
UNIT 2 HUMAN AS BEING IN THE WORLD

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To study some of the fundamental notions of Heidegger about human being and so enlighten our human nature.
- To familiarize the students with “being-in-the-world,” and its related term “Dasein” as developed by Heidegger.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As we saw in the last unit, humans are totally one with the animal and plant kingdom. We are also unique. We live in the world which is our home. “Being in the world,” is a unique feature of human beings, because they are the only ones who are aware of their facticity and fallenness in the world. Since “being-in-the-world” is a unique notion of Heidegger on the human situation, we spend some time studying the basic thoughts of Heidegger with a view of understanding authentic human life.

2.2 INTRODUCTION TO HEIDEGGERIAN THOUGHT

Who am I? What is my relationship to the world? What Heidegger seeks to destroy in particular is a certain picture of the relation between human beings and the world that is widespread in modern philosophy, especially in Descartes. Roughly and readily, this is the idea that there are two sorts of substances in the world: “thinking things,” like us and “extended things,” like tables, chairs and indeed the entire fabric of space and time. The relation between thinking things and extended things is one of knowledge and the philosophical and indeed scientific task consists in ensuring that what a later tradition called “subject” might have access to a world of objects. This is what we might call the epistemological construction of the relation between human beings and the world.

This is a dualistic understanding of humans and the world. Heidegger does not deny the importance of knowledge, he simply denies its primacy. Prior to this dualistic picture of the relation between human beings and the world lies a deeper unity that he tries to capture in the formula “Dasein is being-in-the-world”. This is quite significant for us.

If the human being is really being-in-the-world, then this implies that the world itself is part of the fundamental constitution of human beings. In other words, I am not a free-floating self or ego facing a world of objects that stands over against me. Rather, for Heidegger, I am my world. The world is part and parcel of my being, the real fabric of my existence. We might capture the sense of Heidegger’s thought here by thinking of Dasein not as a subject distinct from a world of objects, but as an experience of openness where mostly my being and that of the world are not distinguished. I am completely fascinated and absorbed by my world, not cut off from it in some sort of “mind” or what Heidegger calls “the cabinet of consciousness” (Critchley 2009).

Heidegger’s major claim in his discussion of world in his most famous book, *Being and Time*, is that the world announces itself most closely and mostly as a handy or useful world, the world of common, average everyday experience. My encounter with the table on which I am writing these words is not as an object made of a certain definable substance (wood, polish, iron, etc.) existing in a geometrically ordered space-time continuum. Rather, this is just the table that I use to write and which is useful for arranging my papers, my laptop and my coffee cup. Heidegger insists that we have to “thrust aside our interpretative tendencies” which cover over our everyday experience of the world. In fact we need to attend much more closely to that which shows itself in and through the world (Wikipedia 2010).

The world is full of handy things that hang together as a whole and which are meaningful to me. In even more basic terms, the world is a whole load of stuff that is related together: my laptop sits on my desk, my spectacles sit on my nose, the desk sits on the floor, and I can look over to the window at the garden and hear the quiet hum of traffic and police sirens that make up life in this city. This is what Heidegger calls “environment” (*Umwelt*), a term he uses to describe the world that surrounds the human being and in which it is completely immersed for the most part.

Heidegger insists that this lived experience of the world is missed or overlooked by scientific inquiry or indeed through a standard philosophy of mind, which presupposes a dualistic distinction between mind and reality. What is required is a phenomenology of our lived experience of the world that needs to be open to what shows itself first and foremost in our experience (Hornsby 2010). In other words, we might say that Heidegger is inverting the usual distinction between theory and practice. My primary encounter with the world is not theoretical; it is not the experience of some spectator gazing out at a world stripped of value. Rather, I first apprehend the world practically as a world of things which are useful and handy and which are imbued with human significance and value. The theoretical or scientific vision of things that find in a thinker like Descartes is founded on a practical insight that is fascinated and concerned with things.

Heidegger introduces a distinction between two ways of approaching the world: the present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) and the ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*). Present-at-hand refers to our theoretical apprehension of a world made up of objects. It is the conception of the world from which science begins. The ready-to-hand describes our practical relation to things that are handy or useful. Heidegger's basic claim is that practice precedes theory, and that the ready-to-hand is prior to or before the present-at-hand. The problem with most philosophy after Descartes is that it conceives of the world theoretically and thus imagines, like Descartes, that I can doubt the existence of the external world and even the reality of the persons that fill it – who knows, they might be robots. For Heidegger, by contrast, who we are as human beings is inextricably bound up and bound together with the complex web of social practices that make up my world (Critchley 2009). The world is part of who I am. For Heidegger, to cut oneself off from the world, as Descartes did, is to miss the point entirely: the fabric of our openness to the world is one piece. And that piece should not be cut up. Furthermore, the world is not simply full of handy, familiar meaningful things. It is also full of persons. If I am fundamentally with my world, then that world is a common world that experienced together with others. This is what Heidegger calls “being-with” (*Mitsein*).

2.3 BEING IN THE WORLD

Being-in-the-world is Heidegger's replacement for terms such as subject, object, consciousness, and world. For him, the split of things into subject/object, as we find in the Western tradition and even in our language, must be overcome, as is indicated by the root structure of Husserl and Brentano's concept of intentionality, i.e., that all consciousness is consciousness of something, that there is no consciousness, as such, cut off from an object (be it the matter of a thought, or of a perception). Nor are there objects without some consciousness beholding or being involved with them (Wikipedia 2010).

At the most basic level of *being-in-the-world*, Heidegger notes that there is always a mood, a mood that “assails us” in our unreflecting devotion to the world. A mood comes neither from the “outside” nor from the “inside,” but arises from being-in-the-world. One may turn away from a mood, but that is only to another mood; it is part of our facticity. Only with a mood are we permitted to encounter things in the world. Dasein (a co-term for being-in-the-world) has an openness to the world that is constituted by the attunement of a mood or state of mind. As such, Dasein is a “thrown” “projection,” projecting itself onto the possibilities that lie before it or may be hidden, and interpreting and understanding the world in terms of possibilities. Such projecting has nothing to do with comporting oneself toward a plan that has been thought out. It is not a plan, since Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself. Dasein always understands itself in terms of possibilities. As projecting, the understanding of Dasein is its possibilities *as* possibilities. One can take up the possibilities of “The They-self” and merely follow along or make some more authentic understanding.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Which are the two ways of approaching the world, according to Heidegger?

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2) What is Being-in-the-world for Heidegger?

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2.4 DASEIN’S FACTICITY

Martin Heidegger’s main interest was to raise the issue of Being, that is, to make sense of our capacity to make sense of things. Additionally, he wished to rekindle the notion that although difficult to understand, this issue was of utmost importance. Heidegger’s study, however, was of a specific type of Being, the human being, referred to by Heidegger as ‘Dasein’, which literally means ‘Being-there’. By using the expression Dasein, Heidegger called attention to the fact that a human being cannot be taken into account except as being an existent in the middle of a world amongst other things, that Dasein is ‘to be there’ and ‘there’ is the world. To be human is to be fixed, embedded and immersed in the physical, tangible day to day world we experience. Our goal here is to offer an explanation of what Heidegger meant by ‘Being-in-the-world’.

According to Heidegger, philosophy should be capable of telling us the meaning of Being, of the where and what Dasein is. Heidegger postulated that, the world ‘is’, and that this fact is naturally the primordial phenomenon and the basis of all ontological inquiry. For Heidegger the world is here, now and everywhere around us. We are totally immersed in it, and after all, how could we be anywhere ‘else’? Before Heidegger, Edmund Husserl had previously spoken of a ‘*Lebenswelt*’ (life-world) to stress the solidness of the human encapsulation within reality, but Heidegger’s ‘grounding’ was more complete. Heidegger articulated this entrenchment with the composite, *In-der-welt-sein* (a ‘Being-in-the-world’, a ‘to-be-in-the-world’).

For Heidegger, “Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being.” To add: “Dasein exists. Furthermore, Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent

Dasein, and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible.”

For Heidegger, Dasein may exist in either one of two modes, (authenticity or inauthenticity), or it is modally undistinguished, but Dasein’s character needs to be understood a-priori as being ‘grounded’ in the state of Being that he called ‘Being-in-the-world’.

Therefore, ‘Being-in-the-world’, for Heidegger stood for a unitary phenomenon and needed be seen as a whole. However, Heidegger was aware that the expression had several components to its structure. There was the duty to examine the ontological structure of the ‘world’ and define its ‘in-the-world-ness’. Also, the identity of the ‘Who’ that is within the mode of Dasein’s average everydayness needs to be sought out, and, the ontological establishment of ‘Being-in’ needs to be proposed.

Heidegger was concerned with Dasein’s distinctive method of being-in, which is at variance with the manner in which one object can be in another. In *Being and Time* Heidegger wrote: “What is meant by “Being-in”? Our proximal reaction is to round out this expression to “Being-in” ‘in the world’”, and we are inclined to understand this Being-in as ‘Being in something’as the water is ‘in’ the glass, or the garment is ‘in’ the cupboard. By this ‘in’ we mean the relationship of Being which two entities extended ‘in’ space have to each other with regard to their location in that space.....Being-present-at-hand-along-with in the sense of a definite location-relationship with something else which has the same kind of Being, are ontological characteristics.”

It is the convening or converging of ‘Dasein’ and the ‘world’ which gives definition to both, and the solidness of these terms is covered thinly by the English word ‘facticity’ (Steiner 1978). Heidegger maintains: “Dasein’s facticity is such that its Being-in-the-world has always dispersed [*zerstreut*] or even split itself up into definite ways of Being-in. The multiplicity of these is indicated by the following examples: having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining.... All these kind ways of Being-in have concern (‘*Besorgen*’) as their kind of Being.”

2.5 CONCERN

Heidegger (1962) used the term ‘concern’ as an ontological term for an *existential* to select the Being of a possible way of Being-in-the-world because he felt that the Being of Dasein itself was to be revealed as ‘care’ (*Sorge*) and that because Being-in-the-world fundamentally belongs to Dasein, its Being concerning the world is fundamentally concern. Concern is the temporal meaning which Being-in-the-world has for human beings and it is the time configuration of human life which is the identical concern which human beings have for the world. If human beings had no concept of time they would have no reason to be engaged or implicated in the world in a human way. It is the awareness of temporality which establishes that the relationship that human beings have with the world is through concern (Warnock 1970).

Not everything is possible for every human being. Every person’s options are limited in one way or another and ‘concern’ is a way that humans can decide what decision could be the correct one in order to move from one condition to another. Choices are made in the world in which humans exist surrounded by other humans. Human beings are characterized by uniqueness, one from another, and this uniqueness gives rise to a set of possibilities for each individual. All human beings are continually oriented towards their own potential, among which are the possibilities of authentic and inauthentic existence. If, whilst moving forward, the standards and beliefs and prejudices of society are embraced, individuals may fail to differentiate themselves from the masses. This, Heidegger regarded as living an ‘inauthentic’ existence.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Why does Heidegger uses the term “Dasein” for human beings?

2) How does “concern” relate Being-in-the-world and human beings?

2.6 LIVING AS AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE

For Heidegger, Authentic existence can only come into being when individuals arrive at the realization of who they are and grasp the fact that each human being is a distinctive entity. Once human beings realize that they have their own destiny to fulfill, then their concern with the world will no longer be the concern to do as the masses do, but can become an ‘authentic’ concern to fulfill their real potentiality in the world (Warnock 1970).

Heidegger described the self of everyday Dasein as the ‘they-self’, “which we distinguish from the authentic Self – that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way [*eigens ergriffenen*]. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been dispersed into the ‘they’, and must first find itself.” And further “If Dasein discovers the world in its own way [*eigens*] and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the ‘world’ and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way.” Heidegger said that deliberation on these matters have brought

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about a solid understanding of Dasein bringing the average everydayness of Being-in-the-world into view.

Heidegger felt that the all-determining focal point of our Being-in-the-world was being ignored because the daily realities of our existence are so trite and numerous but, for Heidegger, 'knowing' was a kind of Being and Dasein only discovers itself when it comprehends reality. Knowledge is not an inexplicable bound from subject to object and return (Steiner 1978). But as soon as the 'phenomenon of knowing the world' is grasped it is interpreted, unfortunately, in a 'superficial' or formal manner. The evidence for this is the procedure (still customary today) of setting up knowing as a 'relation between subject and Object' – a procedure in which there lurks as much 'truth' as vacuity. But subject and object do not really coincide with Dasein and the world. (Hornsby 2010)

Heidegger maintained that principle task of Dasein was to understand that knowing has a phenomenal character of a Being which is in and towards the world. Knowing is the possession of those human-things which are able to know and is an internal characteristic of those entities. Heidegger expanded upon this by saying that knowing is a 'concern' and to know something, even with little interest, is a tangible kind of Being-in-the-world. In fact for Heidegger, even forgetting modifies the primordial Being-in just as knowledge did not create the world, forgetting does not destroy it. Therefore, it follows that Dasein only realizes itself when it grasps reality (Steiner 1978).

Further, Heidegger proclaimed that we are 'thrown' into the world and that our Being-in-the-world is a 'thrownness' [*Geworfenheit*]. According to Heidegger, this concept is a primordial banality, which had long been overlooked by metaphysical conjecture. Humans beings are thrown with neither prior knowledge nor individual option into a world that was there before and will remain there after they are gone (Steiner 1978). So Heidegger wrote: "This characteristic of Dasein's Being – this 'that it is' – is veiled in its 'whence' and 'whither', yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the '*thrownness*' of this entity into its 'there'; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the 'there'. The expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*."

No biology of parentage can answer the question of whence we came into Being. Neither do we know toward what end our existence has been projected, apart from our position in relation to death. Yet for Heidegger, it is this twofold mystery that makes the 'thrown' state of human life more absolute and tangible. Human kind is 'delivered over' to a total, all-encompassing 'thereness' and Dasein must occupy this presentness and take it up into its own existence. Heidegger wished to emphasize the unmistakable 'thereness' of the world into which we are thrown (Steiner 1978).

The world into which our Dasein is thrown has others in it, and the existence of others is totally indispensable to its facticity of Being-there. Understanding of others in the world and the association of the ontological status of others with our own Dasein is, in itself, a form of Being. Heidegger said that Being-in-the-world is a being-with, and that the understanding of the presentness of others is to exist. However, being-with presents the possibility of comprehending our own Dasein as an everyday Being-with-one-another where we may come to exist

not on our own terms, but only in reference to others. In so doing, we eventually come to not be ourselves, and surrender our existence to a formless ‘Theyness’ or alterity (Steiner 1978).

For Heidegger, the ‘belonging to others’ is a drastic irresponsibility because the ‘they’ deprives the particular Dasein of its own accountability by making every decision and judgement for it. The ‘they’ can do this most easily because it can always be said that ‘they’ were responsible for such and such. Heidegger said that this passivity creates the alienated self, the ‘Man’ who is fatally disburdened of moral autonomy and, therefore, of moral responsibility. This ‘Man’ can know no ethical guilt. Heidegger called this the ‘self of everyday Dasein’ or the ‘they-self’, the total opposite of the solid singularity of a Dasein which has grasped itself. This crucial distinction was important for Heidegger as it is the distinction between an authentic and an inauthentic human existence (Steiner 1978).

Inauthentic Dasein does not live as itself but as ‘they’ live. In fact, for Heidegger, it barely exists at all and it exists in a state of fear [or *Furcht*] (Steiner 1978). This fear is distinct from anxiety [*Angst*]. Fear could be experienced when a threat to our life, signifying our situation is recognized, but anxiety is experienced in the face of nothing in particular in our situation (Warnock 1970). According to Warnock (1970), anxiety is that which drives us to swamp ourselves in the insignificant, the common and in all of the elements of an inauthentic existence. However, Steiner (1978), wrote that fear is a part of an ordinary communal reaction whereas anxiety [*Angst*] is “that which makes problematic, which makes worthy of our questioning, our Being-in-the-world. *Angst* is one of the primary instruments through which the ontic character and context of everyday existence is made inescapably aware of, is rendered naked to, the pressures of the ontological. And further, *Angst* is a mark of authenticity, of the repudiation of the ‘theyness’.”

Heidegger wrote that an understanding of Being belongs to the ontological structure of Dasein, and he proposed that there is an understanding state of mind in which Dasein is disclosed to itself. Heidegger sought a simplified way of disclosure to bring the structural totality of Being to light and he hypothesized that the state of mind that would satisfy his requirements, was the state of anxiety. Taking the phenomenon of falling as his departure point and distinguishing anxiety from fear, Heidegger wrote, “As one of Dasein’s possibilities of Being, anxiety – together with Dasein itself as disclosed in it – provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein’s primordial totality of Being.”

Steiner holds that a further aspect of Dasein, as argued by Heidegger, is that Dasein is grounded in language; Being-in-the-world expresses itself in discourse. Furthermore, he made a distinction between ‘*Rede*’, ‘the speech of Dasein’ and ‘*Gerede*’, ‘talk’. He avoided the triteness of using the term ‘idle chatter’ for ‘talk’ because it was far too reassuring for what he wanted to say. For Heidegger, ‘talk’ had lost its primary relationship-of-being toward the talked about entity and all that ‘talk’ was doing was to ‘pass words along’ or, to ‘gossip emptily’, fostering illusions of understanding that have no real comprehension. Dasein-with-others takes place in an echo chamber of nonstop bogus interaction, with no cognition as to what is being communicated (Hornsby 2010).

2.7 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AUTHENTIC AND INAUTHENTIC LIVES

The differences between authentic and inauthentic lives were contrasted by Heidegger through the agencies of fear set against anxiety, ‘speech’ contrasted with ‘talk’, genuine wonder opposed to mere novelty. Each disparate category comes about as an expected outcome of the complete antithesis between the self-possession of true Dasein and the collective lack of perception of an existence carried out in terms of ‘oneness’ and ‘theyness’. Heidegger denoted this latter state as ‘*Verfall*’ (‘a falling away from’). Heidegger was careful to point out that the condition of ‘*Verfallensein*’ (a fallen state) is not sinful, nor is the term meant to cast a moral value judgement (Critchley 2009).

Heidegger wrote, “Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away [*abgefallen*] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its self, and has fallen into the ‘world’. ‘Fallenness’ into the world means an absorption in Being-with-one-another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. Through the Interpretation of falling, what we have called the ‘inauthenticity’ of Dasein may now be defined more precisely. On no account however do the terms ‘inauthentic’ and ‘non-authentic’ signify ‘really not’, as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were altogether to lose its Being. ‘Inauthenticity’ does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world, but amounts rather to quite a distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world – the kind which is completely fascinated by the ‘world’ and by the Dasein-with of Others in the ‘they’. Not-Being-its-self [*Das Nicht-es-selbst-sein*] functions as a positive possibility of that entity which, in its essential concern, is absorbed in a world. This kind of not-Being has to be conceived as that kind of Being which is closest to Dasein and in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part.”

For Heidegger then, ‘inauthenticity’ and ‘fallenness’ are not mere mishaps or erroneous options. Rather they are essential components of existence, because Dasein is always Dasein-with and a Being-in-the-world into which we have been thrown. Acceding to the enticement of living a mundane existence is simply a part of existing itself. ‘Fallenness’ was a positive for Heidegger in the sense that there must be ‘inauthenticity’, ‘theyness’, and ‘talk’, for Dasein to become aware of its loss of self and strive for its return to authentic Being. ‘*Verfall*’ turns out to be the completely essential prerequisite towards the repossession of self, the struggle toward true Dasein (Hornsby 2010).

In the first division of “Being and Time”, Heidegger worked out his account of Being-in-the-world and used it to ground an insightful evaluation of long-established ontology and epistemology. For Heidegger, human beings are never directly in the world except by way of being in some particular circumstance; it is Dasein that is Being-in-the-world (Dreyfus 1991).

2.8 LET US SUM UP

After analyzing Heidegger’s understanding of Being-in-the-world, we have indicated the authentic existence that Dasein is called to live.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

- 1) How can we arrive at authentic existence?
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- 2) What is ‘thrownness’ in Heidegger’s philosophy?
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2.9 KEY WORDS

- Being-in-the-world : (*In-der-Welt-Sein*) is Heidegger’s replacement for terms such as subject, object, consciousness, and world. It is the human being understood as a unitary phenomenon and needed to be seen as a whole.
- Dasein : “Being there” or human beings in their everydayness. Heidegger’s definition of human being. For him, Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being.
- Existentialia : *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 expresses in terms of care and concern. Normally, if we were analysing anything entity other than Dasein we would use the term category. But Heidegger forbids this, because Dasein is not like any other entity (Dasein is, in fact, the ground upon which the perception and conception of everything else rests) and therefore Dasein needs to be analysed in a different way to other entities. The existence structure of Dasein must be defined existentially. Heidegger therefore wants his ‘*existentialia*’ to be sharply distinguished from the concept of ‘category,’ as it is ordinarily understood. ‘*Existentialia*’ and ‘category’ are the two basic

possibilities for characters of Being. The entities that correspond to them are these: 1. *Existentialia* relating to Dasein, 2. Categories relating to Entities that present at hand, i.e., not Dasein (Munday, Roderick. “Glossary of Terms in Being and Time” http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/b_resources/b_and_t_glossary.html#e, accessed July 2010.)

- Existentiell** : It refers to someone’s personal understanding of their own existence. For an individual Dasein, the question of existence never gets clarified except through existing. The understanding of oneself that we acquire along the way Heidegger calls “*Existentiell*”.
- Extential** : It refers to a more general understanding of existence. The question of existence is close to Dasein, but this does not mean that Dasein is necessarily conscious of the question of existence. But the structuring of the question “What is Being?” points the way for the formal analysis of what constitutes existence. The context of such structuring we call “*Existentiality*”. But its analytic has the character of an understanding *which is not extentiell*, i.e. structure plus content. But *extential*: structure minus content.
- Facticity** : An understanding of specific structures in advance comes from Dasein understanding of its own most Being.
- Lebenswelt** : Life world or the world of lived experience. It may be conceived as a universe of what is self-evident or given, a world that subjects may experience together. For Edmund Husserl, the lifeworld is the fundament for all epistemological enquiries.

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