<div align="center">Anxiety Deconstructed</div>

Anxiety disorders are of the most common reported today (Muskin, 2021). Many believe that there is no positive value to anxious states leaving people to resort to escapism, pharmaceutical or otherwise. Philosophy provides an entry-point to the issue of Anxiety where the impacts of technisation, politics, or economic biases have been unconcealed, so to delve into it in this way may provide details previously unconsidered. While there are several thinkers from the 19th and 20th century I wish to consider, I believe that purely rewriting their theories in an exegetical manner would be naïve and ineffectual. As such I intend to use Deconstruction – a post-modern method of evaluation popularised by Jacques Derrida in the 1960s - to appraoch these classic thinkers, and connect their views in a variety of ways. This project will require an evaluation of Derrida's theory to build up the lens of enquiry, and then to use said lens to consider the perspectives that Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, and Sigmund Freud take on the Subejct and Anxiety.

      Deconstruction is a difficult term to get into. Derrida actively avoided the defining in specific terms any method. This, as well as the fact that any discussion of deconstruction brings the language one uses immediately to the foreground, makes any discourse on the topic perilous. There develops a minefield of terms to avoid, from those common to ordinary language, to those common to a tradition of philosophy – these become loaded, and with them comes a host of other, possibly unintended meanings. In philosophy, especially when writing it, it is very easy to slip into certain ways of speaking. These can be hyperbolic or sophistic methods to get a point across, but in doing so, one can end up contradicting the very schema they are trying to discuss. Fittingly, this act of writing, of putting words down before you, forces you to confront the very thing Derrida discusses deeply, and the area often considered his entry point to philosophy: the way language works. This is, to me, the most apt starting point.

In response to the tradition of the Structuralists just before his time, Derrida developed an understanding of language that is called Post-Structuralist. A key proponent of Structuralism that Derrida is responding to is Ferdinand de Saussure, an influential contributor to structural linguistics and semiotics (the study of signs). De Saussure believed that language consisted of a signs, these signs were composed of "*the signified*" (the thing itself) and "*the signifier*" (the word) (IEP 2021). To Saussure, unlike in the modern view, the sign pointed to the *psychological concept* of the word. This structure is similar to Formalism, in that there is some ideal of *the signified* that one reaches to, or has in mind. This all led to what has come to be known as the "science of grammatology".

This system can be thought of as the scientisation of language– it implies that there is a schema to language that, upon close enough reflection, we can break down and dissect. This may seem like a digression into language (after all what does this have to do with Anxiety – the topic at-hand?), but a point within the work of Derrida is that the way we view and use language structures our world. A notion of truth – and of correctness - comes hand-in-hand with the ideas of structuralism. Every word is a signifier and as such has a sign, and, therefore, it has a specific *meaning*. Philosophical texts then approach us as maps to intentions, as if the author had one clear meaning in mind, and spends the entire work attempting to convey this. This isn't only the case for philosophical texts, though. Literary theory becomes the act of intention finding, teachers become those who have read texts and "*really understand what the author was getting at*". According to the structuralist view I could have stated at the beginning: "*So what is Anxiety*?" and proceeded to list off any and every philosophers' ideas of what Anxiety is, and all instances in which Anxiety occurs to paint as close a picture as I could to the signified Anxiety (this is actually Freud's initial method for explaining and defining *the uncanny*). In a way, this has been the mode of dealing with clinical anxiety for (at least) my lifetime: there are symptoms, physiological, behavioural, and describable features as well as common causes for anxiety. If the boxes is all ticked off, and one looks like they have anxiety, then they *have Anxiety* – as if in hylomorphic union with their matter, the form of anxiety

pervades their physical essence and it becomes a descriptor as much as, say, brown hair, or green eyes, or being tall. It is a tangible feature one can point at and isolate.

This is where Derrida steps in. His post-structural view of language rejects semiotics while maintaining the bare bones of the strutcure. He says that there are signs, but signs simply point to other signs, not some idea of the word that is "out-there". Further still, within each word or sign there exists traces of these other signs. When I say "*red*" you may think: blood, angry, Canada, warm, hot, Christmas, roses, love and so on. These are Derrida's traces, or relations to other signs. This is what language is made up of: we can only ever use language to define language and so we are stuck within a system.

Not only this, but within language there are biases. Philosophy has been punctuated by the use of binary oppositions for millennia: matter and form, will and desire, sin and faith, good and bad, even signifier and signified. Language too in an everyday sense has this structure, we understand things by their opposite and the traces of these may uncover biases of culture and of individuals: we generally think of rich as better than poor, generous as better than greedy, handsome as better than ugly; but in each of these we ignore the fact that to understand one as "better" than the other, we need the opposition to first be so. Any value judgement is placed on the words by the users, not that the ideal form of "Generosity" is bigger, better, more praiseworthy, than that of "Greedy". These are human interventions on the meanings of words.

Derrida also contends that throughout history we can see instances of a "*transcendental signified*" (Derrida, Speech and Phenomena And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs, 1973) or certain ideas that have acted as lenses to provide meaning to the rest. In philosophy one can think of Plato's forms, Descartes' Subject, Hegel's Absolute Idea. These transcendental signified are not limited to philosophy though, think of *democracy* in Europe, or *freedom* in the US. Given these terms are imbued with absolute authority – becoming the origin of the origin (the font of all meaning) - they are above questioning or examination. They are the first principles; these terms become greater than themselves. But through a notion that Derrida calls *différance* the *transcendental signified* comes apart. *Différance* – an intentionally

misspelled term to subvert the privilege of speech over writing – gestures to the limits of words. That words can never truly bring forth meaning, but instead defer meaning to the endless chain of signification. *Différance* is not, however, "*conceptually closed*" (Norris, 2004, p. 32). Derrida does not attempt to define *différance*, and uses terms like supplement, "*itself bound up in a supplementary play of meaning which defies semantic reduction*" (Norris, 2004)*,* to prevent these terms being limited to strict definitions. Both of these terms highlight the vagueness – the way the chain of signifiers becomes endless, and definitions really allude us. In this fashion, the transcendental signified collapses under the chain of signifiers providing no more meaning than any other term. What it is for a signifier or a text to provide meaning I will unpack next.

Derrida follows the post-structural line of thinking to contend that, in relation to texts, there is no meaning in the sense of hidden intention. Meaning is not some reasoning hidden behind signifiers like a riddle. It is not clear-cut, "*here are the steps, follow them and you will get what the author meant, and if you take anything else from this then you are wrong*", nor "*because I have read this more times and this is what and how I see it, so this is what it means*". If language doesn't have any clear-cut definable meaning, then nor does a text. Texts are like language in so far as they are restrained by language – one can only think and express in specific ways – with the language tools at their disposal. This is where interpretation of a text comes in. Derrida has played a role in many different fields given his basis is that of language which happens to pervade most if not all aspects of academia. Textual analysis obviously plays a significant role in philosophy – it does not take much expertise to understand that a significant project within philosophy is the studying, taking up, and analysing of texts. What Derrida provides is a breakaway from the structuralist notion: he suggests that texts are, by virtue of the lack of one truth, versatile and in a sense alive. The interpretation of the text is just as much of the text as the words themselves. Since there is no one truth of signifiers, there is no one truth of the author – some think this opens post-structuralism to the critique that there is "no truth" and "anything goes", but, as I shall discuss later, this critique is not viable.

This is intricately tied to deconstruction: this is what Derrida proposes as a way of dealing with the openness of texts. In response to this linguistic explanation, one must interact with the text accordingly – an understanding of context (or historicity), traces of the language used, and possibility of meaning is required. A large part of this, Derrida contends, is the taking up of a history of philosophy.

Deconstruction as a term is misleading, even more misleading is one of the terms that influenced it: *Destruktion* in Heidegger's phenomenology (Heidegger, 2008). In both of these, an ordinary language understanding suggests destruction, breaking apart or tearing to pieces. But this is exactly what Derrida wished to avoid. The term "deconstruction" comes from the French word used when describing the action of taking apart a ballistic cannon to transport it – it was too heavy and cumbersome to carry as a whole, so had to de deconstructed into parts, and rebuilt later – Derrida wishes the same for texts and, therefore, philosophies. To understand, first, we must read (a big ask at the time and even now for students and academics), one must then understand the context and the history of philosophy that has been taken up, and then one can get inside the philosophy, to uncover meanings, binaries, and biases that lie within. There is no point critiquing a philosophy from the outside, this is, fundamentally, impossible. Just as a discussion about language without language is nonsensical, so too is an analysis of philosophy without an investigation, interpretation, and playing with the ideas used by the original thinker and their predecessors.

Derrida has a notion that "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*", which has been often translated as *there is nothing outside the text*. This is slightly misleading as it suggests that there is only the text, a more apt translation is *there is no outside-text*. In other words, there is no limit to meaning. The meaning of a text is not confined to the words and the work itself – the text is not a closed, but an open system. The text is only a part of this system, so too is the historicity of the text (the context, the influences of the author, the history). This system leaves texts open and receptive to interpretation by readers, in so far as they can choose to take up the text and its history.

This, albeit circuitous route, leads to the task at hand. I believe that through employing this sort of understanding (employing, of course, being a loaded term, but I do not mean to suggest this is just a technique one takes up as this would leave Derrida spinning in the grave) and unpacking the consequences of a post-structuralist engagement with the notion of Anxiety in Freud, Heidegger, and Kierkegaard is a way of addressing the topic that no one of these authors seems to resolve on their own. This will involve looking at what Derrida says on Heidegger, and following such a train of thought with respect to Freud and Kierkegaard.

In *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* Derrida attempts to deconstruct the works of Heidegger. Derrida follows four ways that Heidegger's purity of question and phenomenological reduction falls victim to presupposition. While a proponent of Heidegger, and obviously indebted to him in many ways for the influence his phenomenological reduction had on Derrida's Deconstruction, Derrida is still critical of details of Heidegger's philosophy. For the most part these relate to the presuppositions Heidegger has with relation to Spirit (*Geist*), and the "*unquestioned possibility of the question*" (Derrida, Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question, 1989) both of which, Derrida argues, evince something about his Nazi sentiments. Derrida's concern is mostly with the political spirit concealed within the works of Heidegger, and the use of Heidegger's techniques. In a footnote in *Of Spirit* Derrida writes "*the enigma of the deinon leaves its mark on all texts we shall have to approach*" (Derrida, Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question, 1989) where deinon (the Greek: δεινόν) is used by Heidegger to mean *unheimlich* or uncanny. This, Derrida says, is the overwhelming feeling when looking at Heidegger's discussion of Spirit, and *"of fire and ashes"* associated with it contrasts his silence over the Holocaust (Davis, 1990). Derrida started a lecture on the same topic, a preface of the book, by saying "*I shall speak of ghost, of flame, and of ashes. And of what, for Heidegger, avoiding means*" (Derrida, Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question, 1989).

This section does not necessarily pertain to a discussion of anxiety in Heidegger, but of anxiety towards Heidegger. Derrida had an intense engagement with Heidegger's works, as seen here. My attempt is to look, Derrida's praises and critiques of Heidegger aside, at the way

his understanding of Anxiety can bolster (in the case of Freud) and be bolstered by (in the case of Kierkegaard) other thinkers with differing approaches. It is interesting to note that this term *unheimlich* comes up in Derrida's description of Heidegger – as will be made clearer by an unpacking of this term in Freud's text *Das Unheimliche*.

In Freud's essay *The Uncanny* (*Das Unheimliche*), he expands on the story by Hoffmann of *The Sand-man* - first evaluated for its properties of uncanniness by Ernest Jentsch. Jentsch believed that the uncanny aspect of this story lay in the character of Olympia – a living automaton. While Freud agreed that such characters have the potential for uncanniness – prime example being The Uncanny Valley, or that disconcerting feeling we get for things that seem very human but lack some vital component such as robots, cyborgs, other human-like automata, zombies, ghosts etc – he believed that this is not the uncanniest aspect of the story. Instead, he focuses on two themes: that of the castration-complex (in the recurring theme of blinding various individuals); and secondly in the theme of "the double", which was "*very thoroughly treated by Otto Rank*" (Freud, 2001). However, I believe Freud's evaluation falls short of providing a basis by itself due to his commitments.

Freud systematically works through a series of translations of *Unheimlich*, and remarks upon its nature as a negative definition. Even more interesting than its being a negation is the paradoxical nature of the root word: *Heimlich*. This word can mean both "at home" and "disquieting" covering the full spectrum from comfort to discomfort. The fact that this word (and, it would make sense to say, its negation too) reveals a sense of paradox will be especially intriguing following a foray into Kierkegaard. This word is translated into English as another negative, albeit with different connotations (oh, the inescapability of language), as Uncanny.

Next, to expand on Freud's treatment of these terms: the castration complex is Freud's explanation for the recurrence of blinding throughout the story. This stems from the menacing or fear-inducing effect that occurs by virtue of the fear of a loss of sight for Freud which (possibly unsurprisingly) "*does not adequately account for the substitutive relationship*

between the eye and the male member which is seen to exist in dreams, myths and phantasies" (Freud, 2001). He ties this castration-complex, and the arbitrator of it, to the relationship between the father and son (*"For why does Hoffmann bring the anxiety about eyes into such an intimate connection with the father's death?"* (Freud, 2001) - as if heaving dealt a fatal blow to the claim that blindness itself is enough for uncanniness to be induced); and explains how, like a loss of sight, the act of castration is more significant than simply a loss of an organ or a limb – it is a shift in identity and self. The horror of such an act is far greater than a simple physical loss.

The discussion of the castration complex seems to me to be Freud being Freud – one can feel the eyes roll as castration is brought up and the heteronormative relations between fathers and sons are supposed to evince some deep anxious state within us. But the conversation of the double seems more fruitful. The notion is that the recurrence of similar situations, faces, or acts have an unsettling character to them. For some reason in our development there is a demur to the idea of a double. He states the double was "*originally insurance against the destruction of the ego, an "energetic denial of the power of death" as Rank says"* (Freud, 2001) with the notion of an immortal soul as the "first" instance of the double. Freud is therefore placing his notion of the uncanniness of the Sandman story in a historico-individualistic developmental context. This is, in a way, the manifestation of his project at large: to in some way scientize the psyche and the psychopathology of humans by treating the notion of identity and the self in the same way the natural sciences have viewed nature. Freud's response to the inability of philosophy to answer the problem of anxiety was to evaluate it scientifically.

While the castration complex quickly leads to a discussion of the misgivings of Freud, the double poses an interesting position, namely for its relevance to one's lived experience. The idea of a Doppelganger is something that many find disconcerting, a complete stranger that bear striking resemblance or similarities to oneself. Furthermore, twins have a recurring role in the horror genre, from the Shining's "*come play with us"* twins, to the idea of the *Tethered* in Jordan Peele's *Us*, or Coraline with her Other Family. The double does seem to be

a recurring theme in media with the intention of unsettling us. Freud links this to the split-Psyche – the Ego, Superego and Id distinction. He says that one of the first instances of the double (developmentally) is found in the self with the distinction between the Ego and the critical faculties that oppose it.

The double brings to light this distinction of the self and the conflict that occurs within, and in media we see this represented externally: instead of one figure plagued by conflict within it is expressed as a literal conflict between indiviudals.

Alternatively, the double, Freud contends, is brought to our attention at the repetition of certain instances: "*if we come across the number 62 several times in one day*" (Freud, 2001)for instance. This is a shared experience of the Uncanny – a reoccurrence of one instance that leads us to extrapolate that there is some kind of meaning behind this – a significance. And with such a discussion of meaning and significance this seems to hark to Heidegger – for whom significance is "*what makes up the structure of the world*" ((Heidegger, 2008, p. 120).

At this point it is necessary to elaborate upon Heidegger and his relation to Anxiety before building bridges between him and Freud. There will be more to say about Freud on returning to him.

I shall try not to unpack Heidegger too much otherwise this essay will lose its thread. That being said some understanding of the way Heidegger understands Dasein (that "*entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being*" (Heidegger, 2008)) is required. Heidegger is well-aware of the nature of language and how terms may be interpreted or understood, as well as the role that historicity plays in a general understanding. His project in *Sein und Zeit* – Being and Time – is to recollect the question of Being. This is to say, to understand why it is that we have "forgotten the question of Being", and the impact this has on our understanding of ourselves as Dasein. He employs a phenomenological reduction on Being to elucidate answers: this involves looking at the

phenomena of Being – for Heidegger in the form of the everyday existence of Dasein – to understand how Dasein lives its life, and to "destroy the history of ontology". This is intricately linked to the post-structuralist idea of deconstruction. Heidegger is not destroying the history of ontology by rejecting the history that has come before, instead Heidegger turns to what has come before to understand why this question has been lost. To sum up the general idea it comes down to philosophy's concealment of Being behind ontology – the terms, ideas, and general notions that alienate Dasein from itself – we forget the meaning of truth and being, and instead only understand how it works.

Heidegger is known for using a host of terms that can be viewed as his avoiding the history of ontology, but in a more accurate way of understanding this isn't avoiding but unconcealing. He is not using these terms simply to hide from the history of ontology, but having brought to our attention the issues that philosophy have faced when it comes to Being, he then assaults us with these terms; they break down the language of philosophy to express or reveal something about the language and the topic behind it that fosters some sort of clarity. His manipulation of language is often the root cause of Heidegger's work being viewed as cryptic and complicated. But this struggle, the aversion we have to his manner of writing, is precisely what Heidegger wanted. In a seemingly very post-structuralist manner (although really one should say that post-structuralism acts in a very phenomenological manner) the assumptions of language are broken down, the terms we use in such a blasé manner usually (Being, world, significance, interpretation, understanding) are taken apart in a way that forces us to view them almost in isolation, without the biases or assumptions they bring with them normally.

This use of language relates strongly to Heidegger's idea of authentic modes of discourse: both poetry and silence. In both of these modes, albeit in different ways, Dasein breaks down language, and escapes from the "Idle Talk" of the everyday. Idle talk is used in opposition to discourse as the articulation of worldly intelligibility – idle talk is not some malicious term, nor is it worse than discourse, it is simply another way of Being for Dasein,

one that we are very accustomed to. Idle talk is a non-disclosive way of communicating, it discourages disputation and inquiry, *"what is said in-the-talk is understood; but what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially"* (Heidegger, 2008, p. 212) there is no taking up or unconcealing of the topic of discussion.

But through silence one is reticent, one listens and is made open to their "*ownmost potentiality-for-being"* that is to say Dasein hears when silent, and because of this understands (where understanding is a mode of Being or existential of Dasein, and not simply an activity to Heidegger). Poetry leads to understanding, or at least a potentiality-for-being, thorugh different means. The breakdown of language separates us from idle talk, language is used in a way so as to communicate existential possibilities of one's state of mind (Heidegger, 2008, p. 205) amounting to a disclosure of existence.

Both of these authentic modes of discourse play a crucial role in Heidegger's writing. It would not be absurd, in my opinion, to describe Heidegger's Being and Time as a poetic text. It is structured in a hermeneutic way – there are allusions to terms and topics early on that aren't covered until much later in the text, each reading brings new topics to light, and the meaning we take from his text is ever shifting and growing as we do – and espouses a very deconstructionist approach to textual meaning.

Heidegger published a number of essays in a work called *Holzwege* – translated as Off the Beaten Track (although this is a little misleading) – this word stands in as a useful analogy. Meaning literally *Timber-Ways*, this word in German is in reference to paths in woodland that veer off the main thoroughfare and allow one to obtain wood from denser parts of the forest. His writing can be thought of as a series of routes through a woodland. Each time you enter the woods it occurs at a different point in time and space – you may take a new route, find new areas, learn new things, and exit at a different place entirely, or you may enter and exit from the same place but there is no guarantee that the path will be the same.

This seems to me to be a very Derridean way of approaching and constructing a text (although obviously Heidegger is chronologically prior, I mean this in its indication of

Heidegger's influence on Derrida) – not only does it take into account the variety of meaning one may take but it is actually constructed in a way that allows for, and encourages this. While Derrida argues that there are various biases in the works of Heidegger (those diametric binaries), and privileges he gives to certain topics, Heidegger's influence on Derrida is clear.

This plunge into Heidegger and language serves to show the importance he places on language and meaning in his general project of recollecting the question of being throughout Being and Time. Now I intend to link this back to the topic in Freud that led us to Heidegger: signification. Heidegger describes meaning as "*the "upon-which" of a projection in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something; it gets its structure from a fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception"* (Heidegger, 2008, p. 193). This definition suggests, in keeping with what has been said so far, that in an instant when something appears or occurs to us, we ascribe a meaning to it. He says "*Meaning is an existentiale of Dasein not a property attached to entities*" additionally, "*Dasein only 'has' meaning, so far as the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world can be 'filled in' by the entities discoverable in that disclosedness"* (Heidegger, 2008, p. 193). Dasein is a meaning maker. This meaning is bestowed upon objects not only by the way they appear, but the history of Dasein, and its orientation. We are never solely present but exist in Time as that Being which is "*already ahead of itself"* (Heidegger, 2008, p. 236); but not only is there a projection forward, Dasein is also always already in a world – thrown into a circumstance. Dasein has "*fallen into the world"* (Heidegger, 2008, p. 220), and is committed to the factical conditions that lead to any specific present moment.

But from its being ahead of itself, Dasein flees. Dasein turns from itself and towards "*entities within-the-world"* (Heidegger, 2008, p. 230). This is where I would like to connect the idea of the uncanny. The uncanny are those things that we turn towards, or that show themselves to us in our Anxiety, that remind us of our Anxiety. Heidegger says "*that in the face of which anxiety is anxious is nothing ready-to-hand* (i.e. as equipment or things to be used by Dasein) *within-the-world"* (Heidegger, 2008). The uncanniness does not stem from

the objects being uncanny in and of themselves. The meaning, the uncanny characteristic comes from Dasein in its orientation towards them.

The feeling of anxiety is accompanied, says Heidegger, by the feeling of uncanniness (Heidegger, 2008, p. 233) which he describes simply as "*not-being-at-home*" once again employing the negative defintion. In this our everyday familiarity collapses, in fleeing we are tranquilised by the "They", but anxiety pulls us away from this and individualises, disclosing our possibility of authenticity or inauthenticity.

Signification and the Uncanny in Freud, therefore, ties in with this and with Heidegger's totality of references. Heidegger says that the way we are interested in things is through a referential totality – tools are seen as for-something, a purpose, a job – the world is structured, by significance of things which is already always essentially discovered. Significance in Being and Time is, put simply, a relation of objects (the for-the-sake-of-which) to their purpose or role (the in-order-to). But the way this relates to Dasein as ahead-of-itself is that this referential totality is never just towards some proximal purpose. The hammer is never just to hammer nails, but for some project – house building, carpentry, fixing something broken. And so, within significance and as a result of it, is this understanding of ourselves as projective – forward thinking, ahead-of-ourselves.

In seeing significance in moments of uncanniness, we are forced (to consolidate the Heideggerian and Freudian discussions) out of fleeing into a world, and back into being projective. We return from fleeing to, once again, become beings of projection. And in looking forward, ahead of ourselves, we inevitably are disclosed to ourselves as Being-towards-death. The consequence of a projection, of being-ahead-of-oneself is an awareness that, from the moment we are brought into the world, death belongs to us as a "not-yet" (Heidegger, 2008, p. 287) our existence is punctuated by the possibility of an end. Death is always impending, not as an object yet to occur, but as a nothing. It is the "*possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein*" (Heidegger, 2008, p. 294). Anxiety about Death, though, is veiled, and can conceal Death's unconcealing capacity. Dasein hides behind this anxiety in an act of fleeing. Yet in this

indefiniteness of Death, there is also an indefinite possibility. In the state of mind of Anxiety, which is fundamentally in relation to Death and the possibility of impossibility, Dasein is "*face to face with the 'nothing' of the possible impossibility of its existence*" (Heidegger, 2008, p. 310). This either utterly individualises Dasein, and makes certain the "*totality of its potential-for-Being*", or results in Dasein's fleeing.

Uncanniness brings Dasein out of the tranquilisation of the They, and in a sense, reminds Dasein of its being a being of possibility (although this implies Dasein has forgotten itself as Being-towards-Death which is true in so far as Dasein neglects that component of itself in the everyday). This is anxiety inducing. These moments of uncanniness, of not-being-at-home, of bestowing significance upon the foreignness or familiarity of certain events, forces us out of being merely with the They and back into individualisation of being-with-ourselves. And this, like any disclosure in Heidegger's work, is a struggle, it is wholly uncomfortable for us and is, in a sense, fought against.

Conflict is not unique to Heidegger though, and can be found too in Freud and his *Ichspaltung* or primordial splitting of the I. Freud's distinction moves away from the distinctions of unconscious and conscious, and towards the notions of Id (Drive), Ego (Organising Principle), and Superego (disciplinarian). He fits these in with the discourse of the unconscious and conscious, and each of their definitions bolster those of the conscious/unconscious distinction, as well as each other. He doesn't quite provide definitions in the same way science does. Science places the influence of drives solely in the realm of the genetic and the behavioural realms of determination. Freud does have strongly positivistic tendencies, but he still makes room for the Subject. While drives and the regulation of those drives come to be a significant influence on actions, Freud does not annihilate the subject. If he had no room for the subject in his project then there would be no need to psycho-analyse; he could have just written a list of neuroses, their respective causes and their solutions.

Freudian positivism was a response to the ongoing problem of subjectivity and anxiety. His solution the debates (whether misguided or not) to was to provide answers by employing the scientific method, and naturalistic tendencies, to the debate of Anxiety. Other than the double being a marker of the Uncanny, we can explain the sentiment of anxiety by looking at his split I – more specifically the conflict between his split I: contention occurs between the disciplinarian of the Superego, and the driver of the Id. This contention becomes a struggle of parts within us as a (normally unified) whole. He was not advocating for some split personality, as these do not all occur in a discussion-like context. Instead, due to the degrees of consciousness or unconsciousness, a pre-reflective struggle can occur.

Freud is coming out of a tradition of Logical Positivism – originating from Vienna – and this can be seen in his psychology. Rather than take his theories simply as they are, it is important to be aware of the context out of which they arrive. His psychology can be viewed as a response to this rise in positivism, and the aftermath of the logicians of western Europe: he is framing the problem of anxiety, and other questions of metaphysical or existential discussions in a manner that makes them tangible and viable to the thinkers who praise Logic and the scientific method. If we frame Freud's theory not solely as an attempt to scientise Being, but, in fact, an effort to fit the problem of anxiety into the discourse of his time, then there is much more to say. The former discussion generally ends fairly quickly – the problem of anxiety is reduced to biochemical, or trauma-ladened issues and is simply resolved by pharmaceutical intervention and therapy. But the last century, where this view has been the outspoken one, seems to suggest that this doesn't provide wholly satisfying answers.

Kierkegaard is often credited with having been one of the first philosophers to explicitly discuss anxiety which he described as "*The dizziness of freedom*". He was a Christian philosopher in the 19th century who, employing religious language, stories, and themes, attempted to unravel the human condition. For Kierkegaard, Anxiety or Dread (*Angest* is the term he uses) is a presentiment of the responsibility the individual possesses when standing at the threshold of

possibility. This feeling is a complicated one, on the one hand it is a dread in the face of choice, and the knowledge of having to choose for eternity; on the other it is an exhilaration in the face of the freedom to choose. Christian dogma to Kierkegaard manifests paradoxes in a way that is offensive to reason and rational ideologies. Exemplified by the idea of God as infinite, and transcendent who became incarnate in Jesus as a temporal, finite human being, this notion is a powerful and recurring one in Kierkegaard.

It is important to note that Kierkegaard is abstruse in his writing. Very little is explicit and instead he incorporates irony, storytelling, and fiction to convey his messages. Kierkegaard uses Christian language and ideology in a way that organised religion found repugnant – understandable given his own views of organised religion as equally repugnant. Central to Kierkegaard was a notion of Faith. This is an individual act, it is burdened by paradox, and it is unmediated (by logical or religious systems). We must believe "*by virtue of the absurd*" (Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 1985).

This stems from Kierkegaard's self which is "*a relation which relates itself to itself*" (Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread, 1957)– in classically obfuscating language he explains it in this way to make manifest the union in humans of body and soul. This union is a synthesis of the bodily and the soulish, united in spirit. This relation, too, is one of paradox: without spirit there would be no dread ("*the less spirit, the less dread*") but we would also lack our freedom. Dread is "*freedom's reality as possibility for possibility*". The paradox of existence is that that facet we require for freedom is, at the same time, a hostile power.

Kierkegaard's solution to the paradox of our own existence is the paradox of faith. This is where he veers away from these other thinkers: many, like Kierkegaard, reach some conclusion about paradox and the complicated nature of human existence, but that is where they stop. Through Kierkegaard's deconstruction of religious language and dogma, he attains an additional understanding of, essentially, how to cope with anxiety.

This solution seems to lie in an aspect of anxiety that is concealed in Heidegger and Freud and even thinkers like Sartre – in all these thinkers, their preoccupation lies in the Self. In a sense this leads to a self-centredness, a narcissism that conceals itself.

A fundamental aspect of Anxiety that has shown itself up until this point is its appearance in the face of possibility – this totalising feeling that stems from the paradox of freedom, of joy and panic in the face of choice. To Kierkegaard, we are determined as spirit – the person in a state of angst both wants to do away with it, but knows they cannot and therefore, in a sense, relishes it. Angst (or dread) is ignorant of Nothing, and as such flees. The individual both wants to flee, doesn't want to, and can't fully flee despite an effort to. Kierkegaard believes that the moment the spirit posits itself – in the act of self-consciousness – the synthesis with the soul and body is comprehended, and the paradox of this shared existence begins. Kierkegaard calls this self-centred anxiety (borrowing from Christendom) "*sin*". Sin encompasses not only the feelings of anxiety, but the belief that through enough self-reflection one can get out of sin. He qualifies despair with sin saying, "*sin is the intensification of despair*" (Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread, 1957). In keeping with this deconstruction of Christian language Kierkegaard says "*the opposite of sin is not virtue, but faith*" (Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread, 1957). This is the answer that Kierkegaard sets before us: Faith. He sets up the process (or Johannes de Silencio - his pseudonym - does) with the analogy of two knights (Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 1985).

The first is the *Knight of Infinite Resignation*; they have given up and reconcile themselves to the pain of this loss. The knight of infinite resignation does not flee from their anxiety but reassures themself with the promise of eventual salvation (even if it is in the next life). However, this knight is not to be confused with *The Knight of Faith* who has, unlike his counterpart, has embraced and accepted the absurd. The knight of Faith exists authentically in so far as they recognise the inescapability of their inauthenticity. This acceptance of the absurd is done, Kierkegaard says, by a leap of faith. Not simply accepting anxiety to get out of sin – as this still lies in a self-obsession – you cannot try to flee from your anxiety without still being

obsessed with anxiety even if you are trying to fix yourself. This allows one to get out of the cycle of self-consciousness: "*Dread is not a determinant of necessity, but neither is it of freedom; it is a trammeled freedom, where freedom is not free in itself but trammeled, not by necessity but in itself*" (Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread, 1957) – this is to say, there is no logical explanation for the occurrence of sinfulness. This self-centred angst is (almost ironically) the part of us that requires an explanation – that demands to know the origin of this sin. But this misses the point. In Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard takes the reader through the story several times to show a variety of outcomes and intentions. In doing this he attempts to show that it is not the deliberation or reasoning of Abraham that makes his act in keeping with God's will, it is the leap of Faith. Kierkegaard wants to explain that, because faith is the opposite of sin, we do not get out of this sinful state by examining – when we despair over sin there is an effort "*to survive by sinking even deeper*" (Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread, 1957). The only way out of this truly is through a leap to God.

In a sense the connection to religion blesses Kierkegaard in a way that the atheism of the other thinkers cannot possibly – it forces one out of oneself. The significance of Faith in Kierkegaard is the way it forces one away from anxiety and despair - or out of oneself, into God. Kierkegaard is often set to one side because of his religious commitments, but to do so is to miss out on a thinker who was ahead of his time. Kierkegaard's work already highlights the problems that come up in phenomenology, and psychology using Dogma we experience throughout our lives. His deconstruction of religious language provides him with the means to step away from the blind following of religion as an ideology alone, and to focus on religion as a personal experience of individuals. Made most clear in one of notorious quotes: "*Truth is Subjectivity*".

To take nothing from Kierkegaard is a waste. His Faith fills in gaps left by psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and existentialism that ought really not to go unnoticed. In the phenomenological reduction of Heidegger, and the naturalistic scientisation of the psyche by

Freud (and even in the optimistic freedom of Sartre) the role of paradox in the individual is eventually highlighted: the roles that authenticity and inauthenticity play; the necessity of being-with The Other, and the inevitability of being lost in the Other; the inner conflict we experience in the face of freedom, to do what we want, want what we want, do what we don't want to (etc..), all of this comes from a deep introspection, reduction, and analysis of the Self (call it whatever) but these thinkers all seem to miss something about Anxiety. Heidegger's solution that anxiety is a positive thing in the face of our freedom, or Freud's positivistic explaining away of anxiety and the uncanny, neither of these seems to console the worried mind very much – because both of these thinkers lack a quality that Kierkegaard has. He is self-less. This is not a selflessness in the moral sense, but a literal quality. His time is devoted to something outside of him-Self, vis-à-vis God.

This gives Kierkegaard the ability to not only talk about the merits and positive framing of Angst, but to live it. Even in Heidegger's discussion of The Other, or Dasein in general terms, or Anxiety, he is essentially self-centred. His focus lies so heavily on his project, on the topic of his contemplation, that he is ignorant of the biases by which he is conditioned and the binaries that accompany them. Through a post-structuralist lens there are elements of the phenomenological project and the Freudian endeavour that come to light, that may otherwise have been missed.

Many see a fatal flaw in deconstruction and post-structuralism as a theory that permits anything – there is no truth and so anything goes. If interpretation is as much a part of the text as the text itself, and these texts are alive and fluid, then I can say anything I want and say it falls under the umbrella of meaning of the text. I could contend that actually all of these thinkers are just reiterating Nietzsche, or Hegel, or actually they are all secretly Christian theologians, or phenomenology is just nihilism.

But this misses the point of deconstruction – which is that one's aim is not to destroy a text, it is not the application of any truth one sees fit, but the taking up of a text. An engagement

with the historicity and possible meanings. Yes, the interpretation is fluid, and can change with times (who would have thought that a feminist reading of Shakespeare was possible in the 17th century? No one). But this doesn't mean there is no justification required. Derrida's post-structuralism makes a lot of space for interpretation, but these interpretations have to fit in between the text – they have to engage with, and take up the original text and signs, which may result in zany conclusions, but these conclusions are consistent from within the text.

While the answers of Kierkegaard are obviously not wholly satisfying, there is no doubt that the paths he illuminates are of value. Even in saying we are dissatisfied by the answers we are unintentionally falling into this anxious need for a logical and clear-cut path that doesn't exist. The schema of Kierkegaardian existentialism – that is to say of Self-less faith – and an understanding of meaning and language in a post-structuralist manner provide insights into the discussion of anxiety that may otherwise have remained concealed. This does not end the project; Anxiety has not been resolved. But it has opened up texts that, to many in academia and the everyday world, have long been closed. Deconstruction keeps texts alive and permits us to imbue them with meaning allowing space to be made for insights following the texts. They have never been closed off, nor will they be. Looking at the starting point of this whole discussion, and the themes that underlie the works of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Freud, the strongest takeaway for me is that of the understanding of language and paradox. In all of these works the play with language is crucial to the general project. Language is not, as it is so often viewed, a mere tool. The way we understand language controls our understanding of meaning, and of purpose. This includes purpose both within ourselves (what is my purpose), and purpose in the general sense of our choices and paths we may take. If this essay evinces anything of note, it is that the way we think and take how we think for granted has utter control over our lives, goals, and projects.

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