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# A Phenomenological Ontology of Freedom: Obscuration and the Light

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Philosophy

University of Sussex

January 2017 – Resubmitted March 2018

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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## Thesis Abstract

The thesis argues that for Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, the free will debate has been rendered intractable by a fundamental misunderstanding of the terms involved. This is exacerbated by a failure to identify and adopt an appropriate methodological approach to the problem. Both philosophers argue that this error in the free will debate is symptomatic of a broader misunderstanding of philosophical enquiry and the method it necessitates. For Heidegger, the entire history of 'analytic/western' ontology has been fatally misconceived as a result of an effort to define the being of entities in static terms. The insistence on the question of what a being 'is' obstructs any meaningful enquiry by conceding its existence at the outset of the investigation. Sartre's project is founded on Heidegger's argument, pushing it into a definitive claim about the nature of consciousness. He argues that as the only being for whom 'meaning' is possible, consciousness is distanced from beings by 'nothingness' which ensures its ontological freedom. The thesis will argue that Sartre has misconstrued Heidegger's work, making comprehension of his freedom all the more complicated. We propose that a thorough investigation of their projects will reveal an account of ontological freedom that does not suffer from the shortcomings of existentialism whilst avoiding the methodological missteps of the traditional discourse.

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## Introduction: The Principles in Debate

The question of the nature of freedom and whether we have it has been a consistent feature of philosophical discourse. In his text 'The Essence of Truth' (*ET*)<sup>1</sup>, Martin Heidegger offers an account of freedom, deeply intertwined with fundamental philosophical questions such that enquiring after any one will necessitate confrontation with all, indeed with truth as such. For his part, Jean-Paul Sartre also couches his robust account of existential freedom and responsibility in a broad ontology of being. He claims at the outset of 'Being and Nothingness' (*BN*)<sup>2</sup> that though, 'modern thought has realised considerable progress' in overcoming embarrassing philosophical dualisms,<sup>3</sup> the terms and parameters of that progress remain undefined. In attempting to do just that, Sartre provides what he argues is an account of freedom similarly unencumbered by dualism. In the course of this thesis, we will show how in either case a radical and compelling account of freedom is premised on a project to address and ask the question of being. Moreover, that doing so necessitates criticism of a traditional approach to ontological enquiry and a fundamental shift in methodology. For both philosophers, the very way we traditionally approach ontological questions precludes the possibility of describing phenomena in accordance with experience. Rather they are abstracted from a contextualising matrix, critically distanced from the enquirer and defined in theoretical terms. While this may not be immediately problematic in certain cases, satisfactory accounts of human freedom have proven particularly elusive. This of course is uncontroversial and one needn't appeal to the complexities of Heidegger and Sartre to establish as much. Contemporary discourse occasionally observes similar misgivings with respect to finding satisfying accounts of free will.

Despite the broad range of positions in contemporary discourse on freedom, one may find consensus in the difficulty and seeming intractability of the problem. As Peter van Inwagen points out in his paper, 'An Essay on Free Will':

It is difficult to formulate the problem of 'free will and determinism' in a way that will satisfy everyone.<sup>4</sup>

Galen Strawson points out a possible reason for the problem in his summary of the debate on free will though he fails to explore it further:

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002)

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>4</sup> Peter Van Inwagen, *An Essay On Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1983) p.1

But in many human beings, the experience of choice gives rise to a conviction of absolute responsibility that is untouched by philosophical arguments.<sup>5</sup>

From this quote at least the problem seems clear: philosophical arguments about freedom are often ill equipped to account for its experience.<sup>6</sup> For Heidegger and Sartre, the problem is much less the human conviction about absolute responsibility and more the invalidity of the method by which the problem is formulated. In other words, they will argue that traditional methods both have not and cannot satisfactorily account for the experience of choice. A brief overview of popular positions will serve to orientate their criticism in respect of contemporary discourse. Moreover, explicit criticism of the traditional approach to freedom is a significant feature of *BT* and *BN* so our interest in the contemporary debate is restricted to its usefulness in illustrating their projects. To that end, Strawson describes determinism and the two most common responses to it in the free will debate in the following way

Briefly, determinism is the view that everything that happens is necessitated by what has already gone before, in such a way that nothing can happen otherwise than it does.<sup>7</sup>

The implication of determinism seems to be that there is no such thing as free will, contradicting our 'conviction of absolute responsibility'. Its language seems uncontroversial and difficult to contest but its implications directly contravene first-personal experience of everyday life. The problem seems to turn on the issue of time: one may gladly concede that what 'has happened' is a direct consequence of causal forces but to say that therefore all that 'can happen' is equally determined, although rational, seems harder to swallow. Strawson goes on to introduce the compatibilist response to determinism:

According to compatibilists, freedom is compatible with determinism because freedom is essentially just a matter of not being constrained or hindered in certain ways when one acts or chooses.<sup>8</sup>

His description is particularly helpful if only to highlight the root of contention. The compatibilist, as described by Strawson at least, offers an equally uncontroversial account of freedom but relies on

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<sup>5</sup> Galen Strawson, *Free Will*, Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2011: <http://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/free-will/v-2/>

<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, two weaknesses in Strawson's claim may help to explain the discrepancy he identifies. First, given that he is a human being, one is compelled to ask whether Strawson is similarly 'untouched' by philosophical arguments or for that matter, whether his philosophical arguments are 'untouched' by the experience of choice. Secondly, his claim seems to presuppose a distinction between 'human beings' and philosophical arguments, although no philosophical argument can be made without humans and only humans are capable of philosophical arguments.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*



the ambiguity of ‘choice’ and ‘hindrance’.<sup>9</sup> In reductive terms, a generic compatibilist defence of freedom may argue that if determinism is true then ‘choice’ is necessarily stripped of its substance. Experiences such as deliberation, anxiety, conflict and of course the ‘conviction of responsibility’ are seemingly rendered incoherent if every event is a necessary result of preceding causes. Lastly, Strawson defines the incompatibilist in the following way:

Incompatibilists hold that freedom is not compatible with determinism. They point out that if determinism is true, then every one of one’s actions was determined to happen as it did before one was born. They hold that one cannot be held to be truly free and finally morally responsible for one’s actions in this case.<sup>10</sup>

In his own summary, Timothy O’Connor expands on the incompatibilist position:

Incompatibilists think that something stronger is required: for me to act with free will requires that there are a plurality of futures open to me consistent with the past (and laws of nature) being just as they were – that I be able ‘to add to the given past’...<sup>11</sup>

It may be helpful to separate O’Connor’s claims. He states that the incompatibilist wants a stronger or more robust freedom than freedom as the compatibilist conceives it. For the incompatibilist, some ‘addition’ to the predictable course of events must be identifiable in order to evidence freedom. But this would seem to presuppose a distinction between human action/choice and the causal world, as though choice operates outside the boundaries of causality. Nevertheless the presupposed distinction is unaffected and uninterrogated. For Heidegger and Sartre, the problem of presupposing such fundamental ontological characteristics of beings, skews any ontological investigation from the outset. Moreover, they share a central claim that this problem is inherent to a certain methodological approach to the problem of freedom in which it is seen ‘from above’ with little or no meaningful appeal to the agent’s experience. On our reading of the definitions provided by Strawson and O’Connor, incompatibilists require that humans *would have to be* distinct from natural causality in order to be free: humans have to be able to ‘add to the given past’. Compatibilists, on the other hand, want to show that we may be free despite being embroiled in natural causality. For both therefore, ‘the conviction of absolute responsibility’ arising from the experience of choice is a problem that must be worked into a pre-existing view of nature. Both compatibilists and incompatibilists thus employ a dualistic approach. Heidegger and Sartre eschew such an approach. They both begin their respective texts, *Being and Time* (BT)<sup>12</sup> and *BN*, with its

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<sup>9</sup> The traditional debate often revolves around the extent to which one has ‘choice’ or is ‘hindered’ or what these terms mean, as we shall see.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> Timothy O’Connor, *Free Will*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/freewill/>

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962)

identification and rejection. Charles Taylor refers to this approach as ‘rationalism’ in his paper, ‘Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger’:

In speaking of “rationalism” I am supposing that a certain conception of reason played a determining role. [...] That is, what were seen as the proper procedures of rational thought were read into the very constitution of the mind and made part of its very structure. The result was a picture of the human thinking agent as disengaged, as occupying a sort of protovariant of the “view from nowhere” to use Nagel’s suggestive phrase.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the problem of the rationalist approach is that first, the philosopher adopts a disengaged way of thinking about the agent and second, the agent is conceived as a disengaged decision maker. The ‘dominance’ of the former is necessary to be ‘read into’ the latter. Taylor identifies two variants of rationalism, ‘dualism’ and ‘mechanism’, though both are ‘ontologies of disengagement’. In fact, it may be worth noting that Taylor goes even further, including everyday thought in his critique of the rationalist approach:

In speaking of the “dominant” view I am thinking not only of the theories that have been pre-eminent in modern philosophy, but also of an outlook that has to some extent colonized the common sense of our civilization.<sup>14</sup>

Our concerns lack the scope necessary to investigate this claim but we can say that the current problem may be even worse than Taylor suggests.<sup>15</sup> For Heidegger and Sartre, if a disengaged approach can be shown to be i) inherently problematic for understanding freedom and ii) a consistent feature of how freedom has been traditionally approached, it will be the result of a methodological error arising from a fundamental misunderstanding in the approach to philosophy.

As Inwagen, Strawson and others have indicated, a certain dissonance arises when comparing traditional philosophical arguments about freedom with average everyday experience. Although this may be a predictable consequence of developing philosophical arguments deliberately intended to maintain a ‘disengaged perspective’ or what might more commonly be referred to as keeping a ‘critical distance’.<sup>16</sup> The effect can be seen in the assumptions adherents to the method allow

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<sup>13</sup> Charles Taylor, *Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger* in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.317-337, pp.317-318

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.319

<sup>15</sup> It may be informative to consider the possibility that this ‘dominant view’ has not ‘colonised the common sense of our civilisation’ as much as it has been the ideological spearhead in this civilisations history of colonialism.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Rationalism’ excludes the context of first-personal experience resulting in accounts whose coherence depends on maintaining a ‘critical distance’ from the realities of everyday life. Thus for Taylor, ‘The conditions of intelligibility are built into the elements and processes of the mind as internal properties. [...] This outlook forgets that for something to be intelligibly x is for it to count as intelligibly x, and that there are always contextual conditions for anything to count as something.’ - *Ibid.*, p. 332

themselves such as those made by Thomas Nagel in his essay, 'What is it Like to be a Bat?'<sup>17</sup> Therein Nagel asserts,

In understanding a phenomenon like lightning, it is legitimate to go as far away as one can from a strictly human viewpoint.<sup>18</sup>

Of course what a loosely 'human viewpoint' might be is not explained. Nor for that matter does Nagel describe how he manages to 'go far away' from a 'strictly human viewpoint' and then return to reflect on his findings. This is not to mention the worrying realisation that by implication at least, Nagel seems to think that he can more 'legitimately' understand the phenomenon of sporadically electrically charged particles than a bat. He also declares that 'denial of the logical significance of what one *cannot* understand or describe is simply 'cognitive dissonance'',<sup>19</sup> oblivious to consequent inference that 'logical significance' is simply untouched, that is, disengaged from the very possibility of understanding and description. In other words, something may be considered logically significant though it is neither described nor understood. For Heidegger and Sartre, critical analysis of this disengaged methodology provides the framework for a renewed if not improved account of freedom. It is to that end that we focus our attention on their projects and particularly though not exclusively their major works, *BT* and *BN*. We will contend that the full value of these projects for the problem of freedom has often been overlooked or obscured. We will show how a combination of misunderstanding and misrepresentation has diluted the impact of their work on the contemporary understanding of freedom. Finally, that re-analysis may therefore afford us an account of freedom that does not suffer from the difficulties associated with the above-mentioned analytic accounts.

Our first chapter will seek to establish the fundamental similarities between the two philosophers. We will show how both authors explicitly acknowledge and, to a greater or lesser extent, investigate the shortcomings of a traditional ontological methodology. Both will argue in favour of a methodological approach emphasising an inherent understanding of phenomena. Although they arrive at similar conclusions in that regard their positions diverge in their respective accounts of freedom. We will also show that Sartre's project is in large part influenced by *BT* but seeks to resolve what Sartre believes are fundamental problems therein. Sartre's primary concern in that regard is to include an account and proof of consciousness in an otherwise Heideggerian phenomenological ontology. In so doing, our first chapter will also outline some of the major differences between the two, suggesting some of the causes of popular misunderstanding. The

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Nagel, *What is it Like to be a Bat?*, The Philosophical Review, Vol.83 No.4, (1974) pp.435-450

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.443

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.440-441

accuracy of our interpretation will be largely reliant on maintaining the distinction between erroneous criticisms and complications arising from Sartre's misrepresentation of Heidegger's ontology.

Chapter two will therefore be dedicated to analysis of Heidegger's fundamental ontology. It will seek to explicate that project and some of the complexities which often lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. As we will see, Heidegger's awkward syntax and the holistic structure of his work are structural features which have a significant effect on interpretation though they certainly make comprehension more difficult.<sup>20</sup> Heidegger's first concern is that the problem of being<sup>21</sup> as a whole has been 'forgotten', implied and/or presupposed in almost all ontological enquiry. Focussing on the introduction of *BT*, we will explore Heidegger's investigation of the methodological approach to ontological enquiry, its shortcomings and the need for the 'destruction' and 'restatement' of what he considers the 'leading questions of philosophy'.

Chapter three will then provide extended analysis of Sartre's phenomenological ontology. It will seek to evidence and make concrete the claim that Sartre has in fact produced what we will call an anthropocentric ontology of being, suffering from the kind of dualism inherent to rationalist accounts. We will investigate Sartre's division of being into his two ontological modes, being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Although we will argue that Sartre's particular dualism does not function according to the same principles, the dependence of both modes on consciousness ultimately contradicts his initial intentions, resulting in a confused account of freedom. Nonetheless, criticisms of Sartre and his account of freedom often fail to read it in the appropriate context, producing invalid arguments and further complicating matters.<sup>22</sup> As Peter Poellner states in his paper, 'Early Sartre on Freedom and Ethics',

Any interpretation of the early Sartre's views needs to take a stance on how seriously to take Sartre's description of his project, in the subtitle of BN, as 'Phenomenological Ontology'.<sup>23</sup>

It is precisely this project we intend to focus our attention on whilst evidencing its dependence on Heidegger's project as outlined in *BT*.

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<sup>20</sup> Here we agree with Mahon O'Brien's conclusive recommendation about Heidegger's sometimes 'vague' language: 'And even when his wording seems vague or ambiguous or leaves us somewhat bewildered at times, I recommend that we look to reconcile the odd sporadic remark with the preponderance of the remaining textual evidence rather than the reverse.' – See, O'Brien, Mahon (2014) *Leaping Ahead of Heidegger: Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity in Being and Time*, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Vol. 22, No.4, p.549

<sup>21</sup> For the purpose of ease, we will refer to 'being' in the lower case throughout though both Sartre and Heidegger make a distinction between 'being(s)' and 'Being'.

<sup>22</sup> See, Ronald E. Santoni, *Camus on Sartre's "Freedom": Another "Misunderstanding"*, The Review of Metaphysics, Vol. 61 No. 4 (2008) pp.785-813

<sup>23</sup> Peter Poellner, *Early Sartre on Freedom and Ethics*, European Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 23 No. 2 (2012) pp.221-247

Chapter four and five will address the accounts of freedom in Sartre and Heidegger. Heidegger's project and in particular, the methodology he describes, will ultimately attempt to raise the question of freedom to the pinnacle of philosophical thought, becoming the standard by which all enquiry is judged. In this manner, Heidegger highlights and unpicks presuppositions implicit in a traditional approach to ontology. Such a challenge will require that we address some fundamental assumptions of rationalist philosophy but that in so doing, the full force and efficacy of a radical or robust freedom will also be revealed. Analysis of both Sartre and particularly Heidegger will follow the progression of their arguments in the order and manner of their presentation. To that end, chapters four and five will offer a detailed analysis of Sartre and Heidegger's accounts of freedom respectively.

Chapter four will isolate Sartre's argument for the necessity of freedom from his general project as explicated in chapter three. Therein, he describes an ontological freedom inferred from 'intentionality' and consciousness. For Sartre, the experience of a *motif*<sup>24</sup> is determined by a 'fundamental project' rooted in the very structure of consciousness, differing depending on the unique perspective of each individual agent. We contend that a sympathetic reading will reveal the most serious concerns with Sartre's account, allowing for an adjustment in his interpretation.

In a similar respect, chapter five will argue for maintaining what Heidegger calls, 'essential insight' or what we refer to as interpretive sensitivity. We will contend that *The Essence of Human Freedom (EHF)*<sup>25</sup> and *ET* are i) two halves of Heidegger's account of freedom and ii) an effort in applying the methodology described in *BT*. An appropriate reading will therefore demand that arguments and explanations are understood according to those principles. These two texts will firstly offer analysis of what Heidegger believes is the best available argument for the freedom he wants: Kant's transcendental and practical freedom. We will explicate Heidegger's interpretation with regard to his overall project, referring back to the methodology of *BT*. For Heidegger, Kant's account lacks the 'radicalism' necessary to 'problematise' the assumption of causality as the most primordial feature of first-personal experience. *ET* is an effort in precisely such 'radicalism' whereby 'man is no longer possessor of freedom' but is 'possessed by freedom'.

As we will show, despite the problematic ambiguities Sartre finds in Heidegger's account, it offers a compelling argument for freedom as a necessary prerequisite for experience including the experience of causality. Moreover, that Sartre's criticisms can be satisfied in a manner that reinforces the premises of Heidegger's ontology. If accurate, this account may shed new light on some of the fundamental premises of a rationalist ontology, in particular, the disengagement of the

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<sup>24</sup> Sartre refers to *motif*'s(reasons) and *mobile*'s (motives) in his account of choice. We will discuss these terms but will use the French throughout.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002)

philosopher and their conception of the agent. We contend that Heidegger's account follows from the principles of his fundamental ontology adding weight to the claim that the 'problem' of freedom is less to do with freedom as such and more a consequence of a misconception in how we approach the question of our freedom.

## I

## Foundational Similarities

Our first concern will be to briefly outline the fundamental similarities between Sartre's project of phenomenological ontology and that of his predecessor, Martin Heidegger. The central point therein the fundamental importance of the question of being to both projects. The question does not simply indicate the aim or direction of their projects but firstly, it provides the methodological horizon of their ontological investigations. For both philosophers, all ontology is flawed from the outset if it fails to firstly appropriately formulate the question of being. Only after having doing so can one provide an investigation of a particular being and thus shed light on all beings, indeed on being as such. Secondly, its importance to the methodology of Heidegger and Sartre's projects can be summarised in its reflection of the fundamental concerns of average, everyday human experience. Heidegger and Sartre premise their projects on the claim that ontology must take the brute fact of presence or 'there-ness' as the appropriate point of departure for any investigation. They will argue that efforts to disengage,<sup>26</sup> detach or bracket-out the everyday experience of the enquirer from the enquiry is at best, disingenuous if not ill-conceived. Rather they adopt a 'hermeneutics of facticity' whereby there-ness is already informative of the interpretive-matrix of meaning in average, everyday experience. An elaboration of their premises and methods will follow but our current interest is to observe the manifestation of their shared concern with the question of being and their rejection of idealist and realist traditions. Their view of experience as firmly rooted in the context of 'the world'<sup>27</sup> is one of the main features distinguishing their projects from traditional ontology.

As we shall see, *BT* provides a platform from which Sartre develops his project and view of human reality. It is therefore entirely unsurprising that one can specify points of similarity between them. One consequence of this is that Sartre often seems to slide from concurrence with Heidegger to opposition. Distinguishing his position will therefore demand a degree of interpretive sensitivity. The difficulty of achieving this is summed up by the opening words of Michel Haar's paper, 'Sartre and Heidegger':

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<sup>26</sup> See Charles Taylor, *Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger* in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.317-336

<sup>27</sup> A term which has slightly different meanings for both but will be explored at length in the chapters dedicated to analysis of their projects. Briefly, Sartre argues that human beings are 'inescapably engaged in the world' and without whom, 'there would not be a world'. For Heidegger, 'the world' refers to the 'unitary totality of history and nature'; an inherent feature of what it means to be human.

In the heyday of postwar existentialism, the names Sartre and Heidegger were often linked, evoking two aspects of the same doctrine. Today, more than thirty years later, it seems clear that no kinship ever bound the two philosophers, but that, on the contrary, they are radically opposed in every respect.<sup>28</sup>

Thus Haar claims that in the course of thirty years, scholarly opinion has swung from the association of Heidegger and Sartre to the assertion of their disparity. It would indeed be quite simple to disregard the ‘heyday of postwar existentialism’ in favour of a contemporary reading but diligence and simplicity seldom go hand in hand. The task herein is rather less straightforward and though we will now outline the points of foundational similarity, the analysis of Sartre’s view of human reality in chapter three will clarify their differences. These points of similarity are threefold and are derived from the fundamentality of the question of being in both their projects. We will refer to the first as: i) critique of traditional ontology. We will explicate their argument that the methodological approach inherent to dualistic ontology is inappropriate to its concerns. We will refer to the second as: ii) rejection of realism and idealism wherein we explicate the formalisation of their critique in the assertion of a strictly phenomenological methodology. We will refer to the third as: iii) prioritisation of human being(s) where we will explicate the methodological significance of their hermeneutics of facticity where the ontology of the enquirer and their immediate experience is an integral feature of the question of being. Finally, it will be important to note how Sartre’s project differs from Heidegger’s. Though, as we shall see, there are three significant differences worthy of mention, the most significant is Sartre’s interpretation of the question of being. For Heidegger, the proximity of the question of being to the enquirer is such that it demands careful formulation to mitigate the inclination to disengagement and presupposition. Sartre’s project reads more like an attempt to actually answer the question insofar as he is concerned to establish an existentialist ethics which is absent in Heidegger’s ontology.

### **i) Critique of Traditional Ontology**

Much like Heidegger, Sartre acknowledges that the question of being has thus far been overlooked. Of course neither Sartre nor Heidegger assert the total absence of ontological enquiry in the history of philosophy. Rather, for both, the dominant discourse has been methodologically inclined to presupposing the ontological character of beings thereby obscuring enquiry from the outset. Heidegger states that ‘This question [of being] has today been forgotten’<sup>29</sup> and similarly, Sartre claims that ‘being has not been given its due.’<sup>30</sup> Of course there is a difference between these

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<sup>28</sup> Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) pp.168-187, p.168

<sup>29</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.21

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.16



claims. Nonetheless, whether an appropriate ontological discussion about the question of being has been lost or impeded, it is absent. On our interpretation, neither philosopher employs their phrase as a rhetorical device but a literal observation of the accuracy if not the validity of ontological discourse. If the ontological character of beings is conceded by the enquiry then investigation is deprived of its substance. Such enquiry could therefore only be ostensibly concerned with ontology having presupposed the fundamental characteristics of beings. Of course the accuracy of their hypothesis will be scrutinised but it is on this basis that Heidegger and Sartre begin their discourse with the assertion that all previous efforts in ontology have failed to appropriately approach the question of being. For both, culpability lies at the feet of an inappropriate methodology, though the explanation for this state of affairs differs. For Heidegger the evidence is found in the ‘presupposition’<sup>31</sup> of being that is inherent to the questions of traditional ontology. Typically these questions are formulated such that one might ask, ‘what is being?’ or ‘what is the being of this entity?’. In either case, the nature of the being that is sought after is presupposed by the ‘is’ of the question. In the opening pages of *BT*, Heidegger asserts that the presupposition of ‘is-ness’ ‘keeps one within an understanding of the ‘is’, though it remains uncertain what ‘is’ signifies’.<sup>32</sup> The problem is twofold. Firstly, the attribution of ‘is-ness’ prescribes a mode of being in the sense that what ‘is’ (as opposed to what ‘is not’)<sup>33</sup> already refers to beings of a particular ontological character. Secondly, Heidegger argues that we comport ourselves, that is think, act and behave, within an understanding of being where ‘understanding’ refers to a pre-ontological relationship. This familiarity with or concern for being and the question thereof makes it all too easy to overlook or assume the nature of that relationship. The presupposition of ‘is-ness’ indicates precisely such an oversight restricting enquiry to those beings which conform to the character of what ‘is’. In this sense, the question ‘what is being’ is taken to mean, ‘what does one understand of being, given that it ‘is’?’ For Heidegger, ontological enquiry must be committed to the ‘disclosure’<sup>34</sup> of being achieved in part by rejecting the temptation to formulate the question of being in the traditional manner.

Sartre is similarly critical of traditional ontology but focuses his critique on the dualistic conception of being(s) he claims is also inherent to it. The introductory pages of *BN* allude to the ‘embarrassing dualism’ of ‘being and appearance’ [*l’être et le paraître*] inherent in traditional

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.27

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25

<sup>33</sup> This is an ‘is’ in the sense of Wittgenstein’s, ‘the world is everything that *is* the case’ where what ‘is’ refers to the ‘existing state of affairs’. The term is invalid in a discussion ostensibly intended to investigate the nature of what ‘is’. See, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Milton Keynes: Lighting Source UK, 2009)

<sup>34</sup> A term that will be central to the problem of freedom in Heidegger’s account referring to a directive to rethink ordinary concepts in order to reveal being.

ontology. Sartre discusses the dualisms of ‘interiority and exteriority’ [*l’intérieur à l’extérieur*] with regard to ‘the existent’ as well as ‘appearance and essence’ [*l’apparence et l’essence*]. The concern is not the particular metaphysical definitions of each term but that a binary logic is applied in each case wherein an opposition persists throughout traditional ontological discourse. The problem, on our reading of Sartre, is that these dualisms are firstly, metaphysically invalid and secondly, ontologically disingenuous. In the first case, Sartre argues that dualistically conceived being will not admit of a relation between the two categories. Any ontology thus conceived is therefore incomplete since it cannot account for the holistic experience of being. In the second case, the conception of a disengaged agent which underlies the dualistic approach undermines their robust ontological responsibility that Sartre attributes to consciousness. In order for the philosopher to account for both ‘appearance’ and ‘essence’ or ‘interiority’ and ‘exteriority’ they must adopt an ‘objective’, that is, ‘view from nowhere’ perspective. As Taylor also explains, this Cartesian model of a mind disembodied and disengaged from experience is extended and read into the ontology of beings. Ontological enquiry is thus reduced to hypothetical propositions masquerading as an account of beings. According to Sartre, ‘considerable progress’ has been made culminating in the ‘illegitimacy’ of these ‘metaphysical dualisms’:

The obvious conclusion is that the dualism of being and appearance is no longer entitled to any legal status within philosophy. [...] That is why we can equally well reject the dualism of appearance and essence. The appearance does not hide the essence, it reveals it; it *is* the essence. The essence of an existent is no longer a property sunk in the cavity of this existent; it is the manifest law which presides over the successions of its appearances, it is the principle of the series.<sup>35</sup>

The claim that *essence* is obscured by characterising it as a hidden ‘property’ of an existent entails the ‘rejection of appearance *and* essence’. Though Sartre maintains his own distinction between essence and existence,<sup>36</sup> he rejects the traditional model of metaphysically precedent essences determining appearances. As we will see, he will argue that the particularities of appearance are evidence of a profound ontological relationship between modes of being proceeding from consciousness rather than the phenomena themselves. For Sartre, one takes a step towards the disclosure of being once one has divested oneself of a methodology which impedes the ‘arrival at the idea of the *phenomenon*’<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.2-3

<sup>36</sup> The central claim of Sartre’s existentialism is that ‘existence precedes essence’.

<sup>37</sup> It may be worthy of note that Sartre explicitly accredits this ‘idea of the phenomenon’ to Husserl and Heidegger. *Ibid.*, p.2

## ii) Rejection of Realism and Idealism

Both Heidegger and Sartre formalise the rejection of realism and idealism as ‘phenomenology’. David Woodruff Smith defines phenomenology in the following way:

Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions.<sup>38</sup>

He later adds that as a philosophical discipline, phenomenology ‘came into its own in the works of Edmund Husserl’ whose writing and teaching had a profound impact on Heidegger and by extension therefore, Sartre. Crucially, Heidegger’s opus takes issue with and thoroughly rejects a central feature of Husserl’s phenomenology. As Woodruff Smith explains,

We are to practice phenomenology, Husserl proposed, by “bracketing” the question of the existence of the natural world around us. We thereby turn our attention, in reflection, to the structure of our own conscious experience. [...] Consider my visual experience wherein I see a tree across the square. In phenomenological reflection, we need not concern ourselves with whether the tree exists: my experience is of a tree whether or not such a tree exists.<sup>39</sup>

We are not concerned to provide an exegesis of Husserl’s argument. Suffice it to say therefore that on Woodruff’s interpretation, ‘bracketing’ is premised on distinguishing the question of the ‘pure’ structure of conscious experience from the question of the nature of beings. Thus the question of the nature of the experience of a tree is at least prior to if not entirely independent from the question of its existence. For Heidegger this method of ‘bracketing’ maintains an implicit and disingenuous disengagement between the thing and our experience of it. If, as Heidegger will argue, the fundamentality of the question of being underlies all experience then the question of the nature of the experience of the tree is deeply intertwined with the question of its existence. By ‘bracketing’ out this concern what remains is a disengaged abstraction of immediate experience. Sartre remains quite in line with Heidegger when he claims that previous failures are a direct result of shortcomings in the dominant traditions of idealism and realism. Consequently a solution is required that does not adhere to either:

[...] we have ruled out a *realistic* conception of the relations of the phenomenon with consciousness. [...] we have ruled out the *idealist* solution of the problem. It appears that we have barred all doors and that we are now condemned to regard transcendent being and consciousness as two closed totalities without possible communication. It will be necessary to show that the problem allows a solution other than realism or idealism.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> David Woodruff Smith, *Phenomenology*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.19-20

This move away from realism and idealism may also be seen in light of Heidegger's claim that,

Both realism and idealism have – with equal thoroughness – missed the meaning of the Greek conception of truth, in terms of which only the possibility of something like a 'doctrine of ideas' can be understood as philosophical *knowledge*.<sup>41</sup>

Heidegger derives his definition of phenomenology from his interpretation of Greek accounts of the phenomenon and the logos. He understands the latter as a reference to a kind of discourse which 'lets-something-be-seen' regardless of whether what is seen is considered 'real'. If being is neither 'behind' nor 'beyond' the phenomenon then what remains is the phenomenon itself. Just as Heidegger's definition of phenomenology is 'to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself',<sup>42</sup> Sartre argues that being is disclosed from the phenomenon itself:

For the being of an existent is exactly what it *appears*. [...] It does not point over its shoulder to a true being which would be, for it, absolute. What it is, it is absolutely, for it reveals itself *as it is*. The phenomenon can be studied and described as such, for it is *absolutely indicative of itself*. [...] The appearance does not hide the essence, it reveals it; it *is* the essence.<sup>43</sup>

In this passage Sartre almost directly reiterates the sentiment of Heidegger's claim that,

Least of all can the Being of entities ever be anything such that 'behind it' stands something else 'which does not appear'.<sup>44</sup>

For both,<sup>45</sup> entities do not have an 'objective reality' beyond perception (as in traditional realism) nor are they simply the 'subjective' product of concepts and ideas (as in traditional idealism). The reality of entities and their appearance to the perceiver are inherently intertwined in a complex of indivisible relations which, all too often, are insufficiently described by a dualistic approach to ontology. Thus for Heidegger, 'appearance' [*Erscheinung*], is more precisely 'the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself, but which announces itself through something which does not show itself'.<sup>46</sup> What 'appears' therefore does not refer to perceptible occurrence but, in the first instance, a reference-relation between what is announced and what is *not* shown.

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<sup>41</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) pp.57-58

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.2

<sup>44</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.60

<sup>45</sup> The degree of their similarity in this regard and their reasons for the rejection of metaphysical dualisms will become apparent in the analysis of their projects.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52 - Sartre fails to provide a definition for his use of the term [*paraître*] but seems to be working along similar lines.

This study of the phenomenon is posited in opposition to realism and idealism. Though the strength of that opposition differs, the foundational principle is the same in both cases. Heidegger asserts that the presupposition inherent to previous ontological discourse tends to find its expression in one or the other of these two traditions.<sup>47</sup> His criticism expands to include Aristotle, Descartes and Kant. For Heidegger, whether one posits the objective reality of ‘the world’ independent of perception or whether ‘the world’ is reduced to our subjective perspective on it, being is obscured. In the realist approach, the concrete mind-independent properties of an entity describe its being. In the idealist approach, entities are the construct of ideas whose being is manufactured in the mind. In either case, Heidegger will argue that being is construed as the ‘most universal’ concept ‘already included in the apprehension of an entity’, ‘indefinable’ by virtue of its supposed universality or is ‘self-evident’ in all ‘comportment towards entities’. Consequently, a thorough explication of being is overlooked in favour of methodologies categorising entities as *subject* or *object*. It is on the basis of this broad criticism that Heidegger accuses traditional ontology of blindness and perversion ‘from its ownmost aim’ insofar as it has failed to *firstly* ‘clarify the meaning of being’.<sup>48</sup>

Though Sartre also explicitly rejects realism and idealism, he does so for different reasons requiring that he is not as severe in his criticism.<sup>49</sup> He does state that realism and idealism have fallen short of appropriately addressing the question of being:

We have indeed established [...] that the being of the phenomenon can on no account act upon consciousness. In this way we have ruled out a *realistic* conception of the relations of the phenomenon with consciousness. We have shown also that [...] consciousness can not get out of its subjectivity [...] and that consciousness can not act upon transcendent being nor without contradiction admit of the passive elements necessary in order to constitute a transcendent being arising from them. Thus we have ruled out the *idealist* solution of the problem.<sup>50</sup>

Almost at once, Sartre rejects the possibility that an external objectivity can have a determinative effect on consciousness and claims that ‘passively’ receiving objects of consciousness is necessary for self-consciousness, so that he also rejects the possibility that consciousness can have a determinative effect on external objectivity.<sup>51</sup> In ruling out the ‘realistic conception’ and the

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<sup>47</sup> À la Taylor’s ‘rationalism of the dominant view’ - Charles Taylor, *Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger* in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.317-336

<sup>48</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.31

<sup>49</sup> This ‘sympathetic approach’ is cause for criticism and will be subject to scrutiny at a later point. Preliminarily we will say only that Sartre employs certain aspects of traditional ontology to provide him with historical justification for his anthropocentrism.

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.19-20

<sup>51</sup> Michel Haar suggests that Sartre wants to ‘safeguard the principles of Cartesian and Hegelian metaphysics’ as an explanation for the difference in his rejection of realism and idealism. This preservation of Descartes in particular is a point we will return to later. See, Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) p.168

‘idealist solution’ Sartre wants to establish the necessity of an approach to the question of being that does not adhere to the presupposed principles of either methodology. Both, he will argue, are dualistically conceived and therefore both reinforce the conception of a disengaged agent. Ultimately, both realism and idealism (insofar as, for Sartre, these exemplify the traditional discourse) are ill equipped to address consciousness’ robust ontological responsibility and therefore cannot provide a satisfying account of freedom.

### iii) **Prioritisation of Human Being(s)**

For both Sartre and Heidegger, the prioritisation of human beings (consciousness or *Dasein*) is a methodological principle: investigations into the ontology of consciousness/*Dasein* must precede any investigation of the ontology of other entities. In neither case does it refer to any metaphysical priority where entities of ‘the world’ are somehow dependent on consciousness/*Dasein* for their existence. Nevertheless, for both philosophers an account of consciousness/*Dasein* is the appropriate point of departure in the ontology of being.<sup>52</sup>

The first way *Dasein* takes priority over all other entities refers to the distinction between the ontical and the ontological. Broadly speaking, we understand the ontical to refer to an entity’s concrete, observable properties or what we might call matters of ‘fact’. The ontological, on the other hand, refers to the underlying structures which ground the ontical or the nature of, the being, of entities. For Heidegger, an understanding of *Dasein* requires an account of the relationship between the ontical and the ontological that is an account directed by enquiring after the structures which make *Dasein*’s ontical comportments possible. By contrast, what we have referred to as a disengaged account, is marked by either exclusive treatment of the ontical or conceiving the ontological as removed or disengaged from a factual phenomenology. In either case, the underlying structures of being remain presupposed. Thus though, in his first mention of the ontical, Heidegger states that,

Ontological inquiry is indeed more primordial, as over against the ontical.<sup>53</sup>

Ontical and ontological are not, nor does Heidegger think they should be, sharply divided in an account of *Dasein*. Thus, continuing his introduction to the ‘priority of the question of being’, he goes on to assert the entanglement of ontical and ontological with particular respect to *Dasein*:

Rather it [*Dasein*] is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, this seems to provide the basis from which Sartre’s argument lapses into a metaphysical claim. This is exemplified by the prerequisite necessity of consciousness for nihilation and thereby the knowledge of entities. This constitutes a key difference with Heidegger summarised by the inclusion of the phrase ‘which it is not’ in his definition of intentionality which we will discuss in a critique of Sartre.

<sup>53</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.31

On our interpretation therefore, what distinguishes our concrete or observable properties is precisely an underlying concern for being as such. It is in this sense that accounting for *Dasein*'s ontical comportments will necessitate a confrontation with the question of being. Moreover, the categories serve as an explanatory tool to firstly, distinguish the concern of his enquiry from previous efforts and secondly, to illustrate the pervasiveness of the question of being to all human concerns. To that end, for Heidegger, *Dasein* is pre-reflectively self-aware:

The self is there for the *Dasein* itself without reflection and without inner perception, *before* all reflection. Reflection, in the sense of a turning back, is only a mode of self-*apprehension*, but not the mode of primary self-disclosure.<sup>55</sup>

This pre-reflective self-consciousness seems to be behind Heidegger's claim that *Dasein* has a 'relationship'<sup>56</sup> to its being. He differs from Sartre in respect of 'self-apprehension' insofar as Sartre will appeal to a 'pre-judicative comprehension of non-being' in order to explain consciousness' relationship with itself. By contrast, Heidegger's account refers to the pre-ontological 'understanding' of *Dasein* and its being as a basis for understanding being in general. We will explore this particular difference and its consequences for an account of necessary human freedom at a later stage. For the moment it may be informative to note that on our interpretation, this difference is indicative of Sartre's concern that pre-reflective self-consciousness leaves *Dasein* in ambiguous ethical territory. After all, if 'the self is there for *Dasein* itself without reflection' then its actions and behaviour are not ultimately its own responsibility. The self and all its characteristics become either an *a priori* absolute or a spontaneous consequence of circumstance. We therefore understand Sartre's proof of consciousness as an effort to correct this oversight by 'ontologising'<sup>57</sup> reflective self-awareness. If, as Sartre states, consciousness is always consciousness of what it is not then consciousness is ontologically bound to be aware of itself in its distinction from all other objects. Consciousness is thus burdened with a profound ontological-ethical responsibility, the rejection of which is tantamount to bad faith. That aside, our concern for the moment is how

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32

<sup>55</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) p.159 – The quote is also cited by B. Scot Rousse in *Heidegger, Sociality, and Human Agency* (European Journal of Philosophy, 2016) pp.417-451, p.420. He adds another quote which reinforces Heidegger's rejection of apprehension or knowledge as a basis of relation between *Dasein* and itself: 'Existing is precisely this being towards oneself, only the latter must be understood in its full metaphysical scope and must not be restricted to some activity or capability or to any mode of apprehension such as knowledge or apprehension.' See, Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) p.189

<sup>56</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.32

<sup>57</sup> This is Taylor's term for 'the reading of the ideal method into the very constitution of the mind'. See Charles Taylor, *Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger* in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.321

Heidegger's account of pre-reflective self-awareness grounds his claim that *Dasein* 'understands itself in its being':

Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it. [...] and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being – a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. [...] *Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being.* Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.<sup>58</sup>

For Heidegger, *Dasein*'s inherent 'issue' with being firstly, characterises its relationship and secondly, establishes the possibility of an ontological understanding. Phenomena thus can only be disclosed by an entity for which ontology is a possibility. As such the first entity to be ontologically interrogated is the entity which performs the enquiry. The being of humans or human-being is of marked significance for both Heidegger and Sartre. The explanations for the prioritisation of human-being differ from Heidegger to Sartre but both reach the same conclusion. We will explore key differences but the central distinguishing feature is that prioritisation of *Dasein* is for Heidegger strictly a methodological principle albeit a necessary one. It provides an account in favour of ontology from the first-personal perspective as somehow already rooted in an ontological understanding such that it makes little or no sense to begin from any other position. Sartre's argument for the prioritisation of consciousness seems to read that methodological principle into the very ontology of consciousness. His claim that a relation between the two regions of being is established in consciousness by means of knowledge implies that knowledge and therefore a relation between for-itself and in-itself is literally impossible without consciousness. Sartre's argument for the prioritisation of consciousness is nevertheless premised on Heidegger's albeit taken further.

For Heidegger, *Dasein* must be prioritised in three ways. Each way presents its own complexities but it may be best to read them all as a single argument leading to the third which is the methodological priority. The first way is an 'ontical priority' of *Dasein* insofar as its 'existence' is already included in its being:

The first priority is an *ontical* one: Dasein is an entity whose Being has the determinate character of existence.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.32 – Here again, we may note that this account of Dasein, at least on our interpretation of Sartre's concern, strips it of ethical responsibility. If Dasein's ontical distinction is grounded in a pre-ontological and 'definite' 'understanding of being' then action, behaviour and all comportment is deterministic. In other words, if my actions are a direct product of my understanding of being as a definite characteristic of myself then I am absolved of responsibility; I would not choose my actions, I would merely act out of a natural disposition.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33



The immediate concern is distinguishing the first from the second way of taking priority since both refer to existence as a characteristic of and determinative for *Dasein*. For Heidegger, the ‘existence’ of *Dasein* refers to ‘the possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself’. Insofar as ‘the question of existence’ is for Heidegger, an ‘ontical affair’, it refers to those possibilities which are ‘straightened out’ through ‘existing itself’. Thus in this respect, existence refers to the everyday normative concerns contributing to an ‘understanding of oneself’.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the question of *Dasein*’s existence is not a matter of disengaged analysis but actual, everyday existing. Existence is therefore an ‘ontical affair’ insofar as it refers to the ongoing, everyday question *Dasein* poses to itself about its behaviour or comportment in the world and what this means regarding the kind of self it can be. *Dasein* firstly takes priority insofar as it must understand itself as existing in ‘the world’. The point is already indicated by the phrase ‘*Da-sein*’ wherein being (‘*sein*’) is inextricably tied to a localising ‘there-ness’ (‘*da*’). Further, this first ontical priority establishes Heidegger’s claim that *Dasein*’s issue with being is characterised by presence in a ‘world’. This is how we understand what Heidegger refers to as ‘thrownness’: *Dasein*’s ontological condition presupposes its presence in ‘the world’. It is not an extension of some mental projection and is not subject to Cartesian scepticism. *Dasein*’s being presupposes a physical, ‘existence’, constituting its ontical priority. Moreover, it is important to note that to claim that *Dasein* has the character of existence is not in itself to make a priority claim of any kind. This is not to assert that *Dasein* takes priority over the non-*Dasein* but that it is different in respect of its character.

The second way that *Dasein* takes priority is that ‘*Dasein* is ontological’:

The second priority is an *ontological* one: *Dasein* is in itself ‘ontological’, because existence is thus determinative for it.<sup>61</sup>

Our interpretation of this second way is derived from the first. ‘Existence is determinative’ means that *Dasein*’s comportment to its existence in ‘the world’ is grounded by an ontological understanding of its being and being as such. This is to say that ontological analysis of *Dasein* ‘always requires that existentiality is considered beforehand’.<sup>62</sup> The fact of *Dasein*’s physical presence is not immaterial to analysis of *Dasein*’s nature. It is in this sense that, ‘*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence’. *Dasein*’s ontology is such that its existence in ‘the world’ determines its understanding of itself. So the second way *Dasein* takes priority is that it understands its ‘existence’ ontologically, that is in respect of being as such. Again, this in and of

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33 – A close corollary of Sartre’s ‘fundamental project’ which we will assess later.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33

itself, is not a priority claim for *Dasein* over other entities but a further account of its distinction which will lead to its methodological prioritisation.

The third is that ‘Dasein provides the possibility of all ontology’:

But with equal primordially Dasein also possesses – as constitutive for its understanding of existence – an understanding of the Being of all entities of a character other than its own. Dasein has therefore a third priority as providing the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies. Thus Dasein has turned out to be, more than any other entity, the one which must first be interrogated ontologically.<sup>63</sup>

Before providing a brief explication of the third way, one point ought to be made clear. It may be objected that the introduction of *Dasein*’s ‘understanding itself’ is an attempt to smuggle in an unspecified epistemological argument. After all it might seem that existence could be determinative for *Dasein* without requiring that *Dasein* understand itself. The lack of an explanation seems to pose a serious problem for Heidegger’s claim but the objection collapses with the recognition that for Heidegger, ‘understanding’ (*Verstehen*) is ‘pre-ontological’ and is thus always already part of the being of *Dasein*. *Dasein* does not ‘understand itself’ in the sense of having knowledge or awareness of a specific self. Rather *Dasein* ‘understands itself’ in the sense of understanding itself as a self as such.<sup>64</sup> In other words, *Dasein*’s ‘primary mode of self-disclosure’ is not in the mode of reflection or ‘self-apprehension’ characteristic of self-awareness or self-knowledge. Rather insofar as the self is pre-ontologically ‘there for *Dasein*’, the self is ultimately grounded in *Dasein*’s relationship with being. In other words, *Dasein* ‘understands itself’ or discloses itself in terms of its relationship to being as such and thus primarily conceives itself in terms of self as such.

*Dasein*’s third way of taking priority is the ‘ontico-ontological condition’ for ontology and consists in two claims:

- (1) That *Dasein*’s pre-ontological understanding of its own being is equi-primordial with its pre-ontological understanding of the being of all other entities.
- (2) An investigation of the ontology of *Dasein* must precede an investigation of the ontology of other entities as a methodological necessity.

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34

<sup>64</sup> See Haar’s discussion of this point regarding Sartre’s exception to Heidegger’s argument: ‘Here Sartrean criticism intervenes: “Understanding has meaning only if it is consciousness of understanding. My possibility can exist as *my* possibility only if it is my consciousness which escapes itself toward my possibility. [...]” Sartre’s reasoning is founded once again upon the sole alternative between the for-itself and the in-itself. It excludes the possibility of a “third kind of Being,” as Merleau-Ponty says. Understanding must be conscious or unconscious, it cannot fall between the two, for there are only two modes of being. [...] By refusing an understanding not linked to consciousness, he is reaffirming the preeminence of knowledge.’ - Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) p.171

Heidegger's second claim is the assertion of the methodological priority of *Dasein* and follows from the first. Equi-primordially of pre-ontological self-understanding and pre-ontological understanding of the being of all other entities means that *Dasein* has a permanent and underlying relationship to all beings (including itself) and being as such. For Heidegger, it is this relationship that is expressed by the human ability to phrase and ask ontological questions. The nature of that relationship and therefore the nature of *Dasein* and being are disclosed by determining an appropriate methodological approach. Nevertheless, claiming that an understanding of the being of *Dasein* is a constitutive part of an understanding of the being of all entities raises an obvious objection. It does not seem to clearly follow that *Dasein*'s understanding of its being results in its understanding the being of all entities. One may understand one's own nature and yet understand nothing of the world around them. The argument turns on the interpretation of 'the understanding of being'. *Dasein* understands its being as a relation to being as such: this is the sense in which it 'takes issue' with being. All entities fall under the category of being-as-such, insofar as they *are*. Therefore, *Dasein* must understand the being of all entities. *Dasein*'s 'understanding' is not restricted to itself but things as such. Heidegger cannot and does not claim that *Dasein* understands all entities in all their descriptive detail but this has no bearing on a pre-ontological understanding.

The significance of consciousness in Sartre's project is principally in keeping with Heidegger's prioritisation of *Dasein*. Like *Dasein*'s relationship to being by way of understanding and based on pre-reflective self-consciousness, Sartre argues that 'knowledge' of entities is possible given consciousness only insofar as consciousness is consciousness of being conscious of something which it is not:

However, the necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge *of* its object, is that it be consciousness of itself as being that knowledge. This is a necessary condition, for if my consciousness were not consciousness of being consciousness of the table, it would then be consciousness of that table without consciousness of being so.<sup>65</sup>

Sartre's argument for the prioritisation of consciousness<sup>66</sup> can be inferred from this necessary and sufficient condition for consciousness. Thus,

- (1) The necessary condition for consciousness of something is being conscious of oneself as conscious of that thing [which 'I' am not].
- (2) The necessary condition for consciousness of something is consciousness of oneself.
- (3) Therefore an investigation of the ontology of consciousness necessarily precedes an investigation into the ontology of other things.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.8

<sup>66</sup> This is not the same as awareness. Sartre uses the term as a reference for the central feature of first-personal experience.

Not unlike Heidegger's second priority, Sartre asserts that consciousness 'founds its own being' and consequently, has a relationship to its own being. Furthermore, one can find similarities with Heidegger's third priority when Sartre asserts that ontology is only possible by virtue of consciousness. The 'whole foundation of a 'world'', an external environment containing objects of consciousness, requires consciousness:

But the peculiar possibility of being [...] is of being the foundation of itself as consciousness through the sacrificial act which nihilates being. The for-itself is the in-itself losing itself as in-itself in order to found itself as consciousness. Thus consciousness holds within itself its own being-as-consciousness, [...] If being in-itself can be neither its own foundation nor that of other beings, the whole idea of foundation comes into the world through the for-itself.<sup>68</sup>

Thus we see from the opening sentence that the 'possibility of being' requires that consciousness founds itself. This 'self-foundation' through the 'sacrificial nihilation'<sup>69</sup> produces consciousness which in turn means that the being of consciousness is 'held within' consciousness. Therefore the being of consciousness has a relationship to itself which 'is one of being'. From thence comes 'the whole idea of foundation' in respect of a 'world': ontology made possible by virtue of the for-itself and its relationship to itself.<sup>70</sup> For Sartre, all ontological encounters are founded on the nature of consciousness as consciousness of something which it is not. Therefore, ontological enquiry must begin with the being which distinguishes itself from all other entities. Nonetheless it will be important to note that, as Haar says,

As a general rule, Sartre takes inspiration from Heidegger only in so far as the preeminence of consciousness is not shaken.<sup>71</sup>

Read materially, one can understand the ease with which Heidegger and Sartre were identified in 'the heyday of postwar existentialism'. For Heidegger the 'world' is inseparable from *Dasein* such

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<sup>67</sup> One may note a difference in the emphasis on the *necessity* of beginning from consciousness as opposed to *Dasein*. For Heidegger, the methodological principle expresses the most *appropriate* means of approaching ontological discourse. For Sartre, on the other hand, the 'knowing consciousness' is structured such that ontology cannot but proceed from consciousness.

<sup>68</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.106

<sup>69</sup> The term relates to, but is distinct from, 'annihilation'. It does not refer to destruction but to constituting the meaning of objects by virtue of what they are not.

<sup>70</sup> It should be noted that the translation of this passage is problematic. The claim that 'the whole *idea* of foundation comes into the world through the for-itself' is ontical and thus quite different from the ontological claim that the possibility of ontology requires the for-itself. The original French does not include the word, 'idea' and thus avoids such an error. It states, '*...le fondement en general vient au monde par le pour-soi.*' See, Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, (Tel Gallimard, 1943) p.118

<sup>71</sup> Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) pp.174/5

that understanding necessarily includes the context of a ‘world’.<sup>72</sup> Similarly Sartre argues that consciousness encounters the world and constitutes it such as it is, by means of that encounter.

#### iv) Subtle and Significant Differences

Although we maintain that Sartre’s project is based on Heidegger, there are important differences between them. A brief discussion will illustrate how Heidegger’s concerns with philosophical methodology are obscured ultimately undermining the possibility of an alternative approach to the problem of freedom. Sartre bases his project on the two ontological modes, being-in-itself and being-for-itself. They are distinguished by the for-itself positing nothingness in order to establish knowledge of the in-itself as something that ‘simply is’. In this respect it is reminiscent of the kind of metaphysical dualism typical of traditional ontology. Of course Heidegger also distinguishes *Dasein* from non-*Dasein* entities but this distinction is intended to illuminate *Dasein*’s mode of being in respect of its situation. For Heidegger, *Dasein*’s being is not essentially divorced from the being of other entities. Sartre’s inclusion of nothingness on the other hand, necessitates that the for-itself is essentially distanced from the in-itself. Analysing the function of Sartre’s two modes of being will show that a similar dualism extends beyond terminology. Discussion of these ontological modes will follow so only a brief account is needed here. In short, Sartre’s existentialist ontology describes consciousness’ division of beings: being-in-itself is the mode of being of non-conscious entities and being-for-itself the mode of being of conscious entities.<sup>73</sup> This distinction will also be discussed at length in the chapter dedicated to analysis of Sartre’s project.<sup>74</sup> At the moment it will serve to note that Sartre explicitly argues that being-in-itself entities do not encounter themselves and are incapable of doing so. Though Sartre is careful to avoid sliding from an epistemological to a metaphysical argument, his reliance on the dualism of subject and object engender precisely that risk. His argument is ultimately that the for-itself does not create in-itself entities in any empirical sense but that the in-itself is the ‘original contingency’ of the for-itself:

The in-itself cannot provide the foundation for anything; if it founds itself, it does so by giving itself the modification of the for-itself. It is the foundation of itself insofar as it is *already no longer* in-itself, and we encounter here again the origin of every foundation. [...] It follows that this in-itself, engulfed and nihilated in the absolute event which is the appearance of the foundation or upsurge if the for-itself, remains at the heart of the for-itself as its original contingency.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> ‘[...] world is defined in *Being and Time* as that “wherein” *Dasein* understands being. Being-in-the-world is the very unity and identity of *Dasein*, and cannot be split into two independent parts, such as “consciousness” and “world.”’ – *Ibid.*, pp.174/5

<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that the for-itself is not equivalent to consciousness but is the nihilating characteristic which allows for the upsurge of consciousness.

<sup>74</sup> See, *Sartre’s Project of Phenomenological Ontology*, p.57

<sup>75</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.106

Unlike Heidegger's 'destruction',<sup>76</sup> of traditional ontology, Sartre superimposes existentialist ontology onto the traditional dualism of subject and object. Though this may not be without good reason<sup>77</sup> it renders the rejection of 'embarrassing dualisms' all the more complicated.

a) Firstly, Sartre adopts Heidegger's project<sup>78</sup> but does not provide a similar exegesis of traditional ontology and the methodology involved. His intention to 'complete the definition of *Dasein*',<sup>79</sup> and 'pass beyond Heidegger to a still more fundamental project',<sup>80</sup> by the inclusion of consciousness therefore lacks the philosophical grounding necessary to justify his adjustment of Heidegger's project.

b) Secondly, Sartre's focus on consciousness effectively shifts focus from the question of being, of which human beings are a part, to the question of what it means to be a human being. This raises the problem of anthropocentrism or the centrality of conscious entities (human beings/*Dasein*) to the world of independently existing objects.<sup>81</sup> Heidegger is clear that *Dasein* and the world are mutually constitutive. Though *Dasein's* being-ontological constitutes the possibility of an ontological encounter with the world as such, the world constitutes the ground of *Dasein*. Sartre's account of consciousness tilts the balance of *Dasein* and world towards the former. Consequently, Sartre risks introducing an epistemological *and* a metaphysical precedence of consciousness over the world.<sup>82</sup>

c) Finally, Sartre shifts the question of being from the observation of *Dasein's* ontological condition to an injunction necessitating a response. His claim that Heidegger overlooks Descartes and specifically the *cogito*<sup>83</sup> is intended to cement a radical responsibility into the ontology of consciousness such that all action is ultimately the burden of human beings. His concern that

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<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.49

<sup>77</sup> Sartre seems pre-occupied with the concern that Heidegger's failure to include consciousness in his ontology risks reducing the human-being to a being-in-itself.

<sup>78</sup> It may be informative to note that Heidegger is the most heavily referenced authority (37) in *BN* alongside Descartes (35) and Husserl (34).

<sup>79</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.18

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.585

<sup>81</sup> 'Understanding has meaning only if it is consciousness of understanding. My possibility can exist as *my* possibility only if it is my consciousness which escapes itself toward my possibility. Otherwise the whole system of being and its possibilities will fall into the unconscious – that is into the in-itself.' *Ibid.*, p.109

<sup>82</sup> This is exemplified by comparison of Sartre's phrase 'existence precedes essence' with Heidegger's, 'the essence of *Dasein* lies in its existence'. Sartre divides essence from the totality of human acts whereas Heidegger asserts an inherency of essence to the fact of existence. See, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1973) pp.26/28/29 and Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.68, respectively.

<sup>83</sup> Sartre claims, 'Heidegger [...] begins with the existential analytic without going through the *cogito*.' 'Heidegger is so persuaded that the "I think" of Husserl is a trap for larks, fascinating and ensnaring, that he has completely avoided any appeal to consciousness in his description of *Dasein*.' - Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.97/109

Heidegger conceals an ethical/moral aspect of his project<sup>84</sup> betrays his own need to attach a moral weight to the machinations of consciousness.<sup>85</sup> But we will argue that this shift moves the discussion from the ontological to the ontical: from what Heidegger thinks of as the proper concern of philosophy to normative ethics. It will be our claim that Sartre's grounding of consciousness in nothingness necessitates that it establishes its own relationship to being. His account of this in respect of what he calls the fundamental project, abandons pre-ontological grounding precisely in order to establish a robust conception of responsibility. If the ontical refers to all comportment which presumes a relationship to and a pre-ontological understanding of being then in so doing, Sartre's nothingness-grounded consciousness exchanges the ontology of being for an ontical freedom.

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<sup>84</sup> 'In truth Heidegger's description shows all too clearly his anxiety to establish an ontological foundation for an Ethics with which he claims not to be concerned, as also to reconcile his humanism with the religious sense of the transcendent.' 'And we shall note as Heidegger did (although the expressions "authentic" and "unauthentic" which he employs are dubious and insincere because of their implicit moral content)...' – *Ibid.*, pp.104/552

<sup>85</sup> This is confirmed by *Existentialism and Humanism* which explicitly seeks to assert a moral basis for his view of human reality.

## II

## Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology, *Dasein* and the Question of Being

Before beginning it will be instructive to note that the forthcoming analysis will be restricted to investigating *BT* from the point of view of its fundamental ontology and its methodologically conceived phenomenology. Our concern is to establish these features of Heidegger's 'early work' as a background to investigating the explicit treatment of freedom in the 'later essays'. We therefore put to one side the substantial and serious literature addressing the role of freedom in *BT*.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, we acknowledge that extended discussion of what Heidegger calls authenticity,<sup>87</sup> and the call of conscience<sup>88</sup> would certainly attest to the persistence of freedom in Heidegger's thought, if not the theoretical structures that ultimately underpin his conception of freedom. Of particular note to that end is question of what Heidegger calls, 'resoluteness' (*Entschlossenheit*) which for Mahon O'Brien, and here we agree, is a central feature of Heidegger's project in *BT* and his later work. He states,

Resolve is characterised as an open willingness to be 'claimed' by the call of conscience, to acknowledge openly the fact that rather than free floating, autonomous self determining authors of our own destiny, we find ourselves thrown into a world with an horizon of possibility determined by our own radical finitude. [...] The radical disjuncture between the early and later Heidegger in this context then can only be maintained through a distortion of *Being and Time*'s account of authenticity.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See particularly, Mahon O'Brien, *Heidegger and Authenticity: From Resoluteness to Releasement* (London: Continuum, 2011) and Thomas Sheehan, *Martin Heidegger in A Companion to the Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003)

<sup>87</sup> 'The most familiar conception of "authenticity" comes to us mainly from Heidegger's *Being and Time* of 1927. The word we translate as 'authenticity' is actually a neologism invented by Heidegger, the word *Eigentlichkeit*, which comes from an ordinary term, *eigentlich*, meaning 'really' or 'truly', but is built on the stem *eigen*, meaning 'own' or 'proper'. So the word might be more literally translated as 'ownedness', or 'being owned', or even 'being one's own', implying the idea of owning up to and owning what one is and does.' See, Varga, Somogy and Guignon, Charles, *Authenticity, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>88</sup> In tracing the continuity of Heidegger's thought from *BT* to his later work, O'Brien appeals to the theme of the call of conscience. Here he connects it to a confrontation with 'the thrown' nature of existence which we will argue, in reference to what we will call 'submission', is central to Heidegger's account of freedom: 'Conscience is the call of care and we are fundamentally caring beings. It forces us to confront the thrown, abandoned nature of our existence which all of us recognise but few of us reflect on for extended periods, preferring instead to flee to the anaesthetised existence of "the they".' - Mahon O'Brien, *Heidegger and Authenticity: From Resoluteness to Releasement* (London: Continuum, 2011) and Thomas Sheehan, *Martin Heidegger in A Companion to the Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) p.40

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53



Though we are lacking in space and time to address these herein, there are also significant similarities in the premises of those explications with our own, beginning with the importance of the methodological framework described in *BT* and its impact on Heidegger's later work.<sup>90</sup> In the interests of developing the explication of that framework, we may therefore begin by observing that Heidegger's *BT* opens with the assertion that the question of being has been 'forgotten'.<sup>91</sup> The claim comes in the context of an argument for 'restating' the question since this 'forgotten-ness' is characterised by an assumed familiarity with the question and its meaningful content. Moreover, for Heidegger the sense of familiarity with the question is not unwarranted but misunderstood such that it obscures investigation.<sup>92</sup> As Stephen Mulhall states in the *Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time*,

Accordingly, when Heidegger claims that the philosophical tradition has forgotten the question with which he is concerned, he does not mean that philosophers have entirely overlooked the question of the Being of beings. Rather, he means that, by taking certain answers to that question to be self-evident or unproblematically correct, they have taken it for granted that they know what the phrase 'the Being of beings' signifies – in other words, they have failed to see that there is a question about the *meaning* of 'Being'.<sup>93</sup>

Thus critique of the ontological tradition and proposal of fundamental ontology comprise what he refers to as the formalisation of the question of being. In this chapter we will seek to explicate this formalisation by establishing three points. First, fundamental ontology is underpinned by a methodology which assumes an understanding of the question and its meaning is implicit in all human activity including and for his purposes in *BT*, particularly, the act of enquiry itself. The problem is that very inherency provides a false sense of security with respect to the question and its meaning. As we will see, Heidegger will argue that all human activity or comportments is indicative of a pre-ontological understanding of and thus relationship to being. In other words, if Husserl's method required that questions of the existence and nature of objects are bracketed-out of an analysis of consciousness then Heidegger will investigate human experience as profoundly rooted in the fundamental question of being. Far from impeding a 'pure' ontology of human experience therefore, all comportment including philosophical enquiry can be revealing of that relationship and understanding. Second, that investigation will therefore focus its attention on average, everyday human experience and engagement with the world. If, as Heidegger argues, the question of being is

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<sup>90</sup> As O'Brien states, 'The essential spirit of this 'early' work is something which I believe that much of his 'later' philosophy is similarly imbued with. Furthermore, the structural dynamics of his later work are, in many crucial respects, consistent with his early structural approach in *Being and Time*.' See, *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>91</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.21

<sup>92</sup> Heidegger states that, 'Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way.' – *Ibid.*, p.25

<sup>93</sup> Stephen Mulhall, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005) p.7

inherent to my being as such then any disengagement from immediate experience in either the form or function of ontological investigations is both disingenuous and ultimately exacerbates the forgotten-ness of the question. Third, therefore the ontology of human being as *Da-sein* or there-being, is the appropriate point of departure and the only sincere means of addressing the question of being. We will explicate the following three dimensions of Heidegger's project in order to clarify his argument for freedom in respect of the above points:

- i) **Fundamental Ontology** - This section will pay special attention the 'fundamental' kind of ontology Heidegger wants. The term is not only included to distinguish his ontology from what he calls, 'traditional ontology'. Fundamental ontology is premised on the primordially of the relationship of *Dasein* to the question of being. The profundity of that association is such that the enquirer cannot 'rationally distance' or disengage from the question thus avoiding the risk of presupposition prevalent in the traditional methodological approach. Heidegger's critique of the ontological tradition particularly, Aristotle, Descartes and Kant, is therefore central to explicating his formalisation of the question of being.
- ii) **The Role of *Dasein*** - Heidegger claims that *Dasein* has 'ontico-ontological priority' over all other entities. We understand and explicate this prioritisation in two respects: First, as a claim about the ontological condition of *Dasein* which is that all of *Dasein*'s everyday action and behaviour or comportment, is indicative of an understanding of being. Second, as a methodological principle that therefore the question of being must be addressed by prioritising an investigation of *Dasein*. For Heidegger, the enquirer's comportment while enquiring is itself indicative of an understanding of being and must therefore firstly be observed and acknowledged in order to maintain the integrity of the investigation. Heidegger offers three reasons for his prioritisation of *Dasein*, previously described in chapter one.
- iii) **Phenomenology as the Method of Ontology** – Heidegger thus interprets phenomenology as the method of fundamental ontology. His etymologically derived definition of 'phenomenon' and 'logos' reinforces the methodological principle that investigation of *Da-sein*-ness is the only appropriate and sincere means of addressing the question of being. It is in light of these points that Heidegger will present his account of freedom.

#### **i) Fundamental Ontology**

Central to explicating the formalisation of the question of being is Heidegger's fundamental ontology as premised on a critique of the ontological tradition. We will therefore begin by outlining the errors Heidegger argues are implicit to traditional methodology. We will then explicate the fundamentality of Heidegger's methodological approach whereby enquirer and enquiry are

inextricably linked rendering disengagement impossible. Finally we will discuss the significance of Heidegger's critique and fundamental ontology to the question of being.

a) *What Fundamental Ontology is Not*

Heidegger goes to great lengths to contrast his ontology with 'traditional ontology' and this, he argues, is not without good reason.<sup>94</sup> An absolute rejection of the tradition requires that no remnant can remain untested:

The question of Being does not achieve its true concreteness until we have carried through the process of destroying the ontological tradition. In this way we can fully prove that the question of the meaning of Being is one that we cannot avoid, and we can demonstrate what it means to talk about 'restating' this question.<sup>95</sup>

For Heidegger, the predilection for disengagement exemplified by rationalist ontology is so pervasively problematic that neither its passive approval nor active inclusion is acceptable. It will serve to clarify precisely what Heidegger means by the ontological tradition and where it is mistaken before we attempt to account for the 'destruction'.

Heidegger refers to Aristotle, Descartes and Kant to evidence both the prevalence and the problem inherent to a methodological tradition. An extended discussion of Aristotle and Kant will follow in our chapter on the primordially of freedom in Heidegger's account. Our concern will temporarily be restricted to Descartes insofar as he is also of particular importance to Sartre. Suffice it to say, Heidegger's critique of Descartes is applicable to Aristotle and Kant albeit to differing degrees. Thereby Cartesian dualism and the predication of existence in the proof of God as epistemic guarantor serve as prime examples of rationalist disengagement where both philosopher and agent are conceived as disengaged thinkers. On our interpretation, the very premise of Descartes investigation to find some point of epistemic certainty firstly, presupposes the ontological character of the enquirer and secondly, the meaning of the truth he seeks. For Heidegger, the failure to interrogate these presuppositions leads to the inaccuracy of their ontological conclusions. In other words, if one does not begin with the disclosure of all presuppositions, one necessarily describes an ontology which aims at the discovery of essential properties of things rather than revealing their being:

The question of Being aims therefore at ascertaining the *a priori* conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and, in so doing, already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations. *Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal,*

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<sup>94</sup> Distinguishing fundamental with traditional ontology is a feature of the 'destruction' of the latter. - *Ibid.*, p.41

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49

*remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task.*<sup>96</sup>

In this respect, the failure of the rationalist approach to disclose the presupposition of disengagement necessarily obscures an investigation of freedom. Although Descartes' methodology is rationally formulated, Heidegger argues that it fails to address being as it is and from itself. Descartes' '*ego*' remains undisclosed whether or not it can be attributed with a '*cogito*'. His *res cogitans* and *res extensa* describe entities with different properties without revealing their mode of being. Descartes' ontological error is betrayed by the presupposition that the modes of being of entities can be inferred from their properties. His argument describes thinking as a property of the 'I' but it does not follow that '*I am that which thinks*'. This may be what Heidegger means by the following:

[...] the *ego cogito* of Descartes, the subject, the "I", reason, spirit, person. But these all remain uninterrogated as to their Being and its structure, in accordance with the thoroughgoing way in which the question of Being has been neglected. It is rather the case that the categorical content of the traditional ontology has been carried over to these entities with corresponding formalisations and purely negative restrictions, or else dialectic has been called in for the purpose of interpreting the substantiality of the subject ontologically.<sup>97</sup>

Here we understand the substantiality' of the ontological subject as its very *is*-ness or that which accounts for the possibility of its presence. This, Heidegger argues, is overlooked by Descartes in favour of the 'categorical content of traditional ontology'. Consequently an interpretive matrix is imposed on an ontological enquiry which both obscures a meaningful investigation and determines the characterisation of the entities involved. For Heidegger, traditional ontology has committed itself to these errors obligating a new ontology to first lay those errors bare. Their replication in a renewed or 'restated' discourse is therefore impossible, 'destroying' traditional ontology. He argues that these errors extend back at least to 'medieval scholasticism' and provide Descartes with his basic premises and methodological approach:

Everyone who is acquainted with the middle ages sees that Descartes is 'dependent' upon medieval scholasticism and employs its terminology. But with this 'discovery' nothing is achieved philosophically as long as it remains obscure to what a profound extent the medieval ontology has influenced the way in which posterity has determined or failed to determine the ontological character of the *res cogitans*.<sup>98</sup>

That 'medieval scholasticism', Heidegger argues, relies on a Greek 'orientation' to the interpretation of the question of being which directly affects the analysis of phenomena, particularly time:

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31

<sup>97</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.44

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46

The full extent of this cannot be estimated until both the meaning and the limitations of the ancient ontology have been exhibited in terms of an orientation directed towards the question of Being. [...] When this is done, it will be manifest that the ancient way of interpreting the Being of entities is oriented towards the 'world' or 'Nature' in the widest sense, and that it is indeed in terms of 'time' that its understanding of Being is obtained. [...] Entities are grasped in their Being as 'presence'; this means that they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time – the '*Present*'.<sup>99</sup>

Thus to fully come to terms with and confront the question of being it is necessary first to unpick its terms in order to reveal an underlying, presupposed 'orientation'. In this case, the 'determinations or failures to determine the ontological character of the *res cogitans*' is a consequence of 'grasping the being of entities' in the temporal mode of presence. Furthermore, that this is an expression of an orientation towards time itself as just 'one entity among other entities',<sup>100</sup> equally divisible from the whole and describable by its essential properties. These properties render an understanding of time as essentially fixed: insofar as those properties are permanent features and essential, time itself is understood as fixed 'presence-at-hand'.<sup>101</sup> By means of a similar effort to identify and attribute essential properties, entities are 'grasped' without regard to their change over time but to the 'definite present'. Their past and thus the question of their origin and the future and thus the question of their cessation are not open to discussion. A central feature of the being of entities is thereby overlooked and obscured in respect of their relation to time.

b) *A 'Restatement' of the Question*

Heidegger proposes the following for a 'restated' ontology:

The task of ontology is to explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief.<sup>102</sup>

Our immediate concern is not *how* but precisely *what* is to be achieved. In accordance with the above, fundamental ontology is directed toward an understanding of the relationship between Dasein and the question of being thereby answering the question of being: to disclose being such that it 'stands out in full relief'.<sup>103</sup> Heidegger restates the question of being as a question of the 'meaning' of being to this end. His underlying argument seems to be that if the ontological tradition has obscured enquiries into being because of a methodological error, then correcting that method

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.46/47

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48 – Chapter five will discuss this further as it applies to Kant and causality.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49

<sup>103</sup> One may argue that this is hardly a radical or distinctive ontological demand. Moreover, if *Dasein* already has an understanding of being then there is no question to answer. But this belies insensitivity to the emphasis in Heidegger's ontological demand: 'One can determine the nature of entities in their Being without necessarily having the explicit concept of the meaning of Being at one's disposal. Otherwise there could have been no ontological knowledge heretofore. [...] Of course 'Being' has been presupposed in all ontology up till now, but not as a *concept* at one's disposal – not as the sort of thing we are seeking.' - *Ibid.*, p.27

should produce an improved account. In re-orienting the traditional question from what/whether being 'is' to the 'meaning of being', the enquirer confronts the primordially of the understanding of being inherent to enquiry and all comportment. In this sense, we interpret Heidegger's 'restatement' to the meaning of being as the formalisation of a hermeneutic approach to phenomenological ontology. Heidegger clarifies this point in holding Kant accountable for the same error:

In taking over Descartes' ontological position Kant made an essential omission: he failed to provide an ontology of Dasein. This omission was a decisive one in the spirit [im Sinne] of Descartes' ownmost Tendencies.<sup>104</sup>

The assertion that Kant had taken over Descartes' ontological position is of course open to debate. Nonetheless, the failure to 'provide an ontology of Dasein' is certainly true of both. This is to say that neither Descartes nor Kant prioritise the being of the enquirer and their comportment to enquiry in their respective investigations.

Of course Heidegger's recognition of errors in previous ontologies alone does not ensure him against their repetition, albeit in a different guise. To that end, it is important to explicate Heidegger's shift of the question from what being '*is*' [*was ist*] to what being '*means*' [*der Sinn*].<sup>105</sup> On our reading, enquiring after the 'meaning' of being is intended to avoid the problems Heidegger perceives as inherent to traditional ontological methodology. Firstly, it resists any assumption of familiarity with being(s) such that their character cannot be implied by the language of the enquiry. Secondly, this methodological compulsion to investigate the hermeneutics of being(s) from immediate experience obstructs any effort at disengagement.<sup>106</sup> If disengagement is the traditional methodological principle directing ontological discourse to what being '*is*', as such, adopting the 'view from nowhere', then Heidegger's restated question will force the enquirers introspection in the context of a relationship to being or a view from right-here. This is how we understand Heidegger's claim that:

But even if we ask, 'What *is* "Being"?'', we keep within an understanding of the '*is*', though we are unable to fix conceptionally what this '*is*' signifies.<sup>107</sup>

Discourse premised on what being '*is*' presupposes an uninterrogated understanding of what one means by being such that it '*is*'. Moreover, Heidegger refers to 'temporality as the meaning of the

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46

<sup>105</sup> What Heidegger calls, '[...] the cardinal problem – the question of the meaning of Being in general.' *Ibid.*, p.61

<sup>106</sup> Heidegger claims that 'Only if the inquiry of philosophical research is itself seized upon [...] as a possibility of the Being of each existing Dasein, does it become at all possible to disclose the existentiality of existence and to undertake an adequately founded ontological problematic.' – *Ibid.*, p.34

<sup>107</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.25

being of that entity which we call “Dasein”.<sup>108</sup> *Dasein* must think of itself in respect of time, that is in respect of its past, present and future. So shifting to an introspective hermeneutics of being will necessitate that ‘time is brought to light as the horizon for all understanding of being’.<sup>109</sup> For Heidegger, time has served the function of distinguishing what he calls temporal entities (natural and historical processes) with non-temporal entities (spatial and numerical). The problem is that this function has become almost self-evident, serving to designate ‘criterion for various realms of entities’. This is veiled behind the ‘*is-ness*’ of the question of being which presupposes the relationship between the answer and time. The answer to the question, ‘what is being?’ acquires a timeless quality insofar as it refers to the essential properties of being. Time serves only to contrast that realm of being from what Heidegger calls the ‘temporal’ which ‘always means simply being [seined] ‘in time’’:

We are accustomed to contrasting the ‘timeless’ meaning of propositions with the ‘temporal’ course of propositional assertions.<sup>110</sup>

Conversely, an introspective hermeneutics of being must encompass ‘temporal being’ particularly insofar as ‘there-ness’, the ontical grounding characteristic of *Dasein* is both spatially and temporally located. Secondly, the question of meaning invites confrontation with what Heidegger calls the ‘ancients’ by contrasting what being has meant with what it means contemporaneously. This is how we interpret the following:

Because Being cannot be grasped except by taking time into consideration, the answer to the question of being cannot lie in any proposition that is blind and isolated. [...] Whether the answer is a ‘new’ one remains quite superficial and is of no importance. Its positive character must lie in its being *ancient* enough for us to learn to conceive the possibilities which the ‘Ancients’ have made ready for us.<sup>111</sup>

Directly confronting the problem of what being means (rather than implying its meaning behind its ‘*is-ness*’) requires that enquiry reach back to earlier interpretation and in that respect, maintain a temporal horizon.

#### c) *Two Features of Fundamental Ontology*

Two conclusions about Heidegger’s fundamental ontology can be drawn from what we have discussed thus far. First, the formulation of the question of being is crucial to the direction of the investigation and what it reveals. Secondly, a sincere effort to address the question of being cannot be achieved by rational disengagement and abstraction. Instead, as the only entity for which being is

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40

an issue, *Dasein* must be the first subject of enquiry. As such, fundamental ontology requires that entities are interrogated in context of a 'world':

[...] understanding of Being pertains with equal primordially both to an understanding of something like a 'world', and to the understanding of the Being of those entities which become accessible within the world.<sup>112</sup>

On our interpretation, 'understanding' here refers to the relationship *Dasein* has to the question of being where concern for being betrays a pre-ontological awareness of being as such. Thus for Heidegger, *Dasein*'s understanding is neither purely rational (à la Descartes) nor transcendental (à la Kant) but is grounded by the localising context of a world and those beings belonging to it. A brief allusion to the relationship between 'primordially' and 'something like a world' will also serve our purposes. *Dasein*'s equi-primordial understanding of being and 'something like a world' is indicative of its previously discussed ontico-ontological priority. In this sense, average everyday comportment to entities in the world is revealing of a primordial, pre-ontological familiarisation with their being. This is what Heidegger refers to as the '*existentiell*' or a way of understanding being by reference to 'Dasein's ontical affairs'.<sup>113</sup> Thus disclosing the being of entities *from* themselves requires investigating what is 'already there' about the entity where already-there-ness refers to a primordial understanding. A disengaged account is therefore any enquiry into being which overlooks, by presupposition or otherwise, the contextualising matrix of the world and the understanding it reveals. We will refer to this as the error of 'unrelatedness', which as we have seen is equally applicable to both realism and idealism in Heidegger's estimation. In her paper on, 'The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project', Dorothea Frede highlights this issue:

[...] the mistake lies in the *theoretical* approach as such. As mentioned earlier, the stance taken in theorizing allows the thinker to have a detached point of view. The thinker can treat the objects of his investigation as "indifferently occurring" things that exist independent of observation, just as the observer in his turn is at liberty to fasten on any object. So observer and observed, thinker and the object of his thought, are regarded as "indifferently occurring" alongside one another.<sup>114</sup>

For Heidegger, a core problem is, to borrow Frede's term, this 'theoretical approach as such': adherence to a principle of 'clinical observation' or 'disinterested analysis'. Insofar as both realism and idealism hold to this 'approach', both implicitly assert unrelatedness between enquirer and world<sup>115</sup> and are as such, subject to the same criticism. For the former, reality exists independent of

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33

<sup>114</sup> Dorothea Frede, *The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project* in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.42-69, p.58

<sup>115</sup> 'Both realism and idealism have – with equal thoroughness – missed the meaning of the Greek conception of truth[...]' - Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.57



observation and for the latter reality is a construct of observation. The dualism inherent to their methodologies implies an enquirer capable of straddling these metaphysical boundaries in order to assert their ‘indifferently occurring’ observations. On our reading, Frede’s criticism of the ‘detached point of view’ reflects the disingenuousness that Heidegger attributes to the ontological tradition. That disingenuousness is rooted in the contradiction that accepting the premises of the ‘theoretical approach’ ultimately makes it impossible to establish its conclusions beyond theory. This is the sense in which we’ve argued that philosophical arguments about freedom are ill equipped to account for its experience and will therefore perpetually suffer a seeming intractability. If the ‘theoretical approach’ requires disengagement from the interpretive matrix which contextualises the encounter with entities then its claims and conclusions cannot be revealing of their experience.

d) *The Significance of Fundamental Ontology to the Question of Being*

For Heidegger, fundamental ontology is the only appropriate way of addressing the question of being: it is the ‘formal structure’ of that question. Section two of the introduction to *BT* opens in regard to this point:

The question of the meaning of Being must be *formulated*. If it is a fundamental question, or indeed *the* fundamental question, it must be made transparent, and in an appropriate way.<sup>116</sup>

This formulation is what we have argued concludes in its formalisation with respect to fundamental ontology and the ontico-ontological priority of *Dasein*. On our interpretation therefore, the appropriateness of making ‘the fundamental question transparent’ is measured in the sincerity of the methodology underpinning an enquiry. That is, the prioritisation of an introspective analysis of the enquirer in the context of a concern for being. Three reasons can be given for the high value Heidegger places on fundamental ontology in light of what has been said thus far: i) shifting the question from what being *is* to the meaning of being, ii) the prioritisation of *Dasein*’s ‘ontical affairs’ or its everyday comportment iii) the tightly interlocking or holistic features of fundamental ontology and *Dasein*.

We have said that Heidegger’s adjustment of the question of being is primarily intended to correct the problem of presupposition. Thereby Heidegger advances the argument that a hermeneutic analysis methodologically compels confrontation with the primordially of *Dasein*’s comportment to being. Enquiry after the meaning of being will therefore bring *Dasein*’s relationship to the forefront of the investigation. This is how we interpret Heidegger’s insistence on analysis of *Dasein* as a primary and necessary feature of the question of being:

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24

Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it – all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves. Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being. the very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about – namely, Being.<sup>117</sup>

For Heidegger, the fact of questioning, comportment to the question and the understanding of the question are all 'constitutive modes of being' which are part and parcel of enquiry into being. Similarly, ontological enquiry about an object will require that the entity perceiving and enquiring after the object be 'made transparent' and in so doing, the relationship of both to being as such. It is crucial for Heidegger, therefore that 'Dasein must be shown in its average everydayness':

We must rather choose such a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this [Dasein] can show itself in itself and from itself [an ihm selbst von ihm selbst her]. And this means that it is to be shown as it is *proximally and for the most part* – in its average *everydayness*. [...] When taken in this way, the analytic of Dasein remains wholly oriented towards the guiding task of working out the question of Being.<sup>118</sup>

Two points are worthy of note for our purposes here. First, that we understand Heidegger's reference to average everydayness in respect of the ontical priority of *Dasein*. Second, what we might call the particular-generality of Heidegger's enquiry which is the basis for the argument he presents in favour of freedom as we will show in the corresponding chapter. In respect of the first point, Heidegger's choice of 'access' to being by means of *Dasein*'s average everydayness is on our interpretation, both a mechanism to resist the predilection of disengagement and a means of grounding the analysis itself in the comportment to entities. Thus the pursuit of the fundamental question is not removed from my immediate experience but on the contrary, my actual experience, in all its particularities, will be revealing of a broader and prerequisite understanding. This brings us to the second point where here, as in the *ET*, Heidegger argues that an investigation into being in general can and methodologically should proceed from the particular. Thus approaching the fundamental question of philosophy will require that we first investigate the enquirer. Similarly, Heidegger will argue in the *ET* that 'going-after-the-whole', that is asking after being as such, requires 'going-to-the-roots', an ontological analytic of *Dasein*. We will discuss this issue further in the chapter on Heidegger and freedom but it will serve our current purposes to note that Heidegger's prioritisation of *Dasein* is, on our reading, intended to illuminate the question of being by reinforcing its inherency to *Dasein*.

In his paper entitled, 'Dasein, the Being that Thematises', Robert R. Brandom offers a helpful reflection on *Dasein*'s interlocking features:

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.26,27

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.37,38

Heidegger claims that in his discussion of *Dasein* he is not just doing anthropology, but fundamental ontology. Part of the cash value of this claim must be that he is not merely offering us a set of descriptions, in however rich vocabulary, which all just happen to be true of us. Rather, his characterizations form a tightly interlocked set of features, no one of which could be exhibited without all the others. [...] Thus to claim that entities could exhibit some of these ways of being without others is to claim that there is no such thing as *Dasein*, that Heidegger has gotten it wrong.<sup>119</sup>

We argue that this holistic account of *Dasein*'s interlocking features is equally applicable to fundamental ontology and Heidegger's argument for freedom. Thus Heidegger's investigation of *Dasein* provides him access to the question of being and formalised as fundamental ontology. They are so intertwined that separating fundamental ontology from the question of being equates to a rejection of the former; that there is no such thing as fundamental ontology. If, as Heidegger claims, 'the meaning of being must already be available to us'<sup>120</sup> then fundamental ontology must be simultaneously concerned with the enquirer, the enquiry and the answer to the question. The 'cash value' of fundamental ontology is its holistic structure which keeps each aspect of enquiry related to one another and in the context of being as such.

## ii) The Role of *Dasein*

The relationship of the question of being to *Dasein* is central to fundamental ontology. Nevertheless, Heidegger's methodological prioritisation rests on the validity of attributing an understanding of being to *Dasein*. Of course Heidegger's assertion that concern for being and therefore an understanding of being is inherent to *Dasein* is insufficient to account for its validity. Furthermore, *Dasein*'s centrality to fundamental ontology entails an equivalent significance to the question of being which cannot be taken at face value. To that end, we will describe *Dasein* in two ways. The first will provide a positive statement of what Heidegger means by *Dasein*. The second will identify what *Dasein* is not, eliminating any possibility of conflation. This will also establish the validity of attributing understanding to *Dasein*. We will conclude by applying these points to the significance of *Dasein* to the question of being.

### a) A Positive Understanding of *Dasein*

An immediate interpretation has already been mentioned in the outline of fundamental ontology. In the simplest terms, *Dasein is the enquirer*. Yet, for Heidegger, this identifying declaration does more to conceal and obscure than inform. The total content of the relationship between '*Dasein*' and 'enquirer' is concentrated in the 'is'. Familiarity with '*is-ness*' identifying

<sup>119</sup> Robert R. Brandom, *Dasein, the Being that Thematisizes* in *Heidegger Re-examined* (New York: Routledge, 2002) pp.35-73, p.47

<sup>120</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) pp.24-25

enquirer and *Dasein* presupposes their mode of being in lieu of an explicit investigation. Heidegger refers to this problem at the beginning of his text:

It is said that 'Being' is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it. In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method.<sup>121</sup>

Clearly, a simple identification of *Dasein* and enquirer is insufficient for our purposes.

Heidegger refers to *Dasein* as having ontico-ontological priority over all other entities. That is, *Dasein*'s ontical comportments are indicative of a primordial understanding of being(s). Insofar as this will include enquiry itself, a sincere investigation of being(s) will be preceded by analysis of *Dasein*. Heidegger also refers to this relationship between *Dasein* and the question of being in the following:

Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being – a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. *Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being*. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.<sup>122</sup>

Two points in this quote are of particular interest for our purposes. First, though Heidegger distinguishes *Dasein* from other entities, he specifies an ontical distinction. Second, Heidegger's claim that *Dasein* is ontological seems to rely on the same presupposed familiarity with 'is-ness' that he criticises in the ontological tradition. We will address these points individually but it will benefit the interpretation of Heidegger's argument to see them as related claims.

In respect of the first point, it is crucial for Heidegger's argument that what distinguishes *Dasein* from other entities are its 'ontical affairs'. That is to say, *Dasein*'s distinction is strictly in respect of its comportment to entities. On our interpretation of Heidegger's argument, this is intended to reinforce a methodological principle that analysis of *Dasein*, though the priority, must be pursued firmly within the context of a broader enquiry into being as such. An ontical distinction

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21 – A strikingly similar albeit more poetic proclamation is made by Friedrich Nietzsche at the start of his text, *The Genealogy of Morals*: 'We are unknown, we knowers, ourselves to ourselves: this has its own good reason. We have never searched for ourselves – how should it then come to pass, that we should ever *find* ourselves?' - Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003) p.1 – [The similarity of premises provides grounds to assert a logical relationship between Nietzschean Perspectivism and Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology.]

<sup>122</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.32

thus restricts the predilection to attribute characteristics to *Dasein* that would implicitly establish its independence from being. In other words, insofar as the ontical is revealing of an ontological understanding then ontical distinction refers to a negative *relation*. Thus one may distinguish graphite from wood but their difference is revealing of a relation constituting ‘the pencil’. Similarly, we understand Heidegger’s reference to *Dasein*’s ontical distinction as a description of its relation to being. So distinguishing *Dasein* from the world, for instance, reveals a relation constituting being.

In respect of the second point and as we have explained, Heidegger is critical of the claims in traditional discourse in part because of the methodologically necessitated presupposition of ontological characteristics. His own claim that *Dasein* is ontological is therefore particularly problematic especially given that the prioritisation of *Dasein* depends on the validity of the claim that the question of being is inherent to *Dasein*. To that end, we may note Heidegger’s first statement that *Dasein*’s occurrence amongst entities, its ontical comportment, is not one of indifference. Rather *Dasein*’s presence amongst entities is immediately and fundamentally ontologically-oriented. This is how we interpret the following claim that ‘*Dasein* is ontically distinguished by the fact that being is an issue for it’. Thus *Dasein*’s comportment to entities is indicative of a prerequisite ontological understanding of being(s). This is also how we understand the assertion that *Dasein* is ontological. The presuppositions implicit in ‘*is-ness*’ are confronted by *Dasein*’s ontical-ontological relation to entities. Therefore when Heidegger declares that *Dasein* is ontological, this is only to say that *Dasein* cannot but relate to being(s) by means of an ontological understanding.<sup>123</sup>

*Dasein* therefore is the entity for whom being-ontological is a ‘constitutive state’. As such, the ontology of entities is a possibility inherent to *Dasein*. Heidegger makes this clear in the second and third ways in which *Dasein* takes priority over all other entities:

The second priority is an *ontological* one: *Dasein* is in itself ‘ontological’ [...] But with equal primordially *Dasein* also possesses – as constitutive for its understanding of existence – an understanding of the Being of all entities of a character other than its own. *Dasein* has therefore a third priority as providing the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies.<sup>124</sup>

Importantly the priority of *Dasein* in investigating the question of being must not be misinterpreted as the metaphysical priority of *Dasein* over all other entities, especially since that is the kind of criticism Heidegger levels at the idealist strand of traditional ontology. Misunderstanding *Dasein* as

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<sup>123</sup> This already suggests that ontological enquiry cannot be satisfied by empirical analysis. In fact, as a necessary feature of *Dasein* (us) it is not to be *satisfied* at all. Ontological enquiry must, in the least, consider whether its methodological approach presupposes empiricism.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34

dominant over all other entities constitutes the kind of unrelatedness Heidegger wants to avoid. An accurate understanding demands sensitivity to the syllabic composition of the term. ‘Da-sein’ can be literally translated as ‘being-there’ (‘there-being’). An ontically contextualising ‘there-ness’ is included in the definition of the term. We do not therefore interpret ‘*Dasein*’ as a hypothetical proposition against which experience can be measured. Rather its ontical-ontological description invites a fundamental introspection on pre-ontological understanding of ‘there-ness’ implicit in all ontical comportment. If *Dasein*’s ‘issue’ with the question of being is grounded in its ontical situatedness and ‘always already’ being in the world is an ‘essential structure’<sup>125</sup> of *Dasein*, then understanding *Dasein* requires that we explicate precisely how *Dasein* ‘always already’ finds itself in ‘something like a world’. Thus far we have explicated always already being in something like a world with respect to *Dasein*’s ontical comportment to entities. In that sense, *Dasein*’s everyday engagement with the world is inherently indicative of an always present and prerequisite understanding of being(s). On our reading of Heidegger, this central characteristic of *Dasein* is also ontologically grounded. Here, always already being in something like a world refers to Heidegger’s critique of disengagement and his insistence on analysis of *Dasein*, specifically in its average everydayness, as a point of departure for enquiring after being. Furthermore, in our understanding of Heidegger’s project this is his central philosophical point. His claim that *Dasein* is caught in an inextricable ontical-ontological relatedness to the world is anchored in the argument that ontological truth is only possible on condition that human experience and its objects are mutually presupposing. Thus the relationship of experience to its objects must be pragmatically grounded in the brute fact of presence-hood in the world. Therefore a pre-ontological understanding of the world and being(s) as such is implicit in their manipulation. This is what Heidegger seems to mean when referring to *Dasein* as an entity which ‘in its very being, comports itself understandingly towards that being’ in that it is ‘grounded upon that state of being which we have called “*being-in-the-world*”’<sup>126</sup> This ‘state of being’, on our reading, describes a fundamental and constitutive feature of experience as such so that there can be no experience which does not presuppose and thus reaffirm a contextualising framework of worldliness. On Mulhall’s reading therefore,

Heidegger’s use of the term ‘Dasein’, with its literal meaning of ‘there-being’ or ‘being-there’ to denote the human way of being emphasizes that human existence is *essentially* Being-in-the-world; in effect, it affirms an internal relation between ‘human being’ and ‘world’.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Robert R. Brandom, *Dasein, the Being that Thematisizes in Heidegger Re-examined* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p.37

<sup>126</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.78

<sup>127</sup> Stephen Mulhall, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005) p.40

An extended discussion of the relationship between *Dasein*, the world and ontological truth will be an important part of explicating *ET* and *EHF* in our penultimate chapter. Suffice it to say that for Heidegger, the ontical-ontological relatedness of *Dasein* to the world is grounded in the mutual presupposition of experience and its objects. Frede explains this point in concise terms:

If there are basically two separate entities, subject and object, that occur side by side, the question of how contact is possible between the thinking subject and independently existing objects remains an insoluble problem, even if one grants that the subject somehow bestows the “form” or the “meaning” on the objects. For this question remains: How can there be truth if it is conceived of as the *correspondence* between our thoughts (or the content of our consciousness) and the outside world? In other words, what guarantees the objectivity of our subjective impressions?<sup>128</sup>

Heidegger’s criticism of the ontological tradition is rooted in these concerns so an accurate and appropriate account of *Dasein* requires bearing them in mind. The ‘thinking subject’ cannot be disengaged from ‘independently existing objects’ else there could be no certainty of these objects as independently existing at all. Similarly, independently existing objects cannot be disengaged from the thinking subject else there could be no ‘truthful correspondence’ between thought and objects. Heidegger’s account of *Dasein*’s comportment to entities in the world will be illustrative of his claim that *Dasein* has a pre-ontological understanding of being(s). He categorises these entities under one of two modes of being: *Zuhandensein* (ready-to-hand or equipment) and *Vorhandensein* (present-at-hand or objects). A brief outline of each will be sufficient for our purposes.

*b) Disclosure of Being-Ontological in Relation to Equipment*

*Zuhandensein* refers to the comportment to entities in the mode of their use as equipment. It describes an ontical engagement within a contextualising matrix of values and significances, grounded in a pre-ontological understanding. For Heidegger, *Zuhandensein* is ‘essentially’ its being ‘something-in-order-to’. Thus the appropriate comportment to an entity towards achieving some other end will disclose its being in relation to *Dasein*:

Equipment is essentially ‘something-in-order-to...’ [“etwas um-zu...”]. A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the ‘in-order-to’, such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability.<sup>129</sup>

The hammer for example discloses the ‘equipmentality’<sup>130</sup> of its being insofar as it is manipulated ‘in order to’ achieve the end of hammering a nail. Importantly, *Zuhandensein* is not restricted to a localised understanding. The ‘ready-to-hand’ does not refer just to the particular entity currently in use but to that entity insofar as using it is an instance of an encounter with the environment as

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<sup>128</sup> Dorothea Frede, *The Question of Being: Heidegger’s Project in The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.61

<sup>129</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.97

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97 – What Heidegger refers to as the ‘kind of Being equipment possesses...’

subject to use or manipulation. Heidegger confirms this broader understanding in reference to 'Nature':

So in the environment certain entities become accessible which are always ready-to-hand, but which, in themselves, do not need to be produced. Hammer, tongs, and needle, refer in themselves to steel, iron, metal, mineral, wood, in that they consist of these. In equipment that is used, 'Nature' is discovered along with it by that use – the 'Nature' we find in natural products.<sup>131</sup>

Thus an encounter with the world is implicit in the use of equipment such that an inherent relation of *Dasein* to the world is a constitutive feature of manipulating or engaging with entities. Crucially this relation is mutually presupposing so that the ontical-ontological understanding disclosed by equipmental-comportment confronts the totality of relations. As Brandom reminds us,

Heidegger is clear that there is no equipment without *Dasein*, and no *Dasein* without equipment. *Dasein* and *Zuhandensein* mutually presuppose one another as substructures of being-in-the-world.<sup>132</sup>

*Dasein* and *Zuhandensein* are 'mutually presupposing' in that for an entity to be equipment it must be used by *Dasein* towards achieving an end, and conversely whatever *Dasein* handles towards achieving an end becomes equipment. Nevertheless, this characterisation refers only to the system of relations between entities within the 'substructure of being-in-the-world'. *Dasein*'s three ways of taking priority mean that it cannot but recognise this system of relations.

c) *Disclosure of Being-Ontological in Relation to Things*

Michael Wheeler, describes the present-at-hand or *Vorhandensein* in the following way:

When *Dasein* engages in, for example, the practices of natural science, when sensing takes place purely in the service of reflective or philosophical contemplation, or when philosophers claim to have identified certain context-free metaphysical building blocks of the universe (e.g., points of pure extension, monads), the entities under study are phenomenologically removed from the settings of everyday equipmental practice and are thereby revealed as fully fledged independent objects, that is, as the bearers of certain context-general determinate or measurable properties (size in metres, weight in kilos etc.). Heidegger calls this mode of Being *presence-at-hand*, and he sometimes refers to present-at-hand entities as 'Things'.<sup>133</sup>

These 'Things' are not simply objects occurring in the world but are 'encountered in such a way that their worldly character comes to the fore'.<sup>134</sup> They involve an engagement that is not one of use but observation and in this respect we understand this as the engagement with objects typical of rational enquiry, detached from practical engagement. We have previously referred to the present-

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100

<sup>132</sup> Robert R. Brandom, *Dasein, the Being that Thematises in Heidegger Re-examined* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p.39

<sup>133</sup> Michael Wheeler, *Martin Heidegger*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/heidegger/>

<sup>134</sup> Sometimes refers to as 'un-readiness-to-hand' - Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) pp.102/103



at-hand in respect of Heidegger's critique of Descartes and his dependence on 'medieval scholasticism' whereby beings are treated exclusively in the mode of the present. To be clear this 'present' refers to a mode of relation to its objects whereby temporal presence is extended infinitely as a contextualising metaphysical space in which objects can be observed. This is how we understand what Heidegger refers to as the 'there-is'<sup>135</sup> of presence-at-hand and therefore its 'inappropriateness' to *Dasein*:

But here our ontological task is to show that when we choose to designate the Being of this entity [Dasein] as "existence" [Existenz], this term does not and cannot have the ontological signification of the traditional term "*existentia*"; ontologically, *existentia* is tantamount to *Being-present-at-hand*, a kind of Being which is essentially inappropriate to entities of Dasein's character.<sup>136</sup>

Moreover, it is important to note that the present-at-hand is not independent of equipmental-comportment. On our reading of Heidegger, observational engagement remains ontologically grounded in a form of pragmatic relation but where the 'something-in-order-to' has to do with rational analysis. Thus a breakdown of equipmental-comportment, for instance, will reveal an otherwise implicit observational engagement. So if my pen should fail in applying ink to the page, my relation to it will be characterised by a rational reflection on its component parts. But this comportment characterised by a contextualising infinite presence, a theoretical space where entities are suspended for observation, is premised on an ontical-ontological understanding of being(s). This can be illustrated with respect to Heidegger's criticism of the presupposition inherent to rationalism. As we have seen, Heidegger argues that the dualistic hypothesis is valid on condition of a pre-existing relation between experience and its objects. In this sense, observational-comportment (the mode of being characterised as *Vorhandensein*) is similarly possible on condition of a prerequisite understanding of being(s). Thus the breakdown of relations in practical engagement does not dissolve objects from experience but furnishes the possibility of an observational/rational relation.

d) *The Significance of Dasein to the Question of Being*

In light of what has already been said we will restrict ourselves to the statement of three key conclusions drawn from the consideration of *Dasein*'s significance to the question of being:

- *Dasein* is the entity of ontico-ontological priority to the question of being.
- *Dasein*'s prioritisation is reflective of both a methodological requirement to fundamental ontology and an ontological claim that the possibility of ontological truth presupposes an understanding of being(s).

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67

- Analysis of *Dasein* must be framed by its average everydayness insofar as its practical (*Zuhandensein*) and theoretical (*Vorhandensein*) engagement disclose this pre-ontological understanding.

Thus for Heidegger, an existential analytic of *Dasein* is part and parcel of enquiry into question of being. Failure to provide such an analytic therefore risks a disengaged account of being(s).

### iii) The Identification of Phenomenology with Ontology

Having discussed [fundamental] ontology, the majority of our focus will be dedicated to phenomenology but a brief reiteration will provide coordination and context. We will consider phenomenology in two ways. First, we will outline the etymologically-derived definition in regards to the ‘phenomenon’ and the ‘logos’. Second, we will develop that definition into phenomenology as methodology, concluding by applying our understanding of phenomenology to the question of being. Our intention will be to show that for Heidegger, phenomenology is the formalisation of the analysis of *Dasein* in respect of its everyday comportment. If, as we have argued in our interpretation of Heidegger, rationalist, that is disengaged, methodology is marked by disingenuousness then phenomenology is intended as a sincere means by which to approach the question of being.

#### a) What Heidegger Means by Phenomenology

For the remainder of this analysis ‘ontology’ will refer to fundamental ontology unless otherwise stated. Put simply, ontology describes an effort to disclose the being of entities in relation to the totality and thus ultimately establish a confrontation with being as such. It will seek to maintain the holistic structure of immediate experience by addressing its enquiries in terms of hermeneutic facticity. We understand this in much the same terms as Miguel de Beistegui outlines in *The New Heidegger*. In distinguishing Heidegger’s understanding of hermeneutics from traditional definitions he says,

With Heidegger, hermeneutics no longer refers to the science of interpretation, but to the process of interpretation that is an essential characteristic of life or existence itself. [...] The mode of access to being is through this understanding of being that *Dasein* already has. [...] All *deliberate* interpretations take place on the basis of *Dasein*’s primordial facticity, that is, on the basis of a pre-reflexive understanding of being from within a concrete situation that has intrinsic relation to the interpreter’s life and personal as well as common history, to his past as well as his future.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Miguel de Beistegui, *The New Heidegger* (NY/London: Continuum, 2005) p.23

In this respect and as previously stated, the brute facticity of immediate and localised present-hood is always-already indicative of a primordial relationship between human-being and being as such. Finally, it is rooted in the philosophical claim that ontological truth is possible on condition of such a pre-ontological understanding of being(s), what we have referred to as the mutual presupposition of experience and its objects. An equally simple summary of phenomenology will provide us a preliminary sketch of how they are identified by Heidegger. Phenomenology can be understood in two ways though they are not sharply distinguished:

- Phenomenology as the etymologically-derived definition of the term. This is a literal understanding, individually defining ‘phenomenon’ and ‘*logos*’ before recombining them.
- Phenomenology as the most appropriate ‘methodological conception’ of ontology. Here phenomenology is the means of arriving at an ontological disclosure of being.

Maintaining a distinction between these definitions may contradict the implications of the term but will help us clarify the identification of phenomenology with ontology. Of course Heidegger’s project requires that these and previous concerns are not individual parts but overlap each other.

The first way of understanding phenomenology refers to the Greek root of the word. Heidegger divides phenomenology into the phenomenon and the *logos*. For Heidegger, the Greek for phenomenon translates as ‘appearance’ or more precisely, a ‘showing-itself-in-itself.’<sup>138</sup> We will outline the distinction between phenomenon and appearance before elaborating what Heidegger means by showing-itself-in-itself. As Heidegger states:

“*Phenomenon*”, the showing itself-in-itself, signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered. “*Appearance*”, on the other hand, means a reference-relationship which is in an entity itself, and which is such that what *does the referring* (or the announcing) can fulfil its possible function only if it shows itself in itself and is thus a ‘phenomenon.’ Both appearance and semblance are founded upon the phenomenon, though in different ways. The bewildering multiplicity of ‘phenomena’ designated by the words “phenomenon”, “semblance”, “appearance”, “mere appearance”, cannot be disentangled unless the concept of the phenomenon is understood from the beginning as that which shows itself in itself.<sup>139</sup>

There is a difference between phenomena as appearance, semblance and mere appearance<sup>140</sup> though they are all founded on the phenomenon. For Heidegger, understanding the phenomenon as a showing-itself-in-itself renders the phenomena encountered all the more comprehensible. Nevertheless, phenomena encountered as semblance seem to *prima facie* contradict Heidegger’s

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p.54

<sup>140</sup> We will focus on appearance and semblance. These two are sufficient to clarify the phenomena of phenomenon in all their ‘bewildering multiplicities.’

definition of the phenomenon as showing-itself-in-itself. This is especially problematic because Heidegger also says semblance can be understood as a showing-itself-as-what-it-is-not:<sup>141</sup>

Now an entity can show itself from itself [von ihm selbst her] in many ways, depending in each case on the kind of access we have to it. Indeed it is even possible for an entity to show itself as something which in itself it is *not*.<sup>142</sup>

Of course our discussion of appearance and semblance is preliminary and will not explore the issues involved at length. The point is to elucidate our interpretation of methodological phenomenology as the most appropriate or sincere means of comportment to ontological enquiry and ultimately how this grounds Heidegger's argument for freedom. To that end, a question arises as to whether something which shows-itself-as-what-it-is-not truly shows itself at all. If what is shown is not what the entity *is* then it cannot conform to the definitions of the phenomenon. We are obligated to understand how semblance is reconciled with the phenomenon in light of this contradiction. Heidegger acknowledges the importance of this reconciliation:

If we are to have any further understanding of the concept of phenomenon, everything depends on our seeing how what is designated in the first signification of *φαινόμενον* ('phenomenon' as that which shows itself) and what is designated in the second ('phenomenon' as semblance) are structurally interconnected.<sup>143</sup>

This 'structural interconnection' is constituted by the fact that a given phenomena cannot show itself as something it is not unless the phenomenon is 'already included within what it isn't'. In other words, semblance must already imply the phenomenon it is a semblance of. 'Seeming' to be something necessitates revealing that which is ostensibly hidden. As Claudio proclaims to Leonato, 'Give not this rotten orange to your friend. She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.'<sup>144</sup> 'Seeming' ripe already implies the contrary rottenness of the orange that it *is*. To 'seem' honourable is to be such that one does not 'seem' dishonourable. Thus the semblance of honour reveals the dishonour which seeming purports to hide. Heidegger consolidates this reconciliation in the following way:

Only when the meaning of something is such that it makes a pretension of showing itself – that is, of being a phenomenon – *can* it show itself *as* something which it is *not*; only then *can* it 'merely look like so-and-so'. When *φαινόμενον* signifies 'semblance', the primordial signification (the phenomenon as the manifest) is already included as that upon which the second signification is founded.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> A semblance is usually understood as an outward appearance which is not always an accurate representation of reality.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51

<sup>144</sup> William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (London: Michael O'Mara Books Ltd.), pp.110-133, Act 4 Scene 1

<sup>145</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.51

Something cannot make a ‘pretension of showing itself’ without firstly showing itself even when pretension purports to hide what it *is*. An encounter with that which ‘hides something’ already includes an encounter with the ‘hidden-ness of that thing’. This, it seems, is the sense in which semblance, showing-itself-as-what-it-is-not, is founded on the phenomenon, showing-itself-in-itself.

‘Appearance’ on the other hand, refers to what Heidegger calls the ‘announcing-itself’. He is clear that appearance does not refer to the familiar usage for which something that appears is also that which shows-itself: it is not the contrary term to what is usually meant by a ‘disappearance’ for example. An appearance, for Heidegger, ‘does not show itself’:

Thus appearance, as the appearance ‘of something’ does *not* mean showing-itself; it means rather the announcing-itself by [von] something which does not show itself, but which announces itself through something which does not show itself.<sup>146</sup>

‘Appearance’, in Heidegger’s sense, therefore refers much more to that which ‘indicates’ or ‘presents’ in the sense of a physical malady or illness. One may for instance ‘present’ the symptoms of flu but what shows-itself may be a loss of colour or runny nose which ‘announce’ a virus. Heidegger nonetheless insists that ‘appearing is possible only by *reason of a showing-itself*’. Though it is strictly an ‘announcing-itself’, a phenomenon is ‘constitutive for appearance’. In other words, what is announced by the reference-relationship of an appearance is only possible on condition of an underlying showing-itself. It is in this sense that appearance and semblance are both ‘founded on the phenomenon’.

We may divide the terms ‘showing-itself’ and ‘in-itself’ to highlight their individual significance. The first refers to the disclosure of being as opposed to its discovery or definition. What shows-itself need not be sought or defined in order to determine what it *is*. As a ‘showing-itself’, the phenomenon is first encountered as ‘already available to us’. In this sense, Heidegger’s notion of disclosure avoids unrelatedness by revealing what is inherent to the phenomenon by virtue of what is already available. The ‘it’ of ‘itself’ specifies a given entity from a multiplicity of other such entities. Much like the phenomena of semblance, the entities which it is not are ‘already included within it’ and thereby constitute the specification of ‘it’ as ‘itself’. Thus showing-itself-in-itself refers to the disclosure of being by means of relatedness to its constitutive world.

Heidegger’s interpretation of *logos* also relies on what he calls a ‘word-for-word’ translation from the Greek. *Logos* becomes ‘discourse’ or more specifically, ‘to make manifest what one is ‘talking about’ in one’s discourse’<sup>147</sup> but what Heidegger means by ‘making manifest what is discussed’ is unclear. The ‘manifestation of discourse’ does not mean making what is said ‘real’ or

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56

‘true’. For Heidegger, the ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ of what is discussed has very little bearing on whether or not discourse is ‘manifested’. Logos is rather ‘letting-something-be-seen’ irrelevant of whether what is seen is agreed upon as ‘real’ or ‘true’:

Furthermore, because the λόγος is a letting-something-be-seen, it can *therefore* be true or false. But here everything depends on our steering clear of any conception of truth which is construed in the sense of ‘agreement’.<sup>148</sup>

Manifesting discourse does not require ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ in the sense of empirical observation. To let something be seen means only that what is discussed is disclosed<sup>149</sup> by what is spoken about. In this sense, what is manifested in discourse can even be ‘false’ and still adhere to ‘letting-something-be-seen’. Falsehood or ‘being false’ in discourse means only that it is spoken [*sprechen*] as a covering up:

Similarly, ‘Being false’ amounts to deceiving in the sense of *covering up* [*verdecken*]: putting something in front of something (in such a way as to let it be seen) and thereby passing it off *as* something which it is *not*.<sup>150</sup>

In this respect, when what is spoken about is covered up one encounters the discourse as a deception. Even in the case of a ‘successful’ deception, the discourse is still encountered as such. Truth in regards to *logos* is an unhidden-letting-something-be-seen. Falsehood is therefore letting-something-be-seen-as-covered-up:

When something no longer takes the form of just letting something be seen, but is always harking back to something else to which it points, so that it lets something be seen *as* something, it thus acquires a synthesis-structure, and with this it takes over the possibility of covering up. The ‘truth of judgments’, however, is merely the opposite of this covering-up, a secondary phenomenon of truth, *with more than one kind of foundation*.<sup>151</sup>

Though we may speak of something so as to cover it up, our speech is encountered as a covering up. One always ‘points to’ that which is hidden even whilst passing it off as something else and this ‘pointing to’ simultaneously hides and reveals what is spoken about. Thus deceptive discourse requires a simultaneous encounter with what is hidden and the means of its obscuration. For Heidegger, difficulty with this simultaneity is due to a ‘misunderstanding of the Greek conception of ‘truth’. He claims that ‘Αισθήσεις, the sheer sensory perception of something, is ‘true’ in the Greek sense [...]’.<sup>152</sup> Simultaneously covering up and pointing to what is spoken about does not

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56

<sup>149</sup> What is disclosed and disclosure will be discussed at length in the chapter on Heidegger and freedom.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57

constitute a falsehood in the sense of contradicting empirical truth. Deception is rather encountered as such thereby revealing what is ostensibly ‘hidden’.

Thus we have an interpretation of the phenomenon as a showing-itself-in-itself: a necessary disclosure of being. Showing reveals its relatedness to the world which constitutes the phenomenon, including the observer. The *logos*, as we have understood it is a letting-something-be-seen, specifically in regards to the manifestation of what is spoken about. Even deceptive discourse is encountered as such, in much the same manner as semblance:

Thus “phenomenology” means to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself. This is the formal meaning of that branch of research which calls itself “phenomenology”. But here we are expressing nothing else than the maxim formulated above: ‘To the things themselves!’<sup>153</sup>

In light of this, we can explain the difficulty of distinguishing the two ways of understanding Heidegger’s phenomenology. This is partly due to the fact that although conflating methodology and definition is generally problematic, it holds in the case of phenomenology. Phenomenology must be a methodology insofar as its definition describes the aim of ontology. As previously mentioned, the ‘hammer-ness’ of a hammer is disclosed in its appropriate use: in the phenomenon of hammer-ing. Similarly, ‘that formal branch of research we call phenomenology’ is only revealed by ‘grasping objects’ such that entities are encountered from themselves in the world. Thus understanding phenomenology by application means it is understood phenomenologically:

What is it that phenomenology is to ‘let us see’? What is it that must be called a ‘phenomenon’ in a distinctive sense? What is it that by its very essence is *necessarily* the theme whenever we exhibit something *explicitly*? Manifestly, it is something that proximally and for the most part does *not* show itself at all: it is something that lies *hidden*, in contrast to that which is proximally and for the most part does show itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground. Yet that which remains *hidden* in an egregious sense, or which relapses and gets *covered up* again, or which shows itself only ‘*in disguise*’, is not just this entity or that, but rather the *Being* of entities, as our previous observations have shown. This Being can be covered up so extensively that it becomes forgotten and no question arises about it or about its meaning.<sup>154</sup>

Here Heidegger returns to the problem of ‘forgetting’ the question of being which opened his analysis. We are better positioned to understand his reference to the ‘hidden’ in light of what has been said about appearance and semblance. The phenomenon is precisely that which leads to what ‘does not show itself’ but not in the colloquial sense of what cannot be seen. What ‘remains hidden’ is quite precisely the being of entities and ultimately being. Phenomenology understood phenomenologically is therefore the disclosure of the being of entities by means of what ‘covers them up’. That being of entities is ‘covered up’ in the same sense of the reference-relation which is

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59

announced by it. What ‘proximally and for the most part shows itself’ is also that which announces the being of entities but strictly and solely as an announcement. Failure in the appropriate application of phenomenology to disclose the being of entities will invariably commit ontology to this ‘covering up’ and ultimately ‘forgetting’ of the question of being. Heidegger refers to this application of phenomenology as methodology when he states,

Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. *Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible.*<sup>155</sup>

Heidegger’s *eo ipso* identification of phenomenology as the proper method of ontology is certainly bold. As discussed, Heidegger criticises the methods of the ontological tradition as either insufficient or obstructive to the task of ontology. The ontological tradition thus either falls short of serious enquiry or presupposes being, obscuring interrogation. Nonetheless, it does not follow from these criticisms that phenomenology provides the sole means of addressing ontology. Read simplistically, Heidegger seems to assert the impossibility of ontology in the absence of phenomenology and this would indeed constitute a very difficult claim. Heidegger’s contradiction of that claim exacerbates its difficulty:

One can determine the nature of entities in their Being without necessarily having the explicit concept of the meaning of Being at one’s disposal. Otherwise there could have been no ontological knowledge heretofore. One would hardly deny that factually there has been such knowledge. Of course ‘Being’ has been presupposed in all ontology up till now, but not as a *concept* at one’s disposal – not as the sort of thing we are seeking.<sup>156</sup>

Putting to one side the unhelpful possibility of a glaring contradiction, Heidegger’s claim refers to a particular kind of ontology: fundamental ontology. Moreover, his criticisms of traditional ontology are not incidental to his claim. It is made in light of the proposed ‘destruction of traditional ontology’. Thus we can take the claim to mean, ‘only as phenomenology, is [*fundamental*] ontology possible’ or ‘only as phenomenology, is [*the appropriate*] ontology possible’. Either, it seems, would suffice. The point is simply that any ontology which sincerely undertakes its task, its ‘ownmost aim’, will do so by means of phenomenology. A definition of phenomenology as a ‘methodological conception’ will help us further clarify their identification:

‘Phenomenology’ neither designates the object of its researches, nor characterises the subject-matter thus comprised. The word merely informs us of the “*how*” with which *what* is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science ‘of’ phenomena means to grasp objects *in such a way* that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.27-28

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59



For Heidegger, phenomenology is not tasked with defining phenomena but providing an appropriate means of addressing the 'subject-matter' of ontology. It seeks to 'exhibit' the being of entities without presupposition or imposition. 'Directly demonstrating' objects requires avoiding the unrelatedness of those objects from the constitutive world. But this we can readily infer from everyday experience: 'directly demonstrating' or 'exhibiting' the being of this pencil is implicit in its use. It is in this sense that objects disclose their being in relatedness to the world. In 'Intentionality and the World: Division I of Being and Time', Harrison Hall reflects this use of phenomenology as the means by which objects are 'exhibited' in the world:

Heidegger makes these discoveries by getting things to show themselves to us as they really are in our ordinary dealings with them. [...] His claim is that the hammer and doorknob really are what they are as practically employed. The trick is to see what they are without changing them from instrumental to perceptual objects and breaking down the network of relations essential to their instrumental nature.<sup>158</sup>

This 'trick' is the task of phenomenology as methodology. The concern of phenomenology, on our interpretation of Heidegger's understanding, is precisely '*how*' one addresses objects, thereby avoiding 'changing an instrumental object to one of perception'. Thus doorknobs disclose their being only in their use, revealed by the attempt to 'open-the-door-by-means-of-the-knob'. The door it opens, the function of the door and the environmental system of relations which contextualise the door are already included in the 'door-knob'. Abstracting the doorknob from the world results in the 'breakdown of relations essential to its nature': the principal error of the ontological tradition and a description of the problem with a 'disengaged' approach to philosophical enquiry. For Heidegger, only strict adherence to a specified methodology avoids the risk of abstraction. It must also guarantee that objects are addressed in a manner appropriate to the world to which they are essentially related. As we have seen, ontology is tasked with laying entities bare such that they disclose being in themselves and from themselves.<sup>159</sup> Success in that regard requires eliminating the imposition of presuppositions, occurring as a consequence of an inappropriate methodology. This is only possible given a methodology which is critical of the enquirer and therefore must be a methodology which is 'self-critical in a positive sense'.<sup>160</sup> Phenomenology's focus on '*how*' objects are addressed rather than '*what*' is addressed presents just such a 'self-critical' methodology. For

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<sup>158</sup> Harrison Hall, *Intentionality and the World: Division I of Being and Time in The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.122-140, pp.126-127

<sup>159</sup> 'Because phenomena, as understood phenomenologically, are never anything but what goes to make up Being, while Being is in every case the Being of some entity, we must first bring forward the entities themselves if it our aim that Being should be laid bare; and we must do this in the right way. These entities must likewise show themselves with the kind of access which genuinely belongs to them.' - Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.61

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61

Heidegger, phenomenology is the most appropriate means by which ontology is possible because it meets these criteria. The application of phenomenology (phenomenology understood phenomenologically) must fulfil the requirements of fundamental ontology.

b) *The Significance of Phenomenology to the Question of Being*

As the sole means by which ontology is possible, phenomenology is the only way of addressing the question of being. The assertion fails to mention a crucial issue, though it follows. Phenomenology is distinguished by its prioritisation of the enquirer. It demands assessment of one's methodological approach to ontology. This is the sense in which it is presented as 'self-critical'.

The enquirer becomes the focus of enquiry:

Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about – namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term "*Dasein*".<sup>161</sup>

The significance of phenomenology to the question of being must be understood in the light of *Dasein*'s centrality to that question. Understanding *Dasein* results in understanding the significance of phenomenology because it is the entity for which 'the very asking of this question' is a mode of its being. In regard to the relationship between phenomenology and the question of being, it will suffice to say that phenomenology must be the method by which the question of being is addressed:

With regard to its subject-matter, phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities – ontology. In explaining the task of ontology we found it necessary that there should be a fundamental ontology taking as its theme that entity which is ontologico-ontically distinctive, *Dasein*, in order to confront the cardinal problem – the question of the meaning of Being in general.<sup>162</sup>

For Heidegger, understanding the question of being requires phenomenology as a method precisely because it is concerned with interrogating the enquirer. He is assured of *Dasein*'s importance to phenomenology (and thereby of phenomenology to the question of being) by virtue of its inherent understanding of being. The ontico-ontological distinctiveness of *Dasein* describes its phenomenological appropriateness for ontology. If phenomenology is 'to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself' and *Dasein* must take issue with being and thus have an understanding of being, then an ontology of *Dasein* will provide a phenomenological disclosure of being. In other words, 'destruction' of the philosopher's disengagement by means of a phenomenological, existential analytic will aid the disclosure of being(s).

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61

## III

## Jean-Paul Sartre's Project of Phenomenological Ontology

Sartre's project rests on two related concerns. Primarily, *BN*<sup>163</sup> is intended to provide a form of phenomenological ontology which is centred on consciousness. The book's secondary, though no less significant, concern is addressing and ultimately adjusting Heidegger's ontology, principally the ontology of *Dasein*. An accurate explication of Sartre's project will therefore invariably require comparison with Heidegger's project of phenomenological ontology, as this was presented in the previous chapter. For Sartre, Heidegger's failure to include consciousness and an epistemic account thereof constitutes a fundamental error in his ontology of *Dasein* and therefore his project as a whole. Ultimately, we will show that Sartre's argument for freedom is central to his claims of a robust responsibility couched in his interpretation of intentionality. It is our contention that Sartre's effort to 'establish consciousness epistemologically' betrays a misunderstanding of Heidegger's project. We contend that Sartre seems to read the methodological prioritisation of human experience into the very constitution of consciousness such that it becomes the locus of all ontology and meaning. Nonetheless, arriving at that conclusion will require careful analysis of Sartre's project which, he claims, is intended to answer five central questions:

What is the meaning of these two types [for-itself and in-itself] of being? For what reasons do they belong to *being* in general? What is the meaning of that being which includes within itself these two radically separated regions of being? If idealism and realism both fail to explain the relations which *in fact* unite these regions and which *in theory* are without communication, what other solution can we find for this problem? And how can the being of the phenomenon be transphenomenal? I have written the present work in order to try answering these questions.<sup>164</sup>

Thus for Sartre, his project is intended, in part at least, to establish a 'solution' to the problem of the 'radically separated regions of being'. As we have already seen, Heidegger argues that dualism merely describes a negative relation to being, not the lack of a relation. In other words, the radical separation of regions of being presupposes their communication. Analysis of *Da-sein* therefore presents an appropriate methodological point of departure to disclose an implicit understanding. Conversely, Sartre seems to want to propose a theoretical solution to the problem and, we argue, will do so by appeal to what he calls a 'pre-reflective cogito'. As we will show, Sartre wants to supplement the Heideggerian account of *Dasein*, which he understands as describing the ontological

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<sup>163</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003)

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23

ground of human-being, with an epistemological account. This is how we interpret Sartre's statement that,

Thus to the necessity of ontologically establishing consciousness we would add a new necessity: *that of establishing it epistemologically.*

Later adding,

In other words, every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself.

And concluding that therefore,

...reflection has no kind of primacy over the consciousness reflected-on. It is not reflection which reveals the consciousness which renders the reflection possible; *there is a pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito.*<sup>165</sup>

'Establishing consciousness epistemologically' is, on our reading of Sartre, necessary because, he argues, *Dasein* is described in ethically ambiguous terms, reducing it to a 'thing-like, blind in-itself'<sup>166</sup> and leaving little room for responsibility and thus freedom. In the appeal to Descartes therefore, Sartre wants to establish a primordial *res cogitans* (a thinking or experiencing 'I') to which he can attribute a profound ontological responsibility. In chapter four we will ultimately argue that Sartre's attempt to slot an account of a pre-reflective cogito into the ontology of *Dasein* grounded by its being-in-the-world and distinguished by its relationship to being, constitutes an internal contradiction in Sartre's project and a misunderstanding of Heidegger. Though we will not discuss these issues in the following analysis, reference to Sartre's 'epistemic proof of consciousness' will help shed light on his relationship to Heidegger and the argument for freedom. To that end it will suffice to focus our attention on the first three of Sartre's questions representing the three core claims of *BN*:

- i) **Being-in-Itself and Being-for-Itself** – Simply speaking, the former is the type of being of non-conscious entities. The pen, for example, is unaware of itself and as such, cannot extend beyond its boundaries to project possibilities. Being-in-itself is limited to the fact that it *is*. Being-for-itself is the type of being of conscious entities. Being-for-itself is described as 'a lack', not possessing any positive determinations.
- ii) **'The Problem of Nothingness'** – For Sartre, nothingness is central to consciousness, rendering impossible an absolute identification of oneself with the external world and one's

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8,9 [Italics added]

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p.98

actions.<sup>167</sup> Consciousness' 'pre-judicative comprehension' of non-being allows for a sense of authorship over the self, responsibility for action and an encounter with the world such as it is.

- iii) **The Centrality of Consciousness** – Sartre claims that ontological discourse is impossible in the absence of consciousness because it alone provides the possibility of ontology. Consciousness is therefore a necessary prerequisite for an encounter with the world as such. This does not mean that the empirical world depends on consciousness but that the meanings of things in the world are inconceivable in the absence of consciousness.

Before beginning our analysis, it is important to note three key points. First, though each of these core claims will be explicated independently, they are indispensable parts of a collective whole. Each refers to and requires the others in propping up Sartre's view of human reality. Second, Sartre's style of writing often lends itself to criticism. His syntactic complexity therefore demands greater interpretive sensitivity. Consequently, full and proper comprehension requires careful interpretation. Finally, Sartre's insistence on the inclusion of consciousness means that his arguments often slide from the ontological to the epistemological. One preliminary example can be found in his use of 'meaning'. In the previous chapter we explicate Heidegger's argument for adjusting ontological questions from asking what a being, and being in general, '*is*' to what one *means* by a being such that it '*is*'. We explicate this adjustment in respect of Heidegger's effort to methodologically compel the enquirer into a hermeneutic introspection of facticity precisely in order to disclose an otherwise implicit/presupposed understanding of being. Sartre's claim that 'essence is the meaning of the object' collapses this distinction into an assertive claim about being(s). If 'essence *is* the meaning of the object' then meaning is no longer instructive of a relationship to being(s) but describes being(s) as such. Thus the '*is*-ness' of objects becomes the responsibility of the being for whom meaning is a possibility.<sup>168</sup> Although our intention at this stage is not to propose criticisms of Sartre based on a comparison with Heidegger, we will address some points of contention so that Sartre's project may stand out in full relief.

#### i) **Being-in-Itself and Being-for-Itself**

The first core claim that Sartre makes is that there are two modes of being, being-in-itself and being-for-itself, and the corresponding two kinds of entity, the in-itself and the for-itself. Our explication will be restricted to two main questions. We will first seek to define both being-in-itself

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<sup>167</sup> By this of course we do not only mean actions that involve the physical movement of the limbs but also mental actions such as thinking or attending.

<sup>168</sup> He later adds that, 'Consciousness can always pass beyond the existent, not toward its being, but toward the *meaning of this being*.' - Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.5/p.18

and being-for-itself though it should be noted that Sartre regards these as inextricably intertwined types of being. Our definitions are provided with the sole intention of clarifying the modes of being inherent to entities in Sartre's project, not their independence. We will then address their relationship. In so doing we hope to explicate Sartre's argument for the need to 'establish consciousness epistemologically' and the basis of that argument in his interpretation of intentionality. Sartre argues that the for-itself could not be without the in-itself, much as 'colour could not exist without form'.<sup>169</sup> Of course this raises the question of whether this dependence is reciprocal. Sartre later adds,

[...] the in-itself has no need of the for-itself in order to be; the "passion" of the for-itself only cause *there to be* in-itself [*seulement qu'il y ait de l'en-soi*]. The *phenomenon* of in-itself is an abstraction without consciousness but its *being* is not an abstraction.<sup>170</sup>

Thus Sartre suggests that the phenomenon of the in-itself, its being-there, depends on the 'passion' of the for-itself. One may therefore be inclined to infer traditional disconnected dualism at work here. Therefore it is important to clarify that these passages are set in the context of an attempt to 'conceive of a synthetic organisation such that the for-itself is inseparable from the in-itself and conversely such that the in-itself is indissolubly bound to the for-itself...'<sup>171</sup> We understand this to be the logical extension of Sartre's stated intention to find 'the meaning of that being which includes within itself these two radically separated regions of being'.<sup>172</sup> To that end Sartre asserts that, 'Doubtless the for-itself is a nihilation, but as a nihilation it *is*; and it is in *a priori* unity with the in-itself',<sup>173</sup> later adding the following:

What does this mean if not that the indissoluble totality of in-itself and for-itself is conceivable only in the form of a being which is its own "self-cause"? [...] And if we can raise the question of being of the for-itself articulated in the in-itself, it is because we define ourselves *a priori* by means of a pre-ontological comprehension of the *ens causa sui*. [...] Has it not appeared due to the mere fact of the upsurge of the for-itself, and is not the for-itself originally a project of being its own self-cause? Thus we begin to grasp the nature of total reality. Total being, [...] that being whose existence would be a unitary synthesis of the in-itself and of consciousness – this ideal being would be the in-itself founded by the for-itself and identical with the for-itself which founds it – i.e., the *ens causa sui*.<sup>174</sup>

Thus for Sartre, a 'unitary synthesis' of 'total being' is predicated primarily on the for-itself 'founding' the in-itself such that the 'indissoluble totality of in-itself and for-itself' is only possible given an *ens causa sui*, that is, given a being that does not merely disclose 'total being' but by virtue of the 'upsurge of the for-itself' founds total being. Therefore it is clear that Sartre wants to

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p.641

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p.642

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.642

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p.641

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.642

describe an inherent and necessary relationship between these two modes of being. In effect, the phenomenon of the in-itself presupposes the for-itself.<sup>175</sup> Thus colour cannot exist without form but colour and form are not synonymous.<sup>176</sup> The relationship of being-in-itself to being-for-itself is complicated by the subtlety of these distinctions.

a) *Definition of Being-in-Itself/Being-for-Itself*

Sartre provides only a brief explication of being-in-itself in contrast to his thorough discussion of being-for-itself.<sup>177</sup> The end of his introduction to *BN*, provides a sketch of how we are to understand being-in-itself:

But if being is in itself, this means that it does not refer to itself as self-consciousness does. It is this self. It is itself so completely that the perpetual reflection which constitutes self is dissolved in an identity. [...] In fact being is opaque to itself precisely because it is filled with itself. This can be better expressed by saying that *being is what it is*. [...] Being-in-itself has no *within* which is opposed to a *without* and which is analogous to a judgment, a law, a consciousness of itself. The in-itself has nothing secret; it is *solid (massif)*.<sup>178</sup>

To say that an entity simply, ‘is this self’ does little to progress a definition. Similarly, references to ‘solidity’ and ‘opacity’ may only serve to obfuscate rather than illuminate. Sartre asserts that the in-itself ‘is itself so completely that the perpetual reflection which constitutes a self is *dissolved in an identity*’: it need not refer to itself but already ‘is this self’ such that its nature is fully revealed and restricted to the fact of itself. This is what Sartre refers to as the ‘being of phenomena’.<sup>179</sup> By means of clarification one might turn to Sartre’s example of ‘cup’ and ‘inkwell’.<sup>180</sup> Therein both cup and inkwell are described as entities for which their being is ‘neither a matter of indifference nor the opposite’. It is in this sense that the in-itself is ‘glued to itself’, ‘neither self-affirmative nor self-denying’.<sup>181</sup> The defining characteristic of the in-itself is the necessity of its absolute identification with itself such that it simply *is* and *cannot be otherwise* or more precisely, it does not contain the possibility for being other than it is. The in-itself is therefore that which *must be* what it is and *could not be otherwise*.

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<sup>175</sup> “‘Before’ consciousness one can conceive only of a plenum of being of which no element can refer to an absent consciousness.” – *Ibid.*, p.11

<sup>176</sup> The significance of these distinctions cannot be underestimated. They are indicative of Sartre’s move away from Heidegger’s Dasein and will form the basis of our criticisms.

<sup>177</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.95-239 – Five pages of the introduction entitled ‘Being-in-Itself’ (pg.18-23) is available.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21,22

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198

<sup>181</sup> Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) p.168

Nevertheless it would still seem that Sartre's being-in-itself is indebted to accounts from traditional ontology.<sup>182</sup> Thus it will help our explication to clarify that for Sartre, being-in-itself and being-for-itself are 'two modalities of *being*' and that, 'the in-itself and the for-itself are not juxtaposed. Quite the contrary, the for-itself without the in-itself is a kind of abstraction; [...]'.<sup>183</sup> Thus in-itself and for-itself are fundamentally related modalities inherent to 'being in general'.

We now require a definition of being-for-itself:

The *self* therefore represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of *not being his own coincidence*, of escaping identity while positing it as a unity – in short, of being in a perpetually unstable equilibrium between identity as absolute cohesion without a trace of diversity and unity as a synthesis of a multiplicity. This is what we shall call presence to itself. The law of being of the *for-itself*, as the ontological foundation of consciousness, is to be itself in the form of presence to itself.<sup>184</sup>

Sartre later adds the following:

Thus the for-itself must be its own nothingness. The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist *at a distance from itself* as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is Nothingness. Thus in order for a *self* to exist, it is necessary that the unity of this being include its own nothingness as the nihilation of identity. [...] The for-itself is the being which determines itself to exist inasmuch as it can not coincide with itself.<sup>185</sup>

We interpret this to mean that therefore an entity is an instance of the for-itself (and is characterised by being-for-itself) if it is present to itself, and is thus at once identical to itself (as every entity is) and yet not identical to itself (in that it is on the one hand subject and on the other hand object, and this implies a distinction). Here again Sartre refers to the for-itself in respect of being the cause of itself or the *ens causa sui*. Crucially, he now describes this in relation to the 'self' and the nature of consciousness born of 'Nothingness'. He states that 'in order for a self to exist' the for-itself must produce an 'ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself'. This 'distance' between self and itself, he says is 'Nothingness'. Moreover, Sartre is very clear that this self 'exists' in the mode, that is, 'in the form of presence to itself' which is 'the law of being of the for-itself'. He is unequivocal that on his account, 'the ontological foundation of consciousness' is grounded in presence to self. 'The law of being of the for-itself' is such that consciousness is ultimately in a permanent state of 'unstable equilibrium' because, as 'its own Nothingness', the for-itself cannot permit of any 'coincidence' with the self. At a later stage in this chapter we will explicate the relationship between this account of consciousness and Sartre's effort to 'correct' the

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<sup>182</sup> The *ding an sich* (thing in itself) of Kant's Noumena for example is one Sartre distances himself from - Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.4

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p.641

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p.101

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102



account of *Dasein* by attributing to it a robust, ontological responsibility. Suffice it to say that for Sartre, *Dasein*'s 'understanding of being' implicit in its everyday comportments absolves human action of an ethical/moral imperative. His addition of 'Nothingness' at the ontological root of consciousness requires that it is always present before itself, incapable of ever fully identifying with itself and thus always in a position to observe and assess itself. But putting this to one side, our immediate concerns are firstly, the process by which the for-itself engages in active 'nihilation' such that it can be 'present to itself' and secondly, the relationship between being-for-itself and consciousness.

A lengthy discussion of 'nihilation' will follow so a general definition will suffice herein. 'Nihilation' refers to the establishment of a matrix of negative relations between beings by the for-itself. To 'nihilate' something therefore is to encounter them by means of the nothingness which arises between consciousness and its object. This nihilating activity is for Sartre, the fundamental feature of the for-itself which comes into being only through an act of nihilating the in-itself. To that end Sartre states that,

For the for-itself, to be is to nihilated the in-itself which it is.<sup>186</sup>

The aforementioned 'unstable equilibrium' of the for-itself is, on our reading, attributable to this permanent state of making nothingness arise in, or nihilating, the in-itself which brings it (the for-itself) into being. Indeed a distinction can and will be made between the for-itself's nihilation of itself and of the in-itself. The for-itself can of course nihilate itself in reflection and must nihilate the in-itself as a fundamental mode of self-presence. Nevertheless, we contend that Sartre's reference to the 'pre-reflective cogito' and his appeal to Descartes are indicative of the primordality of reflection (the for-itself nihilating itself) in his project. This is how we understand what Sartre refers to as the 'unity of the three temporal ekstases'<sup>187</sup> referring to the three stages or 'ekstases' by which the for-itself separates from self. Therein, nihilation of the in-itself is succeeded by reflection or the nihilation of for-itself by itself. We argue and will discuss, that these ekstases are simultaneous and therefore equally primordial.<sup>188</sup> At first sight the definition of being-for-itself seems to rest on an underlying fallacy: on Sartre's understanding of being-for-itself, the for-itself can only be present to itself *after* actively nihilating. This is to say that prior to active nihilation, the for-itself is an in-itself in 'absolute identification with itself' and is not present to itself. Two related but distinguishable problems appear:

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p.461

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p.458

<sup>188</sup> This, we suggest, explains the sense in which the for-itself 'still belongs' to the in-itself it nihilates. – *Ibid.*, p.651

- 1) Sartre must account for what motivates nihilation *from* a state of self-identity.
- 2) Nihilation presupposes a characteristic distinction and metaphysical separation between for-itself and in-itself. The for-itself differs from the in-itself in respect of its potentiality for nihilation.

Nevertheless, these problems and the critique they suggest are a product of having fundamentally misunderstood Sartre's project.<sup>189</sup> The two problems have their corresponding and related solutions:

a) the simultaneity of presence to self and active nihilation of being-in-itself and b) the impossibility of potentiality for active nihilation with respect to the for-itself:

- a) For Sartre, presence to self and active nihilation of being-in-itself are simultaneous and cannot occur independently of each other. There can be no presence to self without active nihilation and active nihilation must result in presence to self. Active nihilation is not a will governed capacity but a necessary characteristic of the for-itself. Sartre points this out in explicating the three 'ekstases' of consciousness.<sup>190</sup> The first and second 'ekstases' refer to the 'temporalisation' of consciousness and 'presence to self' respectively. The third 'ekstases' of 'transcendence' refers directly to the simultaneity of presence to self and active nihilation. Therein, consciousness is 'not something which would *first* be in order subsequently to put itself in relation with this or that end [...]'.<sup>191</sup> Similarly, the for-itself is in a permanent state of active nihilation and is therefore immediately present to itself.
- b) Properly speaking, the for-itself cannot be in a state of *potentiality* for active nihilation: if it is not actively nihilating it cannot be *for-itself*.

An account of being-for-itself that focuses exclusively on presence to self and ignores nihilation and therefore the dependence of the for-itself on the in-itself invites an interpretation of Sartre which skates too close to the disconnected dualisms he wants to avoid. Whether or not Sartre is successful in this regard (and we do not believe he is) it is important that one note the subtleties of his argument even if only to ensure the accuracy of criticism. Haar risks precisely such misinterpretation:

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<sup>189</sup> We include John E. Atwell's paper, *Sartre's Conception of Action and His Utilization of Wesensschau*, *Man and World*, Vol.5 No.2 (1972) pp.143-157 and Gary E. Jones' paper, *Sartre, Consciousness and Responsibility*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.41 No.1/2 (1980) pp.234-237, as examples of similar misunderstanding. Though their criticisms refer to different issues the nature of their criticisms are founded on similar presuppositions. In both cases Sartre's phenomenological ontology is inappropriately tested against the requirements of traditional ontology.

<sup>190</sup> These 'ekstases' refer to the fundamental characteristics of consciousness which aid the explication of the for-itself and active nihilation.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.475

[Being-in-Itself is] Not only things, objects, but in general *every being that is not conscious*, every being in the world partakes of the in-itself.<sup>192</sup>

By categorising ‘every being that is not conscious’ as entities of being-in-itself and therefore undermining the relationship between consciousness and being-in-itself, Haar cannot resist the temptation to criticise Sartre for founding his project of phenomenological ontology on those dualisms:

Accomplishing one of the last possibilities still open to Metaphysics in its death throes, Sartre reverses the propositions traditionally dominant. He is the anti-Leibnizian.<sup>193</sup>

On our reading, his criticism is not wholly inaccurate but fails to correctly specify the cause of the problem. It is not untrue that Sartre reserves some vestige of traditional metaphysics in his project and does so explicitly. Nonetheless the effort to identify the ‘meaning of being which includes two radically separated regions’<sup>194</sup> would be doomed from the outset were they simplistically divided. And though achievement does not necessarily follow from intention, it does signify awareness. Sartre specifies that presence to self depends on a relation, albeit negative, to the in-itself. Consciousness’ type of being is ‘perpetually in a state of unstable equilibrium’ precisely because its relationship to active nihilation of the in-itself necessitates an encounter with the in-itself while simultaneously rendering identification with it impossible. Sartrean consciousness includes this relationship between being-for-itself and being-in-itself:

The for-itself is the in-itself losing itself as in-itself in order to found itself as consciousness. Thus consciousness holds within itself its own being-as-consciousness, and since it is its own nihilation, it can refer only to itself; but *that which is* annihilated in consciousness – though we can not call it the foundation of consciousness - is the contingent in-itself.<sup>195</sup>

At this point it will suffice it to say that consciousness’ type of being necessitates a nihilating relationship to and an encounter with being-in-itself. Failure to acknowledge the importance of this relationship tends to suggest that Sartre undermines the value and meaning of a reality independent of the whim of consciousness. Nonetheless this does not exempt Sartre from the charge of anthropocentrism though it will be discussed at a later point.

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<sup>192</sup> Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) p.170 – Italics added.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p.181

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106

b) *The Relationship Between Being-in-Itself and Being-for-Itself*

In order for us to establish how Sartre overcomes the problem of disconnected dualisms (thus separation and disengagement), it is worth recalling that his project is focused on accounting for the relationship between these ‘two regions of being’:

Our inquiry has led us to the heart of being. But we have been brought to an impasse since we have not been able to establish the connection between the two regions of being which we have discovered. [...] But what we can retain is the reminder that it is not profitable first to separate the two terms of a relation in order to try to join them together again later. The relation is a synthesis. Consequently the *results* of analysis can not be covered over again by the *moments* of this synthesis.<sup>196</sup>

Clearly, Sartre wants to account for the ‘connection between these regions of being’ by analysing them *in relation*. In this respect, he echoes Heidegger’s methodological concern to avoid abstraction. A relationship between these regions is established by virtue of nihilation. The loss of the in-itself as in-itself to found consciousness in fact necessitates a permanent association of the in-itself and the for-itself in the mode of presence to self. Nevertheless, the ‘empty distance’ of nothingness between the for-itself and itself which facilitates and mediates this encounter moves Sartre away from Heidegger. Far from a primordial understanding of being implicit in *Dasein*-ness (being-ontological), Sartre’s account requires that consciousness must encounter being(s) across this distance. But this, as we will show, is precisely what affords Sartre the room to attribute a robust ontological responsibility and therefore ontological freedom, to consciousness.

In order to clarify the nihilation of the in-itself by the for-itself as a mediating connection between these regions of being it is important to set it in the context of nihilation as an activity of the for-itself. This is how we interpret Sartre’s claim that,

Thus by the mere fact that *there is* a world, this world can not exist without a univocal orientation in relation to me.<sup>197</sup>

On our reading, Sartre’s emphasis on the ‘there-is’ of the world is indicative of the encounter with beings contingent on active nihilation. Thus the world can be said to be ‘there’ only insofar as one is capable of distinguishing and identifying particular beings within the totality. Nothingness which distances beings from the for-itself thereby makes it possible that one may observe that ‘there-is’ a world. More to the point, the law of presence to self, rooted in the for-itself, is such that consciousness must be equally aware of its role in the establishment of there-ness’s (beings in respect of their there-ness) so the existence of ‘this world’ is permanently experienced in its relation to me. In expanding on this point, Sartre makes comments that lend weight to an interpretation of

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<sup>196</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.27

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p.331

‘the world’ as a reference for the totality of in-itself entities. After explaining his rejection of the classical Cartesian division between mind and body, he states:

That is why we ought not to take this as our point of departure but rather our primary relation to the in-itself: our being-in-the-world.<sup>198</sup>

This may be interpreted to mean that consciousness’s relationship to the in-itself is grounded by ‘our being-in-the-world’ such that ‘the world’ must have some special connection to or be a direct reflection of, the in-itself. But we understand in-itself to be a feature of the ‘indefinite multiplicity of reciprocal relations’ which is more appropriately ‘the world’. It refers to a space of relations between the for-itself and the in-itself which produces an ‘indefinite multiplicity’. Sartre explains that ‘the world’ understood without its relation to the for-itself would result in the in-itself returning to its indifferent self-identity.<sup>199</sup> ‘The world’ therefore results from the activities of the for-itself and its relation to the in-itself and cannot therefore be understood as wholly one or the other. An extended discussion of ‘the world’ and its relationship to the for-itself will follow. For the moment, we may note that though Sartre rejects a traditional disconnected dualism of for-itself and in-itself, he is at risk of undermining his intention to establish a connection between these two regions of being. His claim that the for-itself makes there be a world by denying that it is a being,<sup>200</sup> presupposes the same disconnected dualism that he wants to overcome. Of course this is not an argument for a causal relationship between the for-itself and ‘the world’ but for the impossibility of disassociating the in-itself and its meaning from the for-itself. His argument that ‘being-there’ requires a ‘distance’ posited between object and perceiver is exemplified in what Sartre calls a ‘strictly external’ negation.<sup>201</sup> Therein, nothingness is posited ‘at the heart of being’ such that the for-itself is ‘wrenched away’<sup>202</sup> from itself creating an ontological distance:

Similarly I see my hand touching objects, but do not *know* it in its act of touching them. [...] For my hand reveals to me the resistance of objects, their hardness or softness, but not *itself*. Thus I see my hand only in the way that I see this inkwell. I unfold a distance between it and me, and this distance comes to integrate itself in the distances which I establish among all the objects of the world.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p.330

<sup>199</sup> ‘This is by no means the consequence of a strict application of the principle of identity but because this fusion of right and left, of before and behind, would result in the total disappearance of “*thises*” at the heart of a primitive indistinction. [...] The in-itself which is made manifest in the form of the *this* would return to its indifferent self-identity.’ – *Ibid.*, pp.330,331

<sup>200</sup> ‘We know that there is not a for-itself on the one hand and a world on the other as two closed entities for which we must subsequently seek some explanation as to how they communicate. The for-itself is a relation to the world. The for-itself, by denying that it is being, makes there be a world, and by surpassing this negation toward its own possibilities it reveals the “*thises*” as instrumental-things.’ *Ibid.*, p.330

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p.462

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p.328

This is the sense in which we claim that nihilation serves the dual function of facilitating and mediating an encounter with being(s). The ‘distance unfolded between it and me’ is necessary to encounter beings without which being can be no more than it ‘is’, self-identical in-itself. Crucially, Sartre characterises this encounter with beings in terms of ‘knowledge’ so that ‘knowing’ my hand is here equated to revealing the hand ‘itself’. His insistence on a mediated distance between perceiver and perceived is explained by his commitment to ‘establishing consciousness epistemologically’<sup>204</sup> in the ‘pre-reflective cogito’. Here he explicitly claims that distance between perceiver and perceived is necessary for *knowledge*:

[...] man is always separated from what he is by all the breadth of the being which he is not. He makes himself known to himself from the other side of the world and he looks from the horizon toward himself to recover his inner being. Man is “a being of distances.”<sup>205</sup>

Thus insofar as the for-itself knows the in-itself as a consequence of nihilation then by extension, ‘man knows himself across the distance of nothingness’. Haar highlights the problem with Sartre’s preference for ‘knowledge’ by contrasting it with Heidegger’s pre-ontological ‘understanding’.<sup>206</sup> In its reliance on observation, the former is symptomatic of traditional ontology whereas the latter refers to a pre-existing ontological relationship between perceiver and perceived. Sartre does clarify his use of ‘knowledge’ and its appropriate interpretation in respect of his project:

There is only intuitive knowledge.

Later adding,

Knowledge appears then as a mode of being. Knowing is neither a relation established after the event between two beings, nor is it an activity of one of these two beings, nor is it a quality or a property or a virtue. It is the very being of the for-itself in so far as it is presence to---; that is, in so far as the for-itself has to be its being by making itself not to be a certain being to which it is present.<sup>207</sup>

Clearly then, knowledge as Sartre understands it with respect to the encounter with beings does not correlate precisely with the kind of knowledge dependent on rationalist disengagement. In fact, Sartre’s assertion that knowledge ‘is the very being of the for-itself’ insofar as it is in the mode of presence to self, brings him very close to Heideggerian claims about the inherent understanding of being. Nevertheless, on our reading, it is paramount to Sartre’s project that consciousness cannot fully identify with itself or being as such, primordially, intuitively or otherwise. Thus though intuitive knowledge does not equate to rationalist knowledge Sartre’s ‘pre-eminence of

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41

<sup>206</sup> Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) p.179

<sup>207</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.195,197

knowledge’,<sup>208</sup> ‘distancing’ and ‘wrenching’<sup>209</sup> are indicative of his predilection for the dualisms his project is intended to have done away with.<sup>210</sup>

Three related but distinct conclusions can be drawn from an outline of the relationship between being-for-itself and being-in-itself in Sartre. First, Sartre shares some basic premises with Heidegger but states that his project is in aid of establishing a connection between two regions of being. This connection, we claim, is rooted in Sartre’s effort to ‘establish consciousness epistemologically’. Second, the nihilating activity of the for-itself necessitates a perpetual confrontation with the in-itself, characterised by the law of presence to self. The ‘upsurge’ of self is therefore explained by the loss of the in-itself as in-itself by virtue of nihilation which ‘wrenches’ it away from itself establishing an ontological distance by means of which a self becomes self-present. This is how we understand the claim that, ‘for the for-itself, to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is.’<sup>211</sup> Third, the inherency of nihilation to the for-itself necessitates a relationship to the in-itself albeit as a ‘losing of itself’.<sup>212</sup> For Sartre, introducing nothingness into a state of absolute self-identity, rather than shattering all relations, establishes a negative relationship between the for-itself and what it is not. Therefore Sartre’s two regions of being are locked in relation insofar as the for-itself must encounter the in-itself and the in-itself cannot be observed without the for-itself.

## ii) ‘The Problem of Nothingness’

The second core claim of Sartre’s project relates to what he calls, ‘the problem of nothingness’<sup>213</sup>. Two particular concerns will be addressed in explicating nothingness. First, we will determine precisely what the problem of nothingness is by exploring two aspects of nothingness: nihilation and non-being. Second, we will address what Sartre calls the ‘origin of nothingness’.<sup>214</sup> In so doing we will develop our claim that Sartre’s epistemological establishment of consciousness is couched in his conception of nihilation as a distancing/mediating feature of conscious experience. Sartre raises the question of the problem of nothingness on two separate occasions.<sup>215</sup> His response

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<sup>208</sup> Michel Haar, *Sartre and Heidegger in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981) p.171

<sup>209</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.299

<sup>210</sup> It is possible that Sartre includes a mediating nothingness in his account in order to adjust what he thinks of as an error in Heidegger: ‘Heidegger endows human reality with a self-understanding which he defines as an “ekstatic pro-ject” of its own possibilities. [...] But how could there be an understanding which would not in itself be the consciousness (of) being understanding? This ekstatic character of human reality will lapse into a thing-like, blind in-itself unless it arises from the consciousness of ekstasis.’ Nevertheless, chapter four and the conclusion will show how this possible adjustment leads to an inconsistent account of freedom. – p.98

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p.461

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.35/46

is developed over chapter 1, sections 1-4 of *BN*. Our interpretation is based on these sections although it aims to be consistent with the whole text.

a) *Nihilation and Non-Being*

Our first concern will be to expand on our outline of nihilation before turning to non-being. We will discuss nihilation with respect to the introduction of negativity to objects in the world and the self which we will connect to Sartre's concept of external and internal negation. In order to clear the ground for an exploration of nihilation and non-being, it is important to bear in mind that for Sartre, nothingness is not a phenomenon unto itself. Nothingness is meaningless in the absence of consciousness. We understand the following as an effort to emphasise this point:

If [...] we tried to ask ourselves what "was there" before a world existed, and if we replied "nothing," we would be forced to recognise that this "before" like this "nothing" is in effect retroactive. [...] Negation here springs from a consciousness which is turned back toward the beginning. If we remove from this original emptiness its characteristic of being empty of *this world* and of every whole taking the form of a world, as well as its characteristic of *before*, which presupposes an *after*, then the very negation disappears, giving way to a total indetermination which it would be impossible to conceive, even and especially as a nothingness.<sup>216</sup>

Thus the phenomenon of nothingness is brought into being by consciousness whose nature posits it as a means of an encounter with the world.<sup>217</sup> The only conceivable nothingness is that which 'springs from consciousness'; nothingness independent of a conscious mind to conceive of it is wholly incoherent. On our reading of Sartre, nothingness therefore does not refer to a structure but quite precisely a phenomenon deeply rooted in consciousness' ontological condition. This is neither the nothingness of colloquial conversation nor that of a pre-Big Bang universe but a necessary characteristic of an encounter with the world.

With that said, our first concern is the nihilation that introduces negativity into objects in the world and its relation to external negation. Nihilation can be understood as the process by which nothingness is introduced to distinguish subject from object, perceiver from perceived. It is the fundamental characteristic of consciousness necessary for Sartre's interpretation of intentionality. Therein Sartre will argue that consciousness always being conscious of something requires that this 'something' must be an entity other than consciousness and therefore not consciousness. Thus consciousness is both related to and distanced from its objects by virtue of its root in not-ness. Moreover, observation of entities also requires that consciousness distinguish a plurality of possible entities. Therefore, in so far as consciousness is directed at an individual entity, it is directed at that entity as 'not me' and 'not anything else'. Nihilation, for Sartre, brings negative relations into

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.39-40

<sup>217</sup> Of course it may be more in keeping with Sartre's argument to say that nothingness and consciousness coincide.



existence. It is the process by which consciousness' 'pre-judicative comprehension of non-being' makes negative relations between things in the world into real existences where 'pre-judicative' means 'prior to judgement', i.e. prior to any negation. Sartre's first mention of nihilation comes in the well-known discussion of Pierre's absence from a café:

When I enter this café to search for Pierre, there is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the café, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear. This organization of the café as the ground is an original nihilation.<sup>218</sup>

We understand this to mean that the appearance of the 'objects in the café' is already 'synthetically organised' around the expectation of Pierre being there; the appearance of the objects are grounded in the expectation of Pierre's presence. The 'original nihilation' therefore is the negative perception of a café absent of an anticipated presence. My immediate perceptions in this respect at least are entirely oriented along the contours of my expectations and intentions. Of course the assertion that Pierre is *not* here also functions as a negative judgment or negation. Though they are closely related, it will be informative to distinguish negation from nihilation. The former is simply the judgment that something is simply not-*x*, for example that 'a match is not a twig'. In the case of the nihilation of the objects of the world, the associated kind of negation is what Sartre calls, 'external negation':

When I say, for example, 'A cup is not an inkwell,' it is very evident that the foundation of this negation is neither in the cup nor in the inkwell. Both of these objects are what they are, and that is all. The negation stands as a categorical and ideal connection which I establish between them without modifying them in any way whatsoever, without enriching them or impoverishing them with the slightest quality; they are not even ever so slightly grazed by this negative synthesis.<sup>219</sup>

Nihilation on the other hand founds the possibility of negation such that the reality of the distinction between match and twig, cup and inkwell is possible on condition that these objects are equally nihilated:

Thus the original nihilation of all the figures which appear and are swallowed up in the total neutrality of a *ground* is the necessary condition for the appearance of the principle figure, which is here the person of Pierre. This nihilation is given to my intuition; I am witness to the successive disappearance of all the objects which I look at – in particular of the faces, which detain me for an instant (Could this be Pierre?) and which as quickly decompose precisely because they "are not" the face of Pierre.<sup>220</sup>

Again, it is worthy of note that though Sartre refers to this nihilation in terms of intuition, which we understand in the sense of 'intuitive knowing', 'the disappearance of objects' is described in respect

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.33,34

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34

of Pierre's absence. In other words, any phenomenal experience is anthropocentrically grounded in my particular expectations and intentions. That said, clearly for Sartre, these negative judgements are reflections of an 'original nihilation'. The varieties of possible negative judgments in the world are founded on nihilation. One may say that 'a cup is not an inkwell', 'I am not the cup' or 'I am not you'. Moreover, one may make these judgments at once and, though each constitutes a different negation, each is founded on nihilation. Sartre explains the simultaneity of negations and of resulting negations in speaking of the 'image of an absent Pierre':

The image must enclose in its very structure a nihilating thesis. It constitutes itself qua image while also positing its object as existing *elsewhere* or *not existing*. It carries within it a double negation; first it is the nihilation of the world (since the world is not offering the imagined object as an actual object of perception), secondly the nihilation of the object of the image (it is posited as not actual), and finally by the same stroke it is the nihilation of itself (since it is not a concrete, full psychic process.)<sup>221</sup>

Thus the image of absence is 'doubly negating' insofar as it *is* an image but what it captures, as it were, is precisely the lack of an image. The 'double negation' is here founded on three distinct nihilations: of the world, of the object of the image and the image itself 'qua image'. The negative judgment that the 'cup is not an inkwell' does not refer to a 'lack' in either. Thus the negation of the cup as inkwell detracts from neither the cup as 'cup', nor inkwell as 'inkwell'. Rather both are equally and originally nihilated. The claim that neither object is even 'slightly grazed', points to a central argument in Sartre's project. Similarly, Heidegger asserts that 'Dasein is never to be taken ontologically as something present-at-hand'. Such entities are not merely 'indifferent' to their being but are 'such that their being can neither be a matter of indifference nor the opposite'.<sup>222</sup> Though Heidegger's *Vorhandensein* characteristically differs from Sartre's cup or inkwell-like object,<sup>223</sup> a comparison will shed further light on the role of nothingness in Sartre's project. Thus both are described in terms of their indifference to negative judgements and for both Heidegger and Sartre, the perceiver is prioritised. Nevertheless and as we have seen, the relationship between *Dasein* and *Vorhandensein* is mutually engaging. *Dasein*'s comportment to the present-at-hand discloses their being but equally discloses *Dasein* and the primordially of its understanding. By contrast for Sartre, consciousness' external negations, grounded by an original nihilation, establishes its relationship to

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<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50

<sup>222</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.68

<sup>223</sup> Firstly, Sartre makes no distinction between kinds of 'objects'. Being-in-itself encapsulates all entities that lack consciousness regardless of whether they are present or ready-to-hand. Secondly, Heidegger's present-at-hand is inherently intertwined with *Dasein* in its being. This is quite different from Sartre's being-in-itself which is passively related to consciousness.

being(s) such that the symbolic and interpretive significance of experience is a direct by-product of an original nihilation.<sup>224</sup>

By means of clarification, Sartre states that these objects are unaffected by this ‘negative synthesis’ as it does not ‘constitute them’. But this would seem to contravene the claim that nihilation and consciousness’ ‘pre-judicative comprehension of non-being’ endows the world with meanings. Otherwise, Sartre could not maintain his argument about ‘destruction’, for example. Therein he claims that ‘storms do not destroy, they rather re-distribute masses of beings’.<sup>225</sup> He argues that only ‘man’ is capable of destruction in the sense that only ‘man’ perceives the re-distribution of beings as a loss. For Sartre, there is a difference between the making of a negative judgment and the experience of what he calls a *néгатité*. In the first case, the observation of entities must be mediated by negation in order to arrive at a negative judgment. Thus no ‘lack’ is observed in the entities themselves but in regard to the for-itself. In the second case, one experiences a reality:

There is an infinite number of realities which are not only objects of judgment, but which are experienced, opposed, feared, etc., by the human being and which in their inner structure are inhabited by negation, as by a necessary condition of their existence. We shall call them *néгатités*.<sup>226</sup>

A *néгатité* thus refers to a reality ‘inhabited by negation’, where negativity is integral to their structure by virtue of the relation of this reality to human expectations and projects. A *néгатité* therefore is dependent on an original nihilation. Observing the debris and carnage left by a ‘destructive storm’ is to experience one such reality inhabited by negation. Thus though a storm may have crossed oceans, disturbing all in its wake, it is not considered ‘destructive’ until it reaches a population. In this respect, observation is imbued with the experience of ‘what has been lost’ and what is ‘no longer’. Therefore on our interpretation, the experience of a *néгатité* is the result of the totality of the nihilation of the observed in addition to the inherent ‘lack’ of consciousness.

We will now discuss the nihilation of the self as it relates to what Sartre calls ‘internal negation’. It is a simpler phenomenon to explicate if for no other reason than the regularity of its mention:

But we can already guess the meaning of the other type of negation if we consider such expressions as ‘I am not rich’ or ‘I am not handsome.’ [...] they do not mean only that the speaker is denied a certain quality but that the denial itself comes to influence the inner structure of the positive being who has been denied the quality. When I say, ‘I am not handsome,’ [...] I intend to indicate that ‘not

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<sup>224</sup> For Heidegger, the world is not severed from *Dasein*. It is the constitutive ground of *Dasein*’s being. There is no *Dasein* without world and no world without *Dasein*: there is only being. On the other hand, Sartre seems to argue that consciousness and the world co-exist across a medium of nothingness.

<sup>225</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.32-33

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

being handsome' is a certain negative virtue of my being. It characterises me within; as negative it is a real quality of myself – that of not being handsome – and this negative quality will explain my melancholy as well as, for example, my failures in the world.<sup>227</sup>

Thus again though the object of not being handsome is negatively encountered, it establishes a 'real' positive relation. Nevertheless, this differs from external negation in one way above all. A 'negative synthesis' unfolds a distance between perceiver and object to establish a real, albeit negatively characterised, matrix of relations between objects. Thus we interpret the 'indifference' Sartre attributes to these objects in respect of the brute facticity of their appearance; the relation established between perceiver and object discloses 'nothing' or the raw fact of the 'there-is'. On the other hand, an internal negation will not permit an absolute hermeneutic signification. Given that nihilation is the central activity of the for-itself an internal negation cannot be 'indifferent' or 'passive'. Rather an internal negation, that is a judgement of lack internal to the self, is grounded in an original nihilation, characterising a relationship to these objects in terms of potentiality or possibility. If, as Sartre states, the for-itself is 'contingent', that is if it is the in-itself losing itself as in-itself then a negation such as 'I am not handsome' is 'lost' at the moment of its pronouncement. Thus though a positive relationship, a 'quality', is established between self and the object of 'not-being-handsome', it is characterised in terms of the ontological possibility to-not-be-handsome. Thus, unlike external negations whose objects are characterised passively or in terms of their indifference, the nihilating activity of the for-itself perpetually distances self from its objects such that they reveal only what one could be and thereby a framework for accountability. This is how we interpret the following:

To give in to fatigue, for example, is to transcend the path by causing it to constitute in itself the meaning of "a path too difficult to traverse." It is impossible seriously to consider the feeling of inferiority without determining it in terms of the future and of my possibilities.<sup>228</sup>

Of course we do not interpret these as empirical facts in neither Sartre's account nor everyday experience for that matter. Neither attractiveness nor the 'difficulty' of a path is an empirically verifiable feature of the world. For Sartre, the nihilation of self, the loss of in-itself as in-itself, situates consciousness in a world characterised by that relation such that 'I' is experienced as 'he-who-cannot-traverse-the-path' or 'he-who-is-looked-upon-unfavourably'. This is also how we interpret Sartre's claim that this real quality explains my failures in the world insofar as it expresses the anticipation of judgement in the eyes of 'the other'.<sup>229</sup> In this sense, internal negation can be a

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<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p.481

<sup>229</sup> Nevertheless, this is what Sartre refers to as 'appropriation' and the inevitability of conflict in ones being-for-others. There appears to be a contradiction between ones anticipation of the other and the stare of the other

defence against the glare of the other affirming the expression of a purposeful project. Thus 'I', my project, the other and the world in which these relations play out are simultaneously nihilated. Nihilation therefore entails the impossibility of 'finding oneself' at a disadvantage or haphazardly suffering 'twists of fate'.<sup>230</sup> Rather an encounter with a world in which one is 'insufficiently fit to traverse this path' or 'too unattractive to liaise with those they find attractive' is the realisation of a 'general plan':

But the inferiority complex itself is a project of my own for-itself in the world in the presence of the Other. As such it is always transcendence, as such again it is a way of choosing myself. This inferiority which I struggle against and which nevertheless I recognise, this *I have chosen* from the start. [...] it is nothing other than the organised totality of my failure behaviour, as a projected plan, as a general device of my being, and each attitude of failure is itself transcendence since each time I surpass the real toward my possibilities.<sup>231</sup>

We interpret these attitudes of failure as expressing the relation to what is here the conscious object of inferiority perpetually transcended as 'opaque', in-itself reality and thus constituted as a possibility. On our reading, the expression of my inferiority is simultaneously experienced in respect of the possibility that 'I will be inferior'. So the 'project of my own for-itself' is less a consciously crafted effort to realise my inferiority and more the 'projection' of an inferiority complex across the empty distance constituting presence to self. Inferiority or any other such conscious object is thus experienced as a hypothetical postulation not a concrete feature of being. Sartre's intentional model of consciousness is made possible by an original nihilation and the permanent possibility of presence to self. An 'inferiority complex' resulting from internal negation is quite precisely an instance of consciousness as consciousness of itself: a project of itself in anticipation of 'the other'.

We may now turn our attention to an explication of non-being as distinct from nothingness. Examples of non-being are found mainly in the discussion of the 'problem of nothingness' where Sartre's expression often allows non-being to overlap with other kinds of negativity. It will therefore be helpful to firstly provide a positive definition of non-being. The central feature of non-being is its status as 'the transcendent fact of non-existence'.<sup>232</sup> Non-being refers to the ever-present, real possibility of negativity where 'negativity' refers to the absence of something or a negative judgment about something. For Sartre, non-being grounds the possibility of negativity

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which 'fixes me in my being'. If the other is anticipated, in what sense and to what extent is their stare overwhelming?

<sup>230</sup> Nihilation thus begins to describe the radical responsibility Sartre wants to attribute to his account of freedom.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p.481

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

which establishes a relation between beings. We will therefore explicate the transcendence of non-being as ‘the permanent objective possibility of a negativity’.<sup>233</sup>

As indicated by what we have outlined thus far, Sartre’s account of human engagement with the world requires a permanent and transcendent possibility of negativity as an objective reality shaping thought and behaviour. Thus non-being may be best understood simply as negative being. At the outset of his chapter on ‘The Origin of Negation’, he explains that all questions imply and necessitate the possibility of a ‘negative reply’:

Thus the question is a bridge set up between two non-beings: the non-being of knowing in man, the possibility of non-being of being in transcendent being. Finally the question implies the existence of a truth. By the very question the questioner affirms that he expects an objective reply, such that we can say of it, “It is thus and not otherwise.” In a word the truth, as differentiated from being, introduces a third non-being as determining the question – the non-being of limitation. This triple non-being conditions every question and in particular the metaphysical question, which is *our* question.<sup>234</sup>

So non-being refers to the permanent objective possibility of negativity, applicable to all of human reality including the question of being. Sartre’s ‘triple non-being’ does not reflect different kinds and is not unique to ‘the metaphysical question’ but describes the permeation of human reality by non-being. Thus the ‘truth’ that something ‘is thus and not otherwise’ is supported by being *limited* to what it is. Thus cup and inkwell *are* insofar as they *are not* the space between and around them. In this respect, non-being does not function in the same way as what we will call empirical non-existence. For Sartre, non-being, what is *not*, is an ‘objective existence’ whose symbolic role and significance in human experience is inherent to what *is*. Conversely the empirically non-existent is traditionally understood as what is not the case and therefore what is not true. Of course both empirical non-existence and non-being require further clarification but it will suffice at this juncture to state that they are not identifiable.

Sartre’s claim that triple non-being conditions the metaphysical question in particular does not imply prioritisation. Rather all human activity necessarily involves the transcendent possibility of non-being. In fact, the non-being of limitation entails the claim that one encounters truth on the condition of permanent non-being:

Nothingness beyond the world accounts for absolute negation; but we have just discovered a swarm of intra-mundane being which possess as much reality and efficacy as other beings, but which inclose within themselves non-being. [...] Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being – like a worm.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

<sup>235</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.45

Sartre's 'swarm of intra-mundane being' thus refers to the fabric of empty distances across which beings relate in a matrix of symbolic values and signifiers whose meanings are contingent on the projection of a perpetually nihilated self. If nothingness 'lies coiled in the heart of being' then non-being is inherent to enquiry and all human activity because the in-itself is primarily encountered in respect of my transcendence and thus experience as a possibility. Enquiry, in Sartre's project, necessitates recognition of the possibility of non-being in order to function meaningfully:

Thus at the moment when I ask, "Is there any conduct which can reveal to me the relation of man with the world?" I admit *on principle* the possibility of a negative reply such as, "No, such a conduct does not exist." This means that we admit to being faced with the transcendent fact of the non-existence of such conduct.<sup>236</sup>

Enquiry must, from the outset, include 'the possibility of a negative reply'. This possibility need not reflect a genuinely realisable alternative. Rather enquiry presupposes the transcendent fact of non-existence. Moreover, Sartre explains, the 'possibility of a negative reply' requires that one have a 'pre-judicative comprehension of non-being':

Thus my question by its nature envelops a certain pre-judicative comprehension of non-being; it is in itself a relation of being with non-being, on the basis of the original transcendence; that is, in a relation of being with being.<sup>237</sup>

And it is in this sense that he asserts,

[...]non-being does not come to things by a negative judgement; it is the negative judgement, on the contrary, which is conditioned and supported by non-being.<sup>238</sup>

A problem begins to appear at this stage: if the pre-judicative comprehension of non-being is a relation of being with non-being, recognition would itself require the possibility of the non-being ('the non-being of knowing in man') of pre-judicative comprehension and so on *ad infinitum*. In other words, if non-being is a i) transcendent possibility, ii) a permanent objectivity and iii) necessary for truth then recognition of a pre-judicative comprehension must itself be subject to the permanent and transcendent possibility of negativity. In an effort to 'establish consciousness epistemologically', Sartre has seemingly introduced the permanent possibility of uncertainty about his own claims. Although the problem indicates the kind of difficulty inherent to Sartre's project it nonetheless rests on a misunderstanding: assuming an ontological equivalence of negative judgements and non-being. We may consider the negative judgment that 'x is not y' which could

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<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32 –Sartre's opposition of being with non-being betrays an inclination towards the kinds of metaphysical dualism that he purports to oppose. At the conclusion of our analysis of non-being we will outline the first major criticism of Sartre on this basis.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35

not be made without discerning their properties. Discernment of this sort necessitates that one first ask whether ‘*x* is ‘*y*’ and this preceding question must ‘admit the ‘possibility of a negative reply’’. Thus simply observing the properties of ‘*x*’ and ‘*y*’ presupposes a pre-judicative comprehension of their non-being. Whether or not there actually are distinguishing properties unique to either ‘*x*’ or ‘*y*’ has no bearing on their possibility. Thus non-being and negative judgments are not ontologically equivalent.<sup>239</sup>

Sartre’s pre-judicative comprehension of non-being can be explicated in two ways. Both will help us consolidate its prerequisite necessity and the role of nothingness in Sartre’s account of consciousness. In his project, the first is intuitive and restricted to analysis of the terms themselves. It is our contention that the terms are chosen to serve a specific purpose. The second is derived from comparing Sartre’s explanation with a strikingly similar passage in *BT*. It is our further contention that this similarity reinforces their shared fundamental principles. First, it is important to note that the comprehension of non-being is *pre-judicative*: comprehension preceding judgment. Common application of the term ‘comprehension’ denotes competence requiring knowledge of both what is and what is not true about a given subject. *Pre-judicative* comprehension precedes precisely such an understanding and may better be interpreted as understanding without judgment. It is a pre-ontological understanding or, as Heidegger puts it, a ‘primary understanding which is one of the constituents of the Being of the “there” in general.’<sup>240</sup> Second, similarity between Sartre and Heidegger in this regard extends beyond vocabulary. Sartre’s first mention of pre-judicative comprehension<sup>241</sup> begins as follows:

In every question we stand before a being which we are questioning. Every question presupposes a being who questions and a being which is questioned. [...] On the other hand, this being which we question, we question *about* something. [...] From this point of view the question is a kind of expectation; I expect a reply from the being questioned.<sup>242</sup>

Questioning, for Sartre, involves a relationship of expectation between the ‘being who questions, the being questioned and what is being questioned *about*’. In the sub-section entitled, ‘The Formal Structure of the Question of Being’, Heidegger refers to a similar relationship though ‘enquiry’ is preferred to ‘question’:

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<sup>239</sup> One may also say that the creation of a clock requires an understanding of time. Yet one could not conclude that there is some equivalence between the two. Much as the clock is an expression of a pre-requisite understanding of time, a negative judgement is an expression of a pre-requisite understanding of non-being.

<sup>240</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.182

<sup>241</sup> Sartre initially points to the ‘pre-interrogative familiarity with Being’ from which he derives the pre-judicative comprehension of non-being.

<sup>242</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.29



Every inquiry is a seeking [Suchen]. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought. [...] Any inquiry, as an inquiry about something, has *that which is asked about* [sein *Gefragtes*]. [...] Furthermore, in what is asked about there lies also *that which is to be found out by the asking* [das *Efragte*]; this is what is really intended: with this the inquiry reaches its goal.<sup>243</sup>

Here also enquiry involves a fundamental relationship including ‘what is asked about’ and ‘what is to be found out’. Nonetheless, Sartre’s adjustment from the pre-*ontological* to the pre-*judicative* is, on our reading, indicative of his preference for an epistemic account of consciousness. Moreover, it is Sartre’s inclusion of that proof that we contend obscures the ontology he otherwise adopts and ultimately therefore a satisfying account of freedom. As we have seen, for Sartre, consciousness’ directedness to its objects is premised on the permanent reality of non-being. In other words, all engagement with objects either in terms of observing an inkwell or asking a question, presupposed what Sartre calls the ‘possibility of a negative reply’. The ‘non-being of limitation’ similarly establishes the there-ness of beings as ‘this and no more’ so that its appearance is supported by a pre-judicative non-being. Furthermore, we have explained that non-being is a product of the for-itself (the in-itself losing itself as in-itself) which nuances and characterises all of conscious experience in terms of a negation. Thus internal negations for example are ‘transcended’, that is ‘wrenched away from’ and ‘distanced’ such that the relationship of self to its objects becomes one of possibility. But here we argue that the permeation of human reality by non-being as a prerequisite to questioning and observation (if not all human comportment) characterises all experience in terms of a hypothetical postulation. Insofar as the self, bound by the for-itself’s law of presence to self, must transcend its objects towards its possibilities and must encounter beings on the basis of a preceding comprehension of non-being, then it will follow that the encounter with being(s) as such is premised on the permanence of non-being and is equally transcended.<sup>244</sup>

As mentioned, it will be necessary to clarify the difference between empirical non-existence and non-being. As a necessary feature of conscious experience ‘coiled in the heart of being’, non-being cannot be identified with empirical non-existence. Non-being is inherent to being: not external, before or after. By contrast, empirical non-existence refers to a vacuum. The difficulty of description testifies to its emptiness though Sartre does provide an allusion.<sup>245</sup> As ‘negative being’, non-being does not require observation of empirically verifiable absence but the possibility of

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<sup>243</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.24

<sup>244</sup> On our interpretation, Sartre argues that it is precisely this perpetual distancing and nihilation at the heart of conscious experience which guarantees ontological freedom. That freedom consists in this ontological feature of consciousness which requires it transcend all its objects such that nothing can be determinative of it but itself. But, as we understand it, this conception of freedom and conscious experience anchored/underpinned by permanent non-being serves only to reconstitute a Cartesian treatment of beings exclusively in the mode of present-at-hand. That is, Sartre’s account seems ultimately dependent on the same rationalist framework he is otherwise seeking to undermine.

<sup>245</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.39-40

negativity. In this sense, Sartre's ontology can be summarised by the phrase, the encounter with being rests on the possibility of its negation and the pre-judicative comprehension of non-being. Sartre describes 'Pierre's' failure to attend an appointment to exemplify the point:

I have an appointment with Pierre at four o'clock. I arrive at the café a quarter of an hour late. Pierre is always punctual. Will he have waited for me? I look at the room, the patrons, and I say, "He is not here." [...] But now Pierre is not here. This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the establishment. In fact Pierre is absent from the *whole* café; [...]<sup>246</sup>

Thus the experience of the 'whole café' is consumed by, that is, permeated by non-being underlying the observation of Pierre's absence. Crucially it is not experienced as his empirical non-existence since, properly speaking, such an experience is 'impossible to conceive' [*impossible de concevoir*]<sup>247</sup>. His absence is a *néгатité*. Two points arise in concluding our outline of nihilation and non-being: First there seems to be a *prima facie* contradiction in designating empirical non-existence impossible to conceive even though some conception is necessary to make that point and second, we need to place a certain emphasis on the distinction between *néгатité* and non-being.

Sartre insists on the distinction between non-being and empirical non-existence. He claims that nothingness evoked by describing the universe before the dawn of time does not equate to non-being. But his additional claim that one cannot conceive of empirical non-existence is quite different.<sup>248</sup> If empirical non-existence is impossible to conceive then the assertion itself must be equally impossible. Sartre does not acknowledge this problem though we contend that it can be accounted for by approaching the claim sincerely. Taking Sartre at his word, the actual attempt to conceive of what was there before there was anything, is only possible on condition of removing all points of reference. Any point of reference presupposes a 'there' where one wants to find nothing. Insofar as perspectives presuppose a perceiver, all perspectives are necessarily impermissible in a sincere conception of empirical non-existence.<sup>249</sup>

The importance of distinguishing non-being from *néгатité* is compounded by a similar distinction between non-being and nihilation. As we have seen, nihilation refers to the activity of making nothingness arise between beings and thus establishing an interpretive matrix of relations. Nihilation is therefore grounded by the permanent possibility of non-being. *Néгатité* has been described as a reality inhabited by negativity requiring its observation in contrast to expectation. We

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.33-34

<sup>247</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, (Tel Gallimard, 1943) p.50

<sup>248</sup> We leave aside the question of whether his second claim follows from the first: Sartre's argument does not require that they do. The impossibility of conceiving of empirical non-existence is supplementary.

<sup>249</sup> This is by no means a unique argument. One might do well to recall the opening words of *Pascal's Wager*: 'If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no affinity to us.' Similarly, empirical non-existence has 'neither parts nor limits' and as such is 'infinitely incomprehensible.'

have exemplified instances of *néгатité* by reference to destruction and ‘Pierre’s absence’. Both include the negative judgment that something is ‘no longer’ or ‘not present’. As with nihilation, negative judgments also presuppose the permanent possibility of non-being. But *néгатité* describes the experience of inhabiting a totality of negative judgements such that the local environment instantiates non-being.

b) *The Origin of Nothingness*

The centrality of nothingness to Sartre’s project is undeniable but it presents an immediate problem. Sartre recognises the need to account for the origin of nothingness in asking, ‘where does nothingness come from?’.<sup>250</sup> That is, how do we ground the in-itself’s loss of itself as in-itself? Moreover, in a related concern we will discuss later, how do we account for our ability to enquire after the ground of nothingness if it is already a feature of my enquiry? That is, how can we be sure of the accuracy of our observations if they are necessarily conditioned by the object of enquiry? His answer leaves much to be desired. Given the preceding discussion of nihilation, non-being and *néгатité*, we may already have a sense of the origin of nothingness. This sense may be summed up by the argument that if nothingness arises with consciousness then consciousness may also be its point of origin. Explicating Sartre’s answer will determine the validity of that sense.

Sartre offers specific criteria for the origin of nothingness before repeating the question:

We perceived that Nothingness can be conceived neither *outside of* being, nor as a complementary, abstract notion, nor as an infinite milieu where being is suspended. Nothingness must be at the heart of Being, in order for us to be able to apprehend that particular type of realities which we have called *néгатités*.<sup>251</sup>

Thus it seems that Sartre directly contradicts our claim that his inclusion of nothingness reintroduces a rationalist approach which presupposes the treatment of all being(s) in the mode of presence at hand. A *néгатité*, Sartre claims, must be imbued with nothingness in the very fact of its appearance. But this we contend, simply speaks to the anthropocentric orientation of Sartre’s reliance on Cartesian rationalism. Thus though nothingness is a hard reality of my experience, the for-itself’s law of presence to self, necessitates the permanent possibility of transcending even this experience. Thus if *néгатité* should give rise to insecurity this will be because consciousness must characterise its experience in respect of the projection of its possibilities. Nevertheless, clearly Sartrean nothingness is not independent from being. *Néгатités* are ‘apprehended’ only insofar as nothingness is ‘at the heart of being’ though they cannot be conflated. Sartre reinforces their distinction with the assertion that, ‘Negation is an abrupt break in continuity which can not [*sic*] [...]

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.35/46

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46

*result* from prior affirmations'.<sup>252</sup> Thus negation cannot be accounted for by appeal to anything beyond nothingness. Sartre also insists that consciousness is not conflated with any other entity. In fact, this insistence on consciousness' unique status is the primary motive for Sartre's move away from Heidegger.<sup>253</sup> Furthermore, Sartre makes no effort to account for the origin of consciousness by appeal to 'prior affirmations' because consciousness is not determined by preceding causes.<sup>254</sup> The similarities in the description of nothingness and consciousness begin to outline a mutual entailment. If nothingness cannot be accounted for by appeal to anything beyond being then nothingness must originate in being. Furthermore, if enquiry presupposes a pre-judicative comprehension of non-being then all non-enquiring entities cannot share a relationship with non-being. Thus nothingness must originate either from itself or from another region of being which does not require 'prior affirmations':

If we wish to pursue the problem further, we must first recognise that we can not grant to nothingness the property of "nihilating itself." For although the expression "to nihilate itself" is thought of as removing from nothingness the last semblance of being, we must recognise that only *Being* can nihilate itself; [...] Nothingness does not nihilate itself; Nothingness "is nihilated."<sup>255</sup>

We interpret this in respect of the argument about the permanence of non-being as a feature of being as such. Nothingness does not nihilate itself because it grounds the experience of being; the *loss* of the in-itself. It is the contextualising matrix establishing the possibility of an encounter with being(s). Its origins must therefore be rooted in another region of being which must meet further criteria:

We must observe first that the being postulated can not be passive in relation to Nothingness, can not receive it; [...] the Being by which Nothingness comes to the world can not *produce* Nothingness while remaining indifferent to that production [...] The Being by which Nothingness arrives in the world must nihilate Nothingness in its Being, [...] The Being by which Nothingness arrives in the world is a being such that in its Being, the Nothingness of its Being is in question.<sup>256</sup>

Sartre's first claim here is that the being which originates nothingness cannot be 'passive'. Passive reception of nothingness is insufficient for origination. His second claim states that 'active' origination cannot be indifferent in the sense attributed to objects not even 'slightly grazed' by negative judgments. Nothingness indifferently 'produced' cannot be positively recognised and

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35

<sup>253</sup> See, *Ibid.*, pp.97-98 - Sartre accuses Heidegger of allowing his characterisation of Dasein to 'lapse into a thing-like, blind in-itself' unless the category of consciousness is added. A brief mention will suffice though we intend to discuss this insistence at length in our criticism of Sartre.

<sup>254</sup> See, *Freedom in Being and Nothingness, The Argument for Necessary Freedom, c) Nihilation of the Self and the Fundamental Project* - where a defence against the charge of capriciousness details the difficulty of accounting for consciousness., p.105

<sup>255</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.46

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.46-47

would thereby take on the character of being impossible to conceive. Thus that which originates nothingness must do so actively and be able to positively recognise that action. Finally, Sartre's reference to the 'nothingness of the being' which 'is in question' and which is 'the being by which nothingness arrives in the world, conflates its action with itself, pointing to his understanding of intentional consciousness.<sup>257</sup> In order to clarify the origin of nothingness in Sartre's project, we may point to a notable difference between consciousness as he describes it and *Dasein*. As we have seen, for Heidegger, *Dasein* describes a comportment which is inherently illuminating of being such that both its practical and theoretical engagements disclose an understanding of being(s). For Sartre, on the other hand, an account of these engagements is incomplete unless they are grounded by a pre-judicative comprehension of non-being, that is, by the permanent possibility of negation as a real feature of experience. Thus, though Sartre may also attribute an understanding or comprehension to human comportment, he insists that this understanding itself is permeated by non-being and is thus encountered across a distance. Yet the inherency of nihilation to conscious experience on our reading will require that this distancing is nihilated and thus positively recognised and consciousness thereby 'arrives in the world':

[...] man is always separated from what he is by all the breadth of the being which he is not. He makes himself known to himself from the other side of the world and he looks from the horizon toward himself to recover his inner being. Man is 'a being of distances.'<sup>258</sup>

The inclusion of nothingness in what is otherwise an account of *Da-sein*, betrays a subtle shift which constitutes the basis of our criticism. The effort to ground experience in the permanence of non-being reinforces the presupposition of being that is inherent to rationalist methodology. If the encounter with and understanding of beings presupposes their nihilation then their possibility as such, there is-ness, or the 'ownmost aim of ontological enquiry', is accounted for by 'nothing'. In other words, if nothingness originates in being but as a permanent feature of reality then our understanding of being is limited to the absolute of its nihilation. Thus that which for Sartre grants absolute ontological freedom to human experience, perpetual active nihilation meaning that human experience is conditioned by nothing, is precisely that which restricts the understanding of being to the observation of its thus-ness 'and no more'. In this sense, we return to the assertion of is-ness rather than its disclosure.

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<sup>257</sup> It will be worth noting that this key characteristic of consciousness is described in much the same way as that of *Dasein*. In fact, their similarity could hardly be coincidental: 'Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it.' - Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.32

<sup>258</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.46

### iii) The Centrality of Consciousness

Sartre's concept of being-in-the-world which we understand as a reference to the conscious experience of reality as such reflects the primacy of consciousness in his project. This does not refer to the empirical reality of an external world but the relationship of consciousness to the conscious object of 'world'. As previously explained, the for-itself *is* the in-itself losing itself as such. Thus a negative relationship is established wherein an encounter with being(s) is premised on their loss or nihilation. By extension therefore, consciousness' relationship to the world, its being-in-the-world is grounded in its nihilating activity. In other words, consciousness' being-in-the-world is characterised by a necessary relationship of nihilation between consciousness and its objects. Mikel Dufrenne highlights this point in his paper, 'Existentialism and Existentialisms':

The necessary connection of the for-itself with in-itself becomes, when the for-itself is understood as concrete subject, and the in-itself, enlightened by the for-itself, is understood as the world, the relation between man and world. Being-in-the-world is not being a thing among things, it is bringing sense to the in-itself, so making that world be.<sup>259</sup>

However, on our reading of Sartre, Dufrenne's account risks two inaccuracies by implication. He is not guilty of these inaccuracies but his failure to address the subtle distinctions in Sartre's argument raises the possibility of misinterpretation. First and as we have seen, though non-conscious entities are categorised as in-itself, observation and identification of the in-itself presupposes consciousness. This is to say that, the non-conscious is 'impossible to conceive' except in the light of consciousness. Second, consciousness is not reducible to the for-itself. The for-itself is presence to self because the inherency of nothingness means it evades definition. In this respect, it is the antithesis of a 'concrete subject'. Consciousness involves a necessary relationship of both regions of being whereby presence to self necessitates an encounter with the in-itself. Perceived objects are firmly entities *of* conscious experience:

We know that there is not a for-itself on the one hand and a world on the other as two closed entities for which we must subsequently seek some explanation as to how they communicate.

And,

Such an error will be avoided if we are willing to maintain that the world appears inside the circuit of selfness [...] it is this in terms of which human reality makes known to itself what it is.<sup>260</sup>

Thus in our sense, being-in-the-world refers to the relationship between the nihilated in-itself and the for-itself. Sartre is clear that the for-itself and the in-itself do not reflect a traditional

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<sup>259</sup> Mikel Dufrenne, *Existentialism and Existentialisms* (Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol.26, No.1, 1965) pp.51-62, p.54

<sup>260</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.330/221

subject/object division. The two must communicate through active nihilation. Moreover, the nihilated in-itself cannot be abstracted from the 'circuit of selfness' or what we might otherwise refer to as the machinations of consciousness. Hence Sartre's definition of human reality in the following:

Human reality is its own surpassing towards what it lacks; [...] Human reality is not something which exists first in order afterwards to lack this or that; it exists first as a lack and in immediate, synthetic connection with what it lacks. [...] Human reality is a perpetual surpassing toward a coincidence with itself which is never given.<sup>261</sup>

Here Sartre is unequivocal in the importance of consciousness to his account of being as such. Thus human reality is primarily characterised by the law of the for-itself which necessitates the unrealisable ideal of self-coinciding. The 'lack'<sup>262</sup> of the for-itself is nothingness 'brought to the world' by active nihilation with which it is synonymous. Thus in this respect at least, Sartre indeed reduces all of human reality to the ontological description of consciousness. In the same paper, Dufrenne notes that Sartre's human reality positions 'man' at the centre of the world:

The world as I live in it has myself as an absolute centre of coordinates because I am involved in it and because my presence to it is contingent.<sup>263</sup>

Here Dufrenne's account is far less susceptible to inaccurate interpretation. In fact, he may understate the case. What we have previously called Sartre's anthropocentrism refers to this 'absolute centring of the self'. Sartre's reduction of human reality to the machinations of consciousness shares a striking resemblance to Kantian idealism.<sup>264</sup> He avoids a simple division of his two regions of being but their relationship is undermined by necessitating nihilation for an encounter. It is in this sense therefore that we claim, Sartre reads the methodological principle of prioritising *Dasein* into the very constitution of consciousness. As the being in whom nothingness originates, necessitating presence to self and insofar as an original nihilation grounding the upsurge of the for-itself underpins the possibility of an encounter with being(s), consciousness becomes the locus of all ontology and meaning.

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<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, p.113

<sup>262</sup> Sartre also refers to for-itself as 'a lack' or 'lacking' on numerous occasions one of which can be found on p.109

<sup>263</sup> Mikel Dufrenne, *Existentialism and Existentialisms* (Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol.26, No.1, 1965) p.54

<sup>264</sup> Sartre himself acknowledges the similarity to Kant but clarifies that 'we ought rather think of Descartes'. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.17-18

## IV

## Freedom in Being and Nothingness

The problem of anthropocentrism and the reliance on rationalism ultimately render Sartre's account of human freedom problematic. Our previous chapter has sought to establish the relationship between Sartre's proof of consciousness and the nothingness that he argues is at the heart of being. Thus we claim that 'establishing consciousness epistemologically' is anchored by nothingness which for Sartre, is the necessary pre-requisite for all ontological enquiry if not all comportment as such. This 'permanent possibility' of negation imparts a robust responsibility on consciousness which as we will show herein, underpins Sartre's argument for freedom as a necessary characteristic of conscious experience. Our explication of Sartre's account of ontological freedom will thus focus on three particular concerns. First, we will provide a definition of precisely what we understand Sartre to mean by freedom. This will be preceded by a discussion of what Sartre does not mean by freedom and his reasons for rejecting the 'free will' account. Doing so will eliminate the possibility of conflating Sartre's freedom with the latter. Second we will offer an explication of Sartre's argument for the claim that humans are necessarily free. The complexity of that argument raises *prima facie* objections which will also be addressed. In so doing we will outline what we understand of the fundamental project which nuances and informs the constitution of causes. It is in this particular sense that, for Sartre, human experience cannot but be responsible for its choices since they are premised on reasons for action constituted by consciousness' fundamental project. Finally, we will assess Sartre's argument for the claim that humans are necessarily free. We contend that the success of the argument will depend on the criteria by which it is judged. The argument can be assessed independently of Sartre's project or in the appropriate context of fundamental ontology as we have explained it. We have argued that understanding any particular argument in *BN* requires understanding it as predicated on the project as a whole. We also contend that Sartre's argument is successful if and only if other claims integral to his project are rejected. To that end we will show that Sartre's argument hinges on his interpretation of intentionality within the framework of Heideggerian fundamental ontology. Ultimately we will argue that Sartre's account of ontological freedom based on his interpretation of intentionality is inconsistent with the Heideggerian ontology which forms his premises.

It will be helpful to state a few preliminary points. Our analysis will be restricted to the issue of freedom where possible. Nevertheless the holistic structure of Sartre's project is such that it will require mention of other issues. These will include the mistranslation of '*motif*' and '*mobile*' as



‘cause’, the adoption of a fundamental project and the encounter with the world. These issues are integral to Sartre’s argument for necessary freedom and therefore require explication, though analysis of his project in the previous chapter means that brief discussion will suffice. Furthermore, proposed responses to *prima facie* objections should not be interpreted as support for Sartre’s argument. Inaccurate objections are dismissed only in order to arrive at a serious criticism which approaches the argument appropriately.

### i) Sartre’s Definition of Freedom

Sartre is quite clear in regard to his understanding of freedom. He states that his use of the term is both ‘technical’ and ‘philosophical’. Furthermore, he claims that his account must be clearly distinguished from ‘common sense misunderstandings’ carrying ‘historical, political and moral’ connotations; the ‘technical and philosophical concept of freedom is the only one in consideration and means only the autonomy of choice’.<sup>265</sup> Finally, he distinguishes his account from the traditional analytic debate:

Thus at the outset we can see what is lacking in those tedious discussions between determinists and proponents of free will. The latter are concerned to find cases of decision for which there exists no prior *motif*, or deliberations concerning two opposed acts which are equally possible and possess *motifs* (and *mobiles*) of exactly the same weight. To which the determinists may easily reply that there is no action without a *motif* and that the most insignificant gesture [...] refers to *motifs* and *mobiles* which confer its meaning upon it. Indeed the case could not be otherwise since every action must be *intentional*; [...] But the determinists in turn are weighting the scale by stopping their investigation with the mere designation of the *motif* and the *mobile*. The essential question in fact lies beyond the complex organisation “*motif*-intention-act-end”; indeed we ought to ask how a *motif* (or *mobile*) can be constituted as such.<sup>266</sup>

Here and elsewhere Sartre uses *motif* to refer to the reason for which an agent acts:

Generally by *motif* we mean the *reason* for the act; that is, the ensemble of rational considerations which justify it.<sup>267</sup>

Barnes’ translation of *motif* as ‘cause’ is therefore misleading and will be avoided. By contrast, Sartre uses *mobile* to refer to the desires or fears driving the act:

The *mobile* [...] is the ensemble of the desires, emotions, and passions which urge me to accomplish a certain act.<sup>268</sup>

Sartre is uninterested in ‘common sense’ notions which hinge on the availability of alternatives toward the realisation of a particular end. He also rejects the positions taken up in the analytic

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<sup>265</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.505

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.458-459

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p.468 - We understand the phrase, ‘which justify it’ to mean, ‘which the agent takes to justify it’.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p.468

debate of his time insofar as they do not appropriately address the ‘constitution’ of *motifs* and *mobiles*. On our interpretation of Sartre, those ‘tedious’ analytic discussions are restricted in their accounts of freedom because they fail to interrogate the constitution of a cause. That is, they fail to address what in conscious experience originates and substantiates a cause, *motif* (reason for), *mobile* (desires that drive) an act. The analytic account of human freedom will be referred to as ‘the free will account’ throughout the remainder of this analysis. On this analytic account, whether an agent acts freely depends simply on whether they could have acted otherwise than they did. It may be informative to contrast Sartre’s summary of the analytic free will debate with contemporary discussions. Of course *BN* was published in 1943 so these discussions will not be what Sartre had in mind. Nonetheless a comparison will benefit our assessment of Sartre’s argument and its relevance to modern thinking on the issue of human freedom.

a) *Sartre vs. the Modern Debate*

Contemporary analytic views on free will fall into a number of sets and sub-sets which in many cases share the view that acting freely consists in acting such that one could have done otherwise. The clearest division between them is compatibilism and incompatibilism whose positions can be deduced from their title. Incompatibilists argue that determinism and free will are mutually exclusive: if determinism is true, then an agent could never have acted otherwise, so the agent’s action cannot be free. For some (‘hard determinists’), human action is explained by reference to determinism which they consider an absolute governing all events, and accordingly human action is never free. Other incompatibilists (‘libertarians’) assert that determinism is inapplicable to human action, for which a power of spontaneous agent causation must hold. This is exemplified by Roderick M. Chisholm in his paper, ‘Human Freedom and the Self’.<sup>269</sup> Chisholm borrows Aristotle’s assertion that ‘a staff moves a stone moved by a hand, which is moved by a man’.<sup>270</sup> Thus though the actions of stone, staff and hand are explained by prior causes, the ‘prime mover’ i.e. the ‘man’, is also the *causa sui*. By contrast to both forms of incompatibilism, compatibilists<sup>271</sup> argue that determinism and free will are compatible. Like hard determinists and libertarians, compatibilists typically accept that freedom consists in it being the case that the agent could have acted otherwise. However they argue in various ways that the agent’s ‘being able to have acted

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<sup>269</sup> Roderick M. Chisholm, *Human Freedom and the Self in Free Will* (Oxon: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp.24-35

<sup>270</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* 256a

<sup>271</sup> For example see, J.M. Fischer and M. Ravizza, *When the Will is Free* (Philosophical Perspectives, Vol.6, Ethics, 1992) pp.423-451 – Though they argue that moral responsibility (rather than free will) is compatible with determinism, free will is ‘commonly taken as a necessary condition of moral responsibility’ – See, McKenna, Michael and Coates, D. Justin, *Compatibilism*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/compatibilism/>

otherwise' is compatible with determinism. This brief discussion of hard determinist, libertarian and compatibilist positions will provide appropriate examples against which we can assess the accuracy of Sartre's summary and rejection.

For Sartre, both libertarians and hard determinists are mistaken. He argues that 'proponents of free will' by which he means libertarians such as Chisholm, 'render action absurd'<sup>272</sup> by envisaging acts that have no prior *motif* (reason). He also claims that 'determinists', by which he means hard determinists who think of determinism as an absolute leaving no room for human freedom, are 'weighting the scale'. For Sartre, the failure to prioritise the experience of a *motif*, that is, the presupposition of what one means by a *motif* and the ontology of consciousness experiencing *motifs* and *mobiles* renders the analytic debate schematically inappropriate for a discussion of human freedom. Much as for Heidegger the ontological tradition fails to appropriately approach the question of being so for Sartre is the analytic tradition equally at fault with regard to human freedom. For both 'determinists' and 'proponents of free will', the debate is framed so as to exclude an account of both the experience of *motifs* and *mobiles* and the underlying ontological condition of consciousness for whom freedom is a possibility so neither begins appropriately. Crucially, this omission is an inherent feature of the free will debate insofar as it assumes the same methodological parameters as the ontological tradition: the agent is conceived as disengaged from the context of the world, that is, action and freedom are conceived independently of an account of the agents' relationship to and understanding of the world. Sartre gives an example of action and choice which may exemplify the importance of accounting for the experience of *motifs* and *mobiles* to understanding whether an agent acts freely:

If I accept a niggardly salary it is doubtless because of fear; and fear is a *mobile*. But it is *fear of dying from starvation*; that is, this fear has meaning only outside itself in an end ideally posited, which is the preservation of a life which I apprehend as "in danger". And this fear is understood in turn only in relation to the *value* which I implicitly give to this life; that is, it is referred to that hierarchal system of ideal objects which are values. [...] *Motifs* and *mobiles* have meaning only inside a projected ensemble which is precisely an ensemble of non-existents.<sup>273</sup>

The point, for Sartre, is not that fear necessitates a certain response which, given the same circumstances, could not have been otherwise. Rather, one only experiences the *mobile* of a fear of dying because they have adopted the fundamental stance of valuing their life. It is this *mobile*, combined with the *motif* that one may starve unless they accept a low salary, which gives rise to the

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<sup>272</sup> 'To speak of an act without a motif is to speak of an act which would lack the intentional structure of every act; and the proponents of free will by searching for it on the level of the act which is in the process of being performed can only end up by rendering the act absurd.' - Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.459

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p.459

act of accepting the salary. Thus an agent's actions are not simply determined by a prior state of affairs. Rather *motifs* and *mobiles* are coherent or have meaning only within the context of a 'hierarchical system of ideal objects'. Sartre also claims that an inappropriately framed debate about human freedom is explained in the following way:

[...] this amounts to trying to take the *motifs* and *mobiles* as *things*. We try to confer permanence upon them. [...] we take them for constants.<sup>274</sup>

We understand this effort to take '*motifs* and *mobiles* as things' in terms of what we have referred to as the fallacy of the 'theoretical approach as such'<sup>275</sup> and the 'methodology of rationalist disengagement'.<sup>276</sup> In this sense, the effort to treat *motifs* and *mobiles* as 'things' reflects an inappropriate characterisation of phenomena as present-at-hand akin to Heidegger's critique of Descartes on his representation of time. His point, it seems is that trying to 'confer permanence' or presenting beings as 'constants' is a feature of the rationalist 'view from nowhere' in order that they may be critically observed.<sup>277</sup>

An example of the free will account described without appeal to *motifs* and *mobiles* can be found in the libertarian account provided by Chisholm. To his credit, Chisholm identifies a distinction in the case of human action exemplified by what he calls 'immanent causation':

[... ] I shall say that when an *agent*, as distinguished from an event, causes an event or state of affairs, then we have an instance of *immanent* causation.<sup>278</sup>

For Chisholm, actions originating from humans are a special case distinguishable from an otherwise causally determined state of affairs. Nonetheless immanent causation is seemingly initiated *ab nihilo*. Nothing (whether *motif* or *mobile*) is given to explain immanent causation other than the assertion that 'cerebral events cause instances of transeunt causation though these events are caused by man'.<sup>279</sup> The absence of an investigation into what Chisholm means by 'man' and the power to

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<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p.462

<sup>275</sup> See, Heidegger's *Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being*, p.30

<sup>276</sup> Charles Taylor, *Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger* in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

<sup>277</sup> Our concern in respect of Sartre's argument for necessary freedom is his 'ontologising' of precisely this conferring of permanence. Thus he argues that consciousness is inherently nihilating thereby 'unfolding' an ontological distance necessary for an encounter between perceiver and perceived. But this characterisation of the encounter with being(s) also presupposes not the permanence of things as such but the permanence of 'no-thing'. This is how we understand Heidegger's critique of Sartre in his *Letter on Humanism* where he states that, 'the reversal of a metaphysical proposition, however, is still a metaphysical proposition.' See, Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.15

<sup>278</sup> Roderick M. Chisholm, *Human Freedom and the Self in Free Will* (Oxon: Oxford University Press, 1982) p.28

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30 – Where 'immanent causation' refers to events caused by an agent and 'transeunt causation' refers to events caused by preceding events.

‘cause cerebral events’ makes him prey to Sartre’s critique. It may be worth noting that Chisholm does imply the necessity of a renewed investigation since ‘there can be no science of man’:

For at times the agent, if he chooses, may rise above his desires and do something else instead.<sup>280</sup>

But Chisholm’s failure to address the problem of ‘man’ leaves his argument insufficient to satisfy Sartre’s criticism.

Sartre never addresses the compatibilist position so one is obligated to extrapolate what he may say from his comments on hard determinism and libertarianism. That said, for Sartre the very terms of the debate are already mistaken insofar as their rationalist approach means they fail to methodologically prioritise conscious experience. Compatibilists want to show that it being the case that one could have acted otherwise is compatible with determinism rather than interrogating the assumption that acting freely consists in acting such that one could have acted otherwise and are therefore equally susceptible to Sartre’s critique. J.M. Fischer refers to the similarity between compatibilists and incompatibilists on the basic terms of the free will debate in his paper, ‘Responsibility and Control’:

In understanding this argument it is important to see that something like the principle of alternate possibilities is usually accepted by *both* compatibilists and incompatibilists.<sup>281</sup>

The ‘Principle of Alternate Possibilities’ (PAP) states that an agent is *morally responsible* for an action only if they could have done otherwise but it typically goes hand in hand with the view that an action is *free* only if the agent could have done otherwise.<sup>282</sup> In a separate paper, Fischer and Mark Ravizza in effect argue that an agent may act differently if their *motifs* and *mobiles* had been different<sup>283</sup> even if they cannot be accounted for rationally. Sartre may have been inclined to agree with a compatibilist account such as this. Nevertheless, it fails to address how *acquires* given *motifs* and *mobiles*. In other words, Sartre would ultimately reject this and similar compatibilist accounts<sup>284</sup> because they fail to see that *mobiles* and *motifs* depend on the symbolic value of a ‘projected ensemble of non-existents’. Thus having different *mobiles* and *motifs* requires a different projection

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<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33 - This may not be too far removed from Sartre’s assertion that, ‘A law is a transcendent object of knowledge; there can be consciousness of a law, not a law of consciousness.’ - Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.11

<sup>281</sup> J.M. Fischer, *Responsibility and Control*, (The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 79, No.1, 1982) pp.22-40 – Fischer is usually associated with semi-compatibilism which argues that regardless of the compatibility between determinism and free will, determinism is compatible with moral responsibility.

<sup>282</sup> See, Harry G. Frankfurt, *Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility* in *The Importance of What We Care About* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp.1-10

<sup>283</sup> J.M. Fischer and M. Ravizza, *When the Will is Free* (Philosophical Perspectives, Vol.6, Ethics, 1992) pp.423-451

<sup>284</sup> The same can also be said of ‘Responsibility and Control.’

and the values it produces. Freedom is still restricted to the ability to do otherwise and its limitations without ever interrogating what it means for one to be caused to act or to will actions and in this respect, there is a disengaged account of freedom.

We may note that Sartre's summary of the analytic free will debate is insensitive to the nuances and intricacies of its contemporary positions. Of course Sartre could not have adjusted his argument to account for these later developments. Nevertheless, the demand that the ontological character of consciousness be investigated prior to determining whether an agent is free is not met by the positions we have discussed. Neither the experience of a *motif* or *mobile* nor the character of the agent experiencing it is addressed. Against this account, Sartre asserts what he calls 'ontological freedom', by which he means a fundamental capacity to distinguish, identify and prefer particular comportments and ultimately adopting a certain non-existent state of affairs as an end (projecting non-existents) which gives them their value.

The rejection of the free will account is a significant feature of Sartre's own account of freedom. Sartre offers two overarching reasons for rejecting an account of freedom as consisting in the possibility that the agent could have done otherwise. These are what we will refer to as the i) existential and ii) phenomenological:

- i) Existential reason: For Sartre, the 'constitution of *motif* as such can not refer to another real and positive existence; that is, to a prior *motif*.<sup>285</sup> Rather a *motif* is constituted as such in light of a pre-existing 'project'. For example, if an agent obeys the law because (in its view) 'the law is authoritative', then this consideration is the agent's *motif* (reason) for obeying. But the consideration is only constituted as a *motif* (reason) for obeying because the agent has a prior project of seeking order. Thus Sartre asserts that 'nothing external to consciousness can motivate it';<sup>286</sup> motivation is determined by consciousness' basic projects. Freedom on the other hand, is a fundamental characteristic of consciousness, subject to neither change nor manipulation. As we understand it, if the character of consciousness necessitates that an encounter with being(s) is characterised in terms of its possibility, then so long as one has consciousness, one must have ontological freedom:

[...]we hope simply that we have shown that the will is not a privileged manifestation of freedom but that it is a psychic event of a peculiar structure which is constituted on the same plane as other psychic events and which is supported [...] by an original, ontological freedom.<sup>287</sup>

We understand this to mean that an account of freedom based on the will [to do otherwise] presupposes consciousness' relation to being(s) such that one may will any number of

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<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p.459

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p.475

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p.474

alternatives. Willing any alternative requires that being(s) are experienced not as hard determinatives necessitating a particular action but in terms of their possibility. Thus one may will the acceptance of a 'niggardly salary' or even their own death for that matter precisely because 'life', that is 'my life' is experienced quite precisely as a permanent possibility in perpetually unstable equilibrium between negation and affirmation.

Traditional accounts of free will on the other hand, are inherently incapable of acknowledging ontological freedom because the methodological parameters of that discourse necessitate the presupposition of consciousness' relationship to being. The effort to determine an agent's free will, will not involve discussion of how *motif's* are constituted as such or an interrogation of the nature of the agents experience from their perspective as an engaged actor in the world.

- ii) Phenomenological reason: Sartre's discussion of freedom is intended to explicate two main concerns. Firstly, that freedom is a necessary feature of consciousness' ontological character, which is a necessary prerequisite to particular choices and secondly, that this feature is therefore inseparable from consciousness. For Sartre, the account of freedom as free will does not offer an ontological account of consciousness as a necessary foundation for the discussion of choice. Consequently, the parameters of the free will debate appear indifferent to either the ontology of consciousness or a phenomenological account of action. But if, as we have seen, the 'logical significance' of rationalist accounts has little or nothing to do with what one can 'understand or describe' then it will not be surprising to find accounts of free will from that tradition that seem removed or disengaged from immediate experience. Sartre refers to this oversight as follows:

It is strange that philosophers have been able to argue endlessly about determinism and free will, to cite examples in favour of one or the other thesis, without ever attempting first to make explicit the structures contained in the very idea of *action*.<sup>288</sup>

These 'structures contained in the very idea of action' are founded on the 'principle of intentionality': that consciousness must be consciousness of something and Sartre clarifies this when he states that, 'we should observe first that an action is on principle intentional'.<sup>289</sup> Therefore, an ontological account of consciousness is necessary in order to 'make these structures explicit'. But neither compatibilists nor incompatibilists provide such an account. Rather for both, free will depends on the extent to which the law of

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<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p.455

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, p.455 – Sartre may simply be using 'intentional' here to mean that action is directed at achieving some purpose. Nevertheless we claim that Sartre's argument in the introduction and throughout *BN* is, in part, that normative action presupposes the 'principle' of intentionality in the phenomenological sense.

causality prevents alternate possibilities. For Sartre, the lack of an explicit and prioritised ontology renders the account of freedom as free will inappropriate for any discussion involving intentional consciousness.

Sartre's claim (to be discussed below) that consciousness entails freedom means that the latter is neither fleeting nor subject to change regardless of the objective state of affairs. In other words, for Sartre, consciousness' characteristic of transcendence means that firstly, no state of affairs could determine 'man's freedom' and secondly, that this is because freedom is a permanent feature of consciousness inherent to the 'reality' of non-being. This is how we understand the following:

If we start by conceiving of man as a plenum, it is absurd to try to find in him afterwards moments or psychic regions in which he would be free. As well look for emptiness in a container which one has filled beforehand up to the brim! Man can not [*sic*] be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all.<sup>290</sup>

Sartre emphasises the relationship between consciousness and freedom with the assertion that 'choice and consciousness are one and the same thing.'<sup>291</sup> His assertion will be assessed in the forthcoming section on Sartre's argument for the necessity of freedom. For now, a definition of Sartre's freedom can be inferred from his understanding of intentional consciousness which we claim underpins Sartre's argument by grounding it in phenomenological ontology. Ontological freedom refers to the necessity of transcending intentional objects provided by the permanence and pre-judicative comprehension of non-being such that the world is experienced in respect of the projection of consciousness' possibilities. Thus both the encounter with intentional objects and the adoption of a particular project ground Sartre's argument in favour of necessary human freedom. He does not go to great lengths to separate these two aspects of his argument, though this may not be without good reason. It is possible that the holistic structure of his project is preserved by explicating the argument without distinguishing between these aspects. Nonetheless we may propose a distinction to aid our understanding of his argument. Firstly, on our reading of Sartre, if consciousness is always consciousness of some-thing then some distinction between consciousness and its thing-ness must be included in that definition. The unfolding of an empty distance between perceiver and perceived establishes this distinction but not simply in terms of an external negation. Rather the nothingness 'unfolded' is premised on a pre-judicative ontological non-being such that all experience is characterised in terms of its possibility thereby necessitating choice.<sup>292</sup> Consciousness' encounter with objects is thus premised on a fundamental ontological 'distancing'.

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<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p.463

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p.484

<sup>292</sup> What Sartre refers to as 'active nihilation' as explained previously.



Extended analysis of ‘active nihilation’ will follow. Our immediate concern is acknowledging Sartre’s claim that alternate possibilities are already implicit to consciousness.

We cannot understand Sartre’s argument for ontological freedom without a discussion of what he refers to as the ‘fundamental project’. After all, active nihilation alone does not account for the experience of intentional objects as alternate possible choices:

[human reality is] not something which would *first* be in order subsequently to put itself into relation with this or that end, but on the contrary, a being which is originally a project – i.e., which is defined by its end.<sup>293</sup>

For Sartre, consciousness is immediately ‘defined by its end’. We understand this ‘end’ as a reference for the fundamental project, which informs and contours each consciousness’ particular experience of the world in respect of pursuable possibilities. In this sense intentional objects have their value as ‘choices’ conferred on them in light of an adopted fundamental project. Thus Sartre’s account of the fundamental project will establish freedom in everyday experience but grounded by his interpretation of intentionality and the necessity of active nihilation.

## ii) The Argument for Necessary Freedom

Having established a positive definition of what Sartre means by freedom we may now explicate his argument that humans are necessarily free. The basic outline of the argument will be familiar given the holistic structure of Sartre’s project and the fact that his argument rests on principles previously discussed.<sup>294</sup> For Sartre, ontological freedom is inherent to consciousness insofar the nihilating activity of the for-itself, founded by the pre-judicative comprehension of non-being, necessitates that consciousness transcend intentional objects so that they are established in respect of their possibility,<sup>295</sup> as previously explained. In short, the objective reality of non-being reveals the permanence of negation such that beings can be encountered not simply as hard, opaque constants but as possibilities, specifically ‘my’ possibilities. As such, there can be no thought which is not immediately accompanied by the exclusion of its alternative. This is the sense in which we interpret Sartre’s ontological freedom; the character of consciousness is such that being(s) are encountered specifically as non-conditional or non-determinative ontological hypotheses necessitating ‘choice’, not as a normative or overt description of tangible alternatives but a fundamental characteristic of experience. Consciousness as consciousness of what is not already includes the possibility of alternatives included in the encounter with intentional objects.

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<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, p.475

<sup>294</sup> See, *Jean-Paul Sartre’s Project of Phenomenological Ontology*, p.57

<sup>295</sup> A Heideggerian formulation may be ‘the possibility of choice’. The difference between the two statements describes the subtle but significant difference between their projects.

a) *Intentionality and Active Nihilation*

We have already explained that for Sartre, the argument for ontological freedom i.e. the capacity for 'projecting non-existents' and for adopting a certain non-existent state of affairs as one's end must be derived from the structure of consciousness. The claim that humans are necessarily free must be implicit to the principle of intentionality which we have previously described as the claim that 'all consciousness must be consciousness *of* something'. As Pierre Jacob explains,

Intentionality is the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs. [...] It derives from the Latin word *intentio*, which in turn derives from the verb *intendere*, which means being directed towards some goal or thing.<sup>296</sup>

The principle of intentionality<sup>297</sup> thus refers to the claim that consciousness is always directed towards something be it an object in the external world, a group of objects or a particular thought. Sartre agrees with this general claim and uses it for the basis of his account of consciousness and thus ontological freedom. He states, for example:

All consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness *of* something.<sup>298</sup>

Nonetheless, Sartre goes to some effort in the introduction of *BN* to distinguish himself from the understanding of intentionality described by Edmund Husserl and in particular the *noesis-noema* model.<sup>299</sup> The model is intended to account for the relationship between the action of directedness towards an object (*noesis*) and the perceived object (*noema*) as part of the intentional structure of consciousness. Sartre claims that Husserl's account does nothing to successfully establish a connection between these two regions of being which, as we have seen, is the ostensible purpose of Sartre's project:

But, we are told, Husserl defines consciousness precisely as a transcendence. In truth he does. This is what he posits. This is his essential discovery. But from the moment that he makes of the *noema* an *unreal*, a *correlate of the noesis*, a noema whose *esse* is *percipi*, he is totally unfaithful to his principle.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Pierre Jacob, *Intentionality*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/intentionality/>

<sup>297</sup> What David Woodruff Smith also refers to as, 'the central structure of an experience' and, 'its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object.' David Woodruff Smith, *Phenomenology*, The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2011, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/phenomenology/>

<sup>298</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.7

<sup>299</sup> See, Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I, The Essential Husserl – Basic writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, (Indiana University Press, 1999)

<sup>300</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.17 – It is informative for our purposes to note that Sartre is in agreement with Heidegger in this respect also. Difference arises in regard to how they resolve this problem. Sartre aims to achieve this by adding a mediating nothingness whereas Heidegger will dissolve distinction between *noesis* and *noema* in Dasein's being-in-the-world.

For Sartre, Husserl's attempt to arrive at purely mental processes by 'bracketing' out beings in the world undermines a phenomenological relation between consciousness and intentional objects, accusing him of '*reducing* the world to the state of the noema-correlate of consciousness'.<sup>301</sup> He claims to resolve this problem by bringing out a 'detachment from self'<sup>302</sup> already implicit in Husserl's idea of intentionality. Thus for Sartre, the general definition of intentionality is adjusted by a simple addition: consciousness is consciousness of something *which is not itself*:

Consciousness is consciousness *of* something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, the consciousness arises oriented towards a being which is not itself.<sup>303</sup>

Thus Sartre's interpretation of intentionality reinforces his account of nihilation as a medium between the two regions of being. His claim that 'transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness' on our interpretation refers to the claim that if consciousness must be consciousness of something, then consciousness must be conscious of *itself* as *not* that thing. Thus for Sartre, the principle of intentionality already implies the law of presence to self and the pre-judicative comprehension of non-being which ground the upsurge of the for-itself. As we will see, Sartre's argument for freedom is anchored in this conception of intentionality and non-being such that he equates the rejection of this transcendence (the perpetual loss of in-itself as such resulting in presence-to-self) with a total misconception of human-being. Thus he claims that, 'refusal of freedom amounts to the same thing as attempting to apprehend oneself as being-in-itself'.<sup>304</sup>

Of course one may object that distinguishing intentional objects need not require this robust, ontological freedom nor does it require that we characterise consciousness as an entity of being-in-itself. Sartre pre-empts this objection by reference to what he calls the 'impossibility of passively receiving conscious objects'<sup>305</sup> or the impossibility of spontaneously occurring conscious objects. We would do well to recall that the law of presence to self, that is the permanent possibility of negation, is premised on an objective nothingness which distances consciousness from its objects. Thus the loss of in-itself as such established the conditions for an encounter with being(s). We have also outlined Sartre's two modes of negation: external and internal where the former refers to negative judgments about external objects and the latter refers to negative judgments about the conscious agent. Moreover, we have stated that no feature of Sartre's project is independent of the whole. External negation is predicated on an implicit distinction between the external object and the

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28 [Italics added]

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, p.462

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46

observer rendering the judgment, two kinds of the triple non-being inherent to negation. Similarly, internal negation materialises an encounter with an agent who has particular properties. Thus the statement, ‘I am not tall’ simultaneously declares an impression of height and an encounter with a self constituted as ‘he-who-could-not-be-tall’. For Sartre, both internal and external negations presuppose nothingness necessary to distance perceiver from perceived and thus establish an encounter with both. The crucial feature of Sartrean intentionality then is not directedness towards an intentional object but the inherent necessity of a pre-judicative comprehension of non-being. But nothingness, Sartre argues, cannot be passively received; rather it must be actively posited. He claims that pre-judicative comprehension and active nihilation necessitate transcendence and thus the permanent possibility of choice:

We must observe first that the being postulated can not [*sic*] be passive in relation to Nothingness, can not receive it; Nothingness could not *come* to this being except through another Being – which would be an infinite regress. But on the other hand, the Being by which Nothingness comes to the world can not *produce* Nothingness while remaining indifferent to that production – like the Stoic cause which produces its effect without being itself changed. [...] *The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness*. By this we must understand not a nihilating act, [...] but an ontological characteristic of the Being required.<sup>306</sup>

As we have seen, Sartre argues that consciousness is the required being. Thus, if consciousness cannot be ‘passive’ or ‘indifferent’ to the ontological characteristic by which nothingness comes to the world then consciousness must be actively aware of the matrix of negative relations establishing being(s). Intentional objects or perhaps more accurately, intentionally nihilated objects are therefore encountered as such by virtue of *active* nihilation. Sartre reinforces this argument in his analogy of the workers’ revolution of 1830:

This means that he [the worker] will have had to give himself room, to withdraw in relation to it, and will have to have effected a double nihilation: on the one hand, he must posit an ideal state of affairs as a pure *present* nothingness; on the other hand, he must posit the actual situation as nothingness in relation to this state of affairs. He will have to conceive of a happiness attached to his class as a pure possible – that is, presently as a certain nothingness – and on the other hand, he will return to the present situation in order to illuminate it in the light of this nothingness and in order to nihilate it in turn by declaring: “*I am not happy*.”<sup>307</sup>

We do not understand Sartre as saying that the ‘troubles or suffering’ of the worker are not experienced as such. Nor that a ‘different state of affairs’ is empirically impossible prior to ‘conceiving’ of them. Rather we interpret Sartre’s claim here in respect of the ontological possibility of establishing both ‘difference’ and ‘my happiness’ such that the present state of affairs must be doubly nihilated, contrasting the self and an ideal situation with current circumstances. The

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<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.46-47

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, p.457

feeling that these conditions are intolerable or ‘requiring revolution’ is thus dependent on an ontological characteristic of the being making the declaration. Only as a characteristic of transcendence can self and circumstances be ‘projected’, that is, hypothesised across a distance of nothingness, establishing the possibilities of revolt/submission.

Nevertheless, further objections can be raised with regard to the impossibility of passively receiving conscious objects. One is what we may call the objection from the possibility of passive enquiry. The objection could run as follows: We have shown that the intentionality of consciousness entails nihilation and that nihilation means that objects cannot be passively perceived. But this assumes that nihilation is active. What if nihilation is passive? Moreover, nihilation cannot be active if nothingness comes to the world by a pre-judicative comprehension of non-being. At first sight, this presents a serious problem for Sartre’s interpretation of intentionality and consequently, his argument for ontological freedom. By way of resolving the objection, it will be helpful to positively state precisely what passive nihilation means. Nihilation we have understood as the process by which an encounter with being(s) is constituted as characterised by some kind of not-ness. In other words, nihilation describes the encounter with being(s) on the basis of a pre-judicative comprehension of non-being. Passive nihilation we therefore understand in terms of what Sartre calls ‘indifference to the production of Nothingness’. This, on our interpretation, would require that nihilation describes an insurmountable ontological absolute, that is, it would require the impossibility of nihilating the process of nihilation or put simply, to have nihilation as an object of thought. If nihilation refers to a passive condition then all intentional objects (including the object of nihilation) cannot be transcended towards their possibilities but are encountered as already established. Thus the object of nihilation would be encountered as already nihilated in its very appearance. We may explain the impossibility of such a situation by reference to theoretical and experiential evidence. To that end, we return to Sartre’s three ekstases of consciousness:<sup>308</sup> i) Temporalisation, ii) Presence-to-Self and iii) Transcendence. Our immediate concern is restricted to the second which requires that consciousness is always self-aware or immediately ‘internally nihilating’. As previously stated, Sartrean intentionality states that consciousness must always be conscious of something which it is not: something other than its objects. This does not negate the possibility of being engrossed in awareness of an external object. He argues that consciousness of an object is always accompanied by consciousness of self as such or ‘non-thetic self-consciousness’.<sup>309</sup> Moreover, these states are ‘ontological correlates’<sup>310</sup> insofar as both are examples

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<sup>308</sup> See, *Jean-Paul Sartre’s Project of Phenomenological Ontology, Being-in-Itself and Being-for-Itself, a) Definition of Being-for-itself/Being-in-itself*, p.61

<sup>309</sup> ‘Non-thetic self-consciousness’: Implicit consciousness of being conscious of something.

‘Thetic self-consciousness’: Consciousness of being conscious i.e. the reflection of consciousness onto itself.

of intentional consciousness. The difference is what consciousness is directed to and the mode of negation. Thus for Sartre, 'nothing exists in consciousness which is not consciousness of existing'.<sup>311</sup> It will follow therefore that 'nothingness' could not be an intentional object without consciousness' active awareness of it as such. Nihilation must be active insofar as the ontological character of consciousness requires that it is conscious of nihilation:

This means that by a double movement of nihilation, he [consciousness] nihilates the thing questioned in relation to himself [...] and that he nihilates himself in relation to the thing questioned[...]<sup>312</sup>

Sartre does not claim that passive nihilation is insufficient for an encounter with objects in the world. Rather, passive nihilation is insufficient for intentional consciousness. Passive nihilation presupposes the exclusion of internal negation because in that case consciousness could not be conscious of itself as consciousness of something it is not. Such consciousness would be restricted to an exclusive awareness of objects. We understand Sartre's assertion that, 'in order to count, it is necessary to be conscious of counting'<sup>313</sup> in this regard. An elementary thought experiment is sufficient to illustrate the experiential evidence. As stated, passive nihilation requires that the 'thing questioned' and the 'self' doing the questioning are already nihilated in their relation to each other. Thus the 'thing questioned' is nihilated in relation to self and self is nihilated in relation to the 'thing' but both are already nihilated. Passive nihilation is proven on condition that one can successfully think of an object without being aware of so doing. Failure evidences the necessity of active nihilation. But active nihilation means that the experience of intentional objects is itself active. Thus Sartre's assertion that passively received conscious objects are impossible to conceive can be taken quite literally.<sup>314</sup>

Our effort to resolve the objection from passive nihilation reveals a secondary problem of greater concern. As stated, for Sartre a pre-judicative comprehension of non-being can and must be inferred from the principle of intentionality in order to correct shortcomings in Husserl's definition as well as Heidegger's account of *Dasein* and being-in-the-world. It is based on the aforementioned

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'Non-thetic' and 'thetic' self-consciousness are both characteristics of consciousness as consciousness of something.

<sup>310</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.471

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p.475

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>314</sup> The argument for the 'impossibility' of passively nihilated conscious objects does not preclude the possibility of previously un-encountered objects. Sartre's argument does not equate to a rejection of 'discovery'. One may claim and empirically verify receiving previously unknown information without posing a problem for Sartre's argument. The impossibility of passive nihilation is a reference to the ontological character of consciousness *necessary for knowledge*. It refers to the pre-requisite structures of consciousness necessary for experience.

‘necessity of establishing it [i.e. consciousness] epistemologically’<sup>315</sup> and this is reinforced by his appeal to Descartes:

But this consciousness (of being) consciousness must be qualified in some way, and it can be qualified only as revealing intuition or it is nothing. Now a revealing intuition implies something revealed. Absolute subjectivity can be established only in the face of something revealed; immanence can be defined only within the apprehension of a transcendent. It might appear that there is an echo here of Kant’s refutation of problematical idealism. But we ought rather to think of Descartes.<sup>316</sup>

In the introduction of *BN*, subtitled, *The Pursuit of Being*, Sartre turns to what he calls the ‘ontological proof’ [of being] derived he says, ‘not from the reflective *cogito*’ but from ‘the pre-reflective being of the *percipiens*’. This being is what we understand as the ‘something revealed’ by intuition, namely the ‘transcendent’ or the ‘non-conscious and transphenomenal being’. Moreover, he clarifies that, ‘we are here on the ground of being, not of knowledge’. As we have seen, for Sartre, the problem inherent to the account of *Dasein* and Husserl’s intentionality is the failure to acknowledge the ‘revealed-revelation’ of non-being inherent to consciousness and thus that ‘there is no being outside of that precise obligation to be a revealing intuition of something’. In other words, it is clear for Sartre that an intentional account of consciousness only makes sense on condition that consciousness’ consciousness of something is established by a transcendence revealing non-being. Thus consciousness of something is always and simultaneously consciousness of nothing-ness, the permanent possibility of non-being. The risk, on our reading of Sartre, is that failure to acknowledge the inherency of non-being to intentionality renders consciousness a thing-in-itself and thus deprives it of choice, ontological responsibility and ultimately freedom. Our final chapter on Heidegger will seek to explicate his argument for freedom so it isn’t necessary to assess the validity of Sartre’s concern here. Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that Sartre’s project, as a whole, is intended to aid the effort to establish a relation between two regions of being. This relation, we now understand, is established by the ‘revealed-revelation of non-being’. But insofar as Sartre is clear we are here ‘on the ground of being, not of knowledge’ then non-being cannot refer to another being ‘outside of consciousness’ obligation to be a revealing intuition’. Thus ‘the transphenomenal being of what exists for consciousness is itself in itself’. The problem, as far as we have understood Sartre, seems to be that if the revealed intuition of non-being establishes the relation between the two regions of being then what grounds consciousness’ relation to non-being? The answer, as derived from the outline of active nihilism, is the absolute of transcendence and the consequent law of presence to self. In other words, for Sartre, the permanent possibility of non-being is an

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<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.17-18

inescapable ontological characteristic of consciousness such that be conscious is already to reveal an intuitive grasp of non-being. But this is intuitively dissatisfying since it seems to state that consciousness' pre-judicative comprehension of non-being is explained simply as a hard fact of what it is to be conscious such that the proof of consciousness is already established by its upsurge. This what we have referred to as the problem of anthropocentrism in Sartre's account; that an investigation of active nihilation and the impossibility of passive nihilation reveals that for Sartre, 'the being of the world' is 'implied by consciousness'. Consciousness is thus not simply the methodological priority as a point of departure but the focal point, that is, that which grounds meaning and thus ontological truth as such. That said, the severity of this problem cannot be understood until we have a full account of Sartre's argument.

For Sartre, the whole process of active nihilation inherent to intentionality reflects what he calls the 'fundamental project'.<sup>317</sup> This is consciousness' underlying project to be a particular kind of person determining its *motifs*, *mobiles* and therefore their perception of the world. The translation of *motif* as 'cause'<sup>318</sup> confuses an account of the fundamental project and must therefore be clarified first. Moreover, *motifs* (reasons) and *mobiles* (motives) are central to Sartre's conception of the fundamental project so it will serve our purposes to explain their relationship.

b) 'Cause,' 'Motif' and 'Mobile'

Previous commentators<sup>319</sup> have noticed the importance of *motif* and *mobile* to Sartre's project, preferring to use the French rather than a translation. Inaccurate translation does not extend to *mobile* in the 2003 Routledge publication which uses the term 'motive'. Since reason (*motif*) and motive (*mobile*) can often overlap in colloquial discussion it is important to explicate their distinction in Sartre's project.

For Sartre, *motif* and *mobile* are real features of the experience of the world which have their meaning conferred on them by an upsurge of a particular consciousness. In that respect, they are more flexible than a 'cause' which describes a determinative relationship to its effects regardless of the particularities of consciousness' upsurge. Hunger, for example, may be a *mobile* for eating an apple but curiosity, whim or any number of possibilities may be equally valid *mobiles*. The experience of *motifs* and *mobiles* is necessary for their designation:

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<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p.429

<sup>318</sup> See, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.458-459 as compared to Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, (Tel Gallimard, 1943) pp.480-481

<sup>319</sup> See, John E. Atwell, "Sartre's Conception of Action and His Utilization of *Wesensschau*", *Man and World*, Vol.5 No.2 (1972) pp.143-157, as one such example.



In order to be a *motif*, the *motif* must be *experienced* as such. Of course this does not mean that it is to be thematically conceived and made explicit as in the case of deliberation. But at the very least it means that the for-itself must confer on it its value as *motif* or *mobile*.<sup>320</sup>

We understand this to mean that a *motif* for Sartre is deeply intertwined with everyday experience. This does not require that one explicitly consider and acknowledge a *motif* but that one's very experience is indicative of their *motifs*. Thus the for-itself confers value on *motifs* and *mobiles*<sup>321</sup> insofar as the upsurge of consciousness and the nothingness it brings to the world establishes a matrix of values and signifiers which indicate its project. Nevertheless, they are distinguishable terms. *Motif* refers to the explanatory reason for an action, experienced as such by the agent committing the action. *Mobile* on the other hand, is the motive for the action in the sense of the psychological state propelling the agent. The *motif* is defined as follows:

Generally by *motif* we mean the *reason* for the act; that is, the ensemble of rational considerations which justify it. If the government decides on a conversion of Government bonds, it will give the *motifs* for its act: the lessening of the national debt, the rehabilitation of the Treasury. Similarly it is by *motifs* that historians are accustomed to explain the acts of ministers or monarchs; they will seek the *motifs* for a declaration of war: the occasion is propitious, the attacked country is disorganised because of internal troubles; it is time to put an end to an economic conflict which is in danger of lasting interminably. [...] We shall therefore use the term *motif* for the objective apprehension of a determined situation as this situation is revealed in the light of a certain end as being able to serve as means for attaining this end.<sup>322</sup>

And the *mobile* is defined in these terms:

The *mobile*, on the contrary, is generally considered as a subjective fact. It is the ensemble of the desires, emotions, and passions which urge me to accomplish a certain act. The historian looks for *mobiles* and takes them into account only as a last resort when the motifs are not sufficient to explain the act under consideration. [...] The ideal rational act would therefore be the one for which the *mobiles* would be practically nil and which would be uniquely inspired by an objective appreciation of the situation. The irrational or passionate act will be characterised by the reverse proportion.<sup>323</sup>

Thus we have the objective *motif* and the subjective *mobile*. 'Cause' was rejected above as a translation of *motif* because common usage implies a relationship of necessity with its effects, leaving little room for the kind of freedom Sartre wants. But it seems that Sartre's definition of *motif* as the 'objective apprehension of a determined situation' suggests a similar necessity between a situation and its apprehension. Furthermore, the definition of *mobile* as a 'subjective fact' characterised by its overwhelming irrationality and passion 'urging consciousness to accomplish a certain act', also gives the impression of restricting ontological freedom. These restrictions on ontological freedom are relieved by the claim that *motif* and *mobile* are constituted as such in light

<sup>320</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.459

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p.459

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p.468

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.468-469

of a preceding project. This is to say that Sartre grounds *motifs* and *mobiles* in the projection of possibilities inherent to the three ekstases of consciousness.

Even though *motif* and *mobile* can be distinguished in the sense of their objectivity and subjectivity, it is clear from Sartre that they are equally dependent on consciousness' project for their meaning. *Motif* and *mobile* are thus 'correlative' terms in respect of their parallel relationship to consciousness' project. This 'correlation' exemplifies the difference between *motif/mobile* and 'cause':

Thus *motif* and *mobile* are correlative, exactly as the non-thetic self-consciousness is the ontological correlate of the thetic consciousness of object. Just as the consciousness of something is self-consciousness, so the *mobile* is nothing other than the apprehension of the *motif* insofar as this apprehension is self-consciousness. But it follows obviously that the *motif*, and the *mobile*, and the end are the three indissoluble terms of the thrust of a free and living consciousness which projects itself toward its possibilities and makes itself defined by these possibilities.<sup>324</sup>

We understand this to mean that *motif* and *mobile* are correlative insofar as both are characteristics of Sartrean intentionality. Thus if, as Sartre has it, consciousness must be consciousness of something it is not, then the apprehension of the 'ensemble of rational considerations' (*motif*) is simultaneously the 'ensemble of desires, emotions and passions' (*mobile*). Crucially the entire organisation of action (*motif*, *mobile* and end) are grounded ultimately in the projection of possibilities inherent to the ontological condition of consciousness. Thus though *motif* is the objective apprehension of a situation and *mobile* the subjective condition urging action, both must be experienced as such by the prior projection of a given end. The reputation of a given institution for example, becomes a *motif* for enrolment in light of the end of successfully achieving a doctorate. Equally, ambition and determination become *mobiles* urging action only in light of that end. Sartre exemplifies this ontological correlation in the following passage:

If Clovis is converted to Catholicism, then inasmuch as so many barbarian kings are Arians, it is because Clovis sees an opportunity of getting into the good graces of the episcopate which is all powerful in Gaul. And so on. One will note here that the *motif* is characterised as an objective appreciation of the situation. [...] Nevertheless this objective appreciation can be made only in the light of a presupposed end and within the limits of a project of the for-itself toward this end. In order for the power of the episcopate to be revealed to Clovis as the cause of his conversion (that is, in order for him to be able to envisage the objective consequences which this conversion could have) it is necessary first for him to posit as an end the conquest of Gaul.<sup>325</sup>

*Motif* and *mobile* are equally distinguished from 'cause' by virtue of their ontological correlation.

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<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, p.471

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, p.468

c) *Nihilation of the Self and the Fundamental Project*

It will now be important that we understand what Sartre means by an ‘end’ which points to a fundamental project. Our explication of his argument in favour of necessary human freedom will also involve discussion of consciousness’ adoption of a particular fundamental project. Finally, it will be necessary to determine the effect of a fundamental project on *motif* and *mobile* and whether they do in fact restrict ontological freedom. The discussion of the fundamental project will therefore be separated into two concerns:

1. How it is possible for consciousness to have a fundamental project?
2. How can Sartre account for the adoption of a particular fundamental project over any other?
1. Sartre makes a distinction between an everyday end and a fundamental project. An end refers to intentional action, so conscious agents may have any number of everyday ends at any given moment. This is how we understand the following:

We should observe first that an action is on principle *intentional*. The careless smoker who has through negligence caused the explosion of a powder magazine has not *acted*. On the other hand the worker who is charged with dynamiting a quarry and who obeys the given orders has acted when he has produced the expected explosion; he knew what he was doing or, if you prefer, he intentionally realised a conscious project.<sup>326</sup>

Thus for Sartre, ‘action’ refers exclusively to deliberate projects. In so doing, Sartre can focus his argument on those actions for which moral responsibility is an inherent concern. There is also a difference between realising a conscious project and its *intention*. *Realising* a project refers to overt actions taken toward that project. The *intention* of a project refers to the goal to be realised by the action. For example, obeying orders to explode a quarry may reflect an intentional project but it is not therefore the realisation of a fundamental project. Everyday projects only point to a fundamental project. Clovis’ conversion to Christianity was a project much as was conquering Gaul and both quite intentional. Nonetheless, these projects are adopted in light of a fundamental project which, in the case of Clovis, may be to be the kind of being that is powerful, dominant, feared, respected etc. Thus all deliberate or intentional action can be deciphered in a hermeneutic exercise as a manifestation of this fundamental ontological directedness in terms of the kind of being a conscious agent wants to be. Situating actions in the context of their implied meanings will therefore be revealing of that project. This is how we understand the following:

The problem is indeed to disengage (*dégager*) the meanings implied by an act – by every act – and to proceed from there to richer and more profound meanings until we encounter the meaning which does not imply any other meaning and which refers only to itself.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, p.455

<sup>327</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.479 – italics added. The word may be better translated as ‘extract’. See, Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’être et le néant*, (Tel Gallimard, 1943) p.502

The fundamental project is therefore the ‘meaning which refers only to itself’. It is consciousness’ primary *intention*, realised and pointed to by everyday ends.

Sartre claims that particular ends are rationalised by the fundamental project, revealed by extracting the ‘meanings implied by actions’. In much the same way, *motif* and *mobile* have their value conferred on them by the end which expresses a fundamental project. We may return to Sartre’s account of consciousness’ nihilating faculty to explain the possibility of a fundamental project:

It [human reality] has to be this nothingness, as we have seen, in multiple dimensions; first, by temporalising itself – i.e., by being always at a distance from itself, which means that it can never let itself be determined by its past to perform this or that particular act; second, by rising up as consciousness of something and (of) itself – i.e., by being presence to itself and not simply self, which implies that nothing exists in consciousness which is not consciousness of existing and consequently that nothing external to consciousness can motivate it; and finally, by being transcendence – i.e., not something which would *first* be in order subsequently to put itself into relation with this or that end, but on the contrary, a being which is originally a project – i.e., which is defined by its end.<sup>328</sup>

These three ‘dimensions’ (previously referred to as ‘ekstases’) are not listed in chronological order. For Sartre, the three ekstases occur simultaneously and immediately. The second ekstasis is particularly informative regarding the possibility of a fundamental project. This ekstasis is also referred to as ‘reflection’ whereby, ‘the for-itself tries to adopt an external point of view on itself’.<sup>329</sup> As we have seen, the reality of being-for-itself is that which ‘rises up as consciousness of something and (of) itself’. Self-conscious awareness ‘rises up’ as a result of the nihilation of the in-itself which grounds and supports the for-itself.<sup>330</sup> The cumulative effect of the ekstases concluding in transcendence necessitate a fundamental/ontological self-awareness or an effort to grasp oneself but at a distance from oneself. Consequently a projection self is cast across the horizon of this distance one form of which is the ‘temporalisation of oneself’. Consciousness thus reflects on the in-itself which it is and which is subject to it. Presence to self, the loss of a unified whole, thus originates ‘human reality’ as a project to become a certain kind of being: the possibility of a fundamental project. This is how we understand the following:

*Motifs* and *mobiles* have meaning only inside a projected ensemble which is precisely an ensemble of non-existents. And this ensemble is ultimately myself as transcendence; it is Me in so far as I have to be myself outside of myself.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.475

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p.651

<sup>330</sup> ‘...for the for-itself, to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is.’ - *Ibid.*, p.461

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p.459

2. Though the upsurge of consciousness in its three ekstases accounts for the possibility of a fundamental project in Sartre's account, it does not explain the adoption of a particular fundamental project. In other words, the necessity that consciousness is originally a project does nothing to explain pursuing one project over another. Furthermore, if *motif* and *mobile* have their value conferred on them by fundamental project, they cannot explain why it is adopted. This issue goes to the core of Sartre's account of choice as suggested by John E. Atwell in his paper, 'Sartre's Conception of Action and His Utilization of *Wesensschau*' as well as other commentators.<sup>332</sup>

Sartre finds himself faced with a serious problem: how to explain a particular "upsurge" rather than an alternative one. He admits, for instance, that Clovis might have found in the "objective" situation a *motif* for any number of actions; so the question arises, "Why did he find a *motif* for converting to Christianity? [...] Unless this can be answered, it seems that Sartre is committed to the very capriciousness he wishes to reject."<sup>333</sup>

It is important to note that Atwell's explicit concerns are restricted to the *motif* for a particular end such as converting to Christianity. Nonetheless, the 'threat of capriciousness' in the *motif* for a particular end is equally applicable to the adoption of a fundamental project. Sartre does not provide an explicit answer to this problem but it can be extrapolated from what has already been discussed.

One may interpret this to mean that a particular 'upsurge' may result from an objective apprehension of a determined situation requiring that consciousness become a certain kind of being. For example one could argue that prior apprehension of oneself as 'inferior' or 'weak' may give *motif* for a fundamental project that changes that situation. Thus a particular fundamental project is adopted as a response to an objective apprehension. But this betrays the assumption that a given *motif* is causally related to an action whereas for Atwell (and here we agree) they can only be *logically* related:

Sartre wholly rejects, therefore, the doctrine of mental causation as it applies to action; for he maintains, in effect, that so-called "mental causes" are logically related to actions rather than causally related. To explain why someone did something is, on his view, to cite the agent's end, or *motif*, or *mobile*, hence something logically connected with his doing it, and as a consequence something which, by definition, cannot be the cause of his doing it.<sup>334</sup>

We would add that the threat of capriciousness itself is only possible if one fails to take those contexts into account, which is to say that one has 'missed the point'.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> See, Thomas Baldwin, *The Original Choice in Sartre and Kant*, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series, Vol.80 (1979-80) pp.31-44

<sup>333</sup> John E. Atwell, *Sartre's Conception of Action and His Utilization of Wesensschau*, Man and World, Vol.5 No.2 (1972) p.147

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147

<sup>335</sup> See, Leslie Stevenson, *Sartre on Bad Faith*, Philosophy, Vol.58 No.224, (1983) pp.253-258 - Stevenson accuses D.Z. Phillips of having 'missed the point' in his paper, *Bad Faith and Sartre's Waiter*, Philosophy, Vol.56 No.215 (1981) pp.23-31. These errors are of the same nature.

We may recall that for Sartre, ‘human reality [consciousness] is originally a project’. Therefore consciousness immediately arises with a fundamental project: the fundamental project and consciousness occur simultaneously. Sartrean intentionality requires that consciousness must rise up as part of the ‘plenum’<sup>336</sup> of being which includes the fundamental project. Since consciousness is always consciousness of something which it is not, consciousness is immediately confronted by a project to determine itself.<sup>337</sup> On our interpretation of Sartre, consciousness is caught in a permanent crisis of self-identification. If consciousness must be a project it is because consciousness must be at a distance from itself, that is, in transcendence towards its possibilities. The inability to establish a pre-existing cause determining that consciousness adopts a particular project is necessitated by the ekstasis of transcendence. In this sense the threat of capriciousness is more observation than criticism. Sartre’s account of choice rests on the principle that consciousness is originally ‘capricious’ but develops reasons for acting and motive thereafter. Capriciousness, far from rendering choice meaningless, is quite precisely what allows consciousness to confer meaning onto its ends. It functions as a confirmation of Sartre’s project:

If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is. [...] Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism.<sup>338</sup>

Sartre fails to address the threat of capriciousness because he simply does not see it as a threat. The fundamental project cannot point to a prior project to provide it meaning in much same way that ‘the constitution of a *motif* cannot refer to another real and positive existence, a prior *motif*’.<sup>339</sup> Sartre makes this point clear in the introduction to *BN* where he tends to avoid the ‘eclecticisms’<sup>340</sup> attributed to his writing in later chapters:

This self-determination of consciousness must not be conceived as a genesis, as a becoming, for that would force us to suppose that consciousness is prior to its own existence. Neither is it necessary to conceive of this self-creation as an act, for in that case consciousness would be conscious (of) itself as an act, which it is not. Consciousness is a plenum of existence, and this determination of itself by itself is an essential characteristic. It would even be wise not to misuse the expression “cause of self,” which allows us to suppose a progression, a relation of self-cause to self-effect. It would be more exact to say very simply: The existence of consciousness comes from consciousness itself.<sup>341</sup>

<sup>336</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.463

<sup>337</sup> This is how we understand Sartre’s conclusive assertion that, ‘man is a useless passion’. The project of self-definition, for the for-itself to identify with the in-itself, is made impossible by active nihilation. – *Ibid.*, p.636

<sup>338</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1973) p.28

<sup>339</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.459 – the word ‘engaged’ from the French ‘engagé,’ could also be translated as ‘committed.’

<sup>340</sup> See, John E. Atwell, *Sartre’s Conception of Action and His Utilization of Wesensschau*, *Man and World*, Vol.5 No.2 (1972) pp.143-157

<sup>341</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.11

This we understand to mean that therefore consciousness neither originates its project nor does it deliberately create and maintain a project. As a 'plenum of existence' consciousness refers almost to an accidental composition perpetuating itself. Thus Atwell is correct to state that what Sartre calls 'one's choice of self' is ultimate 'and being ultimate it is no more explainable than any other ultimate'.<sup>342</sup> In this sense, we understand efforts to explain the 'choice of self' in terms of empirical non-existence; impossible to conceive. On our interpretation of Sartre, intentionality founded by a pre-judicative comprehension of non-being constitutes an absolute such that any effort to ground consciousness must return to consciousness. As the locus of meaning, the enquiry, its constitution, symbolic values and aims are ultimately an expression of consciousness' nihilating activity. Therefore there can be no causal account to explain the adoption of a particular fundamental project which would not undermine the robust ontological freedom Sartre wants since that freedom is bound by the same absolute condition of consciousness. Nevertheless, the idea that the fundamental project rises up by virtue of nothing also severs any attempt to provide an account of the being of consciousness. If the choice of self is ultimate, then there can be no account of self which is not already reflective of a fundamental project. Taking Sartre at his word, if Clovis' conversion to Christianity is not explained by the influence of divine grace but indicates a project to be feared, respected and powerful then Sartre's proposal of non-being at the heart of being is not an expression of his meditation on the question of being but is ultimately explained by an ulterior, private motive. Of course one may argue that Sartre's argument still allows for the possibility that one may have a fundamental project which involves performing ontological enquiry and doing so adequately. In other words, this would be to say that conceding the disingenuousness of Clovis' conversion need not necessitate invalidating the possibility of taking sincere steps to salvation. But on our reading of Sartre, this would still be missing the point. The ultimacy of choice of self and the absolute of pre-judicative comprehension of non-being mean that the very criteria by which we determine adequacy, accuracy, significance and value of either Clovis' conversion or Sartre's proposal are themselves constituted by our individual fundamental projects. In this respect, far from establishing a relationship between two regions of being, Sartre's inclusion of nothingness necessitates that all ontology is ultimately grounded in the particular constitution of the enquirer. Phenomenological ontology on Sartre's terms therefore does not describe the most appropriate means by which to approach the question of being but explains the redundancy of the question given the absolute capriciousness of my being. Nevertheless, Sartre's argument for ontological freedom is accounted for precisely by the ultimacy of one's choice of self since it therefore imposes a robust ontological

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<sup>342</sup> John E. Atwell, *Sartre's Conception of Action and His Utilization of Wesensschau*, Man and World, Vol.5 No.2 (1972) p.148

responsibility on consciousness as such. It is in this sense that we claim accepting Sartre's argument for freedom requires abandoning his claim that it is based in fundamental ontology.

d) 'Constitution' of the World Such as it is

The final 'subordinate notion'<sup>343</sup> in Sartre's hierarchy of action and the explication of choice as a feature of ontological freedom is what we will refer to as constituting the world such as it is:

[...]to act is to modify the *shape* of the world; it is to arrange means in view of an end; it is to produce an organised instrumental complex such that by a series of concatenations and connections the modification effected on one of the links amène (causes) modifications throughout the whole series and finally produces an anticipated result. But this is not what is important for us here. [...] For an act is a projection of the for-itself toward what it is not, and what is can in no way determine by itself what is not.<sup>344</sup>

We understand this as reflective of two key and related points. Once again, Sartre emphasises his claim that 'what is can in no way determine by itself what is not'. Insofar as, for Sartre, all acts are principally intentional then all acts are founded by non-being originating in the for-itself and this is 'what is important' for us to recognise. Sartre's other point on modifying the shape of the world is nevertheless contextualised by the projection of the 'for-itself'. Thus, on our interpretation the modification of the shape of the world refers to the objective reality of nothingness and the determinative effect the for-itself has on its experience. Constitution of the world such as it is, in this respect at least thus refers to the fundamental project of the for-itself, determining consciousness' experience of the world. That said, Sartre distinguishes overt action, i.e. 'modification of the world' from action as a 'projection of the for-itself' but these are not independent kinds of action. For Sartre, objective apprehensions of overt action are impossible without nihilation. Modifying the world presupposes the whole structure of nihilation, the fundamental project its consequent *motifs* and *mobiles*.

Though one may distinguish the apprehension of a determined situation from its constitution as a *motif* in the light of an end, objective apprehensions cannot arise independently of those ends. For Sartre, the apprehension of a situation is influenced by preceding ends. Thus the perception of the Catholic Church's power does not happen to occur to Clovis before constituting it as a *motif* for conversion to Christianity. Its power is apprehended in light of the decision to conquer Gaul. Conversion consolidates Clovis' position in order to achieve the preceding end. Objective apprehensions are concurrent to the constitution of *motifs* so consciousness' objective apprehension of the world is simultaneously its constitution of the world such as it is. Crucially, both apprehension of a 'fact', such as the power of the Church and a *motif*, such as this same power as a

<sup>343</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.455-458

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p.455



reason to convert to Christianity, are devoid of meaning in the absence of the subject's fundamental project. Sartre provides an example which will illuminate what we are referring to as consciousness' constitutive capacity:

In a sense, certainly, man is the only being by whom a destruction can be accomplished. A geological plication, a storm do not destroy – or at least they do not destroy *directly*; they merely modify the distribution of masses of beings. There is no *less* after the storm than before. There is *something else*. Even this expression is improper, for to posit otherness there must be a witness who can retain the past in some manner and compare it to the present in the form of *no longer*. [...] If a cyclone can bring about the death of certain living beings, this death will be destruction only if it is experienced as such. In order for destruction to exist, there must be first a relation of man to being – i.e., a transcendence; and within the limits of this relation, it is necessary that man apprehend one being as destructible. [...] Thus it is man who renders cities destructible, precisely because he posits them as fragile and as precious because he adopts a system of protective measures with regard to them.<sup>345</sup>

Of course Sartre is not defending the notion that geological catastrophes are the responsibility of their victims.<sup>346</sup> The point is rather that destruction is constituted as such in light of a project which valued what is now destroyed. The formation of the planets, the evolution of the species or the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius, acquire their meaning from consciousness which constitutes them as 'the Big Bang', 'natural selection' or 'the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum'. Thus the constitution of what we colloquially refer to as the world such as it is does not describe the ability of consciousness to manifest a rock in orbit around the Sun but its ability to confer meaning onto that rock such that it is 'the world'. By equal measure therefore it will follow that creation also demands that 'there must be first a relation of man to being' since modifying the distribution of masses of beings could also lead to building cities. The point seems to be that the symbolic values and hermeneutic signifiers which comprise our everyday experience presuppose 'man's transcendence'. Of course if man renders cities destructible where they would otherwise be merely redistributed, then the transcendence of the for-itself and consciousness' fundamental project refer exclusively to the appearance of things and not in their redistributive mode, that is, not in themselves. If, on the other hand and as Sartre states, 'the appearance is the essence' then on our reading, he is compelled to either embrace Kantian transcendental idealism (and thus abandon fundamental ontology) or abandon all efforts to describe being(s) without a presupposed perceiver. Moreover, given the ultimacy of the fundamental project as a necessary feature of consciousness, Sartre's appeal to 'destruction' as a 'geological plication' becomes necessarily incomprehensible. He implicitly acknowledges this in the phrase, 'even this expression is improper' since on our reading, it is impossible to conceive of the world without presupposing oneself as the perceiver. In

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<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.32-33

<sup>346</sup> See, Gary E. Jones, *Sartre, Consciousness and Responsibility*, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol.41 No.1/2 (1980) pp.234-237, for an example of a similar misunderstanding.

this sense, there can be no description of ‘destruction’ that has not already had its meaning conferred onto it. After all, a ‘geological plication’, a ‘redistribution of beings’ and ‘destruction’ are all premised on a ‘relation of man to being’. Thus presumably, ‘destruction’ will to some extent be dependent on the orientation of my fundamental project which may find opportunity in despair.

The constitution of the world is an inherent feature of the fundamental project in Sartrean freedom. He offers an example from the fundamental project of inferiority, realised in the constitution of the world as the *motif* for fatigue:

I start out on a hike with friends. At the end of several hours of walking my fatigue increases and finally becomes very painful. At first I resist and then suddenly I let myself go, I give up, I throw my knapsack down on the side of the road and let myself fall down beside it. [...] [C]ould I have done otherwise without perceptibly modifying the organic totality of the projects which I am; or is the fact of resisting my fatigue such that instead of remaining a purely local and accidental modification of my behaviour, it could be effected only by means of a radical transformation of my being-in-the-world – a transformation, moreover, which is *possible*? In other words: I could have done otherwise. Agreed. But *at what price*? [...] Let us note first that fatigue by itself could not provoke my decision. As we saw with respect to physical pain, fatigue is only the way in which I exist my body. [...] It is only on this plane that the fatigue will appear to me as bearable or intolerable. It will never be anything in itself, but it is the reflective For-itself which rising up suffers the fatigue as intolerable. [...] The way in which I suffer my fatigue is in no way dependent on the chance difficulty of the slope which I am climbing or on the more or less restless night which I have spent; these factors can contribute to constituting my fatigue itself but not to the way in which I suffer it. [...] That a certain passionate and tense way of struggling against the fatigue can express what is called an inferiority complex we shall not deny. But the inferiority complex itself is a project of my own for-itself in the world in the presence of the Other. [...] To give in to fatigue, for example, is to transcend the path by causing (*à faire*) it to constitute itself in the meaning of “a path too difficult to traverse.” [...] Thus the inferiority complex is a free and global project of myself as inferior before others; it is the way in which I choose to assume my being-for-others [...] <sup>347</sup>

That the degree of the slope traversed and the conditioning of one’s body contributes to fatigue is central to understanding the constitution of the world. The onset of fatigue does not determine its experience as ‘intolerable’, ‘painful’ or ‘motivating’. It is, as Sartre says, only the way ‘I exist my body’. Similarly, the rising power of the Catholic Church does not determine its use as *motif* for converting to Christianity. Rather the intolerability of fatigue i.e. its counting as a reason to stop walking is conferred onto the walk up a slope only in light of a fundamental project. Thus one may feel physical fatigue but the question of tolerance or difficulty is indicative of transcendence and a projection of the possibility that this slope is ‘intolerable’ or otherwise. If difficulty is not an empirical measure but an experiential appraisal constituted by the conscious agent involved then it will follow therefore that all intentional action is an expression of consciousness’ fundamental project. This is how we understand the following:

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<sup>347</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.475-481

This way of yielding to fatigue and of letting myself fall down at the side of the road expresses a certain initial stiffening against my body and the inanimate in-itself. It is placed within the compass of a certain view of the world in which difficulties can appear “not worth the trouble of being tolerated”; or, to be exact, since the motive is a pure non-thetic consciousness and consequently an initial project of itself toward an absolute end (a certain aspect of the in-itself-for-itself), it is an apprehension of the world (warmth, distance from the city, uselessness of effort, etc.) as the cause (*‘motif’*) of my ceasing to walk.<sup>348</sup>

All acts are therefore understood by their end which reveals an underlying fundamental project. In this respect, consciousness is presented by Sartre as an organised whole, always self-aware and always expressing its projects. This is what Sartre refers to as the ‘ascending dialectic’ which is ‘practiced spontaneously by most people’ and that ‘it can even be established that in knowledge of oneself or of another there is given a spontaneous comprehension of this hierarchy or interpretations’.<sup>349</sup> The brevity of his claim here does not detract from its plausibility in our estimation. If internal negation necessarily proceeds from intentional consciousness as consciousness of something which it is not, then the self may be intuitively aware of the fundamental project expressed by all actions. This may be what Sartre means by his assertion that, ‘in a certain way, we can say that human reality is surprised by nothing.’ ‘By the very nature of one’s project’ one may ‘reserve temples for unknown gods’ or ‘create a certain margin of indetermination’ in anticipation of the ‘unpredictable’.<sup>350</sup> To a certain extent, the nature of the fundamental project may already include anticipation of otherwise ‘unpredictable’ events.

We may draw three conclusions from our outline of the constitution of the world such as it is. First is its inherency to the fundamental project and therefore nihilation and choice as necessary to consciousness. For Sartre, neither the constitutive capacity of consciousness nor the way the world is constituted can be accounted for by appeal to empirical occurrences prior to action. Constitution must happen in light of a fundamental project. Furthermore, similarity with the ‘intentional structure’ of *motif* and *mobile* reflects the ontological character of intentional consciousness. Second, is the idea that all action presupposes and is directed to satisfying a fundamental project. For Sartre, this is even true of actions that seem detrimental to the agent involved. Constitution of the world may express a fundamental project to experience the limitations of one’s body while walking up an arduous slope or the scale of one’s ambition in the conversion to Christianity. In either case, whether by appeal to *Wesensschau*,<sup>351</sup> ‘Existential Psychoanalysis’<sup>352</sup> or the possibility

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<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p.486

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p.479

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p.528

<sup>351</sup> See, John E. Atwell, *Sartre’s Conception of Action and His Utilization of Wesensschau*, *Man and World*, Vol.5 No.2 (1972) pp.143-157 – *Wesensschau* here refers to a feature of Husserl’s phenomenology which is his claim for an intuition of essences and their essential structures.

of spontaneous intuition, all actions can be rationalised when seen in the context of a fundamental project. Finally, understanding what Sartre means by ‘modifying the *shape* of the world’ where the point is not to dispute an empirical account of the world but to explicate conferring meaning onto occurrences as such. In light of these conclusions and Sartre’s overall account of action, we may state that for Sartre, intentionality grounded in non-being establishes a robust ontological freedom on consciousness. If all human comportment in the world is indicative of a fundamental project, that is, if it is ultimately indicative of transcendence establishing a relation to being(s) in terms of possibility, then experience as such is the responsibility of consciousness. As we have seen, this does not mean to say that consciousness creates reality as such but that the symbolic values and hermeneutic signifiers of all experience and indeed experience as such, originates in the fundamental nihilation which grounds the for-itself in the loss of the in-itself as such. It is on the basis of the ultimacy of this characteristic of consciousness that Sartre proposes the necessity of ontological freedom; not the freedom to choose or will as one wishes but the freedom to transcend being(s) toward the projection of possibilities constituting the world. It is on the same basis that we therefore claim that the success of Sartre’s argument for ontological freedom will depend on the validity of his interpretation of intentionality in the framework of Heideggerian fundamental ontology.

### iii) An Assessment of the Argument

We may now state that ontological freedom refers to the ‘autonomy of choice’, a feature of intentional consciousness. As explained, this is Sartre’s idea that consciousness is always consciousness of something which it is not, necessitating the transcendence of the for-itself and the permanent reality of non-being. The resulting law of presence to self establishes consciousness’ ontological responsibility since nihilation must be active. Its autonomy reflects the claim that the fundamental project is an ultimate which cannot refer to a prior existence but arises out of absolute nothingness. Sartre’s argument for ontological freedom is thus supported by the impossibility of passive nihilation and the necessity of active nihilation. Choice therefore is not an observation of external alternatives but a symptom of consciousness’ active nihilation. Furthermore, Sartre argues that the adoption of a particular project will influence the apprehension of alternatives available to an agent, constituting them as *motifs* or *mobiles* for a given action. Finally, he argues the upsurge of a particular fundamental project is simultaneous to nihilation such that to be conscious is always to be engaged in a project. Conscious experience is thus the ontological responsibility of consciousness which on our reading, is to say that consciousness is the ontological origin of

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<sup>352</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.578 - Sartre attempts to account for the impossibility of a powerful subconscious requiring treatment.

meaning. In this sense then, ontological truth is itself bound up in the fundamental project and the upsurge of the for-itself. Thus for Sartre, the *mobile*, the act, and the end are all constituted in a single upsurge:

Each of these three structures claims the two others as its meaning. But the organised totality of the three is no longer explained by any particular structure, and its upsurge as the pure temporalising nihilation of the in-itself is one with freedom. It is the act which decides its ends and its mobiles, and the act is the expression of freedom.<sup>353</sup>

If ‘it is the act which decides its ends’ and ‘the act is the expression of freedom’ and if in the preceding outline we have correctly interpreted action in Sartre’s project as fundamentally intentional, then freedom here refers simply to the ontological necessity of transcendence. Ontological freedom thus describes the character of consciousness as the in-itself losing itself as such and bound by presence to self, necessitating adoption of a fundamental project. He summarises it at the outset of his discussion of freedom:

It [human-reality] is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what is and from what will be. It is free, finally, because its present being is itself a nothingness in the form of the “reflection-reflecting”. Man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself.<sup>354</sup>

As we have seen, the law of presence to self simply describes the perpetual loss of the in-itself as in-itself establishing the upsurge of the for-itself. Nevertheless, Sartre’s claim that freedom is entailed by the nihilating faculties of consciousness may be more of a hindrance than a help. Although Sartre infers ontological freedom from active nihilation and his interpretation of intentionality, this also means that criticism of the argument for necessary freedom can be generalised across the project as a whole. The entirety of Sartre’s project can arguably be understood as an attempt to associate ontological freedom with active nihilation and intentional consciousness. As Sartre himself states:

Thus freedom as the requisite condition for the nihilation of nothingness is not a *property* which belongs among others to the essence of the human being. [...] What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the *being* of “human reality”. Man does not exist *first* in order to be free *subsequently*; there is no difference between the being of man and his *being-free*.<sup>355</sup>

Here we understand the ‘nihilation of nothingness’ as a reference to active nihilation or the impossibility of passive nihilation. On our reading therefore, every aspect of Sartre’s project is geared toward establishing the freedom of human reality. Thus it will follow that criticism of

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<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p.460 – Of course ‘*motif*’ and ‘*mobile*’ are ‘ontologically correlative’ so one can safely assume this applies to both.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p.462

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49

Sartrean intentionality will undermine his argument for ontological freedom. Our assessment of Sartre's argument for necessary freedom will reflect this problem: it is successful on condition it abandon the premises shared with Heidegger's fundamental ontology. We have seen that Sartre's appeal to Descartes and the inclusion of nothingness to address concerns with Husserl and ultimately Heidegger is intended to establish consciousness epistemologically and to infer an ontological freedom from there. Sartre's explicit aim to establish a relationship between his two regions of being while avoiding metaphysical dualisms can only be achieved by necessitating a permanent and irreconcilable distance from being(s). If, as Sartre states, human reality is perpetually 'wrenched away from itself' by virtue of a fundamental nihilation grounding the for-itself in non-being, then the ontology of consciousness is itself and of necessity reducible to the expression or the act of a particular upsurge. As the locus of meaning, consciousness ultimately bears the responsibility for ontological truth itself such that an enquiry into what being(s) are as such will reveal not the truth of being(s) but the fundamental project which confers their value and that of the enquiry itself. This, on our reading, is expressed in the necessity of transcendence which anchors Sartre's argument for ontological freedom. In this respect, Sartre effectively substitutes an understanding of the possibility of being(s) by an existential analytic of consciousness. In other words, in establishing transcendence as an ontological absolute, consciousness is bound to itself as the 'reflection-reflecting' perpetually re-affirming only its own freedom.

Before explicating this problem further it is important that we distinguish it from the criticism of everyday experience. Asserting the necessity of alternatives inherent to consciousness obligates Sartre to account for the difficulty of directing consciousness towards new projects. In other words, 'conceiving of a different state of affairs', the necessary predicate for a workers revolution in 1830, should already be possible given ontological freedom. Declaring the situation 'unbearable' need not require great effort. Sartre's discussion of the 'inferiority complex' offers a solution. He claims that inferiority is not undermined by the possibility of an alternative project. The difficulty of a given task and the consequent experience of inferiority are already inherent to the adopted project:

If I question one of my companions, he will explain to me that he is fatigued, of course, but that he *loves* his fatigue; he gives himself up to it as to a bath;[...]<sup>356</sup>

Both fatigue and inferiority, disclose a particular conscious project. In this case, acquiescence to fatigue confers meaning onto the task, reflecting a project of inferiority. Thus difficulty in adopting new projects does not qualify as evidence against Sartre's argument. It reflects a project of difficulty, constituting the experience of transition.

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<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p.477

We have stated that Sartre's seeming substitution of an understanding of beings instead of establishing the permanent transcendence of the for-itself is problematic particularly in respect of his effort to establish consciousness epistemologically and the distancing inherent to nihilation. We have also discussed Sartre's anthropocentrism and the contingency of ontological truth on consciousness.<sup>357</sup> Therein human reality is reduced to the constitutive powers of consciousness rendering the experience of the world little more than an expression of a fundamental project. Moreover, Sartre's attempt to explicate an epistemic proof of consciousness betrays a predilection for metaphysical dualisms and he is acutely aware of this risk:

The reduction of consciousness to knowledge in fact involves our introducing into consciousness the subject-object dualism which is typical of knowledge.<sup>358</sup>

He continues to assert that failing to include knowledge in an ontology of consciousness invites the risk that 'we always bump up against a non-self-conscious reflection and a final term'.<sup>359</sup> This is what he otherwise refers to as the danger inherent to Heidegger's ontology which he claims portrays consciousness as 'thing-like, blind in-itself'.<sup>360</sup> It is our contention that this is only a risk on condition of misinterpreting the 'non-self conscious reflection' of Heidegger's account.<sup>361</sup> All these issues converge in Sartre's argument for necessary freedom: i) the substitution of fundamental ontology for an existential analytic, ii) anthropocentrism and iii) the fallacy of 'establishing consciousness epistemologically', are inherent to the argument from active nihilation.

- i) In our discussion of the threat of capriciousness, we agreed with Atwell's reading that as an 'ultimate the fundamental project is no more explicable than any other ultimate'. More to the point, its ultimacy means that nothing but consciousness itself can originate a fundamental project. This ultimacy is precisely what, on our interpretation of Sartre, guarantees ontological freedom since choice and action are constituted in light of a fundamental project and that must be the responsibility of consciousness. Nevertheless, we contend that the same ultimacy demands that Sartre replace a Heideggerian analysis of being by an existential analytic of consciousness. Since, as Sartre argues and as we have explained, consciousness must rise up as a fundamental project and thus must originate itself, then any ontological enquiry can only reflect that fundamental project. The problem of course is not merely having the project of performing ontological enquiry but that

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<sup>357</sup> See, *Sartre's Project of Phenomenological Ontology*, p.57

<sup>358</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.8

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p.98

<sup>361</sup> See, *Jean-Paul Sartre's Project of Phenomenological Ontology, Being-in-Itself/Being-for-Itself, b) Relationship Between Being-in-Itself and Being-for-Itself*, for a discussion of 'understanding' as opposed to 'intuitive knowledge', p.66

therefore the most authentic enquiry is bound by the law of presence to self to reveal nothing but the enquiring consciousness. In discussion of Clovis' conversion to Christianity we states that of course, one may still interpret Sartre's argument as allowing for the possibility of a fundamental project which involves performing ontological enquiry and adequately. But this strikes us as missing the point since the choice of self is an 'ultimate' and the pre-judicative comprehension of non-being refers to an absolute. The combination of these mean that the adequacy, accuracy and value of an ontological enquiry is equally determined or constituted by the upsurge of the for-itself *as* a fundamental project. On our reading, the prioritisation of *Dasein* and consciousness reflected a methodological principle establishing a factual hermeneutics that served the dual purpose of avoiding rationalist disengagement and compelling a direct confrontation with the understanding inherent to everyday comportment. The ultimacy of the fundamental project, far from grounding comportment in being, abandons any such effort in favour of an existential analytic of consciousness:

Consciousness is *in fact* a project of founding itself; that is, of attaining to the dignity of the in-itself-for-itself or in-itself-as-cause. But we can not [*sic*] derive anything further from this. [...] Ontology here comes up against a profound contradiction since it is through the for-itself that the possibility of a foundation comes to the world. In order to be a project of founding itself, the in-itself would of necessity have to be originally a presence to itself – *i.e.*, it would have to be already consciousness. Ontology will therefore limit itself to declaring that *everything takes place as if* the in-itself in a project to found itself gave itself the modification of the for-itself.<sup>362</sup>

It is this 'profound contradiction' which we claim is not inherent to ontology, as Sartre asserts, but to the substitution of ontological truth by an existential analytic of consciousness. If, as Sartre states, it is 'through the for-itself that the possibility of a foundation comes to the world' then it will indeed be the case that ontology is necessarily restricted to beginning from the hypothetical, 'as if'. Moreover, if as we have seen, the for-itself is fundamentally supported by the loss of the in-itself as such, that is, if it is indeed grounded in non-being (*i.e.* in not being its objects) then enquiry into its possibility can only reinforce the whole upsurge. Enquiry into the ground of consciousness is thus always-already re-routed to consciousness' project to found itself. This is at the core of what we have referred to as the impossibility of passive nihilation under-pinning Sartre's argument for ontological freedom. It is in this sense that we argue that Sartre's argument for freedom substitutes the ambition to develop Heidegger's fundamental ontology by an existential analytic of consciousness bound by the presence to self which characterises it.

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<sup>362</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) pp.640,641



- ii) This emphasis on the significance of consciousness in what is otherwise an investigation into being(s) as such also results in what we have referred to as anthropocentrism. Therein the absolute character of the for-itself demands that all ontology begin and end with consciousness such that it originates the interpretive matrix of values and signifiers that make up human experience. This is no more apparent than in the combined accounts of the constitution of the world and consciousness as the origin of nothingness. In respect of the former and as we have seen, for Sartre the upsurge of the for-itself necessitates that the totality of symbolic values and hermeneutic signifiers are constituted across the projection of its possibilities. This, in part, established consciousness' ontological responsibility insofar as all meaning is contingent upon the upsurge of the for-itself as a project conditioned by nothing 'external to' itself. The very possibility of an encounter with being(s) is thereby contingent on active nihilation which simultaneously mediates the encounter and establishes transcendence of the for-itself. In very direct terms therefore, Sartre's project is anthropocentrically oriented to the detriment of an effort to pursue an ontology which otherwise restricts the prioritisation of consciousness to a methodological principle. Sartre's statements about consciousness as 'its own nihilation' will serve to summarise the problem in respect of the origin of nothingness:

Thus consciousness holds within itself its own being-as-consciousness, and since it is its own nihilation, it can refer only to itself; but *that which is* annihilated in consciousness [...] is the contingent in-itself. The in-itself can not provide the foundation for anything; if it finds itself, it does so by giving itself the modification of the for-itself.<sup>363</sup>

On our reading, Sartre here reinforces two related claims central to his argument for freedom and his project as a whole. Moreover, though our current concern is the question of anthropocentrism, these claims are indicative of the dualism that persists in Sartre's project. Thus we understand the first claim on consciousness' being-as-consciousness and the nihilation at the heart of the 'contingent in-itself' as a reference to the ultimacy of the fundamental project and the absolute character of the transcendence of the for-itself. In this respect, as 'its own nihilation' consciousness is bound to a reflection of itself in all its compartments such that even what is nihilated is the in-itself in its mode of contingency on consciousness. As we have argued, this necessitates that ontological enquiry therefore, that is the possibility of establishing ontological truth, is rendered impossible since any effort to

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<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106 – Here we understand consciousness being its own nihilation to mean that it is the nihilation that it performs and not that it nihilates itself. Also, in her footnote Barnes adds, 'Sartre says "annihilated" here, but I feel that he must have meant "nihilated" since he has told us earlier that being cannot be annihilated.'

ground the loss of the in-itself as in-itself must refer only to consciousness. In other words, enquiry cannot surmount the limitations of the original nihilation establishing the upsurge of the for-itself. Thus on one hand, the in-itself is inexplicable without the for-itself, since it ‘cannot provide the foundation for anything’ and on the other, the two regions of being only appear on condition of nihilation. But this problem is clear almost from the outset:

Consciousness has nothing substantial, it is pure “appearance” in the sense that it exists only to the degree to which it appears. But it is precisely because consciousness is pure appearance, because it is total emptiness (since the entire world is outside it) – it is because of this identity of appearance and existence within it that it can be considered as the absolute.<sup>364</sup>

‘This identity of appearance and existence’ we understand in the sense that consciousness *is* appearance. One can say that consciousness *is* only insofar as it appears and primarily to itself. By equal measure therefore and in our estimation it follows that consciousness would cease to exist as such were it no longer apparent principally to itself. In one respect this merely reinforces the claim that consciousness is necessarily both intentional (always engaged in directedness) since its existence presupposes its presence to itself and transcendent (directedness characterised by a pre-judicative non-being) since presence to self presupposes a nihilation not permitting of absolute identification with the self. In another respect, the absolute-ness of consciousness, that is, its appearance grounded in transcendence necessitates that consciousness can only understand itself by appeal to nothing. In other words, even consciousness enquiry into itself can only be pursued across an ontological distance establishing an appearance in respect of possibilities, that is, as a pro-ject. On our reading therefore, Sartre’s anthropocentric orientation is such that consciousness is necessarily severed from an understanding of even itself, much less the ‘entire world’ which is ‘outside it’, other than as a phantasmic expression of its own nothingness. But this, we contend, is a risk inherent to Sartre’s effort to establish a Cartesian epistemic proof of consciousness.

- iii) We have previously acknowledged that Sartre’s interpretation of intentionality is intended to adjust an error expressed by Heidegger’s *Dasein*. For Sartre, the failure to establish consciousness epistemologically to supplement the ontological account risks an ethical ambiguity or worse the loss of accountability. He therefore appeals to Descartes and the ‘pre-reflective cogito’ to address this concern. To that end it will be helpful to note that Sartre does not want to argue for an epistemic basis for consciousness and its primary mode

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<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12

of self-reflection as such. This is how we interpret his criticism of what he calls the ‘knower-known dyad’:

But if we accept the law of the knower-known dyad, then a third term will be necessary in order for the knower to become known in turn, and we will be faced with this dilemma: either we stop at any one term of the series – the known, the knower known, the knower known by the knower, *etc.* In this case the totality of the phenomenon falls into the unknown; that is, we always bump up against a non-self-conscious reflection and a final term. Or else we affirm the necessity of an infinite regress (*idea ideae ideae, etc.*), which is absurd.<sup>365</sup>

The problem he identifies is simple: a ‘self’ confirmable by what is ‘known’ raises the question of who knows. One of only two options are therefore available and neither is particularly helpful in respect of disclosing the knower: either assert a ‘non self-conscious reflection and a final term’ that is a prime-knower, unknown as it were or accept the absurdity of an infinite regress of knower-known relations. Thus Sartre argues that it will be necessary to identify ‘an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself’<sup>366</sup> which he calls the ‘condition of the Cartesian cogito’:

Thus reflection has no kind of primacy over the consciousness reflected-on to itself. Quite the contrary, it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible; there is a pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito.<sup>367</sup>

We interpret this ‘non-reflective consciousness’ or the ‘pre-reflective cogito’ to be a correlate of the pre-judicative comprehension of non-being established by the loss of the in-itself as itself thus supporting consciousness’ ekstasis of transcendence and presence to self. We nevertheless contend that Sartre’s appeal to Descartes firstly risks rephrasing the presupposition of the ‘I’ in the cogito and secondly reconstituting rationalist ontologies of disengagement. In respect of our first concern we may return to Sartre’s argument that in the ‘knower-known dyad’, ‘the totality of the phenomenon falls into the unknown’. In respect of Descartes therefore the epistemic certainty of the ‘I’ is anchored in the perfection of God and thus ‘bumps up against’ a ‘final term’ which will not permit of self-conscious reflection. The totality of the ‘knower-known dyad’ is thus presupposed in the assertion of absolute. Nevertheless, Sartre’s non-reflective consciousness is not on our reading, sufficient to evade this problem but only internalises the ultimacy which grounds the Cartesian cogito in the transcendence of the for-itself. In similar terms therefore, ‘the totality falls into the unknown’ since reflection, that is the appearance of consciousness to itself, is bound by the original nihilation establishing its upsurge. It is in this respect that we

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<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

express the second concern that Sartre risks reconstituting rationalist ontologies of disengagement. The internalisation, that is, the ontologising of the Cartesian model in terms of the ‘pre-reflective cogito’, on our reading at least, enshrines the detached ‘view from nowhere’ as a necessary characteristic of the condition of experience as such.

In light of these three concerns, we claim that the ultimacy of the fundamental project constitutes a substitution of fundamental ontology by an existential analytic of consciousness. Moreover, we argue that the general anthropocentric orientation of Sartre’s project ultimately undermines the very possibility of ontological truth that was ostensibly guiding his investigation. Finally ‘establishing consciousness epistemologically’, far from overcoming the ‘embarrassing dualisms’ inherent to ontologies of disengagement which obstructs being from appearance, merely internalises the rationalist model by characterising conscious experience in terms of transcendence predicated on ‘pre-reflective’, ‘permanent’, ‘objective’ and thus absolute non-being. On our reading and as we have seen, these are all internal features of Sartre’s argument for necessary freedom. While we contend that it does provide a defensible account of the impossibility of passive nihilation or the necessity of self-aware autonomy, this is still insufficient for an argument in favour of freedom derived from a fundamental ontology of consciousness and being(s) as such. If, as our explication has sought to demonstrate, Sartre establishes a robust freedom from his interpretation of intentionality grounded by non-being then it will follow that the success of his argument will depend on the validity of intentional-nihilating consciousness within the framework of fundamental ontology. It is in this respect that we argue an assessment of Sartre’s argument reveals that its success is directly proportional to the abandonment of its primary concern: an ontology of consciousness which avoids the problems inherent to disconnected dualisms, progressing a Heideggerian fundamental ontology which achieves this by conceiving the prioritisation of human experience as a methodological principle. Thus, though Sartre bases his project on the critique of what we have referred to as rationalism and the disengaged approach to enquiry, his effort to establish consciousness epistemologically and by appeal to nothingness recapitulates that model and obfuscates an argument in favour of a primordial, ontological freedom.

## V

## The Ontological Primordality of Freedom

Our analysis of Heidegger's view of freedom will, in the main, be restricted to two texts:<sup>368</sup> *The Essence of Human Freedom*<sup>369</sup> (EHF) and *The Essence of Truth*<sup>370</sup> (ET), taken from lecture courses delivered at the University of Freiburg from the summer of 1930 to the winter of 1931. Far from being a peculiarity in Heidegger's thought, we will argue that careful explication of these texts reveal the importance of freedom to his project as a whole. We will offer an interpretation of Heidegger's account in respect of fundamental ontology and the question of being much as we have explicated the relationship between Sartre's account of freedom to his project. Our analysis of Sartre ultimately revealed what, on our reading at least, is a serious though often misdiagnosed weakness in his argument. In short, we contend that Sartre's effort to establish consciousness epistemologically as an anchor for his argument in favour of freedom in fact undermines his ontological premises, severely weakening his attempt to establish freedom as a non-dualistic and necessary feature of experience. More to the point, we have argued that the degree to which Sartre's argument fails is directly attributable to the degree of his dependence on a Cartesian model of consciousness. The problem of course is not the appeal to Descartes as such but what we have referred to as the 'ontologising' of the Cartesian model which reinforces the 'detached view from nowhere' of rationalist, that is, disengaged methodology. Rather than correcting an oversight in Heidegger's account of *Dasein*, as was his ostensible concern, Sartre subverts its fundamental premises. The success of Heidegger's argument in favour of freedom will therefore depend, in part, on avoiding similar rationalist characterisations and presuppositions. On our interpretation, the complexity of the two texts under consideration herein is partly due to Heidegger's effort to do just that and thus discards the vigour of his approach in favour of 'feeling his way forward'. This is how

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<sup>368</sup> *BT* does contain some ideas that have implications for Heidegger's view of freedom but lacks a direct and thoroughgoing investigation. Also, his essay, 'On the Essence of Truth' (*OET*) rephrases and summarises much of the *ET* and the *EHF* - Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - orig. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.111 - That essay will be discussed in part ii) of this chapter. Lastly, we deliberately omit analysis of Heidegger's lecture, 'Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom' - Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985, translated by Joan Stambaugh) - Heidegger's theological concerns in the book (treatment of Good/Evil etc.) and his interpretation of Schelling on philosophical systems will move our analysis too far from the primary concern with freedom and too far into the secondary concern that traditional methods of philosophical enquiry need re-thinking.

<sup>369</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002)

<sup>370</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002)

we understand his claim that ‘definition is what is least suitable for grasping an essence’,<sup>371</sup> In his paper, ‘The Destiny of Freedom in Heidegger’, Hans Ruin notes that Heidegger’s,

[...] abyssal freedom as the transcending opening toward the world is not a philosophical principle in any conventional sense. It is something lived and experienced, which at the same time in itself withdraws from a conceptual grasp.<sup>372</sup>

Insofar as the measure for conventional philosophical principles is the traditional discourse then ‘abyssal freedom’s’ ‘withdrawal from a conceptual grasp’ reflects the concern to avoid if not destroy those conventions as explained in our analysis of *BT*.<sup>373</sup> A second complicating factor is, as it were, self inflicted. Our commitment to an accurate comprehension necessitates our analysis works within the parameters established by fundamental ontology. It is precisely that context which, as we will show, provides the fundamental premises for Heidegger’s view of freedom. Of course we do not claim that Heidegger’s view of freedom can be read as a simple extension of his fundamental ontology. Rather, he suggests that the ‘leading question of metaphysics’, namely ‘What are beings?’ (‘τί τὸ ὄν’),<sup>374</sup> is ‘grounded’ in the question about the essence of freedom:

[...] what now emerges is that *the problem of freedom is not built into the leading and fundamental problems of philosophy, but, on the contrary, the leading question of metaphysics is grounded in the question concerning the essence of freedom.*<sup>375</sup>

Ruin reiterates the significance of freedom to Heidegger’s project by reference to Günter Figal’s 1988 work, ‘Martin Heidegger. Phänomenologie der Freiheit’:

For Figal the entire analysis of Dasein as disclosedness and eventually as truth can be reinterpreted as a way of understanding what it means for Dasein to be free, and thus freedom can inversely be described as Heidegger’s most fundamental concern.<sup>376</sup>

We will not argue that freedom is Heidegger’s ‘most fundamental concern’. Rather that freedom becomes the most appropriate means of addressing and engaging with the question of being. ‘The entire analysis of Dasein’ is a step in addressing the question of being, whether or not it ‘can be reinterpreted as a way of understanding what it means for Dasein to be free’. As we have seen from our reading of *BT*, *Dasein*’s experience is grounded by a primordial relationship to and thus

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<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48

<sup>372</sup> Hans Ruin, *The Destiny of Freedom in Heidegger*, Continental Philosophy Review, Vol. 41, (2008) pp.277-299, p.283

<sup>373</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) – Heidegger’s call for a more ‘fundamental ontology’ in *Being and Time* is echoed by his call for a more ‘radical freedom’ in *EHF*: ‘*Must we not conceive freedom more radically...*’ - Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.99

<sup>374</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.23

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.93

<sup>376</sup> Hans Ruin, *The Destiny of Freedom in Heidegger*, Continental Philosophy Review, Vol. 41, (2008) p.280

understanding of being. It is our view that *EHF* and *ET* represent an effort to advance that argument by firstly seeking to establish the ‘radicalism’ of *Dasein*’s primordially and secondly phenomenologically<sup>377</sup> disclosing an account of freedom inherent to it. Of course the problem of freedom will differ from explicating the premises of fundamental ontology but these differences do not constitute a change or turn in thinking. Heidegger himself is clear in this regard:

Once again, it is all important to see the problems, the method and the direction of questioning, and not just the content of the questions. The approach and the direction of the problem, and the field of its solution, are not formal and external to the content, but these alone determine whether the genuine substantiality in the content is philosophical. [...] It is characteristic of all vulgar conceptions of philosophy to see only material for learning and knowing.<sup>378</sup>

Given these complexities our analysis will address these texts individually beginning with an explication of the argument in *EHF* followed by *ET*. It is our contention that *EHF* is an effort to evidence the profundity of *Dasein*’s relationship to being by analysis of Kantian metaphysics. The argument, broadly speaking, is that even though Kantian thinking represents significant progress with respect to the question of being, the rationalist presupposition of the primordially of causality confirms the ‘insufficient radicalism’ of Kant’s approach. For Heidegger, this requires an ontological interrogation into freedom, the enquirer and the ground from which the question is raised, namely the world. This is what he refers to as ‘going-to-the-roots’ in the first chapter of *EHF*:

Or does philosophy’s concern with the whole mean something else? Does it signify that it goes *to our own roots*? And indeed, not by occasionally applying to our own case, in a moral way, philosophical discussions and propositions which we have supposedly understood, thus gaining edification from philosophy. Ultimately we only understand philosophy if the questioning goes to the root of what is questioned. [...] The character of philosophy as inquiring into the whole remains fundamentally inadequate as long as we do not grasp the ‘going-after-the-whole’ as a ‘going-to-the-roots’.<sup>379</sup>

To that end, *ET* reframes *Dasein*’s relationship to being and its manifestation in the inherent confrontation with the question of being as ‘*ἀλήθεια*’ (*aletheia*; unhiddenness or ‘truth’). Therein the understanding characterising *Dasein*’s relationship to being endows there-being with the possibility for revealing or disclosing being as such and from itself. It is this primordial comportment to *aletheia* which necessitates a prerequisite interpretative space or freedom as an *a priori* feature of all enquiry and experience as such. In a sense therefore *EHF* and *ET* provide respectively negative and positive definitions of freedom. The first delineates what freedom is *not*;

<sup>377</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.24, p.58 – ‘The question of the meaning of Being must be *formulated*. If it is a fundamental question, or indeed *the* fundamental question, it must be made transparent, and in an appropriate way.’

<sup>378</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.167

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.13,14

the second, what it *is*. *BT* explains the necessity of ‘destroying’ traditional ontology by revealing its shortcomings before ‘restating’ its fundamental questions. Similarly, *EHF* provides an extended analysis of Kant’s account of freedom in order to pinpoint specific and serious problems therein. Only then can the problem of freedom ‘achieve true concreteness’ by being ‘restated’ in *ET*. To that end, our first concern is *EHF* focussing on four main issues:

- a) *‘Negative Freedom’ and ‘Freedom-From’*
- b) *‘Positive Freedom’ and ‘Freedom-For’*
- c) *Kant’s ‘Two Ways to Freedom’*
- d) *The ‘Insufficient radicalism’ of Kant’s view*

Two final points require our attention. First, Heidegger is clear that his interests are restricted to the freedom of human beings:

With the topic ‘the essence of human freedom’ we strictly bind ourselves to the examination of one *particular question* (freedom) which for its part is related to one *particular being* (man) within the totality.<sup>380</sup>

The ‘totality’ is what Heidegger refers to as ‘the world’, the ground of which ‘is what we commonly call God.’<sup>381</sup> His ‘examination’ of human freedom is not abstracted from ‘the totality’ nor its ground but is quite precisely from ‘within’ it. This will not include discussion of ‘possible alternatives’, ‘determinism’, ‘coercion’, ‘the fulfilment of one’s desires’ or any other such traditional concerns. Criticism, therefore, must address Heidegger’s argument on its own terms.<sup>382</sup>

Second, the accuracy of Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant is of little concern. Our focus is restricted to Heidegger’s view of freedom, not its relationship to Kant. Nor are we interested in our own critique of Kant. Despite his interest in Kant’s metaphysical account of freedom, Heidegger is critical of his failure to provide a thorough ontological interrogation. *ET* proposes a fundamental shift in the Kantian approach as a platform for a challenge to the traditional discourse as a whole and in so doing, establishing our primary claim that an account of freedom as a necessary feature of experience demands a radically different methodological approach.

## **i) The Essence of Human Freedom**

- a) *Negative Freedom and Freedom-From*

Heidegger begins by adopting a curious approach to the problem of freedom that warrants attention. His lecture on the essence of human freedom is simultaneously delivered as a general

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<sup>380</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.2

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>382</sup> One is highly unlikely to understand ‘Schrödinger’s cat’ by inquiring after the colour of its fur.



introduction to philosophy. This presents an immediate problem, stated in the ‘preliminary considerations’:

To attempt an introduction to philosophy by way of the question of human freedom, to seek an understanding of *philosophy in general* by immediately diverting into a *particular question*: this is clearly an impossible undertaking.<sup>383</sup>

He later explains,

For philosophy is surely not exhausted by the treatment of this *one* problem. Beside this there are questions concerning the essence of truth, human knowledge, the essence of nature, history, art, and whatever else is commonly listed when one gives an overview of philosophy.<sup>384</sup>

Simply put, the generality of an introduction to philosophy contradicts the particularity of an enquiry into the problem of freedom. The opening ten pages are dedicated to addressing this apparent contradiction. In so doing, Heidegger outlines the underlying premises of his view of freedom. One such premise is that arriving at the *essence* of freedom is contingent upon understanding the question of the essence of freedom as an instance of the essence of the question of beings in general rather than in abstraction from that question: the particular question as an instance of the general question. Here we understand the essence of beings in general as a reference to what we have previously called the *is*-ness of all beings:

Yet we [humankind] are also acquainted with that in which, despite every distinction and difference, *all* things agree. Everything we know is known as something that *is*, and everything that *is* we call a being [*ein Seiendes*]. To be a being [*Seiendes zu sein*] is what everything we have mentioned, primarily and in the last instance, has in common.<sup>385</sup>

For Heidegger, restricting ontological interrogation to a being’s particularity necessitates exclusive analysis of its distinguishing features. Of course this does not prohibit the discussion of individual beings. The point is that such discussions often leave implicit the presupposition that it is possible to abstract (to disengage) from the common. We have previously discussed abstraction as an impediment to ontological interrogation and its inherency to traditional ontology,<sup>386</sup> particularly in respect of Dorothea Frede’s problem of the ‘theoretical approach as such’.<sup>387</sup> The same methodological approach which presupposes abstracting the ontical from the ontological and which allows the philosopher to legitimise adopting an objective perspective, would also abstract the

<sup>383</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.2

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1 – *Seiendes* is translated as ‘entity’ in *BT* and ‘being’ in the *EHF*. We will reflect this adjustment for the remainder of this chapter.

<sup>386</sup> See, Heidegger’s *Fundamental Ontology*, *Dasein and the Question of Being*, p.30

<sup>387</sup> Dorothea Frede, *The Question of Being: Heidegger’s Project in The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.58

question of freedom from the question of the essence of beings in general. This is how we understand Heidegger's argument that freedom must be understood in terms of what it 'has in common' with 'everything we know as something that *is*':

Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in Dasein; in the 'there is.'<sup>388</sup>

In this respect, understanding the particular as an instance of the general describes the appropriate means by which to address the particular. Heidegger gives an example of this in regard to mathematics and 'the calculation of differentials':

And yet how do we begin, for example in mathematics? We do not start with the theory of differential equations but with the calculation of differentials, i.e. we treat this topic in particular and not mathematics as a whole, never the mathematical as such. [...] So in all the sciences: we begin with the particular and concrete, not in order to remain and get lost at this level, but so that we can proceed to the essential and universal.<sup>389</sup>

As a particular kind of mathematics, the 'calculation of differentials' introduces principles that refer to mathematics as such. Moreover, it is quite precisely the actual calculation, as opposed to the theory, of differentials that verifies its relation to mathematic principles. Thus for Heidegger, an engagement with the question of human freedom in this respect of its relation to philosophical enquiry as such, will be informative of the 'essential and universal'.

Despite this, simply insisting on 'looking from the perspective of commonality' or enquiring into the *essence* of freedom in the context of the essence of beings in general is insufficient to resolve the apparent contradiction between giving an introduction to philosophy and an account of the essence of freedom. In fact, it is at risk of perpetuating the problem. After all, an account of the *essence* of something presupposes its possibility. An explanation of *essence* is available so speculation is unnecessary:

Three things belong to the clarification of essence: 1. what-being, what it (freedom) as such is. 2. how this what-being is in itself possible. 3. where the ground of this possibility lies.<sup>390</sup>

The questions pertaining to the 'clarification of essence' are indicative of the approach Heidegger's enquiry into the *essence* of freedom will take. Given the attention paid to the word 'is' in *BT*, one ought to be careful in its interpretation. As Heidegger explains:

What we are treating, therefore, is the *essence* of a relationship. We do not seek to establish and prove such a thing as a fact.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p. 26

<sup>389</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.2

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

So the first clarification of essence does not refer to the fact of an essence of freedom. Rather, it refers to the 'negative' relationship implicit in difference e.g. the difference between a general introduction to philosophy and the particular question of the problem of freedom. The second and third questions expand the question of the *essence* of freedom from, 'what 'is' freedom?' to 'what must be the case such that freedom *is*?'. In this respect, Heidegger reflects the methodological adjustment he makes to the question of being in *BT* and discussed earlier.<sup>392</sup> The enquiry into the *essence* of freedom contains a methodological directive to approach the nature of beings in relation to, or in terms of what they have in common with, being in general.<sup>393</sup> In *EHF*, Heidegger reiterates his claims from *BT*<sup>394</sup> about the problem of presupposition; a reminder of this methodological contiguity:

We all understand being and yet we do not grasp it, i.e. we are not able to explicitly define *what* we mean by it. We operate within a *preconceptual* understanding of being. We thereby refer to the puzzling fact that already, and precisely in our everyday existence, we understand the being of beings.<sup>395</sup>

Clearly and in the least, Heidegger's work on freedom progresses out of the methodological premises introduced by *BT*. On that basis, the assertion of an *essence* may, suggests a resolution to the apparent contradiction with which we began: enquiry into *essence* refers to what relates a general introduction of philosophy to the particular problem of freedom in respect of what they have in common. We have stated that a brief explication of Heidegger's underlying premises will relieve us of a lengthy analysis. It also serves a secondary, equally important function. Failing to acknowledge those premises tends to result in irrelevant or short-sighted criticism of the 'rationalist' kind identified earlier.<sup>396</sup> Marvin Farber's paper, 'Heidegger on the Essence of Truth' is

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<sup>392</sup> See, *Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being*, p.30

<sup>393</sup> Hans Ruin and Fred Dallmayr also acknowledge continuity between *BT* and Heidegger's work on freedom. For Ruin:

'Taken together with the previous statement, that SZ [*Being and Time*] was in fact a meditation on transcendence, it implies that at least at this point he was prepared to see SZ as one long elaboration of the problem of freedom.' - Hans Ruin, *The Destiny of Freedom in Heidegger*, *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 41, (2008) p.282

And for Dallmayr:

'As I have indicated, and as the commentaries readily attest, Heidegger's opus revolves to a significant extent around the problematic of freedom.' - Fred R. Dallmayr, *Ontology of Freedom, Heidegger and Political Philosophy*, *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, (1984) pp.204-234, p.213

<sup>394</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) pp. 25, 31, and throughout the introduction.

<sup>395</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.31

<sup>396</sup> See, *Introduction: The Principles in Debate*, p.5

a good example of such a criticism. He takes Heidegger to task for his ‘pretentious verbiage’<sup>397</sup> and operating ‘arbitrarily with regard to matters of fact’:

Speculative philosophers should be given unlimited freedom to reconstruct “absolutes” to their heart’s content. But they should not be allowed to operate arbitrarily with regard to matters of fact, and especially history. One kind of history does indeed begin with the posing of the question of the nature of existence. But there are other kinds of history – economic, political, and on a larger scale, biological, geological and astronomical.<sup>398</sup>

Farber takes exception to Heidegger’s assertion that, ‘only where the quest for what-is-as-such is preserved does history begin’. The problem of course is that like the enquiry into *essence*, it is not intended to establish a fact. Only by ignoring the context and therefore the particular methodological approach is Farber justified in his appeal to geological, astronomical and biological ‘history’. This is especially concerning since Farber attended Heidegger’s lectures delivered at the University of Freiburg<sup>399</sup> which discuss the term and the context. Unfortunately, Farber’s paper does not refer to Heidegger’s explanation from the 1935 lecture published as, ‘An Introduction to Metaphysics’.<sup>400</sup> Our observation of the methodological contiguities indicated by the enquiry into *essence* will be helpful in avoiding similar errors in regard to the question of the essence of freedom.

Heidegger now reverses his position about viewing the question of the essence of freedom as a particular question to be addressed in the context of the question of the essence of beings in general:

We ourselves began by indicating that freedom is a particular property of man and that man is a particular being within the totality of beings. Perhaps that is correct. The question concerning the essence of freedom is nevertheless not a particular question. But if this is so, if the topic of these lectures is not a particular question, then we are not at all in a position to set out from a particular question in order to arrive at something universal.<sup>401</sup>

Heidegger’s original apparent contradiction was in the relation between the particularity of the question of the essence of freedom and the generality of an introduction to philosophy. A new

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<sup>397</sup> Marvin Farber, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, International Phenomenological Society, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1958) pp.523-532, p.523

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, p.528

<sup>399</sup> See, The University of Buffalo ‘Biographical Note’ on Marvin Farber:

[http://libweb1.lib.buffalo.edu:8080/findingaids/view?docId=ead/archives/ubar\\_0768.xml](http://libweb1.lib.buffalo.edu:8080/findingaids/view?docId=ead/archives/ubar_0768.xml)

<sup>400</sup> Heidegger has seven points clarifying his use of the term. The first four of which are as follows:

- ‘1. The determination of the essence of man is never an answer but essentially a question.
2. The asking of this question is historical in the fundamental sense that this questioning first creates history.
3. *This is so because the question as to what man is can only be asked as part of the inquiry about being.*
4. Only where being discloses itself in questioning does history happen and with it the being of man, *by virtue of which he ventures to set himself apart from the essent as such and contend <auseinandersetzen> with it.*’ - Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959) pp.143-144

<sup>401</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) pp.3-4

contradiction is now introduced whereby although we must arrive at the general by means of the particular, the question of the essence of freedom is not a particular question. Heidegger attempts to resolve this new contradiction by explaining the i) un-scientific particularity of the question of the essence of freedom and ii) by exploring the understanding of the term ‘freedom’.

Heidegger argues that the rationale for pressing forward ‘from the treatment of a particular problem to the universality of philosophical knowledge’<sup>402</sup> rests on an implicit presupposition that philosophical enquiry proceeds according to the methodological principles of science:

Such is the situation, provided that philosophy *too* is a science and as such remains bound by the guiding principles of scientific method. But this assumption is erroneous.<sup>403</sup>

But for Heidegger and in our own view, it is not at all clear that philosophy should be understood as a science.<sup>404</sup> Of course one may argue that it must be possible to describe all observable occurrences by reference to the general laws of science insofar as they determine the principles of empirical reality. The question is whether such an approach is the most appropriate to the subject of study.<sup>405</sup> Heidegger explains the necessity of identifying an appropriate methodology, that is, one that has ‘a genuine origin in the phenomenon itself’, towards the conclusion of the *ET*:

It was an error of phenomenology to believe that phenomena could be correctly seen merely through unprejudiced looking. But it is just as great an error to believe that, since perspectives are always necessary, the phenomena themselves can *never* be seen, and that everything amounts to contingent, subjective, anthropological standpoints. From these two impossibilities we obtain the necessary insight that our central task and methodological problem is to arrive at the *right* perspective. [...] It is not because we must view it from some perspective or other that the phenomenon gets blocked off from us, but because the perspective adopted most often does not have a genuine origin in the phenomenon itself.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

<sup>404</sup> This makes Farber’s claim about ‘operating arbitrarily with regard to matters of fact’ especially strange since he makes no effort to explain the relationship of fact to the discussion of truth.

<sup>405</sup> We have in mind the argument put forward by O’Brien in his Heideggerian critique of post-humanism. He states, ‘We routinely transpose the *techne* model of the exact sciences onto questions that do not have the same rationalist/idealist backdrop and we end up philosophically marooned.’ – See, O’Brien, Mahon (2011) *The Future of Humanity; Heidegger, Personhood And Technology*, Comparative Philosophy, Vol. 2, No. 2, p.27

<sup>406</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) pp.203-204 – This is echoed in his *Letter on Humanism* in respect of what he calls, ‘thinking’:

‘Philosophy is hounded by the fear that it loses prestige and validity if it is not a science. Not to be a science is taken as a failing that is equivalent to being unscientific. Being, as the element of thinking, is abandoned by the technical interpretation of thinking. “Logic,” beginning with the Sophists and Plato, sanctions this explanation. Thinking is judged by a standard that does not measure up to it. Such judgment may be compared to the procedure of trying to evaluate the essence and powers of a fish by seeing how long it can live on dry land. For a long time now, all too long, thinking has been stranded on dry land.’ - Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.240

For Heidegger, whether a scientific methodology is appropriate to philosophical enquiry and freedom is, in the very least, debatable. Furthermore, Heidegger argues that the ‘totality of beings’ have been ‘divided into different domains’ and ‘distributed among the particular sciences’.<sup>407</sup> Thus the combined fields of physics, chemistry and biology describe all phenomena in the material universe. Therefore philosophical enquiry cannot refer to a domain not already under study by one or another branch of science. It is either superfluous in its entirety or, as Heidegger claims, philosophy ‘can only concern itself with all beings, and indeed precisely as a whole.’<sup>408</sup> Philosophy is not compelled to adopt an alternative methodology simply because science has already divided and distributed the totality of beings. On the contrary and as already mentioned, enquiring into the *essence* of freedom already requires looking from the perspective of commonality with the ‘*is-ness*’ of ‘everything we know’:

This difference and distinctiveness of the question concerning human freedom, namely that it leads into the totality of beings, marks it out as a specifically *philosophical* question.<sup>409</sup>

Two points are worthy of note in this regard. Firstly, Heidegger’s identification of what he thinks of as appropriately philosophical methods and concerns. If what ‘marks out’ the ‘question concerning human freedom’ as ‘*philosophical*’ is its inclination to ‘totality’, then philosophical concerns are specifically those which ‘leads into the totality of beings’. Thus the second point of note: philosophy and philosophical enquiry are ‘marked out’ or raised up to the level of an exclusive concern with ‘totality’. By inference therefore, the exclusive concern for particularity is specifically *un-philosophical*.

Of course this does not resolve the contradiction with which we began. The enquiry into the essence of freedom is still a particular pursuit within the general field of philosophy. It is not the same as aesthetics, theology, ethics or any other identifiable philosophical pursuit. Therefore philosophy can still be shown to rely on scientific methodology insofar as it also divides fields of study. Heidegger explains that though the question of the essence of human freedom and the essence of truth, for example, are indeed different, ‘both these questions inquire into the totality and thus have a necessary connection with the most general question concerning the essence of beings as such.’<sup>410</sup> These are self evidently different questions and will therefore involve a different set of problems and will find different solutions.<sup>411</sup> Nonetheless, insofar as both questions pertain to

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<sup>407</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.3

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.5-6

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

<sup>411</sup> An extensive discussion of precisely how the question of the essence of truth is related to the essence of beings as such will follow.

*essence*, both questions will have a necessary relationship to the question of being. Conversely, an appropriately scientific enquiry must be restricted to the concerns of its particular region of study:

For not only in a quantitative but also in a qualitative sense, no science has the breadth of horizon to encompass the unitary whole which is intended (albeit unclearly and indefinitely) by the question of freedom.<sup>412</sup>

Heidegger's reference to the 'quantitative and qualitative sense' does not seem to us to be a rhetorical device intended to add emphasis. It offers a simple account of the fundamental difference between the appropriate methodological approach of scientific and philosophical enquiry. In other words, the quantitative and qualitative senses in which science does not 'encompass the unitary whole' 'intended by the question of freedom'. Though Heidegger fails to expand on what he means by these distinctions we may offer our own account:

- i) *Quantitative*: Science cannot quantitatively 'encompass the unitary whole' insofar as it is exclusively concerned with empirical reality. Enquiry is scientific only insofar as it involves repeatable observation and experimental evidence. In this respect, the scientific method reflects the exclusive concern of science. Clinical observation, testing and proof, for example, are antithetical to the question of the relationship between all things and the unitary characteristic they have in common. Conversely, this, for Heidegger, is the main concern of philosophy: what is shared in common by all things. Enquiry into *essence* therefore characterises all properly philosophical pursuits. Of course these pursuits are not exhausted by enquiring into essence<sup>413</sup> but the objects of all philosophical pursuits share the condition of 'is-ness'.
- ii) *Qualitative*: Scientific methods are qualitatively inappropriate insofar as they do not require that the enquirer establish their relationship to the totality of all beings prior to the investigation of particular beings. On the contrary, science demands objectivity and restricting the relationship between enquired and what is enquired after to 'disengaged' or clinical observation. Insofar as the enquiry into the essence of freedom is concerned with the totality of beings and what they have in common, it must be primarily concerned with establishing the relationship between enquirer and the totality of all beings. This is how we understand Heidegger's aforementioned, 'going-to-the-roots'.<sup>414</sup> Moreover, we interpret this

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<sup>412</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.6

<sup>413</sup> What Heidegger calls the 'ontico-ontological priority of Dasein' does not equate to an immediate understanding of all entities. That requires precisely the abstraction of individual entities the discussion of *essence* is intended to avoid. See, *Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being, A Positive Understanding of Dasein*, p.41

<sup>414</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) pp.13,14

as a rephrasing of *BT*'s argument that ontological enquiry must begin by enquiring after *Dasein*.

For Heidegger, enquiry into the essence of freedom addresses a particular question only insofar as it offers a particular perspective on the totality of beings. This is to say that although the enquiry into the essence of freedom is concerned with the totality of beings, it is enquired after by a particular enquirer who cannot be 'disengaged' from their contextualising interpretive-matrix of everyday experience. In this respect, we interpret Heidegger's contrast of science and philosophy or more broadly, the particular and the general as a way of reframing his argument for a hermeneutics of facticity and fundamental ontology. After all, the question can be raised (and has been previously) as to how an analytic of *Dasein* in its everyday comportments is revealing of being as such. The point of course is that the enquiry and its methodology are not intended to reveal being but to allow the pre-ontological understanding of being to come to the fore, from itself. Further, the criticism that difference in perspective reduces the enquiry into the essence of freedom to a regional enquiry is simply not one we consider credible. It relies on the false claim that the fact of perspectives necessitates their separation. That is, it implies that the questions, 'how are you doing?' and 'how do you do?' or the phrases, 'ice' and 'frozen water' are fundamentally different. We see no reason for attempting to invalidate the concept of a synonym. Heidegger addresses the necessity of a perspective or what he refers to as a 'standpoint', in the early stages of the *ET*:

It should be said, however, that even to make a beginning with philosophy one must have rid oneself of the illusion that man could pose, let alone solve a problem, *without* some standpoint. The desire to philosophise from the standpoint of standpointlessness, as a purportedly genuine and superior objectivity, is either childish, or, as is usually the case, disingenuousness.<sup>415</sup>

Nevertheless, the new contradiction may have been easier to understand had Heidegger included a distinction of category. Thus the question of the essence of freedom could be thought of as a linguistic particularity and reference to the totality could be its conceptual context. Still, the new contradiction is negatively reconciled by the non-scientific methodology of philosophical enquiry into the essence of freedom. It must sustain an understanding of what freedom has in common with the totality of phenomena. Explicating the '*is-ness*' or *essence* of a particularity necessitates a discussion of its relationship to the whole.

Our second means of reconciling the new contradiction involves a direct analysis of freedom as such. The first offered a negative reconciliation of the new contradiction: that the enquiry after the essence of freedom is not a particular question in the sense that a regional scientific question is

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<sup>415</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p. 57



particular. It will therefore be necessary that we explain how Heidegger understands the essence of human freedom itself and in what sense it relates to philosophy as a whole.

Heidegger's second subsection to his 'preliminary considerations' refers to the 'Specific Character of Philosophical as Distinct from Scientific Questioning'. Therein he describes a traditional definition of freedom:

Among the definitions of the essence of freedom one has always come to the fore. According to this, freedom primarily refers to autonomy. Freedom is freedom from [...] This definition of the essence of freedom as independence, the absence of dependence, involves the denial of dependence on something else. One speaks, therefore, of the negative concept of freedom, more succinctly of 'negative freedom'.<sup>416</sup>

We would do well to firstly address Heidegger's assertion that freedom has commonly been understood as independence before explicating 'freedom-from' or 'negative freedom'. A brief overview of the philosophical discourse on freedom will suffice though it should be reiterated that our concern is restricted to Heidegger's view of freedom not his understanding of other accounts. In other words, Heidegger's freedom is not contingent upon his analysis of alternative readings. Though *EHF* is largely dedicated to analysis of Kant, there is no mention of any other author on the issue of freedom. His claim about 'freedom-from' will be satisfied if freedom has been understood as autonomy at all. If the claim is false, then Heidegger will be engaged in an exercise of futility. If accurate, it will reinforce the criticism of the presuppositions implicit to traditional methodology and the need to sincerely reconsider the approach to the problem of freedom. A previous chapter acknowledged and assessed a similar claim made by Sartre.<sup>417</sup> Their similarity comes as no surprise. The extent of Sartre's reliance on Heidegger's fundamental premises has already been discussed. Sartre's version of the claim states that, 'proponents of free will are concerned to find cases of decision for which there exists no prior cause (*'motif'*)'.<sup>418</sup> Of course, these claims are not identical. Autonomy and independence are not wholly synonymous with the absence of a prior cause (*'motif'*). It is worth noting that Sartre's claim comes 12-13 years after Heidegger's lecture on the issue. The discourse on free will would have developed in that time and this may account for improved terminological competence. Be that as it may, claims of this nature are not unfamiliar and do not require extensive analysis. Both Sartre and Heidegger find that the traditional discourse assumes that freedom consists in freedom-from. That is to say that one is free insofar as one is independent from any causal power external to the agent. In both cases this assumption is targeted for criticism.

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<sup>416</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.4

<sup>417</sup> See, *Freedom in Being and Nothingness; Sartre's Definition of Freedom*, p.87

<sup>418</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.458

A previous discussion of prominent authors from the contemporary free will debate<sup>419</sup> concluded that the assumption is accurate despite the brevity of Sartre and Heidegger's accounts. For his part, Chisholm fails to provide an account of how 'Immanent causation' occurs and stops his investigation into the causal chain at 'man'. He neither explains the power to 'cause cerebral events' nor what one ought to understand by 'man' to whom this power is attributed. Therefore, in effect, he defines freedom as the absence of external causation. Similarly we found that Fischer and Ravizza's accounts are restricted to the limitations of an agent's ability to will or do otherwise. No attempt is made to explain what it means to be the kind of being for whom 'causes' are limiting or the experience of a 'limitation' in the process of 'willing'. Freedom is debated on the basis of whether and to what degree one is liberated from the 'coercive' forces of determining events and/or occurrences. It is therefore indeed the case that, at least in these few instances, freedom (free will) is predicated on autonomy or independence from causal powers. Further, it is the case that such a view of freedom is an implicit presupposition insofar as no discussion of its validity arises. Nonetheless, Heidegger's analysis of 'freedom-from'/'negative freedom' does not seem to be driven by the desire to criticise incomplete accounts but to arrive at a fundamental understanding of the relationship between freedom and autonomy/independence.

Freedom as autonomy implies that one is free on condition that their actions cannot be accounted for by reference to any external causal power.<sup>420</sup> Freedom as autonomy coincides with the absence or non-presence of such forces. Heidegger highlights a problem with such negative propositions in the *ET*. The principle he describes is applicable to freedom though the subject therein is 'un-truth':

There is an old doctrine of logic according to which negation *presupposes* something *capable* of being negated, thus something already affirmable, affirmed, thus affirmation. To want to *begin* with negation, whether this is a detour or not, therefore infringes against the most elementary law of logic.<sup>421</sup>

To clarify, freedom understood as autonomy requires that action cannot be accounted for by appeal to determining and coercive forces. But to claim that these forces are indeterminate at least in this instance, is to imply their efficacy in all other cases. Presumably these forces do not negate themselves which raises the question of the relationship between freedom as autonomy and the

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<sup>419</sup> These include, Roderick M. Chisholm, J.M. Fischer, Mark Ravizza and references to Peter Van Inwagen and Harry Frankfurt.

<sup>420</sup> This is no more clearly enunciated than by Harry G. Frankfurt's 'Principle of Alternative Possibilities' (PAP). Therein an agent can only be considered free on condition that there is an alternate possible action to the one actually committed. In other words, the action in question must not be a consequence of coercion by determining forces. See, Harry G. Frankfurt, *Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility in The Importance of What We Care About* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp.1-10

<sup>421</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.95

forces it negates. For Heidegger, common interpretations of freedom have failed to adequately account for the relationship between the independence of a free human and what they are independent of. Moreover, by failing to consider a prerequisite relationship between free-independence and external causal powers, ‘freedom-from’ is incomplete yet presented as the original concept. Accounts of freedom as ‘freedom-from’ are problematic only insofar as they presuppose a negative relationship that is left uninterrogated. In this respect, freedom understood as ‘freedom-from’ begins ‘with negation’ and thereby ‘infringes against the most elementary law of logic’. Omitting an explication of its relationship to the totality of beings impedes an appropriately philosophical account of the essence of freedom. This is how we understand Heidegger’s assertion that, ‘this negative freedom of man is fully defined by specifying what man is independent from, and how such independence is to be conceived.’<sup>422</sup> The ‘from-what’ of independence or autonomy, he argues, can be reduced to ‘two essential directions’:

1. The first and most common in contemporary discourse is ‘independence from nature’. Here autonomy requires that human action cannot be accounted for by reference to determining laws:

By this we mean that human action as such is not primarily caused by natural processes; it is not bound by the lawfulness of natural processes and their necessity.<sup>423</sup>

This is what Heidegger now more broadly refers to as ‘independence from the world’. ‘World’, he goes on to explain, is to be understood as ‘the unitary totality of history and nature’. The grandiose language must not distract us from the familiarity of this position. Chisholm’s rationale is derived from the Aristotelian ‘prime mover unmoved’. Both require an origination of causal effects exempt from its determining laws. Chisholm opens his essay<sup>424</sup> with a reference to a chain of causality beginning with ‘man’ and concluding in the movement of a stone. The argument implied by the quote and developed by Chisholm is that, though the stone’s movement can be causally accounted for by the staff and the staff by the hand, the man moving the hand originates the causal chain. Yet Chisholm fails to recognise that the ‘power of origination’ is both logically and empirically impossible in the absence of the world, the staff, the stone and the hand. The causal world remains a necessary predicate no matter what powers he attributes to ‘man’. It is implicitly posited at the point of asserting human autonomy but a discussion of the relationship between the autonomous power of origination and the causal world is absent. It is our contention that the same holds for any account which depends on the attribution of powers that render human action or human will independent from nature. Another such account underpins the aforementioned ‘principle of alternate

<sup>422</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.4

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4

<sup>424</sup> Roderick M. Chisholm, *Human Freedom and the Self in Free Will* (Oxon: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp.24-25

possibilities'. It is the claim that free will requires the ability to have done otherwise than what one actually does. On this account, freedom is contingent on the absence of external causal powers determining a particular possibility even though the agent has no control over whether alternative actions are available.<sup>425</sup> In this respect, freedom is little more than a reference for a particular kind of causal event wherein an action can be achieved by more than a single means. That is, those events when the agent is presented with the possibility of acting other than they might. If the agent cannot determine whether they have the ability to do otherwise, then free will is contingent on the external causal powers which afford the agent that possibility.<sup>426</sup> On our interpretation of this account of freedom, autonomy refers only to those cases in which external causal powers are not as restrictive on action as they may otherwise be.

2. Heidegger refers to the second 'essential direction' of the 'from-what' as 'independence from God'. 'God' is defined in the opening page of *EHF*:

[...] the ground of the world is what we commonly call God.

The attached footnote adds,

'World' and 'God' are here intended as noncommittal words for the totality of beings (the specific totality of nature and history: world) and for the ground of the totality (God).<sup>427</sup>

Freedom-from 'God' is therefore freedom-from 'the ground of the totality of beings'. This second 'from-what' demands further disambiguation. After all, it is unclear that this *is* implied by the traditional definitions of freedom. John D. Caputo provides a clearer definition of 'ground' ('God') in his paper 'Being, Ground and Play in Heidegger'.<sup>428</sup> His analysis of 'The Essence of Ground', explains that Heidegger's reference to 'founding' is not dissimilar to his use of 'ground' whereby the former 'is the process by which Dasein lays the ground of metaphysics [...]'. The clarity and relevance of Caputo's explication warrants a lengthy quotation though our focus is restricted to elucidating the 'independence from God':

To "found" means to give a reason for what is founded, to explain it, to give it intelligibility. Heidegger here is employing the well-known philosophical sense of the word 'ground' as 'reason'. [...] What Heidegger means by "founding" can be explained as follows. A being is a phenomenon,

<sup>425</sup> We omit the possibility that the agent can control whether or not they have the ability to do otherwise. As stated in the case of 'Immanent causation', one would have to account for the power to supersede external causal forces. In effect, one can only be free if determining forces *do* negate themselves, making room for the 'choice' of the agent. One is left to wonder to what extent these forces are *determining* at all, assuming a free and morally responsible choice is ever possible.

<sup>426</sup> In other words, if there happens to be two routes by which I may arrive at my destination, then I have the ability to do otherwise and have free will. If not, then I don't. Freedom becomes a byword for fortune.

<sup>427</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.1

<sup>428</sup> John D. Caputo, *Being, Ground and Play in Heidegger*, *Man and World*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1970) pp.26-48

that which appears and presents itself as a being. Being is that which renders the appearing of the appearance possible. To “found” the being is to bring it forth as a being, to render it intelligible and manifest as a being. Founding is clearly identical with the comprehension of Being, for a being is manifest only because it is understood in its Being. Founding is accordingly “ontological truth” itself, illuminating the being in terms of its ‘reason’ or ‘why’ (Being). It does not explain the being in terms of *another* being, but is rather the condition of possibility of the manifestness of all beings.<sup>429</sup>

It may be helpful to break Caputo’s analysis down into its claims in order to shed light on what it means for the ‘independence from God’:

- a) ‘Ground’ should be interpreted as the ‘reason’ for the appearance of a being or its ‘why’. In other words, the ‘ground’ of a being is that which explains its appearance.
- b) Being<sup>430</sup> makes the ‘appearing of the appearance’ possible for beings.
- c) Therefore ‘reason’ must refer to ‘the condition of possibility of the manifestness of all beings’.

In this respect, ‘founding’ refers to ontological analysis which seeks to explicate beings in terms of their relationship to being in general. We therefore interpret ‘founding’ as another reference for what we have understood of enquiring into the essence of freedom. ‘Independence from God’ thus describes an account of freedom which is removed from an explication of beings in respect of what they have in common. This, we contend, echoes Heidegger’s critique of traditional ontology in *BT*, which abstracts beings from their relationship to being in general. He develops his criticism into the distinction between the ‘occurrence of a question’ and a ‘*genuine asking*’:

The totality of beings does indeed demand asking this elementary question as to what beings are as such. *This leading question of Western philosophy is not wrongly posed*, but is *not even posed at all*. At first sight, to be sure, this is an outrageous and presumptuous statement. [...] The question was asked by Plato and Aristotle and can be readily identified in their writings. [...] How then can we maintain that this question has not been posed? Plato and Aristotle did, in fact, ask this question. To be sure, but if we merely ascertain that this question, along with a certain answer, occurs in their works, does this mean that they *really and genuinely* pose the question? From the fact that this question, still more their answers and their various implications, occur again and again in the subsequent history of philosophy, can we conclude that this question was genuinely posed? Not at all. To once *again* ask this question of Plato and Aristotle – the question, in brief, of Western philosophy – means something else, namely to ask *more primordially* than they did.<sup>431</sup>

To ‘really and genuinely’ ask the question ‘as to what beings are as such’ is therefore to ‘ask more primordially’. We understand Heidegger’s reference to the primordial in two particular but related senses. First, Heidegger is concerned to arrive at an understanding which unveils the philosophical premises of our most fundamental assumptions about freedom. The primordial, in this sense, is what grounds the traditional discourse on freedom. Thus we understand the primordial to be

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27

<sup>430</sup> Caputo makes a distinction between ‘being’ and ‘Being’ where the latter refers to being as such or being in general. We refer to being in general here.

<sup>431</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) pp.26-27

interchangeable with ‘ground’. Second, the primordial is therefore the origin of other derivative accounts of freedom. For Heidegger, this adds weight to the critique of traditional accounts of freedom. Their failure to acknowledge and address an original understanding of freedom means their accounts are necessarily incomplete.<sup>432</sup> It is in this respect that we understand freedom-from ‘God’ not as freedom-from reason as such but from ‘founding’. As Heidegger argues at the outset of *BT*, the problem is not the lack of ontological discourse but that ‘*is-ness*’ remains an ‘*a priori* enigma, veiled in darkness’ and it is therefore necessary to ‘raise the question again’.<sup>433</sup>

Both freedom-from ‘World’ and freedom-from ‘God’ point to a fundamental philosophical concern. In each case, the ‘from-what’ of autonomous or independent freedom implies the totality of phenomena or their ground:

*World and God* are not just accidentally or contingently represented in the *negative concept of freedom*, but are *essentially included* in it. If negative freedom is the topic, then world and God necessarily belong to the topic as the ‘from what’ of independence. [...] If freedom becomes a problem, albeit initially only as negative freedom, then we are *necessarily inquiring into the totality of what is*.<sup>434</sup>

Thus the apparent contradictions raised by Heidegger’s can be reconciled. Consequently, Heidegger’s preliminary view of the essence of freedom can be reduced to three key points:

- i) An account of freedom must not ask the particular question of the essence of freedom in the regional, scientific sense of particularity. Rather, enquiry after the essence of freedom must pertain to what is held in common by all beings and therefore their relationship to being in general.
- ii) This *essential insight* is necessary to ‘found’ the problem of freedom in order to arrive at ‘ontological truth’.
- iii) *Genuinely asking* after the problem of human freedom will involve a renewed analysis of the ‘leading question of metaphysics’, the question of being.

The claim that the problem of human freedom is a particular philosophical question without being a question about a particular kind of entity relies, on Heidegger’s distinction between science and philosophy. This particular philosophical question ‘thematizes the totality of what is, World and God’.<sup>435</sup> Of course Heidegger’s ‘preliminary considerations’ only orientate thinking on the issue in accordance with the fundamental principles of his project. It is in this sense that we argue in favour of reading *EHF* as an extension of fundamental ontology. The three key points we take from these

<sup>432</sup> That is, they are ‘blind from their ownmost aims’. Again, *BT* may provide the theoretical framework for Heidegger’s analysis.

<sup>433</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.23 – It is in this particular sense that we criticise Sartre’s anthropocentrism and appeal to Descartes. By originating being in consciousness grounded by nothingness, being is once again veiled in an ‘opaque’ ‘darkness’.

<sup>434</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.5

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

preliminary considerations reflect the prioritisation of *Dasein* and the methodological directive to establish a hermeneutics of facticity as the appropriate point of departure for enquiry. He applies these principles to the analysis of freedom in two large phases. First, he presents an analysis of Kantian freedom as an example of ‘positive freedom’ or ‘freedom-for’. Kant is of special interest because he ‘brings the problem of freedom for the first time explicitly into a radical connection with the fundamental problems of metaphysics’<sup>436</sup> though Heidegger will ultimately reject Kant’s account for failing to take this ‘radicalism’ far enough. His explication and criticism of Kant will develop our understanding of Heidegger’s own position. Second, Heidegger attempts a direct application of his methodological approach to the problem of freedom. This, in our view, is the total content of *ET*, founded by *EHF*. The explication of ‘freedom-for’ will be broken down into two further sections: transcendental and practical.

*b) Positive Freedom and Freedom-For*

An alternative to negative freedom is positive freedom. Heidegger presents Kant’s account as the best example of such an alternative. His interpretation and defence of Kant’s view of freedom will underlie much of his own position. Though he ultimately rejects the Kantian view, he adopts much of its reasoning: primarily the principles of transcendental freedom and ‘being a law unto oneself’. The main criticism of Kantian freedom will be that it remains couched in causality. For Kant, human freedom must be a kind of causality because, he assumes, the latter *must* be of greater primordality in that it is a fundamental prerequisite for experience. For Heidegger, the metaphysical prioritisation of causality over freedom inverts the relationship of freedom to being. Moreover, in respect of the aforementioned ‘old doctrine of logic’, the inversion is contingent on a prerequisite comportment to and understanding of being which, crucially, remains entirely uninterrogated. This, on our reading, sums up the charge of ‘insufficient radicalism’. Heidegger’s primary claim will be that freedom is the ground of human experience, not the reverse. It is initially posited as part of a hypothetical argument at the conclusion of part one of *EHF*:

*Freedom is not some particular thing among and alongside other things, but is superordinate and governing in relation to the whole. But if we are seeking out freedom as the ground of the possibility of existence, then freedom must itself, in its essence, be more primordial than man. Man is only an administrator of freedom, i.e. he can only let-be the freedom which is accorded to him, in such a way that, through man, the whole contingency of freedom becomes visible.*<sup>437</sup>

*ET* is, in the main, an attempt to substantiate this claim. Explication will therefore be reserved for later analysis but understanding that claim includes the path taken to arrive at it. To that end, three

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<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, p.93

main areas of concern pertain to Heidegger's interpretation of Kant and his own view of freedom.

These are:

- Kantian Positive Freedom
- Causality and Freedom
- The Two Ways to Freedom

Heidegger lists these concerns in order of their progression:

So our view of the problem of freedom broadens out. The individual moments of this broadening can again be indicated: practical freedom (autonomy) – transcendental freedom (absolute spontaneity) – exemplary causality – causality (causation) as such – being moved as such – beings as such.<sup>438</sup>

A discussion of what Heidegger calls, 'the Question Concerning the Being of Beings',<sup>439</sup> in the first half of *EHF* is deliberately omitted here. Much of the content reiterates arguments from *BT* which have already been addressed at length.<sup>440</sup> Suffice it to say, Heidegger restates the 'preconceptual understanding of being',<sup>441</sup> and philosophical enquiry's obligation to disclose this understanding: what he now refers to as 'the birth of philosophy from the Dasein in man'.<sup>442</sup> Thus for Heidegger, philosophy is 'awakened as a primal activity' by humankind's pre-conceptual understanding of being. Philosophical enquiry is therefore a fundamental characteristic of *Dasein*: the being for whom 'Being is an issue'.<sup>443</sup> Of course this does not refer to formal philosophy but the basic activity of ontological identification and understanding or the necessary prerequisite for the formalisation of philosophical enquiry. One point from Heidegger's reiterations is worthy of discussion even if briefly. Heidegger evaluates Kant's conception of freedom in the light of his critique of the understanding of being (*Sein*) as 'constant presence', an understanding that he attributes to the ancient Greeks. He derives 'constant presence' from the colloquial Greek, *ovσία* (being). Everyday possessions such as a house, chair etc are all referred to as '*ovσία*' which, Heidegger argues, indicates that the Greeks had a pre-theoretical understanding of being (*ovσία*) as 'constant presence' or 'enduring constancy'.<sup>444</sup> The exact meaning of 'constant presence' in Heidegger's account points to what differentiates him from Kant. To that end, it is important to note that 'constant presence' should not be understood as a form of permanent appearance. As a synonym (or etymological root) of being (*ovσία*), 'constant presence' refers to that which makes the 'appearing of the appearance

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<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28

<sup>440</sup> See, Heidegger's *Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being*, p.30

<sup>441</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.31

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32 – 'This awakening of the understanding of being, this self-discovery of the understanding of being, is the birth of philosophy from the Dasein in man.'

<sup>443</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.32

<sup>444</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.32



possible'. In fact, Heidegger concedes that the Greeks had a different word for presence (*παρουσία*) in the sense of phenomenal appearing but asserts that his 'thesis' 'does not rest on such considerations.'<sup>445</sup> Rather, constant presence refers to that which 'remains' regardless of appearance and 'disappearance'. Heidegger explains this by reference to 'change' and 'becoming':

Change in colour, for example, is conceived as the *disappearance* of one colour and the *appearance* of another. In the case of processes, i.e. of what we call 'becoming' in the narrower sense – a white piece of chalk becoming a red piece of chalk – there is something which underlies this change: *ύπο*, something remains: *μένον*. [...] In absence it is not essence but presence which is lacking; thus 'essence-hood', *ουσία*, at bottom means *presence*. The Greeks understood *beingness in the sense of constant presence*.<sup>446</sup>

'Constant presence' does not refer to the ontical characteristics of beings or the symptoms of appearance, in this case, the 'red' or 'white' of the chalk. 'Appearance', 'disappearance' and 'change' all presuppose 'something which underlies' them, namely 'essence-hood': the condition of the possibility of appearing. Kant's account of freedom will assume an understanding of being as 'constant presence' as it relates to causality. In Heidegger's reading, Kant argues that freedom is grounded in causality which is the underlying law of human experience. This is the sense in which Heidegger sees a 'radical connection' between Kant and the 'fundamental problems of metaphysics'.

As we have seen, freedom-from necessarily implies a broader freedom often left uninterrogated. A fundamental account is indicated by considering what one is free from: the 'from-what'. This requires a working definition of positive freedom:

Freedom in the positive sense does *not* mean the 'away-from...', but rather the 'toward-which'; positive freedom means being free for..., being open *for*..., thus *oneself* being open for..., allowing *oneself* to be determined through..., determining oneself to... This means to determine one's own action purely through *oneself*, to give to oneself the law for one's action.<sup>447</sup>

Of course Kantian freedom falls into two categories: transcendental (cosmological) and practical. In order for Heidegger to justify his preference of Kant's account of freedom, it is therefore necessary to first show that his two kinds of freedom are not forms of positive and negative freedom. Rather, that they are both forms of positive freedom.

The definition of practical freedom taken from the 'Critique of Pure Reason' presents Heidegger with the first obstacle to interpreting both kinds of freedom as positive:

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<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15

Freedom in the *practical* sense is the will's independence of coercion through sensuous impulses'. Freedom in the practical sense is *independence*, which is precisely how we characterised negative freedom.<sup>448</sup>

'The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals' clarifies that this only provides a 'negative explanation' which alone 'affords no insight into its essence'.<sup>449</sup> A positive account is therefore necessary:

The positive concept of freedom means *autonomy* of the will, *giving laws unto oneself*. [...] *practical* freedom itself divides into negative and positive.<sup>450</sup>

Of course the positive aspect of practical freedom does not discount the negative. But for Kant, as Heidegger presents him, practical freedom understood as independence is 'inadequately essential'. Far from 'countering' the negative, the positive aspect of practical freedom gives it greater primordially. The *essence* of practical freedom is not described by independence or autonomy alone. The division of practical freedom into negative and positive reveals its grounding in 'absolute spontaneity', derived from the 'transcendental idea' of freedom.<sup>451</sup> The negative or 'from-what' of practical freedom, refers to 'independence of coercion through sensory impulses'. The positive or 'for-what' of practical freedom, refers to autonomy as the ability to 'give a law unto oneself'. The latter suggests a relationship to 'absolute spontaneity':

Autonomy is a kind of absolute spontaneity, i.e. the latter delimits the universal essence of the former. Only on the basis of this essence as absolute spontaneity is autonomy possible. Were there no absolute spontaneity there would be no autonomy. The possibility of autonomy is *grounded* in spontaneity, and practical freedom is grounded in transcendental freedom.<sup>452</sup>

The relationship of 'independence of coercion through sensory impulses' and autonomy is grounded in transcendental freedom. Thus for Heidegger, practical freedom cannot be understood as negative and transcendental freedom, positive. Rather, as it's 'for-what', autonomy grounds practical freedom in 'self-legislation' and therefore, 'absolute spontaneity'.

Transcendental (cosmological) freedom must also be shown to be an instance of positive freedom. To that end, Heidegger quotes Kant's definition of transcendental freedom as, 'the power of beginning a state spontaneously':

[...]'Such causality will not, therefore, itself stand under another cause determining it in time, as required by the law of nature. Freedom in this sense is a pure transcendental idea.'<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.16-17

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16

Three points can be identified from this definition, all of which will, to some extent, be discussed in the remainder of this chapter. First, transcendental freedom is a kind of causality which is to say that ultimately, transcendental freedom is grounded in causality. This will be the root of Heidegger's critique of Kant. Second, transcendental freedom is a kind of causality which itself is uncaused: it does not 'stand under another cause'. In this sense, it is prior to time and space and cannot therefore be experienced or assessed by criteria based in the *a posteriori*. Finally, transcendental freedom refers to an 'idea' which is to say that it refers to reason's conception of freedom. As Derk Pereboom points out in, 'Kant on Transcendental Freedom':

Kant's theory is not ambitious: he maintains that it cannot be established theoretically – i.e., on the basis of any evidence available to us – that we have this sort of freedom, or even that it is metaphysically possible that we do. Rather, he claims only that our conception of our being free in this sense involves no inconsistency, and that the legitimacy of a belief that we have this kind of freedom must rely on practical reasons.<sup>454</sup>

'Absolute spontaneity', in this respect, refers to the origin of ideas though this does not, in our estimation, undermine the ambition of 'Kant's theory'. Whether or not Kant, 'claims only that our conception of being free' 'involves no inconsistency', transcendental freedom is an *a priori*, presupposed by experience. Nevertheless, this definition also presents an immediate problem. The issue in this case is not validity but whether transcendental freedom constitutes a separate category at all. Heidegger defines it as, 'the *power of the self-origination of a state*.'<sup>455</sup> He sums up the problem with the question, 'Is absolute spontaneity not the same as autonomy?'<sup>456</sup> He answers:

*Absolute spontaneity* is the faculty of the self-origination of a state; autonomy is the self-legislation of a rational will. Absolute spontaneity (transcendental freedom) is not a matter of the will and the law of the will but of the self-origination of a state; autonomy, on the other hand, concerns a particular being to which there belongs willing,  $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ . They are not the same, and yet both pertain to that which has the character of self.<sup>457</sup>

The difference is subtle but significant. Autonomy (the positive aspect of practical freedom) is logically impossible absent absolute spontaneity but absolute spontaneity does not require autonomy. Thus, 'The possibility of autonomy is *grounded* in spontaneity, and practical freedom is grounded in transcendental freedom.'<sup>458</sup> A more pressing concern presents itself at this point for our argument that Heidegger succeeds where Sartre does not. The similarities between this interpretation of Kant and a previous example are hard to miss. Heidegger argues that Kant's

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<sup>454</sup> Derk Pereboom, *Kant on Transcendental Freedom*, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 73, No. 3 (2006) pp.537-567, p.538

<sup>455</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.16

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18

account makes a preceding ‘spontaneity’ which ‘originates a state’ necessary for the possibility of practical freedom. Chisholm’s argument also required ‘self-origination’ in order to start a causal chain: what he calls, ‘Immanent causation’. Moreover, the implicit and uninterrogated reliance on causality has been the main focus of our criticism of Chisholm. Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant will be subject to the same criticism in the absence of a thoroughgoing interrogation of the relationship between the faculty of absolute spontaneity and causality. To that end, Heidegger explains that Kant’s transcendental freedom is itself a kind of causality: ‘the causality of freedom’:

From this it is clear that what is genuinely problematical in absolute spontaneity is a problem of *causality*, of *causation*. Accordingly, Kant sees *freedom* as the *power of a specific and distinct causation*.<sup>459</sup>

Thus transcendental freedom refers to a kind of causation which ‘lies outside what is experientially accessible’.<sup>460</sup> This marks a major difference with Chisholm’s account. In this case, freedom is not a power attributable to a particular being, affording it the ability to interfere with or start a causal chain. The ‘Experientially inaccessible’ causality involved in the ‘self-origination of a state’ already constitutes a kind of freedom. In Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant, causality does not pose a problem for freedom nor limit an agents’ ability to will or do otherwise. Causality or more precisely causation as such, grounds transcendental freedom. The ‘radicalism’ of Kant’s approach is evident: freedom is not understood in terms of ‘choices’, ‘willing’ or ‘doing’ but in terms of a certain kind of causality which is their implicit presupposition:

The question of spontaneity, of beginning and letting follow on, is the question concerning the cause [*Ursache*]. This, the causation [*Ursachesein*] of a cause (*causa*), is what Kant calls ‘causality’ [*Kausalität*] (the causality of *causa*). In this sense he speaks pointedly of the ‘causality of a cause’. This does not mean ‘cause of the cause’, but rather the causation of a cause, i.e. *that* and *how* a cause is a cause.<sup>461</sup>

Unlike previous examples, Kant’s account of freedom confronts what one means by a cause such that it ‘*is*’. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s first criticism suggests this as the limit of Kant’s account. In an introductory discussion of the problem of movement, Heidegger refers to philosophy’s failure to make progress with this problem and says that Kant is equally at fault:

Since Aristotle, who was the first and last to grasp the *philosophical* problem, philosophy has not taken a single step forward in this area. On the contrary it has gone backward, because the problem is in no way grasped as a problem. Here too Kant completely fails. That the problem of causality was central for him makes this all the more remarkable. It is easy to see that the problem of the essence of movement is the presupposition for even posing, not to speak of solving, the problem of causality.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22

Kant's failure to 'problematise' causality renders his account of freedom similar to the negative concept of freedom in its inadequacy. Grounding freedom in causality raises questions about the *possibility* of causality and its relationship to freedom but Kant falls short of 'genuinely posing' that question. Nor does he offer an explanation for the fact that human beings are the only entities for whom such a question is possible.<sup>463</sup> Heidegger summarises this issue and the necessity of 'problematising' causality in the following way:

Once the problem of freedom is understood in a metaphysical sense, controversy with Kant is not only unavoidable, but must stand in the forefront. Once freedom is understood as a metaphysical problem, the question is already raised as to whether freedom is a kind of causality, or whether, on the contrary, causality is a problem of freedom.<sup>464</sup>

Heidegger's concern is that Kant's methodological approach to the problem 'obscures' a fundamental ontology of both freedom and causality:

[...]the problem is considered in terms of the category of causality, but without making causality itself problematic through a radical discussion of the ontological problem it involves.<sup>465</sup>

Kant's assumption of the primordality of causality and therefore its presupposition of a comportment to and understanding of being remains, as Heidegger says of all ontology that has not clarified the meaning of being, 'blind and perverted from its ownmost aim'.<sup>466</sup> He develops his criticism through an explication of causality and Kant's two ways to freedom.

The essence of practical and transcendental freedom has been identified as autonomy and absolute spontaneity respectively. Furthermore, transcendental freedom refers to the 'self-origination of a state' so that transcendental freedom is grounded in causality. Kantian transcendental freedom differs from other accounts insofar as it is a kind of causality. Nevertheless, it is not at all clear how causal freedom (freedom grounded in causality) can allow for the 'self-origination of a state'. Heidegger quotes Kant's definition of 'what causality means as such' as it relates to the 'existence of appearances' and their 'accessibility to us' for clarification:

'Everything that happens, that is, begins to be, presupposes something upon which it follows according to a rule'.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> This is the aforementioned 'ontico-ontological priority of Dasein'. One may say that Kant's view of freedom 'goes-after-the-whole' but does not 'go-to-the-roots'.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, p.203

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>466</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.31

<sup>467</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.105

Therefore the ‘self-origination of a state’ must also follow that which precedes it ‘according to a rule’. Two possibilities exist: either Kantian ‘origination’ involves a peculiar definition or causality must include room for the creation of a state which does not ‘follow something according to a rule’.

Heidegger makes two points on causality as it relates to freedom for Kant:

1. Causality is a necessary condition for the experience of nature.
2. ‘Natural’ is more primordial than ‘free’ causality.<sup>468</sup>
1. Heidegger explains that Kant’s account of causality describes the rule which ‘binds a multiplicity of apprehensions in succession’. Causality does not provide the rule for the fact of phenomena but their experience as such. The argument is explained at length but can be reduced to a simple point:

But if the temporal succession of apprehensions is to have a necessity, time itself, wherein every being encountered in experience is located, must indicate how the perception of something objective – the binding character of the succession of apprehensions – is possible. Can time itself do this? Does it involve a lawfulness in respect of succession? It does indeed, for I can arrive at a later time only by way of an earlier time. While I can think of something which comes later without attending to its character as later-than, I cannot conceive it precisely *as later* except by reference to what preceded it. The earlier time necessarily determines the subsequent time. The subsequent time *cannot be* without the earlier time. But does the reverse apply? *Time is an irreversible succession, i.e. it has a definite direction.*<sup>469</sup>

Heidegger also states that the rule of ‘irreversible succession’ is only applicable to the ‘perception of events or present occurrences’ and not to ‘indeterminate perceptions’. The distinction is exemplified by analogy of the difference in perception between a standing house and a ship sailing downstream. The house has ‘properties and determinations which do not involve any succession’. Whether perceived from bottom to top, left to right or vice versa the house does not involve a temporal succession: ‘It does not have the character of an event.’<sup>470</sup> The sailing ship is quite different in this regard. It is perceived further downstream from one moment to the next. Moreover, the order of successive apprehensions is ‘bound down’ but a problem arises from this distinction. Both house and ship are apprehensions in time. The experience of their apprehension is not atemporal though their particular properties differ. The distinction invalidates the claim that causality is a ‘necessary element of the whole that makes experience as such possible.’<sup>471</sup> Heidegger offers a weak solution:

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<sup>468</sup> Of course the problem of causality is a source of much more extensive discussion for both Kant and Heidegger. For example, Heidegger also investigates Kant’s account of causality in ‘three modes of time: permanence, succession and simultaneity’.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, p.130

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, p.129

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131

It is true that the succession of apprehensions is not bound to an objective succession of appearances, for the house is not an event. [...] On the other hand, the succession of apprehensions still has a binding character. [...] In the construction of the house, the roof comes last, and in the completed house it remains at the top. In other words, the succession of apprehensions is arbitrary only against the background of the binding character of the ordered constellation of elements making up the present house.<sup>472</sup>

The problem here is that this requires that causal perception of the house is predicated on familiarity with its construction.<sup>473</sup> The confusion is caused by Kant's distinction and exacerbated by Heidegger's failure to fully explicate the issue. We may propose a simple solution provided by analysis of the gaze itself. Thereby 'one could only arrive at a certain view of the house by way of an earlier view'. Of course this would obligate Kant to account for the perceiver of house and ship:

In his discussion of the Analogies, Kant repeatedly emphasises that 'absolute time is not an object of perception', that 'time itself cannot be'. 'Now time itself cannot be perceived.' 'Time cannot be perceived in itself, and what precedes and what follows cannot, therefore, by relation to it, be empirically determined in the object.' What is the ultimate reason for this? *Kant did not and could not expressly provide the reason, for he lacked a metaphysics of Dasein.*<sup>474</sup>

For Heidegger, Kant needs to substantiate the argument that transcendental freedom is grounded in causality by providing a 'metaphysics of Dasein'. The lack of such an account leaves the argument incomplete since analysis of what it means for one to experience time and how that relates to the 'self-origination of a state' is necessary to determine the greater primordially of causality over freedom. Put another way, freedom refers to absolute spontaneity specifically with respect to reason, as previously stated. The very ability to raise the question of its possibility (its 'what' and 'how' being as in the 'clarifications of essence') undermines the claim that it is of greater primordially. Suffice it to say that the 'self-origination of a state' remains problematic in the absence of a 'metaphysics of Dasein'.

2. Heidegger's criticism that Kant lacked 'a metaphysics of Dasein' introduces an underlying, fundamental problem. In this case, a 'metaphysics of Dasein' is absent because Kant *assumes* that causality, causation as such, must be the most fundamental condition of experience. Therefore the perceiver of house and ship must conform to the laws of causation without need for further enquiry. Heidegger states that for Kant,

It [causality] is a relation which does not just occur in time, but which *is determined in its relational character as a temporal relation*, as a mode of being-in-time. 'Succession' is a relation which represents in advance, and as such makes possible the experience of intra-temporal occurrences, i.e. succession is pre-represented *in and for* all experiential representation (perception and thought). This relation is temporal in the sense that *causality (as causation) means: running ahead in time as*

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<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, p.129

<sup>473</sup> Even then, this is limited to those houses which have or require constructed roofs. This cannot describe the ground of *all* experience.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111 [Italics added]

*determining letting follow on* such that what runs ahead is itself an event that refers back to something earlier that determines it.<sup>475</sup>

Kant's causation accounts for the 'possibility of experiences', 'perception and thought' including, one assumes, the thoughts necessary to make and investigate his own claim. What Heidegger calls 'the fundamental metaphysical problem underlying his [Kant's] interpretation of freedom as a kind of causality',<sup>476</sup> is exacerbated by a contradiction in a further distinction between 'natural causality' and 'causality through freedom'. Kant's account of causality as a 'determined', 'relational' 'succession' puts it in tension with transcendental freedom insofar as it describes the 'absolute spontaneity' of 'experiential representation'. The greater primordially of causality that Kant argues for, should restrict 'perception and thought' to only that which 'refers back to something earlier that determines it'. Heidegger summarises the problem as follows:

If the definition of causality in general is oriented to the causality of nature, where nature means the being-present of that which is present (whether physical, psychical or whatever else), then the way of being of causation becomes characterised as *being-present*. If the causality of freedom is defined in terms of this universal causation, then freedom (as *being-free*) itself takes on the fundamental characteristic of being-present. But freedom is the fundamental condition of the possibility of the acting person, in the sense of ethical action. Thus the existence of man, precisely through the characterisation of freedom as causality (albeit as one kind thereof) is *conceived basically as being-present*. This turns freedom into its complete opposite.<sup>477</sup>

For Heidegger, Kant infringes on the possibility of absolute spontaneity by grounding freedom in causality. He cannot 'treat the causality of freedom primordially and in its own terms' because the primordially of causality is assumed. A previous chapter explains Heidegger's claim that, 'existentialia is tantamount to *Being-present-at-hand*, a kind of Being which is essentially inappropriate to entities of Dasein's character.'<sup>478</sup> Beings whose mode of being is presence-at-hand are beings for whom, 'their Being is 'a matter of indifference'; or more precisely, they 'are' such that their Being can be neither a matter of indifference to them, nor the opposite.'<sup>479</sup> Heidegger's criticism of Kant, summarised in the following, is based on these claims:

Kant's orientation of causation to being-present, which he equates with actuality and existence as such, means that *he sees freedom and being-free within the horizon of being-present*. Since he *fails to pose the question concerning the particular way of being of beings which are free*, he does not unfold the metaphysical problem in a primordial manner.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p.133

<sup>478</sup> See, Heidegger's *Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being; A Positive Understanding of Dasein*, p.41

<sup>479</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) pp.67-68

<sup>480</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.134



‘Orientating’ freedom to causality implicitly restricts its ontological definition to the ‘fundamental characteristic of being-present’. Absolute spontaneity and the ‘self-origination of a state’ cannot therefore describe powers attributed to ‘man’, allowing a disruption of the causal process (e.g. Chisholm). As Heidegger concludes, they are descriptions of a relational character between beings that are present-at-hand:

Every transition from one state to another, which states might exist in two instants, still happens in a time between the instants and thus belongs to the *entire time of alteration*. For this reason every cause of an alteration testifies to its causation during the whole time of the alteration. In other words, the action of matter is continuous. There is no such thing as a sudden occurrence which breaks out from prior nothingness.<sup>481</sup>

Strangely, ‘origination’ cannot imply a ‘point of *origin*’ since ‘the action of matter is continuous’. Thus every ‘origination’ testifies to its causation. Failing to address the being of praxis (ethical action) amplifies the problem inherent to the assumption of the primordality of causality. Following Heidegger’s explication of Kant’s two ways to freedom will help us determine the extent of the problem and therefore the ground Heidegger marks out for his own position.

c) *Kant’s Two Ways to Freedom*

#### **Cosmological (Transcendental) Freedom:**

Heidegger states that the first way to freedom is arrived at ‘*by way of the problem of the possibility of experience as the question of the possibility of metaphysics*’.<sup>482</sup> Freedom as a ‘cosmological idea’ ‘*arises in the context of the problem of world*’, understanding ‘world’ in Kant’s sense as the ‘totality of appearances’ (nature and cosmos), thus the totality of present beings as accessible to finite human knowledge.<sup>483</sup> The ‘totality of present beings’ is not a reference to each and every present being. Neither Kant nor Heidegger claims that ‘finite human knowledge’ has access to an *a priori* inventory of beings. It refers to the fact of the totality: that which ‘binds’ all present beings in the common fact of their present-ness. Furthermore and as previously stated, cosmological (transcendental) freedom involves the ‘self-origination of a state’ and ‘experientially inaccessible causation’. This is non-empirical causation or the causation of pure reason:

One thing may be assumed in advance: if freedom belongs in the context of the problem of world, if the world is the totality of appearances in their succession, and if the experientially accessible unity of appearances is determined by natural causality, then *freedom is forced into close connection with natural causality*. [...] In brief, we can say that freedom is a *distinctive mode of natural causality*.<sup>484</sup>

Heidegger later clarifies that,

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<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145

*Freedom is a non-empirical (intelligible) kind of causality.*<sup>485</sup>

The first way to freedom must therefore involve the intelligibility (transcendence) of ‘world’. This is how Heidegger understands Kant’s reference to ‘ideas’. He states the following with respect to ‘reason’:

[...]the faculty or power of representing something in its origin and outcome, i.e. in its ‘principles’. Reason unifies these principles through concepts of reason, or as Kant calls them, ‘ideas’. According to Kant, the idea is ‘the concept provided by reason – of the form of the whole – insofar as the concept determines *a priori* not only the scope of its manifold content, but also the positions which the parts occupy relatively to one another’.<sup>486</sup>

We may therefore understand Kant’s first way as causal reasoning towards a metaphysical ‘idea’ of world. Heidegger identifies two concerns central to Kant’s argument for transcendental freedom: i) the sense in which the representation of present beings or their ‘unification’ in ‘ideas’ involves the ‘self-origination of a state’ and ii) Kant must show that the causality of reason does indeed ‘come into unity’ with natural causality.

i) Heidegger quotes what Kant calls, ‘reason’s principle of unconditioned unity’ in order to state the first problem:

Thus the principle of reason is ‘that *if the conditioned is given, the entire sum of conditions, and consequently the absolutely unconditioned* (through which alone the conditioned has been possible) *is also given.*’<sup>487</sup>

The ‘conditioned’ is what Heidegger also refers to as ‘what appears in appearance’, namely ‘occurrences, alteration, the succession of events’. These are the sum of experienced ‘corporeal nature’ which is ‘given’. Kant’s claim is that the laws which constitute corporeal nature are equally present (given) to reason as is their ground or that which is absolutely unconditioned:

During our discussion of the principle of causality we saw that, in its dynamical meaning, this relates to events, i.e. the sequential occurrence of appearances. Thus what reason refers to here is precisely the unity and completeness of this sequence.<sup>488</sup>

For Heidegger, Kant requires that human reason must ‘found’ the conditioned: to provide an account of the ground of what appears. Given that the conditions are causal, reason is compelled to return ‘not just to something prior as its own particular cause, but to the absolute beginning of the sequence.’<sup>489</sup> Reason thus ‘represents’ an origin which is free because it logically precedes

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<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p.177

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148

(transcends) causal conditions. The ‘principle of reason’ therefore is the return to an origin or first cause which produces all subsequent events in nature. The ‘self-origination of a state’ does not therefore refer to a spontaneous creation of a first cause resulting in a succession of natural events. The representation and unification of present beings in ideas only endeavours ‘to extend it beyond the limits of the empirical’.<sup>490</sup> Rather, ‘self-origination’ posits an origin within the limits of its empirical ‘finitude’. In Heidegger’s interpretation, Kant finds that reason is inferior to ‘the understanding’:

In its representing (i.e. in its concepts) reason is only *seemingly* superior to the understanding as the genuine faculty of concepts. [...] Kant emphasizes that it is only *from the understanding* that pure transcendental concepts can arise: ‘Reason does not really generate any concept. The most it can do is to free a *concept of understanding* from the unavoidable limitations of possible experience, and so to endeavour to extend it beyond the limits of the empirical, though still, indeed, in terms of its relation to the empirical.’<sup>491</sup>

Thus insofar as reason is restricted to the empirical, at least in Heidegger’s reading, the return to ‘the unity and completeness’ of a causal sequence does not ‘generate any concept’ of origin. That is attributed to ‘the understanding’.<sup>492</sup>

ii) Kant must also explain how the coincidence of natural and free causality is possible where ‘coincidence’ refers to their producing the same effects. He refers to it as the ‘inner dissension of pure reason’.<sup>493</sup> It is explained by analysis of what is later called the ‘permanent and necessary antagonisms’, ‘essential to human reason itself’.<sup>494</sup> This is the dissension between the causality of freedom as necessitated by ‘pure human reason’ and the empirical laws of nature. Heidegger summarises the problem by quoting Kant’s thesis and antithesis of this third antinomy:

1. ‘Causality in accordance with the laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances in the world can one and all be derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom.
2. ‘There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature.’<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, p.146

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, p.146

<sup>492</sup> This is similar to the ‘understanding’ Heidegger refers to in some respects. In Heidegger’s estimation, they differ insofar as Kant fails to ‘justify his assertion [about human nature]’: ‘He [Kant] does so simply by alluding to human nature itself. However uncomfortable this circumstance may be for earlier and contemporary interpretation of Kant, no sleight of hand can alter it or diminish its significance: Kant sees the grounding of metaphysics precisely as a return to human nature. [...] [Kant] does not interpret human nature radically from itself, but already sees it from the perspective of the three indicated domains which have been made self-evident to him by the tradition. Only in this way does he turn to human nature.’ – *Ibid.*, p.142

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, p.149

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, p.149

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, p.149

In Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, the problem of coinciding causalities is symptomatic of a fundamental dissension evident in all human reasoning. In trying to understand the world as a causally related totality, reason is forced both to assert and to reject the existence of a first cause. Heidegger summarises Kant's way of resolving the antinomy. Both thesis and antithesis depend on an implicit presupposition of the kind previously attributed to traditional ontology:

The Thesis asserts freedom as unconditioned causality, as the primordial origin subject to no further conditions. We can thus take the Thesis as saying that the ordered series of causes, considered in its totality, is finite. Clearly then, the Antithesis would say that the series of the regressive synthesis of conditions is infinite. [...] This kind of opposition is called a simple contradiction. To understand the antagonism in this way (i.e. in accordance with common reason) presupposes that nature is a thing-in-itself, i.e. that nature is given to us absolutely and is known absolutely. This presupposition overlooks the fact that as the fundamental concept of appearances, nature cannot possess absolute existence. Since nature is not being-in-itself it cannot be said to be either finite or infinite. The presupposition of both thesis and antithesis is false. [...] Both Thesis and Antithesis are based on an illusion, and indeed, as we saw, on an illusion necessary to common reason.<sup>496</sup>

Thus both thesis and antithesis presuppose the 'is-ness' of nature as a 'thing-in-itself'. In order to present a final resolution to the third antinomy, Heidegger reminds us of the 'universal ontological concept of action', namely, 'The relation of the subject of causality to the effect'.<sup>497</sup> Of course these relations differ and are what Kant refers to as their 'character', of which there are two kinds: 'empirical' and 'intelligible':

*The empirical character is that lawfulness of causation which is empirically accessible in experience, as appearance. It is causation in its 'how' as belonging to appearance, i.e. the causality of nature. The intelligible character – we can already guess – is the mode of causation of causality from freedom.*<sup>498</sup>

Any appearance which 'shows itself for human knowledge' does not also empirically reveal 'what it is in itself'.<sup>499</sup> Nonetheless, *that* the ontological condition of the appearance is unknown is understood. This is what Heidegger refers to as the 'transcendental object which must underlie the appearances'.<sup>500</sup> A site of coincidence for two kinds of causality is provided by the availability of both 'characters' of causal relation to the 'rational living being'.<sup>501</sup> Heidegger finds evidence in Kant's notion of 'pure-apperception': 'actions and inner determinations which [man] cannot regard

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<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.161-162

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.169-170

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171

<sup>500</sup> 'In brief, just as an appearance always remains related to something (X) that never appears, so the intelligible can be the non-appearing transcendental cause of the empirical and thus be the cause of one and the same appearance as effect. What appears can also be determined by what does not appear, i.e. by what the appearing is an appearance *of*. From the perspective of appearance, however, the intelligible cause begins from and of itself, thus making possible an originary action.' - *Ibid.*, p.173

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176

as impressions of the senses'.<sup>502</sup> Here the 'transcendental object' is pointed out by the 'I'-being' in all references to oneself such as, 'I am writing' or 'I think'. The causal character of this relation is that of the 'ought' which is not derived from mere appearance but from a concept. Praxis (action of 'the ought') is grounded in the 'pure causality' of reason which imposes an 'ought' 'from itself':

Where, as with man, action occurs in unity with nature, reason possesses an empirical as well as an intelligible character. [...] The essential *universal metaphysical ground of the possibility of the unity of the two causalities* lies in the fact that *appearances are determinable as both intelligible and sensible*.<sup>503</sup>

In Heidegger's reading of Kant, reason is itself a 'kind of causality',<sup>504</sup> underlying all human action but this is causality of an 'intelligible character': a non-empirical causality with 'no before and after'.<sup>505</sup> If all human action (empirical causality) is therefore predicated on reason (intelligible causality) then human action describes the coincidence of two kinds of causality bringing about the same effect. The 'I' of pure apperception points to the 'ought-governed action',<sup>506</sup> which characterises the causality of reason. The permanence of the 'I' in all action necessitates this coincidence of empirical and intelligible causality.

### **Practical Freedom:**

Kant's second way to freedom is shorter but no less problematic. This is due, in part, to the fact that the transcendental is the ground of the practical: they are not entirely separate. The first way accounts for the *possibility* of freedom, the second will explicate its *actuality*. This is the freedom of human beings not of any other entity or freedom as such. It follows therefore that actual freedom must be revealed in the features which distinguish human beings:

Now what is distinctive to man is his *personality*. [...] In what does the personality of a person consist? We can understand this if we consider the personality as distinct from the humanity and animality of man. All these elements go together to define the full essence of man. To be sure, the traditional definition of man recognises only two elements: *homo animale rationale*, man as the animal endowed with reason. [...] But humanity in this specific sense does not exhaust the essence of man, which is realised and genuinely defined only in his personality. This makes man not just a rational being but a being capable of *accountability*. Such a being must be capable of *self-responsibility*. The *essence of person*, the *personality*, consists in self-responsibility.<sup>507</sup>

We can identify two problems here though Heidegger only concerns himself with the second. The former can be accounted for with ease but the latter requires closer attention. First, in the interest of clarity it is important that one understand how self-responsibility follows from personality and

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<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, p.175

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, p.175

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.179-180

rationality. As a ‘genuine definition of humanity’, ‘personality’ cannot provide an explanation but a solution is inherent to the argument about reason as a kind of causality. Kant’s ‘pure apperception’ is a feature of human experience and action which refers to what Heidegger calls the ‘I’-being’.<sup>508</sup> Any ‘actions and inner determinations’<sup>509</sup> involving an ‘I’-being’ necessarily imply self-awareness. In this respect, the experience of action is always self-referential and must therefore include a sense of accountability.<sup>510</sup> One is aware of themselves and their actions in such a manner as to be ‘capable of *self-responsibility*’: responsibility *to* and *from* the self. In our interpretation therefore, ‘persons’ are self-responsible insofar human experience and action involves ‘pure apperception’.

The second problem is whether a demonstration of practical (actual) freedom is at all possible:

It is only in and from experience that we can decide about the actual practical freedom of human beings. Accordingly, the concept of practical freedom is an ‘empirical concept’. But Kant denies this: ‘This [practical] freedom is not an empirical concept.’ ‘We could not prove freedom to be actual in ourselves and in human nature.’ Practical freedom cannot be proved ‘as something actual’. This means, then, that the actuality of practical freedom is not a problem; as with cosmological freedom we can inquire only into its *possibility*. [...] It is impossible to demonstrate practical freedom as something actual; to demonstrate the possibility of practical freedom is unnecessary. The second way to freedom thus loses all point and sense.<sup>511</sup>

Proving freedom is a difficult issue if for no other reason than that it is not a quantifiable, empirical phenomenon. In much the same manner, ethical action cannot be proven as ‘something actual’. Action(s) can be proven and can reflect the characteristics of what can be considered ‘ethics’ but the actuality of praxis, as a kind of action, is beyond the bounds of empiricism. This does not require abandoning discussion of the actuality of freedom. Nor does it require improving empirical analysis. Appropriately philosophical discussions of freedom simply require an equally appropriate methodology:

The *problem of actual freedom* is thus to *demonstrate its actuality*. But this is something different to pointing out, from experience, some actual case of being-free. It means *demonstrating the kind of actuality of freedom* and its mode of intuitive validation. [...] When Kant says that ‘we could not prove freedom to be actual in ourselves and in human nature’, this means only that freedom cannot be experienced in the manner of a natural thing. [...] The reality of freedom requires another kind of actuality than that exhibited by natural objects, i.e. the reality of freedom is *not an objective reality*.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p.175

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p.175

<sup>510</sup> This is not culpability. Praxis is grounded on transcendental freedom and therefore refers to concerns beyond ascribing normative moral responsibility. Also, this may explain Strawson’s critique of the human ‘conviction of absolute responsibility’, otherwise ‘untouched by philosophical arguments’. – See, ‘Introduction: The Principles in Debate’, p.4

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p.185

Thus the ‘actuality’ of freedom is not negated by its impossibility as a ‘natural thing’ much as the intangibility of ethics does not negate its ‘actuality’. Proof is given by the direct experience of self-responsible action or what Heidegger refers to as the ‘facticity’<sup>513</sup> of pure reason. The first way to freedom accounted for the necessity for reason of the transcendental (the ‘idea’) of freedom. Therein reason arrives at freedom by ‘representing’ it in its ‘principles’. Similarly, practical concerns are experienced by their ‘representation’ in ‘concepts’. Ethical action or praxis is determined by these ‘concepts’:

The will is ‘a power to act according to concepts’. A concept is the representation of something, being able and willing to act according to what is thus represented. For example, the determining instance may be the representation of the scientific education of man. What is represented in this representation can determine an action. An effect that is determined in this way is will-governed, i.e. praxis.<sup>514</sup>

But this describes a general idea of practical reason. In other words, ‘representations’ are ‘obtained through experience of actually present human beings with definite characteristics.’<sup>515</sup> Practical freedom must be shown to be ‘pure’ in the sense that it is ‘determined *a priori*’ if it is indeed grounded in ‘self-origination’ and transcendental freedom. It is to that end that Heidegger proposes the hypothesis that, ‘if will can determine its own causation’<sup>516</sup> then ‘will-governed determining is intrinsically ‘addressed’ to itself.’<sup>517</sup> As a non-empirical causality which can respond to and ‘bring about’ its ‘representations’, will (reason) must refer to itself for the ‘determining ground for its willing’.<sup>518</sup> The ground (why) of willing cannot be derived *a posteriori* because it presupposes reason. For Kant, praxis evidences practical freedom because will (the determining force of human action) is a law unto itself, grounded on the transcendental idea of freedom:

It thus emerges that the *basic law of the pure will, of pure practical reason*, is nothing else than the *form of law-giving*. [...] The ethicality of action does not consist in realising so-called values, but in the actual willing to take responsibility, in the decision to exist within this responsibility.<sup>519</sup>

The proof of practical freedom is therefore provided by the very ‘decision for responsibility’: the necessary predicate for the experience of praxis. Understood in this sense, the argument is consistent with the earlier claim that proof does not refer to an empirical object but the direct experience of freedom: the experiential understanding of what one means by freedom or those

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<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187 – It will be worth noting that ‘will’ is not different from reason but is the term for the causality of reason: ‘Will is ‘causality through reason’, i.e. reason in its practical employment, practical reason.’ - p.188

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189

<sup>519</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) pp.190-191

experiences which give rise to the ‘conviction of absolute responsibility’. Kant’s shift of focus to the phenomenological is also a central feature of Heidegger’s project as we have understood it. Nonetheless his interpretation simultaneously reveals Kant’s ‘insufficient radicalism’. The problem of a thorough ontological interrogation persists.<sup>520</sup> Heidegger paraphrases Kant’s views to address the concern that the proof of practical freedom leaves it a victim to whim or being ‘totally indeterminate’:

If this willing of the pure will transcends the contingency of empirical action, this does not amount to becoming lost in the empty abstraction of a valid form of lawfulness, such that what one is to do remains totally indeterminate. Rather, this transcending is the coming into operation of genuine concrete willing, concrete because it wills willing and nothing else besides.<sup>521</sup>

Continuing to paraphrase Kant, Heidegger later adds,

[...]in the phenomenological searching out of our consciousness for the presence of the categorical imperative, we have from the very beginning gone astray concerning the kind of factuality characteristic of this fact.<sup>522</sup>

On our reading of Heidegger, grounding the categorical imperative in pure will, that is ‘will that wills willing and nothing else besides’, constitutes an instance of what we have referred to as ontologising rationalist methodology or rationalist disengagement. In this respect, Kant’s radicalism consists in its attribution of an ontological value to practical comportment or praxis. His insufficiency is therefore rooted in its failure to properly interrogate the pure will and the primordially of causality. Crucially, this problem cannot be revealed, let alone understood, by employing the same methodology. Sustaining ‘essential insight’ and evidencing practical freedom necessitates practically engaging in praxis and determining the facticity of pure will. Still interpreting Kant, Heidegger says the following to this end:

But willing what precisely? Again, this seductive question already leads us astray from actual willing. The question looks as if one is making an effort to actually will, for one is seeking something that can be willed. But in this way willing is closed off to precisely the one who at that moment is supposed to will. Willing what? Everyone who actually wills knows: *to actually will is to will nothing else but the ought of one’s existence.*<sup>523</sup>

The simplicity of the final assertion is deceptive. His emphasis on ‘actual’ willing implies an opposing category such as ‘insincere’ willing. This suggests that ‘knowledge’ of ‘actual’ willing is

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<sup>520</sup> Heidegger states that, ‘Not only do we not know whether the existence of man implies the existence of a pure will, we do not even know what the factual existence of a pure will is supposed to be. For in the end, the factuality of a pure will, i.e. existence in and as pure will, is something totally different from the being-present of man as a world-entity. So the factuality of the fundamental law of pure practical reason, and thus also of a categorical imperative, is of a nature all its own.’ - *Ibid.*, p.192

<sup>521</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.193

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, p.195

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, p.196



not always self-evident and therefore that the reference to ‘everyone’ need not imply a majority. Heidegger is clear that the demand for proof of practical freedom requires that one ‘will *the ought of one’s existence*’ and not merely the ends of one’s intentions. Its explicit concern is the self-ascription of responsibility as a fundamental characteristic of one’s existence.<sup>524</sup> ‘Insincere’ willing therefore involves assuming a ‘critical distance’ from the analysis of practical freedom, already presupposing the ontological condition of the being whose freedom is in question. The argument which will form the basis of Heidegger’s own view of freedom is best understood in this sense. For Heidegger, Kant approaches this view of freedom in the account of ‘the actual willing of the pure ought’:

The proof of the practical reality of freedom consists in nothing else than in understanding that freedom exists only as the actual willing of the pure ought. [...] We can now derive the *essence of freedom* from the character of the factuality of the fact of practical freedom: *practical freedom is self-legislation, pure will, autonomy*. Freedom now reveals itself *as the condition of the possibility of the factuality of pure practical reason*.<sup>525</sup>

d) ‘Insufficient Radicalism’

The last sentence introduces a hypothesis that will be the underlying premise of Heidegger’s argument in *ET*. It follows from Heidegger’s inversion of the relationship between freedom and causality at the basis of Kant’s account. Thus for Heidegger, rather than freedom being a kind of causality, causality is in fact a kind of (‘a problem of’) freedom and that therefore ‘...*the question concerning the essence of human freedom is the fundamental question of philosophy, in which is rooted even the question of being*’.<sup>526</sup> If the ‘factuality’ of causal reason is contingent on praxis then causality is experientially subordinate to freedom: it is conditioned by freedom. The hypothesis is simultaneously reinforced by a thorough understanding of Kant’s view of freedom and two critical problems at the root of his argument.

The first problem is this: Heidegger argues that, ‘The actuality of freedom is not interrogated in a properly metaphysical sense, not *as a problem of being*’.<sup>527</sup> The ‘is-ness’ of will-governed action is presupposed leaving unanswered the problems of what one might mean by ‘human will-governed action’ (praxis), how it relates to human-beings as the *animale rationale* and in what it originates. The second problem is in regard to transcendental freedom. Kant enquires into the *possibility* of freedom but only in the context of natural causality:

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<sup>524</sup> For Heidegger, ‘The ethicality of action does not consist in realising so-called values, but in the actual willing to take responsibility, in the decision to exist within this responsibility.’ - *Ibid.*, p.191

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, p.200

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, p.203

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204

This makes it look as if the possibility of freedom is a problem only insofar as freedom is a kind of causality. Once freedom is conceived in this fashion, the question of its possibility can concern nothing else but the compatibility of this causality with natural causality.<sup>528</sup>

Heidegger's main criticism derives from a combination of these two problems: both transcendental and practical freedom '*neglect the question of the ontological character of what is placed in question as possible and actual*'.<sup>529</sup> Kant's metaphysics are intended to provide an analysis of freedom which accounts for both its actuality and possibility. Nonetheless, Heidegger finds that the 'ontological character' or the '*is-ness*' of the object of Kant's analysis is almost entirely ignored such that the relationship between freedom and causality is assumed without further ado. What is ostensibly under analysis is implicitly conceded without interrogation and from the outset. The discourse on freedom will remain 'insufficient in its radicalism' so long as causality and 'the ontological problem it involves'<sup>530</sup> are not problematised in a manner appropriate to the task. Heidegger's conclusion to *EHF* is worthy of note as regards his 'destruction' of Kantian metaphysics. He claims that Kant's account of causality suggests that, '*Freedom is the condition of the possibility of the manifestness of the being of beings, of the understanding of being*'.<sup>531</sup> His failure to acknowledge his own implications exemplifies the problem with Kant's account. For Heidegger, understanding causality as a 'character of the objectivity of objects'<sup>532</sup> requires comporting oneself towards being such that one already acknowledges the 'binding character of their so- and that-being'.<sup>533</sup> In order to approach objects as such one must first have already acknowledged their *that-ness*. This 'originary self-binding' 'amounts to giving a law unto oneself'.<sup>534</sup> Practical freedom similarly necessitates 'the ought' of pure will, revealing self-responsibility. This is the 'originary self-binding' of oneself to one's being-in-the-world and the 'objectivity of objects'. It is precisely this 'comportment' to being, implicit in Kant's understanding of causality, which 'is only possible where freedom *exists*'.<sup>535</sup> Freedom, therefore, is a necessary pre-requisite for the understanding of being. Of course this alone is insufficient to satisfy our concern to find an account of freedom that does not suffer from the same limitations of a 'rationalist' approach. There is ample room for misunderstanding and confusion if for no other reason than that Heidegger begins by positing Kantian causality precisely in order to undermine its

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<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

premise. For Heidegger, Kant misconstrues the ‘two ways to freedom’ as categories of causality because of its implicit ontological prioritisation: his own account will not.

## ii) The Essence of Truth

Heidegger’s 1930 lecture entitled, ‘On the Essence of Truth’ (hereafter *OET*)<sup>536</sup> was published as an essay in 1943. He also gave Winter semester lectures in 1931/32 entitled, ‘The Essence of Truth: on Plato’s Cave Allegory and Theaetetus’ (thus far and hereafter, *ET*)<sup>537</sup> not published until 1988. Much of *ET* involves summaries of ideas and arguments found in *BT* and *EHF* and detailed analysis of passages from Plato. We intend to draw on both *OET* and *ET* for this final analysis. Insofar as our interests remain centred on Heidegger’s view of freedom, we will restrict discussion of his interpretations to those areas of particular pertinence. Three issues need to be explicated to that end. First, we intend to provide an account of what truth has to do with freedom. Second, we will address and explicate precisely what we should understand of freedom as Heidegger sees it. Finally, we will provide a brief discussion of what this means for Heidegger’s project as a whole, the majority of which will be reserved for the conclusive chapter. It was suggested at the outset of this chapter that *EHF* and *ET* function as a direct application of ‘destruction and restatement’ necessitated by fundamental ontology. If the former can be appropriately characterised as an exercise in the destruction of traditional metaphysics, exemplified by Kant, then the latter is the completion of the overall process. In regard to the problem of freedom and on our reading, *EHF* investigates Kant’s two ways to freedom with the intention of identifying the specific insufficiency of his metaphysics. Therein rationalist disengagement underlies the conception of a pure will characterised by a primordial causality. A contention is implicit throughout the majority of *EHF* and hypothesised by the end, that sincerely problematizing, that is, interrogating the being of the pure will and its comportment to causality will reveal a more primordial freedom. In other words, it will reveal that freedom is not a property of a particular agent but is rather the ‘condition necessary for the understanding of beings’. This, we contend, summarises Heidegger’s argument in favour of freedom in *ET*. The comportment to causality exemplified by Kant, is revealing of a relationship to and therefore an understanding of greater primordality, that is, an understanding that causality is contingent upon. This understanding which as we have seen, characterises the hermeneutic facticity of experience is reframed in *ET* as *aletheia* or unhiddenness, disclosure and truth. As we will show, for Heidegger, *Dasein*’s concern for and understanding of being invites a confrontation with ontological truth. The understanding of being implicit in all of *Dasein*’s comportments, although

<sup>536</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.111

<sup>537</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002)

not necessarily conceptually graspable, describes a capacity for disclosure of being. Freedom therefore refers simply to that which grounds the possibility of such disclosure. Much less an attribute of any agent or class of agents, freedom is an *a priori* necessity for the understanding inherent to experience as such.

a) *Truth and its relationship to Freedom*

*ET* begins in much the same manner as the previously discussed *EHF*. Heidegger's 'preliminary considerations' are intended to address and ultimately reject common sense notions of truth in favour of an 'essential' account. Just as particular instances of 'free action' or moral responsibility were of no interest to *EHF*, so are particular truths irrelevant to the concerns of *ET*. The primary concern was and remains their *essence*: their 'universal what-being'.<sup>538</sup> Both *ET* and *OET* open with a brief analysis of the 'usual concepts of truth'. By appeal to what Heidegger calls 'self-evidence', he arrives at a working definition of truth as it relates to propositional statements and matter:

The true, whether it be a matter or a proposition, is what accords, the accordant [das Stimmende]. Being true and truth here signify accord, and that in a double sense: on the one hand, the consonance [Einstimmigkeit] of a matter with what is supposed in advance regarding it and, on the other hand, the accordance of what is meant in the statement with the matter.<sup>539</sup>

Thus truth, at least in its 'usual conception', refers to accordance or correspondence.<sup>540</sup> For Heidegger, this provides a working definition though it does not exhaust the concept of 'truth': it is more appropriately a description of 'propositional truth'. The essence of propositional truth, Heidegger says, is in the 'correctness' of statements where 'correctness' refers to the relationship between 'knowledge' (what is known and expressed in a proposition) and 'matter' (what one knows *about* and reflected by a proposition). For Heidegger, the problem is that 'correctness' and 'correspondence' are presupposed as the essence of truth, independently 'of the interpretation of the essence of the Being of all beings'.<sup>541</sup> The point, therefore, is to firstly investigate the nature of the relationship between propositional statements and matter in order to determine the essence of their 'correspondence'. Heidegger offers an initial explanation in respect of the statement, 'the coin is round':

Here the statement is in accordance with the thing. Now the relation obtains, not between thing and thing, but rather between a statement and a thing. But wherein are the thing and the statement supposed to be in accordance, considering that the relata are manifestly different in their outward appearance? [...] The essence of the correspondence is determined rather by the kind of relation that

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<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2

<sup>539</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.112

<sup>540</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.2

<sup>541</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.113

obtains between the statement and the thing. As long as this “relation” remains undetermined and is not grounded in its essence, all dispute over the possibility and impossibility, over the nature and degree, of the correspondence loses its way in a void.<sup>542</sup>

The relationship between ‘statement’ and ‘thing’ is commonly referred to and understood as that of ‘correctness’. In that sense, ‘the coin is round’ relates to matter insofar as the proposition refers to *something true about* the coin. For Heidegger, the statement is true in the strict sense that it is ‘correct’ though self-evidence conceals naïveté in this case. ‘Correctness’ in this regard refers to a tautological relationship between statements and matter. In other words, what is true about the coin must already be understood in order for the statement to be ‘correct’. The ‘correctness’ (truth) of a statement can only be determined by comparison with what is already assumed to be true about matter. In this case, we will have agreed to what ‘round’ means so when we say ‘the coin is round’ we only confirm the accordance of ‘round’ to itself. Thus the apparently self-evident account of truth as an ‘accordance’ between a statement and a ‘thing’ reduces to tautological observations, each referring to the other and none offering a meaningful description. More importantly, this material investigation of a self-evident or ‘usual conception’ reveals an understanding of truth presupposed by a propositional statement. In our view, Heidegger’s two texts on truth under consideration move in slightly different directions at this juncture. These differences are a response to the theoretical and methodological demands of particular phases of the argument, not a change in thought.

*ET* begins an etymological analysis of truth as *ἀλήθεια* (*aletheia*) whereas *OET* offers a brief and complex account of an ‘open region’ and ‘open comportment’ before declaring an essential relationship between truth and freedom. In the interests of clarity, *OET* does make reference to *aletheia* on four occasions but provides no extensive account. The term is simply introduced in a broad definition:

To let be – that is, to let beings be as the beings which they are – means to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself. Western thinking in its beginning conceived this open region as *ta aletheia* the unconcealed.<sup>543</sup>

Further allusions to *aletheia* in *OET* reinforce its significance to Heidegger’s account of freedom. ‘Openness’ may therefore be understood as shorthand for the detailed analysis of *aletheia*. Explication of one will therefore shed light on what Heidegger means by the other and how they relate to freedom. ‘Preliminary considerations’ in *ET* provide a short description of *aletheia* sufficient for our purposes at this point. Heidegger uses a basic definition as a platform for an

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<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, p.114

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117

interpretation of Plato's cave allegory: 'understanding it as a clue to the essence of unhiddenness (αλήθεια)'.<sup>544</sup> As stated, we will turn to that analysis as and when necessary. For the moment it will serve to note that for Heidegger, *aletheia* or unhiddenness *essentially* differs from the 'usual conceptions' of truth:

What then do the Greeks call αλήθεια; (unhidden, true)? Not assertions, not sentences and not knowledge, but the beings [*das Seiende*] themselves, the totality of nature: the human world and the work of God.<sup>545</sup>

Putting to one side the difficulties inherent in translation, Heidegger's interpretation is explained by its correlation with his project. The concern therein is to arrive at an 'explicit concept of being' by means of a particular method chosen to avoid theoretical obstructions. His analysis of traditional ontology and the methodology he adopts are validated by this understanding of *aletheia*. 'Truth' itself now coincides with the aim of phenomenology: 'to let beings show themselves from themselves' which is the formal understanding that Heidegger ultimately dismisses for the phenomenological, as explained earlier.<sup>546</sup> The implied association of truth with phenomenology points to their mutual grounding in the interpretive matrix of relations of *Dasein*'s experience:

Although we do not want to fixate on a mere word-meaning, we must still bear in mind that the word for truth, αλήθεια, does not stand for some arbitrary and irrelevant thing, but is a word for what man wants and seeks in the ground of his essence, a word, therefore, for something ultimate and primary. [...] Instead, must not this word, if it is a word for what constitutes the ground of human Dasein, derive from a primordial experience of world and self? Is αλήθεια then not a basic and primal word?<sup>547</sup>

This 'primordial experience of world and self' occurs in the 'unconcealed and open region' of *aletheia*. The essence of truth therefore does not refer to the 'correctness of assertions and propositions' as they relate to 'things' but the metaphysical space that makes an encounter with beings possible. Understood as such, Heidegger's otherwise difficult account of 'open comportment in an open region' refers to the appropriateness of one's approach in the primordial investigation of being(s). 'Comportment' [*Verhalten*] is that which 'accomplishes that bearing [*Verhaeltnis*] in the relationship between presentative statement and thing'.<sup>548</sup> In other words, it offers a term to account for the presupposed understanding between any particular statement and beings. For Heidegger, this

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<sup>544</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.19

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10

<sup>546</sup> See, Heidegger's *Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being; Phenomenology as the method of Ontology*, p.48

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9-10

<sup>548</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - orig. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.115

extends to ‘All working and achieving, all action and calculation’<sup>549</sup> such that comportment does not describe a deliberate or proactive action in the effort to understand beings but precisely that prerequisite way of engaging with things necessary for such actions. ‘Open comportment in an open region’ may therefore be understood quite simply as the relation between enquirer, enquiry and what is enquired after in the ontological encounter with beings: the possibility of truth (*aletheia*).

An obvious problem presents itself to us at this point: Heidegger’s account of truth seems to imply the impossibility of untruth. Describing *aletheia* (truth) as the site of a ‘primordial experience of world and self’ or the metaphysical space reserved for an ontological encounter with beings, undercuts the possibility of falsehood or error. Heidegger does offer an account of untruth presumably in order to address precisely such a problem though he does not explicitly say so. Nonetheless, our familiarity with this kind of criticism affords us the opportunity for clarification before returning to Heidegger. First, an earlier explication of being-ontological required that a distinction be made between the ‘priority’ and ‘primacy’ of *Dasein*.<sup>550</sup> This was done in anticipation of the possibility that one may misinterpret the ontico-ontological priority of *Dasein* to the question of being. It was resolved that such a reading involved terminological and ontological contradictions in the account of *Dasein* and fundamental ontology and could not therefore be sustained. Similarly, open comportment and the primordial understanding of beings do not require the absence of untruth. Rather open comportment based on a primordial understanding offers an account of the very possibility for what is ‘self-evidently’ referred to as untrue. Second and perhaps more importantly, the assumption of an essential opposition between truth and untruth betrays implicit presuppositions about their nature. The latter merely describes a negative relation to the former, not their separation. Previous discussions about ‘semblance’ and the ‘permeation of untruth’ have already attested to the persistence of truth even in the case of concealment.<sup>551</sup>

*OET* identifies two categories of untruth: ‘concealing’ and ‘errancy’. As ever, these are not entirely separate categories but are related by what Heidegger refers to as ‘the mystery’. Whilst untruth as concealing ironically preserves the mystery, untruth as errancy is distinguished as a ‘turning away from the mystery’. By means of explanation, Heidegger states the following about concealing:

Concealment deprives *aletheia* of disclosure yet does not render it *stereis* (privation); rather, concealment preserves what is most proper to *aletheia* as its own. [...] What conserves letting-be in this relatedness to concealing? Nothing less than the concealing of what is concealed as a whole, of

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<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115

<sup>550</sup> See, Heidegger’s *Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being, A Positive Understanding of Dasein; The Role of Dasein*, p.41

<sup>551</sup> See, Heidegger’s *Fundamental Ontology, Dasein and the Question of Being, What Heidegger Means by Phenomenology*, p.48

being as such, i.e., the mystery; not a particular mystery regarding this or that, but rather the one mystery – that in general, mystery (the concealing of what is concealed) as such holds sway throughout man's Dasein.<sup>552</sup>

In light of that, errancy is described in these terms:

The insistent turning toward what is readily available and the ek-sistent turning away from the mystery belong together. They are one and the same. Yet turning toward and away from is based on a turning to and fro proper to Dasein. Man's flight from the mystery toward what is readily available, onward from one current thing to the next, passing the mystery by – this is erring.<sup>553</sup>

We may derive two crucial points from these statements. First, concealment and erring are both features of truth as *aletheia*. In the case of the former, it inherently indicates 'what is most proper to *aletheia*' and the latter what is 'proper to Dasein' for whom *aletheia* is a fundamental concern. Neither concealment nor errancy in pursuit of *aletheia*, describe opposition to truth in the conventional sense. Second, both categories provide an extension of principles already accounted for and explicated in the course of this analysis. Mention has already been made of the relationship between concealing and the previously discussed phenomena of semblance and appearance. Therein we explain that for Heidegger, a semblance or 'showing-itself-as-what-it-is-not' cannot conceal without simultaneously revealing itself as such and implying what is concealed. In the simplest terms, concealing cannot occur without indicating itself as a concealment and thus that something is concealed. Similarly, erring now designates that method of ontological enquiry which has been attributed to traditional discourse, instances of which we have referred to as 'missing the point'. The predilection for material investigations, the reduction of ontology to the enumeration of characteristics or the appeal to the 'self-evident' all fit firmly in the category of an 'ek-sistent turning away from' or a 'turning toward what is readily available'. In either case (concealing/semblance or errancy/abstraction), Heidegger's primary concern is the question, 'what are beings?' ('τί τὸ ὄν') and the necessity of determining a careful approach such that it is not lost or obscured. It is our further contention that 'the mystery which holds sway over Dasein' functions as an ambiguous reference for the same concern. The 'concealment of beings as such' does not describe an overt act but a necessary consequence of *Dasein*'s ek-sistence:

However, what brings into accord is not nothing but rather a concealing of being as a whole. Precisely because letting be always lets beings be in a particular comportment which relates to them and thus discloses them, it conceals beings as a whole. Letting-be is intrinsically at the same time a concealing. In the ek-sistent freedom of Dasein a concealing of being as a whole comes to pass [ereignet sich]. Here there is concealment [...]<sup>554</sup>

<sup>552</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.120

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120



Phrased simply, the very means by which one arrives at particular truths simultaneously and necessarily has the effect of concealing the truth of being. The introduction to *BT* makes a similar claim though the key term therein is the ‘presupposing’ of being:

This ‘presupposing’ of Being has rather the character of taking a look at it beforehand, so that in the light of it the entities presented to us get provisionally articulated in their Being. This guiding activity of taking a look at Being arises from the average understanding of Being in which we always operate and *which in the end belongs to the essential constitution of Dasein itself*.<sup>555</sup>

Both texts concur that the ‘average understanding’ or ‘the ek-sistent freedom of Dasein’ has the effect of obscuring or diverting attention from the question of being. Thus ‘the mystery’, in this sense, is not a concept added to Heidegger’s project at the time of *ET* but refers to the very same ‘puzzling fact that we understand the being of beings without having an explicit concept at our disposal’. As if to reinforce this continuity, Heidegger echoes the opening words of *BT*:

Wherever the concealment of beings as a whole is conceded only as a limit that occasionally announces itself, concealing as a fundamental occurrence has sunk into forgottenness.<sup>556</sup>

This, it would seem, is the very same ‘forgottenness’ afflicting the restatement of the question of being by means of the ‘prejudices’ which insist that such enquiry is ‘unnecessary’.<sup>557</sup> Nonetheless the ambiguity of ‘the mystery’ represents a shift in language from the methodological technicalities of *BT*. What might be considered the eccentricities of Heidegger’s language reside precisely in the fact that individual terms are deliberately burdened with the weight of previously explicated theory. Thus, ‘the mystery’ is intended to accommodate the vagueness of ‘avoiding definitions’ and ‘feeling our way forward’.<sup>558</sup> The assertion of ambiguities, in this respect and on our reading, is reflective of an effort to evade the predilection for disengagement in conceiving the enquiry. A strict definition offers, at best, accordance between statement and a presupposed understanding of being. As Heidegger states in ‘An Introduction to Metaphysics’,

We shall fail to understand the mysteriousness of the essence of being-human, thus experienced and poetically carried back to its ground, if we snatch at value judgments of any kind.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>555</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) pp.27-28

<sup>556</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - orig. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.121

<sup>557</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.22

<sup>558</sup> The introduction of *BT* states that the ‘vague average understanding of Being is still a Fact’ - *Ibid.*, p.25 - suggesting that *ET* simply shifts the emphasis to the ‘*fact of a vague understanding*’ rather than its illumination.

<sup>559</sup> Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959) p.164

In our view therefore, the assertion of ‘the mystery’ as a necessarily ambiguous understanding is the culmination of an effort to disrupt such impulsive ‘snatching’. Yet the question remains as to what ‘the mystery’ and *aletheia* as a metaphysical space, have to do with freedom.

The first paragraph of the section of *OET* entitled, ‘The Ground of the Possibility of Correctness’ concludes with the assertion that, ‘The essence of truth is freedom’.<sup>560</sup> This is followed by a complex albeit brief account of freedom in the section entitled ‘The Essence of Freedom’ before turning to truth, concealing and errancy. *ET* offers a far more detailed analysis but explanations are derived, in large part, from an interpretation of Plato’s cave allegory. Thus Heidegger says the following under the title, ‘Light and Freedom, Freedom as the Bond to Illuminating’:

No less essential than what has just been discussed is the story of the prisoner’s release from his shackles: the phenomenon of *freedom*. The allegory, i.e. the whole story as we have followed it, provides clues as to how freedom should be understood. [...] Comportment to what *gives* freedom (the light) is itself a *becoming* free.<sup>561</sup>

*OET* echoes this point but without reference to the allegory:

To free oneself for a binding directedness is possible only by being free for what is opened up in an open region. Such being free points to the heretofore uncomprehended essence of freedom. The openness of comportment as the inner condition of the possibility of correctness is grounded in freedom.<sup>562</sup>

His account of the relationship between truth and freedom in these quotes can be reduced to two moves. The first poses few problems when understood appropriately. The second is far more problematic but strikes at the heart of Heidegger’s view of freedom. Moreover, it forms the basis of our own position which has directed this enquiry from the outset.

1. The first move can be simplified to the observation that light (a ‘stage’ in the ‘occurrence of truth’) reveals one’s freedom. Phrased normatively, one is free to move, see and do as they wish precisely on condition that one can see what is before them:

We speak of a ‘forest clearing’ [*Waldlichtung*]; that means a place which is *free* from trees, which *gives* free access for going through and looking through. *Lighting up* therefore means making-free, giving-free. Light lights up, makes-free, provides a way through.<sup>563</sup>

<sup>560</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.115

<sup>561</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) pp.43-44

<sup>562</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.115

<sup>563</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.44

Thus seeing phenomena as they truly are allows one to act freely. The contention that light is a prerequisite for freedom risks the misinterpretation that ‘darkness’ obstructs freedom. It may therefore be worth addressing if only to avoid confusion. We interpret the distinction between light and dark in much the same manner as previously explicated antitheses. Just as untruth ‘preserves what is most proper to *aletheia*’, so is the dark intimately related to light:

Correspondingly with the dark. This is only a limit case of brightness and thus still has the character of a kind of brightness: a brightness that *no longer* lets anything through, that *takes away* visibility from things, that *fails* to make visible. [...] Only that can fail which also has the possibility of securing. The dark fails to make visible because it can also secure sight: in the dark we see the stars.<sup>564</sup>

It may be interesting to note that this relationship between light and dark can be equally expressed by the thought that absolute light blinds just as dark ‘fails to make visible’. At least in empirical terms, sight is possible on condition of the relationship between light and dark. *OET* omits discussion of ‘seeing’ and ‘the light’, referring rather to the ‘unconcealed’ where what is ‘unconcealed’ is already what is ‘seen’. ‘Seeing’ is also understood in a very particular manner here. Thus Heidegger’s warning that, ‘Clearly, seeing and seeing is not the same’.<sup>565</sup> The latter refers to the process by which *Dasein* understands beings as they are encountered. Thereby, seeing is far less a matter of light particles and neurological synapses and much more, ‘The seeing of the idea, i.e. the understanding of what-being and how-being’.<sup>566</sup> This is the sense in which ‘seeing in the light’ acts as a development of *BT*’s ‘already working within an understanding of the *is*-ness, the what-being of being(s)’. Heidegger’s account of what he means by sight warrants attention on this point:

With sensation too the eye is only the organ into which the faculty of sensation is built, but it is not this faculty itself. The eye as instrument strictly *sees* nothing at all; at best the *sense of sight* [*Gesichtssinn*] does this with the *help* of the eyes. The sense of sight ‘sees’ *colours* in the manner of sensation [*Empfinden*], but never anything like a book; only through the sense of sight do we ‘see’ a book. [...] When we say that ‘we see the book’, we use ‘see’ in the meaning which *goes beyond* perceiving the object by means of the sense of sight with the help of our eyes. [...] To this latter kind of ‘seeing’ there belongs an *understanding* [*Verstehen*] of what it *is* that one encounters: book, door, house, tree. [...] What is sighted in this seeing is the *idéa*, the *εἶδος*. [...] We never see beings with our bodily eyes unless we are also seeing ‘ideas’.<sup>567</sup>

Thus for Heidegger, ‘sight’ as a term for the function of the eye, does not begin to address the understanding of what is seen. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s argument seems to rely on something of a sleight of hand. The assertion that ‘the eye sees nothing at all’ is perfectly true as far as it relates to

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<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.37-39

the corporeal body we call 'the eye'. Moreover, the claim that 'the sense of sight can never see anything like a book', is also beyond doubt insofar as sight describes the filtration of light through a lens. The problem is that no one claims the corporeal eye is sufficient for object-recognition. Moving from there to the claim that, 'we must already understand what 'book' and 'door' mean in order that they are seen' seems to be an attempt to slide in an argument for an as of yet, unexplained claim. In other words, one may concede the necessity of 'understanding' for recognition without having to labour the term with a phenomenological account of its experience. Tugendhat's explanation of 'understanding' will help address this problem:

But Heidegger wants the word *understanding* to be grasped in such a way that it stands for the disclosure of one's own possible-being. [...] Thus, a kind of understanding is at issue for which it is constitutive that it is understanding in the first person.<sup>568</sup>

Heidegger's argument does not depend on the understanding of any particular reference or object but the recognition of 'thing-ness' as such. The point is not whether humans harbour an innate comprehension of 'books' and 'doors' but that both are experienced as 'external objects' or 'things' to which one attributes a reference. Discussion of and reference to Plato's 'ideas' ought to indicate the metaphysical inclinations of Heidegger's argument. This is that the inherent understanding of 'objects' as 'things' is demonstrable in the 'average-everyday'. It is in this sense that to look or more precisely to 'see the book' always and already includes the understanding of being(s):

We did not expect that in order to see this book, door, and so forth, we must already understand what 'book' and 'door' mean. Understanding what such things mean is nothing else but the seeing of the look, the *ιδέα*. In the idea we see *what* every being is and *how* it is, in short the *being* of beings [*das Sein des Seienden*].<sup>569</sup>

We may therefore understand the first move in Heidegger's relationship between truth and freedom in the following way: 'Freedom is the essence of truth' in that 'truth' (*aletheia*) presupposes the freedom to disclose. Truth (*aletheia*) refers to the possibility of understanding in the sense of disclosure and specifically, 'disclosure of one's own possible-being'. Thus *aletheia* ('unconcealment') presupposes the possibility of disclosure, the freedom to disclose. On our interpretation, this first move points to the influence of Kant's argument for transcendental freedom. Therein transcendental freedom described reasons return to the absolute beginning of a causal sequence in respect of the 'self-origination of a state'.<sup>570</sup> Similarly Heidegger's first move argues for freedom in the sense of an ontological characteristic of *Dasein* to return to a primordial

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<sup>568</sup> Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986) p.202

<sup>569</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.39

<sup>570</sup> See, *The Ontological Primordality of Freedom; Kant's Two Ways to Freedom, Cosmological (Transcendental) Freedom*, pp.126,127

understanding which discloses being(s). In the most emphatic sense therefore, an enquiry into truth (*aletheia*) as ‘disclosure’ reveals a prerequisite freedom. This may be what Heidegger means by ‘rethinking the ordinary concept of truth’:

If we translate *aletheia* as “unconcealment” rather than “truth,” this translation is not merely more literal; it contains the directive to rethink the ordinary concept of truth in the sense of the correctness of statements and to think it back to that still uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosure of beings.<sup>571</sup>

Here, one already begins to point towards Heidegger’s second move. As we have seen, the limit or insufficiency of Kant’s argument in Heidegger’s estimation is the assertion of a causally characterised pure will. The failure to interrogate the possibility of a primordial comportment to causality perpetuates the methodological misstep attributed to the rationalist tradition. Thus it will be necessary that Heidegger’s account will ultimately appeal to praxis, which we interpret as that which gives *Dasein* its ontical priority, as the founding of being grounded by freedom.

2. *ET* makes a distinction also omitted from *OET*. What we have referred to as the first move only offers a description of negative freedom or freedom-from. Our previous explication of freedom-from relieves the need for further analysis. Suffice it to say that the ‘two essential directions of the from-what’ (‘World’ and ‘God’) point to enquiry into the totality without attempting its investigation. Similarly, ‘unconcealment’ of freedom by virtue of the understanding of being(s) points to enquiry into ‘the light’ and ‘the *idéa*’ without examining the meaning and relationship of these terms. Heidegger states the following in continuing with his interpretation of the cave allegory:

The second and third stages show that it is not only a matter of removing the shackles, i.e. of freedom *from* something. Such freedom is simply getting loose, and as such is something negative. [...] This is what genuine positive freedom offers; it is not simply freedom *from* but freedom *for*. [...] Genuine becoming free is a projective *binding of oneself* [...] such that one remains always bound in advance, such that every subsequent activity can first of all become free and be free.<sup>572</sup>

The second move in the relation between truth and freedom is summed up in this ‘projective binding of oneself’ to what ‘gives freedom’, the light. An explanation is available though we will clarify further:

Becoming free for beings, seeing-in-the-light, means to enact the *projection of being* [*Seinsentwurf*], so that a look (picture) of beings is projected and held up in advance, so that in viewing this look one can relate to beings as such.<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.117

<sup>572</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) pp.43-44

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

A hasty reading of this explanation will lead to what seems an obvious contradiction that ought to be addressed before moving forward. One may be forgiven for taking exception to the assertion of ‘projecting a look of beings in advance’. At first sight, there seems little to distinguish a ‘preconception’ or an ‘implicit presupposition’ of being(s) from such a ‘projection’. Our explication of that distinction will all but complete our understanding of the relationship between truth and freedom in Heidegger’s writing.

Heidegger offers three examples to clarify ‘*how* such freedom as pre-modelling projection of being first allows us to come closer to beings’.<sup>574</sup> In the interests of expediency, we will not assess or analyse every example. Moreover, each is intended to indicate the same characteristic so an overview will not do disservice to the argument as a whole. The first refers to the scientific ‘discovery of nature’ which is accredited to the likes of Galileo, Kepler and Newton. The second refers to cultural history and in particular, Jacob Burckhardt. Finally, Heidegger includes Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe from the fields of art and poetry. All three areas of study are of particular interest to Heidegger’s thought and are recurring themes throughout the course of his writing. The concern herein is their similarity in regard to ‘binding to light’ and the ‘projection of being’. To that end, Heidegger explains the progress of science in the following way:

What was decisive, what actually happened, is that a projection was made which *delineated* in advance what was henceforth to be *understood* as nature and natural process[...]<sup>575</sup>

Burckhardt’s developments are explained similarly:

[...]his projective essential view of the fate, greatness and misery of man, of the conditions and limits of human action, in short, because of his anticipatory understanding of the *occurrence* we call history, of the *being* of these particular beings.<sup>576</sup>

Finally, great art also owes its greatness to,

[...]essential insight for the possible, for bringing out in the inner possibilities of beings, thus for making man see what it really is with which he so blindly busies himself.<sup>577</sup>

Thus for Heidegger, the underlying premise of great works in general and those mentioned in particular, is to reveal the nature of beings anew. Regardless of the specific area of study, the point is to make use of one’s expertise to shed new light on all beings as such. Thus scientific revelations are not restricted to their fields but eventually influence the understanding of nature and reality as a

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<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.46-47

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47

whole: what are often referred to as Kuhnian paradigm shifts.<sup>578</sup> As previously discussed, ‘essential insight’ is contingent on adopting a methodology which neither abstracts nor isolates phenomena but sets them firmly in the context of the whole: the totality of beings. The individuals identified are, at least in Heidegger’s estimation, synonymous with precisely such insight and a renewed, ‘genuine’ investigation into being(s). The point is that their work, by its very nature, seeks to challenge if not revolutionise accepted principles and the contemporary understanding of the world. Of course it is beyond doubt that Kepler and Dante for example, will have wildly different views of the world. Materially at least, ‘The Divine Comedy’ seems to have little or nothing to do with the laws of planetary motion and Copernican astronomy. Yet, for all their differences, the effort to affect a renewed understanding of the world is equally applicable to both. Similarly, an economic assessment of the previous century will certainly differ from ecological accounts though both describe the same period of time. The point is to determine the appropriateness of the perspectives presented, measurable by,

[...]this *individual* grasping himself as *being-there* [*Da-sein*], set back into the isolation and thrownness of his historical past and future.<sup>579</sup>

*EHF* identifies such a perspective as one which ‘goes-after-the-whole’ as a ‘going-to-the-roots’. Thus a ‘projection of being’ which is set in the context of the totality must also go to the root of each individual’s being-there. Taken in conjunction with what we know of *Dasein* (a being ‘always already in something like a world’), ‘binding’ oneself to light means perpetually grasping oneself *as* a being-there: a being thrown into the world. Thus, freedom understood in relation to truth, includes the directive that one grasp (understand) themselves from the particular thrownness that is, the hermeneutic facticity of their experience. In this respect, Heidegger’s second move echoes the methodological demand of his fundamental ontology described in *BT*. But the goal of his ontological enquiry now extends beyond having ‘an explicit concept of being at our disposal’ to being ‘authentically free’:

In this comportment I am able to be *authentically* free, i.e. I can acquire power by *binding* myself to what lets-through. Such binding is not loss of power but a taking into one’s possession.<sup>580</sup>

Beatrice Han-Pile comes to a similar conclusion regarding freedom and *Dasein* in her paper, ‘Freedom and the ‘Choice to Choose Oneself’ in Being and Time’. Following a quote from *BT* referring to the ‘possibility of being free for authentic existentiell possibilities’, Han-Pile states the following:

<sup>578</sup> See, Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revelations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

<sup>579</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.45

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44

Since by definition Dasein cannot but be in the world, ontological freedom is inalienable: it consists in having a projective understanding of oneself and of the world focused by having oneself as one's for the sake of which[...]

She later adds,

We knew from above that existentiell freedom lies in making the *right* choice. We now discover that such a choice is not a matter of deliberation, of weighing pros and cons, but of understanding oneself in the right way and being 'in thrall' to such understanding[...]<sup>581</sup>

We will refer to this condition of being 'in thrall' to the understanding always-already present in *Dasein's* being-ontological as submission. The second move in Heidegger's relation of truth to freedom may therefore be understood as the necessity of submission to thrownness, the particularity of projected totality.

b) *Freedom as such*

Heidegger's investigation into the relationship between truth and freedom provides the final feature of the methodological framework supporting his account of freedom as such. If nothing else, it is quite clear that truth, freedom and understanding are deeply intertwined. It is important therefore that we explicate their entanglement in Heidegger's account. The final paragraph of *OET* refers to this point:

The present undertaking takes the question of the essence of truth beyond the confines of the ordinary definition provided in the usual concept of essence and helps us to consider whether the question of the essence of truth must not be, at the same time and even first of all, the question concerning the truth of essence.<sup>582</sup>

Set back in the context of *BT* and the primary concerns therein, the investigation into the essence of truth and thereby the truth of essence, exposes a necessary freedom. Heidegger states the following, earlier in *OET*:

However, the proposition in question does not really mean that an unconstrained act belongs to the execution of the statement, to its pronouncement and reception; rather, the proposition says that freedom is the essence of truth itself.<sup>583</sup>

Hans Ruin reinforces the entanglement of truth and essence, thrownness and freedom. He begins with an assessment of *BT* in attempting to identify 'to what extent can the phenomenon of freedom

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<sup>581</sup> Beatrice Han-Pile, *Freedom and the 'Choice to Choose Oneself' in Being and Time*, (Unpublished) pp.2,12

<sup>582</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.122

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116



in its binary matrix be said to surface also in Heidegger's writings'.<sup>584</sup> Therein he claims the truth of *Dasein* is contingent on 'practicing a stepwise critical destruction of inherited patterns of thought':

This precarious space of meaning is at once the ground of *Dasein*, its essential determination, and yet it can become available to this *Dasein* only under certain circumstances, namely that it assumes authentically its own finite and thrown existence.<sup>585</sup>

The 'assumption of thrown existence' is not achieved by force of will nor described by analytic study. For Heidegger, being 'in thrall' or submission, is not a frame of mind nor a perspective but the primordial condition of *Dasein*, obscured by persistent grasping at essences. In other words, the primordial condition of *Dasein* and authentic freedom are obscured by precisely the approach to enquiry which abstracts from the 'finite' and 'thrown existence' of human beings. It is in light of this that Heidegger insists on the possession of man by freedom and not the reverse:

Man does not "possess" freedom as a property. At best, the converse holds: freedom, ek-sistent, disclosive *Da-sein*, possesses man – so originally that only it secures for humanity that distinctive relatedness to being as a whole as such which first founds all history.<sup>586</sup>

We contend that this description of freedom issues directly from the conclusion of *EHF* wherein Kantian causality is 'only possible where freedom exists':<sup>587</sup> the greater ontological primordality of freedom. Of course it is unclear quite how man is 'possessed' by freedom much less how in the immediate submission to the brute fact of finite present-ness, *Dasein* can be 'possessed' by freedom.

As we have seen, Heidegger's account of freedom is couched in the claim that 'the openness of comportment as the inner condition of the possibility of correctness is grounded in [made possible by] freedom'.<sup>588</sup> He arrives at this claim by virtue of two moves. First, freedom makes possible the particular kind of understanding inherent to *Dasein* and second, the directive to begin enquiry from *Dasein*'s thrownness: submission to the light. In much the same fashion, Kant's two ways to freedom reveal first the understanding of reason towards a metaphysical 'idea' and second, the 'actual willing of pure ought' or 'willing the ought of one's existence'. For both Kant and Heidegger, the first move refers to a metaphysical/ontological (in Heidegger's terms, 'onto-theological') observation and the second derives an ethical demand, the praxis of enquiry. For Heidegger, Kant makes little effort to investigate the nature of the enquirer and no effort to

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<sup>584</sup> Hans Ruin, *The Destiny of Freedom in Heidegger*, *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 41, (2008) p.279

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p.280

<sup>586</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993, translated by John Sallis) p.118

<sup>587</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.205

<sup>588</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.116

problematised causality as such. Both are presupposed, resulting in an account of freedom as a kind of causality, analogous to natural causality. Conversely, Heidegger's extended analysis of *Dasein* and a fundamental approach to ontology compels him to reorient Kant's analysis toward the question of being. François Jaran makes a similar point regarding the analysis of *Dasein* and its relationship to the problem of freedom:

The project of a metaphysics of *Dasein* thus reached its peak with the exposition of a metaphysical concept of freedom that Heidegger considered the origin and condition of possibility of all ontical freedom [...] as well as all possible relation with beings, whether it be practical, theoretical or aesthetic.<sup>589</sup>

It will therefore be possible to correctly infer Heidegger's view of freedom from his metaphysics of *Dasein* given a sufficiently sensitive reading.

Thus a second concern, alongside freedom's possession of man, arises with respect to distinguishing the 'authentic assumption of thrownness'. One point can be made in that regard without the need for further investigation. In light of the discussion of untruth (errancy and concealment) and negative freedom, it is clear that authenticity cannot be straightforwardly inferred from 'inauthenticity'.<sup>590</sup>

1. The account of possession begins with an investigation into 'striving' as a description for the 'soul's relation to Being'. More precisely that 'striving for being' is what one commonly refers to as a soul:

Being is that towards which the soul strives, not just from time to time and to any purpose, but essentially. The soul is this striving for being, i.e. in Platonic terms, the word 'soul' simply means striving for being.<sup>591</sup>

Though Heidegger wants to first determine how *Dasein* relates to its soul, our concern is what this striving for being means for possession, having and authenticity:

The striving relationship is intrinsically a having-before-oneself, a having that is at the same time a not-having. We already see that everything depends on clarifying what 'having' means here. [...] where having is understood as a human *comportment*.<sup>592</sup>

Although it is obvious to the point of near banality that freedom cannot be 'had' in the same sense that one 'has' a pen, it is equally incredible to the point of absurdity that the nature of 'having

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<sup>589</sup> François Jaran, *Toward a Metaphysical Freedom: Heidegger's Project of a Metaphysics of Dasein*, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2010) pp.205-227, p.215

<sup>590</sup> It may be worth noting that Heidegger's chapter on 'Possession, Striving and Having' discusses inauthenticity and finds that, 'While the respective objects of authentic and inauthentic striving do not coincide, they certainly go together in the essence of authentic striving.' - Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.154 [Italics added]

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, p.152

freedom' is rarely a subject of discussion in traditional discourse. Clearly, however one defines freedom, it is not open to the manipulation, destruction or recreation attributable to any other object one may 'have'.<sup>593</sup> Similarly, one speaks of 'having a husband', 'having the flu' or 'having an emotion' yet none of these reflect the 'having' usually denoted by the term including control over, possession of or at one's disposal. In regard to the latter,

Such possessing can (but need not) be seen as the *highest* mode of having, for it is marked precisely by immediacy of disposition and arbitrariness of employment, thus by a kind of *freedom* in having.<sup>594</sup>

But in this case:

The genuine comportmental character of having becomes a self-losing of he who has. The autonomy of the self gives way to the contingency and arbitrariness of needs and desires to be immediately satisfied.<sup>595</sup>

Thus a kind of freedom is implicit in having characterised by the 'immediacy of disposition' but one that is couched in a presupposed relation of self to beings resulting in a disengaged conception. Ontical comportment is, for Heidegger, prioritised quite precisely by its taking issue with, that is engaging with beings and the relationship to being that implies. Freedom associated with the 'immediacy of disposition' therefore loses all meaning in respect of establishing, that is founding, its 'is-ness' insofar as it fails to acknowledge much less address its implicit presupposition. In this respect, when one speaks of having freedom one is compelled to orientate the discussion toward the totality of beings and its relationship to being-there or the brute fact of meaning-centred presence. In other words, to have freedom is to be engaged with beings and thus have an understanding of being as such manifested by 'employment' and 'disposition'. Here the question of authenticity meets the possession of man by freedom.

2. Heidegger offers a simple definition of authenticity and his sense of possession:

What we understand by authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] is *that* mode of human existence wherein man (authentically) appropriates himself, i.e. wherein he comes *to himself* and can be himself.<sup>596</sup>

He later adds the following in the context of 'inauthentic striving' which, alongside 'authentic striving' both 'go together in the essence of authentic striving':

This kind of striving (whose *possibility* alone we are now considering) does not strive to possess the object, but strives for it to *remain* as striven for, as held in the striving in order that the striver finds himself *from* that for which he strives.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> One may be free to dispose of their will as they please but one cannot dispose of the freedom granting that ability.

<sup>594</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.153

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, p.153

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, p.153

Read together, authenticity and striving (as a kind of having<sup>598</sup>), can be understood as a non-possessive having of oneself. The aforementioned examples of seeing in the light may serve to clarify the point. Poets and artists cannot strive to possess their object in the usual sense if for no other reason than that the object is intangible. Whether one considers a Shakespearean sonnet, Dante's reflections on the damned or Homer's tragedies of the Trojan wars, the object is not possessed by either author or reader. One may of course possess the physical texts but this bears no relation to one's grasp of their content. Similar examples can be found in spiritual worship, the object of which is certainly not possessed. Rather God must remain as striven for and in precisely such a manner that the devout 'find themselves from that for which they strive'. Our analogy of God and worship may be more appropriate than it might seem. In attempting to account for Heidegger's complex metaphysics of *Dasein*, Jaran argues that,

In fact, Heidegger always thought of his metaphysics of *Dasein* as the retrieval (*Wiederholung*) of an unsolved problem in Aristotle: that of the unity of the ontological and theological questionings.<sup>599</sup>

Later adding,

Even clearer is the letter Heidegger wrote to Max Muller in November 1947, in which he said that the very title *Sein und Zeit* was a catastrophe, as was the whole effort of that time, as it never succeeded in overcoming 'the onto-theological basis of metaphysics'.<sup>600</sup>

The point of course is not whether literary mastery and solemn prayer are identifiable pursuits. Rather what Jaran refers to as the 'transcending' of *Dasein* in relation to the object, is an essential feature in either case. Thus when speaking of having artistic inspiration or a divine awakening, one certainly does not speak of these things as being at their disposal. Striving towards God is uniformly represented as a response to an introspective concern, neither discovered nor created but 'revealed' as inherent to conscious existence. Whatever one's thoughts about poetry or prayer, both compel an introspection which must maintain a view on the totality of beings. This understanding may be what Heidegger refers to as what is 'most primordially held in striving':

It is being which in all circumstances is already present and there, not as a thing or any kind of object, but as that which is striven for in authentic striving. Whether we are aware of this or not, it is being that is most primordially and comprehensively held in striving.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, p.154

<sup>598</sup> Heidegger states, 'Thereby, however, i.e. in such authentic striving, man *holds himself* as an existing being in the midst of beings; man *has* the beings, and in these beings he has himself, in the way he as a man *can* have anything at all.' – *Ibid.*, p.155

<sup>599</sup> François Jaran, *Toward a Metaphysical Freedom: Heidegger's Project of a Metaphysics of Dasein*, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2010) p.212

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, p.215

<sup>601</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.156

As we have seen, *Dasein* does not will ontological enquiry but must 'take issue' with being at every turn and in every encounter. The authenticity with which being is 'striven for' is determined by the extent to which one assumes their grounding in the world: the avoidance of what we have referred to as disengagement and unrelatedness. *Dasein*'s 'possession by freedom' therefore refers in one respect, to the provision of the metaphysical space necessary for precisely such primordial striving.

c) *Truth, Freedom and Dasein*

Our explication began with the claim that far from representing a turn in his thinking, *EHF*, *OET* and *ET* were intended to advance the principles of *BT* further into the essence of *Dasein*. It now appears this can be stated with greater certainty. Though Heidegger's language and style are markedly different from *BT*, the substantive content of his arguments are either wholly reliant on or are often indistinguishable from those made therein. One final example will serve to confirm the point and conclude our explication of Heidegger's view of freedom:

Freedom was first determined as freedom for what is opened up in an open region. How is this essence of freedom to be thought? That which is opened up, that to which a presentative statement as correct corresponds, are beings opened up in an open comportment. Freedom for what is opened up in an open region lets beings be the beings they are. Freedom now reveals itself as letting beings be.<sup>602</sup>

Two points are worthy of note here. First, there is a meaningful, if not straightforward, relationship between this description of freedom and the previously discussed etymologically derived definition of phenomenology. Second, that it does not contradict but reinforces the assertion of freedom as the essence of truth.

As we have seen, Heidegger defines phenomenology as letting 'that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself'.<sup>603</sup> Taken in conjunction with what has been said regarding freedom's possession of *Dasein*, both the substantive continuity and linguistic adjustments from *BT* become abundantly apparent. Heidegger's phenomenology is intended as a methodology for ontological enquiry in approaching the question of being. Moreover, the explicit function of the analyses provided by *BT* is to develop a 'concept of being at one's disposal'. This effort is readily abandoned in favour of 'retrieval'. As Jaran points out,

But at the end of the 1920's, Heidegger never spoke of *overcoming*, but rather of *retrieving* the fundamental questions of metaphysics.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 translated by John Sallis) p.117

<sup>603</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.58

<sup>604</sup> François Jaran, *Toward a Metaphysical Freedom: Heidegger's Project of a Metaphysics of Dasein*, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2010) p.206

By the time of *ET*, the absence or lack of a concept of being is no longer the point of departure but an observation intended to confirm and illuminate a developed line of investigation. The ‘non-conceptual’ understanding of being no longer evidences a shortcoming in philosophical thought but a necessary feature of *Dasein*’s thrownness. Here, on our reading, Heidegger consolidates his difference with Kant and thus the traditional discourse as a whole. What was referred to in the analysis of Kant as the only proof of practical freedom, namely praxis, is now a description of the understanding of being as such. Far from reason or the pure will, that which founds being is precisely the non-conceptual relation that permeates all comportment and discloses meaning. Heidegger suggests expanding his criticisms of ontological discourse to include the objective of *BT* at conclusion of *OET*:

The decisive question (in *Being and Time*, 1927) of the meaning, i.e., of the project-domain, i.e., of the openness, i.e., of the truth of Being and not merely of beings, remains intentionally undeveloped. [...] The course of the questioning is intrinsically the way of a thinking which, instead of furnishing representations and concepts, experiences and tries itself as a transformation of its relatedness to Being.<sup>605</sup>

The necessity of a non-conceptual understanding is such that Heidegger’s own efforts must be expunged precisely in order to arrive at a clear and appropriate account of truth and freedom. This non-conceptuality is precisely what evades grasping and possesses *Dasein*.

The relationship between the claims that ‘freedom is the essence of truth’ and that ‘freedom reveals itself as letting beings be’ may already be quite clear. Describing freedom in the terms which defined phenomenology need not cause confusion given the discussion of *aletheia* and the ‘disclosure of beings’. Truth is neither a simple matter of propositions and their validity nor the accuracy of one’s impressions. As Ruin explains,

And at this point he writes, close to the argument in the essay on truth: that when we seek freedom as the ground of possibility of man, then freedom is more original than man. Man is only the keeper, *Verwalter*, of freedom. Thus freedom should no longer be thought of as the property (*Eigenschaft*) of man, but man as the possibility of freedom. *For man is the being in which the understanding of being happens, and thus the possibility of truth.*<sup>606</sup>

The essence of truth, which must include untruth, is possible on condition that an interpretive space is already provided within which an encounter with beings occurs. Directly prior to declaring ‘freedom the essence of truth’ Heidegger asks and answers the following:

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<sup>605</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 translated by John Sallis) p.124

<sup>606</sup> Hans Ruin, *The Destiny of Freedom in Heidegger*, *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 41, (2008) pp.285-286 [Italics added]

Whence does the presentative statement receive the directive to conform to the object and to accord by way of correctness? Why is this accord involved in determining the essence of truth? How can something like the accomplishment of a pregiven directedness occur? And how can the initiation into an accord occur? Only if this pregiving has already entered freely into an open region for something opened up which prevails there and which binds every presenting.<sup>607</sup>

This ‘open region’ is simultaneously the domain of *Dasein*’s being-ontological though of course not in the sense of possession, ownership or primacy. It is the space which makes Da-sein (being-there) possible quite precisely as a being inextricably entrenched in the world which cannot but engender and confront the question of being:

Disclosedness itself is conserved in ek-sistent engagement, through which the openness of the open region, i.e., the “there” [“Da”], is what it is.<sup>608</sup>

It is in this respect that Heidegger’s account of freedom is derived from the account of phenomenology as described in *BT*. Freedom, in Heidegger’s estimation, is not merely that ambiguous force which one may or may not attribute to action and from which one may infer moral responsibility. At least by the time of *ET*, freedom refers to that open space which grounds all interpretation, belief and action. It remains our contention that such an understanding of freedom can be readily derived from a thorough comprehension of *BT*. Nevertheless, the combined arguments of *EHF*, *OET* and *ET* confirm that freedom must be a constant presence underpinning there-being and the hermeneutics of facticity characterising the concern for being. Furthermore and perhaps more importantly, a compelling argument for freedom prioritising a phenomenological account of being, in this case at least, certainly requires challenging some fundamental, methodological assumptions about how one approaches the problem. As Ruin puts it,

Together these passages [...] point toward a conception of philosophical work which remains guided by a certain understanding of freedom, not primarily as agency or independence [...] but as a kind of responsive openness to what is. To reach the free as an interpretive goal, as in the Schelling book, is obviously not to liberate oneself from the matter of the past, but to reach a point where one is able to encounter it.<sup>609</sup>

It is to that end that we turn our attention to the necessary reinterpretation of freedom. Not as one philosophical pursuit amongst many but quite precisely as the means by which we may encounter philosophical thought as such.

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<sup>607</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 translated by John Sallis) p.116

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117

<sup>609</sup> Hans Ruin, *The Destiny of Freedom in Heidegger*, *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 41, (2008) p.296

## Conclusion: Freedom and Being

Our primary concern in the course of this analysis has been to explicate the claim that a radical and compelling account of human freedom is contingent on a criticism and correction of traditional rationalist methodological approaches to ontological enquiry as such. To that end, we have sought to investigate the major relevant works of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre whose projects to address and enquire after the meaning of being we interpret as preeminent examples of just such an account.

We have shown that for both Sartre and Heidegger, a rationalist methodology which conceives both enquirer and agent as disengaged observers, has been read into the very conception of the constitution of the agent such that, to use Taylor's phrase, they occupy 'a sort of protovariant of the "view from nowhere"'.<sup>610</sup> Consequently, philosophical enquiries into the nature of being, and significant phenomena of experience such as freedom, are fatally misconceived from the outset. The problem for both therefore will require a radical re-assessment of methodological presuppositions as a necessary prerequisite for any meaningful ontological enquiry. We have argued that for both Heidegger and Sartre, this provides the platform for an argument in favour of ontological freedom.

Nonetheless, we have also argued that Sartre's project ultimately contradicts its premises insofar as they are based in what Heidegger refers to as fundamental ontology. The point there, as we have understood it, was to outline a methodological approach to enquiry which sought to evade if not 'destroy' the traditional conception of the subject as disengaged by beginning from the assumption of an inherent and primordial relationship between *Dasein* and being as such. Crucially, this prioritisation of *Dasein* reflected a methodological principle to guide enquiry such that conceptions of the subject and its objects remain firmly rooted in interdependent relation to one another and being(s) in general.

Sartre's argument in favour of ontological freedom, as we have understood it, contravenes this principle by construing all intentional objects of consciousness as inhabited by 'not-being' as a necessary pre-requisite for their encounter and thus anthropocentrically. Sartrean consciousness, on our reading and as we have explained it, though free in respect of its 'perpetually unstable equilibrium'<sup>611</sup> which will not admit of full identification with its objects but which therefore enshrines its ability to adopt any object as an ontological characteristic of its being, is also conceived in a quasi-Cartesian disengagement. Thus we have also argued that the appeal to

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<sup>610</sup> Charles Taylor, *Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger* in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.317-337, p.318

<sup>611</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.101



Descartes epitomised by the ‘pre-reflective cogito’<sup>612</sup> ultimately undermines the argument for an ontological freedom not dependent on disconnected dualist conceptions of human experience.

A Heideggerian account of freedom, as exemplified by the combined works of *EHF* and *ET*, extends the principles of fundamental ontology such that the possibility of an understanding of being is ultimately grounded by a primordial disclosure characterising all human comportment. In this sense, the confrontation with the question of being, the guiding concern of fundamental ontology and the central feature of *Dasein*, reveals an ‘open region’<sup>613</sup> grounding all ‘ek-sistent engagement’.<sup>614</sup> This ‘open region’ is the site of *Dasein*’s freedom as a necessary and prerequisite characteristic of average everyday experience. Freedom therefore is that which grounds the interpretive matrix of signs, values and signifiers comprising the hermeneutic facticity of engaged experience.

Furthermore, we have acknowledged and attempted to address difficulties in Heidegger’s account particularly with respect to Sartre’s concern that *Dasein* is conceived in ethically ambiguous terms. Nevertheless, we have argued and continue to hold that insofar as these and other concerns are valid, they can be satisfied within the parameters of Heidegger’s project which in turn can therefore provide fertile soil for a reinterpretation of the problem of freedom if not philosophical enquiry as such. A brief summary of the central points in our analysis will orient our conclusive thoughts.

As we have seen, though Sartre is critical of those ‘dualisms which have embarrassed philosophy’<sup>615</sup> that we consider symptomatic of rationalist methodologies, he is concerned that neither Husserl nor Heidegger, as examples of alternatives, satisfactorily account for the ‘consciousness of consciousness’.<sup>616</sup> Without this, human-being is mischaracterised as a ‘blind in-itself’<sup>617</sup> to which we cannot therefore attribute any responsibility. This is resolved, on our reading of Sartre, by acknowledging a pre-reflective cogito or a ‘non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection [of consciousness to consciousness] possible’.<sup>618</sup> This, in turn, is couched in an interpretation of intentionality which modifies the ‘consciousness must be consciousness of something’<sup>619</sup> formulation by grounding consciousness’ directedness to its objects (or its

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<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>613</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 translated by John Sallis) p.117

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117

<sup>615</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.1

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, p.98

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7

‘something’) in a ‘pre-judicative comprehension of non-being’.<sup>620</sup> Thus being-for-itself is produced of an original nihilation at the heart of being-in-itself. As the hermeneutic site of the relationship between these ‘two regions of being’,<sup>621</sup> consciousness is therefore bound to perpetually transcend its objects. This attributes to it a profound and robust responsibility for the meaning of beings and therefore assures consciousness’ freedom as an ontological condition of experience.

In explicating our reading, we address a number of criticisms and counter-criticisms pertinent to Sartre’s project and his argument for ontological freedom. We dismiss many of these as having ‘missed the point’<sup>622</sup> insofar as they underestimate the significance of fundamental ontology to the premises of Sartre’s project. Of particular concern for our argument was the counter-criticism that Sartre’s account of consciousness does not, as we claim, preclude the possibility of performing ontological enquiry and adequately. The concern derives from our defence of Sartre against the ‘threat of capriciousness’<sup>623</sup> which argues that Sartre’s account of human action implies that all human projects (the total cumulative effect of our everyday aims towards an overarching goal) are ultimately indeterminate, that is, arbitrary. That argument posits that, if, as Sartre suggests, the values and meanings we attribute to entities and events in the world are in fact exclusively constituted in light of a preceding project of the for-itself then we have no means by which to account for the adoption of any particular project.

In responding to this criticism, we have argued that capriciousness, far from being a threat to Sartre’s project, confirms one of its central pillars. If ‘nothing’ explains the adoption of a particular project then, for Sartre, this will be because ‘to begin with he [‘man’ who adopts the project] is nothing’ and must be so in order that later ‘he will be what he makes of himself’.<sup>624</sup> But here we observe a greater concern with respect to what we might call the ultimacy of nothingness in Sartre’s project. If, as we have seen, the upsurge of the for-itself is accounted for by an original nihilation at the ‘heart of being’<sup>625</sup> then enquiry into the nature of being can only reflect the transcendence of the for-itself grounded by the permanent possibility of non-being. In this respect we have argued that Sartre replaces fundamental ontology by an existential analytic of consciousness.

Here the aforementioned counter-criticism intercedes with the claim that the original nihilation at the heart of the in-itself, supporting the upsurge of the for-itself, does not undermine the

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<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27

<sup>622</sup> See, Leslie Stevenson, *Sartre on Bad Faith*, Philosophy, Vol.58 No.224, (1983) pp.253-258 - Stevenson accuses D.Z. Phillips of having ‘missed the point’ in his paper, *Bad Faith and Sartre’s Waiter*, Philosophy, Vol.56 No.215 (1981) pp.23-31.

<sup>623</sup> See, John E. Atwell, *Sartre’s Conception of Action and His Utilization of Wesensschau*, Man and World, Vol.5 No.2 (1972) p.147

<sup>624</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1973) p.28

<sup>625</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003) p.45

adequacy of a project undertaken by a given agent to perform ontological enquiry. The internal logic of the point thus can be reformulated to say something like, 'it is a contingent fact that Pascal takes up ontological enquiry but as a result of taking it up he discovered some non-contingent ontological truths' and certainly nothing is contradictory here. The problem of course is, as we have argued, in this instance the non-contingent ontological truth Pascal discovers is that his taking up ontological enquiry and in fact, the very meaning of that act and its component parts, is ultimately reflective of Pascal's project to be a certain 'philosophically' inclined kind of person. In other words, the non-contingent truth is that all truths and the meanings and values ascribed to 'truth' as such are contingent on for example, a project to render being(s) coherent. As for what being 'is' therefore, in Sartre's terms and on our reading, we can say only: 'Being is. Being is in itself. Being is what it is.'<sup>626</sup> We thus concluded that Sartre's i) replacement of fundamental ontology by an existential analytic of consciousness, in addition to what we have called his ii) anthropocentrism and iii) appeal to a Cartesian pre-reflective cogito are ultimately contradictory of the fundamental ontology which would ostensibly support an argument in favour of ontological freedom. We nonetheless attribute these shortcomings in Sartre's argument to his misunderstanding of *Dasein*.

We have argued that the project of fundamental ontology presented in *BT*, provides a theoretical framework for a radical interpretation of freedom. Thus and as we have seen, Heidegger begins with the observation of a misstep in the history of traditional ontological enquiry reducible to what we have called the 'presupposition'<sup>627</sup> of being. On our reading, the error refers to a predilection inherent to the traditional methodological principles of enquiry which overlook or presuppose the relationship between enquirer and the object of enquiry such that the investigation is possible.<sup>628</sup> Heidegger's *Dasein* therefore, that designation attributable to entities of the enquirers nature, will be primarily characterised by a primordial 'understanding'<sup>629</sup> of being. This understanding, in turn, indicates the role of *Dasein* in Heidegger's fundamental ontology, as that entity of 'ontico-ontological'<sup>630</sup> priority to the question of [the meaning of] being. On our reading, this prioritisation of *Dasein* reflects a methodological directive to formulate the enquiry after being in terms of a proactive introspection of the enquirer's factual hermeneutic condition which is how

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<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22

<sup>627</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.27

<sup>628</sup> Thus even to state that 'I have no understanding of being' is to admit of a relationship to being albeit negatively characterised. Failing to acknowledge this relationship therefore risks misconceiving enquirer and the object of enquiry as indifferently occurring alongside one another. See, Dorothea Frede, *The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project in The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.58

<sup>629</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.32

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34

we interpret what Heidegger calls conceiving ‘going-after-the-whole’ as a ‘going-to-the-roots’.<sup>631</sup> In so doing, Heidegger outlines a methodological approach intended to avoid if not ‘destroy’<sup>632</sup> the predilection for a disengaged conception of the approach to ontological enquiry.

Furthermore, we argue that this methodological approach is exemplified in the combined accounts of *EHF* and *ET* which together and on our reading, constitute Heidegger’s argument in favour of an ontological freedom. To that end, *EHF* first seeks to establish the claim that traditional accounts of freedom tend to treat exclusively of a negative relation, that is in terms of the independence from coercive forces, such that freedom is primarily conceived as ‘freedom-from’.<sup>633</sup> But in line with the methodological concern to avoid presupposition, Heidegger turns to Kant for a positive account of freedom as ‘freedom-for’ since Kant brings freedom into a ‘radical connection with the fundamental problems of metaphysics’<sup>634</sup> and thus provides the platform for a radical conception of freedom. Thus Heidegger interprets Kant’s practical and transcendental freedom such that the former describes the factual evidence of freedom in the form of praxis and the latter grounds practical freedom in reason’s capacity for the ‘self-origination of a state’.<sup>635</sup> The problem, as we have understood Heidegger, is that Kant assumes the causal character of freedom rather than, as fundamental ontology requires, interrogating the possibility of its primordially. Thus Heidegger argues that if freedom can be conceived in respect of reason’s return to an original cause, then it will follow that freedom grounds the possibility of a causal representation of being. This, we have claimed, points to Heidegger’s radical conception of freedom; not as a property attributable to a particular agent but as the condition for the possibility of the understanding of being.

Here, on our interpretation, Heidegger reframes *Dasein*’s onto-ontological priority in terms of the possibility of truth or what he refers to as unhiddenness and *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια).<sup>636</sup> We have argued that *Dasein*’s ‘being-in-the-world’<sup>637</sup> is anchored in the philosophical claim that ontological truth is possible only on condition that human experience and its objects are mutually presupposing. *ET* thus interrogates the possibility of ‘truth’ such that it will ultimately ground the relationship between *Dasein* and being in ‘disclosure’.<sup>638</sup> Therein and as we have seen, Heidegger argues firstly

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<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49

<sup>633</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.4

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18

<sup>636</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.117

<sup>637</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) p.78

<sup>638</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, On the Essence of Truth* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993 - org. 1943, translated by John Sallis) p.117

that *aletheia* presupposes an interpretive ‘open region’<sup>639</sup> necessary for an understanding of being(s) and secondly that the profundity of that understanding will depend on what we call ‘submission’ to the hermeneutic facticity of one’s condition principally as being-there, in-the-world. Thus for Heidegger and on our reading, the possibility implied by Kant’s ‘insufficient radicalism’<sup>640</sup>, namely that freedom can be conceived metaphysically, that is, as the ground for the possibility of a causal representation of being, can be reaffirmed. Therefore, *Dasein*’s ‘ek-sistent engagement’ with being(s) and its disclosure of the meaning of being(s), reflective as it is of a primordial understanding, is both made possible by and acts as an expression of freedom as an *a priori* necessity for experience.

Although we argue that Sartre’s critique of Heidegger’s *Dasein* is born of a misunderstanding we are nevertheless sympathetic to, at least, a modified form of his concern. We have stated,<sup>641</sup> that on our interpretation of Sartre, *Dasein*’s primordial understanding of being seemingly strips human action of ethical responsibility. Thus, if *Dasein*’s ontical distinction is grounded in a pre-ontological understanding of being then all human action is deterministic and absolved of responsibility; one would not choose their actions but would merely act out of a natural disposition. But the question of ethical responsibility falls out of the purview *BT* insofar as it is understood as a preparatory discussion intended solely to establish the methodological principles of fundamental ontological enquiry. Nonetheless, an argument can be made that the very effort to identify and distinguish characteristics of a being uniquely attributable to human-being invites precisely the strong sense of a disengaged subject that fundamental ontology sought to avoid. In other words if it is the case, as we have suggested, that *Dasein* must ultimately be grasped non-conceptually, then it seems counterproductive to furnish it with the complex of intricately woven concepts described in *BT*.<sup>642</sup> While we lack the room to explore the critique and possible responses in detail, we may suggest that developing Heidegger’s conception of what he refers to as ‘authentic striving’,<sup>643</sup> which we understand as human comportment grounded by freedom [to disclose being(s)] and characterised by ‘submission’, might allow for an ethical account of *Dasein*. Thus we may satisfy Sartre’s critique within the parameters of fundamental ontology.

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<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116

<sup>640</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.205

<sup>641</sup> See, *Introduction: The Principles in Debate, Prioritisation of Human Being(s)*, p.22

<sup>642</sup> Here we refer to O’Brien’s analysis of *Dasein* with respect to authenticity and death where he argues that on his interpretation of Heidegger, an authentic *Dasein* must expunge itself as *Dasein*: ‘In order for *Dasein* to be completed then, in order for it to be such that there is nothing left outstanding, it would have to be no more.’ See, Mahon O’Brien, *Heidegger and Authenticity: From Resoluteness to Releasement* (London: Continuum, 2011) p.33

<sup>643</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p.155

We have omitted discussion of some important features of both Sartre's and Heidegger's projects<sup>644</sup> which may otherwise have developed our interpretation. Our concerns were twofold: firstly, to show that a radical and compelling account of human freedom is contingent on a criticism and correction of traditional rationalist methodological approaches to ontological enquiry as such. Secondly, to show that the major relevant works of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre are preeminent examples of just such an account. Though much more can of course be said and understood with respect to our concerns, we may state that we have, in the least, identified an appropriate point of departure.

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<sup>644</sup> Issues of particular interest to our concerns would be Sartre's account of 'bad faith' and Heidegger's 'being-towards-death'. The former may present an account of deliberation, choice and action which could satisfy a description of free will more in line with the analytic debate. The latter presents death as the permanent horizon of *Dasein*'s being which may help account for the philosophical tension between the experience of finitude and 'reason's' return to the absolute, unconditioned.

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