

Crippling Occident: Heidegger and being-impaired.

by

Connor J. Steele

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Connor J. Steele

Abstract

I attempt to trace Heidegger's development from existential phenomenology to the task of thinking, by way of analyzing the impairment-disability problem in late modern societies. I contend that Heidegger's critique of Cartesian subjectivity is a useful starting point for understanding the experience of impaired persons and the world of disability. Thence, I link this experience to the problems of the will and modern nihilism that form so much of Heidegger's critique of contemporary life. I argue that both Heidegger's critique of technology and the will can help us understand the thanotopolitical dimensions of able bodied/minded normativity, suggesting that disability studies can enhance an analysis of Heidegger's writings and Heidegger can provide a much needed philosophic framework to disability studies.

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Introduction: Metaphysical Myopia?

Teiresias

...you live in foulest shame unconsciously

Oedipus

*Do you imagine you can always talk
like this, and live to laugh at it hereafter?.
... you are blind in mind and ears
as well as in your eyes.*

Teiresias

*You are a poor wretch
to taunt me with the very insults which
every one soon will heap upon yourself — Sophocles¹*

MY POLITICAL INSIGHT

A specter hangs over European metaphysics. That specter is impairment. Before one can disable this specter or arrogantly speak of blowing its shadow away by means of philosophizing, it is first necessary to pause prudently, in order to retrieve the steps of the ‘walking path’ of Western thinking. Such thoughtful ambulation is essential, lest we commit the crime, most odious to the gods, hubris. Once we commit this act, we become like the figure who embodies the impaired nature of the political, Oedipus, tragically condemned, by willful misjudgment, to be forever blind. It would behoove us to remember that Oedipus was not only blind, but he had a pre-existing impairment; namely, he was deaf to the words of prophetic counsel. Let us proceed, then, on this path with a mixture of daring and caution, openness and resolve, since I shall argue that this is exactly the kind of attitude of which Martin Heidegger would have approved. This

¹ Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. David Grene, In *Greek Tragedies*, ed. Richard Lattimore (Toronto: University of Chicago press, 1991), ll. 367-73. 126.

(dis)position will help us avoid Oedipus' pathetic fate of being rendered dumb and crippled by presumption, accursed by gods and mortals.²

First among the many truths that political philosophy may disclose to us is the following: politics — whether universal or particular — without ontology, is rather like sex without the elevating power of desire. That is, both activities, lacking these facets, amount to awkward and fruitless endeavors in the dark. Since philosophy's inception, humankind's sense of wonder in the face of the peculiarity of its existence has engendered metaphysical speculation. Unfortunately, rather than retaining this feeling of wonder, human beings, especially in the West, have often transformed both their collective and individual experiences of transcendence into systematic ontologies, which obscure the true meaning of a uniquely human and humane way of life; authentic ethics can only be born out of the more primordial experience of finite transcendence. This entails self-consciousness born of the recognition of one's mortality and the ability to overcome such biological limitations.

Yet if such transcendence neglects the primordial experience of Being, it brings slavery, rather than freedom. Though expressions of the human experience of Being may be historically conditioned, our questioning the meaning of Being is shared and primordial. In this sense, experiential epistemology cannot be entirely relative, since there must be certain criteria that better ground the experience of Being: such criteria are openness and wonder. Any truth, therefore, that is to be discovered about humankind ought to be grounded in questions that articulate — though never definitively — our experience of wonder; since this experience creates the earth and world in which human beings dwell.

² David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 203.

Ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos*. This word, though often conflated with morality, is distinct from it: ethics, strictly speaking, is concerned with the stance a person takes on her life, whereas morality is concerned with normative principles for human relationships. Ethics is a way of life expressed in community, and it is only by investigating our tacit understanding of Being that authentic ethics may emerge. This is so because ontology at its most basic is concerned with limits and possibilities for both the individual person and the community of which he is always a part. For this reason politics, ontology and ethics, from Plato onward, have been quite erotic bedfellows.

To elaborate, the perceived criteria in order for a human being to be part of a community, whether the community is small or large, may never be divorced from a prior stance on the question of the proper human way to be in the world. It is only through seeking a genuine way of coping with and articulating the particularly strange human situation, that we shall find the answers for which we are searching. For to ask a question is to possess some *tacit* knowledge, however slight, of the answer. Humankind can ask the question of Being, since as far as known, we are the only species endowed with the capacities, such that finite transcendence can occur. Human beings are transcendent, insofar as our interpretative relation to the world creates an opening in which beings can reveal themselves. We are finite creatures, insofar as we are mortal creatures, endowed with inherently limited knowledge and all too short a time in which to cultivate it. Yet this very weakness is the ground for thinking: for if we were truly immortal, we would care for nothing. In other words, humankind's self-consciousness grounds time and history.³

³ For this conception of Heidegger's thinking, I am indebted to William Richardson, who traces the dynamic of finite transcendence in Heidegger's development in his book, *Martin Heidegger: through Phenomenology to Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003). Though I make no direct references to this volume, it was the first one I read, and it is a *locus classicus* for Heidegger studies. Through a systematic study

On account of this fallible concern, there is an inherent negativity to human existence that extends well beyond our eventual demise, since in every truth there is contained some error. Though human beings have a unique capacity to shed light on phenomena, this light can never reify the transient experience of the whole, which has often been called Being. To quote Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, "All the variety, all the charm, all the beauty of life is made up of light and shadow."⁴

It is in this mixture of light and shadow that Martin Heidegger has found Western consciousness. Like Count Vronsky's ardent eros for the illusive Anna, which ends in the latter's demise, the philosopher's attempt to capture the equally protean *Sophia* has led to the tragic and willful end of metaphysics. This has happened, thinks Heidegger, because human beings have taken truth as a thing to be achieved, rather than seeing it as an experience to be had; and, as so many foolish lovers, philosophers have forgotten their limitations at their peril, exchanging the experience of intermingling light and shadow for a myopic faith in rational illumination and the power of the will. Anna Karenina is so blinded by passion that she ends her life in a false submission to fate; similarly, humankind's preoccupation with truth as certainty and the power of the will have created a situation in which destruction often seems to be the only escape.

Such nihilism, like Anna's gratuitous suicide, is born of a refusal to stand in tentative wonder. Refusing to court truth, humankind possesses it in the form of technology; yet, in our hubris, human beings may have lost the ability to reveal truth, since it is now dictated to us by

of Heidegger's work, Richardson, attempts to trace the continuity and divergence between early and late Heidegger. While this study is ground-breaking, and I adopt its central phrase, I find that Richardson often sacrifices complexity for clarity. In addition, because this book was published before Heidegger's collected works, Heidegger's scholars now possess a much richer understanding of his thought, having information unavailable to Richardson at the time. My study has attempted to strike an uncomfortable middle ground on the question of Heidegger's development: on the one hand I think there is a profound break after the publication of *What Is Metaphysics?* It would be unwise to over emphasize the development

⁴ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Constance Garnett (Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003), 38.

our own creations. In such ontological impoverishment, it is difficult to recover a genuine ethical stance. But this is what we must do, lest we be killed by planes, trains and automobiles, or indeed, inventions far more odious.

For Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being admits no definitive answer. It follows from this supposition that politics always has an element of contest and debate. Naturally, the hegemony of technicity is deleterious to politics as such; for by ever increasing regimes of efficiency, it seeks to neutralize the dynamism inherent to the unfolding process of Being. Yet it is the very negativity of technology that may allow us to recover an ethos. Technology explicates the sheer potentiality of human existence, and as such, may allow persons to take a genuine stance on their lives in the face of contingency. Yet this requires, not a spirit of mastery, but a dynamic spirit of play and humility. We cannot solve the question of technology by becoming more technological, nor can we renounce technology in favor of some other way of being in the world [*In-der welt-sein*], since both forms of reactionism do not help humankind escape from its destiny of technicity. The only way out of this dilemma is to create a community, in which one can employ technology in the service of an authentic life, and this is what I aim to find.

MY CONVERSATION

Before one can accomplish this aim, it is first necessary to trace the development of Heidegger's thought from a Kantian inspired phenomenologist to a thinker at the end of philosophy. One of the best ways to ascertain the trajectory of Heidegger's thought as well as the ethical character of this development is by doing a Heideggerian inspired analysis of impairment.

Though Heidegger never discusses impairment^{*5} explicitly and remained an ardent critic of liberal societies till the end of his life, I believe many of his concepts can be used to further elucidate the experience of impairment and how we ought to respond to such an experience. Heidegger's intention in writing was to open up a path for others to follow.

Hence in travelling with Heidegger on this path and departing from his course when necessary, it is possible for us to think after Heidegger, both in the sense of along with and beyond. I shall contend that impairments are signs of negativity inscribed on/in a person's body/mind that have the potential to reveal unseen aspects of the world, in so far as they implicitly undermine key beliefs of the Cartesian subjectivity Heidegger strove to refute.

In addition to this epistemological value, the experience of impairment can have ethical merit, insofar as it reveals the groundless nature of society's everyday practices. We shall see that Heidegger believes human beings cannot escape from their inherited horizon, which would obviously include the norms of embodiment, sanity, cognitive ability, and the organization of public space. Yet it is only the inauthentic who blindly appropriate convention, without putting convention to creative use. In so far as impairments disclose negativity and, thus, potentiality, the manner in which a society, a community, or a human being response to impairment may be a good heuristic device for assessing the degree to which a society, a community or a person is authentic.

⁵*For the purposes of this study, impairment shall mean any (mal)function of the body and/or mind, which impedes a person achieving a hypothetically normative standard of ability when performing activities of daily living and/or interacting with others. A person may have multiple impairments, which could impede her physical and/or mental capacities in a variety of ways. To a large extent, the determination of what counts as an impairment and what does not is dictated by convention. By saying that the determination of impairment is, to some extent arbitrary, I do not mean to suggest convention cannot play a meaningful role in shaping our lives; for we must remember that being itself is historically determined. Thus in Western societies, certain conditions have a long history of being labeled as impairments, which give them a particular ontic and quasi-ontological signification.

This is particularly pertinent for Heidegger studies; as I shall demonstrate, some of the standard tenets of disability^{6*} theory and Heidegger's philosophy are analogous. Moreover I contend that the construction of the young, male, white, healthy, physically attractive, heterosexual and fit individual as the social ideal to which everyone is compared perhaps forms the most powerful matrix for the birth of an inauthentic life. Heidegger did not state this explicitly, and admittedly, his writings during the Nazi period contradict this. Yet he did not concern himself with these matters, because they were unimportant, but simply because they were merely instances of a far more deleterious ontological state of affairs. Occidental philosophy comprises two main concepts: first, the belief in an independent thinking subject; and second, the belief that this subject can both ascertain and control the meaning of discrete objects and/or ideas, devoid of all context.

This mode of perception is not entirely bad; a problem arises when we become unaware that this mode is derived from the more primordial experience of appropriation [*Ereignis*]. Such forgetting is made possible by technology, which is reified metaphysics, allowing us to flee from impairment and/or death. On account of this delusion, as I shall demonstrate, the construction of an ideal able individual is intimately linked with the progress of technology and the social creation of disability is born of an inauthentic response to the experience of impairments. These while seeming to affect only certain individuals, are actually coterminous with our existential

⁶* As problematic as this distinction may be, because social convention plays an important role in determining impairment, it is useful to adopt the distinction proposed by Michael Oliver, whereby impairments refer to the physical condition of a person and, disability refers to the barriers placed upon the impaired person by the hegemonic able bodied order. These barriers can be social or physical. For example, disability comprises difficulties of access, employment challenges, social discrimination and so forth. To this I would add that disability is a particularly technological and, therefore, modern phenomenon. I am in no way committed to a strict dichotomy between impairment and disability; it is merely a useful heuristic device. Cf. Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability: from Theory to Practice* (New York: St. Martin's press, 1996), 20-35. I am using hegemony in Antonio Gramsci's manner, in order to refer to general guidance of productive, cultural and philosophical power. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Electronic Books, 1999), 508-518, 603-615.

condition. I shall argue that though the creation of the disabled person necessitates a concealment [*Verborgenheit*] of being, worsened in the age of technology, a unique revelation, simultaneous with this concealment, may be possible. In so doing, Heidegger can shed light on disability studies and disability studies may, in turn, illuminate Heidegger. Thus it is my aim to strike a balance, albeit a precarious one, between exegesis and practical application.

This approach may unveil new ways of thinking about and acting upon the question of human impairments and mortality. Yet as Heidegger demonstrates, authentic engagements with embodiment are very difficult, when using traditional metaphysics. As such, continued ontological engagement with these problems is required; for unless philosophers confront the problem of disability, and what it tends to signify, they have no hope of disclosing or redressing the modern malaise. Yet Heidegger is at pains to stress that, contra Sartre, Da-sein is not primarily an individual experience. If my analysis were to stop at the individual impaired person's experience of his disability, as a crude sign of finitude, I would be guilty of the subjectivism Heidegger so often critiques.

Accordingly, while not denying the individual or collective experiences of mortality that disability may present, I am much more interested in the following two questions: first, whether confronting disability authentically can reveal the sheer potentiality of human existence; and, second, whether disabled Da-sein in late modern liberal societies has a unique epistemological value, insofar as his body often reveals the breakdown of the context of referential dependence, in which every human being finds himself. If we are able to answer the former two questions affirmatively, as this paper shall attempt to demonstrate, then certain ethical implications emerge.

MY APOLOGY

If we wish to follow Socrates' example, thinkers must always provide an account of their thoughts and actions; for we always have lived in communities and, as such, had been accountable to our fellow mortals and the gods. There is a fine line in political theory between those who are clever and those who are honest. It is impossible to pronounce on what Heidegger's personal views the on impairment-disability problem might have been; nor is it credible to deny that the early Heidegger's emphasis on masculine resoluteness may not be amenable to a caring philosophy of disability. Moreover, his well-known involvement with National Socialism may make this project appear to some as a stupendously duplicitous feat of intellectual gymnastics. I think this simplistic for two reasons: first, it is possible to apply Heidegger's conceptual analysis to a context where he may not have applied it, and he would have encouraged this practice; second, this paper will take the position that much of the early Heidegger's metaphysics, which he later comes to see as problematic, precipitates the deterioration of the ethical dimension. In relation to disability, I believe that impaired Da-sein has the potential to reveal the sheer contingency of human existence, and this anxiety [*Angst*] provoking attribute causes impaired Da-sein to be more closely linked to technology.

As has been stated, technology leads to the deterioration of the ethical dimension, by showing the world, as well as all who dwell within it, as something to be mastered, rather than encountered. This technological form of encounter becomes intensified when disabled Da-sein is involved. Disabled Da-sein is at greater risk of being perfected, manipulated, or disposed of. Ironically, as Heidegger indeed suggests, it is technology, which both reveals and conceals disabled Da-sein. If one can learn anything from the history of technology and disability, it is that with increased freedom, there is often increased risk of death.

Thus in order to recover the implicit ethical dimension in Heidegger, we must consider his claim that abstract reason, far from being the ground of ethics, holds the nascent seeds of its decline. Nevertheless, the quest to create a public sphere founded on the search for truth is difficult; the majority of persons have many other things to do than contemplate the meaning of existence. This is particularly true when one considers the problems that issue from impairments: without seriously interrogating what this ontic phenomenon may indicate about humanity's ontological situations and capacities, it is nearly impossible to construct a just politics of disability. To elaborate, without recognizing both the limitations of and the connections between epistemology, metaphysics and ethics, it is difficult to have a politics grounded in the disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*] of Being; such disclosure is necessary; for in this interrogation, human beings live meaningful lives. Granted, this may be hard to apply on a large scale, but I think it very worth considering it in certain cases.

My specific methodology is largely inspired by Hans-Georg Gadamer's work on philosophical hermeneutics. I believe this to be the most appropriate method, since Gadamer seeks to develop Heidegger's nascent conception of philosophical hermeneutics into a more developed theory of the process that occurs in human understanding. According to Gadamer, humankind's historical being in the world [*In-der Welt-sein*] means it is always part of a context. Hence prejudice is not an entirely negative condition; rather, prejudice, in the sense of reasoned pre-judgement, forms the positive condition for all understanding.⁷ This does not mean that we are free to be prejudicial. Instead, the interpreter is enjoined to make his prejudices explicit

⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2004), 150-160.

through self-examination. In so doing he recognizes the radical historical gap between the text and himself, and in this recognition of alterity, he achieves greater self-knowledge.⁸

Alterity must be balanced with recognition of continuity. As much as the historical nature of human beings creates a radical gap between different ages, language, a capacity which actualizes the dialogical nature of human understanding, imbeds us in traditions. Human beings are in traditions because they always have a thoughtful relationship to being, and being emerges in history. Consequently, in order to respond to being, we must first respond to each other.⁹ A proper response to the other requires that we recognize both her difference and her kinship with us. I have tried to give Heidegger such a response. I am not saying that Heidegger had an explicit or nascent theory of impairment-disability, nor even am I willing to give a definitive answer on his particular view of impaired persons.

Rather, I have attempted to turn with Heidegger's thought on the question of impairment. This requires both a thoughtful reading of his texts and willingness to critique them. In a recent article, published in the *Economist*, a journalist argued for the impossibility of being literal, owing to the metaphorical character of language. Language, however banal it may seem, is always poetic. As such, we always convey meaning(s) of which we are not aware, that it is the task of future generations to elucidate. It is only thus that we maintain the vitality of thinking. Though I am hesitant to say profound thinkers offer perennial wisdom on predetermined topics of human concern, I think it incumbent upon us to converse with thinkers, at least until we have come to grips with what they have said, and or the questions we put to them.¹⁰ Since philosophy is still grappling with the question of Heidegger's importance, and often fails to raise the

⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. & ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 80.

⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Weinsheimer & Marshall, 244.

¹⁰ Robert Berlin, "Johnson: The Impossibility of being literal", *The Economist*, November 14, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2013/11/metaphors>.

question of impairment-disability at all, I believe mine is a conversation worth having and one that is methodologically sound.

Disability and impairment are protean and elusive phenomena. Though it is impossible to access impairment and disability ‘in themselves’ (that is, in Kant’s sense),¹¹ phenomenological inquiry must start from lived experience. Impairments and disability may be constructed by discourse and history, but persons who are impaired and disabled dwell in the world, and experiences born of this existence affect the unfolding of a person’s life. I think some of these experiences are worth describing. My second, perhaps more controversial claim, is it may be possible to find many commonalities among the diverse phenomena that characterize the impairment-disability question, and that many of these similarities are caused by the dominance of technology in late modernity. Even more controversial, given that this inquiry converses with Heidegger, is my claim that there may be in aspect of being impaired that transcends history.

Though Heidegger eschews almost all essentialism, the aspect of humankind’s essence that transcends history is its ability to question Being. These questions, however, are always mediated by the traditions in which we find ourselves. If impairment is wedded to ontological inquiry, as I believe, it possesses both a historical and a trans-historical dimension. This is so because human beings exist in a world with natural and artificial aspects, and as we shall see, both of them respond to and shape our understanding of Being. My specific perspective in relation to the impairment-disability question is largely indebted to the British school of critical disability studies. I also gained insights from queer theory, social anthropology (particularly

¹¹ Kant makes the distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal. Human beings cannot have access to things as such, since our understanding is always mediated by *a priori* categories of experience. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of pure reason*, trans. Paul Guyer, and Allen W. Wood. (Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.) A250-54 360-62

symbolic interactionism), critical geography and psychoanalysis. Before proceeding, it is incumbent upon me to lay bare what I am sure is an incomplete list of my prejudices:

- 1) Scholarship in the Humanities cannot be objective, nor is this desirable.
- 2) Reason is always situated in a context.
- 3) There is an important distinction between morality and ethics; human beings desire to be ethical; and the way to do this, primordially, is to think about the meaning of being, leading to an examined life. As such, philosophy is, indeed, the preeminent discipline; yet this does not mean philosophy is not obliged to have practical dimensions or engage with other disciplines.
- 4) Being, history and thinking form an interdependent matrix. This means that ideas have a material effect in the world and vice versa. Consequently, humankind is required for the full disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*] of being, but it is not the exclusive determinate of being as such. Human beings are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the disclosure of being.
- 5) We often overlook the conditions for the coming to presence [anwesen], of Being, and this is related to the hegemony of technology.
- 6) Impaired persons are a marginalized group within society. This is, in part, owing to an improper thinking about negativity within the Western philosophical tradition. We ought to, therefore, consider the relationship between willing, negativity and freedom with greater scrutiny.
- 7) There is a partial distinction between impairment and disability, related to the kind and level of oppression experienced.

- 8) We can only have intimations of transcendence through the dynamics of presencing [*anwesen*], and absenceing [*Abwesen*] that take place in the appropriating event [*Ereignis*] that makes manifestations of being possible. Divine revelation is, at best, a derivative phenomenon.
- 9) There is no fixed human nature, apart from history, except the ontological capacity. Consequently, biology, history or ontology alone cannot constitute destiny.
- 10) Our understanding of the world is fundamentally hermeneutic, from this two conclusions follow: first, the subject object distinction does not exist; and second, it is possible to read texts both beyond their historical context, as well as against themselves. For this reason, I think it is incumbent upon us to use the first person in scholarship.

I must leave it to my readers to decide whether these prejudices are merited by my analysis.

MY THOUGHT PATH

Chapter one will discuss Heidegger's critique of Cartesian subjectivity, the reasons why this critique can help us understand the experience of persons with impairments-disabilities, and how such an experience may lead to disability. It will also discuss Heidegger's alleged neglect of the body.

Chapter two will extend this investigation of impairment and Heidegger to show how impairment transforms itself into disability, through a process of anxiety [*Angst*], both individual and collective, and how — in turn — this process is related to the temporal character of disabled Da-sein. To elaborate, my interest shall be in what ways impaired Canadian Da-sein may both reveal and conceal the coming to pass of finite transcendence and the abyssal ground of existence. In short, whether or not there is an authentic response to impairment, both on the part

of the impaired individual and her society, and whether this response may shed light on both the merits and defects of Heidegger's existential analysis.

Chapter three will trace the evolution of Heidegger's thought from the question of the proper [*eingtich*] human way of being, to being as phenomenon, and will show that such an evolution may illuminate disabilities problematic relationship to technology as a flight from the general negativity of human existence. Chapter three will suggest that in our attempt to transcend negativity, we become embroiled in it. Technology is the lowest and highest point of human *existkence*, and we have to go through that point in order to achieve something new. To help illuminate this contention, it is useful to examine the connection between assistive devices, mobility aids, built environments and care services, in relation to the expression of disabled Da-sein and its (possibly impoverished) ethical and epistemological relation to the world in which it dwells. Just like Heidegger believes the essence of technology to be a particular mode of revealing, I believe the essence of disability is also rooted in a species of derivative revelation.

Chapter 4 will examine how the interplay of factors that comprise many expressions of impaired Da-sein are predicated on a more basic deterioration of Heidegger's concept of being with [*mit-sein*] others. Heidegger comes to realize that to have authentic ethics modern humankind must overcome its sense of homelessness [*unheimlich*], by dwelling [*Wohnung*] in a community that allows persons to think about the peculiar and wondrous experience of being. The conditions that must pertain for this to occur are the following: first, this community must always be attuned to its own destiny and transform present limitations into future possibilities; second, possibilities only become intelligible, in light of an articulate ethos, predicated on explicit and implicit experiences of Being; third, honest engagement with finitude is required, in order to ground the experiential truth, derived from questioning Being. Fourth, care for the other

is necessary, in order to strengthen epistemological and ethical reflections. Dwelling in impairment, will help us understand Heidegger's esoteric concept of the fourfold to recover impairment as a holy absence that allows beings to become manifest.

Thus by employing Heidegger's philosophy, it may be possible to create a paradigm that can be used to assess multiple areas of public policy and law. Alternatively, I believe that applying disability studies to Heidegger, may disclose hitherto unseen questions in Heidegger studies. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate that this investigation justifies itself in theory as well as practice.

Chapter One: (Dis)abling Descartes?

All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players; / They have their exits and their entrances, / And one man in his time plays many parts—William Shakespeare.¹²

(RE)THINKING AGENCY

The above quotation comes from *As You like It*, one of Shakespeare's most curious plays because it flirts with tragic comic elements, much like the philosopher ought to do. As with all tragic-comedy, the play's conceit is, of course, the mixture of characters grappling with their fate as well as the consequences of their own folly. As my analysis proceeds, I hope to show that Heidegger's conception of agency may be called tragic comic, insofar as it hovers between the lightness of being and the unbearable weight of its sheer *gravitas*. Like Shakespeare, Heidegger believes that to be human is to be a player in the world; like Shakespeare, he argues that every actor has a role to play; and also like Shakespeare, he suggests that our entrances and our exits matter most.

Heidegger's sharp rejection of traditional conceptions of agency has admittedly, like a proverbial hammer of hermeneutics, become rather worn from repeated use. Alas, this first chapter must add to this tradition of blunt inquiry, if only because — as the carpenter knows best of all — it is necessary to hit certain points deeply, in order to construct both a proper frame and foundation. Accordingly, this chapter will discuss how Heidegger defines phenomenology and ontology and how these challenge the conventional quasi-Cartesian, that is, subjectivist paradigm. Moreover, it will inquire into which of the beings found in the world is capable of phenomenological insight, and it shall discuss the conditions that must pertain for

¹² William Shakespeare. *As you like it*, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New York: World Library Incorporated, 1993) 2.71-4

phenomenology to occur, as well as why the human way of being is requisite for the more specific criteria of transcendence. In this project, I shall come to the conclusion that to describe a person as a human being is insufficient, inasmuch as the experience of there-being [*Dasein*] as both an individual and collective site of disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*] is required for a full human life. *Dasein* is the central concept for Heidegger.

Naturally, some space must be given to this much overused and much misunderstood term. I shall first discuss Heidegger's notion of the lived body, in contrast to the traditional conceptions of the body as an object. Through a discussion of Heidegger it will become clear that the divorce of contextual understanding and embodied knowledge leads to Cartesian dualism, which I consider to be merely an outgrowth of all metaphysical thinking. While *Dasein* has become so immersed in metaphysical thinking that it can no longer have access to other ways of seeing the world. This ontological investigation is particularly pertinent for understanding the connection between impairments and disability. It is my contention that though 'subjectivity' in general is confined by Descartes' influence, it is the impaired person who is perhaps most crippled by the legacy of Cartesian dualism.

In order to see this paralysis more clearly, it is first necessary to analyze key concepts articulated *In Being and Time*, with supplements from other contemporaneous writings. In doing so, it will be possible to see the conceptual fetters which Heidegger fought to refute in order to forge a new path for a genuine, being-focused phenomenological inquiry.

DOUBTING SUBJECT?

In order to avoid this Cartesian philosophical myopia, how ought philosophical inquiry to proceed? Phenomenology is Heidegger's answer, though like much else he appropriates, he does violence to its original meaning.¹³ Yet the task of the phenomenologist is not over, since he must determine what is and what is not an authentic appearance of something. The authentic appearance of something is one which is not covered up by the unconscious coping we employ in day to day experience. On a practical level, this is unavoidable. But if the practice of philosophy is to have any merit, it must excavate the fundamental ontological structures that lie underneath, and thus support, layers of tacit assumptions of everyday life.¹⁴

The belief that Heidegger challenges most explicitly in division I of "*Being in Time*" is the West's adoption of Cartesian dualism. Descartes thinks an action presupposes intention which completes the action, shaping a world that is external to the subject. With the Cartesian tradition, which seeks to anchor epistemology in the indubitable truth of a thinking subject, the divide between appearance and reality emerges. Such are the central problems that phenomenology seeks to redress. Heidegger believes these problems can be fixed by changing how we understand knowledge. The partial basis of this understanding may be demonstrated by the epistemological difficulties it engenders.¹⁵

¹³ Martin Heidegger, trans. Dennis J. Schmidt and Joan Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, Rev. ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World : A Commentary on Heidegger's being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991).

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 87 [94]. Cf William D. Blattner, *Heidegger's Being and time: a Reader's Guide*. (London New York: Continuum Books, 2006), 31. Also Rene Descartes,

When faced with the ever-changing nature of sensory impression, Descartes posited that one can find truth by grounding epistemology in the certitude of a thinking subject. Hence his famous formula “*ego cogito, ergo sum.*” While often translated as “I think therefore I am,” Latin has no present continuous tense, so it could be more accurately rendered as “I am thinking, therefore I exist.”¹⁶ Descartes’ project was to systematically doubt everything: how large his house was, the nature of the candle in his study, and so forth. He wished to do this because he did not believe data from sensory impressions were reliable. If philosophy is to be a genuine science, thinks Descartes, it must rest upon indubitable foundations. Because Descartes perceives that he is thinking at the present moment, he is at least aware that he exists because he must have existence in order to think.

The mind has primacy over the body: while the body is influenced by sensory data, the mind can transcend this data through the use of reason.¹⁷ This transcendence of the body by the mind entitles human beings to dominate nature. We are not part of the world in which we find ourselves but we are actors upon it. In addition to dominance of nature, this creates the further dilemma of solipsism if the only thing a subject knows for certain is that he exists, he cannot ascertain with absolute certainty the existence of other subjects who are external to himself. For the proof of certainty, he must rely at last on an act of faith.¹⁸ Descartes, consequently, argues that the only thing in which human beings ought to place absolute trust is God, who grounds the possibility of their existence. Yet Descartes encounters a difficulty since he cannot adequately redress the problem of solipsism.¹⁹

Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies, trans. Mike Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 40.

¹⁶ Descartes, *Meditations*, trans. Moriarty, 28.

¹⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁸ Ibid., 33.

¹⁹ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 3-15.

He must have recourse to an ultimate being to solve it. This is so because Descartes thinks the subject occupies a special place separate from objects; he is a self-contained mental unit. While this may seem idealist in the extreme, Heidegger believes that it is not philosophic at all. Human beings are not a unique event in the world, as they are for Heidegger. Instead, Descartes characterizes them as a special kind of object among other objects. The thinking thing may be a special kind of thing but it is still a thing. When we interrogate this erroneous conception of Dasein's thingliness further, we will discover that it leads to increased risk of objectification. Reason is, according to Descartes, the preeminent virtue of humankind, since it is by virtue of reason that human beings distinguish themselves from the realm of animals and objects.²⁰ It also follows that the mind is in some way separate from the body, since in the exercise of rational deduction, it ought to divorce itself from sense impressions, born of biological impulses.

In opposition to Cartesian rationalism, Heidegger argues that the more basic criterion of the human way of being is our ability to comprehend Being in general. As he describes it “the fundamental ontic characteristic of Dasein is that it is ontological.”²¹ By ontic Heidegger designates facts about phenomena that become manifest upon analysis. By ontological Heidegger means the capacity to ask questions of the significance regarding these phenomena; for human beings, albeit through considerable effort, can parse the difference between what exists and the meaning of existence.²² On account of this characteristic, in order to comprehend the general meaning of being, it is first necessary to inquire into the human way of being, since the human way of being is the only way of being that is self-conscious; it is, thereby, capable of articulation,

²⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 46 [49].

²¹ Ibid., 10 [12].

²² Ibid., 14[16].

whether tacit or explicit. Behind every day experiences there are more basic ontological structures that condition all prior experience and provide the ground for transcendence.

For this conception of transcendence, Heidegger is heavily indebted to his ontological reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this text, Heidegger claims, Kant lays the groundwork for proper phenomenological/ontological inquiry, by ascertaining the *a priori* categories that structure sense experience.²³ In other words, Heidegger believes that Kant makes possible a genuine phenomenological inquiry.²⁴ As Ian Thompson notes, Heidegger appropriates and modifies Kant's discursivity thesis. Kant's discursivity thesis holds that information about the external world is always mediated through *a priori* categories of human understanding. As such, for Kant, we cannot have access to the thing in itself;²⁵ for our apprehension of phenomena is always mediated through these categories. Kant argues that his conception of mediated understanding seriously undermines any attempt at metaphysics as such.

Heidegger turns this conception on its head, by claiming that finitude is the necessary precondition of metaphysics.²⁶ Because the early Heidegger links the meaning of Being to human experience, he believes that Kant is significant since he reveals the connection between ontology, epistemology and finitude. Thus, meaning is not something that is a by-product of human existence. Rather, it is co-terminus with human existence.²⁷ In Heidegger's phrase, "meaning is an existential." Thus, he notes:

Being" is the self-evident concept. "Being" is used in all knowing and predication, in every relation to beings and in every relation to oneself, and the expression is understandable "without further ado." Everybody understands, "The sky is blue,"

²³ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

²⁴ Ibid., 10-15.

²⁵ See n. 10

²⁶ Iain Thompson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education*, (New York: Cambridge University press, 2005) 54.

²⁷ Heidegger, *Being in Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 151.

“I am happy,” and similar statements. But this average comprehensibility only demonstrates the incomprehensibility. It shows that an enigma lies a priori in every relation and being toward beings as beings.²⁸

Characteristically, Heidegger puts a rather mundane concept in unnecessarily obscure language: all this means is that Dasein is always already making sense of its world. The problem for Heidegger is that the most basic way of understanding something is some kind of conception of what “isness” is, but though Dasein is quick to classify beings, its understanding of being always remains partially unacknowledged. This contention is influenced by one of the fundamental principles of phenomenology, namely, the proximity principle.

According to the proximity principle, those things which are closest to Dasein are often the most difficult to analyze. In order to conceptualize this idea, it is useful to think of oxygen: as human beings we live in and breathe oxygen and without it, we cannot survive, but owing to its ubiquity, we do not notice either oxygen itself nor the immensely complex process of respiration required for our survival. Because of the primacy Heidegger places on meaning, Thomas Sheehan suggests that traditional scholarship on Heidegger that sees him as delineating a fundamental distinction between Being and beings is overstated. Instead, scholars ought to see being as more of a place holder word for meaning.²⁹ Such an approach, Sheehan claims, aids interpreters in making sense of the ‘turn’ in Heidegger’s thought.³⁰ While I agree with much of Sheehan’s analysis, and think it is useful to employ the ontological difference with a grain of salt, Sheehan’s approach also warrants respectful scepticism, for the danger of replacing the signifier being, conceptually cumbersome though it may be, with the more anthropocentric term meaning is that it risks replicating the subjectivist tendency within thinking that Heidegger

²⁸ Ibid., 3.

²⁹ Thomas Sheehan, “Facticity and Ereignis,” in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 44.

³⁰ Ibid., 43.

refuted tirelessly. For this reason I have opted to maintain the distinction between being and Being, but this does not mean that Sheehan's discussion of meaning should not be in the foreground of one's thinking when exploring Heidegger as well.³¹

Thus, given that all our knowledge is conditioned by sense experience, which is mediated through given categories of understanding, pure theoretical reason is impossible. Through his analysis, Heidegger deduces that time is the ultimate transcendental intuition, insofar as a conception of time allows things to manifest themselves within a context of significance.³² We can, therefore, see the first sense in which Dasein is not precisely equivalent to human being; rather, it is an event that occurs within a human being, once a conception of time, however inadequate, has been acquired.³³ It is not a fixed state or attribute: the mode of Dasein varies a great deal based on the context that forms its existence.

In order to access these fundamental categories that condition the meaning of Being, it is first necessary to interrogate the everyday existence of Dasein and from its various particularities ground philosophy in a new kind of universality, which will attempt to redress problems posed by the malaise of modern relativism.³⁴ Indeed, it is the fragmentation of philosophy into different branches and subsidiary disciplines that has most effected Dasein.³⁵ By negotiating the ontological difference — moving from particularity to a new kind of hermeneutic universality — it is possible to maintain the engaged character of Dasein, while also offering a new

³¹ Because as a scholar I feel obliged to make my work accessible to a general audience, I have chosen not to cross being out (mainly because I do not have the technical skills in our cybernetic age to do this on Microsoft Word) or spell being with a Y. One is not obliged to follow a thinker to the true extent of his pomposity. In addition, I still believe the capitalization of being as an abstract concept to be useful. This does not mean that I neglect the active dimension of being for Heidegger; yet, because he himself did this, interpreters risk interpreting the early Heidegger (1919-35) in terms of the late Heidegger and miss crucial steps in his development. This also does not mean I accept a radical break in his thinking, but every rich life is filled with both continuity and divergence.

³² Ibid., 30.

³³ Ibid., 31.

³⁴ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 128.

³⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 1.

nonrelativistic ground for epistemology.³⁶ Existential hermeneutics, thereby, preserves what is admirable about Descartes, while discarding what is deleterious. This is only made possible through the knowledge that Dasein is the site in which truth manifests; this manifestation, in turn, only occurs because time is the fundamental intuition that structures experience. Yet to properly excavate this ground we must first till its surface.

INCARNATE WORLD?

From his understanding of time, Heidegger concludes that care [*Sorge*] is the fundamental ontological characteristic of Dasein, which allows for the disclosure of being. This is so because Dasein always has an engaged position in the activities it undertakes.³⁷ Hence Dasein is not a rational observer, detached from the world in which it finds itself. Rather, Dasein is defined as being-in-the-world. It is not merely that Dasein is a passionate subject, who is with the world: nay, they are one in Being.³⁸

Heidegger notes, “These determinations of being of Da-sein, however, must now be seen and understood *a priori* as grounded upon that constitution of being which we call being-in-the-world [*In-der welt-sein*]. The correct point of departure of the analytic of Da-sein consists in the interpretation of this constitution.”³⁹ Dasein always finds itself within a particular world, comprised of both natural and artificial objects. Though Dasein’s most basic world is obviously the planet Earth, Heidegger’s conception is broader: a world merely constitutes a relatively cohesive context of practical activity and shared knowledge that influence the event of Dasein.⁴⁰

³⁶ Charles Taylor, “Engaged Agency and Background to Heidegger,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B Guignon (New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 53 [56].

³⁸ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 232.

³⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

It is possible to occupy several worlds simultaneously, since human beings are always engaging in many activities that continuously reform their identity.

Dasein may, for example, occupy some of the following: the world of academia, the world of medicine, the world of car racing, the world of disability, the world of Caribbean Canadian lesbian women, the world of a Star Trek fan, the world of concert cellists, and so forth. With these rather sporadic instances, I have tried to show that Heidegger's concept of world has a wide range of specificity and application. Thus, the modality of Dasein is highly dependent upon the activities that preoccupy it.

Nevertheless, though Dasein may occupy particular worlds—and by activities contained therein, achieve a measure of individuation—it always is indebted to the macro cultural identity. This cultural identity is derived from the temporal intuition that conditions Dasein's experience, that is to say, the apprehension of transcendence, which, as has been stated, is analogous to the term Dasein and which is only made possible in the space between birth and death. This is perhaps the only certain fact about human beings: we inherit the mutually inextricable cultural context and material conditions over which we have little control and out of which we will be thrown at our demise, just as we were thrown into the same world upon leaving our mother's womb. Since human beings are ever thrown into a world, of which it is only possible to have partial understanding—on account of the traditions that have accumulated before their birth—only a partial articulation of the practices which form the context of culture is possible.⁴¹ This problem spawns an issue for Dasein; for whatever “coloring” Dasein may achieve through its particular situation, as the hermeneutic being, it must indicate something about being in general. Yet wherefore can Dasein achieve this task with ambiguity, when

⁴¹Ibid., 203.

finitude is an *a priori*? The hermeneutic principles presented by Heidegger, therefore, will only provide insight if the preeminent precept they offer pertaining to being is the *aporia* of its perplexing ambiguity, thus precluding rational certainty. The ontological truth, therefore, that one may deduce from Dasein's various ontic situations is that Dasein always stands in the untruth, and this follows from its finite character.⁴² Such a skeptical epistemological claim is perhaps uncontroversial, yet before proceeding to Heidegger's more radical critique, the second feature of this event ought to be discussed.

I suggested above that though there is a close connection between the term human being and Dasein, it is erroneous to see them as homologous. Whereas the former designates a being in space who acts in time, the latter denotes an event taking place within that same human being that, in a manner of speaking, disrupts and comes to define the temporal process. To these facts we ought to add the above epistemological meditation.⁴³ If Dasein is always found in a semi-determinate cultural milieu, inheriting a given history, every event of Daseining is, in part, a collective event. To be sure, as I shall argue later, Daseining is certainly influenced by the person in which it takes place; much like tennis gameplay can vary widely based on the athletes participating in it. What Heidegger desires is a general theory of the play that unfolds as we constantly go back and forth between beings and Being. Though Dasein is the hermeneutic being, it cannot grasp the whole of Being, even with proper [*eingtich*] delineation of the given structures that underpin its existence and so must rely on others, which it recognizes as like itself, in order to give the unfolding of Being a slightly different shade.⁴⁴ In this way, Dasein's primordial apprehension of being is analogous to a light emanating from a member of species *Homo Sapiens* and its various thrown situations can be likened to differently constructed prisms

⁴² Heidegger, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, 206.

⁴³ Ibid.,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 107 [114].

that reflect, refract, distort and parse an event of Being. The person, possessed of Dasein, cannot be a subject opposed to objects, since Dasein is an event occurring within time and, consequently, must have a cause. Whereas the answer offered by Kant is to ground freedom in the faculty of reason, in order to transcend the problem of causality, thus preserving the dignity of humankind,⁴⁵ this mode of reasoning, predicated as it is upon the rational subject may not — argues Heidegger — survive scrutiny; for we cannot always defend the intelligibility of our practices.

This shared temporal world obviously means Dasein does not exist with other human beings, who created the conditions for the event of Dasein, in the same way it exists with objects: one of the ontological categories that determines experience is that we are not automata, but we always find ourselves with others. A thoughtful Dasein, therefore, does not encounter others like itself as objects, but, instead, it treats them with solicitude.⁴⁶ Such solicitude is subsequent to the recognition that the others among whom Dasein finds itself also possess the hermeneutic potentiality to delineate the ontological difference.⁴⁷ Though they have a drastically different conception of knowledge, Heidegger still believes in the Socratic axiom that all human beings desire to know. If the experience of Dasein is the means by which we come to have ontological knowledge, it follows that we ought to recognize others as like ourselves: this ethical judgment is necessary to ground a viable intersubjective epistemology.

Here again, it becomes evident why it is misguided to privilege the “subjective” dimension of Dasein. While considerations of Dasein’s context(s) of practical activity are unavoidable — especially because this project is an example of one — these considerations

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Taft, 126-135.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 113-121.

⁴⁷ Charles B. Guignon, “Authenticity, moral values, and psychotherapy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B Guignon (New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1993), .203.

cannot override the meaning of Being in general. Accordingly, so-called ‘regional’ ontological studies, preoccupied as they are by particular facts, are unintelligible without a universal schema of ontological hermeneutics that can give significance to particulars. What Heidegger perhaps underestimates is the extent to which the event of Dasein may reveal universality from particularity. In other words, one of my purposes in conducting this analysis is to show that the distinctions between regional and fundamental ontology may not be as clear as Heidegger supposes. This criticism is in line with one of the major strands of critique of Heidegger’s phenomenology, namely its lack of specificity, to which I shall return at the end of this chapter. Suffice to say, Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein is almost certainly not psychological, nor is it even sociological, though these facets obviously are subsumed by it. The event of Dasein is primarily ontological, then epistemological.

As being- disclosive, Dasein has value, insofar as it inherits collective experience, and modifies that collective experience, however minutely or greatly, through a creative appropriation of context. Thus human beings intuit time and this gives rise to the collective experience of Dasein.⁴⁸ Though this event has a high degree of variability, there are existential categories, which underpin and tie together the multiple ontic threads; these create the tapestry of human existence on the loom of history, and in this metaphor, the shuttle of the loom crosses the thread between beings and Being. This argument for a collective epistemology, with ethical implications is enough to shake the conventional wisdom that informs the everyday quasi-Cartesian understanding, since it becomes apparent that the idea of rational agency is anything but rational.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 207.

BEING -USEFUL?

Nevertheless, Heidegger's critique is more radical than this. If the best way to analyze human beings is through their practical activity, it begs the question: whence do the mental representations that structure consciousness come? If we are so conditioned by practical activity, then those practical activities come to comprise the essence of who we are. Simply put, Dasein is what it does.⁴⁹ Heidegger argues that distance is not entirely determined by literal space, but our perceptions of distance are determined by concern. Likewise, hearing is determined by the culture in which we find ourselves. He uses the example of a motorcycle: we hear the sound of the motorcycle as it is because we already have an understanding of what motorcycles do. We only hear certain sounds for what they are because they are part of a context. Indeed, when a context functions as a whole, Dasein does not, strictly speaking, have discrete thoughts: world and agent fuse in practical activity.

It is necessary to examine this further. Perhaps one of the most known images in *Being and Time* is that of the carpenter and her workshop. While working on her table, the carpenter discloses a world, she feels the world, and executes an innumerable number of tasks, which she has learned from muscle memory, engendered by regular practice of her craft. When she walks into her workshop, she apprehends it as a whole; everything is familiar, and she knows where everything is. She smells the odour of the wood. The grains of the oak are familiar under her fingertips. Hours pass. She loses consciousness of time. For her the present becomes eternal. The hammer becomes an extension of her arm, which she moves without conscious awareness. Her wisdom is embodied — her art is disclosed in how she moves and revealed by her skin.⁵⁰

Presently, something happens. The hammer breaks. The uninterrupted hypnotic work ceases and

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 111.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 64 [70].

the world of the carpenter breaks down. The hammer becomes an object present-at-hand instead of ready-to-hand; and this commences the process of Dasein's individuation.⁵¹

When the hammer malfunctions, the carpenter is forced to examine the hammer as an object. This examination causes the carpenter to adopt a theoretical understanding. In order to repair the hammer, the carpenter must examine it closely, and she must be more mindful of the information from her senses. She must develop a plan, derived from a theoretical knowledge about how to repair the hammer and/or the damage it has caused to the table on which she is working. Previously, there was little separation between agent and intention, cause and effect. Now, deliberation comes to the fore of consciousness, since the broken hammer, on account of its malfunction, becomes isolated from the context of practical activity that imbued it with meaning. It ceases to be a hammer; instead, it becomes a combination of iron and walnut, with multiple discrete qualities. These, in turn, may be quantified and understood as "subject-independent" attributes. By this breakdown of context, therefore, Dasein elevates itself above its world.⁵²

We ought to heed Heidegger's correction that the type of understanding he describes with the breakdown of this world is not inherently negative. Theoretical detachment is necessary, in order to have the very useful knowledge afforded by scientific understanding. The danger of the hegemony of theory over engaged practice is that Dasein is wont to forget the derivative nature of theoretical knowledge.⁵³ Recall, Dasein's principle characteristic is its ability to negotiate the liminality of ontological difference: it apprehends the distinction between beings and Being. The theoretical stance, generally speaking, privileges beings rather than Being. The thinking subject

⁵¹ Ibid., 40 [45].

⁵² Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 40.

⁵³ Martin Heidegger, *The basic problems of phenomenology*, trans. & ed. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 40.

becomes yet another thing in nature. The thinking subject may be a particularly special thing, insofar as he is endowed with capacities that supersede the inanimate and animal aspects of the world; nonetheless, the thinking thing remains a thing. This causes Dasein to adopt an instrumental attitude to the world. Objects are no longer bodily extensions. Nature is no longer a home for humankind. The breakdown of context allows everything to become an object of scrutiny. Isolated objects are much easier to exploit, since to conquer one must first divide.

(RE)PRESENTING IMPAIRMENT?

In *Being and Time*, phenomenology is supposed to engender an understanding that is neither active nor passive. Through engaged subjectivity Dasein is supposed to let phenomena be seen as they are. Consequently, to impose a representational schema on the world as Descartes does and, indeed, as all metaphysics has done, could be conceived as an act of will. For Heidegger, Dasein is enslaved by the taxonomies it uses because it obscures Dasein's ontological capacity. The attitude of will leads to a perspective whereby phenomena reveal themselves to Dasein as things to be manipulated or perfected. Only then will Dasein have the capacity to perfect its environment and itself. Thus, to create a taxonomy of impairment, as a way of distancing oneself from one's body and phenomena generally, is an act of will. With the occurrence of impairment, one comes to see the ironic consequences of Cartesian subjectivity. While it may be logical to suppose that the mind body-split has the potential to help those with physical impairments, I contend that the exact opposite is in fact the case.

When mind and body are divided, Dasein treats its incarnations as being something that can (or ought to be) modified. As Dasein in the Cartesian mode subjugates nature, so too does it subjugate its body, itself associated with nature. Once beings are perceived as simply discrete phenomena, as opposed to a part of a meaningful context of significance, they become things to

be controlled, as opposed to things to be understood and accepted. In short, this mode of thought leads to the subjugation of the body, or more precisely, the negation of it, as an act of will. Rather than taking one's body as a vital part of experience, Dasein takes the body as an impairment to normative perceptions, which we must overcome.

A perceived malfunction, therefore, has the potential to create a situation in which Dasein becomes handicapped by its own negativity. As Dasein attempts to perfect impairment, this process has the potential to create more problems, which will, in turn, require further negation. I shall argue that this process of ongoing negation is revealed in the connection of impairment with technology. Moreover, once divorced from a intersubjective world, predicated on the interdependent understanding of Dasein, it may become easier for a Dasein operating under the deleterious Cartesian-influenced mode to view impairments as a problem besetting individual minds/bodies, rather than something which is a particular instance of the general condition of Dasein.

Before understanding the fundamental fact from which this schismatic stance on Being issues, it is necessary to provide a skeletal account of the debate regarding the relationship of Heidegger's theory to the study of embodiment(s). At first blush, it would seem as though the concepts previously discussed, such as being-in-the-world [*in-der-Welt-sein*], would be amenable to a powerful theory of embodiment(s). Appropriate to a study of Heidegger, this is both true and false. We have seen that Dasein is always part of a context and so cannot be divorced from its material conditions; one of these is, of course, the body. Heidegger's privileging phenomenological description may indicate that diverse physical and cultural conditions will influence any search for a fundamental ontology, yet it is important to remember that the phenomenology of everydayness is intended to elucidate the fundamental *a priori*

existential categories of being. This means that these categories should apply, regardless of Dasein's incarnation or cultural background. To privilege the facts about Dasein's embodiment(s) over others and, thus, to overlook its more general capacity for ontological disclosure, is to miss the point of the existential analytic entirely. That is, Heidegger attempts to show, though he would later consider this project a failure, that through an analysis of the human way of being in the world [*In-der welt-sein*] one can access the meaning of Being in general. Hence feminists and queer theorists criticize Heidegger for neglecting the true weight of embodied experience, specifically the influence of sex, gender and sexual orientation, as problematic as those categories themselves may be.⁵⁴

Coming from a similar ideational background, disability studies would likely have analogous concerns about the philosophic propensity for abstractions, since despite Heidegger's protestations to the contrary, at bottom, Dasein may not point to universality; instead, it seems to reflect the image of the man who is at pains to describe its generality. The human way of being, consequently, has a remarkable likeness to an upper middle-class, educated, able-bodied/minded, heterosexual German male, at the beginning of the 20th century. This presents a more fundamental problem if one argues that these biases not only apply both to the ontic, but also to the ontological level of inquiry. From this may follow the conclusion that Heidegger, as well as some of his students, whether tacitly or explicitly, like almost all Western philosophy, reinforce the hegemony created by the ideal type of the able person, which contributes to the oppressions of impaired human beings who are grouped under the negative label of impaired and/or disabled. It is prudent then to abandon such metaphysical speculation, in favor of a more corporeal

⁵⁴ Kevin Aho, *Heidegger's neglect of the body* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 53. And Richard R. Askay, "Heidegger, the body, and the French philosophers," *Continental Philosophy Review*, no. 32 (1999), 31-36. By privileging the body, the French philosophic work on the body, unfortunately, remains in the subjectivist tradition. Heidegger's point is not to devalue the body. Rather, he simply contends that our bodies are already immersed in the world of lived experience.

philosophy, for instance, the phenomenological approach initiated by one of Heidegger's students, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Such an approach, it is claimed, will help the West transcend our idealist heritage and — in so doing — discover anew, in a quasi-Nietzschean affirmation — that the sensuous is also ontological.⁵⁵ For any study of Heidegger discussing these kinds of topics must speak to the criticism that Heidegger fails to overcome metaphysical thinking.

BODILY ONTOLOGY?

I shall have occasion to address the final criticism in later chapters, yet to the above, I have four broad rejoinders, which I hope will gain greater articulation and nuance as we proceed. First, Heidegger does not deny the validity of regional ontology; it is simply not what he is attempting to do. Second, the affirmation of many that the personal is the political, in fact, reinforces the objective thinking that Heidegger is trying to undermine. For him, privileging individual embodiment(s) conceals the far more deleterious effects that the dominant scientific approach can have, and this is what raises the problem of embodiment in the first place. Indeed, until one investigates the more primordial problem, the issue of embodiment, born of that problem, cannot be solved. Third, since Heidegger openly advocated a deconstructive approach to all philosophical inquiry, and indeed, had eccentric views — to say the least — on almost all members of the ‘Canon’ from Heraclitus to Nietzsche, I do not have qualms about doing violence to Heidegger’s texts; for they always lay the ground for further thinking. I fail to see what use the studies of texts have, if they cannot be used to speak to present concerns through creative (mis)appropriations.

For better or worse, we are located in the interpretive matrix, engendered by a text, its interpreters and the larger public context, endowed with only prudence and tradition to help us

⁵⁵ Ibid., 31-40.

navigate it. Accordingly, I think there are good grounds for rejecting the subjectivist interpretation of Dasein's being-in-the-world and the resultant emphasis on Heidegger's historical conditioning. Fourth, *pace* Quinten Skinner, I do not believe that just because an author does not intend something explicitly, we cannot draw out the implications or underlying logic of her theory.⁵⁶ To understand something correctly, it is often useful to recover its origin: and who, if not Heidegger, began the modern preoccupation with embodiment?

Consequently, it is useful to discuss the understanding of the body as a primordial tool. Yet great caution ought to be exercised, when employing this metaphor, in order to avoid dualism. The body is not a present-at-hand-tool. Rather, it is most often a ready-to-hand tool, indistinguishable from Dasein in the performance of practical activity. Indeed, the tacit knowledge of our bodies is almost always more extensive than the carpenter's is of her tools and her workshop. Our movements are often executed without conscious deliberation: when submerged in practical activity, again made possible by the more basic phenomenon of temporally determined care, Dasein is inextricable from its principle instrument. Yet the body is only a nexus point in the general 'field' of concern which Dasein creates, on account of its temporal condition. The perceptual horizon that the existential phenomenon of care [*Sorge*] creates, as it organizes sensory data, is capable of expansion or contraction. In this way it is appropriate to say neither that we are 'in' our bodies nor 'outside' them; for though we are tethered to a particular location and material condition, we always have some ability, however slight, to project beyond those fetters. Nor, strictly speaking, is it appropriate to refer to those conditions in a negative light: such conditions are the very things that, on account of their finitude, ground the experience of the world.

⁵⁶ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 29-67.

Since Dasein is always engaged in activity, and activity begins to describe Dasein's constitution, the body is of utmost importance. In both a literal and a metaphorical sense, the body conditions our posture toward objects. In fact, one of the easiest ways to comprehend being-in-the-world [*in-der-Welt-sein*] is to discuss the tacit cultural practices that shape Dasein on a somatic level. Though it is impossible to determine when the event of Dasein happens within a human being, it is clear that this occurs at a very young age; for it happens whenever a human being begins to take a stand on her own being. More precisely, it happens whenever a human being begins to assume the norms of her culture. The majority of such norms remain unarticulated, and a significant number are communicated through a tacit language of bodily comportment [*Hatung*].

Even in early infancy, an understanding of the world is conveyed to the newborn through touch. To use Hubert Dreyfus's example, one cultural group may socialize a young infant to be quiet, calm and docile through touch and sound, reflecting that cultures' understanding of how a human being ought to be within the world, whereas another cultural group may touch their infants in a manner that is more likely to produce a dynamic engagement with the world.⁵⁷ Into adulthood, our socialisation is injected into our muscle memory. For instance, many cultures have an implicit understanding of the appropriate distances to position oneself in relation to other persons, depending on the social status of and/or relationship between the persons involved in the interaction.

Yet when trying to explicitly articulate these conventions, one discovers that they are rarely — if ever — discussed explicitly. One also discovers that there is no inherent rationality

⁵⁷ Dreyfus, *Being-In-The-World*, 64.

behind such practices.⁵⁸ To draw out the logical implications of this discussion, Heidegger believes that most of what many consider to be deducible from nature is merely convention, and that at its core, Dasein is convention, save for its ability to negotiate the ontological difference and, thereby, deduce the existential categories of experience.

How then is the groundless character of Dasein's practical activity illuminated? The answer is that light always finds its way through unlikely cracks. Returning to the example of the carpenter and her workshop, recall Heidegger's contention that the malfunction of the hammer marks the breakdown of a given world in which the event of Dasein happens. Yet Heidegger's primary interest is not the breakdown of that particular world but what the decay of that world signifies. In stopping to contemplate the malfunctioning hammer, the carpenter has an intuition — slight though it may be — of the negativity endemic to existence. As will be explained in more detail below, this fact is ethical, ontological and epistemological.

For now I shall say the following: we have seen human knowledge to be finite, our relation toward others to be encompassed by groundless custom, and now, the fragility of the carpenter's hammer to reveal the fragility of existence. As with the furniture on which she works, so too can reality split open at one false blow of fortune. In our primordial understanding of our bodies, they are not separate from us, but are one with us when engaged in practical activity. As has been said, Dasein is a temporal being, and, as such, it is defined by its field of concern(s). The body is a nexus point for this field of concern, but Dasein always projects beyond its body, so long as Dasein is a being within the world. When we enter a room, we apprehend the objects within it inhabit a unified space. We are constantly moving forward or backward without consciously deliberate action based on our context of practical activity. The

⁵⁸ Ibid., 40.

body is the primary instrument through which we accomplish our activities, and it becomes one with Dasein's site of primary hermeneutics, in the same way that the hammer becomes one with the carpenter.

Dasein receives sensory information from its body, which obviously conditions the event of Dasein, but the event of Dasein is made possible through the various unique and collective comportments of the body. Dasein and its body are locked in a perpetual hermeneutic circle: both interpret each other. If the body is so primordial to the event of Dasein, it follows that their concomitant breakdown may reveal the disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*] of negativity more acutely. Impairment, therefore, is a particular instance of the negativity that pervades existence.⁵⁹ With the breakdown of the context of referential dependence in which the carpenter finds herself, she acquires a theoretical understanding by scrutinizing objects and is able to recognize their distinct qualities.

This technological mode of understanding does not only apply to the world of objects, in which theoretical Dasein dwells, but it also applies to Dasein's very incarnation. Impairments may cause a rupture between Dasein and body, conditioned by temporal activity. With this rupture the body becomes not a lived thing but an object of study like any other. Because theoretical Dasein opposes itself to the world, it is able to isolate, "as well as manipulate discrete objects, especially those deemed to be disordered."⁶⁰ The notion of disorder caused by confronting negativity makes the mind-body split become more acute. Heidegger will later argue

⁵⁹ Christina Papadimitriou and David A. Stone, "Addressing Existential Disruption in Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury: A New Approach to Human Temporality in Inpatient Rehabilitation," *Disability & Rehabilitation* 33, no. 21-22 (2011): 2121-2124.

⁶⁰ Lisa Diedrich, "Breaking Down: A Phenomenology of Disability," *Literature and Medicine* 20, no. 2 (2001): 209-210. I am highly indebted to this article for breaking new ground on this subject. Yet while I find her discussion interesting, I think she, unfortunately, remains in the subjectivist tradition. Too often she cannot be said to offer a truly Heideggerian analysis, and it was the aim of my project to do so by looking at impairment-disability as both somatic and social phenomena.

that once the mind-body split becomes too pronounced, the thinking subject ceases to be a ‘subject’ at all and merely becomes a manipulable object. The first step in this process is the depersonalization that is often born of the breakdown of the worlds in which Dasein finds itself. This (mal)function in the performance of practical activity disrupts the tacit understanding of being that a culture possesses, whose grounding, as I have indicated, is our flesh. Not only does impairment signify a personal confrontation with negativity, it embodies the abyss [*abgrund*] that supports being-in-the-world.⁶¹

BINDING PHILOSOPHY?

This chapter has primarily analyzed division I of *Being and Time*. I have argued that impairments can cause the domination of the body, since this brings about the breakdown of the context of practical activity. Furthermore, while the split between the mind and body appears as helpful to for this problem, in reality, it makes it worse. As cultural beings, we always carry within our bodies various stances upon our world. We follow these cultural norms without thinking, since so much of our knowledge and/or prejudices remain unexpressed; and if we did express them all, we would not have culture as such. One of the things that define the human way of being in the world is the use of tools. I shall argue below that the world of impairment-disability is more defined by the use of tools because of the attempt to hide the groundless nature of our beliefs, particularly its faith in rational subjectivity and the power of the human body; yet I have only obliquely touched the problem of death to little satisfaction. It is now necessary then to go boldly and not so gently into that good night, if we are ever going to shed light on the relationship between technology, ethics and disability. Let us hope there is light at the end of the tunnel and not merely a train wreck.

⁶¹ Ibid., 211.

Chapter Two: Interrupting (Im)Potency?

Jesus said “Let them be alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” — Mat. 15:14

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND?

The author of Matthew narrates Jesus' dissatisfaction with the hypocrisy of the Pharisaic interpretation of Jewish law and the sinfulness of his generation. They have ears but do not hear; they have eyes but do not understand. For the author of Matthew, the Pharisees represent the conventional morality. In opposition to this conventionalism, Jesus offers a far more apocalyptic vision. Apocalypse comes from the Greek word to uncover. While they differ profoundly about the content of this apocalyptic vision, both Heidegger and the author of Matthew share apocalyptic elements, insofar as they both seek to reveal a life beyond convention.

The blind leading the blind was a trope in ancient Mediterranean discourse to express the condition of double ignorance—that is, one does not know what one does not know. The thoughtful position, for both Plato and Heidegger, is knowledge of one's own ignorance, which can further the process of questioning.⁶² Yet for Heidegger, the very thing of which Dasein is ignorant, on both a literal and a metaphorical level, is blindness itself. Because Dasein's thrown [*geworfen*] condition, we are fundamentally blind to the impaired nature of both its particular instantiation of being and Being itself. Only by recovering this sense of impairment, may we have a truly apocalyptic vision. As with all apocalyptic visions, this process is very dangerous. For when the scales fall from our eyes, we stare at both an absolute freedom and an absolute abyss.

⁶² Plato, *Meno*, trans. G. M A. Grube, in *Five Dialogues*, ed. G.M.A. Grube. (Indianapolis IN Hackett 2002) 87d 87-88.

Now that we have discussed the body's relation to the revelation of negativity, we must explore negativity in further detail. Accordingly, this chapter will discuss Heidegger's conception of inauthentic existence, born of a leveling of all distinctions in humankind, and how such leveling may provide insight into able-normativity. By able-normativity, I mean something analogous to the term heteronormativity; that is, where a certain set of performative gestures and body movements are recognized as compulsory and define one's being able in the same way that certain practices within a given culture determine one's gender and/or sexual orientation (s). "One is not born a woman or a man; rather one becomes either a woman or a man".⁶³ Likewise, one is not born impaired as such; rather, one in certain respects becomes impaired. As McRuer says, "able-bodiedness offers normative... positions that are intrinsically impossible to embody, and the persistent failure to identify fully and without incoherence with these positions reveals able-bodiedness itself not only as a compulsory law but as an inevitable comedy"⁶⁴

The One [*das Man*] is a form of existence that does not see the groundless nature of everyday practices. Rather, it assumes convention as its only law. Through an analysis of this impoverished instance of Dasein, it is possible to see the consequences of Cartesian subjectivity. In an effort to control its world, much of the modern instance of Dasein has lost everything that distinguishes it from the animal: the common human being no longer recognizes the crucial fact of ontological difference.

In order to understand both able-normativity and the concept of leveling, it is necessary to analyse Heidegger's concept of mood, which sheds further light on being-in-the-world. I contend that both the fundamental moods of anxiety and boredom play an important role in the social construction of disability from impairment, though I shall be placing more emphasis on the former

⁶³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books). 301.

⁶⁴ Robert McRuer. "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J Davis, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 301.

than the latter. In order to explain why anxiety is a fundamental mood, it is first necessary to explain how anxiety differs from fear. One must examine anxiety to ascertain how Dasein becomes individuated. Thus being-towards-death [*sein-zum-Tod*] is not being-towards-death at a particular time, but embracing the fact that it could occur at any moment.

Heidegger believes that it is only through confronting anxiety that we achieve individuation; for we are, at bottom, beings-towards-death. To say that Dasein is being-towards-death is also to say that Dasein is an event oriented toward its own freedom. Anxiety [*Angst*], therefore, emerges out of confrontation with possibility as much as a confrontation with death. Impairments have the potential to hasten this confrontation and make it far more fruitful. A discussion of Heidegger and impairment-disability on this score may also have the merit of preserving many things that are admirable in his discussion of anxiety, while also tempering many of its disturbing implications. This analysis of anxiety would, of course, be impoverished without further elucidation of the relationship between anxiety and time. Heidegger argues that the One is precisely the instance of Dasein that holds onto a present-centered conception of time, whereas authentic Dasein has a future-centered conception of it; this focus on futurity allows the latter to achieve a higher degree of freedom.

Dasein and world form their own ground. Thus to embrace death is to embrace one's self because death represents the potentiality to become what one is. This is so because ontology is made possible by questions precipitated by finitude. If the only thing Heidegger can say for certain about Dasein is that it is ontological, then Dasein becomes what it is through embracing death. I shall argue that proper [*eingtich*] acceptance of finitude happens on both a collective and a Dasein-specific level, even though impairments are part of the collective fate of Dasein that manifests in particular bodies.

Hence, in affirming impairments, whether the world in which we dwell dictates that we have one or not, we enact the ongoing process of being-towards-death. Far from presenting a handicap, I hope to show this allows Dasein an increased range of possibilities. Considering that for Heidegger the task of the human way of being is to disclose a world, the epistemological and ontological dimensions of impairment also have ethical implications. An authentic being-with [*mit-sein*] others is only possible with a concomitant acceptance of negativity. The chapter shall conclude by asking: to what extent a metaphysics predicated on resolve and will embroils those who wish to question disability in the more general fetters of philosophy. Consequently, we must also ask, along with Heidegger, how to transcend desire after desire that ceases only in death. The posing of this question, I hope, will begin to turn us from a phenomenology of disability and impairment to the task of thinking about disability and impairment.

(DIS)LOCATING (IN)DIFFERENCE?

Genuine thought is impossible, however, if one refuses to fly above the banality of convention. Unfortunately, many instances of contemporary Dasein are like ostriches, unwilling to extricate their heads from the seemingly soothing sands caused by the present-centered conception of time. If taken to an extreme, this creates an existence befitting an animal, rather than an instance of Dasein. Heidegger lamented the paralysis that he observed in the Dasein around him. In modernity humankind's desires are increasingly satisfied, causing the unequal to be made equal. In order for this equalization to be effective, Dasein must aspire to lower aims. As a consequence of this collective apathy, Dasein loses transcendence. If the ontic characteristic of Dasein ceases to be that it is ontological, human beings would continue to be a member of the species *Homo Sapiens* but would not hold the event of Dasein within them and further its capacities for disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*]. In the name of purported 'liberal freedom', humankind has sacrificed its

primordial epistemological and ontological freedom. It is possible to say, therefore, that modern Dasein has collectively fallen prey to erroneous and morally deleterious phenomenological conceptions. Much of Dasein cannot perceive itself as it truly is, nor can it disclose phenomena as they truly are. Dasein as an event in the world today, though seemingly free, is everywhere in ontological chains. Dasein has ears but cannot hear, and it has eyes but cannot understand. This is so because understanding necessitates praxis, and contemporary life is often too uniform to permit genuine actions.

If Dasein is, in fact, being-in-the-world, it cannot become what it is, while unwilling or unable to execute significant action. In other words, philosophy qua philosophy is always practical. Hence the sickness of modernity is stultifyingly simple: there are scores of persons possessed of theoretical knowledge for each one who has the courage to put it into practice.⁶⁵ All but a brave few are subsumed by the desires of the herd; they find it difficult to resist the sway of convention, since they become seduced by the creature comforts of contemporary life. Owing to this seduction, they become everyone and no one. As discussed in Chapter one, it is possible to describe Dasein as both the space and the event in which the disclosure of being occurs.

Consequently, the One [*das Man*] is an impoverished form of disclosure because, despite its ubiquity, it has no definite place. Ethical judgments, at least for Heidegger, are derived from the considered stance Dasein takes on the situation in which it dwells. Guignon argues that this shows Aristotelian influence, for Heidegger makes an implicit distinction between *poiesis*: actions which are done for the sake of something else, and *praxis*: ethical actions which are pursued for their own sake.⁶⁶ The one may be moral only by coincidence, yet it would be improper to call the one ethical, since it knows no deliberation. Heidegger writes:

⁶⁵ Heidegger, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, 118 [126].

⁶⁶ Charles Guignon, “Heidegger’s concept of freedom, 1927—1930,” in *Interpreting Heidegger*, 89.

In its being, the one [*das Man*] is essentially concerned with averageness. Thus, the one maintains itself factically in the averageness of what is proper, what is allowed, and what is not. Of what is granted success and what is not. This averageness, which prescribes what can and may be ventured, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore. Every priority is noiselessly squashed.....Distantiality, averageness, and levelling down, as ways of being of the One, constitute what we know as ‘publicness.’⁶⁷

Hence, the subjectivity of the One can be summarized by statements, such as the following: “one ought to drive on the right side of the road,” “one ought to love one’s neighbor as oneself,” “one ought to use conditioner on one’s hair to prevent split ends,” “one never wears white after Labor Day” and so forth.

Here it is necessary to correct possible misunderstanding. The dictates of convention are a necessary part of an authentic life; for Dasein is always falling prey to its world. As such, authenticity is not ever a fully realizable goal for, as we shall see, to be authentic is to be dead. Rather, Dasein exists within a contentious continuum between authenticity and inauthenticity.⁶⁸ Yet the following two questions come to the fore: whether or not these conventions serve a salutary purpose — that is, are they able to further Dasein’s potentiality —; and second, whether or not Dasein can take on mores and creatively shape them to further the disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*] of being.⁶⁹ For this reason, the inauthentic nature of the One also is caused by its tendency to universalize. The parochialism of this mass instance of Dasein is ill suited to the flux inherent in Being. To elaborate, to assume that loving one’s neighbor as oneself is a moral imperative is to miss the truth that there are many situations in which this disposition is misguided and, in fact, quite unethical⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ Heidegger, *Being And Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 119 [127].

⁶⁸ Ibid.,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 351-387.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 112 [120]

This is not to diminish the importance of benevolence, nor to say that there are not situations in which benevolence is also heroic — persons like Gandhi come to mind — yet the myopic faith in convention precipitates the obfuscation of personal responsibility. Gandhi was heroic, at least in this respect; his convictions were accompanied by courage and action. Persons like him provide examples for us to follow in constructing a life that responds to our historical situation, while also not being entirely confined by it. He subverted the platitudes that trapped both the majority of his compatriots and their oppressors, such that he was able to create, through this subversion, a new path for others to follow. This was a path that embraced death for the sake of the ethical. On this, Guignon comments that “...genuine freedom is to be found not in the absence of all constraints, but in clarity and depth about the constitutive stories that lay out the guidelines along which we already shape our lives.”⁷¹ Contemporary life bores Heidegger because the average mode of being-in-the-world amounts to the blind leading the blind on an increasingly banal journey. No one knows when this journey began, but if it is continued in this way, whether we accept it or not, it ends in falling to our death in ignominious ignorance. It is possible to say, therefore, that axioms are the opiate of the inauthentic masses. So the philosopher, much to my chagrin, must embrace both bad fashion sense and split ends.

I feel I must guard against further unwanted concealment of truth as we advance steadily toward revealing the essence of negativity for Heidegger. As stated in Chapter 1, every event of Dasein is born of a context of practical activity. As such, Dasein is forever falling prey to the world, and this is a natural part of life, especially considering Heidegger’s contention that Dasein is what it does. Indeed, there are some roles, socially influenced though they maybe, which have a high degree of ontic significance for Dasein that borders on the ontological.

⁷¹Charles B. Guignon, “Authenticity, moral values, and psychotherapy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon , 255.

For example, a person may see being both a nurse and mother as not simply occupations in which she is engaged. Rather, she *is* both a nurse and a mother.⁷² To elaborate, some identities and the worlds born of them become so wedded to a Dasein that they cannot be divorced from it, without severely handicapping its unique form of disclosure. Those roles in which we invest ourselves the most have the potential to disclose truth, yet in tandem with this revelatory potential, there is a danger of undue concealment [*Verborgenheit*]. If the nurse and mother in question simply were to adopt the ‘Florence Nightingale approach’, becoming utterly consumed by a perceived ideal of her caring roles, this would cause an improper concealment of her being. Likewise, it would be a very inappropriate response to her situations, if she were to be constantly apathetic to either of these roles, thereby, neglecting the other instances of Dasein for which she is responsible.⁷³ The question of the propriety of social roles, whatever they may be, rests upon whether or not these roles enhance or detract from Dasein’s creative plasticity. Now it is necessary to investigate the activities that enhance our capacity for ontological metamorphosis.

The protean potential of Dasein depends on whether or not it can successfully negotiate the ontological difference, through the activity of questioning being. Yet these possibilities are limited if one thinks of time in the improper way. Contemporary Dasein, on account of its metaphysical heritage from Aristotle onward, remains trapped in the present. To speak of both the past and the future as being captured by the present seems oxymoronic, but there is often much to be gained from the investigation of seeming antinomies; for there we find the dynamic process of Being at play. Heidegger argues that we simply view the past as the present that has passed, the present as the present happening now, and the future as the present to come.⁷⁴ Conducting one’s life under this myopic conception of time is likely to lead to preoccupation with daily activities and insufficient

⁷² Heidegger,, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 87.

⁷³ Ibid., 113 [121].

⁷⁴ Ibid., 295-307 [310-328].

deliberation about what range of activities, made possible by the talents of our thrown [*geworfen*] condition, may enhance our lives. Common Dasein often has inklings that it is a finite event, but through constant subtle acts of disavowal, it comports itself in the world as though the opposite were true. Enmeshed in the myopic minutia of our mundane lives, comfortable though we may be, we are mollified by the tasks around us, teeming as they are with technological distractions.

A WAKEFUL LIFE?

This conceals a malignancy that is best expressed by Socrates' image of the cave in Plato's Republic. Heidegger would obviously concur with Socrates' statement that the unexamined life is not worth living.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, this statement often passes into the plethora of unpracticed platitudes that perform the task of thinking for the One. We often overlook the existential horror that the image of the cave ought to evoke. To be perpetually paralyzed, on both a ontic and ontological level, to pass one's life unable to discern what is true from what is false, as though drugged, is a fate worse than death. The truly tragic element of the Republic comes to the fore when it ends with the myth of Er. That is, though many take this story about reincarnation literally, it could have a much more symbolic meaning. After living his life and understanding the afterlife, as well as what justice is, there is a danger that Er could forget everything, and thereby become trapped in the cycle of life and death (nature) forever. If this were the case, transcendence of nature through the contemplation of existence would be impossible and philosophy would cease. It is likely, therefore, that Er is a symbol for the problem of amnesia that ought to perpetually preoccupy humankind, particularly those worthy of practicing philosophy. That is, persons possessed of merit ought to be haunted by the recurring nightmare in which, at the advent of their immediate and eternal total annihilation, they realize they have led a pitiful life.

⁷⁵ Plato, *Republic* X, 621c; trans. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 303.

Moreover, we enact the myth of Er every day. We fall asleep when the sun sets and then emerge from the land of dreaming when the sun rises. Consequently, one could read the myth of Er as a proto-existentialist exhortation to live one's life virtuously, as though everyday one has the opportunity to begin again and break completely from the realm of dreams.⁷⁶ Breaking from this tendency toward amnesia is the constant task of the philosopher. Yet it is this pitiable forgetfulness, born of an impoverished capacity for transcendence, which Heidegger takes to be the dark core of modern nihilism.⁷⁷ In modernity we are all in the same position as Er, on the precipice of amnesia.

Consequently, it is logical to ask how this nightmare may be constructive at all. The answer is that if this nightmare is internalized correctly, it leads to a vivifying temporal orientation, one that can provide a very free and wakeful life. Unlike animals, Dasein is in a world created by time. To be sure, the animal lives in the world conditioned by temporal laws, but it is completely confined to the realm of nature; its life is a sequence of determined patterns, born of instinct. Conversely, owing to being in time in the way that other beings are not, Dasein is always able to project itself into future possibilities.⁷⁸ To elaborate, the ontological capacity, if properly exercised, enables Dasein to transcend the horizon of nature — albeit slightly — in order to create one of its own. This is not to say in some rationalistic way that Dasein, by virtue of its self-consciousness, transcends the animal; but it is to say that Dasein transcends the animal, if it creates a world through both reflection and activity. In other words, the only proper [*eingtich*] freedom is one which is both free in thought as well as deed. Heidegger comments “Da-sein is a being-possible entrusted to itself through possibility throughout. Da-sein is the possibility of being free for its own most potentiality of

⁷⁶ I am grateful for a conversation I had with Justin Campbell, in which he elucidated the commonalities between Plato and Heidegger on this score.

⁷⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, (New York: Indiana University Press, 1995), 136.

⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Being in Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 135 [144].

being.”⁷⁹ Guignon elucidates this enigmatic statement as follows: “Finite freedom, true human freedom, is achieved when we see our possibilities as given to us as an inheritance that opens us up onto genuinely worthy courses of action, and we make our choices among these possibilities with a clear-sighted choosing to choose.”⁸⁰

Dasein is always becoming what it is. A less obscure way to think of this is to conceive of an instance of Daseining in terms of narrative. Right now, I am writing a Master’s thesis, with the intention of pursuing doctoral research in continental philosophy. Hopefully, if both Apollo and Dionysus look upon me favorably, I will get tenure someday. Since I consider professorship as a kind of vocation, I tend to view my past in relation to that future possibility, however tentative it may be.

For example, all the education I have accrued, the languages I have learned, and the interpersonal relationships I have formed help me become a better teaching assistant and scholar. I do this because I want to be part of an illustrious tradition that I think serves an important purpose; and since this goal has ethical importance for me, insofar as it requires me to take a definite stance on my life, it would be improper to surrender this ambition easily. Hence a dwelling [*Wohnung*] in time that takes action as its focus must necessarily be future-oriented, since it always finds itself in relation to the tasks that must be accomplished. Should I accomplish or fail to accomplish said goal, my conception of time, arising from the activities associated with my aims, would change. The narrative of my life would have a new chapter, and hitherto glossed over sections would assume greater significance.

⁷⁹ Ibid.,

⁸⁰ Charles Guignon, “Heidegger’s concept of freedom, 1927—1930,” in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical essays*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 97.

If I am fortunate enough to lead an examined life that takes ontology into consideration, this dyadic process of projection into future possibilities and the concomitant retrojection of those possibilities into the past will continue until I am dead. My death will be the final jot on the story of my life that I, at least in part, helped to pen. Death is, therefore, the possibility towards which we are constantly moving, since death is the eventual outcome of projecting into possibility.⁸¹ With death, an instance of the event of Dasein ceases: it can no longer disclose a world from a particular position; wherefore, it is possible to comprehend this event in its totality. I cannot know the full significance of my aspiration to become a professor, since my life is not yet over. Thus Heidegger argues that proper [*eingtich*] Dasein is being-toward-death [*sein-zum-Tod*], it is also appropriate to say that Dasein, whether singular or collective, is always striving for completion. This is why my death would be my own most potentiality.⁸²

Another instance of Dasein may assume my role as student and perform it better than I do, but they cannot take on the responsibility of my death for me. Even if we were to imagine a Dickensian scenario, where an attractive Sydney Carton-esque character goes to the gallows on our behalf, so we can be with our true love, such sacrifice would only delay our inevitable appointment with death. This appointment is made all the more unsettling because Dasein knows it comes to all at some point, often far too soon. It is without reason; it is not justice that is blind but Death's cold and indiscriminate hand.

Since we can feel the ghost of its hand on our shoulder, as opposed to the animal, which is confined to the realm of nature and, therewith, rendered oblivious, Heidegger distinguishes between types of demise. The animal simply perishes when its biological functions cease. The animal is poor in world. Accordingly, it cannot form a context of significance between its body and the things it

⁸¹ Heidegger, *Being in Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 280 [383].

⁸² Ibid., 135 [144].

uses.⁸³ My cat perceives her water bowl as a thing from which she can drink. She does not know why she must drink, yet more importantly for this discussion, she cannot imbue her water bowl with significance in a network of objects that constitute a definitive stance on some kind of ‘cat manner of being’. The water bowl for her will obviously never be a chalice, in the same way that Dasein often invests liquid receptacles with religious significance. Owing to this impoverishment, when my cat perishes, she will not leave a world; she will leave an environment.

Only Dasein dies because only Dasein helps to create a world. It is because of Dasein’s capacity for disclosure that it mourns the dead and has diverse funerary practices. Grief amounts to the recognition of the loss Dasein experiences when a particular instance of it ceases to be. Respect for the corpse of the deceased acknowledges that the corpse is not precisely an object, until it has been respectfully dealt with; for it used to house the world-building event of Dasein.⁸⁴ To suggest that no one can take on another’s death, is merely to suggest that no one can lead another’s life. My death is my own because my life is my own, and being toward my own death requires me to embrace my capacity for freedom.⁸⁵ Hence, Heidegger says that Dasein is in each case my own, meaning that every person who has the capacity to house this event is responsible for her actions, which can either enhance or detract from Dasein’s revelatory capacity.

We ought to be on our guard, however, since this seems to flirt with a subjectivist interpretation. Though Dasein is an individual modality, precipitated by being-towards-death [*sein-zum-Tod*], this cannot be divorced from the being-with-others that renders mortality and identity possible. It is not an exaggeration to argue, therefore, when an authentic Dasein dies, world[s] in which this Dasein dwelled are made worse. This contention is analogous to the statement that the

⁸³ Ibid., 240-241. For an extensive discussion of the role that the idea of perishing plays in Heidegger’s work, cf Brent Adkins, *Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger and Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 124-134.

⁸⁴ Adkins, *Death and Desire*, 62.

⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 110 [117].

death of a particular Dasein enacts the dyadic process of truth, mainly the constant play between unconcealment [*Unverboregeheit*] and concealment [*Verborgenheit*]. On the co-disclosure of the world and the ethical dimensions of Dasein's intersubjective existence, Olafson writes:

This might suggest that Heidegger's conception of our "being for the sake of others" could be understood, at least in part, in terms of just such a relation of co-disclosure of the world. In other words, each one of us would constitute a resource for our fellow human beings through the disclosure of the world that we effect and that we make available to them on countless informal occasions of social life as well as in the context of organized inquiries.⁸⁶

Negativity and freedom are synonymous, since both express different facets of choice.

When a Dasein chooses to do something it obviously chooses not to do something else. In order to affirm its existence, Dasein must come to realize that it is a particular event of being, as opposed to some other event. Every possibility Dasein chooses has limitations, obviously born of Dasein's condition of finite transcendence. Dasein exists in the space between the gods and the animals. Heidegger believes that even if God exists she/he, paradoxically, would not experience transcendence. This is so because transcendence requires time. The Western theological tradition posits that God is outside time and, thereby, apprehends all of history simultaneously. It is contradictory to conceive of a being outside time that could experience the phenomenon of care [*Sorge*]. A necessary condition for the disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*] of world is the phenomenon of care; ergo, God cannot be said to have a world qua world. Additionally, though many often say that God has infinite possibility, when one interrogates the statement, it is illogical. If limitations and possibilities function as a dyad, God, as infinite substance, can have neither limitations nor possibilities. These belong to Dasein alone.

To live an authentic life, therefore, is to understand that one is sheer possibility. Heidegger thinks that this recognition requires Dasein to take responsibility for what it does in the world.

⁸⁶ Fredrick Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: A Study of Mitsein*, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42.

Heidegger's conception of human existence tries to strike a balance between freedom and responsibility, which is a very difficult and dangerous task, as well as one that Heidegger often failed to do. Dasein is unable to completely change the context in which it finds itself. Nevertheless, to assume this context is entirely fixed ignores the negativity — and thus the plasticity — of existence. Ontology is therefore nothing but meditation upon negativity, but this meditation ought to yield effective results in the world.

MOODY BOREDOM!

For this reason, anxiety is one of Dasein's fundamental moods [*Grundstimmung*]. Before continuing it is necessary to discuss what Heidegger means by mood [*Stimmung*], for it differs from the common understanding. For Heidegger, mood is not best conceived of as an interior experience, since that would simply reinforce the subjectivist paradigm which he tries to transcend. Instead, mood [*Stimmung*] is an attunement [*Befindlichkeit* lit. “finding oneself-ness”⁸⁷] toward being. He states “Attunement [*Befindlichkeit*] is so far from being reflected upon that it precisely assaults Da-sein in the unelected falling prey to the “world” of its heedfulness. Mood assails. It comes neither from “without” nor from “within,” but rises from being-in-the-world itself as a mode of that being.”⁸⁸ In order to understand what Heidegger means by attunement, it is useful to think of how this word is employed in music. When an instrument is tuned to a key, it emits certain frequencies and not others. Out of a given range of possible sound, the instrument plays only a portion. The frequencies that the instrument can play often create a certain mood according to the thrown [*geworfen*] condition in which Dasein is situated. In order to understand this, it is useful to think of the different ambiances created in an opera versus a Metallica concert.

⁸⁷ as in the English expressions, "how do you find yourself?"; Or, as the kids say, "what's up?".

⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 29 [134].

Accordingly, Heidegger seeks to give ontological significance to a tacit, though unacknowledged, understanding of mood. That is, we all know a person, who is either quite cheerful or quite miserable, and as such, influences disclosure of the world around her. In her presence things reveal themselves in a certain way and we often feel energized or drained having left her. To be sure, her thoughts play an important part in the way she comports herself toward Being, but her mood is far more than that. It is expressed by her gestures and how she interacts with other persons. Though mood is often an intersubjective phenomenon, sometimes Dasein cannot overpower a mood. Additionally, there are times when we walk into a mood unexpectedly and the way we comport ourselves toward being immediately changes. It is possible to ascertain this if one has had the unfortunate experience of coming across a group of persons who have had news of a sudden tragedy.

From these examples it is possible to say that mood is that indescribable energy in the air, which is ever-present yet impossible to grasp. As Heidegger says, it occupies a liminal space, on account of this evanescent quality, between the subjective and the objective. He comments:

After all, feelings and attunements constantly change. They have no fixed subsistence, they are that which is most inconstant. They are merely a radiance and shimmer, or else something gloomy, something hovering over emotional events. Attunements—are they not like the utterly fleeting and ungraspable shadows of clouds flitting across the landscape?⁸⁹

But there are only two moods that Heidegger believes possess ontological significance — anxiety and boredom.

In what is, appropriately, perhaps the most boring book of philosophy (however informative it may be) Heidegger distinguishes between three types of boredom. Boredom is a fundamental mood [*Grundstimmung*], because in boredom, it is possible to better comprehend Dasein's relation to time and negativity. In boredom [*Langeweile* lit. long while] one sees the process of finite

⁸⁹ Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts*, trans. McNeill & Walker, 129 [134].

transcendence more clearly. The way Dasein reveals the world—which is synonymous with saying discloses time—alters with its mood. This may give the impression that Dasein has considerable ability to shape its reality through the way in which it comports itself toward beings. While this is in many cases true, why this mood is so unpleasant is precisely because it resists the desires of Dasein. The reverse is true. The cliché “time flies when you are having fun” always has a high degree of poignancy.⁹⁰ In these examples of joy or boredom, we become more aware of time’s obstinacy; and owing to time’s resistance we are forced to contemplate it.

The first type of boredom Heidegger identifies is being bored *by* something. An object or person does not entertain us, and so we become bored by it, as I am sure any sane person would be after reading the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*.⁹¹ We can all think of an instance when time, as though by diabolical sorcery, appears to stop, during Christmas dinner, as we listen to that annoying relative prattle on about the latest plebeian project he has undertaken. His inconsequential monologue makes us contemplate finitude, since for an instant, though it may be brief, we contemplate using our utensil to either end our lives or his. The next type of boredom occurs when we become bored *with* something. To help us understand the difference, Heidegger writes of a party, in which everything is perfect, but the mere idea of being at that event becomes imperceptibly and inexplicably tiresome. This boredom is more general, and on account of this generality, has more ontological significance. Because something that ought to have preoccupied Dasein no longer does, it begins to see the groundless character of its everyday activity.⁹²

From this conception of being bored with, Heidegger discusses boredom with ontological significance. When Dasein experiences ontological boredom, time no longer matters; for the world in which Dasein dwells ceases to have significance. While it would be improper to exist in this

⁹⁰ Ibid., 106.

⁹¹ Ibid., 107 [134].

⁹² Ibid., 109 [164-166].

attunement indefinitely, Heidegger thinks this feeling of homelessness [*unheimlich*], born of boredom, is invaluable. This is so for two reasons: first, it exhorts Dasein to enhance its capacities for disclosure (transcendence); and second, it reminds Dasein that its projects, if they are to have any meaning [*sinn*], constantly require reaffirmation (finitude).⁹³

At this point, it is necessary to recall that Heidegger's early work is phenomenological. Accordingly its primary concern is to let phenomena be seen as they are. The fundamental tenets of *Being and Time* are that Western metaphysics describes the human way of being in the world in the wrong way, thereby, leading to a concealment of what the human way of being actually is, and that through an analysis of how this process of concealment works, it is possible for Dasein to break free of it, however briefly. In Chapter One, I argued that Division I of *Being and Time*, which analyzes being-in-the-world, could be termed an exposition of the cultural sediment Dasein accrues over time. In this chapter, I have discussed comportment toward being designed to excavate this sediment and to show how and why Dasein runs from what it uncovers. This deliberative stance towards life, salutary though it may be, can only take one so far. To philosophize may be to learn how to die, but Platonic philosophy suggests that persons ought to overcome death through disinterest, whereas Heidegger believes Dasein ought to stare death in the face. It is only through looking at death that we will apprehend our own reflections. Such confrontations, like Dasein itself, are events which seem to disrupt the regular flow of time and in many cases redefine it.

Heidegger's conception of anxiety is not the kind of adolescent emotions one thinks of when listening to Radiohead. Rather, anxiety is distinguished from the emotion of fear by the fact that it does not have a definite object. When Dasein experiences anxiety, the world reveals itself for what it truly is: mainly, a series of contingent relations with no given purpose.⁹⁴ This does not mean

⁹³ Ibid., 80 [119-120].

⁹⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 175 [187].

that anxiety exposes the world as entirely meaningless, but it does suggest to Dasein that if there is significance to the world, Dasein is responsible for creating it on both an individual and collective level. Anxiety occurs when we contemplate the nothing [*das Nicht*]. The nothing is not simply fear of our imagined death, for that emotion has a definite object.⁹⁵ Rather, the nothing cannot be spoken about in positive terms, yet always penetrates existence. In the face of this nullity, it is the task of Dasein to affirm its ability to act. Only by this affirmation can it stand out as an instance of the nothing itself. Heidegger believes that, try though we may, we cannot forget the ontological intuition that we are sheer negativity.

Dasein, if it has any merit, feels guilty for not fulfilling its potential. It often makes excuses for itself or refrains from acting, since there appears to be an infinite expanse of time before it. More than delusions about its individual immortality, Dasein deceives itself about its collective endurance. Dasein often has a sense that if it does not complete a task, there will be others to complete it, it is always part of an eternal tradition called ‘humanity.’ We often get this sense when we see archaeological ruins from thousands of years ago, which provide feelings of beauty in the face of contingency. Yet these ruins conceal the amazing amount of archaeological evidence that has been lost. Moreover, as awe-inspiring and ancient as the Acropolis appears, on an astronomical scale, its age is insignificant, not to mention that Armageddon can always come tomorrow.

This is not to say that Heidegger undervalues tradition. In fact, that is a crucial part of his analysis, but it is to say that tradition for tradition’s sake is meaningless. Though Dasein inherits a past, owing to its thrown condition, proper [*eingentlich*] Dasein must always interpret this history in relation to future goals. Hence, authentic existence is both an individual and collective

⁹⁵ Ibid., 234 [254].

phenomenon. In order to have a conception of futurity at all, one must already possess a nascent notion of nullity.

As uncomfortable as a confrontation with the nothing may be, it is the only way human beings can possess wisdom, since to philosophize is to be homeless [*unheimlich*]. Dasein must be at home everywhere and nowhere. What Heidegger means to convey by this figure of speech is that when we fall prey to the world and its amusements, we lose our sense of wonder. To question is to seek, and consequently, genuine thinking has to have an element of adventure. In order to have a worthwhile adventure, there must be risk, but if Dasein creates a world where negativity is unduly circumscribed, adventure is impossible because there is always a predictable outcome.⁹⁶ Philosophy without homelessness merely becomes a series of doctrines to be memorized, rather than questions to be contemplated. Beginning from Socrates' image of the gadfly, genuine philosophy has always striven to challenge the dominant order. Whereas scientists seek unity, thinkers of the first order seek multiplicity. We must have resolve when confronting negativity, since it is only through resolved decision that we can accomplish genuine action. On account of this conviction, Heidegger believes that it is more proper [*eingtich*] to say of Dasein that it creates *ex nihilo* than to make that statement about God. If all actions are contingent, the only way Dasein can have a meaningful way of being in the world is to serve as its own ground. Hence, Dasein's absolute accountability, its thrown situation aside, is the only firm foundation for Dasein; all else amounts to building a house that rests upon sand. Heidegger writes "In the light of the for-the-sake-of-which of the potentiality-of-being which it has chosen, resolute Da-sein frees itself for its world." The thinking which does not consider the nothing is not philosophy.⁹⁷ Rather it is science.

⁹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Boston, Mass: Yale University Press, 2000), 169-185.

⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Being in Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 274 [298]

NOTHING SCIENTIFIC?

For Heidegger, negativity is the paradoxical groundless ground of existence. The nihilism of contemporary life is, consequently, precipitated by the primacy of science [*Wissenschaft*]. Heidegger argues that though science seeks to supersede ontology by subsuming all of Dasein's modes of disclosure into itself, it cannot do this, since it cannot comprehend the nothing [*das Nicht*]. Science cannot conceive of the nothing because it can only observe positive, that is, measurable phenomena.⁹⁸ Because nothing positive can be said about nothing, the modern age contends that it is pointless to contemplate. Yet Dasein requires the nothing, since without it Being is not possible. Without intimations of non-being, to speak of being at all would be logically incoherent. If Dasein is unable to experience the world as ultimately meaningless — that is, if it cannot see things separate from their context of meaningful significance as mere things — it cannot experience the wonder that there are things at all and not nothing.⁹⁹

In this way, the experience of the nothing throws Dasein back upon itself. To elaborate, when confronted with anxiety, Dasein realizes the fragility of its existence (finitude) and is, thereby, forced to receive the gift of existence with humility and work to further the disclosure of being (transcendence). Though Dasein must always act when confronting the nothing, this is the kind of action which ought to exercise restraint.¹⁰⁰ Thus the dynamic relationship between negativity and receptivity to being ought to be read against the disturbing voluntaristic facets of Heidegger's thinking.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", trans. David Krell, in *Basic Writings*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993), 93.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 96.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 102.

¹⁰¹ Brett Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*, (Evanston, IL: NorthWestern University Press, 2007), 26-30.

I have demonstrated that it is precisely such meditation that prevents the malignant metastasis of Cartesianism into every part of Dasein's body and world. The scientific mode of revealing is predicated on efficiency: that is, it seeks to diminish the ratio (or time) between desire and satisfaction. To elaborate, by means of obfuscating negativity, science seeks to accelerate and control the temporal process of being. Unfortunately, this acceleration cannot control time, since in order for Dasein to take hold of its negativity, the exact opposite conditions must occur.¹⁰² Consequently, it is not the pursuit of scientific knowledge which Heidegger finds so egregious. Instead, what is reprehensible is simply the absolutely crucial reversal of priority between ontological questioning and science, which has occurred with little notice, much to Dasein's detriment. Scientific discovery is predicated on the range of ontological questions asked and not the reverse.¹⁰³ Efficiency, therefore, is a mode of revealing, which seems to give Dasein increased freedom while, in reality, it cripples Dasein's capabilities.

How does this crippling pertain to the politics of disablement? I contend that impairments have a negative ontological status in the symbolic order, which is related to the negativity of philosophy as Heidegger conceives it. Heidegger contends that the negative propensity of Western metaphysics has to do with the structures of self-consciousness and negation characteristic of the Indo-European family of languages.¹⁰⁴ Though I cannot pursue Heidegger's claim here, it is useful to examine the terms of negation we use to describe non-normative forms of bodily comportment

Unfortunately, I do not have the etymological competency or the space to pursue an exhaustive analysis of the description of non-normative forms of embodiment in the Indo-European language family. Yet it may be salutary for us to examine five English terms. Lame comes from the

¹⁰² Tom Darby, "On Spiritual Crisis, Globalization, and Planetary Rule," in *Faith, Reason, and Political life today*, ed. Peter Augustine Lawley and Dale McConkey, (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2001), 35.

¹⁰³ Andrew Barry, "The anti-political economy, *Economy and Society*, no. 31, (2002) 270-281.

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Fried & Polt, 56-60.

Proto-Germanic word *lamon*, meaning ‘broken’; the word cripple comes from the Proto-Germanic word *krupilaz*, meaning ‘bent person’. The word impaired comes from the Vulgar Latin verb *impeiorare* – to make worse. All the words to describe different forms of embodiment besides the perceived able-bodied norm have a negative connotation. The word ‘disabled’ itself has two Latin roots, *dis* – to do the opposite of – and *ablen* – to render fit.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, something that is disabled does not function. From this small sample, we get a sense of how Dasein with an impairment, which is, of course, determined by the context in which it finds itself, seems to bear a much higher degree of negativity.¹⁰⁶

From my discussion above, it is clear how much negativity offends the one [*das Man*]. The Subjectivity of the one often exists solely in the realm of arbitrary convention. It takes for granted that norms of able-bodied minded subjectivity are universal. It is worthwhile to note that I am not taking this state to ever be realized in one Dasein at all instances. Rather, in keeping with the

¹⁰⁵ Michael Oliver and Colin Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement* (Leeds: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 99-101.

¹⁰⁶ While I find the distinction between impairment and disability useful for certain forms of conceptual analysis, I reject the structuralist notion that nature and culture are somehow distinct. In this reading, impairment would belong to the sphere of nature, whereas disability would belong to the sphere of culture. While I am not denying the biological impact of impairments, biological facts often are created by social reality, and vice versa. On this, cf. Noel Castree, “Socializing Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics,” in *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*, ed Noel Castree and Bruce Braun, (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 20-33. Owing to this belief, I am inclined to disagree with much of the so-called ‘social model’ approach to disability, outlined in the work of much previous disability studies (e.g., Oliver and Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement*, 1-20), which sees a rigid division between the somatic and the social. Instead, though this theory has flaws as well, I tend to agree with Tom Shakespeare’s critique of the social model, though not his critical realist position on epistemology. Cf. Tom Shakespeare, “The Social Model of Disability,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 192-203. Shakespeare is right to point out Judith Butler’s critique of the sex and gender distinction, as analogous to the distinction between impairment and disability. Butler argues for the social construction of both sex and gender, since both exist as material and social phenomena. She, therewith, challenges the distinction between the biological body and the social world. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 115-135. I think Shakespeare is right to make such criticisms of a rigid interpretation of the social model, but he often misses the social model’s intentions. Moreover, he often assumes that things, such as wilderness, which are obviously socially constructed, are inevitable realities with which impaired persons will have to contend. Consequently, he, albeit implicitly, labels in paired persons as partially outside nature. As Raymond Williams observes, the natural is the preeminent ideological concept. Raymond Williams, “Ideas of Nature,” in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 68. Applying Heidegger to the impairment-disability distinction may help us surpass this conceptual quagmire, by refocusing our attention on being-in-the-world, creating a far more permeable boundary between nature and culture, while also acknowledging that meaning is not exclusively dependent on human beings.

subjectivity of the one it is everywhere thought of, but never actualized.¹⁰⁷ It is useful to give examples in order to better define what I take to be able bodied subjectivity. The notion of the ‘perfect body’ and ‘perfect mind’ infiltrates Dasein’s world on levels so banal that they often escape consideration. For example, most light switches and kitchen countertops are designed under the assumption that the person using these devices will be standing. Moreover, sidewalks are often built with no colour contrast, under the assumption that the Dasein employing these sidewalks has ‘normal’ vision. Most buildings do not have strobe light fire alarms to accommodate hearing impaired Dasein.¹⁰⁸ And most of us have very a narrow understanding of what is neurologically typical behavior that often amounts to endorsing pedestrian politeness over creativity and caring.

Even when accessibility and other analogous measures are in place, they must always follow a conventional standard of accessibility or so-called barrier-free access, paradoxically creating, as it were, a normative form of abnormality. If one of the characteristics of modernity is uniformity, then modern industry is geared toward a uniform body.¹⁰⁹ Dasein has little time to ponder other modes of bodily comportment because such contemplation would be inefficient. Contemporary Dasein’s preoccupation with efficiency is born of an attempt to circumscribe anxiety [*Angst*], because impaired Dasein is often closer to negativity.

I contend that this is more likely to affect the disclosure of beings through the moods of both anxiety and boredom. This association with boredom is both ameliorated and worsened in

¹⁰⁷ On the historicity of able bodied normativity, cf. Lennard Davis, “Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3-5. Additionally, I believe the binary of the able-bodied/minded and impaired to be highly fluid. As with all binary logics, they are mutually interdependent and unstable, the impaired person must exist, in order to propagate the ideal of the able-bodied embodiment, a hysterical remainder of our inability to deal with antinomies. To take on impairment authentically, then, is to be queer, insofar as impairment by nature questions binary logic, and so impaired bodies can act as sites in which one challenges structuralism and heteronormativity. On the link between poststructural theory and queer politics see Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1-20.

¹⁰⁸ Davis, Constructing Normalcy. 6-10.

¹⁰⁹ James I. Charlton, “The Dimensions of Disability Oppression,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 220-225.

contemporary life because it may be difficult for impaired Dasein to keep up with, or take amusement in, the same pastimes as non-impaired Dasein. Hence, it is more likely to experience all levels of boredom; this may make those around the event of Dasein that has been deemed impaired become bored as well. Through such dysthymia, Dasein has intimations of contingency on both an individual and collective level.

The process is similar with anxiety; if impairment is grasped in its full magnitude, it often seems horrifying and random. One minuscule blood vessel not developing in the brain can have massive implications for the rest of one's life. One random fall can cause total paralysis.¹¹⁰ Dasein has implicit knowledge of these facts, on account of its temporal character; yet, it often chooses to overlook them, as it flees from the mood of anxiety generally. To speak metaphorically, depending on the attitude of the Dasein dwelling in the world, and the other beings around it, impairment can cast a blue mood of anxiety which often preconditions the disclosure of beings.¹¹¹ As I argued in Chapter One, this shadow looms heavily over impaired Dasein because the general negativity of the

¹¹⁰ It is difficult to know the differing ontic implications of whether an impairment is congenital or acquired since personal experience varies so widely. I often hear arguments that those with congenital impairments have lived their whole lives with an impairment and, thus, have a familiar set of limitations and possibilities. The experience of impairment-disability is easier for them because they allegedly do not have the same knowledge of an impairment-free world and so cannot conceptualize the true extent of their loss. There are three problems with this line of reasoning, and the last is more interesting than the first two. First, this conception of impairment sees it as a personal tragedy rather than as an experience; second a person with an acquired impairment gets to experience 'normal' functioning for a time, whereas someone with a congenital impairment is placed in a non-normative category from birth. Lastly, the above contention has an overly contiguous notion of selfhood in mind. To illustrate this point, it is useful to discuss Catherine Malabou's notion of aging. The traditional theory runs that one gradually becomes accustomed to aging, throughout the duration of one's life and that this is part of healthy psychosocial development. Yet Malabou argues that it does not often happen this way; there are more ruptures in our conception of selfhood than we generally acknowledge. She terms this malignant potential for change destructive plasticity. Many people, though they know aging is an ever present reality, still look at themselves in the mirror and become jarred by this fact. There is a remainder of the uncanny, which cannot be assimilated into the symbolic order, when we look at a self we do not recognize. Owing to this remainder of the uncanny, in the making of a self, it is my view that no one ever adjusts to impairment, just as no one ever fully adjusts to the uncanniness of selfhood. But in this maladjustment it is possible to disclose Being. Catherine Malabou, *Ontology of the Accident*, trans. Caroline Shread (Malden, MA: Polity Press 2012) 42

¹¹¹ I am indebted to the symbolic interactionist perspective in sociology, which holds that meaning derives from the interactions a person has with others as part of a larger socio-natural network of ascribed meaning(s). Both impairment and disability arise from socio-natural interactions. Consequently, disability and impairment are not located in particular agents, *per se*. Rather, they are dynamic, born of fluctuating webs of meaning that create the social and biological reality of persons. On this topic, cf., Heather Ridolfo and Brian W. Ward, *Mobility Impairment and the Construction of Identity* (Boulder: Colorado, 2013), 13-18.

world is inscribed on its skin. Our bodies are the primary tools through which we disclose the world, so when the body is impaired, it may enable ontological reflection.

This is only possible if we do not, as it were, quarantine impairments in order to circumscribe negativity. Dasein must use them as an opportunity to be resolute, but what kind of resolution is appropriate, when one is dealing with the problem of impairment? It would seem that Dasein is caught between two undesirable extremes.

LAME RESOLVE?

At this point, it is necessary to consider the ambiguity of the will in *Being and Time*, since by understanding this ambiguity, it is possible to comprehend both the development of Heidegger's thought and how this development may help us understand disability. While I have stated previously that the phenomenological attitude is one that is neither active nor passive, and that being in time tries to develop a conception of agency that critiques the willful nature of the Cartesian tradition, there does seem to be a clear voluntaristic element in *Being and Time*.¹¹² By being towards death, Dasein is able to will its own destiny and provide its own ground. In this reading, therefore, nothing matters but the capacity for Dasein to master its own circumstances. Consequently, Richard Wolin argues that it is not a large step from the metaphysics outlined in *Being and Time* to those discussed in Heidegger's lecture course, *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, in which he completely misreads Kant's categorical imperative¹¹³ and suggests that all

¹¹² Johannes Fritzsche, *Historical destiny and national socialism in Heidegger's "Being and time"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

¹¹³ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler, (New York: Continuum Books, 2002), 195-203. For an excellent discussion of this problem of willing, cf. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 134.

that matters is an act of pure will, rather than an act of will that is in accord with reason. Through this act of will one remains resolute.¹¹⁴

The German word for resolute in common use means to close ones self-off to certain possibilities by a definitive decision. From this emphasis upon the will, Heidegger's *On the Self-Assertion of the German University*, is not an erroneous aberration but a logical extension of his metaphysics. The voluntaristic dimensions of *Being and Time*, when applied to politics, cause Heidegger to support Hitler as the dynamic and disclosing leader of the *Volk*; for there is an etymological and philosophical link between resolve [*Entschlossenheit*] and disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*]. Heidegger's distaste for modern life and the freedoms of the common human being makes him more than willing to suppose that an elite few, the masters, should rule the masses. Those elite few are not persons possessed of reason; rather they are simply those with the resolve to act in accord with the situation in which they find themselves. If all of metaphysics is predicated upon constant strife, it stands to reason that Dasein will become most realized in limit situations, where it stands out into the nothing; only then will it realize its true essence. The call of conscience, therefore, which has no definite character, is merely a call to Dasein to exist in limit situations and cast off the mundane.

Nevertheless, this story is not that simple, and so it would behoove us not to dismiss Heidegger, however odious his actions may have been. As much as resoluteness can be understood voluntaristically, it can also be understood, as the later Heidegger tried to (re)interpret himself, as the negation of negation: to be resolved also is to unlock possibilities, by standing out in the open space created by anxiety. Though it is possible to read voluntaristic elements in being towards death, the whole point of being towards death is not to give Dasein a sense of false heroism. Rather

¹¹⁴ Richard Wollin, *The Politics of Being: the Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 22.

its purpose is to create a sense of humility. Even though we may work towards certain projects, we must accept that they could come to naught at any moment. In this reading, the call of conscience is one that calls Dasein back to the ever present reality of the fleeting nature of existence. This is an existence that hovers somewhere between heroism and ignominy. Thus it may be equally possible to say that in Heidegger's conception of resoluteness one finds the beginnings of a path to transcend the will. Simon Critchley says that the process of becoming an authentic Dasein is concomitant with accepting a constitutive lack in the self. An instantiation of this constitutive lack in selfhood would obviously be impairment.¹¹⁵ Perhaps holding oneself out into the night of anxiety is precisely the kind of experience needed in order to reorient Dasein away from egoism.

I am not contending that either of these interpretations is exclusively correct. They both have validity because there is a fundamental ambiguity concerning the will in *Being and Time*; and to a large extent, Heidegger's career could be defined as redressing this ambiguity.¹¹⁶ To be sure, as I shall argue more in depth in chapters three and four, this encounter with negativity did not abruptly cease after Heidegger's disillusionment with the Nazi party in some grand act of remorse. But it is because of the persistence of negativity in Heidegger's thinking and its ambiguous status that we can begin to understand the problematic nature of disability. I shall argue that Heidegger eventually comes to a position that tries to transcend negation, and in so doing, it strikes a middle ground between activity and passivity. This stance can free us from the dominance of science particularly the technological mode of revealing called disability.

If one of the defining characteristics of science is the concealment of negativity through efficiency and normalization, Dasein with impairments is more likely to have an impoverished form

¹¹⁵ Simon Critchley, "The Null Basis Being of a Nullity, or Between Two Nothings: Heidegger's Uncanniness," in *Interpreting Heidegger : Critical essays*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 75.

¹¹⁶ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 5-20.

of disclosure on account of Dasein's never ending flight away from death. Thus I shall argue in Chapter Three that this technological approach to impairment, born of impaired Dasein's proximity to negativity, is what creates the inauthentic identity of disability.¹¹⁷

As we must confront death in order to lead an authentic life, so too must we confront impairments, which, after all, are but a minor instance of death. This means that Dasein, both on an individual level (according to its cognitive capacity) and on a collective level, must take responsibility for its impairments. In so doing, as with every other challenge that Dasein experiences, impairments can provide a means whereby Dasein may achieve greater transcendence.

A natural question may be to ask how much negativity is too much negativity? Is not the amelioration of negativity through various practices and attitudes of Dasein a positive thing? My answer is yes, with the proviso that there is a vast difference between circumscription and transcendence: I believe this pertains to how we view both impairment and the nature of subjectivity. If we are all automata who flee from negativity, impairment- disability is a category ascribed to particular individuals who require amelioration in order to function;¹¹⁸ but if we take a Heideggerian approach, impairments become part of the collective disclosure of Dasein.

These differing approaches have vastly different ethical stances. The first, generally speaking, is an attitude that acts from pity: we are glad to help others with a personal tragedy but

¹¹⁷ We must be careful in giving disability an entirely pejorative meaning. This is not solely the case. As I have argued above, Dasein is always traversing the two extremes of authenticity and inauthenticity. Thus, impaired Dasein must, in some instances, be disabled, just as we all must be inauthentic. The key is to not be enslaved by ones masks. Only then is it possible to use the role of disability in a creative fashion, such that we can further the disclosure of being. We are always in ideology as it calls us to be particular 'subjects', yet this does not mean we are entirely determined by it; we always have the ability to partially resist interpolation. This insight is well expressed by Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," trans. Ben Brewster, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 175-80.

¹¹⁸ On the negative ontological status of disability in the liberal juridical framework, see Fiona Kumari Campbell, "Legislating Disability: Negative Ontologies and the Government of Legal Identities," in *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, ed. Shelley Tremain, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 109.

are relieved it did not happen to us.¹¹⁹ The second creates a world that challenges convention and embraces instantiations of negativity, whatever their type, since such negativity brings freedom and it is only through having such freedom that persons can engage in the kind of questioning that allows them to negotiate the ontological difference. To put it bluntly, without the impaired being active in the world, persons often tacitly assume that such conditions will not happen to them. Hence, in order to gain freedoms, we must confront our role in defining and being defined by negativity. Only then may we have a balanced life.

The isolation of impairments is caused by a willful disavowal of our relative helplessness and the concomitant overemphasis on our creative power. Tobin Siebers makes this point by recounting one of his subjects who forthrightly narrates her experience of both mobility impairment and receiving attendant care services in the following way:

...we must have our asses cleaned after we shit and pee. Or we have others' fingers inserted into our rectums to assist shitting. Or we have tubes of plastic inserted inside us to assist peeing or we have re-routed anuses and pissers so we do it all into bags attached to our bodies. These blunt, crude realities. Our daily lives.... The difference between those of us who need attendants and those who don't is the difference between those who know privacy and those who don't. We rarely talk about these things, and when we do the realities are usually disguised in generic language or gimp humor. Because, let's face it: we have great shame about this need. This need that only babies and the "broken" have And yes, this makes us different from you who have privacy of the body.... If we are ever to be really at home in the world and in ourselves, then we must say these things out loud. And we must say them with real language.¹²⁰

An authentic response to impairment on the part of a particular instance of Dasein rests on the same principle as the identity of the nurse. To be sure, impairments and disability often influence one's practical activity so much that they, despite being ontic phenomena, achieve a quasi-ontological status.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 110-112.

¹²⁰ Tobin Siebers, "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 179-80.

Like the nurse's identity, it is inappropriate to become paralysed by the identity often created by impairments, to be apathetic about it, or to flee from it outright. This is so because often the ink out of which we compose the story of our lives comes from the blood, sweat and tears of our body. This does not mean we cannot write a compelling narrative from such profane ink. Disclosing impaired Dasein as a medicalized event that elicits pity is perhaps more inauthentic than its outright concealment, since it constitutes a double rather than a single concealment of Being. The medicalized approach, if taken to an extreme, is doubly inauthentic; the one pretends to be compassionate, while merely caring about efficiency. Impaired Dasein becomes seen yet not seen and this double concealment of negativity serves to perpetuate the banality of the one. Dasein must disclose a world, in which its impaired instances have the capabilities and resources to enact finite transcendence; that is, to disclose a world, in spite of their limitations.

I have attempted to show that this world is only possible if we resist the subjectivity of the one [*das Man*], which seeks to mollify our fears by a collective conception of able-bodied -minded normativity that is everywhere and nowhere. Such a mass existence, in addition to endorsing this normativity, is intimately connected with the present centered conception of time. Such a misunderstanding of temporality [*Zietlichkeit*] has the potential to cause the event of Dasein, which is already very fleeting, to become insignificant. In order to avoid insignificance, we require anxiety and boredom; for they wake us from our slumber, and this wakeful existence in the face of danger is the necessary condition for philosophy. Thus to critique able-bodied normativity is one of the necessary conditions for thinking: it is impossible to think when one believes, however tacitly one may hold this belief, that one is immortal.¹²¹

¹²¹ For this approach to disability, I am indebted to the connection that Michèle Le Doeuff draws between feminism as an intrinsically critical practice and philosophy. Michèle Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 40-53.

Yet this anthropocentric preoccupation with negativity dismisses the classical argument that negation need not occur when one pursues immaterial goods. For example, negation does not happen when two persons pursue justice, since justice is not confined by either time or space and so can never be exhausted. This of course raises the obvious problem of whether or not there is negation when a person contemplates two forms at once. The principle of The Good is supposed to redress this problem, since all of the other forms participate in this monad. Consequently, when one contemplates one form, one contemplates them all. Thus the classical philosopher is able to achieve satisfaction for his desire, since it has an object beyond his own demise.¹²²

To this critique, Heidegger would have two rejoinders. First, in order to think correctly, one must begin with phenomenological description and make ontological deductions thence. Consequently, since we are always already in a world, it is only possible to speak of the pursuit of activities thought to be just. Since those activities occur in time, they are subject to negation; for time and negation are synonymous. Second, relying on a monad is improper, because it makes Being a noun rather than a verb. In opposition to the Platonic and Aristotelian models of reality, which become metaphysics of objective presence [*Anwesenheit*], Heidegger seeks a much more dynamic model. In the world of constant flux, there can be only autoerotic desire, since the dynamics of finite transcendence are highly unstable; and I shall argue that Heidegger's imminentization of metaphysics cause his work and contemporary Dasein, tacitly or actively embracing imminent negativity, to fall into some of the materialist traps Heidegger seeks to diagnose and avoid.

¹²² Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy," in *What is Political Philosophy and Other Studies*, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), 9-12, 45-55..

MARRYING THE NIGHT?

Moreover, such a conception of Heidegger and impairment may seem naïve, especially considering the masculinist and militaristic undertones of Heidegger's existential rhetoric. This obvious criticism of my argument is especially apparent when one considers Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi party, which he took to be a practical consequence of his metaphysics during this period. If negativity and impairment-disability are closely connected, then it would seem that it is impossible to think about the two correctly within the Western philosophical tradition, since, as Heidegger realizes in his critique of Nietzsche, metaphysics of pure will is still metaphysics, for all its protestations to the contrary,¹²³ and Heidegger himself would later recognize this. *Being in Time*, and the related writings, are still anthropocentric, and such anthropocentrism is related to the impoverishment of being.

A natural question follows from this assertion: what if the process of concealment that occurs in finite transcendence is not solely centered on Dasein, but inherent to the unfolding of being itself, and what if science and impairment are part of this unfolding. I will answer these questions, as well as demonstrate how one may cultivate a less resolute response to being and impairments, while also preserving much that is meritorious in Heidegger's earlier analysis, in Chapter three.

¹²³ Martin Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics", trans. Richard Wolen in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolen (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), 75-80

Crippling Occident

Interrupting (Im)Potency?

Chapter Three: Paralyzing *Poiesis*?

*Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime...*

*But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long preserv'd virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust.*—Andrew Marvell¹²⁴

A BAD ROMANCE?

Andrew Marvell's poem, "To His Coy Mistress", describes a courtship made more challenging by the ever present reality of time. It is part of the genre of poetry called persuasion literature, where a male author would attempt to seduce his lover by means of poetic skill. "To His Coy Mistress" is rather unique, since underneath its beautiful imagery, there are quite sinister motifs of rape, destruction and decay. It is for this reason that I think "To His Coy Mistress", if the mistress is seen as philosophy, could help us understand Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics that culminates in the technological will to destruction. Try as we may to capture *Sophia*, she always alludes the charms of the thinker, since like Marvell's mistress, she is a projection of the masculine imagination. When poiesis fails to effect our desires, we are left with the same course that Marvell chose: we must resort to images of death, invective rhetoric and a powerful will, in order to effect our lust for domination. Heidegger's fear is that this

¹²⁴ Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress," in "Andrew Marvell: Complete Poetry" (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1984) ll. 1-26.

metaphysical malfunction has the potential to create an actual and spiritual desert for a vast eternity.

It would seem that the analysis undertaken thus far is beginning to come to a curious impasse. If negativity and impairment are locked in a kind of bad romance that, as I have argued above, is related to the coming to pass of truth itself, what hope — or, indeed, point — is there in a Heideggerian analysis of this problem? As I have suggested above, this question is especially glaring considering Heidegger's odious and unrepentant involvement in a regime that possibly exterminated as many as 250,000 instances of disabled Da-sein, as well as millions of others deemed subhuman¹²⁵. Perhaps, at least where emancipatory political aims are concerned, ink is best spilled trying to secure individual rights and access to services, rather than becoming entangled in webs of metaphysical abstraction. Would that the question of disability were this easily answered; for at the end of philosophy, as we inquire into the thanatopolitical¹²⁶ dimensions of technology and disability more deeply, their relationship becomes far more sinister. Heidegger attempts to distance himself from his earlier thinking by continuing to move away from a Da-sein-centered approach to a more Being-centered approach.

¹²⁵ Ruth Hubbard, "Abortion and Disability, Who should and who should not inhabit the world," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 203. It is also important to realize that eugenic policies have a long history and the Nazis merely implemented measures suggested by British and American scientists. Sterilization laws have not been taken off the books of many American states.

¹²⁶ I am using this term to designate the extreme form of biopolitics, which often results in the opposite of life. Giorgio Agamben makes an explicit distinction between *bios* and *zoe*, which he traces back to the Ancient Greeks. *Bios* is life proper to human beings; it is a life experienced in community. Conversely, *zoe* refers to the bare fact of biological existence. Animals possess *zoe*, but they do not possess *bios*. Agamben suggest that the modern condition is that of the homo sacer, a Roman sacrificial victim, who was at once invested with extreme religious significance because he could not be sacrificed but could be killed by anyone on sight, if he entered the community. Because sacer means both blessed and cursed. For Agamben, the modern person is slowly becoming a person outside law and this is epitomized by the concentration camp. Giorgio Agamben *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford , CA: Stanford University Press, 1998. 72) Thus Michel Foucault also sees the problem of Liberal modernity as being essentially bio political. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans Robert Hurley. (New York: Penguin Books., 1997), 138. Timothy Campbell traces the thought of Foucault and Agamben back to the schism inherent in being, presented by Heidegger, and I have followed his lead in this respect. Timothy Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics From Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

Thus Heidegger begins to hyphenate Da-sein in order to emphasize the ‘Da’ element. Human existence becomes even more a receptive space where the sending of being becomes manifest, rather than an event that can be used to determine the meaning of being in general. It is not the finitude in Da-sein that is solely responsible for the process of concealment-unconcealment that characterizes disclosure [*Erschlossenheit*]: this process is inherent in being itself, and is also responsible for the sense of mystery when we participate in it. We lose this sense of wonder when we cease to understand Being as a contingent event and begin to understand it as a noun. The history of metaphysics is, therefore, a history of decline.

Western metaphysics, from Plato onward, begins to take truth as something to be possessed rather than an event in which Da-sein dwells; and this double concealment of truth, on account of the nature of being itself, is what has precipitated Da-sein’s destiny of technology, nihilism and death. I have argued that negativity has many facets in Heidegger’s work. Owing to this ambiguity, Heidegger calls technology both the lowest and highest point of Da-sein’s being-in-the-world. Da-sein must, therefore, pass through this nadir, in order to reclaim an authentic [*eingtich*] dwelling [*Wohnung*] place in the world: since technology is concretized metaphysics, this is synonymous with the statement that Da-sein must redefine its romance with *Sophia*. The best way to effect this redefinition is through a new courtship between thinking and art, such that this thoughtful *poiesis* can create a proper home for Da-sein as it confronts the wondrous nature of its existence.

Accordingly, this chapter will contend that Heidegger’s analysis of technology can elucidate many of the problems of his earlier work, and, concomitant with this contention, I shall further argue that these problems become clearer by continuing to explore the relationship between impairments, disabilities and negativity. In particular, I shall argue that the identity of

disability can be an impoverished form of technologically constructed disclosure. Though this may provide an increased range of possibilities, it often impairs Da-sein's capacity for an ethical comportment toward beings. If the goal of efficiency is to accelerate time by diminishing the ratio between desire and satisfaction, part of technology's essence is also to obfuscate decision. In other words, metaphysics/technology seeks permanence, causing the near total concealment of negativity, but ethics requires dynamism. This ossification of being through efficiency eventually reveals everything, including Da-sein itself, as something to be used, as opposed to an event to be experienced. Because negation is the abyssal ground for metaphysics, it also provides the ground for technology.

Yet technology becomes derailed, as it were, because unlike Da-sein, its essence is born of an asymmetrical relationship between transcendence and finitude. This creates anautopoetic dialectic, involving transcending (that is, negating) anticipated desire that continues both *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseum*. Hence technology could be termed the irresolvable *aporia*, stemming from the negation of negation. In other words, the goal of technology is to break all boundaries, and the goal of efficiency is to co-penetrate thought and action.¹²⁷ Both these aims once again relate to the connection between technology and time.

On account of its proximity to negativity, impaired Da-sein has increased likelihood of being dominated by the technological destiny of late modernity; thus the hegemony of science, similar to the way in which it can create many other inauthentic worlds, creates the world of disability. If Da-sein accepts this process, whether impaired or not, it becomes more trapped in the infinite dialectic of desire and anticipation that characterizes metaphysics predicated on negativity. This chapter will use the hypostasis of impairment into disability in order to

¹²⁷ Tom Darby, *The Feast: Meditations on Politics and Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 97.

illuminate the process of technological enframement [*Gestell*] and its thanatopolitical facets to show that a failure to question ontological assumptions often has very dark and very real consequences. This is just as true now as it was at the dawn of philosophy. Then as now, poetry can often transcend metaphysics, and in so doing, provide a more accessible place from which to think.

ANALYZING *ALĒTHEIA*?

Yet how did Da-sein reach the point where metaphysics has become so difficult? The answer is, of course, metaphysics itself. It is well known that Heidegger's focus on Being, rather than Da-sein, marks a shift in his thinking. Rather than seeing Da-sein's world as being conditioned by fundamental ontological categories, such as being-towards-death or being-in-the-world, Heidegger, instead, comes to see a greater connection between being and history. For Heidegger, every great thinker has only one thought – that is, every great thinker tries to think about the meaning of being. This thinking about the meaning of being provides differing sets of questions and answers; given that an age's ontological inquiries into the meaning of being can never be exhausted. He calls the reification of these questions ontotheology. For Heidegger, ontology begins with the pre-Socratics because they were the first to ask the question 'why is there something, rather than nothing?' In other words, they were the first to experience genuine thinking.

This thinking allows Da-sein to have receptivity. Human beings, by virtue of receptivity to Being, co-determine it by means of a dialogical relationship. We can never grasp the question of being in its totality, for we always reveal a particular clearing [*Lichtung*]. In creating a clearing, Da-sein helps to reveal certain possibilities while concealing others. This process of simultaneous revelation and concealment is what Heidegger calls *Alētheia* (truth).

Truth is a dynamic process. The danger in the process of concealment is that in our eagerness to reveal a clearing for beings, we forget that the clearing is even there. In other words, we in-sist – as much as we *ek-sist* – we become preoccupied with particular aspects of the clearing rather than the whole¹²⁸. This somewhat confusing epistemological claim is discernible from everyday experience. We think about how a rose looks, smells, and feels. A bouquet of flowers may influence the entire feel of a room. In other words, it may affect how things appear in that clearing, but we rarely stop to think about the far more beautiful fact that roses show themselves to us at all. Such insistence conceals particular things from us; but it also hides the very fact of concealment as such. For this reason, Heidegger terms the history of metaphysics a history of error. This is an error on both the ontic and ontological levels. On the one hand, human beings have become preoccupied with quiddity, forgetting to ask about the questions that reveal quiddity *qua* quiddity. On the other hand, being is an event, and, consequently, conditioned by history.

For Heidegger, it is important for the vitality of thought that we consider the pre-Socratics on their own terms and not as pre-Socratics for this label implies that Platonic and Aristotelian logic have reached an ideal of reflection. Hence in the Anaximander fragment, what is perhaps the oldest piece of philosophic reflection, the destiny of Western metaphysics is already revealed.¹²⁹ Heidegger spends considerable time analyzing the Greek word for being (*Einai*), since misinterpretation of this word can provide insight into the unfolding of nihilism from Anaximander to the present. He comments “The Being of beings is therefore taken for granted as the presencing of what presents itself. It is also decisive that the Greeks never did or

¹²⁸ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth”, trans. John Salis, in *Heidegger Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 115-120.

¹²⁹ Martin Heidegger. *Early Greek Thinking*. trans. David Ferrell Krell and Frank A. Cappuzzi. (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 5-10.

could think through the meaning of presencing and establish it in and for the history of thought. By the time a philosophical literature develops, the meaning of *Einai* receded to the threshold of oblivion.¹³⁰ In ancient Greek, the word for Being has two meanings and this ambiguity is related to the fate of the West. On the one hand, Being means that which is present [*Anwesenheit*], and on the other, it means the conditions necessary for beings coming to presence [*anwesen*].

As Iain Thompson notes ontotheology began with Thales and Anaximander¹³¹. From the diverse phenomena he observed around him, Thales sought a unifying principle. He believed water was the principle substance of being from which all other beings received their essence. Though we are quick deride this as superstition, Thompson points out that we should appreciate Thales' philosophy as a profound cognitive leap. He was the first Western thinker to posit a unifying substance that could support reality; water was both literally and figuratively, a building block of life. Conversely his student Anaximander was the first to posit a monistic principle to which all other beings must return. Anaximander was, therefore, the first thinker to ponder being in its highest actuality. Plato combined the thinking of Thales and Anaximander into a unified conception of ontotheology.¹³² The forms give things their essence, while also being the highest actuality of that essence.

All things receive existence by participating in the form of the Good and the form of the Good is the highest fulfillment of essence. These are the two pillars of ontotheology: on the one hand, the West has traditionally posited being in its most primordial essence, while on the other, it thinks about it in its highest actuality. Ontotheology is possible because even as being reveals itself, it also conceals itself. Because of humankind's dialogical relationship to being, our

¹³⁰ Ibid.,

¹³¹ Iain Thompson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 30-42.

¹³² Ibid., 34, 56-60.

thinking about being always occurs within traditions.¹³³ Thus, though different sets of questions ground metaphysics differently, leading Heidegger to conclude that there is a radical gap between different metaphysical epics, there is also continuity in metaphysical thinking. While this study emphasizes the latter theme of continuity, it would behoove us not to forget the equally important Heideggerian theme of divergence.

Returning to Plato, the word form indicates what is erroneous in Plato's conception of being according to Heidegger. Form is another word for boundary. Hence Platonic metaphysics, contends Heidegger, begins to classify being in a way that its predecessors do not. This ossification of ontology conceals the distinction between present things and the conditions for their manifestation. This is so because classical metaphysics believes nature to be that which is given. It is possible to apprehend the form of the good and, thereby, align oneself with the cosmos, by virtue of the atemporal capacity of human Reason, which itself participates in this form.¹³⁴ The task of humankind, according to Platonic philosophy, is thus to bring one's desires in relation to the boundaries of the cosmos, such that, through this harmony, one achieves happiness by fulfilling one's highest potential. Yet, on account of this belief, the experiential nature of truth became increasingly concealed. Instead, truth became synonymous with a correspondence between the mind and reality. Reality was taken to be a world of objectively present things.

Metaphysics grounds disclosure. Because tradition is necessary for dialogue, thinking about Being amounts to thinking about Being historically.¹³⁵ Another way to understand how Heidegger tries to diminish the anthropocentric dimensions of his thought is to suggest that the

¹³³ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 94-97.

¹³⁴ Plato, *Republic* VII, 514a-517c; trans. Bloom, 193-196.

¹³⁵ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972),

later Heidegger emphasizes the thrown nature of Da-sein far more than its ability to project itself into future possibilities.¹³⁶ Thus Being once again is not a thing, but the ground for the manifestation of things itself; whereas the early Heidegger conceives of the ground of being in terms of human existence, the later Heidegger thinks of this ground as being made possible only in part because of human existence. Indeed, he ceases to use the term being at all, contending that the event [*Ereignis*] of appropriation which makes possible the manifestation of being, is what needs to be interrogated. He calls this the event of appropriation and expropriation because human beings are always taken up in this event, even as it decentres us.¹³⁷ We are both realizing our highest capacity, while also experiencing alienation from our own subjectivity.

This is possible because human beings dwell in a particular place and time, and it is only through such dwelling that Da-sein can ask the question: why is there something, rather than nothing? Da-sein is not the sole determinant of the clearing [*Lichtung*], because it depends so intimately on innumerable factors outside itself for beings to manifest; Da-sein is merely a partner in the coming to presence of things. In order to exist, it must *ek-sist* (stand out in the clearing of being).

It cannot be revealed in all its manifestations at once. For the historicity and spatiality of being circumscribes the possible variations of its eventualization. Since we are historical creatures, and given that being requires us to think in order to disclose it, appropriation and history are interdependent: it is impossible to have a conception of history without questioning the significance of the manifestation of things in general, and equally impossible to question their significance without a conception of history. This is what Heidegger means with his

¹³⁶ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 49.

¹³⁷ Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Stambaugh, 10-12.

obscure, and often misunderstood, statement that being is sent, and we respond to this sending.¹³⁸

Because these sendings are always circumscribed by a particular context, they cannot reveal everything. This simply means that as being becomes more manifest in a world of things, the wondrous fact that there are things at all becomes less apparent.¹³⁹ In other words, various epochs take their sending of being for granted as the only way being ought to manifest itself.

Heidegger believes that the only appropriate response to nihilism, after analyzing the writing of Nietzsche, is to do what Nietzsche himself did and return to the pre-Socratics, in order to discover new possibilities for thinking at the end of philosophy. This reveals the ambiguity inherent in appropriation: Even as it shows itself, that very showing is concealment. No longer is Da-sein the primary determinant of truth and falsehood. Rather, because of the dynamic of concealment and unconcealment at the heart of appropriation, the history of metaphysics is a history of error.¹⁴⁰ With the development of philosophy, we have gradually lost the distinction between that which is present [*anwesenheit*] and that which renders the capacity for presence [*anwesen*], until this distinction has become obliterated by modern technology.

Plato, argues Heidegger, furthered a false distinction between being and becoming. Plato also expresses the distinction as a division between nature [*physis*] and convention [*nomos*] but Plato's understanding of nature drastically differs from his predecessors. *Physis* is derived from the Greek word “to grow”. For the pre-Socratics, Being was, consequently, a dynamic and ever-evolving process. Human beings were part of nature, and by virtue of speech, they were able to gather together the differing events of being into a partially unified experience of wonder.¹⁴¹ This

¹³⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹³⁹ Lee Braver, *Heidegger's Later Writing: A Reader's Guide*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 61.

¹⁴⁰ Heidegger, “Overcoming Metaphysics,” trans. Wolen, In *Heidegger Controversy*, 67.

¹⁴¹ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. Krell & Cappuzzi , 73.

dynamic approach to nature and being, argues Heidegger, was more authentic [*eingtich*] because it was better able to reveal Da-sein as sheer potentiality.

Yet it is necessary to correct possible misunderstanding. Although Heidegger thinks the pre-Socratics had a more proper conception of being and truth, he still contends that they were not able to adequately grasp both these things as an event. This is the task for the contemporary age. Consequently, Heidegger does not advocate some primeval return to pre-Socratic philosophy out of antiquarian interest; instead, Da-sein must return to the pre-Socratics, in order to find resources as it transitions into a possibly new epoch of being.¹⁴² The step back Heidegger advocates is, therefore, not a step back to the past. Rather, it is a step back in order to think the uncomfortable truth of the ontological difference in a new way. This motif of a genuine step back, in order to think the truth of presencing anew, will become more apparent, as I discuss its relation to negativity and technology in the later Heidegger.

In such ambiguity, Da-sein dwells in truth. Heidegger argues that the Greek concept of truth originally referred to a kind of clearing in which beings could manifest themselves. Da-sein has a crucial role in maintaining this clearing of being, so long as it maintains a sense of awe and play, when confronting the fragility of its existence.¹⁴³ Concomitant with this fragility, when Da-sein stands in the clearing properly, it sees its destiny as being connected to all that is. This requires proper care for all beings, both living and nonliving.

The forms may be super sensible, but they are still a kind of thing nonetheless. Aristotle's argument that form and matter coincide in the same object merely furthered what Heidegger labeled as the Greek tendency to have a productive comportment toward beings. That is, classical metaphysics, and, by consequence, Da-sein generally, has the tendency to conceive of the

¹⁴² Ibid., 8.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 9.

universe as the totality of created things. This tendency to become preoccupied with what is objectively present obscures the historicity of being. As I have argued, time creates the conditions for the event of appropriation. To speak of an eternal essence whatsoever is a contradiction in terms.

This concealment of being, by dint of the will's capacity for representational schema, was made worse by Christianity, which could be defined as the fraught blend of Hellenism with Hebraic thought. According to the Hebrew Bible, God is completely separate from nature, but human beings, by virtue of their connection with God, have the right to dominate his creation. God is thought of as the chief being that created all the other beings; but this does not solve the problem of the conditions for God's manifestation. Christianity took monotheism, and infused it with Greek philosophy, resulting in the doctrine of the incarnation. No longer is the divine completely divorced from the world, but it participates in human history, thus, Christianity both concealed and revealed being by setting up a dialectic between nature and spirit, or, to elaborate, transcendence and finitude; whereas Greek philosophy had a cyclical understanding of nature, Christianity has a linear understanding of time.

God's multiple interventions in human history, for Jews, but particularly to Christians, created an eschatological dimension to the destiny of being. Thus Augustine of Hippo speaks of two cities – the heavenly and the earthly. Humankind's true home is in the heavenly city, but it is impossible for us to get there, on account of our broken will, until the end of time.¹⁴⁴ Augustine is the first philosopher to deal with the faculty of willing explicitly, though, as we have seen, there are elements of it in earlier thought.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, "Letter 91 to Nectarius," in *Political writings: Compliment to City of God* trans. & ed. E. M. Atkins, & Robert Dodaro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.), 3.

Augustine furthers Plato's connection between the nascent faculty of willing presented and desire. Human beings, for Augustine, have very strong desires to do both good and evil, on account of the damage done to the faculty of will by the fall. This creates a situation of paralysis, in which human beings want to seek god, but are inclined to do evil.¹⁴⁵ In obeying God's will, and not our own imperfect one, we actualize our highest potential. Unfortunately, the full restoration of our will can only occur at the end of time, when the promise of salvation is realized. At this point, all willing will cease because humankind will have fulfilled its highest aim.

In order for the dynamic relationship between desire and will to be satisfied, there must, therefore, be a monadic principle at the heart of the cosmos, which is the final object for humankind's activity of transcendence. Thus in the medieval cosmology, one sees onto theological thinking at its best: God is both the thing which guarantees the underlying substance of reality, as well as the highest manifestation of the same.

Unfortunately, thinks Heidegger, God recedes from view, and what is revealed as modern philosophy develops is a faculty of pure willing. We shall see that this faculty of pure willing is related to humankind's attempt to immanentize the eschaton.¹⁴⁶ It also marks the end of metaphysics, which was doomed from its inception.

MODERN WILLS AND MODERN ILLS?

Theocentric cosmos obscured the distinction between being and beings; for to say that God created everything does not answer the question of what were the conditions for God's appearance at all. Despite this error, the theocentric cosmos had the merit of being less

¹⁴⁵ Augustine *The Confessions*, trans. Marie Bolding (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) II:7-9, 28-30

¹⁴⁶ Eric Voegelin *New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.) 165

anthropocentric. With the rise of science, however, human beings began to take the place of God, only to be later overthrown, like the Philistines, by the very idol they worshiped.¹⁴⁷ With the rise of modern technology, particularly after the industrial revolution, humankind hubristically aspired to be its own ground. In other words, ‘man’ gradually distanced himself from nature and became a boundless instance of will. For Heidegger this lowest and highest point of metaphysics is related to the faculty of representation.¹⁴⁸ Aristotle’s theory of truth describes a correspondence between the mind and reality. Under Scholasticism, this theory of correspondence increasingly emphasized correctness. A human being’s intellect must correspond to the divine intellect, in whose mind is all certainty.¹⁴⁹

In modernity truth becomes a subject-centered certainty, exemplified by Descartes’ metaphysics. Liebniz added to this story by conceiving of subjectivity as the monadic structure that allows for the interplay of desire and reason. Hegel advances this trajectory, and by his notion of Reason as will acting in the world.¹⁵⁰ Spirit is consciousness that tries to recognize identity through difference. In other words, Spirit, by an act of reason/will, attempts to incorporate everything into itself. This is not pure willing as such, because Hegel does not recognize that reason and will are in fact the same. We must explore Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche (and of himself?) because from that precipice of metaphysics, it may be possible to begin again. This is not possible, however, until we have hit rock bottom.

Heidegger does not believe Nietzsche is correct when the latter contends that his is a life-affirming philosophy, rejecting all metaphysical notions in favor of the will to power. This will

¹⁴⁷ 1 Sam. 5:1-21, KJV

¹⁴⁸ Arthur O. Lovejoy. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1936), 293-98.

¹⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of Gelassenheit*, trans. & ed. John M. Anderson & E. Hans Freund. (New York: Harper and Row Publishing. 1966), 55.

¹⁵⁰ G.F. W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of spirit*. trans. A.V Miller, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 5 §8; Martin Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad & Kenneth Maly, (Indiana: Bloomington Press 1988), 69-71.

to power purports to govern the world, actually offering Da-sein true aesthetic freedom.¹⁵¹ In fact, Nietzsche's exhortation to self-creation, predicated as it is on the will to power, actually does the opposite. For Nietzsche, in an endless sea of becoming, the subject must be his own ground, by continuously dominating his environment, himself and his fellows. The myth of eternal recurrence is not an affirmation of a kind of playful spirit which may conflict with the will to power. Still less is it a kind of spiritual meditation. Rather, the doctrine of the will to power and the myth of eternal recurrence are synonymous.

Through an act of will one must always affirm one's fate, even if that fate must be relived ad infinitum.¹⁵² As romantic as this may seem — and as attractive as it was to a younger Heidegger — his older Da-sein comes to have profound criticisms of the will to power. The first of these criticisms is that this phrase is tautologous. The will to power amounts to saying the will to will. Second, this philosophy creates a situation in which the subject is always external to himself: he must project beyond himself, constantly searching for resources, in order to maintain his power.

Heidegger interprets any interruption in this process as a diminishment of the will to power: this will must always transcend itself in order to preserve itself.¹⁵³ The subject, ergo, becomes locked in the quest for transcendence and its seizure by the will marks the end of metaphysics. No longer does humankind seek to question being; still less is it questioned by it. Rather, the will to power knows only mastery. It is no longer the love of wisdom; instead it is the rape of wisdom through the quest for power, and this philosophy of perpetual violence marks the

¹⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics," trans. Wolen in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, 86.

¹⁵² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra : A Book for All and None*. trans. Caro W. Adrian, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). 177-178 and Ken Gemes, "Postmodernism's use and Abuse of Nietzsche," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* no, 62.2 (2001), 337-60.

¹⁵³ Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics," trans. Wolin in *Heidegger Controversy* 83.

end of philosophy and the beginning of technology. Although one may be inclined to blame Nietzsche for this demise, Heidegger believes this to be myopic; for in his philosophy of the will to power Nietzsche merely elucidates nihilism, and, through such elucidation, makes the nascent seeds of the will to representation, present since the dawn of metaphysics, come to fruition. The will to power is, once again, the underlying substance and the highest achievement of reality: the subject must will becoming into being.

Consequently, Heidegger thinks that Nietzsche is correct when he equates the death of metaphysics with the end of God. To make this point metaphorically, Heidegger discusses the German meaning of the word for the occident. In German, the occident [*Abendland*] literally means the land of the evening or sunset. Metaphysics which loses the distinction between beings and being must result in the concretization of the will; for the only philosophy that has value is the kind of philosophy that diminishes the ratio between desire and satisfaction.

In this attempt to diminish the ratio between desire and satisfaction, Da-sein temporarily alleviates negativity; yet as I have said, Da-sein requires negativity in order to negotiate the ontological difference. To say that Da-sein requires negativity is also to say that Da-sein requires time: as we have seen, a primary function of the will, acutely demonstrated by Christian eschatology, is to bring about an end to time. To elaborate, the inauthentic mood of willing present in this mode of Da-sein's being in the world attempts to make the finite infinite; but, in so doing, it cuts off any genuine possibility of transcendence that Da-sein may have. Without such uncomfortable negotiation, we have become locked in the ceaseless trap of our own desires. Though a divine object for desire, contends Heidegger, may have given us temporary satisfaction, this cannot replace the wonder we experience when dwelling in finitude. Still less is Da-sein satisfied by material means of hiding from negativity.

Unfortunately, technology as the concretization of the quest to transcend the gap between Da-sein's limitations and possibilities purports to provide such a solution. For this reason it is appropriate to compare technology to the risen Christ: like the Christian apocalypse itself, contends Heidegger, technology holds within it both salvation and destruction.¹⁵⁴ The essence of technology could thus be defined as a mode of revealing predicated on a willful attunement to the world that seeks to obfuscate the dynamism of appropriation. Heidegger begins "The Question Concerning Technology" by discussing the Aristotelian theory of causation.

(RE)THINKING TECHNOLOGY?

According to Aristotle, there are four causes, which are as follows: material, formal, efficient, and final. The material cause is the material out of which something is made; the formal cause is its shape; the efficient is the thing that makes the object; and the final cause is that for which the thing is made. To make something *poiein* is to bring something forth. The silversmith thus uses the material of silver (material cause) and shapes it into a chalice (formal cause). He is the person who does this action (efficient cause). The silversmith reveals the chalice as a chalice, while simultaneously concealing other possibilities through the application of his art. In other words, the silver could have been any number of things, if not for the silversmith. The chalice will be part of a religious ritual, which is its final cause. In order to have a goal for which something is made, one must take a definite stance on the world (ethics). This stance is born of a context of meaningful significance (world), of which Da-sein is always a part.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Darby, *The Feast* 215-226

¹⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology, trans. William Lovett," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993), 314-317

I have argued that when this context begins to break down, on account of increased proximity to negativity, Da-sein often begins to see things as objectively present, and, thereby, forgets the conditions for their manifestation. Da-sein is no longer part of the context in which it finds itself, and, by means of this separation, takes on an instrumental stance to the world.¹⁵⁶ The word “technology” comes from the Greek words *techne* (art) and *logos* (word/theory). Thus, technology is a mode of revealing that seeks to diminish the gap between thought and action. By closing this gap, the technological mode, by dint of willful subjectivity, sees everything in the world as resources to be used, perfected, or rejected. Heidegger comments:

When man, in his way, from within unconcealment [*Unverboregehit*] reveals that which presences, he merely responds to the call of unconcealment [*Unverboregehit*], even when he contradicts it. Thus when man, investigating, observing, pursues nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing reserve [*Stehen Reserve*].¹⁵⁷

Because of this resource oriented view of the world, things can only have a final cause based on utility.

Thus the essence of technology has nothing to do with specific technological devices, which agents can purportedly employ without granting them much metaphysical significance. Rather, technology represents a particular kind of revealing — one which challenges nature. This challenging is not the same as the Greek concept of *poieisis*, which is best understood as a process in which artisans work in conjunction with nature to bring forth its latent potential. Small-scale agrarian farming can create an authentic world for Da-sein. The farmer works her fields. She knows the winds. She understands the weather patterns; she works with the rising and setting of the sun; and she sees its light glistening on her crops. She keeps track of her livestock,

¹⁵⁶ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, xxvi.

¹⁵⁷ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” trans. Lovett, in *Basic Writings*, 320.

and she respectfully cares for them. When she kills them she uses everything from their bodies that she can, acknowledging the animals' sacrifice.

Contrast this picture with the unfathomable ecological damage and untold horrors of industrial farming.¹⁵⁸ Hubert Dreyfuss illuminates the technological mode of revealing well, when he compares the use of a Japanese teacup to a Styrofoam one. The Japanese teacup carries within it a particular instance of Da-sein's understanding of the world. It is crafted by hand, often by a skilled artisan who quietly works on it. It is meant to be used for generations and is part of a very important cultural ritual. In other words, the teacup and the person who makes it reveal a very particular ethical stance on the world, one born of a deliberate, as well as deliberative, contemplation of beings.

Conversely, the Styrofoam cup conveys a very different stance upon the world. It is part of no context of significance; it is mass produced by machines and can be thrown away immediately when it has served its purpose. Modern Da-sein often does not use the resources of the earth to reveal anything particularly ethical or unique. The Styrofoam cup provides little means to contemplate being. It is just there, it is not part of a world; instead, it is part of an environment with resources that must be maximized, or, indeed, exhausted. Da-sein is thus homeless in the world, though this is by no means the positive homelessness [*unheimlich*] about which I spoke earlier. Apart from nature, technological Da-sein seeks to dominate it.¹⁵⁹ Heidegger uses the example of the Rhine to illustrate this sense of homelessness: rather than seeing the Rhine as an awe-inspiring instance of nature's beauty, much of contemporary Da-sein views it as a resource that can be dammed in order to create a power plant.¹⁶⁰ Even if one views

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁵⁹ Dreyfuss *Being in the world*, 18-21.

¹⁶⁰ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," trans. Lovett, in *Basic Writings*, 319.

the river as a beautiful tourist destination, this does not solve the problem, since the tourist industry — itself a by-product of technology — controls the revealing of the river.¹⁶¹

This willful subjectivity of resource consumption Heidegger calls revealing things as standing reserve. Beings are seen merely as containers of power for Da-sein's exploitation. This power centred subjectivity, which causes impoverished revelations of beings, Heidegger labels technological enframement [*Gestell*]. Technological enframement is the highest point of Da-sein's destiny of nihilism, since it constitutes a double concealment of the question of being.¹⁶² This is so because science, as we have seen, purports to have superseded philosophical thinking, while it is, in fact, a logical outgrowth of it. While claiming not to be an ontological stance, it is both the highest and lowest point of ontology. Yet he says, “the closer we come to the danger, the more brightly does the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we name. For questioning is the piety of thought.”¹⁶³ The problem is that Da-sein does not recognize another way of seeing the world — one that passively exists in the perpetual truth/untruth of appropriation, and does not seek to dominate it. The dominance of will causes Da-sein to forget that it is a dynamic event and not simply a thing.

I have argued in Chapter 1 that one of the most profound consequences of Cartesian subjectivity is the externalisation of the subject from himself. In this reading, as things found in nature, bodies ought to be mastered by the will like any other object. Consequently, it is not difficult to apprehend how such a process of self-mastery could obscure the general question of being such that, in the absence of ontological questioning, ethics flies from the world. For Heidegger, this is precisely what occurs: not only does Da-sein reveal rivers to be used,

¹⁶¹ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or ,Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” in *Uncommon ground : toward reinventing nature*, ed. William Cronon, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1995.) 72-75

¹⁶² Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” trans. William Lovett, 325

¹⁶³ Ibid., 340-341

perfected, or obliterated; this process applies to all of Da-sein as well. Unfortunately, this process, which pervades all aspects of everyday life, is particularly evident in the term human resources. Hence it is not an exaggeration to say that in contemporary life, Da-sein is always at greater risk of being-in-the-world, in a manner similar to a Styrofoam cup.¹⁶⁴ Da-sein has become mass produced, generic, and, as the Holocaust demonstrated with unspeakable horror, disposable.

Moreover, the technological mode of revealing becomes even worse than simple Cartesian subject/object dualism. In the technological age we run the risk of obliterating the subject altogether. Both human beings and machines are part of one monadic reality of immanentized will. This self-replicating character of the technological will, which has engrossed design more than any other revelation of being, is what gives technology its cybernetic character. No longer are machines tools used by human beings to bring a world forth. Instead, tools become self-replicating. Technology is the incarnation of the will's unfulfilled desire to transcend itself, and this narcissistic character of the will has given technology its autopoetic 'nature'; Da-sein is in a global self-replicating 'cybernetic' system over which it has ever diminishing control.¹⁶⁵ For Heidegger, the cybernetic character of technology can cause a double concealment of being. While technology seems as though it imitates the dynamics of *physis*, it is actually the farthest thing from life.

From this point there does not appear to be much hope. Technology is not merely something we use; it is part of the destiny of being itself. This destiny is so totalizing that negation of it seems impossible. To negate technology would merely entrap Da-sein in the same process of negation/transcendence/concealment that precipitated this process in the first place.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 320-321.

¹⁶⁵ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 178

Yet, owing to this capacity of negation, Heidegger argues that technology can serve as the abyss [*abgrund*] out of which it may be possible to grasp the intimations of the new sending of being, now that the current one has reached its zenith.

Similar to the way in which resoluteness [*Entschlossenheit*] in the face of anxiety [*Angst*] can help Da-sein reorient its being-in-the-world, such that it has a non-egoistic comportment toward beings, technology ,as sheer negativity, may also serve as the abyssal ground through which such a conversion in comportment can be both concealed and revealed.¹⁶⁶ To be sure, this process is as dangerous as it is difficult, and there are no ‘Road-to-Damascus’¹⁶⁷ experiences, when Da-sein attempts to release itself from its metaphysical destiny. This takes perilous and arduous labor.¹⁶⁸

Though technology may succeed in obliterating all that is worthy of the event of Da-sein within human beings, it has not yet done so; and, therefore, Da-sein may still rise, a cybernetic phoenix from the ashes of the nothing. If Da-sein can achieve this, technology may provide the highest food for thought in late modernity, which could be termed a perpetual technological Eucharist. To speak in further metaphor, it is only by contemplating the contemporary circle of consumption that we may achieve the genuine “transubstantiation of subjectivity” required to transverse the ontological difference. Only then may the scales fall from our eyes, such that we are able to peer into the wonders of being and dwell therein.

Now we must ask ourselves where the question of disability stands in relation to this dynamic and dangerous process of authentic dwelling and homelessness, as Da-sein responds to a technological sending of being. By now it should be clear that the designations of impairment and disability, as ontologically negative categories, are wedded to the morbid destiny of

¹⁶⁶ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” trans. Lovett, 325.

¹⁶⁷ Acts: 9. KJV.

¹⁶⁸ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” trans. Lovett, , 326.

metaphysics in general, yet while both these designations are negative, the world and culture of disability is a uniquely modern phenomenon, born of the contemporary destiny of technology.

This inauthentic identity may help to reveal both the highest and lowest points of being, provided that ‘broken’ bodies are able to bear their thanatopolitical burden. To elaborate, by questioning the hermeneutical handicaps of ableism, one enables the genuine task of thinking.

As has been said, the cybernetic character of technology means that those operating under the technological worldview come to see it as an autonomous system of which human beings are only a small part. We are made to function as machines, in order to maintain this system.

Because the essence of technology is related to efficiency, it must ceaselessly perfect itself by means of a will that, paradoxically, negates negativity through negation. The danger of technology is that it often conceals this negativity by revealing increased freedoms for Da-sein.

Because of this process of concealment-unconcealment, it is difficult to comprehend the negativity Da-sein requires to save itself. Simply put, we are too busy frequenting shopping malls to contemplate something so tawdry, depressing and seemingly banal as death. This disavowal of death, in a culture that allows the far more profound horror of ‘reality’ television shows, such as “Honey Boo-Boo”, renders Da-sein determinedly distracted and stressed in the midst of ceaseless and unfathomable destruction.¹⁶⁹

Consequently, impairments, like everything else, are seen as problems to be solved, rather than experiences, which, if dealt with ethically, have the potential to enhance the contemplation of beings for all. Unfortunately, the default way of comprehending being is through technology, so any perceived malfunction must be augmented by technological means. Persons who have been deemed impaired, therefore, are more affected by the will to will because in the technological age, everyone is disabled, since everyone has not reached the status of the

¹⁶⁹ Aho *Neglect of the Body*, 109.

cyborg, the perfect union of human being and machine, who (or that?) functions within prescribed parameters, but is also able to regulate those parameters in an ongoing process of improvement. Because impaired bodies function outside regulatory norms, they are often subject to increased technological augmentation, either through direct medical intervention or assistive devices.¹⁷⁰

There are innumerable medical procedures to help ameliorate many impairments. To be clear, I am not foolishly deriding the alleviation of suffering nor advances in medical science *per se*, but it is worth noting how the technological world, illuminated in medicine, reveals itself in contemporary life. One of the incarnations of this will is a medicalized Da-sein. I can give but the briefest characterization, but this is a being that is highly regulated by medical technology and healthcare professionals. Healthcare is a global industry worth billions of dollars, made possible by the rapid expansion of technology. In this industry, it is not only the pharmaceuticals, procedures and devices that are technological, but also the healthcare professionals within this system.

The patient is something to be examined and treated, so that she can return to a ‘normal’ or approximately normal level of function.¹⁷¹ Those medical models predicated on a philosophy of client service, rather than patient treatment, while purporting to be an improvement, are, in many ways, the reverse: they are more explicitly enframed by the technologically influenced capitalist labor relations of modern life. The medicalized being in the world, is a technologically controlled improper form of Being-towards-death, with all the concomitant restrictions upon

¹⁷⁰ David Serlin, “The Other Arms Race,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 206. David Serlin offers an excellent critique of the popularization of cybernetics and hybridity by Donna Haraway, pointing out that ‘sexy’ as prosthetics may be, the union of human beings and machines is often far more emotionally and physically painful than we imagine. Donna J Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*. (London: Free Association, 1991), 249-253.

¹⁷¹ Martin Sullivan, “Subjected Bodies: Paraplegia, Rehabilitation, and the Politics of Movement,” in *Foucault and the Government of Disability* ed. Shelley Tremain (Michigan: University of Michigan Press 2005), 35-37.

freedom incurred therewith. If this contention is correct, it is natural to ask what ought Da-sein to do: would it not be just as improper, if not more so, to fly from negativity back to a model based on pity and charity?¹⁷² Before answering this very pertinent question, it is necessary to analyze the role of assistive devices in this unfolding discussion of technological disclosure, since they are often part of the medicalized world.

BLUE SPACES AND BLUE PERSONS?

I noted in chapter two that the subjectivity of the one [*das Man*] is connected to able bodied-minded normativity. As such, the first thing to note about the category of assistive devices is that it is largely an arbitrary one. In Chapter One, I discussed how Da-sein always finds itself immersed in a context of practical activity that defines its being-in-the-world. Since Da-sein is always immersed in a context of practical activity, Da-sein is always in some way impaired, being that it needs to create a world of tools to augment its projects. Only through creating a world of meaningful objects, can Da-sein properly dwell in the world. Consequently, Da-sein is forever using assistive devices to augment its (dis)abilities. One need only think of the invention of spectacles. Myopia and hyopia are impairments, but because they affect a large percentage of the population and the technological solution for this problem has been in use for some time, they are unnoticed. Through this example one sees Heidegger's concept of truth at play. Because the glasses are unobtrusive, they reveal a world of possibility for the event of Da-sein, mainly correct vision, while they also conceal their correction of a perceived impairment.

¹⁷² Some in the Deaf community have developed an interesting way of resisting the medicalization of impairment by constituting themselves as a linguistic minority, rather than an impaired one. There have been similar moves to affirm the value of neuro-atypical behaviour and psychiatric disorders. For example, Kant and Beethoven are alleged to have Autism Spectrum Disorders. Heidegger also suffered a mental breakdown, and anyone who has a cursory familiarity with his work can tell that he was not the happiest of persons. Harlan Lane, "Construction of Deafness." in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 34.

We rarely think about someone using glasses as needing a technological device to augment an impairment; they merely become part of that Da-sein's appearance. In addition, persons who use glasses have less of a cybernetic quality because the technology used to augment the impairment they correct is relatively simple; yet when these spectacles shatter, as with bodily breakdown in general, the reality of impairment is revealed, while simultaneously concealing the freedom Da-sein had before the spectacles broke. From these broken spectacles, one spies the specter of death, and it becomes apparent that impairment is, to some extent, a by-product of the negativity, which cannot be incorporated into the collective symbolic order. Just as the ideal of the heterosexual male serves a fantasmatic purpose by castrating individuals in relation to that ideal, so too does the equally oppressive *imago* of the healthy body.¹⁷³

This process becomes more pronounced as the technologies used to augment impairments become rarer and/or increase in complexity. For example, because fewer members of the population use hearing aids or cochlear implants to augment their impairments, these are seen as more obtrusive devices and being hearing impaired thus becomes more of a noticeable defect that must be augmented with technology. The identity of disability is often enmeshed with

¹⁷³ Siebers, "Disability Theory," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, 176. It is unfortunate that I came across Lacanian theory so late in my analysis; for I believe there are many fruitful commonalities between Lacan and Heidegger; especially on the question of impairment disability. Mainly, that part of healthy psycho-social development is to recognize a constitutive lack in the ego. This allows the other to emerge. Lacan develops this notion of constitutive lack from his theory regarding the mirror stage of development. According to the mirror stage theory, the infant becomes fascinated by her reflection because it represents a whole. On account of the infant's lack of motor coordination and fast development, it cannot live up to the ideal image of itself. Consequently, it constructs an ego out of increasing interactions with others in an effort to recapture the symbolic image it has of itself. Language and culture thus serve as the symbolic realm, which bolsters the ego. But because there is a gap in language between the signifier and what it can signify, there is also a partial failure, which is intrinsic to the symbolic order. Thus, our inability to signify the nothing and, consequently, to signify impairment on multiple levels, represents both the necessity, as well as the intrinsic impotency of the symbolic order. Additionally, I think it useful to consider his notion of *jouissance* (excess enjoyment that becomes pain) as the thing that reveals the intrinsic impossibility of the symbolic order, though we might have a collective cultural fantasy of the perfect able and immortal body. If this fantasy were ever realized, it would be a nightmare. Thus on a deeper level, one sees further connections between disability theory and elucidating the nightmarish aesthetics of the Third Reich and their thanatopolitical dimensions. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the / Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (Norton & Co.: London, 2005), 75-79.

technology. We know to identify a severely visually impaired instance of Da-sein by a white cane and dark glasses. Thus two technological devices often serve as symbols for being blind.¹⁷⁴ This attempt to master blindness through technology also extends to Da-sein's use of other living beings. The seeing-eye-dog augments Da-sein's functionality, becoming an instance of biological technology.

Mobility impairments are associated with a range of assistive devices varying in technological complexity, a pertinent instance of which is the power wheelchair, designed to facilitate freedom of movement. While this device obviously reveals an increased range of possibilities for particular instances of Da-sein, it also conceals many as well. Like the seeing-eye-dog and the cane, the experience of mobility impairment is symbolized through a technological device. The current symbol for accessibility — a white-stick-figure sitting in a wheel-chair on a blue background — is ubiquitous and internationally recognized, marking the spaces that conform to a predetermined standard of accessibility. To phrase this in a Heideggerian manner, it marks the spaces in which Da-sein that uses a wheelchair has an increased ability to disclose itself. While this increased capacity for disclosure of Da-sein's range of possibilities may be viewed as an entirely positive consequence of adaptive technology, this would be a very simple understanding.¹⁷⁵ For in this revelation of Da-sein's potentiality, the negativity of existence is also concealed. By providing a world in which persons with impairments can function better, is Da-sein not fleeing from death? This question is particularly important because technology and disability are so closely linked, and technology is a prolonged flight from death.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 23.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.,

Moreover while the wheelchair symbol, to put it metaphorically, reveals blue spaces for blue persons. It also conceals the amount of world that is not ‘accessible’ for persons with impairments, caught up as it is in able-bodied normativity. The subjectivity of the one [*das Man*] obviously does not place a red stick figure performing jumping jacks in a red square to designate every area that is inaccessible. It is assumed that there is a normal form of embodiment and a normal form of disclosure. Impaired persons, therefore, often remain in blue areas to facilitate their blue devices. This cost effective approach to accessibility is born of the technological drive to efficiency, exemplified in late modernity. For example, there is often a designated accessible entrance to buildings, rather than making all entrances accessible.

The One argues that it would be an inefficient use of resources to make the world accessible, and an impossible task. One must, therefore, devise a standard to accommodate outliers in the system. Though this likely is the case, it is necessary to speak hyperbolically in order to illuminate how efficiency dominates impairment. Yet if one examines this problem from a different and Heideggerian inspired perspective, it may provide a more ethical approach to both technology and impairment-disability.

When confronted with a world inaccessible to certain devices and the Da-sein who uses them, Da-sein faces negativity as such: not only is impairment a sign of negativity, since things designed to negate this negativity no longer function properly, it reveals the abyssal ground of negativity itself. It reveals the abyssal ground of technology; and since our world is technological, it may with this reveal the finitude of our world.

Efficiency and impairment are so interwoven that they often create a blue attunement. This blue attunement, as argued in chapter two, is associated with Heidegger’s conception of anxiety and boredom. Like the common understanding of anxiety and boredom, this blue

attunement, according to the subjectivity of the One, is not something that pervades all reality, but is confined to particular persons. In this mode of thinking, one sees the technological will to will at its worst and at its best. On the one hand, it is proper for Da-sein to seek to overcome its challenges, but often when it views these challenges as an individual, rather than a collective problem, it leads to a mode of thinking that is improper. The one says that individual persons must master their bodies by means of technology; failure to do this often results in exclusion.

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY?

At this point, it is natural to raise the objection that the disability rights movement has made significant strides at overcoming the medicalized-technological model. Indeed, the idea of independent living, a philosophy which rejects the medical model of disability, in favor of a social creationist approach, similar in character to the one I have been outlining in this study, seems to undermine many of the claims I have explored in this chapter. While some concessions have to be made here, I do not think an overly hasty acclamation of independent living is warranted, since it still falls under the same technological model. This technological character is made all the more insidious owing to its concealment.¹⁷⁶

From a Heideggerian perspective, the first problem with independent living would be the name itself. Heidegger thinks *mit-sein* (being with) is an existential fact. Consequently, no Da-sein lives independently because Da-sein, as a collective response to Being, is made up of individual instances. Da-sein is not an individual consciousness, who by an act of empathy must project itself into another.¹⁷⁷ Instead, being-with is the ever present and pre-existing criterion for empathy. Independent living, if taken to an extreme, conceals this construct of being with. Its

¹⁷⁶ Tom Shakespeare, *Disability rights and wrongs*, (London New York: Routledge, 2006), 144

¹⁷⁷ Heidegger, *Being in Time*, trans. Schmidt & Stambaugh, 117.

purpose is to ensure that persons with impairments are as autonomous as possible. While Heidegger would not dispute the merit of choice, nor would he dispute the value of personal responsibility, these must be subordinated to a more primordial thinking that dwells in being. This authentic dwelling can only occur in community and this quest for community becomes increasingly difficult in the technological age. This is so because the technological age divides Da-sein into automata. Thus if independent living is to be proper at all, it must at least conceive itself as interdependent living.

But the problem runs even deeper than this: personal support/care workers or attendants—similar to healthcare providers—can function as a kind of biological tool, if ethics are not present. Simply put, the attendant, under some models of independent living, ought to have a detached relationship with the person whom he serves such that he can assist the client with a range of activities of daily living, without infringing upon either his or the clients wellbeing or personal autonomy. This goal, however, is easier to dream of than it is to accomplish; and all too often, ethics, like disposable gloves after personal care, are thrown in the trash, by attendance and clients alike.¹⁷⁸ On account of the contemporary drive to efficiency, the attendant must perform a certain range of tasks (eating, toileting, shaving, dressing, and

¹⁷⁸ I must emphasize that my experience of independent living has been truly dichotomous. On the one hand, the attendant relationship has given me some of the most profound experiences of authenticity and love, while confronting death I have ever experienced. This is because these relationships require a degree of openness, not common in everyday life, but in order for this to work, there has to be receptivity on both sides. This allows both parties to work together in co-authoring the experience of impairment-disability. The problem is I had this type of care mostly at Carleton, since most of the persons involved in that program of care appear to be invested in creating a kind of experience; whereas community care often holds a more rigid division between attendant and client, in the name of efficiency and professionalism, but professionalism need not be devoid of caring or philosophic reflection. It is just easier if it is. As a society, we need to value caring roles more, in order to avoid being alienation of labor that causes their deterioration. Then recipients of care would likely we treat their staff better because they would not have to sacrifice personhood or authenticity to survive. For though I have seen how good humanity can be, in my years of receiving care, I have also seen the extent of its depravity, selfishness and idiocy, exemplified in both clients and attendants. Sadly, I too, am no stranger to forgetting being—with in order to survive, and this existential guilt was the major impetus behind this project, for there must be a more ethical way to look at impairment-disability, if we are ever going to defend independent living, in the face of increasing government cutbacks. My philosophical contribution, therefore, tries to adopt the anti-apartheid slogan "nothing *about* us without us"

homemaking) within prescribed time guidelines, ideally while maintaining a professional relationship with the client who is receiving service.¹⁷⁹

The clients under most models of independent living are responsible for directing their own care. This catch all term involves describing how they want tasks done and how the attendant ought to go about achieving these, as well as larger decisions about their service such as care plans and daily schedules. The will to will occurs in two aspects here, which are as follows: first on the part of the client, who must direct her care and advocate for her desires/needs and second, on the part of the organization, which must try to accommodate these desires within strict boundaries of technological efficiency.

Consequently, the cybernetic quality of modernity is at play. In some cases the client can be viewed like a patient; she becomes a malfunctioning machine. By working on maintaining this machine—servicing it—the attendant earns her wage. This wage often does not reflect the attendant's valuable role, on account of our technological society's systemic undervaluing of caring labor. Both the attendant and the client whom she cares for is associated with the biological processes of nature, which are depreciated because they cannot, despite Herculean effort, be overcome by the will to will. Thus, contra- Marx, it is the will to will and not precisely the acquisition of capital that produces the alienation of labor. Care becomes subsumed by the cybernetic forces of production.¹⁸⁰

In turn, the attendant may be viewed as a malfunctioning machine by the client when the client's desire is not fulfilled. In chapter one, I discussed how malfunctioning tools can reveal the

¹⁷⁹ It is useful here to discuss the root of the word “service.” Service comes from the Latin *sevus*, meaning slave. Aristotle famously defines a slave as a biological tool. In some respects, technology has replaced the function that slavery once had. Under the technological system of exchange, persons are no longer slaves because they are compensated for their labor. Yet this compensation, while obviously far better than slavery, does not solve the problem of will to will. Aristotle, *The politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.) Book I:4 10a 22-23.

¹⁸⁰ Shakespeare, *Disability rights and wrongs*, 145.

contingency of the context of referential dependence in which Da-sein finds itself. When tools function as they are supposed to, they reveal a world without Da-sein noticing. I also suggested that the body is a very important and unique kind of tool that allows for disclosure

When bodies malfunction, it reveals this contingency more acutely. As with wheelchairs and other strictly technological devices, the attendant often functions as an extension of Da-sein's bodily will. In order to reveal possibilities (increase choices for the client), the attendant must impose limitations on her will. When this negation of will is not present, and the attendant's desires conflict with the client, the negativity of impairment can be compounded. Not only does a Da-sein's body malfunction, but the very thing designed to negate that negativity malfunctions, thus creating more negativity. Likewise the client, on occasion, has to circumscribe her freedom to accommodate the attendant. Simply put, when the attendant-client relationship becomes solely influenced by the technological, it has the potential to reveal the abyssal ground of our technological world.

Despite this potential revelatory power, this relationship presents a profound problem for Heideggerian ethics: being-with others, Da-sein must always treat other human beings as other sites of disclosure, not as mere objects. This authentic encounter with the other, born of an experience of being towards death which opens up a unique space of freedom for Da-sein, is made difficult by the will to represent things as objects.¹⁸¹ When Da-sein does not accept the radical contingency of its existence, thereby, assuming responsibility for its choices, it cannot dwell with other human beings authentically. Rather, it seeks to master its world in an effort to achieve imagined immortality, either on an individual level or through the achievements of its culture.

¹⁸¹ Fredrick Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*, 57.

Being-with is required for authenticity. In order to project into possibilities, it is also necessary for Da-sein to recognize that others have projects as well. Moreover, the possibilities that are often most meaningful for Da-sein require the cooperation of others.¹⁸² To be sure, as Heidegger himself advocated at his darkest philosophic moment, it is possible to compel persons through an act of will to complete our projects, but a failure to recognize another as an instance of Da-sein restricts its ability to disclose a world.¹⁸³ It is possible to see, once again, how the will to will, though very efficient in accomplishing aims, restricts the capacity of disclosure.

Whatever the changes in Heidegger's thought may have been, he never lost the fundamental insight that human beings are the beings for whom their being is at question.

If we take the quest for ontological discovery seriously, we must allow the other to disclose herself. To be sure, with every disclosure, there is also concealment, but the danger of technology is that Da-sein does not even recognize the possibilities for disclosure that are often concealed. Recognition of loss often necessitates choice; the very essence of technology is to remove genuine choice through increased efficiency.¹⁸⁴ Da-sein does not know what it has until it is gone because it paves paradise to put up a parking lot. As I have said, this paves the way for technological enframement. This technological enframement, while it often reveals possibilities for disabled Da-sein, may bring it closer to the edge of death.

¹⁸² Ibid., 90

¹⁸³ Martin Heidegger, "On the Self Assertion of the German University", trans Richard Wolen, in *The Heidegger Controversy*. ed. Richard Wolen (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992) 34

¹⁸⁴ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 151.

BECOMING (IN)HUMAN?¹⁸⁵

Yet is this not an over statement on three counts? First, Heidegger's contention that all of philosophic history, which mainly amounts to Ancient Greece and German idealism, culminates in the age of technology that only Heidegger is able to see, slightly simple. Furthermore, does it not represent a kind of will to system? ¹⁸⁶ Second, an objection could be raised that disability is a multi-faceted phenomenon; consequently, to reduce it to a form of technological disclosure is rather simplistic. Indeed, is not technology a kind of place holder word in the later Heidegger? Modernity comprises diverse and ever changing phenomena; so some may argue it is reductionist to group these under the heading of technological. It behooves us to ask whether or not we lose too much of our capacity for disclosure when we lose specificity. In short, in the quest for a more universal description of this epoch of being, does Heidegger overlook the singularity of Beings coming to presence in particular places on the earth in which we dwell? If disabled persons are so enframed by technology and labor, then why not simply do a materialist analysis, if one is going to indulge in such fatalism?

Third, given the immense progress of the disability rights movement, in the last 40 years, is it appropriate to speak of the world of disability as being especially technological, if technology is merely the fate of Western metaphysics. Does using a Heideggerian approach for understanding disability not obfuscate personal responsibility?

¹⁸⁵ By the word inhuman, I mean to evoke Kant's idea of indefinite judgement. Indefinite judgement, according to Slavoj Žižek, goes beyond simple negation. To say someone is inhuman opens up an extra human space. We will see in chapter 4 that this extra human space is the remainder that cannot be assimilated into humanist logic, even as it is created by it. This is similar to the way in which disability and homosexuality are the unassimilable remainders of their respective and inter-related symbolic constellations. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the negative : Kant, Hegel, and the critique of ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 119.

¹⁸⁶ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 243.

This is similar to the claim advanced by Lacou-Labarthe that Heidegger's 'apology' for the Holocaust is "scandalously inadequate". It was not being that exterminated millions of persons but the Nazis, and Heidegger used metaphysics as a smoke screen to conceal his own malignant inauthenticity.¹⁸⁷ I concur with Lacou-Labarthe's ambivalent position. Yet the philosopher must not either prosecute or exonerate the dead; for this does not help one on the task of thinking. Though individual agents obviously perpetrated the Holocaust, Heidegger clearly provides many resources for understanding both oppressive regimes and emancipatory thinking. As a complex person, who was an undeniable genius, he participated in both.

Moreover, it is important to note that Heidegger's history of being is not some inverted Hegelian history of spirit with a quasi-mystical and estological dimension. Rather, though Heidegger's history of being differs from the conception of Da-sein as the primary determinant of meaning, one finds in Heidegger's early writings, particularly *Being in Time*, it is still largely contiguous.¹⁸⁸ In *Being in Time* Da-sein becomes immersed in everyday experience, such that it forgets the nullity that it is. Only by understanding the nullity that it is, can it enter a free relationship with itself. Likewise, as Da-sein discloses a world through metaphysics, the possibility of this nullity is concealed. But this is unavoidable because Da-sein being and world are interrelated. Thus, we are always disclosing a world, which covers over being, but it is only through such covering over that we can understand what being is. This is why Heidegger suggests in *On the essence of truth* that as much as Da-sein *ek-sists*, it also *in-sists*. Though Da-sein may stand out in the clearing of being, it also becomes in-sistant on the things which preoccupy it.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Phillippe Lacou-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political*, trans. Chris Turner. (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 35.

¹⁸⁸ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 158.

¹⁸⁹ See n. 128.

As well, I do not mean to suggest that disability is not a multi-faceted phenomenon with an immensely protean history. I am, however, contending that technology plays a hegemonic role, in the proper sense of guiding, in the contemporary understanding of disability; while on a practical level I in no way mean to simplify the immense progress made in disability rights, particularly independent living, I believe failure to interrogate the hegemonic function of technology could have undesirable consequences. While a materialist analysis is valuable for practical critique, material criticism without ontological reflection has the potential to fall under technological enframement, propagating the will to will that precipitates ableism. In closing, I would like to suggest that while the thanatopolitical dimensions of disability are nowhere as pronounced as they were in Nazi Germany; the threat of technological enframement still looms over disability.

Increased biotechnology, such as genetic screening and other perinatal procedures, mean that conditions like Spinal Bifida, Down's syndrome, Muscular Dystrophy, and others, have the potential to become a thing of the past. While many herald this as a positive feature of modernity, it has the potential to limit Da-sein's capacity for disclosure. Without various medical conditions which produce alternative embodiments or states of mind, Da-sein could take normative embodiment or states of mind, to be the only form of being in the world. Such a quest toward normative embodiment merely reinforces the illusion that Da-sein is in control of everything.¹⁹⁰ As I have said, the essence of standing reserve is to provide Da-sein with the

¹⁹⁰ Hubbard, "Abortion," in *the Disability Studies Reader*, 93. I am in no way condemning abortion outright or trying to infringe on women's reproductive rights. I hold a gradualist position, which believes that abortion, as a moral harm, has to be balanced with the harm to the mother and future child. Thus I think a reasonable time frame to think of the fetus as having extended rights is when it could survive independently of the mother (20-24 weeks). It may be permissible to terminate a child with an impairment, if the mother honestly feels she does not have adequate resources to care for the child. What is at issue is a woman's right to choose what she wants to do with her own body. As such, rather than creating a society, where abortion may be seen as the primary way to deal with impairment, we should endeavor to create one where mothers have more access to accurate information when undergoing genetic screening and other tests and about how impaired persons actually live. Also, we should

feeling that it is in control of everything. When we desire electricity it is ready for us: all we must do is flip a light switch. This power on standing reserve conceals the fact that despite our attempts to master nature, we cannot, as of yet, change most of its fundamental laws. Though the scientist may be able to grow plants in a lab, giving the illusion of complete control over the biological process, he merely creates the optimal conditions for growth. He does not determine what these conditions are.¹⁹¹

Moreover, aside from this epistemological claim, the constant attempt to obfuscate negativity by perfecting society, such that impairments are either ameliorated through a culture of disability or suppressed altogether, leaves contemporary impaired-disabled Da-sein in an uncomfortable situation. If technology attempts to remove outliers from the system, impaired-disabled persons have a higher likelihood of becoming human resources: they represent both the success and the failure of technology — its concealing character and its revealing character. This raises the further question of what to do with resources that cannot be optimized, that is, persons who are so impaired physically or mentally, they cannot participate, at least in many of the ways that are often deemed acceptable, in our technologically-driven economy of labour.

Under this mode of revealing, taken to an extreme, technological Da-sein is left with two options when the technological augmentation of impairment fails: either eliminate such instances of intractable negativity or quarantine such negativity in technologically dominated worlds, thereby limiting its potential to undermine the technological system.

endeavor to create a society that better supports impaired children and adults, such that mothers can make the choice to raise them or not, free of coercion. In order for this to happen, medicine in general requires a more holistic approach to impairment, rooted in accurate and current sociological data.

¹⁹¹ Braver, *Heidegger's Later Writing: A Reader's Guide*, 95.

TECHNOLOGICAL TRAGEDY?

But is this not rather melodramatic? It would seem giving such primacy to technology, Heidegger condemns Da-sein, and if I am correct, those determined impaired, to a very dark fate. This is not wholly true. To renounce technology by an Arcadian return to a pre-industrial existence would be just as improper as the technological mindset itself. It would merely, once again, attempt to overcome negativity through a willful act of negation. Instead Da-sein must realize that where the danger is, so lies the saving power. Precisely because technology often reveals beings as simply beings and nothing else, it might, like the experience of anxiety , make us pause to contemplate the fact that there is being at all. In anxiety when we contemplate the nothing in its full magnitude things become not part of a context of significance, rather they reveal themselves as a thing. If I stop thinking about a hammer or a cane within a context of meaningful relations, I come to realize that a hammer is there and not nothing. Once I realize that a hammer is present and not nothing, it is possible for me to experience the wondrous nature of appropriation in general.

However impoverished the technological worldview may be, Da-sein must embrace it as the current destiny of humankind. Such an embracing of this destiny would allow Da-sein to use tools in a manner that would allow it to dwell in the world. As we shall see, this requires a stance of non-willing which is neither active nor passive. Through such a stance of non-willing, it is possible to use technology without becoming mastered by it.¹⁹² If the identity of disability is primarily technological, my suspicion, as I shall argue in Chapter four, is that such a non-willing stance may be a crucial step in allowing one to be impaired without becoming disabled. This

¹⁹² Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* . trans. & ed. Anderson & Freund. , 54.

releasement [*Gelassenheit*] from the will helps us not only think about the handicaps of ethics in the technological age, but overcome the paralytic relationship between ethics and impairment.

Chapter Four: Handicapping Humanism?

Someone gave me this glass, and I really like this glass. It holds my water admirably and it glistens in the sunlight. I touch it and it rings! One day the wind may blow it off the shelf, or my elbow may knock it from the table. I know this glass is already broken, so I enjoy it incredibly.—Ajhan Chan¹⁹³

ENABLING THOUGHT?

This project has endeavored to think about the constitutive lack in our subjectivity effected by both our thrown condition and our ability to project such a condition into future possibilities. Accepting that we are always gazing at both ourselves and others through a distorted mirror of incomplete experience has the potential to liberate Da-sein from the confines of compulsory able-bodiedness.¹⁹⁴ From this salutary position of constitutive infirmity, we can prudently begin the all-important and all pervasive, though ill thought, task of thinking [*Denken*]. Such meditation will bring us closer to the event [*Ereignis*] of appropriation — that mysterious experience, which while being utterly Da-sein's own, also takes it outside itself.

Thinking is the way through both metaphysics and disability, but in the space I have remaining thinking must be thought through, in order to offer some very tentative suggestions regarding both metaphysics and ethics. To do this, my analysis must return to where it started, albeit with a new perspective. I shall reconsider Heidegger's notion of being in the world [*In-der-welt-sein*], which he later calls dwelling [*Wohnung*], and being with [*mit-sein*], which is related to his enigmatic notion of the fourfold. These analyses will help elucidate Heidegger's concept of releasement [*Gelassenheit*] (from the will) a position which tries to strike a balance between participation in the unfolding of being and resignation to its occurrence. In such a position, Da-

¹⁹³ Ajhan Chan. Still, Flowing Water http://www.ajahnchah.org/book/Still_Flowing_Water1.php

¹⁹⁴ See n. 174.

sein begins the long and arduous task of building and dwelling in an ethical place. This is the human vocation par excellence; for only by dwelling ethically may one live ethically. Hence though what it means for beings to be what they are and, specifically, human beings to be who they are, is largely determined by history, it— as of yet — has not completely concealed humankind’s thinking relation to the event(s) of appropriation. Fascinated as we may be by the latest version of the iPhone, we can still ask the question: why is there something rather than nothing? This capacity of questioning may help Da-sein respond to questions of impairment-disability, without becoming immersed in the will to will.

In short, while using Heidegger’s thought helps us to diagnose the ‘problem’ of impairment-disability from many perspectives, it also provides invaluable resources for how we may begin to think through it. I ought to express due reservation here. For Heidegger, the age of metaphysics has come to an end — that is, achieved its purpose — in the age of technology. Until, if ever, we experience the full weight of this age, it is impossible to experience a new sending of being. Da-sein is, at best, in a period of transition and so must await the dawning of a new horizon. The task of thinking, therefore, cannot effect direct change or provide solutions as such; it may only point the way to search for solutions. The thinker must be wary of direct involvement in politics, lest — becoming enmeshed in quotidian affairs — she neglect her far more primordial task of ontological reflection.

Consequently, it would be the height of arrogance for me to suppose that I could offer any definitive answers to the question of impairment-disability: I am writing from a very particular dwelling with particular impairments , so my understanding of truth, on this or any question, is partial; and more importantly, the historical nature of appropriations itself precludes the very notion of definitive solutions to questions of ontological importance, as I have tried to

show the question of impairment-disability is. What I can do is present intimations of what one possible solution may look like, as an elucidation of the task of thinking [*Denken*].

(IN)HUMAN NATURE?

In order to begin, however, I must first revisit the domain of the will present throughout Heidegger. Da-sein has several types of willing, all of which can be troublesome. They are as follows: Da-sein can will outright as an individual entity (personal domination); it can surrender its will to a collective will, which merely amplifies the subjugating power of the subject (political domination); it can seek to dominate others, while pretending to have higher motives (covert domination); it can defer its will to a higher being (theological domination); or it can assert its will by choosing not to will, whereby the not signifies an active negation of willing (passive domination).¹⁹⁵ Obviously, these types of willing often form a highly complex matrix from which it is difficult to escape. Indeed, Davis argues that a kind of “ur-willing” is part of Da-sein’s existential constitution, when he notes the following:

When in-sistence hardens into persistence, and persistence strays into subjective willing, ur-willing is the ego-centripetal force of gravity in this fall (back) into willing. The strife between nonwilling and ur-willing originates in the finitude of being itself—a strife in which humans essentially participate and are in part responsible—and being’s Sein(ver)lassen can either release beings into a freedom of mutual letting-be or unleash them into a diabolical battle of wills to power.¹⁹⁶

The will to re-present [*Vor-stellen*] seems to be an inevitable part of being human. It is helpful to discuss Heidegger’s use of re-presentation here, since the hyphen once again marks a crucial shift. The later Heidegger stresses the fact that phenomena show themselves to Da-sein in the clearing initially as an interconnected whole in which Da-sein dwells. Then Da-sein often has an urge to re-present , in the sense of revealing again, phenomena as distinct units that fit into its

¹⁹⁵ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*. 18-30.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 303.

schema. This is a natural impulse, which though useful in certain circumstances, must be tamed with proper reflection.¹⁹⁷

This is necessary since the will to re-presentation is the source of other far more deleterious forms of the will. As I have said, Heidegger's concept of truth is a constant dynamic of revealing and concealing. When Da-sein participates in phenomena showing themselves, certain aspects of the phenomena remain concealed, but this recognition by Da-sein that it is perpetually participating in error, causes certitude regarding uncertainty. Dwelling in this paradox helps one comprehend the mysterious nature of appropriation. The problem with the will to representation, in excess, is that it often conceals the fact that a being has been presented multiple times and that these presentations pertain to a given comportment.¹⁹⁸ In other words, if we wish to understand phenomena, we must first realize that they have no absolute and inexhaustible meanings, least of all ones that are dominated by the will to will. In this mode of thinking Da-sein wants to re-present according to taxonomies assigning a proper place to everything in the cosmos.

Too often, this will to taxonomy places humankind at the center of the natural order. Heidegger connects this will to anthropocentric thinking with humanism. Its essential feature is the tendency to view human beings as animals plus an extra something that completes the human essence. Heidegger contends that this began with a mistranslation of Aristotle's statement that human beings are speaking animals for rational animals.¹⁹⁹ By virtue of Reason, human beings distinguish themselves from animals. Christian humanism added to this conception, by suggesting that the rational faculty is born of the divine, whose image dwells in human beings.

¹⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John Anderson and E Freund, 69.

¹⁹⁸ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 164.

¹⁹⁹ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", trans. Frank A Capuzzi, Glen J. Gray and David Farrell Krell, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993), 222

Heidegger's critique of Sartre is that he does not free himself from this metaphysical heritage.²⁰⁰

While he dispenses with the idea of the divine, Sartre still links the essence of human beings to free choice. Existence precedes essence because we are the animals blessed with the extra appendage of freedom.

Humanism thus far is a problem for Heidegger, since it is both sublime underestimation and overestimation of Da-sein. Humanism gives Da-sein the right to dominate nature and other instances of Da-sein that have been classified as inhuman. All humanism involves the complex interplay of the domain of the will, from which Heidegger is at pains to distance himself. For example, he argues that humanism first emerged as a Latin translation of the Greek *paideia* (moral education). Humanism is an inherently divisive category: in classical thought, the humane person is always, whether implicitly or explicitly, contrasted with the barbaric one. In Christian humanism, the righteous sheep are divided from the sinful goats. In Sartre's version, the resolutely free are divided from the inauthentic masses.

The divisive character of humanist metaphysics is the main reason Heidegger attempts to demur from Sartre's claim that he and Heidegger are allies. Heidegger suggests that the very thrown nature of Da-sein's being in the world precludes an entirely subjectivist reading. This is not the place to discuss Sartre's possible kinship with Heidegger, and the extent to which Heidegger re-interprets his earlier work,²⁰¹ but it is worth noting, as I did in chapter one, how much Heidegger attempts to undercut the subjectivist interpretation of existence from the

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 223.

²⁰¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Phillip Mairet (London: Butler and Tanner, 1987), 28.

beginning of his work, and, as I did in chapter two,²⁰² the extent to which negativity must always be balanced by a kind of receptivity to the event of appropriation.

This receptivity to appropriation is a far more primordial an ethical attribute. In other words, without it there is always the potential for a person to either hide his (extra)human qualities himself by his actions or have these concealed by another's act of will. After either action, Da-sein becomes an animal, or worse, an object. The instability of humanism is illuminated well by Kant's two types of negative statements. Simple negation involves attaching a negative descriptor to a noun, for example, the statement "she is not human." This simply means she is not human but something else. Conversely, indefinite negation is exemplified by the statement, "she is inhuman": the 'in' implies that she used to be human, but by her own excessive actions, she has transcended the realm of the human into something that *ek-sists* beyond nature. Though this has extreme forms, it is also primordial: to be human is to be in excess. To be human is, in a certain sense, to be inhuman, since try as we may, we can never assimilate the uncanny experience of dwelling in human subjectivity into the symbolic order. It is this very unstable excess of willful subjectivity that simultaneously lays the ground work for both humanity and inhumanity. As appropriation is unstable, we who bear the uncomfortable task of dwelling in and on it are as well.²⁰³

Timothy Campbell expresses this idea somewhat differently when he suggests that the thanotopolitical dimensions of Heideggerian thought are exemplified by the discussion of improper writing found in Heidegger's lectures on Parmenides.²⁰⁴ Technology (in this case, the use of the typewriter), as an outgrowth of the will to will and humanism, has created a world in

²⁰² Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," trans. Capuzzi, Gray & Krell, in *Basic Writings*, 27-229.

²⁰³ See n. 184.

²⁰⁴ Timothy C. Campbell, *Improper Life*, 11 ; and Martin Heidegger *Parmenides*, trans. Andre Schuer and Robert. Rojcewicz (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press., 1982), 80.

which human beings are external to themselves. Heidegger criticizes the typewriter as an improper form of communication, since in a typewritten letter there is less personality. If my thesis were written by hand, were I capable of using a pen, certain aspects of my personality would be discernable through my handwriting. In addition, I would have a profoundly different relationship to my thesis because it would have greater materiality.

Campbell argues that this distinction between proper and improper writing exemplifies the thanatopolitical dimensions of technology; for by dint of (de)subjectification, technological humanism transforms life from *bios* to *zoe*.²⁰⁵ As Campbell persuasively shows, through a reading of Heidegger and Agamben, humanism as such, is always an unstable dynamic between *bios* and *zoe*. This is so because *physis* qua *physis* is a dynamic of revealing and concealing. This dynamic of revealing and concealing is made more unstable because of the ambiguous place the experiences of both freedom and will have in Da-sein's life. I believe Heidegger would concur with Freud, insofar as both seem to hold culture is built upon the necessary restriction of human freedom, and I believe that he would also agree with Freud that modernity offers both considerable freedom and considerable subjection.²⁰⁶

The paradox of technology in late modern life can be summarized thusly: while it increases freedom it also represents the return of the repressed. It attempts to satisfy our greatest nightmare-fantasy, immortality; and impairment-disability is the unsurmountable excremental remainder of this process of projection.²⁰⁷ If both psychoanalysis and philosophy must deal with the inhuman excess of being human, that is to say, our capacity for freedom, which amounts to

²⁰⁵ See n.126

²⁰⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press. 1960), 86.

²⁰⁷ Jaques Lacan, "The Purloined Letter," in *Ecrits*, trans. (Alan Sheridan London: Norton and Co. 2005), 25. & Julia Kristeva *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) 8-10

the death drive, both must help us imagine a post human or, perhaps, dis-human ethics; for only then may impaired persons escape the increased likelihood of becoming what Agamben has called a *homo sacer*.²⁰⁸

The danger is that humankind has ceased to view itself as an ethical way of being, which necessitates both thought and praxis, and thus forgetting that a significant life is what matters, modern life often sanctifies life as such. The problem with sanctifying life qua life as Foucault points out with poignant precision, is that modern cybernetic state systems often seek to control their citizen population in order to allegedly preserve the health of the body politic.²⁰⁹

The will to representation has the potential to cause Da-sein to forget its primordial thinking relation to being. To be clear, Heidegger believes that the event of appropriation is not the same thing as thought.²¹⁰ Yet both would be deficient without the other; it is impossible to think without some relationship to appropriation, and it has unfolded in the manner that it has, owing to human reflection upon it. This is what Heidegger means, when he says that, instead of seeking to master other beings of whatever kind, Da-sein ought to be the Shepherd of beings.²¹¹ I would add, because this will become very important below, this applies on both an ontic and ontological level. On the former, Da-sein must protect the earth and its inhabitants (both human and nonhuman), in order to preserve the range of being's disclosure; on the latter Da-sein must engage in meditative reflection, such that the clearing of being can remain open.

The openness of the clearing depends equally on Da-sein trying to contemplate what is concealed in this opening as it does on Da-sein thinking about what is revealed. Only through dwelling in an uncomfortable space, which is not satisfied with either complete presence

²⁰⁸ See n. 125

²⁰⁹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, trans. Marley David (New York: Picador Books, 2003). 110-125.

²¹⁰ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Stambaugh, 24.

²¹¹ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," trans. Capuzzi, Gray, Krell, 24.5

[*Anwesenheit*] or complete absence [*Abwesenheit*], will Da-sein accomplish its preeminent task: dwelling requires receptivity in the face of constant flux.²¹² This receptivity does not amount to fatalistic resignation, since Da-sein must always be building, in order to construct a world of meaning in which thinking is possible.²¹³ To be sure, the experience of anxiety is invaluable for exposing the sheer potentiality that Da-sein is, yet the paralysis born thereof must not continue indefinitely, lest Da-sein be crippled by its solipsistic dread, or worse, obstinate audacity. In this way, the later Heidegger views Da-sein's proper relation to anxiety, similar to how a Zen Buddhist story describes Enlightenment.

A young monk worked for many years chopping blocks and carrying water to help him contemplate the meaning of enlightenment. Then, one day, he finally had an intimation of what it was, and so he went to a sage to have a conversation. The young monk said to the sage, "I have been chopping wood and carrying water for some years, by now I think I have a grasp of suffering: what ought I to do?" The sage answered, "You must continue as before, but now you know what it really means."²¹⁴ Consequently, the later Heidegger only views anxiety as salutary, when it helps Da-sein to think constructively, in a literal and metaphorical sense. As isolating as anxiety may be, we must weather its storm, by planting and nurturing firm roots in the earth out of which we were born.

To elaborate, humanism does not properly think of both the radical gap and the radical kinship between Da-sein and the animal and the awesome burdens these relationships are. Da-

²¹² Ibid., 263

²¹³ Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling and Thinking," in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). Thus I think Davis is correct when he critiques Habermas' dismissal of Heidegger. Habermas famously believes Heidegger goes from one extreme to the other: Heidegger oscillates from militaristic volunteerism to an eastern inspired fatalism. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will* 240-248; Jürgen Habermas, *The Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Fredrick Lawerence (Cambridge: MIT publishing, 1987), 160-163.

²¹⁴ Michel Zimmerman, "Heidegger, Buddhism, and Deep Ecology ", in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B Guignon (New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 254-255.

sein stands outside itself in the clearing of being, not because of some particular relationship to a faculty or supreme being, but because it participates the in sending of being itself, by means of appropriation.²¹⁵ Again, I must stress that the sending of being is not some transcendental event entirely outside Da-sein's control. Rather, the gift of human life is that we are fortunate enough to have the imminent unfolding of being as an interlocutor. It is this dialogical relationship with being that forms the soil whence the seeds of all other questions come to fruition. Naturally, the inexhaustible fecundity of our dialogue with being also forms the necessary and fertile ground of ethics. For Heidegger, ethics, as distinct from morality, is a stance Da-sein takes on itself. Yet Heidegger also argues that the Greek word for ethics has a much older root meaning to dwell. Wherein does Da-sein dwell, if not the clearing of being? Yet it is one thing for Heidegger to state this ontological fact and it is another for us to begin to actualize his ontological assessment on an ontic level. Do we have intimations of what proper thinking and dwelling may resemble?

A crucial way to understand Da-sein's thrown condition of dwelling is through language. Heidegger's problem with humanism can be traced back to a mistranslation of Aristotle. For Aristotle, a human being is a *zoon logon* (speaking animal). The Latin translation of *logon* for *ratio* has a far more restrictive meaning. I discussed when interpreting Heidegger's encounter with the pre-Socratics how *logos* is a preeminent attribute of Da-sein. For by virtue of *logos* Da-sein participates in the clearing. By dint of speech, Da-sein gathers disparate phenomena into a cohesive world. Thus speech, as an existential of Da-sein, makes possible the more primordial division and interplay between *poiesis* and *praxis* required for an ethical human life.²¹⁶ It is by speech that we think and become appropriated, ethically or otherwise. Speech is not a specific language; rather, languages are derived from the capacity for speech. Instead, speech describes

²¹⁵ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," trans. Capuzzini Gray & Krell, 230-31.

²¹⁶ See n. 68

our capacity to gather phenomena together into a context of meaningful significance. As usual, Heidegger expresses this poetically, when he says:

Being is the protective heed that holds man in his existent essence to the truth of such protective heed—in such a way that it houses existence in language. Thus language is at once the house of Being and the home of human beings. Only because language is the home of the essence of man can historical mankind and human beings not be at home in their language, so that for them language becomes a mere container for their sundry preoccupations.²¹⁷

Specific languages enframe being; words, in part, determine the manifestation of phenomena. This is why I have been at pains to analyze the different terminology associated with the impairment-disability problem; for, by means of speech, we take a stance on the sending of being that we experience. Yet as much as we are determined by language, it can illuminate the process by which Da-sein becomes more receptive to appropriation. As Heidegger observes, we can never get to the bottom of language, for Da-sein always exists in inexhaustible chains of metaphor. While language grants humans freedom, it also curtails it. By dwelling in language properly, therefore, we take another step at dismantling the subject. For proper understanding of language reveals that Da-sein never has complete control over the words it uses.

Here again, I see kinship between Heidegger and much post structural musing on subjectivity. If language forms part of the ‘ground’ of Da-sein’s experience, but we can never have full access to it, to dwell in language is in fact to dwell in a home built on the sands of metaphor. A proper humanism is, thus, poetic; for through polysemy, it is possible to slow the solidification of subjectivity. This is so because poetry aids the task of thinking by keeping the dynamics of *physis* alive. Yet how can one create a poetic understanding of the world that attempts to concretize the attributes of speech Heidegger prizes so highly. The answer is to create an aesthetic and thoughtful dwelling that brings forth the tension between world and earth.

²¹⁷ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, trans. Capuzzi, Gray and Farrell Krell, 263.

TECHNO-TEMPLE ?

In a world that has no objective purpose, the beautiful thing is that Da-sein is able to experience beauty anyway by dwelling in it.²¹⁸ This creation of beauty cannot be merely subjective, since it always occurs as part of a tradition of historical being. This is perhaps best expressed in “On the Origin of the Work of Art”, in which Heidegger defines beauty as that which enacts the tension between world and earth. World can be defined as the process of being unfolding throughout history, whereas earth is the constant forces which threaten to terminate that being. In other words, genuine art attempts to bring us into a proper relationship to appropriation, in the midst of chaos.²¹⁹ While listening to the beauty of Beethoven’s string quartets, it is difficult to remember gut and wood produced such sublime sound.²²⁰ If either world or earth is out of balance, it is not a genuine work of art: beauty cannot be too material, nor can it be divorced from its world. It must always ground Da-sein in a particular place and/or tradition(s), while also provoking wonder that Da-sein finds itself in that particular place and tradition at all.

This is better expressed by Heidegger’s analysis of the Greek temple. The Greek temple does not impose itself on nature, like much of modern architecture. Instead, the stone was sculpted by hand, and it was usually from a marble quarry near the construction site. At once gargantuan and delicate, the Temple exposes the tension between the Apollonian and Dionysian in Greek culture. The building orients the disclosure of the beings in this space in which it is placed, but it does not impose a specific form of disclosure through an act of will. The beauty of the Temple is that it reveals a world, while allowing for concealment. As imposing as the Greek

²¹⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Weinsheimer & Marshall, 160-165.

²¹⁹ Heidegger, “Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). 45.

²²⁰ Braver, *Heidegger’s Later Writings*. 53.

temples are, and as much as they may affect the disclosure of the surrounding area, they are still dependent on features of the environment to complete their beauty.

Moreover, they, as it were, reify the process of truth in their very architecture. Though the structure is very large, it remains open. This void creates a space in which the god(s) become manifest.²²¹ Hence, when Heidegger speaks of the holy, he means to suggest that when Da-sein stands in awe of what is ‘divine’, it implicitly stands in the dynamic of presencing and absencing that unfolds, while contemplating these structures. Not only does it force Da-sein to ask the question, why is there something rather than nothing, it leaves it perplexed, asking the far more profound question of how something and nothing can be balanced in the same location. If Da-sein dwells in this experience of wonder, and does not flee from the realm of the sacred to profane preoccupations, it is, once again, thrown back upon the miraculous coincidence of its brief existence in a particular place and a particular time.²²²

It is possible to use this experience of wonder to understand how Da-sein may began the task of releasing itself from the will, thereby fulfilling its task of thinking. When Da-sein properly dwells in the wonder of its being anywhere at all, it becomes possible to question the will to re-present things according to a given schema. I have suggested that Heidegger believes this to be the cause of all other possibly harmful facets of the will. Owing to this problem of perception, the answer to Da-sein’s woes is, characteristically, phenomenological. Once we realize that persons and things are miraculously coincidental occurrences with which we have been collectively entrusted, we can begin the arduous task of reforming our tendency to force them into one form of presence. Although the later Heidegger says little about the essential nature of humankind, it seems clear that thinking in its relation to appropriation, plays an

²²¹ Heidegger, “origin of the work of art,”, trans. Hofstader. 55-58.

²²² Braver, *Heidegger’s Later Writings*, 99.

important part in our nature. Along with this there does seem to be an innate predisposition to will.²²³ As such, overcoming the will, itself a contradiction in terms, does not seem to be entirely possible. Releasement from the will, much like authenticity, is an ideal. Da-sein must exist between the two poles of authenticity and inauthenticity: to be completely inauthentic is to be intoxicated by the mundane, until a mindless death, whereas to be truly authentic is to be dead. Likewise, to be completely dominated by the will is to lead a life in which one never stops to smell the roses, but merely uses them as a token of exchange on Valentine's Day. Yet to not will is also to not live.

How then is it possible to achieve the state Heidegger suggests? It seems to occur in three phases which are as follows: first one must attempt not to will to re-present according to a given schema but instead dwell on the existence of things as such.²²⁴ This, of course, is an act of will, but it is a kind of will whereby Da-sein restricts itself. In other words, by contemplating the nothing, and its kinship with it, Da-sein becomes the space (Da) in which beings manifest. This act of self-restriction ought to engender greater receptivity to the sending of being, that is to say, a willingness on the part of Da-sein to accept the situation in which it finds itself but also a desire to meditate on the conditions that have to pertain for this event to occur.²²⁵ This also necessitates that Da-sein raise questions about the best way to participate in the experience of appropriation. Trying to free oneself from the domain of the will cannot amount to simple fatalism, since the event of appropriation and Da-sein are forever in a dialogical relationship. To suppose that everything is under human control is a bad consequence of metaphysical thinking, but to surrender all responsibility to some extra human force also ensnares Da-sein in metaphysics.²²⁶

²²³ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 31.

²²⁴ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. & ed. Anderson & Freund., 80.

²²⁵ Ibid., 82-83

²²⁶ Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, 225.

HOLY NOTHING!

For this reason, thinking about being calls us to action. This is so because Da-sein never thinks from nowhere. It is always building the world that, at its best, enhances our meditative capacity. In other words, what I think Heidegger means in his last interview when he says, “only a god can save us” is that Da-sein must work to recover a sense of the holy, similar to the Greek temple.²²⁷ This notion of the holy would cause Da-sein to contemplate the ever present dynamics of presencing [*Anwesen*] and absenceing [*Abwesen*] that it calls being. Before accusing Heidegger of being an elitist, a Luddite or a romantic, one must note three things.

First, thinking need not and, indeed, ought not to be a highly intellectual activity; nearly every Da-sein is capable of wonder and some kind of response. Second, Da-sein cannot simply renounce technology, since that would be a failure to respond to beings manifestation. It must find a way to use technology without being used by it. This task enjoins Da-sein to set aside technology when necessary, while also admitting the possibility that it may have a crucial role in revealing what is holy for the present age. Third, the historical nature of being makes an outright return to the past impossible. Yet this does not mean that Da-sein ought not to investigate the pre-Socratics or other movements as unexplored paths in the history of philosophy; for in doing so, Da-sein realizes both the contingency of its contemporary circumstances and possible unforeseen ways of contending with problems caused therefrom.²²⁸

It is incumbent upon Da-sein (if it is even possible to speak of contemporary Da-sein having control in the cybernetic system), therefore, to employ technology in the service of

²²⁷ Heidegger, “Only a God Can Save Us”, trans. Maria Alter and John Caputo, in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolen (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), 107.

²²⁸ Hubert Dreyfus, ““Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (New York ,NY: Cambridge University Press), 1993 307-310

building, dwelling and thinking. Only then may Da-sein dis-cover ethics. We can have intimations of these possible dis-coveries by dwelling in impairments and our dis-abilities.

For Heidegger being-with is an ontological category of Da-sein's existence, but Heidegger is explicit in distinguishing being-with from empathy, because empathy arises out of the more primordial fact of being-with other human beings. To make matters worse, he discusses care for the other and the call of conscience but is also deliberately nebulous about what those terms mean. The primacy of death, at least in the early Heidegger, makes it seem as though Da-sein would be doing a disservice to itself by eliminating suffering: suffering reveals beings as what they are. I have attempted to show, especially from my analysis of the later Heidegger, that this is a misreading. It does not adequately consider Heidegger's strident critique of the will.

Hence the criticism that Heidegger cannot be used for proper ethical reflection because he subordinates the ethical and political dimensions of human experience to the ontological dimension is not entirely valid.²²⁹ The whole point of thinking about being in the later Heidegger is to create a space in which the other can emerge. This is because thinking about the nullity that we are allows us to create a far more protean self: one that can accept our existence and the existence of the other as a gift.

This ethics of meditative self-withdrawal allows persons and phenomena to be experienced, rather than classified and controlled. Being with is profoundly ethical. Once one realizes that the world is made by others, it becomes difficult to shield oneself from their suffering. Da-sein's limitations and possibilities are tied to every event of being, (human and nonhuman alike).²³⁰ If we wish to participate thoughtfully in this event, we must as far as possible, further its disclosure. This means that Da-sein must resist the anxiety caused by the

²²⁹Miguelde Beistegui, *Heidegger & the political dystopias*. (London New York: Routledge, 1998), 9-15.

²³⁰Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*, 75.

other, who is often thought of as an absence, must be overcome. Consequently, the will to representation pretends to create complete an intractable subject, who is more likely to dominate rather than comprehend the other, since the other is but a very particular instance of negativity.

The other, if properly understood, causes the dynamics of presencing and absencing to become manifest. We comprehend her as someone similar to us existing in the world, a being alongside us, endowed with certain characteristics. At the same time, however, much about her particular being-in-the-world remains inaccessible to us. Thus the partial yet profound inaccessibility of the other, even as she stands alongside us in the clearing of being, helps to create the abyssal ground for the clearings very manifestation. In other words, the absence created by the presence of the other allows us to wonder at not only her being-in-the-world, but presencing absencing as such. We must, therefore, take the ontological process of presencing-absencing far more seriously when making ethical decisions about interacting with others, particularly those deemed impaired.

One way of accomplishing this task is to see the body and mind as incarnating the dynamics of presencing and absencing. This does not have to be some grand philosophical task, we can simply try to dwell for a short time on the series of miraculous (mal)functions that manifests our body's being in the world. I believe this thinking has great ethical importance, since it may be a crucial step in releasing Da-sein from the will to dominate its closest 'object,' the body. By accepting the body as something in which to dwell, rather than to control, Da-sein avoids the two extremes, which actually amount to the same thing, of fleeing from the body, as merely something attached to the sensuous, and not the rational and trying to control it as much is possible through rational (that is, technological) means. Since building, dwelling and thinking require each other, this does not entail resignation to our bodily fate.

On the contrary, we are constantly using tools so that we can survive, regardless of functional level, yet we ought to use these tools pensively to construct a more thoughtful world. Simply put, I do not believe a wheelchair, or any other present technological device and/or medication can, in itself, redress the problem of impairment, unless Da-sein meditates on the dynamic of presencing-absencing. Technology reveals as much as it conceals, and so, it is reasonable to suggest that even if Da-sein were able to use technology to get all of its various instances to a normative level of function, it would then set a new standard of perfection, made possible by technology, against which some would be impaired and others would not.

Moreover, even if this were possible, we must think carefully about the diverse experiences of those deemed impaired that would be lost, if impairment were thought of only as a problem, rather than an experience. On a practical level, I believe taking a more deliberative stance to impairment is best. It avoids either extreme of seeing it as a personal tragedy, which must be overcome, by charity and/or individual acts of will, or as a minority issue, influenced by technology, which must compete like any other in the political arena for rights, in the world with supposedly fewer and fewer resources for all but the elite. The fact is impairments are physical or mental differences that can make it more difficult to operate in the world as it's presently designed. The irony is that the very thing said to augment impairments, technology, is also the very thing that worsens many of the handicaps stemming from impairments — difficulty finding employment in an increasingly fast-paced and efficient workplace, and so on.

If we began to think about being towards impairment in the same way that Heidegger urges us to think about being towards death , we could take several crucial, though small, steps toward existing in what Heidegger calls the fourfold of gods, mortals, earth and sky.²³¹ By gods

²³¹ Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling Thinking,” trans. Albert Hofstader, in *Poetry, Language and Thought* (New York, Harper and Row) 1971.

Heidegger means that which provokes wonder. Awe-inspiring experiences make us stand out in the clearing of being. Da-sein experiences this when it looks at the Acropolis and feels the lingering presence of Athena, though she may have flown from the earth.

As much as this experience brings Da-sein into ecstasy, as mortal, it comes to fruition in, and eventually returns to, a particular soil. To elaborate, meaning [*sinn*] can only occur between situated birth and situated death. We exist in a process of constant flux (earth). Yet we have meaningful intimations, born of the historical nature of being, that this process has some order; or, at least, in longing for it, we attempt to make a receptive order manifest (sky). Through tradition we are called to respond to the ongoing unfolding of being. This response to the unfolding of being, having been thus situated in the fourfold, ought to help Da-sein recover the sense of the holy. I am suggesting, therefore, that we rethink both the aesthetics and hermeneutics of impairment-disability to have a critical position that is ontologically sound. Investigating the aesthetics of impairment-disability and the politics of the body can help us challenge the “disinterested subject”.

This ‘monsters’ revelation can help us create a world that has a porous boundary between nature and culture, through the use of technology, so we may avoid many of its consequences, by (dis)locating subjectivity. Similar to the challenges faced by queer persons, it is often supposed that ‘disability pride’ is difficult because of the ontologically negative status of impairment-disability. Yet as with allegedly subversive sexual and gender identities, non-normative embodiments and states of mind can be a point of pride, precisely because of their ‘monstrosity’—that is, if one understands monstrosity’s original meaning as the thing which reveals both the power and absence of the gods. Bluntly stated, there are times when impaired persons, often more than most, must bear the scars of death and subjectivity with honor and

humility. Heidegger has many resources to help us survive and creatively appropriate the flesh wounds of humanism, as we pass through the crucifixion of spirit.

But can we begin to realize this transubstantiation of subjectivity? I believe so, but all apocalyptic movements have humble beginnings, so it is necessary to start with and new approach of combining technology and nature. To comprehend this point, it is useful to compare some forms of traditional Japanese gardening practices to French Enlightenment gardens. Both require an extreme amount of work. The Japanese garden, at least to Euro-American eyes, often appears unorganized because it does not follow a predetermined schema. In other words, in this method of gardening, the task for the landscape artist is to reveal and enhance the innate beauty of nature, better eliminating the dynamic of revealing and concealing, characteristic of good art.

Conversely, the French Enlightenment Garden sought to order nature: plants were excessively pruned and shaped and everything in the garden was laid out according to a rational pattern. This pattern depicted humankind's conquest of nature. What I am suggesting with regard to Heidegger, disability and technological devices, is that we adopt an approach similar to the Japanese garden. Granted, accommodations for persons with impairments will likely always be technological; we must, however, let this technology fade into the background, while being mindful of its presence. Efforts toward barrier-free design, a movement which tries to create things in such a way that accessibility is integrated into their construction from the beginning, have the potential to do this. This is, of course, the case only if we do not forget the negativity that is concealed, in order to reveal a more accessible world for all.

To remember this dynamic of concealment-unconcealment, Dasein must realise that the solutions to its problems begin with an ethical relation to the world, rooted in the strange experience of finite appropriation. If Dasein takes death as the central concept in ethics, truly

embracing it as the ever-present fate of all, then we may be able to recover a more proper approach to care that is not rooted in transcending death through technological means. Here, I mean “care” in Heidegger’s ontological sense of the term, that is, the primary concern of everyday Dasein is not to lead a meaningful life; it is simply to avoid death or responsibility for its own freedom, by means of ever increasing technological diversion.

But I also mean “care” in the more conventional usage, suggesting the various medical and peri-medical apparatuses designed to distance the impaired from the regular population by means of technology. In short, by asking not “for whom the bell tolls”, both care provider and care recipient can resist the technologicalization of their respective positions. In doing so, Dasein would begin to resist both the revelation of the care giver and care recipient as objects of standing reserve. Hence commencing this task is a necessary measure to counter-act the thanopolitical dimensions of disability, which a politics based on independent living and technological services for persons who have been deemed impaired runs the risk of replicating.

Thus, applying Heidegger to disability studies may help scholars develop what Leonard J. Davis describes as (dis)modern identity, as opposed to, a postmodern identity.²³² A (dis)modern position, with the “dis” in brackets, is drastically different from a postmodern position or a strictly anti-modern position. Post modernity implies that we have somehow gone beyond the modern, but in order for this to be the case, the West would have to have thought through all of modernity’s implications. Heidegger clearly shows is not true. To be anti-modern, merely replicates the problem of modernity—radical negations with no end—and is not a valid option. Both postmodernism and anti-modernism, since they have the potential to split the person into *bios* and *zoe*, privileging the latter to the exclusion of the former, are inadequate. A (dis)modern

²³²Lennard J Davis, “The End of Identity Politics and the Beginning of Dismodernism: On Disability as an Unstable Category,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J Davis, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 238.

stance, as I see it, is one that questions modernity while operating in it. Similar to the way that impaired persons are both inside and outside the body politic, as one of, if not the most powerful, sites of disclosure that threaten to undermine our notions of political cohesion and natural order. This is so because bodily being in the world is the primary experience out of which we construct a normative symbolic order. One that creates a false division between nature and culture, which Heidegger's notion of dwelling tends to question.

It is impossible to divorce Da-sein's philosophic thinking from its comportment to nature, precisely because the impairment-disability problem uncomfortably traverses the alleged boundary between nature and culture, to question disability in a Heideggerian manner, is to question the modern project.²³³ This inquiry widens the space of the ethical.

Disability studies may be a valuable gadfly for the Western consciousness because it, if taken to the extreme of its critical potential, has the ability to cripple the primary bastion of occidental oppression—namely, the mind-body problem and its associated erroneous conceptions of Da-sein's agency. By making being with the ground of ethical deliberation, which I must admit Heidegger failed to do, one deconstructs normative moral judgements, predicated on an allegedly objective standard of reasoning and, instead, roots them in situated ethical thinking.²³⁴ By both poetically and politically thinking about impairment, as a particular instance of Da-sein's impotence, we challenge one of the master signifiers of language, the body, even as we attempt to redefine it.

²³³ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press 1991), 27-32 . Latour, taking much from Heidegger, posits the modern project as a contrary division between the sphere of nature and culture, (purification) while at the same time, this desire for purification creates an increasing of hybrid between nature and culture (translation), leading Latour to argue that, in many ways, we have never been fully modern as conceives it, since even as we try to maintain the distinction between nature and culture, this dichotomy underwrites itself. Disability then is an example of a hybrid status, which exemplifies modernity even as it questions the modern project.

²³⁴ Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*, 99.

Thus thinking about the body, as we dwell in language, helps us experience our thrown limitation while we perpetuate the process of appropriation. Disabling the body to enable thought, thus brings Da-sein closer to realizing Heidegger's humanism. Hopefully, such reflection will lead to a more accessible dwelling place for the whole of Da-sein in relation to care services, universal architecture and (dis)humanist thinking.

CRIPPLING OCCIDENTAL THINKING?

By thinking about being, while taking active steps to dwell in impairment, we begin the long but necessary task of freeing ourselves from technology. Though humanism has been and will no doubt continue to be, an excellent resource in the struggle for the increased disclosure of impaired Da-sein, we ought to take Heidegger's criticism of humanism seriously, especially when considering the question of impairments-disability. For if Heidegger's correct in linking previous humanism to the problem of the will, and I am correct in linking impairment-disability to this problem, we cannot adequately questioned impairment-disability, until we have questioned the metaphysical foundations of humanism. While claiming to provide the ground for all ethical relationships with the other, the schism between the human and the (in)human, predicated as it is on an extra human quality, and not a fundamental relationship to being, undermines the ethics of humanism from the beginning. This is so because this extra quality is often used, not in the service of a dialogue with being, but is employed to control its unfolding. Such an attempt to control appropriation's unfolding, results in a double process of alienation. Da-sein becomes alienated from itself and, therewith, from the other instances of its occurrence.

The difficulty with humanism is that Dasein does not recognise the diminishment of its capacity for thinking. On the contrary, humanist reflection sees itself solely as enhancing Dasein's capacities, all the while ignoring the ongoing concealment of what is holy, that is, the

fact that there is something rather than nothing. By failing to meditate on the distinction between something and nothing, humanism is caught in the process whereby human beings become both ever present and ever absent. But in its quest for absolute reality, humanism has forgotten the ethical; Da-sein to be ethical must dwell as the absence that allows other beings to manifest themselves.

Humanism and its uncomfortable bed-fellow, technology, reveal both the negative and the positive aspect of absence. Both are born of the domain of the will; and in order for us to dwell on and in this positive aspect of absence, we must begin to restrict this domain's effects. Consequently, meditating upon impairment and how we might build a world that acknowledges such an ontological fact may help us further a (dis)humanist ethics. To be impaired in a certain way is to be more fully Dasein: it allows one to dwell as the absence that makes beings manifest. Though negativity may be crippling, by dwelling in this condition, we may make a world that starts to think beyond the will more accessible. To be impaired should become not a condition one passively receives, but an ethical possibility one chooses – a position which reveals far more ontological freedom than ontic paralysis. It is incumbent upon Da-sein, to build a world that respects this ethical possibility, while we try to endure, having been forsaken by ‘Our Father’, who is in language, the unbearable lightness of our being-towards-death and freedom.

Conclusion: Accessible Acropolis?

“But in heaven,” I said, “perhaps a pattern is laid up for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees. It doesn’t make any difference whether it is or will be somewhere. For he would mind the things of this city alone, and of no other — Plato²³⁵

RETRACING MY THOUGHT PATH

Contrary to popular opinion, Plato was not a utopian dreamer, at least in the way that we commonly understand utopia. The value of ideals rest not in the fact that they allow us to flee from the world to a more perfect realm of thought; rather, utopian thinking, as Plato demonstrated perhaps better than any other, functions as a powerful critique of the present. The word utopia can mean both good place and no place, and in this definition we see the tension between the ideal and the actual, theory and practice. This tension reflects the home sickness of humankind generally. As Heidegger puts it, we stand in the clearing of earth, mortals, gods and sky. At times, we wish to be with the divinities. This is especially true in a technological world, in which we constantly feel the absence of the holy, yet we are earthly creatures so must dwell in a particular soil.

Nevertheless, it is in such mixture of earth and spirit that humankind achieves its true dignity, since such selfless dedication allows beings to manifest themselves as they are, which, at least for Heidegger, is the same thing as saying how they ought to be. The ‘phenomenal’, in both the technical and the colloquial sense of the word, career of Heidegger can be summarized by his

²³⁵ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Bloom, IX, 592b, 275.

changing attitudes towards homelessness. To be sure, the early writings of Heidegger are still revolutionary, owing to the emphasis they place on embedded context and collective understanding . However difficult it may make him to read, Heidegger took on the Herculean, perhaps impossible task, of expressing everyday experiences in a novel way, in order to excavate our understanding from layers of accrued cultural sediment. He provides philosophers with a new existential schema.

I have followed Heidegger's internal critique in suggesting that this schema failed to transcend metaphysical thinking. Revolutionary though it may have been, it was a failure owing to the very use of the term transcendence. Heidegger was unable to begin to properly think the meaning of being in general; for influenced by Kant as he was, Heidegger's early writings still remain within the domain of the will to representation. As I have also suggested, the nebulous status of the will and death within *Being and Time* and the early writings has very dark consequences, which are obviously apprehendable in Heidegger's odious foray into politics. Surely, there is not much that is new in this analysis. Enough ink has been spilled about Heidegger's ambivalence to the senseless blood spilled in the Holocaust.

Yet it is because of Heidegger's undeniable genius that many find his actions so unsettling; how could a thinker of his stature behave so thoughtlessly? There is more at issue in Heidegger's blunder than simple opportunism and cowardice, as he would later intimate. It raises the fundamental problem of willful subjectivity in all its horror, especially when this subjectivity is not combined with prudence. This is a familiar story, but my humble addition has been to use impairment and disability to shed further light on it, perhaps one of the most pressing issues of contemporary Da-sein is what ought it to do, in a world where its instances are not getting any younger and are being increasingly augmented?

Though a phenomenological approach to impairment can help us elucidate experiences of Da-sein and, may help us better understand how its various worlds are created, we cannot stop at mere description of the everyday. We must interrogate the acute manifestations of the abyssal ground that come to presence by means of absence in the world of disability. When one accomplishes this interrogation, it is possible to challenge able normativity. This questioning of able normativity benefits the person deemed impaired, and those deemed unimpaired around her, as well as those wishing to question Heidegger.

By elucidating the conventionality of able normativity, it places those who have been deemed impaired in a better position to disclose themselves as free beings within the world. This quest for particular increased disclosure has the potential to make all instances of Da-sein more free on both an ontic and ontological level. On the former, it is in everyone's interest to make a world more accessible to all, since anyone can become more or less impaired at any moment, just as anyone may die at any moment. On the latter, by meditating on the momentariness of both life and death, shown by persons deemed impaired, we achieve the freedom to become what we are: we reveal ourselves as sheer potentiality.

To elaborate, we realize that we are the only beings able to experience death as death. Cats perish but only a human being dies, because only a human being lives; and to live requires ethics. Ethics has a double meaning of proper choice and proper dwelling. Only human beings dwell because human beings can build a context of practical activity, born of the question why is there something, rather than nothing? The problem with Heidegger's phenomenological voluntarism is that, at the very least, it flirts with the subjective and has the danger of precipitating a process of overcoming from which it is difficult to extricate Da-sein.

Why Heidegger is a fascinating thinker with whom to have a conversation with is that he precipitated much of the disorder he saw in the world. To put it bluntly, all instances of Da-sein must strive not to be crippled by negativity; but Heidegger is an intriguing instance of the handicaps incurred by philosophers because his early writings are crippled by the myopia of metaphysics. This leads to both a ceaseless and a pointless process of self-mastery. Though he may rightly begin to critique this process of self-mastery in Descartes, the darker seeds of its consequences are present in *Being and Time*, and this presence-absence threatens to conceal Heidegger's otherwise tremendous efflorescence of thought. Hence, juxtaposing disability studies and Heidegger is useful for both parties.

First, the resolute character of being towards death, at least before Heidegger's turn toward thinking, seems to romanticize chaos and undermine the importance of human fragility, which an honest thinking about being towards death may actually redress. In short, in privileging the ontological dimension of being towards death, Heidegger underestimates its ontic importance. In other words, if one does not understand being towards death in conjunction with being with others, we run the risk of forgetting that the fact of death and negativity generally means that there are others who presently need and will always need our help. Thus by analyzing Heidegger, in light of the question of impairment-disability, the call of conscience becomes less nebulous than is often supposed.

Second, Heidegger's nascent diagnosis of the will to overcome phenomena can serve as a useful propaedeutic for disability studies. In seeking to overcome impairment, particularly by means of technology, humankind is at risk of becoming paralyzed, blind, deaf and dumb inside a cybernetic prison. By using technology, disabled Da-sein believes itself to be freer but with this freedom there is concealment, such that, it is everywhere crippled by technologies chains. This

cybernetic relation, it is true, links human beings together, but in a horribly incorrect manner. The intersubjective begins to disappear; for the distinction between subject and object, itself a form of derivative understanding, begins to erode.

Human beings are connected by their cybernetic fetters but because they continue to forget their human essence, that is to stand out in the clearing of being and preserve it, they are reduced to a mere object. They become a fragile link in the ceaseless chain of consumptive fools that constitutes the indifferent event of the one. This indifference made possible by technology's ability to obfuscate decision and difference, renders an atrocity into an everyday banality.

Technology does not think, at least in the Heideggerian understanding of the word; it merely executes tasks and such execution of tasks, without thoughtful reflection, may and has led to the execution of those who threaten the technological system. For Heidegger, this is in part caused by thinking. This is so because thinking is always in danger of becoming metaphysics, once it has lost its co-responsive relationship to being. Consequently, the task of thinking, whether one is an idealist or a phenomenologist, is not an easy one. In thinking there is always risk and there are always things left unthought, or worse, poorly thought. As human beings, we must think after ourselves and think after and with others. Only then will we preserve the dynamic presence and absence of being. Only then will we preserve the political in conjunction with the ethical.

PENSIVE POLITICS

I have attempted such a thoughtful engagement with Heidegger, on the possible ontological question of impairment-disability, as a way of showing intimations of what a post metaphysical, and thus thoughtful, ethics may be. It is difficult to get to this position, if it is even possible, just as it is difficult, in truth, to have an entirely ethical response to impairment-disability, in a world with more and more technology and thus fewer and fewer resources.

However difficult these tasks may be, by attempting both at once, we may have the potential to redress two serious problems simultaneously. We can confront impairment on the ontic level, all the while participating in the more general unfolding of being. I believe this would allow us to take certain crucial steps in overcoming nihilism. In other words, we may accomplish thinking and dwelling at once and recover a sense of the holy. Impairments, as signs of presencing and absencing, ought to be responded to with care, dedication and acceptance, for human beings can neither live in complete chaos or complete order.

Recall Heidegger's discussion of the windmill. What makes a windmill an authentic [*eingtich*] piece of technology is the fact that it reveals a world, while being receptive to earth. Hence we can use technology to respond to impairment, but we ought to have a receptive relationship to our bodies and each other, in the same way that the farmer has a receptive relationship to both his fields and his fellows who dwell alongside him. This receptivity requires Da-sein to recognize a degree of impairment that it always has, but it also requires recognition of a degree of impairment on the part of the event of being itself.

With every revelation of being there is concealment of it, and so being requires human beings, because we always have intimations of this dyadic process of truth. Thus, not only is Da-sein forever incomplete because it is always with others, it is always incomplete because it is always responding to being. Thus a politics focused on becoming rather than being, which is also tempered by thoughtful reservation, has the best chance at redressing the problem of impairment, wedded as it is to the problematic course of metaphysics; and I think the later Heidegger has plenty of resources for such a politics.

In addition, tracing the earlier Heidegger's thought has two advantages: first it has excellent resources for describing the transition from impairment to disability; and second this

material can help us understand the making of modern disabled identity. Technology without care for others and contemplation of Being will only lead to further problems. The problem of disability, at least at the present, cannot be fixed by technology alone, and wishing that such a problem could be solved by technology alone merely illuminates metaphysics of technological domination. We cannot begin to approach the problem of disability with any cogency, without at first conceiving the negativity of agency that forms the nexus of Western philosophic speculation.

Yet political theory is useless if it cannot offer some practical suggestions for the advancement of our society. One of the reasons I believe an interdependent conception of situational ethics to be so crucial, is because it shifts focus away from the solitary rights-bearing subject. Although this conception is no doubt empowering and useful for many emancipatory movements, by framing impairment as ontologically and epistemologically beneficial for all of society, impaired Da-sein no longer becomes an object of secondary consideration, after the normative boundaries of society are drawn. For all too often, secondary considerations are the ones subject to the most constraint, in a world increasingly driven by efficiency. Yet if we are to honestly confront death, we must also confront impairment. Paradoxically, I am suggesting that such a dance with death may lead to a life less disabled by technology, for not just those impaired by biology, circumstance and groundless cultural practices but for everyone. Sooner or later, everyone is impaired by biology, circumstance and groundless cultural practices.

It is unlikely such a goal will ever be reached. In the meantime, it is imperative that society advocate for the integration of technology and care services. It is disquieting that though the parliament of Canada is fully accessible, it does not have a public attendant on staff or on call, to help visitors who require it with going to the washroom and feeding. The meaning of

freedom in public space and one's personal choices come to look a lot different, if one's life choices are governed to a high degree by basic biological functions. Universal design and the independent living movement offer hopeful signs for the future. We can only wait with determination, play, humility and quietude, provided we do not take their promises of freedom wholesale and forget the technological world they conceal. For as Plato demonstrated, the road to freedom begins with the sublime and arduous task of overcoming amnesia. Only then can we be ontological and only then may we, perhaps, repair the political blindness, embodied by Oedipus.

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