

# Idle Talk, The ‘They’, Death, and Anxiety as Subjects of Language Necessary to Dasein’s Hermeneutic of the Self

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## ABSTRACT

*It is through Heidegger’s explication of concepts such as idle talk, the ‘They’, death, and anxiety as well as his considerations of the importance and function of language, that one begins to see the ways in which this struggle for authenticity is undertaken. Through an examination of these concepts one can see that this struggle, or search, is waged through a hermeneutic of the self informed quite particularly by the way in which language functions within the praxis of each of these concepts. An investigation of certain sections in *Being and Time* reveals the particular importance and interrelation of the four above mentioned concepts to the onto-ontological and existential-ontological examination and construction of this lexically based and informed hermeneutic of the Self; this hermeneutical approach provides Dasein with a practical model for the way in which the teloi of authenticity, understanding, and wholeness may be gained.*

Martin Heidegger is not regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century without reason, and it is not without adequate cause that his writings are considered some of the most difficult within the body of philosophic thought. The high level of complexity, and the denseness with which this complexity is communicated within the body of his work, has consequently been quite deterrent to study by many readers and scholars. However, if one is of a mind to approach Heidegger’s writings, one is certain to find both the denseness and complexity immensely rewarding. This is most certainly true for the keystone of Heidegger’s philosophical works, *Being and Time*, which takes as its focus an examination and reorientation of phenomenological thought and method. If one is so willing, one is certain to find some rather

practical elements interspersed throughout the body of ideas presented within *Being and Time*. Heidegger’s introduction of Dasein anchors the text, and the majority of his thought contained within this work centers on Dasein’s search for authenticity and struggle against inauthenticity.<sup>1</sup> It is through Heidegger’s explication of concepts like idle talk, the ‘They’ death, and anxiety as well as his considerations of

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1 “Authentic moments are those in which we are most at home with ourselves, at one with ourselves. I may initiate or take up possibilities as my own; I have a deep, concrete experience of ‘mineness’ or ‘togetherness’. However, in our more usual, normal, everyday, moments, we do not treat things as affecting us deeply in our ‘ownmost’ being. Heidegger thinks we live in an inauthentic way most of the time. For example, we read about a tragic death in the newspapers but don’t necessarily absorb the event into our own selves or experience it personally; we don’t take it personally. We are experiencing these moments *inauthentically*, experiencing them as one does, as anyone does.” Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), 239-240.

the importance and function of language, that one begins to see the ways in which this struggle for authenticity is undertaken. Through an examination of these concepts one can see that this struggle, or search, is waged through a hermeneutic of the self informed quite particularly by the way in which language functions within the praxis of each of these concepts. An investigation of certain sections in *Being and Time* reveals the particular importance and interrelation of the four above mentioned concepts to the onto-ontological and existential-ontological examination and construction of this lexically based and informed hermeneutic of the Self; this hermeneutical approach provides Dasein with a practical model for the way in which the teloi of authenticity, understanding, and wholeness may be gained.

Before one may begin delving into such an examination of Dasein's hermeneutical endeavors with any appreciable depth, it is critically important to define Dasein, and in doing so to contextualize and understand the phenomenological misconceptions Heidegger means to address through his use of this particular term. The concept of Dasein is the product of Heidegger's attempts to explore more fully than all previous philosophers the question of Being and to delineate a satisfactory, practically workable answer.<sup>2</sup> In the introduction of *Being and Time* he frames both the importance of the question and the need for renewed philosophical inquiry into it, insisting that throughout the history of philosophy members of the discipline have been content to merely assert that being is a property of things which exist and end the discussion there.<sup>3</sup> Heidegger readily provides a rebuttal to the complacency of

this notion from the outset of *Being and Time* when he writes:

*On the basis of the Greeks' initial contributions towards an Interpretation of Being, a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect. It is said that 'Being' is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it. In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method.<sup>4</sup>*

In laying this charge against his predecessors Heidegger makes a valid, though philosophically contentious, point. Additionally, the tongue-in-cheek sharpness of his rebuke easily addresses any questions about the necessity of the massive undertaking he is about to begin. Clearly defining Dasein as term, however, is not nearly as easy as providing the philosophical context and necessity for Heidegger's development of the ideas regarding Dasein itself. One of the simplest definitions of Dasein found within the text of *Being and Time* states:

*Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which is itself one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this*

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2 For a discussion of Heidegger's transition from being to Dasein, see Steven Mulhall "Introduction: Heidegger's Project," in *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 13-14.

3 *Ibid.*, 1-18.

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4 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1962), 2.

*entity that with and through it's Being, this being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.*<sup>5</sup>

Moran paraphrases Heidegger's explication of and work with Dasein by reducing the basic definition even further, writing: "The aim of this analysis is to show up Dasein as having the fundamental structure of Being-in-the-world, being with things and with others in such a way that its whole existence is structured by care (Sorge). As Heidegger puts it, the existential meaning of Dasein is care."<sup>6</sup> Reading these excerpts one begins to understand quite clearly that the most defining trait of Dasein is that Dasein is able to consider its own Being. To clarify and qualify this passage further it is helpful to turn to Moran, who writes that "Dasein is not an entity that stands on its own, like a stone or a chair; it is always caught up in a world. Only Dasein can be really said to have a world; Heidegger thought natural things strictly speaking had no world, and animals were at best "world poor" (Weltarm). The fundamental nature of Dasein is always to be in a world."<sup>7</sup> Dasein is always already thrown into a world, and Dasein's capability for self-reflexive thought—which allows it to examine the world and its Being-in-relation-to-the-world— is what separates Dasein from granite or a rhododendron or an aardvark. Dasein's knowledge of such entities as these, distinguished as ontical knowledge, is separate from Dasein's ontological knowledge of Being in relation to these entities. Because Dasein is capable of the reflexive thought which allows it to examine, contemplate, and even alter its own Being-within-the-world and Being-in-relation-to-the-world, Dasein is no mere

entity. Dasein's ability to consider itself, and therefore to orient itself towards the nature and structure of its own self through careful<sup>8</sup> examination, transports it from the realm of entity (granite, rhododendron, aardvark) into the realm of Being.<sup>9</sup>

Because Dasein is capable of the ontological knowledge which makes it aware of its Being and its modes of Being—the ways in which it conscientiously seeks to be towards itself and to be towards entities and other ontological Beings—Dasein is faced with the particular dilemma of choosing *how* it is to be and *towards* what and whom it seeks to be orienting itself. This constant processing loop of self-awareness and feedback that occurs within a Being within the world creates an interesting dilemma for Dasein, and this dilemma necessitates a solution. The dilemma which Dasein faces is how it can successfully negotiate being involved with and part of the world and yet remain in key ways apart from the world. Dasein's perpetual quandary is, quite simply, individuation. Every human being, every Dasein, is well versed in this dilemma long before it is even aware that the dilemma exists. An infant learns that it is separate from its parents and siblings; many children have a favorite stuffed animal that they cannot be without; boys and girls understand early on that they are different from each other because they play different games and are given different toys and wear different kinds of clothes. Every Dasein is thrown into a world which is must either accept or reject, which feels either authentic or inauthentic to its Being. More than that, every Dasein is constantly being thrown into a world that is perpetually changing;

8 "Careful" is used here to suggest in the senses of both cautious safety and thoughtful attentiveness.

9 For expansion on this point, see William Blattner, "Reading the Text: Metaphysical Idealism and Realism," in *Heidegger's Being and Time: A Reader's Guide*, (London: Continuum, 2006), 116-117.

5 Ibid., 32.

6 Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 238.

7 Ibid., 233.

as Being experiences the world and itself in relationship with each other it constantly reformulates its knowledge and opinion of both. This interpretative act does not cease. For Dasein it is habit, and for Heidegger this precise action is the core of the hermeneutical nature of phenomenological experience. “By ‘hermeneutics’ Heidegger does not just mean the method specific to the historical and cultural sciences, but the whole manner in which human existence is interpretive.”<sup>10</sup> Once it is recognized by Dasein, this hermeneutic of experience loses its closed form and opens outward for a conscientious investigation of itself.<sup>11</sup>

When Dasein is thrown into a world, it is always also thrown into the language of that world. Be it English, German, Russian, or simply the technical jargon of a certain trade or the slang of a particular subculture, language is part of a world in such an integral way that it shapes the world. Language is the means not only of communication, but of interpretation, and Dasein communicates with itself through the medium of language just as it communicates with another Dasein through said medium. Language is the medium through which Dasein seeks to make *everything* intelligible, and in doing so to seek authenticity and reject inauthenticity. Heidegger heavily emphasizes this fact, and the implications it holds for Dasein, in Section 34 of *Being and Time*, entitled “Being-there and Discourse. Language”.

*The fundamental existentialia which constitute the Being of the “there”, the disclosedness of Being-in-the-World, are states of mind and understanding. In understanding, there lurks the possibility of interpretation—that is, of appropriating what is understood. In so far as a state-of-mind is equiprimordial with an act of understanding, it*

10 Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 235.

11 Ibid., 237.

*maintains itself in a certain understanding. Thus there corresponds to it a certain capacity for getting interpreted. We have seen that assertion is derived from interpretation, and this is an extreme case of it. In clarifying the third signification of assertion as communication (speaking forth), we were led to concepts of “saying” and “speaking”, to which we had purposely given no attention up to that point. The fact that language now becomes our theme for the first time will indicate that this phenomenon has its roots in the existential constitution of Dasein’s disclosedness. The existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk.*<sup>12</sup>

Here Heidegger begins to delve into the hermeneutics of self, with particular emphasis on the effect it has on Dasein’s experience as a Being and its interpretation of its Being. Because Dasein uses language as a tool for communication not only with other Daseins but also with itself, and because language is used in both idle talk with Others and in the internal interpretation of all *existentialia*,<sup>13</sup> language serves a number of functions that are integral to the search for authenticity. Moreover, because language does act in so many divergent ways within Dasein’s consideration of itself and within Dasein’s interaction with Others and with the world, Dasein’s reliance on language is bound to be at times a source of both authenticity and inauthenticity in each circumstance where it is used; namely, all circumstances. Heidegger highlights this

12 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 203.

13 “Existentialia (plural) are certain characteristics of Dasein that are revealed by the analysis of its existence. In Heideggerian terms, an existentialia (singular) concerns Dasein’s residing alongside the world and its involvement with entities within the world which is always expressed in terms of care and concern . . . Using the existentialia we may discern some notable patterns in the manifold impressions of Being.” Munday, Roderick. “Glossary of Terms in *Being and Time*”. *On Reading Being and Time: An Explication and Commentary*, March 2009, <[http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/b\\_resources/b\\_and\\_t\\_glossary.html](http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/b_resources/b_and_t_glossary.html)>.

with his assertion that for Dasein an act of understanding often leads to interpreting and appropriating that which is supposedly understood, and this understanding in turn leads to assertion.

However, complicating the function of language to Dasein is the existence of idle talk, as well as the problems posed by Dasein's relationship to the entity which Heidegger terms the 'They'. Experience is not common, but language is, and because language falls between Dasein and the 'They' Dasein does not have a monopoly on the meanings implied within language. Even the meanings Dasein intends cannot always hold up to the interpretive appropriation of another Dasein. This area into which language falls might, for the purpose of this examination, be termed a middle ground of intelligibility, and this middle ground is where Heidegger's discussion of idle talk becomes crucial. In section 35 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes:

*The expression 'idle talk' ["Gerede"] is not to be used here in a 'disparaging' signification. Terminologically, it signifies a positive phenomenon which constitutes the kind of Being of everyday Dasein's understanding and interpreting. For the most part, discourse is expressed by being spoken out, and has always been so expressed; it is language. But in that case understanding and interpretation already lie in what has thus been expressed.<sup>14</sup>*

In his commentary on this section within *Being and Time*, Gelven simplifies the gist of this section quite understandably with the following explanation.

*. . . the chattering enthusiasm of those who find everything in the world "interesting" but never relevant. The noncommittal and hated "That's interesting!" often suggests a kind of unconcern that is far more unpalatable than a direct statement of*

*dislike. Idle talk also refers to those who constantly present a great number of facts and statistics as substitute for rational inquiry, as if through some magic a more exact statistical rendering of what is an obvious fact will somehow generate of itself an understanding of what the problem is or what ought to be done. All of these are examples of what Heidegger calls idle talk (Gerete), and it is the manner in which the inauthentic they-self articulates its subtle smoke screens, which hide the genuine skill of language to expose the workings of what it means to be.<sup>15</sup>*

Here, and in other places in this section, Heidegger either implicitly or explicitly states that idle talk is occurring in this sort of middle ground of intelligibility that is external to every individual Dasein, but which every individual Dasein participates in in some way or another through the shared use of language as a communicative mode of Being. This middle ground of intelligibility exists because each Dasein is limited to the authenticity and inauthenticity of its own Being-in-the-World and by its own particular understanding of the language being used; to put that in Nietzschean terms, every Dasein is limited by its own horizons of experience. It is this which makes the middle ground of intelligibility so fundamental to Dasein's Being-in-the-World and to Dasein's Being-with-Others. Because idle talk is paramount to Dasein's Being in and interacting with the world it is vital to connect both the existence and function of idle talk to Heidegger's ideas regarding Dasein's phenomenological hermeneutic.

In Section 27, "Everyday Being-one's-Self and the 'They,'" one of several sections which focuses on an explication of the 'They', Heidegger writes:

15 Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc, 1970), 107

14 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 211.

*The ‘They’ is there alongside everywhere [ist überall dabei], but in such a manner that it has always stolen away whenever Dasein presses for a decision. Yet because the ‘They’ presents every judgment and decision as its own, it deprives the particular Dasein of its answerability. The ‘They’ can, as it were, manage to have ‘them’ constantly invoking it. It can be answerable for everything most easily, because it is not someone who needs to vouch for anything. It ‘was’ always the ‘They’ who did it, and yet it can be said that it has been ‘no one’. In Dasein’s everydayness the agency through which most things come about is one of which we must say that ‘it was no one.’<sup>16</sup>*

I would argue that much of this thought regarding the ‘They’ can be applied analogously to idle talk. Idle talk is not something from which any Dasein can escape; Heidegger asserts that idle talk is fundamental to Dasein’s average everydayness; it is essential to just getting on with one’s life, as is existence for Dasein as part of the ‘They’. Gelven simplifies and agrees with this point, writing:

*Everyone will readily admit that daily concerns can take one’s mind off the awareness of the self. But if this is true, it means that since one does manifest different modes of Being, then it is necessary that there be different modes. The task, then, of one who is pursuing the analysis of the self is to render and account of the phenomenon that does indeed occur—namely, that sometimes I lose the awareness of myself in concern for daily affairs. In order to make the analysis easier we give names to these modes: the one in which I am aware of the self I give a name, the “self-mode” (i.e., eigentlicht: “authentic”). The other, merely for convenience’ sake, I call the “non-self-mode” (uneigentlich: “inauthentic”).<sup>17</sup>*

As Gelven highlights, Dasein is able to determine authenticity and inauthenticity is this way and in doing so must be able to

assert its individuality as a singular Being whom is separable from the ‘They’ and which is capable of answering for itself. It must wade through the middle ground of shared phenomena, eking out personal intelligibility through an appropriation of language while maintaining a personal experience conducive to the development of authenticity.

It is important to understand and remember that because idle talk and the ‘They’ will never attain Being, but will only ever be mere entities, they are at their most fundamental level of ontic existence inauthentic. Ontic entities are precluded from authenticity by the very fact of their fundamental inability to foster ontological existence through ontological knowledge about and development of Being. Because idle talk has no way of achieving an ontological authenticity, it is able to produce answers that might be simply convenient to Dasein, or that might aid Dasein in defining or differentiating itself from either all or a particular few other Daseins, in the center of which this middle ground of intelligibility is located. Idle talk has no way of answering for itself, just as the ‘They’ has no way of answering for itself, and as such both can be molded or made to answer in ways that are advantageous, convenient, or possibly self-deceptive and damaging to the individual Dasein. Blattner’s comments about curiosity further emphasize this point about the damaging possibilities of idle talk in particular as well.

*Curiosity deepens our immersion in idle talk. Curiosity, rooted in our fascination with the world, emerges in the possibility of “seeing the ‘world’ merely as it looks while while one tarries and takes a rest”. . . . When we merely look at a thing and are, perhaps, delighted by it, we experience a disengaged and at best positive experience of it. We do not, in any case, gain original familiarity this way. There is a heightened form of curiosity, however, in which “curiosity has become free” and we look*

16 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 165.

17 Gelven, Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, 69.

*“just in order to see,” rather than to understand. Such curiosity leads to distraction, and distraction is a positive roadblock to original understanding. Heightened curiosity thereby contributes to the degradation of understanding.<sup>18</sup>*

So while it is certainly possible to turn the hermeneutical circle of Dasein’s phenomena to its advantage and develop authenticity, it is also possible for Dasein to fall away—unwillingly or willingly—from authenticity and become so trapped in its outward persona and appearance that all attempts at authentic Being are rendered impossible.<sup>19</sup> The process is far from simple and much less than straightforward; pitfalls abound, and both knowledge, ignorance, and curiosity contain possibilities for a disruption in the pursuit of understanding.

Not all is lost, however, and to repeat an earlier point, Dasein is separable from this middle ground through reflexive thought, a quality which it is certain that it has, and which it is certain that an Other has, or that Others have. But Dasein either cannot or does not ascribe self-reflexivity to the ‘They’. If the ‘They’ were capable of self-reflexive thought, it would be able to answer for itself. The ‘They’ can be invoked and described as Dasein needs it to inform its own self-reflexive processes and definitions, but because the ‘They’ is an inauthentic labeling of an entity that is incapable of ontological authenticity, any sort of definition Dasein finds for itself through its invoking of the ‘They’ and through the influence of idle talk is also partially inauthentic. The selection of relevant subjects, ideals, and languages may be arbitrary or quite pointedly intentional, but just as Dasein is incapable of escaping its world in which these modes mix, it is also faced with the near impossible goal of achieving authenticity while under the

influence of inauthentic sources.

Because Dasein relies so heavily on these inauthentic sources for material and information that it may deem necessary to the formation of authentic Being, the sheer magnitude of Dasein’s continual struggles for authenticity and against inauthenticity should be neither shocking nor underestimated. Even Heidegger himself deems a truly and completely authentic existence almost impossible to attain, making the argument that we are entrenched in inauthenticity out of force of habit.<sup>20</sup> One could infer, based on Heidegger’s characterization and qualification of Dasein throughout *Being and Time*, that Dasein, is acutely, even if subconsciously, aware of its own inauthenticity, and of the inauthenticity of the methods and sources it uses in its attempts to mine authenticity. This awareness, even if deeply repressed in the subconscious, is a major cause of the angst that a Dasein encounters throughout its life. It is arguably the chief cause of anxiety, both about existence itself and about death, the moment at which all strivings and attempts at an authentic existence must necessarily cease.

The moment in which Dasein becomes aware of its own mortality, it immediately begins to orient itself around and towards the end of its own existence, knowing that with both the finite nature of its Being and the moment of finality which it must at some time face, there also comes an end to its search for authenticity. This awareness may be fully conscious, deeply ingrained in the subconscious, or located somewhere in between, but wherever along that spectrum this awareness resides, the deadline which death<sup>21</sup> gives to Dasein becomes both a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>21</sup> “When Heidegger speaks of death, he is not speaking of how one thinks at the time in which one is dying. For the conditions of death are often not geared toward reflection at all. What is important in this analysis

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<sup>18</sup> Blattner, Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, 135.

<sup>19</sup> Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 243.

motivation for the search for authenticity and a source of anxiety. Moran emphasizes the crucial connection between anxiety and death in Being and Time thusly:

*Human nature is radically finite. It ends in death. Each of us is directed towards death, as the annihilation of all our projects, as that which casts a shadow over all our projects and engagements. . . . Heidegger recognizes the centrality of being-towards-death (Sein-zum-Tode) in humans. Moreover, death can only be authentically experienced by us if we become totally secure with our first person experience of dying – our genuine anticipation of death. We cannot experience other people’s deaths in the same authentic manner.<sup>22</sup>*

Because Dasein exists only for the sake of itself, because only an individual Dasein can define itself and build its own authenticity, the end of both itself and its search looms with menacing inescapability. Death, and the angst it produces, has the ability to take the pursuit of authenticity and make it a frantic and hurried goal to be reached. For Heidegger, death makes authenticity a telos, the ultimate but almost impossible telos.

In section 46, under the heading of “Dasein’s Possibility of Being-a-Whole, and Being-Towards-Death”, Heidegger writes:

*Yet the primary item in care is the ‘ahead-of-itself’, and this means that in every case Dasein exists for the sake of itself. As long as it is, right to its end, it comports itself towards its potentiality-for-Being. Even when it still exists but has nothing more ‘before it’ and has ‘settled...its account’, its Being is still determined by the ‘ahead-of-itself’.<sup>23</sup>*

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is not how one actually feels at the moment of death, but what impending death can mean to one in the fullness of one’s life.” Gelven, Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, 145.

22 Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 241.

23 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 279.

Here Heidegger has clarified both Dasein’s existence for its own sake and the reasons for the nature of such an existence. Moreover, he has expounded Dasein’s existence for itself by making clear to the reader that because the “primary item in care is the ‘ahead-of-itself’”, Dasein is necessarily and contingently oriented towards its own potentiality-for-Being. The potentiality-for-Being is in an ongoing process of realization that cannot be ceased until the moment of death, when Dasein, whether authentic or not, has reached the full sum of its potential and has finally reached the totality of its possible wholeness. In his discussion of the first section within Division Two of *Being and Time* Mulhall expounds upon this point briefly.

In short, an authentic confrontation with death reveals Dasein as essentially thrown projection, its relation to its own Being at once holding open the possibility, and imposing the responsibility, of living a life that is both genuinely individual and genuinely whole – a life of integrity, of authenticity. For Dasein to acknowledge its mortality – to anticipate death – is for it to acknowledge one of the most fundamental limits or conditions of its existence. And it can do so only by acting upon the knowledge that it is authentically itself only when, as concerned Being-alongside (entities) and solicitous Being-with (others), it projects itself upon its ownmost potentiality-for-being rather than the possibility of the they-self.<sup>24</sup>

It is in the recognition of death that Dasein becomes aware of both its potentiality for authentic wholeness and the temporal limits that are placed upon its endeavors to achieve such goals while it is within the world.

In light of this, one could argue that because Dasein seeks means of definition through modes such as the ‘They’ and idle

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24 Mulhall, Heidegger and *Being and Time*, 120.

talk, which are at base ontically inauthentic entities, it is very likely that Dasein spends most of its existence in a state of inauthentic fallenness from which it seeks but cannot always find means of escape. It is here that we can find most strikingly the relationship between idle talk, the 'They', anxiety, and death as they relate singularly and in conjunction to Dasein's search for authenticity. In the midst of this particularly complex problem it becomes essential to return to several sentences in Section 46 of *Being and Time*.

*Hopelessness, for instance, does not tear Dasein away from its possibilities, but is only one of its own modes of Being towards these possibilities. Even when one is without Illusions and 'is ready for anything'...here too the 'ahead-of-itself' lies hidden. The 'ahead-of-itself', as an item in the structure of care, tells us unambiguously that in Dasein there is always something still outstanding, which, as a potentiality-for-Being for Dasein itself, has not yet become 'actual'. It is essential to the basic constitution of Dasein that there is constantly something still to be settled .... Such a lack of totality signifies that there is something still outstanding in one's potentiality-for-Being.*<sup>25</sup>

So it is through Heidegger's explication of modes of being such as hopelessness and anxiety, modes that are in themselves authentic, that one sees that Dasein is never resigned completely and finally to a stagnancy produced by inauthenticity and inauthentic modes of being. Moreover, hopelessness and anxiety, because they can be, and often are, directed towards Dasein's 'ahead-of-itself' and Dasein's potentiality-for-being, are a means of individualizing Dasein and providing a mode of Being that can authentically liberate Dasein from the inauthenticity of idle talk and the 'They'. This is so because even though anxiety and hopelessness are both made accessible

through encounters with the 'They' and the use of idle talk, like all other ideas and concepts, are not understood by Dasein until Dasein encounters them for itself. But it is heavily implied that moments of true, Heideggerian anxiety are not commonplace occurrences; anxiety is still a subject of idle talk and falls prey to the shortcomings of the middle ground of intelligibility.

It may at this point be useful to return to Heidegger's discussion of the way in which anxiety as a mode of Being operates with an authenticity that provides for Dasein true individualization. In Section 40, Heidegger writes:

*On the contrary, the rarity of the phenomenon is an index that Dasein, which for the most part remains concealed from itself in its authenticity because of the way in which things have been publicly interpreted by the 'They', becomes disclosable in a primordial sense in this basic state-of-mind.*

*Of course it is essential to every state-of-mind that in each case Being-in-the-world should be fully disclosed in all those items which are constitutive for it--world, Being-in, Self. But in anxiety there lies the possibility of a disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualizes. This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. These basic possibilities of Dasein (and Dasein is in each case mine) show themselves in anxiety as they are in themselves--undisguised by entities within-the-world, to which, proximally and for the most part, Dasein clings.*<sup>26</sup>

By here establishing the way in which Dasein may achieve authentic individualization, namely through moments of angst with absolute particularity exclusive to Dasein, Heidegger makes it clear that Dasein does have viable access to authenticity through the mode of such

25 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 279.

26 Ibid., 235.

a highly individualized and exclusive phenomena. The anxiety which an individual Dasein experiences cannot be fully echoed or replicated by any other Dasein. Once again, anxiety is of course subject to idle talk, but the fundamentally inauthentic ontical existence of idle talk makes the communication of a fundamentally authentic experience impossible between one Dasein and other Daseins through said medium.

This quite clearly leads Dasein into the sort of hermeneutical circle that necessarily continues until the moment of death; in the mean time both Dasein and this circle must take into consideration all *existentialia* -idle talk, understanding, doubt, anxiety, hopelessness, and all other states of mind which constitute Dasein's there-ness and disclosedness of Being-in-the-World. *Existentialia* and language, and every facet of Dasein's existence to which they apply or by which they are influenced, are integral to the onto-ontological and existential-ontological foundations of Dasein.

Through an examination of Heidegger's presentation of idle talk, the 'They', death, and anxiety in *Being and Time* one is given access to a route by which, with the aid of language, the Heideggerian telos of authenticity—of true and ownmost individuality—may be achieved. Each of these concepts aids Dasein in gaining

both an onto-ontological and existential-ontological understanding of itself through a careful examination of the impact each has, separately and in conjunction with each other, upon Dasein's structure and formulation as it is constantly changing throughout Dasein's existence. This process of constant change occurs through a hermeneutic of the self, which is based in and informed by Dasein's reliance on language for intelligibility both within and without its conception of itself. The ongoing and cyclical nature of hermeneutical understanding that continues until the moment of death plays a crucial role in Dasein's attempts to avoid inauthenticity, and to achieve a wholeness that appears not solely in those moments of retrospection prior to its end. Dasein, for its own sake and for its own intelligibility, needs to be able to strive for temporary versions of wholeness that make its own existence seem relevant and coherent; however elusive and unstable these flawed versions of wholeness may be, it is fundamental to Dasein's continued efforts towards authenticity and authentic wholeness. It is then possible for this Heideggerian hermeneutic of the self to provide Dasein with practical, albeit inauthentic, ways to seek the authentic wholeness and understanding which it desires.

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