

BEING-TOWARD-DEATH AND ANXIETY



That nihility lies at the ground of Dasein is evident from the phenomenon of death . Heidegger says that the ground of human being is its “thrownness into death” (Geworfenheit in den Tod) [52 251] .

Death i s already included within life; it i s a way of being that human being takes upon itself as soon as it is: “As soon as a man receives life he is old enough to die” [5Z 245] . Death is the end of being-in-the-world. In its existing, in its projection as being-ableto- be, human being constantly (stiindig) lets itself go beyond and run ahead of itself [52 303-23] . This is Existence as proje ction.

To this extent human being constantly has “not yet” reached its end, and yet at the same time is “always already” at its end. This is not to say that Dasein has already ended, but rather that in the precursory projection of the self ahead of itself, self-being is always “being-to-the-end” (Sein-zum-Ende) . In standing out from itself, self-being runs ahead and

hits the "end" of self-being; it comes up against death. In coming up against its end, self-being becomes my self-being: the self thereby comes to itself. Dasein is Dasein only as something "futured" by its end; and to come up against the end of the uttermost possibility of being-able-to-be means both that the ground of one's being is revealed and that Nothing is revealed at the ground of self-being.

Since the being of human being is always a being-to-the-end, and death is such an end, Existence means a "being-toward-death" (Sein zum Tode) . Earlier I mentioned that through the revelation of Nothing at the ground of human being, human being becomes itself- through coming to itself. The same holds true of human being as being-toward-death . That human being includes an understanding of Being, and is therefore the being that is aware of its own being, means that it grasps its own being from the Nothing that is its ground, as a being-toward-death. Human being comprehends its own being in the light of the end where all possibility of the self's being-able-to-be runs out.

Being as Existence, as projection toward being-able-to-be, is always something that has not yet ended, something that has not yet exhausted the entirety of possibility, and which therefore maintains itself constantly while running ahead of itself. If not-yet-at-the-end is the ontological foundation of life and of all creative activity, then the self's living and being able to live from the ground of death must be included within its life.

As "beingtoward- death," the self becomes for the first time the source of being-able-to-be, a being-toward the being-able-to-be that is inherent and fundamental to the self.

Death is not a matter of indifference to human existence. One can "run ahead" to it before one dies, and in this way human being can be truly individualized. As being-toward-death Dasein is grasped for the first time as itself and as no other; willily-nilly, death makes Dasein individual Dasein. In this individualization Existence opens up the meaning of being truly there (Da-sein) (SZ 263). It is being-toward-death that makes possible projection or "world-forming" (Weltbilden), so that world may "world" as the disclosure of the being of the self from the ground up.

Just as Nothing discloses the being of human being by making the transcendence of Dasein possible and letting the self come to itself, so in death the possibility of Being and therefore the possibility from which life and all activity become possible is revealed. Being-toward-death is being-toward one's ownmost being-able-to-be. At the same time, the "being-to-the-end" that makes freedom possible is not itself a free act; it belongs rather to Dasein's thrownness, to the essential finitude of human being, to which topic I shall return presently.

In everydayness, of course, this true way of being of the self is concealed. The human being flees from its self-being held out into nothing, from self-being as individualized, in order to exist as "the social one" (das Man within the "public" world. One exists in such a way that one can be anyone and no one. In the business of the social world one is oblivious of the death, or nothing, at the ground of the self and avoids thinking of self-being as being-to-the-end.

This condition Heidegger calls "falling," intending the term in an ontological sense rather than in the sense of a

decadence of civilization.

Both the person who is living the healthiest of lives in the public sphere and the progressive who is working toward a hoped-for future society exist in this "falling." As *das Man*, one lives in the mode of care (*Sorge*) for the business of the so-called world, and feels at home (*zu Hause*) in the world. One's basic existence is at home in the world whether one rejoices or grieves, whether in joy or sadness.

In contrast, true being-in-the-world is "uncanny" (*unheimlich*); the fundamental mood (*Grundstimmung*) of our true way of being is anxiety [SZ, § 40]. Human being is in anxiety regarding the self's being-in-the-world and shudders from the anxiety of death—that is, in the face of the possibility that Existence may become impossible.

In anxiety, human being "finds itself before the Nothing of the possible impossibility of its Existence" (SZ 266). Basically we are never truly at home in the world; the true being of the self is fundamentally *unheimlich*. And in this anxiety, Nothing is revealed.

As Heidegger says in *What is Metaphysics?*, nihilism is not any existing thing given as an object and therefore cannot be grasped (*erfassen*) by the intellect. Anxiety does not mean a rational grasp of nihilism. It means that we encounter nihilism in the experience of having beings-as-a-whole gradually withdraw and slide away from us, assuming a strangely alienating aspect (*Befremdlichkeit*). And having withdrawn in this way, they return to press in upon us [WM ? 103-05].

The attack of nihilism does not signify the negating of beings: negating means power, whereas anxiety means a complete powerlessness in relation to beings. Thus in the attack of nihilism and the falling away of beings-as-a-whole, it is not that we negate them, but rather that nihilism reveals itself as the ground of beings-as-a-whole. "Nothing itself nothingness [nichtet]" (WM ? 105) . Beings-as-a-whole become strange and alienating through being wrapped³⁰ in nothing. This is the "nothinging" of Nothing, in which the true form of our self-being is revealed as "the self individualized to itself in uncanniness and thrown into Nothing"; it is "Dasein in its uncanniness, primordialily thrown being-in-the-world as not-at-home (Unzuhause), the naked 'that' (Dass) in the nihilism of the world" [5Z 276-77] .

Everydayness escapes from this kind of fundamental being-in-the-world into an inauthentic way of being which conceals the basic uncanniness of our being here. From the bottom of this being-in-the-world, Heidegger says, our being calls out to us with the voice of "conscience" [5Z §§ 56-60] . To respond to this call and return to the truth of our human being is what Heidegger calls "resolution" (Entschlossenheit), the decisive opening up of self-being. "Dasein, understanding the calling voice, listens to and obeys its ownmost possibility of existing [Existenzmöglichkeit] . It has chosen itself" (5Z 287) .

To choose oneself in the resolution to leave the inauthentic standpoint of "the social one" means that Dasein stands in "being-to-the-end" and totally immerses itself in the essential finitude of self-being.

Human being, we saw, is projective; it is the being that constantly stands out from itself and takes over its own

being-able-to-be precursively. Moreover, it is constantly limited in its being-able-to-be by death and its running up against death with every step . Dasein thereby becomes a finite and individualized "self." In projecting itself toward the ultimate possibility Dasein constantly comes up to itself (auf sich zukommen), and this is the future in the essential temporality of human being. The self "futures" itself in running ahead, thereby coming into its own futurally as being-toward-death .

But since all projection is "thrown projection," all future is in this sense, already "been" (gewesen).

Thrownness is the pastness in temporality as human being, and this pastness is revealed in running ahead to the most futural, ultimate possibility. Thus human being, in relating to beings in this kind of thrown projection, is actually being "there" (Da-sein).

This is being-in-the-world, and the essential temporality or finitude of this being consists in its being thrown projection. Heidegger defines this thrown projection as care and sees anxiety as its basic mood . Anxiety is anxiety that existence as thrown being-in-the-world may become impossible. And it is here that metaphysics arises.