



Reoccurring Problem of the Will

The Reoccurring

Problem of the Will: Heidegger's Unfinished Existential Analytic

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Heidegger's view of the will and willing is far from straightforward, and undergoes significant development from 1921 to 1940. I want to consider a few of those developments here, and illustrate why these considerations left Heidegger with an unfinished project.

To begin an investigation into the will demands first that we give some prior consideration to the notion of *Sorge* (or care). Heidegger considers the care-structure as prior and pre-constituting for the very possibility of willing. In *Being and Time* he wrote: "Willing and wishing are necessarily rooted ontologically in Da-sein as care."¹ Further emphasizing throughout *Being and Time* that: "The Being of Dasein is care"² This pre-foundational aspect of care prior to possible willing runs back as early as his 1921 *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*.

Allow me then a brief review of some of the central aspects of *Sorge/care* prior to our examination of will. First, Heidegger demarcates Dasein's experience of space and time as essentially concerned or care-related. Space is disclosed for Dasein in terms of care, as that to which I orient myself *towards* or *away* from.

Both directionality and de-severance, as modes of Being-in-the-world, are guided beforehand by the circumspection of concern.³

Being-in-the-world is proximally absorbed in the world of concern. This concern is guided by



circumspection. . . Whenever we have to contribute or perform, circumspection gives us the route for proceeding with it.⁴

This interpretation moves away from a Cartesian schematical picture of space towards one that orients being-there as a relation of having being as an issue, not an “apparent entity” among entities.

The nearest world, the things encountered in it are not placed along the lines of a geometric-mathematical system of points but within environmental contexts of reference.⁵

Heidegger also makes it clear that time is interpreted also within the framework of care-giving orientation. Time is not experienced by Dasein as a thing.

Time is not clock-time
primordially reckoned. Time is temporal: “There is not time without man”⁶ he writes. Further stating in *Being and Time*:

Dasein finds ‘itself’ proximally in *what* it does. . . in those things. . . with which it is proximally *concerned*.⁷

As time for Dasein is finite, Dasein is lead by concern, to *order* that time in terms of care(s). We are: “that entity for which being is an issue.”⁸

All time we read from the clock is time to . . . , ‘time to do this or that,’ appropriate or inappropriate time. . . in it [time] there is intended a whole of relations having the character of the in-order-to. We designated by the term ‘significance’ this totality of relations of the in-order-to, for-the-sake-of, for-that-purpose, to-that-end. Time as right or wrong time has the character of significance.⁹



Finally, Dasein faces time as one's own relation to death. Death individuates us, and calls us out of the average everydayness of one's being—demanding that we give care to what is particularly significant within our own lives. This is referred to as the “call of care,” which is also the call of possibility.

The being of this entity is care; among other things, care means being out for something; Dasein's concern includes a concern for its own being. As being out for something, it is out for *what it still is not*. As care, Dasein is essentially *underway towards something*; in caring it is toward itself as that which it still is not. Its own sense of being is to always have something before itself, which is still not, which is still outstanding. That something is always still outstanding means that the being of Dasein as care, insofar as it is, is always incomplete; it still lacks something so long as it is.¹⁰

This sense that there is always still something outstanding— some debt to be paid to one's self, exists out of this “call of care.”

The call points forward to Dasein's potentiality-for-Being, and it does this as a call which comes from uncanniness.¹¹

The uncanniness is the void or nullity of Dasein's “lack.” Existing without a *prescribed* concern, but still facing the staggering openness of possibility. Heidegger calls this “the call of conscience” and “guilt” in the face of being as possibility.

Conscience is the call of care from the uncanniness of Being-in-the-world—the call which summons Dasein to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-guilty¹²



The significance for this is very important for Heidegger's later consideration of will. Out of the confrontation of care and absolute nullity "the call" is supposed to arrive. However, the call of possibility is *contentless*. The chasm of void provides no particulars. For there to be possibility for Dasein there must be present a manifestation of the openness of possibility as possibility. What provides this manifestation? How *specifically* does "conscience" as the call of care provide content. Nullity itself is the absence of content, death as death *itself* provides no actual meaning nor necessary motivation for exceeding publicness. It may just as well drive me further into the tavern, full of people, noise, and the clamor of "idle talk."

We see that after the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger begins to be concerned about how he had appropriated major conceptions from Kierkegaard—formative notions like: authenticity, angst, guilt-in-the-face-of-possibility, and so-on. In Joan Stambaugh's translation of *Being and Time* Heidegger's marginal notions are given in the appendix. His notations show a deep concern about this appropriation, and further illustrate a growing critique of onto-theology:

It is not a matter of chance that the phenomena of *Angst* and fear, which have never been distinguished in a thoroughgoing way, were constitutive for the scope of Christian theology ontically and also ontologically, although in very narrow limits. This always happened when the anthropological problem of the being of human being toward God gained priority, and phenomena such as faith, sin, love, and repentance guided the questions . . . S. Kierkegaard got furthest of all in the analysis of the phenomenon of *Angst*, again in the theological context of a "psychological" exposition.¹³

S. Kierkegaard explicitly grasped and thought through the problem of existence as existentiell in a penetrating way¹⁴

S. Kierkegaard saw the existentiell phenomenon of the Moment in the most penetrating way, which does not mean that he was also as successful in the existential interpretation of it. He gets stuck in the vulgar concept of time and defines the Moment with the help of the now and eternity. When Kierkegaard speaks of “temporality,” he means human being’s being-in-time. Time as within time-ness knows only the now, but never a moment. But if the moment is experienced existentially, a more primordial temporality is presupposed, although existentially inexplicit.¹⁵

This is a profound comment; it in my view summarizes the conflict for Heidegger in terms of time, authenticity and will. Heidegger’s reference to the Moment is extremely significant. Heidegger realizes and makes explicit, that Kierkegaard’s notion of time is related to “now and eternity” and states that here “a more primordial temporality is presupposed.”

The problem here is fairly clear. For Kierkegaard the Instant/ Moment is not the confrontation with nullity or nothingness, (as Heidegger is working toward) but precisely the opposite. In the last chapter of *The Concept of Anxiety* Kierkegaard writes:

Anxiety is freedom’s possibility. . . Anyone formed by anxiety is shaped by possibility, and only the person shaped by possibility is cultivated according to his infinitude. Possibility is therefore the most difficult of all categories.¹⁶

The “infinitude” which Kierkegaard refers to is the very fulcrum of the self. The self which he makes quite explicit in *Sickness Unto Death* is a synthesis, of
1) the infinite and the finite, 2) the eternal and the temporal, 3) freedom and necessity.¹⁷ Kierkegaard makes explicit that the first column is wholly dependent as *possibility* upon God, stating:



Where does despair come from? From the relation in which the synthesis relates to itself, from the fact that God, who made man this relation, as it were lets go of it; that is from the relation's relating to itself.¹⁸

A person who has no God has no self either. . . for God is the fact that everything is possible, or that everything is possible is God.¹⁹

Returning
to the last chapter of *The Concept of Anxiety*:

But for an individual to be formed thus absolutely and infinitely by possibility, that individual must be honest toward possibility and have faith.²⁰

Here we see that possibility itself is determinate upon what Kierkegaard terms "the God-relation." The Moment or Instant that Heidegger critiques is extremely important, because as Heidegger comments:

Time as within time-ness knows only the now, but never a moment. But if the moment is experienced existentially, a more primordial temporality is presupposed²¹

The moment is then not temporality as Heidegger attempts to conceive it, but a rupture of the Infinite into the finite. This rupture with the finite and with the temporal is explained by not nullity, but the radical and immanent grace of God. This weighs heavily on Heidegger as he assesses his own debt to Kierkegaard.

From here on Heidegger remains circumspect about the influence Kierkegaard had on his work. He dramatically abandons his earlier



notions of: angst, guilt, conscience, and other Kierkegaardian-isms, all of which he now considers too Christian in their orientation.

It is important to return to Kierkegaardian notion of time's "rupture" in the "event" not only because these are conceptually important as notions within Heidegger's later work, but also because the Instant is the disclosure of being *beyond* publicness. Heidegger perceives at this point, that death, and care, as relations to nullity have very little grounding to posit the kind of openness necessary for a rupture with average everydayness. John D. Caputo writes in his essay *Heidegger and Theology*: Kierkegaard had said a century earlier, the discovery of time and history was Judeo-Christian one. . . . Heidegger had baldly appropriated the *kairological*—the *kairos*, the appointed time, the "moment" of truth and decision in *Being and Time*—and *kerygmatic* conceptions of human existence that he had learned from Christianity in the first place and that were quite alien to the Greeks.²²

Heidegger had written as early as 1922: "I do not behave religiously in philosophizing. . . . Philosophy, in its radical self-positing questionability, must be in principle *a-theistic*."²³

How all this relates to problem of the will is that Heidegger conceives at this point that his underpinnings for the possibility of possibility are not acceptable in *Being and Time*, especially if they involve a God-relational ontology. For Kierkegaard, Luther, St. Augustine and St. Paul the Moment/Instant of rupture in time *IS*—ex-ists—out the presence of God (esp. as immanent grace).

Heidegger's whole notion of the Self as possibility he now believes has to be revised. Yet, many of the most pivotal sections of *Being and Time* hinge on the possibility of authenticity.



After all, Heidegger's philosophy is itself an exploration of the possibilities of being i.e. the possibility of possibility.

Throughout *Being*

and *Time* Heidegger generally avoids using the word will, and prefers instead *Entschlossenheit*, which is sometimes translated "holding-fast" or "standing firm." In John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's translation *Entschlossenheit* is translated "resoluteness" and works as Heidegger's substitute for *Willens* or "will" whose various philosophical associations (esp. to Kant) he wishes to avoid. But later, in *Introduction to Metaphysics* he makes the relation explicit writing: "To will is to be resolute. The essence of willing is traced back here to open resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*)"²⁴ This resoluteness, or will, is constitutively essential for Dasein's possibility of authentic disclosure.

Existentially, 'Self-constancy' signifies nothing other than anticipatory resoluteness. The ontological structure of such resoluteness reveals the existentiality of the Self's Selfhood. Dasein is *authentically itself* in the primordial individualization of the reticent resoluteness.²⁵

Will or resoluteness within Dasein is thus pivotal in terms of the possibility of there existing a *moment* in which disclosure discloses being as possibility—or there to be a rupture, or manifestation of being's possibility.

It is essential to remember the relation employed by Heidegger here between *Entschlossenheit* and *Erschlossenheit* since resoluteness also contains the character of being-open disclosing and clearing for itself, and is therefore is often rendered "resolute openness." Dieter Thoma comments:

The new spelling as resolute openness *Ent-schlossenheit* makes it clear that it is supposed to be a matter of an unlocking of oneself, and thus a "self-opening" or "keeping- open" . . . this was understood in *Being and Time* as a being- open for



oneself, for one's own Being.²⁶

The issue then of both will and possible disclosure are linked within the ability of Dasein to resolve—in the sustaining of the moment of revelation. Will itself then, makes possible the possibility of “openness.” This becomes hugely problematic for Heidegger, and he comes to see his attempts at ontology during the *Being and Time* era as “too subjective.”

In 1927, the year *Being and Time* is published, Heidegger gave the lecture course: *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, which shows Heidegger's “turn” from phenomenology. We witness Heidegger's concern that *Being and Time* was “too subjective” in its orientation, and that radical questions of ontology were not adequately explored in it from the point of view of Dasein.

The *being* of the subject must be determined as an entrance into the problems of philosophy, and in fact in such a way that orientation toward it is *not one-sidedly subjectivistic*. Philosophy must perhaps start from the ‘subject’ and return to the ‘subject’ in its ultimate questions, and yet for all that it may not pose its questions in a one-sidedly subjectivistic manner.²⁷

In 1929 Heidegger publishes *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* and simultaneously begins his lectures on German Idealism—often referred to as the “Fichte Lectures.” During this era from 1929-1936 Heidegger writes and gives lectures on Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. With the first two thinkers, he struggles with problems inherent when considering will from the point of view of the subject, and in with Hegel and Schelling, the problems faced when considering the will from an “outside” or from a more metaphysical preview.

Heidegger's encounter with Kant in: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* contains more problems than I could possibly detail here, but I want to bring out what I take to be a couple

of important reference points in the text. The first involves what Heidegger refers to as Transcendental Schematism—which he clearly considers to be a problem.

The formation of the schema [*Schemabildung*] is the making sensible of concepts. How is the look of the immediately represented being related to what is represented of it in the concepts? In what sense is this look an “image” of the concept? . . . the content of the empirical look is given as one from among many, i.e., as isolated within what is thematically represented as such. The particular has dismissed the possibility of being just anything. . . it is a possible example of the one which regulates the possibility of being just anything as such that applies to many. In this regulation, however, the universal has its own specific, clear determinacy. . . dissolving “anything and everything” in contrast to what has been isolated. . . no uniqueness can be demanded.²⁸

The schema-forming making-sensible has as its purpose to procure an image for the concept. . . The pure concepts of the understanding, which were thought in the pure “I think,” require an essentially pure discernibility if in fact that which stands-against in the pure letting-stand-against

is to be capable of being perceivable as a Being-in- opposition. The pure concepts must be grounded in pure schemata, which procure an image for them. Now, Kant expressly says, however: ‘On the other hand, the schema of a pure concept of the understanding is something which can never be reduced to any image whatsoever’ However, if it belongs to the essence of a schema that is to be brought into an image, then the expression “image” in the preceding sentence can only mean *a specific kind of image to the exclusion of others*.²⁹

As ‘pure image,’ time is the schema-image and not just the form of intuition which stands over and against the pure concepts of the understanding. Hence the schema of notions has a character of its own. As schema in general it represents unities, representing them as rules which impart themselves to a possible look. Now according to the Transcendental Deduction, the unities represented in the

notions refer essentially and necessarily to time. The schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding, therefore, must necessarily regulate these internally in time. . . Different times are but parts of one and the same time. The representation which can only be given through a unique object, however, is intuition. Hence time is not only the necessary pure image of the schemata of the pure concepts of the understanding, but also their sole, pure possibility of having a certain look. This unique possibility of having a certain look shows itself in itself to be nothing other than always just time and the temporal.³⁰

The possibility of experience, then, is that which a priori give objective reality to all our cognitions. . . in order for an object to be able to give itself, there must in advance already be a turning-toward such an occurrence, which is capable of being ‘summoned.’ . . This turning-one’s-attention-toward. . . is the condition for the possibility of experiencing.³¹

This critique of Kant is multifaceted, but what I take to be essential is that Heidegger intuits that Kant’s Transcendental Schematism fails the account for two aspects of philosophical concern 1) the being of possibility, and 2) the *manifestation* of the being of possibility. Heidegger’s growing concern of the “event” the rupture of being as “occurant” into the being or pure possibility. From the point of view of the subject what makes possibility manifest in time? Kant’s mentalistic and conceptual picture of time as “schematism” avoid the way in which Heidegger has already considered time in his earlier work—which is time as care-driven and care-related temporality. That is being-in-the-world is not an experienced “schematism” which has its “measure” like clock-time; but our being as Dasein is experienced as care-orientated time. We don’t experience time as the measure of seconds, the measure of hours or days/months, but as concerned orientation. And yet death itself cannot give us measure either, since we do not know when death occurs. Heidegger is critiquing a cognitive “schematism” of time. If the being of possibility is to be manifest existentially, it must be so in time, but he conceives of Kant’s epistemology as too narrow to provide the “event,” (or the Instant in Kierkegaard’s terminology). That is, what accounts for *one* instant *standing out*, receiving *emphasis* over each and every other in an infinite series?

It is interesting to note that Schopenhauer had already covered much of this territory in his appendix to the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*. In it Schopenhauer takes Kant to task for making perception too mentalistic. Schopenhauer’s overall claim is that we experience perception as having *preferentiality* and that a purely concept driven epistemology cannot account for why some objects-of-perception

are given preference—one over the others, or multiplicity. That is, a schematism picture of perception does not explain why *one* moment within the sequence of time receives emphasis, or why one tiny image within a vast field-of-perception becomes “highlighted.” We tend to wonder how in the series of infinitely dividable moments an occurrence takes place whereby a singular possibility becomes (in that series) manifest as other— that is, as possibility.

The other aspect I wish to examine briefly from *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* is Heidegger’s critique of the imagination’s relation to moral personhood, a critique which Schopenhauer also shares.

The moral I, the authentic self and essence of man, Kant also calls the person. In what does the essence of the personality of the person consist? Personality itself is the ‘idea of the moral law’ along ‘with the respect which is inseparable from it.’ Respect is ‘susceptibility’ to the moral law, i.e., the making-possible of a being-susceptible to this law as a moral one. But if respect constitutes the essence of the person as the moral self, then according to what has already been said it must present a way of Being-self-conscious. To what extent is it such? Can it [respect] function as a way of Being-self-conscious. . . ?³²

The same problem arises. How does the moral law, as purely formal maxim, receive “respect”—why would it in its pure conceptual constituents have/contain the “property” or being-respectable? If the person and the authentic self arise out of this original “respect” which makes all authentic being possible from whence does it arrive? If the authentic self must will and will with resolve, what constitutes both the event at the beginning, and the power-of-maintaining through time?

Again, it is hard conceive that Heidegger might not be thinking of Schopenhauer’s essay *The Basis of Morality*. Since in this essay he deals with these same issues. There are three basic criticisms of Kant 1) that even if it is the case that human beings can formulate a formal maxim that is universal, how does its mentalistic constitution in anyway provide *force* to it? Essentially, how does one come to find *interest* in a purely formal aphorism? Since the formulation of a



logical maxim (as formal) cannot constitute my resolution to hold to it, especially in the face of vast numbers of other competing possible interests. From where does it receive its emphasis?

Schopenhauer's second criticism is that even if it is possible to conceive of, and mentally resolve to hold-to this moral principle. This does not show that it is possible to *maintain* it, especially in the face of various conflagrations of life—bodily, social, mental, and appetitive. To will demands a maintaining, or holding-to which must be able to withstand all internal and external tests of time and conflicting force. What Schopenhauer, I think, rightly perceives is that there is a whole gradation problem, both in the emphasis required from the “apparentness” of the categorical imperative in the first place, and the finally a graduation problem when it comes to “resoluteness,” to borrow Heidegger's term. Kant either never sees this problem, or chooses to ignore it. To resolve both Schopenhauer and Heidegger understand, means the ability to maintain the position of emphasis moment to moment—instant to instant— with a degree of force that keeps it from being usurped by the endless multiplicity of *other* competing possibilities. Possibility as possibility requires a force either from within or without to rupture through the “play” of *other* forces.

Schopenhauer's final criticism (which again mirrors Heidegger's own criticisms in the final part of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*) is 3) that Kant's entire foundation for freedom as “autonomy of the will” is ultimately grounded in a theology of the soul as a thinking substance independent of the forces of nature. I do not have the time to examine the specifics of those arguments, but it is important to note the profound emphasis these arguments will have on Nietzsche. These two thinkers will both contribute greatly to Heidegger's own rejection of onto- theology.

The lectures which Heidegger gave the same year of the publications of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*—the so called “Fichte Lectures,” show Heidegger's concern that formulating the will from the point of view of subject—as Fichte and Kant do— is fraught with difficulties. Heidegger now turns toward Hegel and Schelling in order to consider will and the possibility of the event from a more metaphysical distance.

In the lecture given in 1936: *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* Heidegger explores several definitions of, one being: “Freedom as the self-starting of a

series of events which needs no foundation.”³³ Heidegger writes: Thus, Being in general means in and for itself, Being with itself willing oneself, willing as such. Schelling says ‘In the final and highest instance, there is no other Being than Will.’³⁴

Freedom is will. Thus, Being is originally willing. ‘The Will is primal being.’ But at the same time, a limitation becomes apparent here. In that freedom becomes the general determination of all beings. . . Thus, the question arises about *human* freedom.³⁵

In the central part of the treatise on *human* freedom, Schelling must deal namely with the question of *what man is* in the relation to beings as a whole. . . Schelling says. . . ‘Man’s will is the seed—concealed in eternal longing—of God, present as yet only in the depths—the divine light of life locked in the depths which God divined when he determined to will nature.’ To understand this passage means to comprehend the whole treatise.³⁶

The animal never gets out of the unity of its determined stage of nature. Even where an animal is ‘cunning,’ this cunning remains limited to a quite definite path, within quite definite path. . . But man is that being who can turn his own essential constituency around, turn the jointure of Being of his existence into dis-jointure. He stands in the jointure of his Being in such a way that he disposes over this jointure and its joining in a quite definite way. Thus, the dubious advantage is reserved for man of sinking beneath the animal. . . the ground of evil lies in the primal will of the first ground which has become revealed. Evil has its ground in the ground independent of God.³⁷

Accordingly, he equates evil with sin. But ‘sin’ can be defined theologically only within Christian dogmatic philosophy. ‘Sin’ has meaning and truth only in the realm of Christian faith and its grace. . . [he] orients the whole question of evil fundamentally to Christian dogmatics. . . This direction of thinking, however, characterizes not only Schelling’s treatise on freedom, but his whole philosophy, and not only his, but German Idealism, especially that of Hegel.³⁸



Heidegger's engagement with Schelling leads him to the conclusion that Schelling's notion of will is onto-theology. The will is manifest as a God-relation, in this case not "subjectively," as it was given in Kierkegaard, but metaphysically. Both Schelling and Hegel are guilty, in Heidegger's view, of scuttling the issue of will rather than resolving it, by the use of theological-metaphysical underpinnings. Daniel Dahlstrom comments in his essay *Heidegger and German Idealism*:

Heidegger's aim in portraying Hegel's (and later Schelling's) thinking as onto-theology is to demonstrate how the basic question of philosophy gets sidetracked by the leading question of metaphysics. Onto-theology is thus another way in which Heidegger marks the crossroads at which he stands with Hegel. For Heidegger, the basic question is the question of the sense of being and the answer, at least in part, lies in time.³⁹

Heidegger contends that what is decisive but unthought in Hegel's argument is the clearing in which entities come to light, a clearing that is not itself explicable by or grounded in any entity, and, indeed, is not any entity at all. This clearing is. . . the event.⁴⁰

The event must be a rupture in time, it must come about as a presencing which takes emphasis over the multiplicity as *other*, it must have force to be made manifest. However, the question remains about where the emphasis of force is to reside. In the subject? Or from the world-historical? From whence does this spontaneity in time arise? Heidegger's reading of Hegel seems to have given rise to the same problem he met with in Schelling. The philosophy of Spirit (by Heidegger's reading) leaves the constitution of the will *within* the dialectic of Spirit; Spirit is consciousness coming to itself. Heidegger considers this ontology one still under the western en-framing of onto-theology, and one, after reading Kierkegaard, excluded from the problem of individual willing. The question remains: from where does the force of will arrive? If Kierkegaard's notion of the Instant was not satisfying for Heidegger, neither entirely is Hegel's or Schelling's. How would the predicates, of the world-historical, as predicates, constitute a rupture in the absence of any particular individual's acquiescing to the Moment? But Heidegger is certainly closer to Hegel in his later writings than he is to Kierkegaard. He moves away from



the emphasizing the individual's "striving" and begins to conceptualize the event in terms of the possibilities of language and "dwelling." For example, in *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger expressly reverses his earlier position in *Being and Time*.

Knowing that remains a willing, and willing that remains a knowing, is the existing human being's entrance into and compliance with the unconcealedness of Being. The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of the subject, but the opening up of the human being, out of its captivity in that which is, to the openness of Being. However, in existence, man does not proceed from some inside to some outside; rather, the nature of *Existenz* is out-standing standing-with the essential sunderance of the clearing of beings. Neither in the creation mentioned before nor in the willing mentioned now do we think of the performance of act of a subject striving toward himself as his self-set goal.⁴¹

This tendency in the late Heidegger—especially within the French appropriation certainly leads on the path toward the postmodern "death of the subject." Although the Cartesian subject may have deserved its demise. The death of the subject in-total is rather an absurd hypothesis. To assume that the subject has no contribution of will, and subsists only as a painted marionette for history and bio-power, seems to contradict history itself, and even our most basic experiences. The will may be diminished, as compared to Kant or Descartes, but this does not signify the total absence of the contribution of individual will. The outcome in hyperbole of such views are typified in the philosophy of Alain Badiou, who states:

For Heidegger, 'Dasein'—and, ultimately, 'existence'—is the name for 'human reality', the historical destiny of thought and the crucial, creative experience of the becoming of being itself. I am going to propose, on the other hand, a concept of being-there and of existence without making the slightest reference to anything like consciousness, experience, or human reality. . . 'Existence' is not a specific predicate of the human animal.⁴²



Both the event and its appearance, for Badiou, having nothing to do with human beings at all. Human beings are only incorporated into “truth-procedures.” Being’s emphasis belongs not to the subject, but their subjugation into the mathematical/ logical appearing. The Cartesian or Kantian subject may have certainly had its western onto-theological underpinnings, whose roots needed to be cut, or augmented, but the farcical notion of philosophizing from the mathematical/logical “view from nowhere” is equaling or more preponderantly absurd!

Heidegger’s abandonment of both the subject, and of the will, as conceptualized within the western tradition, reaches its summation, I think, in his encounter with Friedrich Nietzsche 1936-1940. At the end of writing four volumes, Heidegger can neither imbibe Nietzsche drives theory of the will, (which involves biologism—he thinks), or accept Nietzsche’s conception of being as will-to-power. Ultimately writing in the final volume:

As an ontology, even Nietzsche’s metaphysics is at the same time theology.
. . The ontology of beings as such thinks *essentia* as will to power. .
. Such metaphysical theology is of course a negative theology of a peculiar kind. Its negativity is revealed in the expression ‘God is dead.’ That is an expression not of atheism but of ontotheology.⁴³

Thus, the notion of will itself, never escapes, in Heidegger’s estimation, the problems of ontotheology—even in Nietzsche! In the final volume and final lecture entitled: *Nihilism and the History of Being* Heidegger writes: Even if the essence of willing which is thought here is obscure in many respects, perhaps even necessarily obscure, we can see that, from the metaphysics of Schelling and Hegel, back beyond Kant and Leibniz to Descartes, the being as such is at bottom experienced as will. Of course, that does not mean that the subjective experience of human will is transposed onto beings as a whole. Rather,

it indicates the very reverse, that man first comes to



know himself as a willing subject in an essential sense on the basis of a still unelucidated experience of beings as such in the sense of a willing that has yet to be thought. . . Those connections cannot be explained here, however. . . What was said about nihilism proper in describing Nietzsche's metaphysics. . . that the ground of nihilism proper is neither the metaphysics of will to power nor the metaphysics of will, but simply metaphysics itself. . . The essence of nihilism *is* historically as metaphysics, and the metaphysics of Plato is no less nihilistic than that of Nietzsche. In the former, the essence of nihilism is merely

concealed; in the latter, it comes completely to appearance. Nonetheless, it never shows its true face, either on the basis of or within metaphysics. These are disturbing statements. For metaphysics determines the history of the Western era. Western humankind, in all its relations with beings, and even to itself, is in every respect sustained and guided by metaphysics. In the equation of metaphysics and nihilism one does not know which is greater—the arbitrariness, or degree of condemnation of our entire history heretofore. . . If metaphysics as such is nihilism. . . is incapable of thinking its own essence, how could metaphysics itself ever encounter its own essence?⁴⁴

If we recall that the problem of nihilism for Nietzsche constitutes a problem of values i.e. that “the highest of all values are now de-valuing themselves” then the problem of will is central. What shall I will as having value? What is the ultra- reality of valuing a value?

If predicates of themselves cannot constitute value, and formal qualities of an axiom cannot yield it (Schopenhauer's critique of Kant), if Spirit (Hegel), primal Will (Schelling), and even will-to-power (Nietzsche) are all onto-theology, how should we constitute the *possibility* of will? What is the openness, or event, by which an individual, or an entire culture, appropriates a metaphysics. . . Is willing possible?

Perhaps today, more than ever, we feel our inability to will; our inability to hold to a resolve. Our problem today is not reducible to en-framing or cybernetics. We face the problem of pure multiplicity. It is not simply that



a “rational choice” will yield our resolve—the profound profusion of meanings in the age of globalization, digitalization, and hyper-consumerism swamps us. In the age of the Anthropocene we wonder about our own extinction. The “nullity” stands out in front of us. In an age when it seems most necessary to will *one* thing,—can we will at all?

Endnotes

1. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 181
2. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 465.
3. Ibid, 143.
4. Ibid, 216.
5. Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 229.
6. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 17.
7. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 155.
8. Ibid, 381.
9. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 262.
10. Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 308.
11. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 325.
12. Ibid, 335.
13. 13 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 404-405
14. Ibid, 407.
15. Ibid, 412-413.
16. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2014), 188.
17. Soren Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 43.
18. Ibid, 46.
19. Ibid, 71
20. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2014), 189.
21. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of



- New York Press, 1996), 413.
22. Charles Guigon, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 336.
 23. Ibid, 334.
 24. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 22.
 25. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 369.
 26. Richard Polt, ed., *Heidegger's Being and Time: Critical Essays* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 223.
 27. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 155.
 28. Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 68-69.
 29. Ibid, 71 (my italics)
 30. bid, 73-74.
 31. Ibid, 83.
 32. 32 Ibid, 110.
 33. Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press), 83.
 34. Ibid, 95.
 35. Ibid, 99.
 36. Ibid, 53.
 37. Ibid, 144.
 38. Ibid, 145-146.
 39. Herbert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall, ed., *A Companion to Heidegger* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 77.
 40. Ibid, 77.
 41. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 65.
 42. Alain Badiou, *Second Manifesto For Philosophy*, trans. Louise Burchill (Malden: Polity Press, 2009), 44.
 43. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche Volumes Three and Four*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harpercollins, 1987), 210.
 44. Ibid, 205-206.
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