

Being Self in Heidegger's Ontology: A Heideggerian Contribution to the Ontology of Individuality

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Abstract: In contemporary ontology, the relationalist perspective succeeding Deleuze prevails regarding Difference itself as a self-generating and self-organizing dynamic against the old ontology of Being as infinitude. Focusing on the Difference itself that penetrates all becoming, this perspective fails to savor the differences between beings and the peculiarity of human existence. Thus, this new ontology is not for the individual as it seems. In this paper, I argue that the characteristic distinguishing Heidegger's thought from contemporary relationalism and presenting it as a new insight lies in contemplating the 'self' as temporal in its ecstatic and horizontal existence and, in this way, spontaneous, making possible an ontology of the individual that has hitherto been disregarded for universality. First, I outline that Heidegger's Being is not like the traditional one, and his deliberation of human existence. Next, I demonstrate that by demand of this Being, an individual exists as a self in the world, distinguished from the traditional subject arrested with self-identity. Then, I argue that the existence of a self in the world is temporal, and an individual's temporality implies 'spontaneity.' Finally, I explain how a self's temporal existence cannot be reduced to the work of Being itself.

Keywords: Heidegger, ontology, individuality, self

Liberalism' or meritocracy takes for granted a distribution proportional to the ability of each. Each of us must take responsibility for one's exercise of free choice. This distribution system, which presupposes 'free' choice, is based on a modern understanding of the 'individual.' The modern individual is originally the subject subordinated to the universal essence and defined by the 'autonomy' operating this universality. However, these days we interpret autonomy as

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mere 'independence' released from the pressure of universality and isolation of individuals. This misconception is no coincidence. It is based on the 'individualism' that sought to dismiss traditional universality and yet lacked the ontology for the individual.

Indeed, we witness these days a new ontology called "New Materialism."¹ It is opposed to Cartesian essentialism and substantivism, which presupposes the universal essence among separate individuals. Furthermore, it refuses the understanding of Being as the absolute that guarantees universal essences. Instead, it assumes Being that penetrates all beings as a self-generating 'dynamic'. Consequently, it saves the individual from fixed isolation and allows for changes in the generation of the all-traversing dynamic.

Nevertheless, I suspect this ontology as a kind of "relationalism"² takes another radical way of thoroughly neutralizing and scattering the individual to stand against modern understanding. In this ontology, the main issue is not the differences between beings but the dynamic itself crossing them. They pay attention only to the 'self-organizing matter,'³ the monistic "not-one"⁴ that pierces all beings. They have more interest in the relationship than the relatum, deboundary than a boundary, and continuity than discontinuity.

Moreover, it is stingy in approving the peculiarity of 'human' beings. Since it is human thinking that has invented the traditional philosophy, this new ontology abandons the long-standing 'anthropocentrism' from ancient to modern times. Instead, it advocates a 'flat ontology' that does not grant privileged status to any beings. Perceptions and practices of the posthuman era reject all the discrimination between humans and non-humans. Indeed, a self can never exist separate from what it is not. However, it must remain irreducible to the relations. No human being can live without asking what 'I

¹ New Materialism generally refers to the thoughts of Manuel DeLanda, Jane Bennett, Rosie Bridotti, and Karen Barad.

² "Relationalism" is Graham Harman's notion for criticizing the contemporary ontology that suggests the internal correlation of all the beings and reduces the beings into the relations. From Harman's point of view, the (pseudo) causal relationship of New Materialism stops short of paying attention to the vertical causal relationship between the depth (Difference itself) and surface (the field of beings) and avoids the problem of the "horizontal interrelationships" between things. See Graham Harman, "Realism without Materialism," in *SubStance* 40, no. 2 (2011), 63. However, this paper does not rely much on his thought. While standing against the relationalistic line, Harman takes himself the flat ontology and makes all the beings as objects retreating from the relationship to their unconnected selves. In this way, he cannot consider the self that this paper aims to elucidate. Self in this paper is, on the one hand related, and on the other hand, does not cease to be itself in its related being.

³ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 147.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

should do. Can we not still ask, 'how is the self?' or 'who am I?' even in the era of anti-anthropocentrism?

As a Heideggerian, I am sure that a critical task for contemporary ontology is secure of ontological position distinct from relationalism as well as traditional philosophy. We need an ontology that goes one step further from ascribing the Difference itself. In other words, not to reduce individuality to simply the effect of the antecedent relations that produce it, we must approve that individuality implies 'spontaneity' to choose and enact something from its side. Only then can we not end up destroying and dismantling the traditional understanding of existence but arrive at a new positive ontology. Therefore, in this paper, I will show that Heidegger's thought considers the spontaneity of the individual, contrary to the relationalist line of contemporary ontology. Heidegger, like relationalists, regards Being as generating beings. However, at the same time, he claims that human 'thinking' is required to belong together with Being for the manifestation of Being. Moreover, for this, human beings should be a 'self.' Therefore, the theme of 'self' is core to Heidegger's thought.

The present analysis will proceed as follows: First, I will outline that Heidegger's Being is not like the traditional one, and his deliberation of human existence only corresponds to the nature of this Being. Second, I will show that by demand of Being, an individual exists as a self in the world, distinguished from the traditional subject locked up by self-identity. Third, I will argue that the existence of a self in the world is temporal, and an individual's temporality implies a 'spontaneous' being. Finally, I will show that the temporal existence of self cannot be reduced to the work of Being itself.

Thinking

The Finitude of Being

Traditional philosophy positions Being as the most 'universal' concept. However, Heidegger declares that the universality of Being is not that of the genus. Since all the differences between beings are in Being, the idea of Being must include all the differences. Therefore, Being cannot be the abstract inclusivity that obliterates all the distinctions of beings. Rather, we must rethink Being as the farthest from the highest emptiness (or fullness).

In Heidegger's question of Being, what is asked about [*das Gefragte*] is Being, and what comes to light by the asking [*das Erfragte*] is the 'meaning of Being.' Moreover, the full-fledged discussion begins after setting human

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existence as what is scrutinized [*das Befragte*].⁵ However, why does Heidegger prioritize the human Dasein in uncovering the meaning of Being? That is because to human beings alone belongs the possibility of 'questioning' that corresponds to the meaning of Being itself.

Because Heidegger consistently contemplates the Being as 'finitude [*Endlichkeit*],' he defines the history of traditional metaphysics as the oblivion of Being, making it clear that what we have forgotten about Being is its 'finitude.'⁶ Being's finitude means that it belongs together with nothingness [*Nichtigkeit*]. Because it belongs together with nothingness, Being becomes 'dynamic' rather than eternally immutable. When he criticizes the traditional understanding of Being, Heidegger maintains that it does not contemplate the 'ontological difference' of Being from beings and interprets Being just as a 'persistent presence [*ständige Anwesenheit*].'⁷ However, we must consider Being as a dynamic 'Time.' Furthermore, the dynamic of Being as Time cannot but occur in the way of giving rise to beings. Therefore, Being is always the being of beings. While infinitude, as the elimination of nothingness,⁸ is beyond all divisions, finite Being is the production of differences, bringing various beings into Being. That is, Being is finite to guarantee the richness of being to beings.

Finally, finite Being requires 'belonging together with thinking'⁹ each time. Being opens a field where Being sends itself in and arrives as beings. Being cannot appear as beings without this 'In-between' of the ontological difference. Questioning is the only way for human thinking to be a 'being there [*Dasein*],' and "Dasein" indicates the relationship of the human being with Being itself,¹⁰ that is, the belonging together of thinking with Being. Heidegger scrutinizes Dasein's existence because Being always belongs together with thinking. Therefore, consideration of thinking is the path to elucidate the "meaning of Being." Even when focusing on human thinking, Heidegger still aims to enlighten the finitude of Being.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 5.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophy* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 118.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 154.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), 209.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Tübingen: Neske, 1978), 19.

¹⁰ See Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 31.

The Role of Fundamental Ontology

Metaphysics contemplating Being is itself a question and an answer concerning the 'relationship between Being and thinking.'¹¹ Therefore, for metaphysics, thinking matters. Indeed, traditional metaphysics has so far forgotten Being in its understanding of the thinking that enables such an oblivious interpretation of Being. Instead, for metaphysics, "the essential link between Being itself (that differs from beings) and the finitude in human being must become clear."¹² So, when Heidegger criticized the traditional ontology in *Being and Time*, he pointed out that Kant failed to ask about the 'temporality of Being' correctly and to develop the ontology of 'Dasein.'¹³

The new ontology of finite Being thus is only possible by reconsidering our thinking. To overcome the 'oblivion of Being' and remember the finitude of Being, we have to clarify by priority the metaphysics that happens as Dasein or "the metaphysics in Dasein [*Metaphysik im Dasein selbst*]."¹⁴ In this way, the first step for metaphysics is 'fundamental' ontology. Even though we know that the early Heidegger thought on human finiteness, we usually fail to connect it with the finitude of Being itself. However, the fundamental ontology first reconsiders thinking and its finiteness to clarify the belonging together of thinking with Being, which is itself finite.

Only when we acknowledge its deep purpose can we recognize the profound reason why the early Heidegger's fundamental ontology defines the structure of human existence in 'temporality.' The being of finite thinking is 'temporal.' And the 'temporality' is the "meaning of being of Dasein,"¹⁵ where "meaning" refers to the dynamic way of letting Being come to beings. That is, due to its relationship with Dasein, Being itself can be temporal, and its meaning can be "Temporality."¹⁶ Since the Being that belongs together with thinking to manifest itself is bound to be finite as "Time,"¹⁷ in *Being and Time* instantly after concluding that Dasein exists finitely, Heidegger could claim that time [*Zeit*] is finite.¹⁸

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Neske, 1978), 213.

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973), 223.

¹³ See, Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 6.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Kant*, 224.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 438.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 432.

¹⁸ See *Ibid.*, 438.

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Self

Care

In Heidegger's entire ontology, 'self' is a leitmotif. As it will be clear from the coming discussion, the 'self' who "takes into question its existence"¹⁹ performs or enacts temporality. Therefore, as much as temporality is crucial, we need to elucidate the "selfness [*Selbstheit*]"²⁰ more than anything else. Thus, taking stock of the 'self' while reading Heidegger's ontology cannot be an arbitrary interpretation but is the most proper one.

However, before fully elucidating the temporality of self, I will first stand against the most common misconception about Heidegger's concept of "self." This process is needed because this misconception distorts and hinders our inquiry into the self. The self is often regarded as a solipsistic subject. However, the self is bound to exist in the world, and only in its being-in-the-world does it earn selfhood.

Heidegger describes the existence of Dasein as a unified phenomenon called "being-in-the-world."²¹ To clarify the moments of this unified phenomenon, Heidegger analyzes the worldhood and the self who is in the world. Furthermore, he defines the who with 'care [*Sorge*].' Dasein only exists in the way of caring about other beings encountered in the world and for other human beings who co-build its world. The self relates to all the beings that are "not" it.²² Therefore, we cannot insist that the existent self is solipsistic.

Even more, Dasein can never escape being-in-the-world because it is the nature of Dasein that exists as the place of appearance of Being as beings. "Without or before being-in-the-world, it does not 'exist' in any way. Because this being-in-the-world constitutes the very being of Dasein."²³ As long as we overlook this point, the emphasis on the individual self becomes the repetition of the old subjectivism, and cannot contribute to the new ontology, so we must dispel this misconception.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 157.

²¹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 71.

²² Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 138.

²³ Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), 241.

Authentic Self

However, an immediate objection follows. The second half of *Being and Time* seems to exclude caring about beings and caring for others from the primordial existence. After setting the conclusion of Part 1 of *Being and Time* as “the existence of Dasein is the care,”²⁴ in Part 2, Heidegger interprets this Dasein’s existence in its ‘primordial,’ that is, “authentic”²⁵ mode.

While Heidegger had already pointed out in Part 1, verse 25, that the ‘who’ of Dasein is “the self,” it was still not distinguished from the “they” who have lost themselves in everyday lives. However, now in its primordial mode, the self is clearly ‘separated’ from “they.” And since he describes the authentic self in contrast with the “they” who stay among beings with shared interpretations of them in the common world, here, selfhood looks to exclude caring about beings and caring for others.

To disprove this misunderstanding, let us follow Heidegger’s deliberation further. When I exist as ‘being toward death,’ the whole of my being matters. When I can take death as a radical possibility that I may no longer exist, that I may not be in the world, all the ownmost possibilities within the unsurpassable possibility of death reveal themselves as ‘mine.’ I myself will enact one of the possibilities and, in that way, be myself. Therefore, in front of death, the self becomes a significant concern.

Furthermore, to this self who stands before death, its existence becomes ‘non-relational.’ In other words, besides death highlighting me and my possibilities as a problem, it demands that I be an “individual.” Neither the person whom I love the most nor the person who loves me the most can die nor live for me, let alone others who treat me as a mere number and all the beings around me that define my obtained identity. So, being toward death, Dasein “retracts” from the associations with other beings and other humans in everyday life – this is the tricky part.

However, the key to non-relational existence is not the ‘dissolution’ of relationships. Heidegger is willing to admit that the primordial existence of Dasein cannot cease to be ‘being-in-the-world.’ Because even in its ‘primordial, authentic mode, Dasein can never stop being a Dasein; rather, it does remain to be Dasein. Therefore, the authentic self should also be a being-in-the-world more than the inauthentic one.²⁶

²⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 309.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 311.

²⁶ See *Ibid.*, 363.

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Care of the Authentic Self

However, how can the authentic self and caring be merged? In the authentic mode of caring, Dasein faces its thrown self in the world, who cares about beings and cares for others. Only to this thrown self in the world are possibilities “based on” its world²⁷ exposed as an individual’s own. Only among its possibilities does the self choose one to be enacted. The voice of the conscience that drives me into anxiety²⁸ makes me confront that I am thrown to take on the responsibility of ‘choosing’ a possibility for myself and realize it. The authentic self must understand, endure, and complete its own choice.²⁹

In this way, Dasein brings ‘notness’ into its own existence and becomes “a ground of this notness [*Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit*].”³⁰ Heidegger explains that the being of Dasein includes ‘not [*nichtig*]’ in the sense that Dasein cannot deny the facticity into which it was thrown as itself. I have no choice but to be amid beings in my world, in a specific situation, and with an attitude toward it. Moreover, I always have to choose whom to be. And I have to bear the notness that when I choose my possibility to bring to me, I can ‘not’ select other possibilities.³¹

It is crucial that as layers of notness, Dasein stands farthest from isolation and enters most deeply into relationships in-its-own-world. Any interpretation that cuts the self off beings within the world or the others constituting the world together will be entirely untenable. Only in this related-relating way does a self form its own uniqueness and stay ‘finite’ enough. While investigating authentic existence, we do not face a ‘pure’ ego defined merely by a universal essence and immune from its finiteness. Instead, the authentic self is the most concretely related-relating, that is, the caring ‘impure’ one.

²⁷ Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 157.

²⁸ Whereas obeying the shared values of the communal world without its own evaluation is familiar and comfortable, breaking away from it to build its own world is an unfamiliar and anxious task. Dasein who exists inauthentically lives only fleeing from this anxiety. However, a person who stood up called by his conscience, for example, against the black segregation policy, has firmly deviated from such an inauthentic way of existence. And the presence of these people makes it clear that a sense of defeat is not our only option. In the face of the rare experience of the collapse of the world that seemed safe and comfortable, I face the terrifying fact that the public interpretation I have followed has supported the world, but such interpretation can no longer support my life. The fact that a world that seemed so firm depends only on the choice of the one who throws it and keeps it for solidarity, puts us in incomparable anxiety.

²⁹ See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 347.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 406.

³¹ See *Ibid.*, 376-9.

Being Self

Temporal Phenomena

Dasein can exist as a self since it differs wholly from a substance or subject. “The constancy of a self [*Selbstständigkeit*]”³² is not like the sameness [*Selbigkeit*] or persistence [*Beständigkeit*] that is relevant to a substance or subject present to us. Instead, being self seems to include one’s performative ‘attitude’ toward its possibility. Far from substance or subject, “Dasein is itself only by existing.”³³

To interpret this sentence clearly, we must understand the ‘temporality’ of a self. Because the title of the second volume of *Being and Time* is already “Dasein and Temporality,” we can reckon that the primordial meaning of existence is related to temporality. Heidegger does present the meaning of existence as ‘temporality.’ The profound interpretation of existence is achieved only by repeatedly explaining the previously introduced authentic existence in ‘temporality.’

The caring Dasein is already thrown into a world and usually immersed in beings. However, the self does not simply remain in the obtained reality. Instead, it is already “ahead of itself” when foreseeing its possibilities. Just because Dasein is already out of it to reach its possibility, it can question how to live or exist forward. Then, the primary phenomenon of existence is the coming future, and the future makes it possible for Dasein to exist in the way of question. Therefore, Dasein has the ‘meaning’ of existence first in the “future [*Zukunft*].”³⁴

And this coming towards returns to itself that has been. A decided possibility cannot be mine if I do not return to myself that has been. Therefore, the foreseeing determination interjoins with the phenomenon of the “past.” Furthermore, wherever Dasein brings its own possibility to the self that has been, there opens a situation in which the beings appear as beings. Therefore, the phenomenon of the “present” emerges with the future and the past. Due to the present presence, Dasein can also immerse itself into the inner world beings.

Thus, even if the future takes the lead of temporality, it is clear that this future cannot exist independently of the past and present. Therefore, being self means unfolding a unified phenomenon of the future, past, and present.

³² *Ibid.*, 427.

³³ *Ibid.*, 156.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 437.

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Temporalization of Time

However, this unified phenomenon of time flows. In forming a unified phenomenon, the future, past, and present are not atomic components. Instead, the future, past, and present, as the “ekstases [Ekstasen],” and extend into each other at each moment. That is because they are existential [existenzial] that cannot be categorized as beings but can be performed through the existence of Dasein. Dasein performs the split and unity of ekstases through its own existence. The temporality, that is, the temporalization of time performed by Dasein, is itself “outside-of-itself [Außer-sich],”³⁵ and a “transition [Übergang]”³⁶ of self and its world each time.

Heidegger calls this temporalization “transcendence.” Transcendence is horizontal in forming the world, ecstatic in exceeding oneself, and temporal in these double and simultaneous senses. Thus, transcendence is the simultaneous ‘occurrence [Geschehen]’³⁷ of the self and the world³⁸ at each moment. Temporally transcending, a Dasein becomes a self in its world. Whereas people “overlook the finiteness of temporality”³⁹ in the ordinary conception of time, time flows only through a transcendence.

However, how is Dasein temporality or how can Dasein temporalize time? Heidegger’s answer is that Being itself that belongs together with thinking is Time. Dasein, who belongs together with Being that is itself Time, therefore cannot but be temporal through and through.

Spontaneous Source

Now, it is the time that we must ascertain how a self that temporalizes time is spontaneous. However, the concept of “spontaneous” seems still obscure. When we say an individual is spontaneous, it usually means that the cause of its action or state is internal rather than external. However, it is impossible to divide my existence into what is caused by external influences and what is not because the transcendent Dasein is “in the middle between the subject and the object.”⁴⁰ The appropriating self provides the world mineness [Meinigkeit], and in my world, I become myself.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 435.

³⁶ Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 352.

³⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), 316.

³⁸ Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 164, 175.

³⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 437.

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 261.

Here, transcendence is the ‘occurrence of ground [*Grundgeschehen*].’⁴¹ Dasein lets the simultaneous event of itself and its world occur through being ground. What does this ‘ground’ mean? It is not supposed to mean keeping Being infinite. The middle Heidegger reads Schelling critically, who presented God as the unity of Ground and Existence. God exists as the intellectual unity of all the various beings. It is also the Ground as the unintelligent will to unfold all beings simultaneously. The unifying ‘system’ and the grounding ‘becoming’ cannot be one in nature because the former is eternal and immutable. Traditional philosophy did choose to assign the ‘system’ to God, who is infinite.

However, Being is different from God and remains as the becoming Ground of all beings. To be Ground far from the system Being embarks on ‘Dasein’ as its ground for manifestation and comes into truth only through it. Dasein exists grounding Being because “Being cannot speak in the truth of the Absolute, but the essence [*Wesen*] of Being is finitude.”⁴²

Heidegger calls this Being-grounding existence of Dasein “source [*Ursprung*].” By calling it a “source,” Heidegger emphasizes its temporality. It needs to be a new beginning of itself each time. As a welling spring, the source of spring water spouts water unceasingly. Only in this way, the source keeps the Ground as Ground only when it plunges itself into grounding.

Moreover, as a caring self, transcendent Dasein is a source of the presence of Being. Ontologically the source does not precede Being, but the presence of Being does not occur until the source grounds the Being. Only through the Dasein holding itself in ‘truth’ [*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*] as a source for the truth event does Being arrive as beings.

Existing as a source, a new ground of Being each moment in its temporality, Dasein is ‘spontaneous.’⁴³ Dasein is thoroughly finite to preserve Being finite. The self is not bound to the subject-object dichotomy, so the interpretation of thinking connected to the dichotomy and the infinite Being as its Existent Ground cannot discern the self. The self is spontaneous,⁴⁴

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 509.

⁴² Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit (1809)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987), 280.

⁴³ Characterizing the authentic existence of Dasein as ‘spontaneous’ is not entirely arbitrary. Heidegger, in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, speaks of the understanding of Dasein, which understands Being as Time, as “spontaneous and self-understanding [*spontane und selbstverständliche*].” See Heidegger, *Kant*, 234.

⁴⁴ We expect freedom from the word “spontaneity,” too. Being spontaneous, the self cannot be caught thoroughly in the causal links. Heidegger points out that Schelling saw the ‘source of evil’ in this temporality of Dasein. Unlike God, human beings are not the unity of Existence and Ground but temporally divided, and such a division produces ‘evil.’ However,

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transcending itself in its world through its belonging together with finite Being.

Self and Being Itself

Belonging Together

Before its actualization, the primordial material of relationalists has an obscure yet distinct structure as its internal force. Even though we need to separate the dimension of 'potentiality' from actuality, we can use the analogy of an embryo to comprehend this potential structure. The development of an embryo can be defined by a set of pre-individual, non-personal, and non-conceptual singularities that will guide the development,⁴⁵ whereas it is 'slightly open' because it contains the materials independent of the structure.⁴⁶ Following merely its pre-structure in its unfolding, the primordial matter generates and organizes itself without any transcendental beings.

Here, this innovative ontology gives the individual nothing but the freedom to be an 'accidental' effect of the interrelationship provided by the pre-existing structure. Here, the accidentality means the slight variations allowed for its actualization. Suppose that, in this ontology, we cannot call the individual 'spontaneous' because they are mere resulting arrangements. Then, how could we insist that the individual is spontaneous in Heidegger's ontology when considering its relation to Being?

Being-in-the-world of Dasein can only be elucidated from the presence of Being itself⁴⁷ which is an event of the truth. In short, for defining the self as spontaneous, the real difficulty for us may be in resolving doubts that Dasein is the work of the Difference itself (or Being) and that the self is simply an expression of the dynamic of Being. To keep our distance from relationalism, at least indirectly, we must clarify that we cannot reduce our existence to the work of 'Being.'

In Heidegger's ontology, the self can never be reduced to anything other than itself, not even to Being. Of course, as it became apparent since the "turn [*Kehre*]," Dasein must be understood as being-there [Da-sein] of Being itself. Nevertheless, even when we focus on Being itself and its being-there, the 'self' as Dasein is still an indispensable element of the manifestation of

without the free domain, one can never be evil. Therefore, we can declare that Dasein has its freedom (to be 'evil') through its temporal existence. See Heidegger, *Schelling*, 215.

⁴⁵ Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London; New York: Continuum, 2002), 72.

⁴⁶ See *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁷ See Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 159, 1929 footnote.

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Being. Even in late Heidegger, the manifestation or appropriation [*Ereignis*]⁴⁸ of Being does not occur without its ‘belonging together’ with thinking, and belonging together is possible only between those that are “different” from each other.⁴⁹

Surely Dasein is asked to speak after the Words of Being and ‘responds’ to them. However, to respond, Dasein must interpret. Moreover, because interpretation is performed by a self who is being-in-the-world, to be able to interpret as a perspective, Dasein must be spontaneous enough to choose itself and its world.

“Only the being that exists finite can have the privilege or pain that experiences the true things as beings.”⁵⁰ So, as a temporal ground of Being, thus finite ‘being’ itself, Dasein has to be able to laugh and cry in its world. It must be able to devote itself to what it holds precious and, on the contrary, abandon itself due to meaninglessness. It should be happy with the warmth of others and lonely to be alone. Since Dasein is the self that does all these, it can be a ground of Being that is simultaneously presence and absence, truth and untruth, appropriation, and disappropriation [*Ereignis und Enteignis*].

Bearing Destiny

Finally, let us consider the ‘oblivion of Being [*Seinsvergessenheit*],’ which has become our destiny according to the misleading nature of Being itself. We are ‘destined’ to forget Being itself and our freedom. We live our lives captivated by all the splendid beings that appear and disappear. Thus, the more he deepens his thought, Heidegger emphasizes belonging together of thinking with Being and the inevitability of oblivion.

The occurrence of thinking responding to the request of Being as truth is a “history [*Geschichte*],”⁵¹ and the beings within the world are “historical/world-historical [*geschichtlich/weltgeschichtlich*].”⁵² In history, something new has its root in what has been. At least the authentic existence opens “its ownmost possibility from the inherited heritage [*Erbe*].”⁵³ So, when Dasein is thoroughly the ground of notness, its ‘fate [*Schicksal*],’ is offered.

Moreover, Heidegger indicates that the fateful Dasein, who exists with others, experiences a communal historizing as “destiny [*Geschick*].”⁵⁴ The historizing of a self is also that of community and folks [*das Geschehen der*

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976), 24.

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 233.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Schelling*, 280.

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 191.

⁵² Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 241.

⁵³ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 507.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 508.

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Gemeinschaft, des Volkes]. Individual fate and social destiny are as closely linked as lived tradition and forwarding determination.⁵⁵ And for Heidegger, the ‘oblivion of Being’ is the collective destiny of our era.

However, the fact that we are doomed to forget Being also does not require the absence of the ‘self.’ Bearing destiny differs from being predestined and determined, which does not allow a spontaneous ‘self.’ Someone has to go through the destiny of oblivion. When the history of metaphysics demands resignation, endurance, and waiting, in these attitudes that seem to do nothing, we are as selves, always bearing our destiny.

It seems unavoidable that the ‘selves’ suffer destiny. However, we can bear our destiny, and we can prepare to revise it. When we remain as selves who suffer, the crisis could go to the extreme and be transformed. Of course, we do not have the power to change this massive flow with a single decision. Still, someday a changeover might happen somehow. It must eventually happen by the accumulation of small decisions of ourselves since the path of Being is paved only through the self of Dasein that clears its way ahead [*be-wägen*].⁵⁶

Conclusion

The characteristic distinguishing Heidegger’s thought from relationalism and presenting it as a new insight lies in deliberating the ‘self.’ The self is temporal in its ecstatic and horizontal existence and, in this way, spontaneous. By adequately considering this self, we can establish an ontology of the individual that the tradition has hitherto disregarded aiming for universality.

At the end of this paper, I should emphasize that the ‘self’ is not the same as the ‘genuine me’ related to the myth of ‘authenticity’ allied with individualism. It attempts to eliminate the self by pushing the ‘genuine I’ to turn against the actual world. In this attempt, paradoxically people maintain the domination of the public world without selves. Because here, searching for one’s ‘genuine’ self becomes ultimately the effort to gain an edge compared to others by escaping from the way of life everyone else enjoys and achieving differentiation.

However, separating a self in its being-in-the-world from all the communal interpretations or traditions is inappropriate. That I make choices as myself does not mean that I have to let go of all the expectations and pressures my family places on me, nor that I have to forget my civic duties

⁵⁵ See *Ibid.*, 384.

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 186, 202.

and responsibilities or ignore the ethics we share as human beings. Instead, when we choose ourselves, we have to see relationships woven through us with a brighter eye and be ourselves holding on to their meanings.

I fully sense my possibilities and limitations when I honestly admit this: None of us can remain entirely inauthentic, just as we are not our pure selves. My ordinary daily life may not differ much from my primordial existence as myself. As much as the worlds of each can never be completely identical to each other, no one can live only as one of them, completely ignoring who it is. So, holding on to the possibility of being oneself is not only possible for a few heroes.

We should keep the question of 'Who am I?' even in the era of posthumanism. Only when we can ask the question is a new recognition and practice possible that breaks us off from the era that reduces the individual to an expression of the universal or absolute. As the one who still thinks in this era, I insist we must revitalize the old and new concept of "self."

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