virtue into the

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161 BGE section 231:

Learning changes us; it does what all nourishment does which also does not merely ‘preserve’—as physiologists know. But at bottom of us, really ‘deep down,’ there is, of course, something unteachable, some granite of spiritual fatum, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions. Whenever a cardinal problem is at stake, there speaks an unchangeable ‘this is I’; about man and woman, for example, a thinker cannot relearn but only finish learning—only discover who this is ‘settled in him.’ At times we find certain solutions of problems that inspire strong faith in us; some call them henceforth their ‘convictions.’ Later—we see them only as steps to self-knowledge,
violence of assault, and the intimation of peril from a sober assessment of serious risk into the zealous embrace of grave danger. His insistence upon the anxious resolve exemplified by the National Socialist youth as the condition for the authentic happening of freedom, of science, and of human greatness finally renders them all indistinguishable in running forward into death. For Heidegger it is only the terror of this ‘greatness’ that provides any guidance, if ‘guidance’ it can yet be called, for human justice and nobility. It was therefore inevitable that he conflate the warlike resolve of the movement with the possibility for the highest achievements of human freedom. His insistence on the primacy of possibility over actuality and enthusiasm for the total or absolute freedom of the Dasein right up to the limits of its finitude ends in (as it must, because authentically interpreted it is) the horror of a constant, total, and ultimately doomed spiritual war of the new master Volk for the continual re-conquest of its freedom against the totality of what is. The radical experience of human freedom and the extreme interpretation of it that form the core of Heidegger’s intellectual project accordingly led him, in this manner, not merely to prepare the ground for, but to throw in his lot with the most violently destructive political movement ever to march across the face of the earth (SA 19).

signposts to the problem we are—rather, to the great stupidity we are, to our spiritual fatum, to what is unteachable very ‘deep down.’
Conclusion

We have now seen how, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s interpretation of the experience of human freedom disclosed by the conscience progressively works out its authentic concept as running ahead into death, as forward running resolve, as the re-conquest and repetition of the inherited possibilities of the past, and finally as a project of the seizure of state power for the sake of liquidating the public dictatorship of *das Man*, educating a new heroic officer class, and creating a new battle community of the *Volk*, the practical measures for which are ultimately laid out in “The Self-assertion of the German University.” At the same time that Heidegger’s work starkly and powerfully exposes for us the insufficiency of prior modern responses to the serious questions of human existence, it presents for our judgement a politics of unprecedented and unsurpassed odiousness. This is, in short, the serious practical problem that Heidegger poses for us: his compelling critique of modern mass society aims to sweep away any solid ground for resisting the militant project of freedom that is its genuine source. Having come face to face with the source and character of Heidegger’s authentic politics, we cannot but find ourselves forced to meet his assault head on. A survey of the available possibilities for defence against, or at least for weathering the storm of his critique of freedom therefore appears in order. There have been, broadly speaking, two ways of attempting to confront the challenge posed by Heidegger’s work. The first of these ways might be called rehabilitation, or (to employ Julian Young’s echo of Allied
efforts to reform Germany after the end of the Second World War) “de-Nazification.” 162 If it were possible to divorce Heidegger’s pursuit of the question of being from his awful political choices, one could parry the challenge that his work poses for us, or even negate it. This response to Heidegger’s thought accordingly asks: if we accept Heidegger’s admittedly devastating critique of the averageness of mass society, are we left with no resources for avoiding a march right up to the doorstep of fascist tyranny? The second way of confronting Heidegger’s teaching asks whether it is not without problems of its own; not in order to rehabilitate it, but either as a means of defending modern mass society against Heidegger’s assaults, or at least of rejecting the source of Heidegger’s thought as an adequate guide to the question that Heidegger himself raises anew, the question of how we should live, if only we are serious about going about being human. I shall discuss each of these approaches in turn.

A. Attempts at Rehabilitating Heidegger’s Thought

Some scholars have entertained the possibility of fixing Heidegger’s thought, of salvaging his pursuit of the question concerning the authentic meaning of being and the compelling elements of his analysis of human freedom from the wreckage of the terrible political consequences that he drew from them. One can indeed find instances in Heidegger’s own thought that are not only out of lockstep with orthodox Nazism, but which are even sharply opposed to it. The resonance of central elements of Heidegger’s thought with National Socialism (or broadly, and more precisely, with fascist politics)

does not mean that Heidegger did not take issue with central tenets of Nazi party doctrine. Heidegger’s attitude towards the orthodox racial doctrines of National Socialism is a case in point. While one can, like Claudia Koonz, choose to infer “racial innuendo” in Heidegger’s *Rektoratsrede*, and even find some evidence of anti-Jewish bigotry in some of his statements, he nonetheless never subscribed to the hard-line biological racism central to the party ideology, and indeed his own thought tends strongly against the materialistic ‘science’ which the Nazis used to justify their extreme racialism. The Nazis themselves sensed that Heidegger was loyal rather to his own ideal private version of National Socialism, which denied the crucial importance (for them) of racial thinking. As far as it goes this characterization is entirely accurate. Furthermore, Heidegger denied that the national awakening had been fully achieved with the Nazi seizure of power, but would first come about only through the efforts of

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Heidegger’s stance towards Nazi racial doctrine was more complicated than this statement suggests. Gregory Fried, for example, concurring with Jacques Derrida’s judgement on this point, notes that, “Derrida is right that Heidegger’s desire to valorize the German Volk and its role in the history of Being leads him to turn to ‘spirit’ in the rectoral address, as well as in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, as a vehicle to distinguish his understanding of the unique German task from that of the Nazi biological racists.” Citing evidence also cited by Koonz (a letter Heidegger wrote to the Ministry of Education in 1929) Fried concludes, “we cannot allow the absence of a biological racism in Heidegger to blind us to this strand of metaphysical racism in his nationalist thinking,” adding that, “this kind of nostalgia for a pure origin (in this case, of history and thinking with the Greeks), and the longing for a *purification* of the Volk for the purpose of an authentic relation with this originary history, have profoundly dangerous implications, for a cleansing based on spiritual grounds may be no less terrible than one based on biologicistic racism.” Gregory Fried, *Heidegger’s Polemos: From Being to Politics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 222, 228. The logic of Fried’s claim is not entirely clear: while the threat of racial degeneration falsely asserted by the Nazis could only be answered by the physical extirpation of the contamination, it is unclear that a spiritual degeneration could only be met in the same way. Would not a spiritual-cultural struggle suffice as a cure? However harsh the repression and occasional violence that might be required, it not does readily follow that it would demand the Nazis’ monstrous crimes. Yet Heidegger’s stance towards the biologistic racism of Nazism, which does indicate a profound difference with ‘orthodox’ Nazi doctrine, should not be understood as exculpatory, as I argue in the following paragraph; in no way did it either alter in theory, or mitigate in practice, his more fundamental commitment to a politics of perpetual resolute warfare for the repetition of the authentic
Heidegger and his students for the realization of his philosophical project (SA 17-18). National Socialism still needed to prove that it was capable of standing up to the demands of Heidegger’s project of freedom. It would therefore be both factually incorrect and unjust to suggest that Heidegger simply lacked any intellectual grounds by which he might have distanced himself from the politics of the National Socialists.

The presence of such resources makes his commitment to National Socialism nonetheless all the more striking. Having witnessed the awakening of a nascent authentic understanding of freedom, albeit one as yet ‘uneducated’ or unformed, his differences with party doctrines only became yet more reasons for involving himself with the new regime and trying to steer the promising new breakout into and along its proper road, for attempting to “slowly... purify and moderate the ‘movement’ that had come to power.”¹⁶⁶ His practical differences with party doctrine therefore only serve to highlight the essential position that an authentic being towards death holds in relation to the question of being and to his thought as a whole. That Heidegger never entirely or successfully distanced himself from his involvement with National Socialism either before or after the conclusion of the war, it may be concluded, is a function of the central importance which forward running resolve continued to hold in his mind for the reawakening of an authentic understanding of being. Even after he had resigned his post as rector, Heidegger confessed to Karl Loewith (whom he could hardly have feared was a party informant) his continued embrace of National Socialism on the ground of his concept of

historicality, a concept that, as we have seen, finds its ground in the authentic freedom for
death. In his *Contributions to Philosophy*, which he began to compose around the
same time as his conversation with Loewith, Heidegger again stressed the central
importance of being towards death for the question of being and a new beginning for
thinking (“a task, however, that is not limited to philosophy”). Years later in
*Gelassenheit*, a writing often taken as a work of passive resignation, Heidegger
nonetheless suggests, “something like power of action and resolve also reign in
releasement.” In turn, “resolve” has to be thought, the “Scholar” says, “as the opening of
Dasein particularly undertaken by him for openness...,” indeed “as it is understood
{already!} in *Being and Time*.” Indeed he goes so far as to suggest the identity of the
letting-be of releasement with the steadfastness of resolve: “There could be a
steadfastness hidden in releasement, residing simply in the fact that releasement becomes
increasingly clearer about its inner nature and, being steadfast, stands within this.”
All that can be said to have changed on this score between the ‘activist’ Heidegger of *Sein
and Zeit* and the ‘quietist’ Heidegger of *Gelassenheit* is the appearance of this “could
be...,” a “could be...” which in the context of that dialogue is hardly an expression of
scepticism, but rather the revelation or holding out of a promising possibility.

Other learned interpreters of Heidegger’s thought, among them Jacques Derrida,

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Controversy*, p. 142.

168 Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, translated by Parvis Emad and
Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 200. Heidegger further remarks that,
“The enactment of being-toward-death is a duty only for the thinkers of the other beginning. However,
every essential human being among those creating in the future can know of it.”

169 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of Gelassenheit by John M. Anderson and E.
have suggested that the later Heidegger subsequently outgrew the earlier subjectivist tendencies of *Being and Time*, and would therefore have avoided falling prey to the politics of National Socialism as he did in his Rectorate Address.\(^{170}\) This comforting and conciliatory suggestion was nonetheless contradicted by the ‘later’ Heidegger himself, in

\(^{170}\) This, at least, is Richard Wolin’s interpretation of Derrida’s position in *Of Spirit*, and of the position of other French followers of Heidegger:

In their efforts to downplay the philosophical underpinnings of Heidegger’s Nazism, their gambit has been to “sacrifice” the early Heidegger—the author of *Being and Time*—in order to save the post-*Kehre* Heidegger—the author of “Letter on Humanism” and “Overcoming Metaphysics.” According to this interpretive stratagem (which, it should be pointed out, closely parallels Heidegger’s own philosophical self-understanding), Heidegger’s political “error” may be explained by the fact that his early work is victimized by a *surfeit of metaphysical thinking*. That is, the philosophical approach of *Being and Time* remains overly indebted to the theoretical paradigm of Western humanism, with its glorification of “man,” “subjectivity,” “will,” and so forth; and it was precisely Heidegger’s excessive theoretical dependence on this “essentialist” categorical framework that allowed him to be seduced into believing that the “overcoming of nihilism” could be achieved by an actually existing, collective historical “subject” – National Socialist Germany. Hence, it was an overreliance on “metaphysical subjectivism” – the philosophical paradigm with which Heidegger would break so decisively in his post-*Kehre* phase – that was, in truth, responsible for his partisanship for Nazism (Wolin, *The Politics of Being*, pp. 155-156).

This is not the place to enter into the interpretation of the works of Derrida and the other French Heideggerians. Wolin’s interpretation is, perhaps, something of a simplification, and *Of Spirit* is hardly a ‘straightforward’ work. Derrida argues that it is only after the Rectorate Address that the meaning of *Geist* becomes a question for Heidegger; but equally that his thought remains ‘haunted’ by it (cf. *Of Spirit*, pp. 83, 40). Gregory Fried argues that Derrida in fact takes pains to avoid the sorts of conclusions that Wolin seems to infer: “The voluntarism thesis poses the danger of quarantining the problem by attributing it to a certain kind of lapse on Heidegger’s part, one that we can avoid. To his credit, Derrida does not argue in this way: precisely by *not* avoiding the ghost of metaphysics, rather than by assuming we have dispensed or can dispense with it, we can combat the entanglements of fascism.” Wolin’s gloss is, nonetheless, sufficient for my purposes here.

On the other hand, Derrida correctly understands that Heidegger’s “discourse on spirit is also a discourse on the freedom of the spirit,” that in its “massive voluntarism” the “exalting celebration of this spirit” becomes a question for Heidegger; but equally that his thought remains ‘haunted’ by it (Ibid., pp. 43, 37-38). Gregory Fried argues that Derrida in fact takes pains to avoid the sorts of conclusions that Wolin seems to infer: “The voluntarism thesis poses the danger of quarantining the problem by attributing it to a certain kind of lapse on Heidegger’s part, one that we can avoid. To his credit, Derrida does not argue in this way: precisely by *not* avoiding the ghost of metaphysics, rather than by assuming we have dispensed or can dispense with it, we can combat the entanglements of fascism.” Wolin’s gloss is, nonetheless, sufficient for my purposes here.

On the other hand, Derrida correctly understands that Heidegger’s “discourse on spirit is also a discourse on the freedom of the spirit,” that in its “massive voluntarism” the “exalting celebration of this spirit” (Ibid., pp. 43, 37-38), is a celebration of the spirit of freedom, and that “by celebrating the freedom of spirit” in his Rectorate Address, “its glorification resembles other European discourses (spiritualist, religious, humanist) that people generally”—in Heidegger’s language, inauthentically—“consider opposed to Nazism” (Derrida, “Heidegger: l’enfer des philosophes,” p. 172, cited by Wolin, *The Politics of Being*, p. 156). Wolin, by contrast, seems to assume that any invocation of freedom must be in conflict with an embrace of fascist politics, that (here Wolin echoes Jaspers) Heidegger was unable “to comprehend the concept of freedom,” and that consequently the talk of freedom in the address is merely “philosophical veneer,” and therefore not the result of serious reflection upon what human freedom is and requires (Wolin, *Politics of Being*, pp. 157, 153).
his interview with Der Spiegel:

Spiegel: But we must (we are almost done with this dreadful quoting) mention one other statement here, one that we cannot imagine that you would still subscribe to today. “Do not let theorems and ideas be the rules of your being. The Fuehrer himself and alone is the present and future German reality and its law.”

Heidegger: These sentences are not to be found in the rectorial address, but only in the local Freiburg student newspaper, at the beginning of the winter semester 1933/34. When I took over the rectorate, it was clear to me I would not get through it without making some compromises. Today I would no longer write the sentences you cited. Even in 1934, I no longer said anything of the kind. But today, and today more resolutely than ever, I would repeat the speech on the “Self-Assertion of the German University,” though admittedly without referring to nationalism. Society has taken the place of the nation [Volk]. However, the speech would be just as much a waste of breath today as it was then.171

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171 “Der Spiegel Interview with Martin Heidegger” in Guenther Neske and Emil Kettering, eds. Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers, Trans. Lisa Harries and Joachim Neugroschel, (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 45-46, emphasis mine. Regarding the last three sentences I have quoted of the interview, see note 118 above. The replacement of the Volk by society may well be a reason, in Heidegger’s mind, why the speech would be “just as much a waste of breath.” In a television interview given in 1969 Heidegger, said of society: “We have to consider that today’s society is only modern subjectivity made absolute. A philosophy that has overcome a position of subjectivity has no say in the matter.” (“Martin Heidegger in conversation with Richard Wisser,” in Neske and Kettering, eds., p. 82). Whatever promise Heidegger might have discerned in the national revolution for overcoming the reign of subjectivity (that is to say, of the average self-understanding of the human being as a merely present being, to which properties such as will and intellect somehow adhere, all of which is grounded in the everyday or inauthentic understanding of being as mere presence) through an authentic relation to the past grounded in freedom for death, not only went unfulfilled, but then subsided as a genuine possibility after the victory of Russia and America, who both represented “the same hopeless frenzy of unfettered technology and of the rootless organization of the normal man” (IM 40/EM 28-29).

A further comment on the work of Derrida and other like-minded interpreters of Heidegger’s thought is apposite in this connection. These comments of the later Heidegger do not represent a self-critique of, or a break with his earlier thought. There is already in Being and Time, as we have seen, a critique of the interpretation of the human being either as subject (hypokeimenon, subjectum) or as substance, and this critique is bound up with the radical working out and appropriation of the revelation of the conscience which grounds Heidegger’s politics. While Derrida correctly notes the central place of freedom in Heidegger’s thought, his association of Heidegger’s earlier work with the concept of subjectivity is mistaken. Johannes Fritsche helpfully notes, expressly contrary to the interpretation of David Farrell Krell, but implicitly contrary also to the interpretation of Derrida: “It is not, as Krell would have it, that Heidegger arrives at nationalism despite his criticism of substance and subject, but the other way around: he criticizes the substance and the subject to pave the way for nationalism” (Fritsche, p. 334). It is Heidegger’s concept of existence and its inherent critique of average subjectivity that calls for the recovery of authentic self-constancy and resolute self-responsibility in the shared fateful struggle for the repetition of the past that is the destiny of the Volk.
Even 33 years later, after the foreclosure of any possibility of a national breakout, even as he distanced himself from “compromises” with the “German reality,” Heidegger declared himself steadfastly willing to repeat his Rectorate Address in all its essential features, even more stridently and resolutely than in his first delivery of the speech. It is therefore more than doubtful that the authentic core of Heidegger’s thought is as susceptible to reinterpretation as many of his erstwhile ‘followers’ optimistically suppose. The singular force of the experience of authentic resolve in and for Heidegger’s work right up to the end of his life, far rather seems to preclude any opportunity, in Habermas’ phrase, “to think with Heidegger against Heidegger.”

This is not to exclude the possibility that this or that portion of Heidegger’s teaching might perhaps be harmlessly appropriated. The operation of the everyday phenomenon of ambiguity that Heidegger describes might, in the arena of scholarship, produce (as Julian Young and others have attempted to do) a ‘Heideggerian’ ‘thinking’ that is compatible with a commitment to modern mass society (indeed even in its liberal democratic variety). We should, however, be clear that this ‘thought’ would not be Heidegger’s own, the spiritual core of which is the authentic understanding of freedom as running forward into death. However successfully Heidegger’s thought might be made politically palatable by such means, one must wonder whether the result would merely be to clothe the real teeth of Heidegger’s teaching in the wool of liberal democracy, and whether Heidegger’s authentic thought might not thereby rather achieve at some future

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date its own victory and revenge. In the end there is no escaping the fact that
Heidegger’s compelling critique of the existence of modern mass society is part and parcel of his militant politics of national destiny, both of which are grounded in the conscientious experience of human freedom that he works out and appropriates as an authentic charging forward into death. One cannot, therefore, embrace Heidegger’s critique of our everyday understanding of freedom and the way of life that goes with it, while discounting the warlike politics consequent to that critique. If the world simply is as Heidegger, in and through the working out and appropriation of the experience of the conscience, describes it, or what works out to the same thing, if we simply are as Heidegger describes us, then we are left only with the choice of authentically facing, or inauthentically and futilely attempting to evade his politics. Heidegger’s work can give us no aid in avoiding the fate that his thought sets before us. If we seek some defence of modern liberal government, we shall have to look elsewhere.

**B. Counter-Critiques of Heidegger’s Thought**

The odiousness of the political consequences of Heidegger’s thought is, however, not itself a ground for ignoring his thought but at best a motive for inquiry. Recognizing the source and political consequences of Heidegger’s critique of our everyday existence does not provide us with the warrant to dismiss Heidegger’s thought *tout court*. His work exposes real difficulties in the foundations of modern mass society, and attempting to bury our heads in the sand will not make those difficulties disappear. It simply will not
do to try to stop up our ears and forcefully assert some other position arbitrarily more to our liking. Such efforts would either amount to an ultimately thoughtless attempt merely to evade the authentic force of Heidegger’s teaching, or, ironically enough, through the force of our self-assertion, themselves finally arrive willy-nilly at Heidegger’s own conclusions. Heidegger’s thought and its consequences must be squarely faced, and any attempt to counter his attacks must meet his teaching head on. We must turn, therefore, to the second approach to Heidegger’s thought, the search for a counter-critique of his work, and the preparation of a meeting engagement capable of stalling or at least weathering the storm of his project of freedom and its political consequences. Carrying out such an engagement would be beyond the scope of this study, so I will confine myself to presenting the outlines of the options that strike me as promising. As I see it, there are two possible fronts for a response to Heidegger’s teaching. On the one hand, we might contest Heidegger’s resolute assertion that freedom or self-determination forms the essential structure of the human Dasein. Alternatively, we might accept that freedom indeed defines the essence of humanity, and turn to an immanent critique of the activity of Heidegger’s authentic freedom-fighter, for while there may be no possibility of turning Heidegger’s concept of freedom against his militant political project, the practical demands of that project are not without difficulties and contradictions of their own.

1. The Critique of the Freedom as the Essence of the Dasein

The fundamental question for us is whether Heidegger’s teaching is an adequate
account of ‘what man is.’ The basic issue of that account is whether the human being or the Dasein is or can be essentially free in the manner that Heidegger describes. In *Being and Time* Heidegger never waives his assertion that the essence of the Dasein is characterized by self-determination: the human being is the being that goes about its being, the being for whom its own being is an issue. This self-determination of human existence nevertheless, according to Heidegger, manifests an essential or fundamental structure. Even allowing Heidegger’s claims that the being or project of the human Dasein is characterized by temporality, and the self-determination of freedom is ever historical and finite, its happening manifests a recognizable pattern or structure. We might wonder whether the persistence of this pattern or structure indicates something of a greater subsistence than Heidegger allows; that is to say, whether the human Dasein is not merely characterized by an essential self-determination but rather by an ‘enduring’ (even if not permanent or continually present) nature, which holds far more sway in determining human thought and action than Heidegger is willing to admit. The clearing of the there, and consequently the project of the understanding ‘within’ that clearing, would be shaped by persistent drives and forces that would not simply be reducible to the as-structure of the inherited public interpretedness that the human Dasein ever ‘inhabits.’ The experience of the clearing of the there, and even the experience of the revelation of the situation as it is disclosed by the phenomenon of the conscience, would not be the experience of primordial self-determination, but the emergent self-awareness of a natural being. Can any teaching, which so discounts the importance of embodiment and its demands in its account of the structure of the self, truly claim to be a complete and
adequate description of the human being?

Heidegger furthermore never wavers in asserting that the freedom of the human Dasein authentically forms a unified whole. It is certainly easier to imagine the human being as a primordial unity if its essence is characterized by a structure of self-determination. Dissonant manifestations of the moments of the structure of freedom are still subject to the decision of resolve. If the human Dasein is defined by freedom, then there would be nothing inherent in its being that would not be susceptible to the discipline of its will. If, however, the human Dasein were defined (at least in part) by an enduring nature, then it becomes harder to countenance the notion that it forms a unifiable whole. We might be led to wonder whether the concept of “moods” that Heidegger so emphasizes, sufficiently captures the power of such drives in determining the project of the understanding. It would not be a foregone conclusion that the collection of natural drives that shapes its being exists in harmony, or would be so susceptible to unification or mastery by the discipline of its will. Running forward into death would not represent the power of the finite freedom of the Dasein to grasp the whole of its being in advance, but at best only come up against limits of human resolve to be found within the being of the Dasein itself. This line of critique has the potential to lead us back from Heidegger’s thought to a reconsideration of the teachings of classic and earlier modern thinkers about humanity and nature, which imply both natural limits on the power of resolve and corresponding restraints on what Heidegger might reasonably expect of his militant political project.

In a certain sense this line of attack offers the most searching theoretical critique
of Heidegger’s thought, which, for all his emphasis on radical inquiry, never calls into question freedom as the essence of the human Dasein, and this assumption stands at the very core of his project. The difficulty that Heidegger poses for us is, however, not merely theoretical, but also or even primarily and directly political: his hermeneutic interpretation of freedom both “springs” from and “strikes back” at the practical engagements of our existence together (BT 62/SZ 38). While the theoretical critique of Heidegger’s work directly confronts the core of his teaching, it speaks only indirectly to his political project, and it doubtful that anyone in the grip of resolute conviction would hearken to these considerations, to say nothing of taking to heart the moderation they imply. It is admittedly true that most of Heidegger’s scholarly defenders generally purvey much tamer versions of his thought. Moreover, we certainly do not now face a free corps of resolute freedom-fighters committed to a perpetual war of liberation against the dictatorship of das Man for the reconquest of freedom in the repetition of the authentic possibilities of the past. That such danger is not imminent does not, however, mean that our need is not pressing. Modern mass society and representative government are badly in need of a practical defence in the wake of Heidegger’s assault upon their foundations. Such a direct defence must begin not with a critique of Heidegger’s interpretation of freedom as the essence of the human Dasein, but closer to the practical concerns of Heidegger’s resolute freedom-fighter, in order squarely to face them. In this spirit we turn to a second possible approach for a critique of Heidegger’s thought, offered by Kojève in his interpretation of Hegel.
2. Kojève’s Critique of Running Forward

For a direct critique of Heidegger’s project of freedom it seems fitting to turn to the thought of that modern thinker who is arguably Heidegger’s genuine antagonist in *Being and Time*, namely Hegel. More precisely, I shall turn to the interpretation of Hegel’s science developed by the political philosopher Alexandre Kojève. Heidegger’s own indications of his grudging respect for his modern arch-enemy Hegel aside, this choice is not merely arbitrary, for there are good reasons for thinking that Kojève found in Hegel’s work a response to Heidegger before the fact. Kojève’s own thought, available to us in his “careful and scholarly study of Hegel,” has been characterized as in fact a “menage a trois of Hegel, Marx, and Heidegger.” Indeed, one could go much further. Kojève credits Heidegger’s publication of *Sein und Zeit* with making Hegel’s thought intelligible to him: “the anthropology of the *Phenomenology,*” he boldly asserts, “would probably never have been understood if Heidegger had not published his book” (IRH 259 n. 41). Kojève reveals himself in this statement as, in the first instance, a

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173 It is indeed Hegel’s concept of time that Heidegger expressly confronts and criticizes at the close of *Being and Time* (cf. BT 480-486/SZ 428-436). James Phillips notes further evidence that Heidegger regarded Hegel as his principle philosophical adversary. Cf. James Phillips, *Heidegger’s Volk: Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford: Standford University Press, 2005), pp. 55-56. In *Being and Time* Heidegger writes that, “Hegel’s concept of time presents the most radical and too little attended conceptual forming out of the vulgar understanding of time” (BT 480/SZ 428). Elsewhere Heidegger presents Hegel’s thought as the completion of Western philosophy (echoing Hegel’s own judgement of his thought). Cf. e.g. EHF, 76-77/WMF 109: “One thing is still to be remembered: The understanding of being as constant presence not only kept up since ancient philosophy right through to Kant and determined {its} problematic, but that this interpretation of the understanding of being once more comes to clear expression precisely there, where Western metaphysics attains its authentic completion, i.e. there, where the start of ancient philosophy, just as like the subsequently attained essential motives of philosophical questioning, are brought to a unified delivery and a full presentation, with Hegel.”


student of Heidegger. According to Kojève, it is only through the existential interpretation, over 120 years after the appearance of the *Phenomenology*, that Hegel’s thought has been really grasped, and that the authoritative interpretation of it (that is to say, Kojève’s own interpretation of it) has become possible at all.

Given the efforts of Heidegger to emphasize the essential antagonism between his own thought and that of Hegel,\(^{177}\) however, might we not simply suspect the possibility of a fundamental incoherence in Kojève’s attempt at their mixture? Certainly it is unclear whether that philosophy which works out its concept equally as both substance and subject can incorporate a thinking that understands itself as grounded in an experience of the self as neither substance nor subject. If that objection to Kojève’s work stands, then we can hardly look to his thought for a rejoinder to Heidegger.

I would like to suggest, alternatively, that in the work of Kojève we witness no mere combination of, but rather a confrontation between, the science of Hegel and the thought of Heidegger. Kojève did not attempt an admixture or reconciliation of Heidegger’s thought with that of Hegel in order to remedy some inherent defect of the latter, but rather found in Hegel, by way of Heidegger, an answer to Heidegger’s own thought before the fact. That he must have done so we may rightfully infer from the fact that while he claims to have only understood Hegel’s science at all by means of Heidegger’s “authentically philosophical” work, it is the philosophy of Hegel, and not

\(^{177}\) Whereas Hegel proclaims that “... what matters is to grasp and express the true not {only} as *substance*, but just as much as *subject*” (PhS 10), Heidegger insists that the Dasein must be understood as “neither substance nor subject” (BT 351/SZ 303). In a corresponding fashion, while Hegel insists upon the priority of actuality, proclaiming that “The spiritual alone is the *actual*” (PhS 14; cf. also e.g. PR 10-11), Heidegger asserts: “Higher than actuality stands *possibility*” (BT 63/SZ 38).
that of Heidegger, which Kojève holds to be authoritative. Indeed he goes so far as to declare that *Being and Time* “adds, fundamentally, nothing new to the anthropology of the *Phenomenology*” (IRH 259 n. 41). This ‘anthropology’ moreover is not some partial aspect of Hegel’s absolute science, but adequately, i.e. philosophically, understood, rather represents the genuine whole of Hegel’s human teaching: the absolute science of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is according to Kojève (and, in Kojève’s interpretation, also according to Hegel) nothing other than a, nay, *the* most thoroughgoing and comprehensive anthropology (cf. IRH 34-35, 39). The existential interpretation does not ultimately stand beyond, and therefore does not ultimately escape the grasp of the absolute knowing of the concept. Hegel’s account of ‘what man is’ remains comprehensive despite (and in a certain yet profound sense because of, or ‘through’) the challenge that Heidegger’s thought poses for it. So what was it, exactly, that Kojève discovered in these thinkers? What was it that Heidegger’s thought gave him to understand about Hegel’s, which nonetheless led him to regard the latter as superior?178

In order to grasp the essence of the critique of Heidegger’s politics that Kojève found in Hegel’s work, it is necessary to begin with a recapitulation of the understanding of the resolute freedom-fighter. Heidegger’s new authentic master wins and maintains

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178 In the following discussion I shall treat Kojève as simply of a mind with Hegel. This proposition is of course demonstrably false, as can readily be gleaned from several instances where Kojève takes issue with Hegel’s teaching over matters that he regarded as essential to it. This issue is not without consequence for the suggestion I have ventured about Kojève’s comparative estimation of the merits of the teachings of Heidegger and Hegel. Kojève’s differences with, and correction of certain elements of Hegel’s teaching may well have their root in his study not only of Marx but of also Heidegger. This would imply that Kojève’s presentation of Hegel’s teaching as authoritative is not quite as one-sided as I have portrayed it. Nonetheless my treatment of it is sufficiently adequate as regards our present problem—the concept of freedom and its political consequences—that we need not concern ourselves with their specific differences here.
his freedom only in steadfastly confronting the nothing of his possibility, in staking his existence against the whole of what is, in wagering the whole of his being, that is to say, his life, in a fight before and against a continually threatening and uncertain world. One might perhaps object, of course, that he wagers his life by engaging in actual fighting only periodically, but in the project of the new master, human existence, authentically understood, is precisely such constant battle. He understands himself as transcending the whole world in and through this perpetual warfare. He lives his whole life, and that is also to say, experiences the constant unity of his freedom, precisely in terms of such an understanding. The more authentically he resolves himself, the more his whole Dasein is defined through and through by an express being towards death. This means equally that he never advances beyond the constant possibility of a charging forward into death. He can never rest satisfied with his resolute action in the fight hitherto. Running forward into death as the authentic experience of human freedom is, and can exist only as, a persistent possibility to be continually seized upon, happening only in the continual (and therefore unfinishable) struggle for the repeatable possibilities of the authentic past. Heidegger’s new master can accordingly never really actualize his primordial freedom. And therewith we come equally both to the essential requirement and to the essential difficulty for the self-understanding of the new master, who, to be whom he believes and resolves himself to be, can never truly realize his authentic freedom: Heidegger’s resolute freedom-fighter must both constantly seek and continually refuse or deny the actualization of his freedom.

On the one hand, in the grip of the disclosedness of the conscience, Heidegger
insists, as he must, that existential possibility (as opposed to mere or purely formal possibility) stands higher than any actuality. And yet that possibility, as a genuine human possibility, as an authentic can-be, must by an unavoidable logic seek to prove itself. Willingly or not, Heidegger finds himself compelled to face up to actuality as a, or even the, standard for human possibility: the self-given task of the Rectorate Address is the “realization” of the essence of the German University (SA 16). The militant resolve of the conscience must set itself in all earnestness to the accomplishment, to the practical realization of its self-legislated tasks, even as it denies to itself the possibility of their authentic achievement. The realization of its tasks would, of course, finally consist in the recognized reality of their achievement. The recognition of its accomplished freedom over against the whole of being would necessarily be a universal recognition. Just as the existential interpretation denies the primacy of actuality, so too (since in the end it works out to the same thing) must it deny any priority to the recognition of an achieved community of minds in the face of the silent voice of the conscience (in contrast to the vainglorious motives of the original master described by Hobbes and Hegel). The original master fought for a recognition that he sought in vain, because he could necessarily never be satisfied by the recognition of other human beings who became his slaves: the new master of Heidegger’s radical project can never be satisfied with the recognition of the public dictatorship of das Man and its indistinguishable, slavish, average mass; neither of them can be satisfied by the recognition of others whose worth they themselves fundamentally do not recognize (IRH 50).

According to Kojève, “The Master’s attitude, therefore, is an existential impasse”
(IRH 19; cf. pp. 46, 50). The authentic master, according to his own understanding of freedom, must continually assert the primacy of his authentic possibility as over against actuality, indeed against actuality as such, and consequently against every subsisting actuality, that is to say, against the totality of what is. He can therefore only affirm his absolute or total freedom in the violent assertion of his existence in the face of the whole, that is, “Only in destroying something does this negative will possess the feeling of itself as existent” (PR, remark to paragraph 5). As odious as this “fury of destruction” may be for the victims of the violence of the new master in his constant battle, it is also his tragedy: “Since the Master transcends the given World only in and by the risk of his life, it is only his death that ‘realizes’ his freedom” (IRH 29). His tragedy consists not in his ultimate self-sacrifice, whose possibility is so far from unexpected that it illuminates the whole of his self-understanding, but that he can only realize his freedom in death, which is to say (as Kojève indicates by means of his quotation marks), that he can never realise his freedom, can never give his existence any actuality. “In short, the Master never succeeds in realizing his end, the end for which he risks his very life. The Master can be satisfied only in and by death, his death or the death of his adversary.” (IRH 46) The “fury of destruction” must in the end become the freedom’s self-annihilation. The self-inherited task of the new master is always an unfinished task, nay, an essentially unfinishable task, which is to say: an impossible task. The pure Da-sein of the master in the fullness of his resolve can accordingly never have what it authentically wants. “But one cannot be befriedigt (fully satisfied) by what is, by what one is, in and by death,” Kojève writes, “For death is not, the dead man is not” (IRH 46). The authentic teaching
of *Being and Time*, which reveals its practical elaboration, and sets itself to work, in and as the programme of “The Self-assertion of the German University,” shows itself in the end only to be a recipe for an existence that is doomed to frustration, for “if man can be satisfied only by recognition, the man who behaves as a Master will never be satisfied” (IRH 19-20). The master might object that he has given up on satisfaction. That he ‘does’ so, while constantly giving himself over to the realization of the tasks of his essential freedom, is nevertheless a self-contradictory, and consequently absurd, position.

To be sure, the experience of the confrontation with death is essential to human freedom, which by its nature can only be a finite possibility. As Hegel says in his 1802 essay on natural right, “pure freedom” first shows itself in and as “death,” and it is through death, that is, “through the faculty (*Faehigkeit*) of death” that “the Subject [= Man] shows himself (*erweist sich*) as being free and absolutely elevated (*erhaben*) above all constraint (*Zwang*)” (Volume VII, page 370, lines 10-13, cited by Kojève, IRH 247). The human confrontation with mortality, that is, the understanding confrontation of the human being with the inescapable and indefinitely certain ‘fact’ of death, or in Heidegger’s language the ‘running forward into the possibility,’ is necessarily the first glimmer of human freedom, but only, as it were, its promise. The self-conscious confrontation with death is certainly necessary for the realization of human freedom (IRH 52, 56-57), but only as an origin, and not as its highest and fullest elaboration. Death *is not*. Its possibility gives the Dasein nothing to be actualized. At the level of the resolve of the new master, human freedom can never manifest itself, it can never be actualized, it can never *prove* itself, except in the storm of battle, whose “proof” disappears just as soon
as it is finished. The action of the master only intimates but never actually demonstrates the absolute elevation of human freedom above constraint, the sole action through which it might achieve its authentic satisfaction. If freedom can be satisfied through the recognition of its realized actuality, it is so not in the resolve of battle but only in the transformation of given nature through labour.

In contrast to the “human Action of the Master,” his “purely warlike attitude”—which in the end “reduces to risking his life,” which is necessarily and essentially “the same at all times and in all places,” and which accordingly changes nothing because it cannot change anything—it is the labour of the servant that realizes the freedom of the human being in the face of the whole (IRH 51, 42). Only a free being, or more precisely a negativity which somehow stands outside the whole as merely given, can change it, and it is only through his labour that the human being actually demonstrates his total independence from the whole of what is, if indeed any proof of his freedom is possible at all. “Man who works transforms given nature” (IRH 51). It is work that transforms essentially hostile nature into a world suitable for human habitation, a human world, wherein the human being “no longer depends on given, natural conditions of existence” (IRH 49). In and through labour the human being demonstrates his mastery of nature, of both the external world that his action transforms, and his own animal instincts, the discipline or education of which is an absolute requirement of his setting himself to work. Through this transformative self-discipline and labour the servant comes “to possess a technique” (IRH 48), which is the root of any and all achievements of human civilization, the “Industry” for the “Culture of the Earth,” “Navigation,” “commodious Building,”
“Knowledge of the face of the Earth,” and all else that is “necessary to commodious living” (L 16/62, 188/63), and, more fundamentally, the “Understanding, abstract thought, science, technique, the arts” which make them at all possible (IRH 49).

Labour even shows itself in the end to be the truth of the fight. For the master, old or new, “The risk itself is what counts, and it does not matter whether a stone ax or a machine gun is being used.” It is only the “Work” of the servant “that one day produces a machine gun, and no longer an ax” (IRH 51). It is not the action of the resolute master, but the labour of the servant, that works out and elaborates the courage of the risk of life in the fight, that in accordance with the project of “thought and the universal” creates the conditions of the situation which “has given courage a higher form,” through purifying it such that “its display now seems to be more mechanical, the act not of this particular person, but of a member of a whole,” and which “seems to be turned not against single persons, but against a hostile group, and hence personal bravery appears impersonal.”

This appearance of the new, higher, “abstract” form of courage is due to the fact that “thought has invented the gun”—which does not mean merely the physical production of handheld infantry gunpowder weapons capable of discharging projectiles at supersonic

179 These statements of Hegel concerning the transformation of the experience of battle appear to contradict Kojève’s claims about the risk of life being the same at all times and in all places, cited above. This contradiction is only apparent. On the one hand, Kojève’s description of the sameness of the risk of life refers to the “purely warlike attitude” of the master, which indeed does not and cannot change. Running forward into death is meaningless in itself. “To risk one’s life is better than merely fearing death, but is still purely negative and so indeterminate and without value in itself. It is the positive aspect, the end and content, which first gives significance to this spiritedness.” (PR Remark to paragraph 328) It is only the cunning labour of the servant that transforms or purifies the experience or meaning of battle, not for the master but for himself, when he once again takes up arms as a citizen (or fights to become a citizen). On the other hand, Hegel’s own statements are somewhat ambiguous. That he writes of semblance and appearance should not be overlooked. The transformation and purification of the experience of battle may well be more apparent than real. The end and content of that experience, however, that is to say its meaning, is given shape through human labour.
speeds, but also of the doctrines of their organized military application—the appearance of which alters the fight for the individual soldier such that no amount of physical prowess ultimately falls into weight in staking his life against the arms of the enemy (PR paragraph 328 and Remark; cf. Addition to paragraph 327). In sum, the “human ideal,” the freedom of the human being in the fullness of its authentic dignity, “can be realized and revealed, can become \textit{Wahrheit} (truth), only in and by Slavery” (IRH 47). The real history of humanity, that is to say, of freedom, and therefore also necessarily the particular history of the \textit{Volk}, is most truly a history not of fighting, but of human works.

It is not the community of battle, but rather the community of work, whose concerns Heidegger largely treats in \textit{Being and Time} as simply of a piece with inauthentic existence, and the shared pains of the “labour service” upon which he accordingly wastes so little breath in his Rectorate Address, that promises to empower freedom in its truth. If freedom can find any satisfaction, it is only realized through the achieved transformation of the world. Accordingly, if Heidegger’s resolute new master would realize his freedom and achieve the authentic satisfaction of his existence, he must eventually turn away from the re-conquest of the primordial history of the heroes of the \textit{Volk}, and the continual war for being, to work, which means, finally, to the concerns of our common business, and find his freedom in the achieved history of its labours. In the end he must recover for himself this “creative education of man by work” which “creates History - i.e., human \textit{Time}” (IRH 53) the understanding of which Heidegger assaults so forcefully, as an inauthentic or vulgar interpretation of history and time, in his attempt to overturn it. If, therefore, it is labour which educates man to actual freedom, if, that is, it is the action of
the labour of the servant that fulfills or realizes, and therefore satisfies his freedom, then
the master must cease to be a master as such, if he would have any possibility of
achieving such satisfaction. If, however, Heidegger’s new master should prove
fundamentally uneducable, that is, if he cannot reconcile himself to what is in the hope of
recovering his freedom in the achieved history of human labour, then he is doomed either
to have a universal recognition imposed upon him or forfeit his existence in the struggle
to achieve it. 180

However that may be, Heidegger’s own experiences with the new radical students
and with the Nazi movement more generally, and their resistance to his programme of
education, suggest that he grossly overestimated the prospects for his project, in a manner
consistent with the prior critique of his thought that Kojève seems to have found in
Hegel. If that critique is correct, then Heidegger overestimated the scope of possibility
for carrying out his project of freedom not merely in connection with the National
Socialists, but as such, because he failed to realize that his thinking denies itself the
means to have what it wants, that indeed what it wants can never be had by any means,
and that its character is therefore fundamentally not Promethean but Sisyphean.
Heidegger’s fateful resolve is doomed to frustration. As indirect evidence for this
suggestion, it is worth noting Heidegger’s own confession that being continually hides
itself even from the resolute thinker of the other inception who pursues the question of its
authentic meaning. Courage, in the final analysis, can at best only be the beginning of

180 In practice, the best that the resolute master can hope for in this case is to be confronted with by an
enemy, who, magnanimous in victory, agrees to accept his unconditional surrender, and forces him to
actualize his freedom in work. Therewith, however, the master ceases to be a master as such.
the road to truth. This would further finally suggest that Heidegger was fundamentally in error about the essence of spirit and therewith also, and most fundamentally, about the essential character of human freedom. Hegel’s understanding of the labour of spirit not only represents a critique of Heidegger’s thought and politics avant la lettre, but represents and expresses the core of Hegel’s own thought. One of his greatest students recognized and proclaimed that “Hegel... erfasst die Arbeit als das Wesen, als das sich bewahrende Wesen des Menschen,”¹¹⁸¹ which means here that it forms the essence of his anthropology and therewith also of the system of his science. If Hegel is correct about the human spirit, his science might enable us to recognise the achieved actuality, or project the outlines of a regime that represents a definitive modern alternative to Heidegger’s authentic community of battle. On this ground we might assert that there might yet exist an actual or at least possible (‘actual’ but not yet ‘real’) “empire of liberty,” a version of modern mass society that, if perhaps not able to resist all comers, is at least capable of weathering the storm of Heidegger’s assaults. The examination of the possibility and character of such an empire, however, represents the proper theme of another study.

¹¹⁸¹ Karl Marx, quoted by Kojève, IRH 3. Heidegger essentially concurs with this judgement (cf. e.g. ST 47/ SWF 57).
Appendix: *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universitaet*

[9] The Self Assertion of the German University

The taking over of the rectorate is the obligation for the *spiritual* leadership of this high school. The following [Gefolgschaft] of teachers and students awakens and strengthens only from the true and common deep rooting in the essence of the German university. This essence however, comes first to clarity, rank, and power when right at the front and at all times, the leaders themselves are the led – led by the inexorability of that spiritual mission which presses the fate of the German *Volk* into the stamp of its history.

Do we know about this spiritual mission? Whether yes or no, the question remains inevitable: *are we*, the body of teachers [Lehrerschaft] and the student body [Schuelerschaft] of this high school, truly and commonly deeply rooted in the essence of the German university? Has this essence genuine [echte] stamping force for our Dasein? It does only then, when we *will* this essence from out of the ground. Who would like, however, to doubt about it? Generally, one sees the predominant [vorwaltenden] essence-character of the university in its “self-administration”; this should remain preserved. Only – have we completely thought it over, what this claim to self-administration demands from us?

Self-administration actually [doch] means: to set ourselves the task and to determine alone the way and manner [Weg und Weise] of its realization, in order to be solely therein what we should be. But do we know then, *who we ourselves are,* this
corporation [Koerperschaft] of teachers and students of the highest school of the German Volk. Can we know that at all, without the most constant and harshest self-reflection?

Neither the knowledge [Kenntnis] of the contemporary [heutigen] condition of the university, nor even the acquaintance with its earlier history [10] establishes already a sufficient knowing of its essence – unless we previously in clarity and hardness bind this essence for the future, in such self-restriction will it, and that we in such willing assert ourselves.

Self-administration lasts only on the ground of self-reflection. Self-reflection however happens only in the force of the self-assertion of the German university. Will we carry it out, and how?

The self-assertion of the German university is the originary, common will to its essence. The German university is valid for us as the high school, which from science and through science takes the leaders and guardians of the fate of the German Volk into education and discipline. The will to the essence of the German university is the will to science as will to the historical spiritual mission of the German Volk as an in its state self-knowing Volk. Science and German fate must especially come to power in the willing of essence [im Wesenswillen]. And they become it then and only then, when we – the body of teachers [Lehrerschaft] and the student body [Schuelerschaft] – first expose science to its innermost necessity and when we also [zum anderen] stand firm against the German fate in its utmost emergency.

We experience the essence of science certainly not in its innermost necessity so long as we only – speaking from the “new concept of science” – dispute the
independence and presuppositionlessness of an all too contemporary science. This merely negative and scarcely looking back over the last decades doing has just about become the appearance [Schein] of a true trouble about the essence of science.

If we want to grasp the essence of science, then we must first go right under the eyes [unter die Augen gehen] of the deciding question: should science still be for us, or should we let it drive off towards a quick end? That science should be at all, is never unconditionally necessary. If science [11] should however be, and if it should be for us and through us, under what condition can it then truly exist [bestehen]?

Only then, when we again set ourselves under [wir… uns… unter… stellen] the power of the beginning of our spiritual-historical Dasein. This beginning is the breakout [Aufbruch] of Greek philosophy. Therein Western man stands up out of one people [Volkstum] by virtue of its language for the first time against the whole of being [das Seiende im Ganzen] and questions and conceives it as the being that it is. All science is philosophy, whether it knows and wants it – or not. All science stays arrested by that beginning of philosophy. Out of it it breathes the force of its essence, assuming that it stays equal at all still to this beginning.

We want here to win back two honoured properties of the original Greek essence of science for our Dasein.

Among the Greeks an old account went around, that the first philosopher had been Prometheus. Aischylos let this Prometheus say a saying, which speaks out the essence of knowing: “Knowing however is far less forceful than necessity.” That wants to say: every knowing about the things remains delivered over to the superior power of fate and
fails before it.

Exactly therefore knowing must develop its highest defiance, for which first the whole power of the hiddenness of being opens up, in order actually to fail. Thus being opens itself in its unfathomable inalterability and lends to knowing its truth. This saying of the creative impotence of knowing is a word of the Greeks, among whom one would like all too cheaply to find the model for a pure putting itself forward and therewith self-forgetting knowing, that one interprets for us as the “theoretical” posture. – But what is theoria for the Greeks? One says: the pure [12] examination, which remains obliged only to the object [der Sache] in its fullness and its demand. This examining posture is supposed with appeal to the Greeks to happen for the sake of itself. But this appeal is wrong [hat unrecht]. For first of all “theory” happens not for the sake of itself, but only in the passion to remain close to the beings as such and under their torment. On the other hand [Zum andern] however the Greeks battled thereabouts to conceive and carry out [vollziehen] this considering questioning as one, indeed, as the highest manner of energeia, of the “setting-to-work” of the human. Its sense does not stand accordingly for adjusting practice to theory, but the other way around, for understanding theory itself as the highest realization of genuine [echter] practice. For the Greeks science is not a “cultural good” but the innermost determining middle of the whole popular-state [volklich-staatlichen] Dasein. Science is for them not the mere means for the making conscious of the unconscious, but the whole Dasein sharp-keeping and embracing power [die das ganze Dasein scharfhaltende und es umgreifende Macht].

Science is the questioning standing firm in the middle of the continually self-
hiding whole of being. This acting holding out knows therewith its own impotence before fate.

That is the beginning essence of science. But does not this beginning lie already two and one half thousand years back? Has not the advance of human doing also changed science? Certainly! The following Christian-theological world interpretation, as well as the later mathematical-technical thinking of the modern age have removed science temporally and objectively from its beginning. But therewith the beginning itself is in no way overcome let alone destroyed. Assuming then, the originary Greek essence of science is something great, then the beginning of this greatness stays its greatest. The essence of science could not first of all be emptied and used up, as it is today despite all results and “international organizations,” if the greatness of the beginning did not still exist [bestuende]. The beginning is still. It lies [13] not behind us as the long finished has been, but it stands before us. The beginning as the greatest has passed over in advance over all coming things and thus over us already also. The beginning has joined in with our future, it stands there over us as the far off order to again catch up with its greatness.

Only when we resolutely obey this distant order in order to win back the greatness of the beginning, only then for us will science turn into the innermost necessity of the Dasein. Otherwise it stays a coincidence, which we have gotten into, or the calmed comfort of a dangerless preoccupation with the promotion of a mere advance of knowledges.

If however we obey the distant order of the beginning, then science must turn into
the grounding happening of our spiritual-popular Dasein.

And if our ownmost Dasein itself really stands before a great change, if it is true, what the passionately God seeking last German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, said: “God is dead”, if we must put into practice [Ernst machen ... mit...] this loneliness of man of today in the middle of beings, how does it stand then with science?

Then the beginning admiring holding out of the Greeks before the beings changes into the completely uncovered being abandoned into the hidden and unknown, that is, the questionworthy. Questioning is then no more only the overcomeable first step towards the answer as knowing, but questioning becomes itself the highest shape of knowing. Questioning then unfolds its ownmost force of unlocking the essential of all things. Questioning then presses to the utmost simplification of the gaze onto the vital.

Such questioning breaks the encapsulation of the sciences into separate subjects, hauls it back from the endless and goalless dispersion into isolated fields and corners and exposes science again immediately to the fertility and to the blessing of all world forming powers of the human-historical Dasein, as there are: nature, history, language; Volk, [14] custom, state; writing [Dichten], thinking, believing; sickness, madness, death; right, economy, technology.

If we want this essence of science, in the sense of the questioning unprotected standing firm in the middle of the uncertainty of the whole of being, then this will of essence creates for our Volk its world of innermost and utmost danger, that is, its truly spiritual world. For “spirit” is neither empty astuteness, not the non-binding play of wit, nor the endless pursuit of rational destructuring [Zergliederung], nor even world reason,
but spirit is originally attuned, knowing resolve to the essence of being [des Seins]. And the \textit{spiritual world} of a \textit{Volk} is not the superstructure of a culture, just as little as the gearhouse for usable knowledges and values, but it is the power of the deepest keeping of its earthly [erdhaften] and bloodly forces as power of the innermost excitement and widest tremor of its Dasein. A spiritual world alone establishes greatness for the \textit{Volk}.

For it forces thereto, that the constant deciding between the will to greatness and the not stopping of the decline becomes the pace law for the march upon which our \textit{Volk} has begun in its future history.

If we want this essence of science, then the body of teachers of the university must actually advance to the outermost posts of danger of constant world-uncertainty. If they stand firm there, that is, you grow from there – in essential nearness to the torment of all things – the common questioning and communally attuned saying, then they will become strong for leading [\textit{zur} Fuehrerschaft]. For the decisive in leading is not mere going ahead, but the force for being able to go alone, not out of obstinacy and lust for rule, but by virtue of a deepest determination and widest obligation [\textit{Verpflichtung}]. Such force binds to the essential, and does the selection of the best, and wakes the genuine [echte] following [\textit{Gefolgschaft}] of those who are of new courage. But we need not first awaken such a following. The German student body [\textit{Studentenschaft}] is on the march. And whom they are seeking, [15] that is those leaders, through whom they want to raise their own determination to the grounded, knowing truth and place it in the clarity of the interpreting-effective word and work.

Out of the resoluteness of the German student body to stand firm to the German
fate in its utmost emergency, comes a will to the essence of the university. This will is a true will, provided that the German student body through the new student law places itself under the law of its essence and therewith first of all places limits around this essence. To give oneself the law is the highest freedom. The much sung “academic freedom” will be rejected out of the German university; for this freedom was false [unecht], because only negative. It meant predominant unconcernedness, as-you-like-ness of intentions and inclinations, unboundedness in doing and letting. The concept of freedom of the German student will now be brought back to its truth. Out of it the future binding and service of the German student body develops.

The first bond is that which binds to the community of the Volk. It obliges to the enduring-with and acting-with sharing in the pains, endeavours, and abilities of all estates and members of the Volk. This bond will henceforth be made fast and rooted into the student Dasein through labour service.

The second bond is that which binds to the honour and the fate of the nation in the middle of the other peoples [Voelker]. It demands the secured in knowing and being-able, and tightened through discipline, readiness for action to the last. This bond will in future embrace and penetrate the whole student Dasein as military service.

The third bond of the student body is that which binds to the spiritual mission of the German Volk. This Volk works at its destiny, while it sets its history in the obviousness of the superior power of all world-conceiving powers of the human Dasein and wins its spiritual world for itself ever anew. Thus set out into the utmost questionworthiness of its own Dasein, this Volk wants to be a spiritual Volk. It demands
[16] from itself and for itself the hardest clarity of the highest, broadest, and richest knowing in its leaders and guardians. A student youth, which is venturing early into manhood and spreading its will over the future fate of the nation, presses itself completely towards the service to this knowing. It will no longer permit knowledge service to be the hollow and quick training for a “distinguished” profession. Because the statesman and teacher, the doctor and the judge, the pastor and the master builder lead the popular-state Dasein and watch and hold keen in its grounding relations to the world-conceiving powers of the human being [des menschlichen Seins], therefore these professions and the education for them are answered over to knowledge service. Knowing does not stand in the service of the professions, but the other way around: the professions effect and administer that highest and essential knowing of the Volk about its whole Dasein. But this knowing is for us not the soothing taking note of essences and values in themselves, but the severest endangering of the Dasein in the middle of the superior power of beings. The questionworthiness of being in general forces the Volk to labour and battle and presses into its state, to which the professions belong.

The three bonds – through the Volk to the fate of the state in the spiritual mission – are equally original for the German essence. The three services that spring from there – labour service, military service, and knowledge service – are equally necessary and of equal rank.

The with-acting knowledge for the Volk, the knowing that holds itself ready for the fate of the state as one with the knowledge for the spiritual mission first create the original and full essence of science, whose realization is set for us – assuming that we
obey [lit. ‘join ourselves to’] the distant order of the beginning of our spiritual-historical Dasein.

This science is meant when the essence of the German university is defined as the high school, that from science and through science takes the leaders and guardians of the [17] destiny of the German Volk into education and discipline.

This original concept of science obliges not only to “objectivity,” but first to the essentiality and simplicity of questioning in the middle of the historical-spiritual world of the Volk. Yes – from here objectivity can first truly justify itself, that is, find its way and limits.

Science according to this sense must turn into the shaping power of the corporation of the German university. In it lies a double sense: the body of teachers and the student body must first each in its way become seized and remain seized by the concept of science. At the same time however this concept of science must in a reorganized manner intervene in the basic forms, within which the teachers and students act scientifically at the same time in community: in the faculties and in the disciplines.

The faculty is only a faculty, if it develops itself for a capacity for spiritual lawgiving rooted in the essence of its science, in order to shape the powers of the Dasein that harass it into the one spiritual world of the Volk.

The discipline is only a discipline, if it sets itself from here in front into the sphere of this spiritual lawgiving and therewith brings the limits of the subject [Fach] to fall and overcomes the musty and false of external professional training.

In the moment [Augenblick], when the faculties and disciplines start up the
essential and simple questions of their science, the teachers and students are also already embraced by the same final emergencies and torments of the popular-state Dasein.

The shaping-out however of the original essence of science demands such a measuring of strictness, responsibility, and superior patience, that over against it for example the conscientious following or the zealous alteration of finished procedures scarcely falls into weight.

If however the Greeks needed three centuries in order [18] even only to bring the question, what knowing is, onto the right ground and into the secure road, then we should not intend that the lighting up and developing of the essence of the German university will take place only in the current or coming semester.

But certainly we know one thing from the indicated essence of science, that the German university comes to shape and power only then, when the three services – labour, military, and knowledge service – originally meet in one stamping force. That is to say:

The essential will of the body of teachers must awaken and strengthen the simplicity and width of knowledge about the essence of science. The essential will of the student body must press itself up into the highest clarity and discipline of knowledge and demandingly and determinedly shape the collective science [Mitwissenschaft] about the Volk and its state into the essence of science. Both wills must mutually set themselves to the battle. All willful and thoughtful capabilities, all forces of the heart and all abilities of the body, must be developed through battle, be increased in battle, and be kept to remain as battle.

We choose the knowing battle of the questioners, and profess with Carl von
Clausewitz: “I renounce the careless hope of salvation through the hand of chance.”

The battle community of teachers and students will however only then make the German university into the place of spiritual lawgiving and effect in it the middle of the strictest collection for the highest service to the Volk in its state, when the body of teachers and the student body arrange their Dasein more simply, more harshly, and more frugally than all other Volksgenossen. All leading must admit the following its own force [der Eignekraft]. Each following [Folgen] however carries resistance within itself. This contrast of character in leading and following should neither be covered over, nor at all extinguished.

[19] Battle alone holds the contrast open and plants in the whole corporation of teachers and students that fundamental mood, out of which the self-limiting self-assertion empowers the resolute self-reflection for genuine self-administration.

Do we will the essence of the German university, or do we will it not? It stands with us, whether and how far we trouble ourselves about the self-reflection and self-assertion from the ground up and not only casually, or whether we – with the best intentions – only alter the old arrangements and join them to new ones. No one will hinder us from doing this.

But no one will ask us either, whether we will or do not will, when the spiritual force of the West fails and it cracks at the seams, when the outlived illusory culture collapses into itself and pulls all forces into confusion and lets them suffocate in madness.

Whether such happens or does not happen, that depends alone on whether we will
ourselves as a historical-spiritual Volk still and again – or whether we no longer will ourselves. Each individual decides about this too, also then and indeed then, when he makes way before this decision.

But we will that our Volk fulfills its historical mission.

We will ourselves. For the young and youngest force of the Volk, which already reach over us, has already decided about this. We first fully understand the magnificence and the greatness of this breakout, however, when we carry in us that deep and broad level-headedness, out of which the old Greek wisdom spoke the word:

Ta… megala panta episphale…

“All greatness stands in the storm…”
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