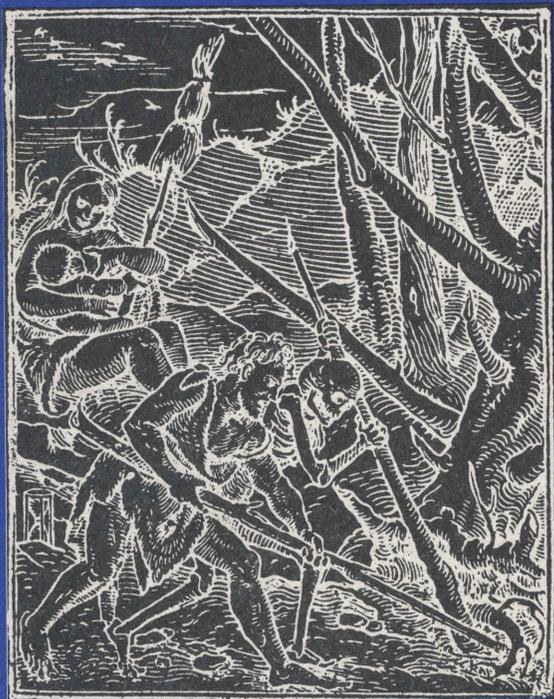


James M. Demske

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# Being, Man, & Death

A Key to Heidegger



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BEING,  
MAN,  
&  
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*A Key to Heidegger*

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as possibility with the elements of the existential concept of death already established, we uncover the following ontological structure of authentic being-unto-death. The understanding of death as the most proper and distinctive possibility of Dasein leads to the realization that it is precisely through death that Dasein is liberated from domination by the impersonal "someone" (*das Man*). Since death touches Dasein in its own reality, determining its existence individually and irreplaceably, the attitude of advancing toward death, of confronting it as an ever-present possibility of one's own being, is the first step toward recovery from the inauthentic condition of the someone-self, which lets itself be completely swayed by public opinion.

Death is also a nonrelational possibility of Dasein. Thus, the more resolutely we advance toward it, the more clearly we see the aspect of aloneness which characterizes Dasein in its being-unto-death. Advancing reveals that all being-with the other beings which make up one's world, whether in the mode of taking care of nonhuman things or caring for other men, fades away in the sight of death. The ever clearer realization that death cuts all one's innerworldly ties thus opens the way to the authentic acceptance of responsibility for one's own completely individualized being.

Advancing toward death as the unsurpassable possibility of Dasein brings it about that all one's other possibilities assume their proper place in the total picture of existence. These other possibilities are seen to be merely intermediate, since they lie "this side of" the outermost possibility of death and fall under its finalizing influence. They are all limited, determined, and in a sense defined by the fact that Dasein exists as being-unto-the-end. In the face of the unsurpassable, insuperable, and irretrievable possibility which is death, they are seen to be surpassable, repeatable, and thus, as compared with death, merely preliminary and secondary. Realizing this, Dasein is armed against the danger of absolutizing any of its intermediate possibilities or of becoming hardened at any state of existence already reached, since it knows that no stage can be definitive except that of death itself. Dasein remains a traveler, continually on the way toward its ultimate possibility-to-be, which is written existentially into its very being.

Advancing toward the unsurpassable possibility of death has also what may be called a social function, because it enables Dasein to understand and evaluate the possibilities of its fellowmen. Seeing that no

bad; it thus approves or reproves, praises or blames, induces satisfaction or uneasiness.<sup>21</sup>

Heidegger understands conscience somewhat differently. For him it pertains not so much to the realm of knowledge as to that of existence. It is an existential, a determination of Dasein in its concrete being-in-the-world. This interpretation arises not from any arbitrary rejection of tradition, but from the attempt to reduce the popular and metaphysical notions of conscience to their phenomenological-existential ground. As always in the existential-ontological analysis, Heidegger is attempting to uncover the underlying structures which form the foundations for all the manifestations of human existence. In the present matter he proposes to "trace conscience back to its existential foundations and structures and make it visible as a phenomenon of Dasein" (SZ 268-69).

How does conscience operate as an existential of Dasein? It is constantly and persistently issuing its call, not in the noisy, overly busy, and equivocating manner of the uncritical "someone," but quietly, clearly, and without concession to mere curiosity. This call has the same triple structure which was previously discovered in the analysis of Dasein's being-in-the-world. The one who is called is Dasein in its fallenness into the inauthenticity of the "anyone-self." That to which conscience calls is authentic existence, in which Dasein understands itself in terms of its own proper possibility-to-be. The one calling is Dasein in its state of "exile," in the homelessness of its thrown facticity. Fallenness, existence, and facticity—these are, once again, the structural moments of concern. Thus the call of conscience (and therefore conscience itself) has its ontological possibility in the fact that Dasein, in the roots and foundations of its being, is concern. Conscience is, existentially speaking, the call of concern (SZ 270-78).

Strictly speaking, conscience has no content; "the call 'says' *nothing* which might be talked about, gives no information about events" (SZ 280). It does not call *from* anywhere or *about* anything, but *to* something, namely to authentic selfhood. And yet, while conscience in this existential sense does not involve any ontic content, it does give one to understand something that there is a gap between what Dasein is and what it should be. More exactly, conscience transmits the message of the distance between Dasein in its everyday fallenness and Dasein in its possible authenticity. It reveals the gulf between the anyone-self, the mask which Dasein usually wears, and the authentic self which it is challenging Dasein to

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prevails in everything that happens, i.e., in everything that comes into being. Thus he formulates the essence of *logos* as "constant, self-prevailing, primordial, collecting collectedness" (EM 98). Whence comes this remarkable collecting character of *logos*? Heidegger points out that *legein*, from which the substantive *logos* is derived, originally meant "the placing of one thing next to another, bringing together into a unity, or, in brief, collecting" (EM 95). Thus, *logos* is "the constant collecting, the autonomous (*in sich stehende*) collectedness of beings" and, as such, it is that which makes a being to be what it is. Thus, *logos* and *physis* are basically the same—the being of beings as such in their totality (EM 100).

The collecting character of being as *logos* appears clearly in the Heraclitean concept of *polemos*, usually translated as battle, fight, war. Fragment 53 calls *polemos* the father and king of all; he has made some to be gods, others men, some slaves, others free. Heidegger translates *polemos* as "putting asunder," *pater* (father) as "progenitor (who permits things to emerge)," and *basileus* (king) as "governing preserver." *Polemos* is the primordial battle, not in the sense of a war between men, but "a prevailing contention antedating both gods and men," the primordial putting asunder which unites within itself all contraries, and gathers together all things striving against each other (EM 47). As such, *polemos* is another facet of the being of beings. *Polemos*, *logos*, and *physis* are basically the same thing under three different aspects: putting asunder, collecting, and emerging and abiding holding sway

### C. Being as *Noein-Einai* (Parmenides)

What was being for the other great pre-Socratic thinker, Parmenides? Contradicting the widely held opinion that the teaching of Parmenides is diametrically opposed to that of Heraclitus, Heidegger maintains that both thinkers really shared the same philosophical standpoint: "Where should these two Greek thinkers, the founders of all thought, take their stand but in the being of beings? For Parmenides too, being is the *hen*, *xyneches*, that which holds itself together in itself, *mounon*, that which uniquely unites, *oulon*, that which is complete, the constantly self-manifesting holding sway" (EM 104).

If it is true that Parmenides conceives being as *hen*, "the one," or primordial unity, he does not mean this in a static, but a dynamic sense. It is "never empty uniformity, nor sameness in the sense of mere equality

distinguished among all beings by the fact that he transcends the beings he meets in everyday experience and penetrates, to some extent, the mystery of being itself. In short, he exists as transcendence.

However, man is still seen as *finite* transcendence in this work. The earlier signs of finitude—thrownness, fallenness, being-unto-death, knowledge of being which is simultaneously concealing and revealing—all these reappear in *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. Thus Heidegger writes that "being itself throws man" (EM 125), man is "forced [to exist] as Dasein, thrown into the necessity of such [a mode of] being" (EM 124), he is "thrown to and fro between organization and disarray" (EM 123). Though his power-activity blazes trails in being, still he is "constantly thrown back into the pathways he himself has made, by getting bogged down in his tracks and caught up in what is familiar to him, drawing the circle of his world in this captivity, entangling himself in mere appearance and thus cutting himself off from being" (EM 121).

In order to overcome the "continually cramping entanglement in customary, everyday affairs," Dasein must use force in the form of a "decisive march on the way to the being of beings out of the familiarity of the usual, of the things closest to him" (EM 128). This exercise of power eventually runs aground in death, insofar as he exists, man stands inevitably under the sentence of mortality (EM 121). He must wrest being into beings in a continual struggle against mere seeming, for the possibility of seeming belongs essentially to the appearing of being in Dasein (EM 79-80).

Finally, the meaning of Dasein is still temporality, as was demonstrated in *Sein und Zeit*. This assertion receives a more precise determination in *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, in that Heidegger speaks now not only of time, but of history. The power-activity commanded by being itself, whereby man forces being into beings by bringing it to a concrete, epochal halt, is the genesis of history; man stands in the service of being, because being transforms itself into history through him. This is the essential task of man, constituting his selfhood but also finally shattering him. Thus history, or the task of transforming being into history, is the deepest meaning of human existence (EM 110, 124-25, 130).

Consequently, man remains Dasein after the turning—he is the 'there' or the place of illumination of being in the midst of beings. But the fact that everything is now viewed from the new standpoint of being itself, means that this term too takes on a new accent. Heidegger even writes it

*being*, as the horizon of his encounter with beings? This impression might well arise in *Sein und Zeit* and in the Kant book, where being is primarily spoken of in connection with human projection. But the subsequent writings have conclusively established the fact that being enjoys the position of primacy, that it is being which "gives itself" to man (WG 43). Being indeed 'needs' man so that it can give itself to him, so that it can come to appearance at all, but the initiative remains undeniably on the side of being.

This change in precedence should not be understood as if man and being were two things confronting each other as the opposite poles of a relation in which dominance has now passed from one to the other, from subject to object. On the contrary, the whole question of transcendence, or the relation between man and being in the preontological understanding of being, occurs in a dimension which antecedes the distinction between subject and object, and indeed constitutes the ground of possibility for this distinction. We are not here concerned with the ontic, empirical encounter between a knowing human subject and beings which are known, but with the preontic and preempirical understanding of being which makes such encounters possible. Heidegger is speaking from the standpoint of Kant's transcendental position, which concerns the a priori conditions of possibility of human comportment with beings. Accordingly, he views being within the context of the transcendental problematic, and not within the confines of subjectivism or objectivism.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the turning takes place completely on the transcendental level. It is not an explosion of subjectivism, which is an ontic position, but much more a decisive shift of accent on the plane of transcendentality itself. Far from being a mere transition from subject to object, it is a change from 'Dasein' to 'Da-sein,' from man as the place of revelation of being to being as revealing itself in man. Succinctly formulated, before the turning, the whole consideration was from the standpoint of man, after the turning, the consideration is from the standpoint of being, but in both cases Heidegger's thought moves on the plane of transcendentality. This interpretation is confirmed by Otto Pöggeler: "Thus the turning is accomplished. no longer does Dasein as being-in-the-world stand in the center of the philosophical enterprise, but being in its meaning and in its truth and, consequently, in its role of rendering a 'world' possible. The direction of thought is no longer from beings to being, but from being to beings."<sup>11</sup>

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power runs aground (EM 121) Set in position as the breach of being, he must eventually be broken upon it (EM 124). This fateful task is allotted him by being itself. "Being itself throws man" (EM 125) He can thus do nothing but 'adjust' to his situation, by integrating himself into the overwhelming pattern: "In the shattering of the work he has done, in the knowledge that all is disarray and a *sarma* (dungheap), he leaves the overwhelming to its right" (EM 125)

With such bold strokes the titanic-heroic image of man is sketched. Of course, Heidegger would protest that everything is to be understood in an ontological rather than an ontic sense. Indeed, in the preface to *Was Ist Metaphysik?* written several years after *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, he explicitly denies ever having sought "to awaken surreptitiously the impression of a 'heroic philosophy'" (WM 47). No doubt this is true, for Heidegger wants his philosophy to be, right from the very beginning, a philosophy of being. Nevertheless, it is impossible to overlook the heroic-tragic, and even titanic, traits in the picture of human existence projected by the early writings, including the transitional work under discussion in the present chapter.

Still, the heroic-tragic element does not constitute the whole of the image of man in *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. Because of the turning, a new feature begins to emerge: a certain feeling of reverence before being. This characteristic makes its first appearance in an allusion to being as "that depth out of which the essential (*das Wesentliche*) ever approaches and indeed returns to man, thus compelling him to superiority" (EM 35). It is also hinted at in the characterization of being as "most worthy of all [our] questioning" (*das Fragwürdigste alles Fragens*, EM 63), which designation is meant literally, since only an attitude of respectful questioning pays due homage to the supremacy of being: "Questioning is the genuine and proper and only way to pay due respect to that which, from its position of supreme strength, holds our Dasein in [its] power" (EM 63). The new posture is also evident in the reference to 'shyness' (*die Scheu*) as an appropriate attitude with regard to being. "The uncanny (*deinon*) is fearsome in the sense of the overwhelming holding sway which commands not only panicky terror and true anxiety, but reflective, self-contained, reserved shyness as well" (EM 114-15)

The subject of death presents a concrete example of the emerging contest between the titanic and reverential tendencies in Heidegger's thought. In *Sein und Zeit* death was purely a phase in the existential

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ism to objectivism, but takes place wholly on the level of the transcendental problematic which antecedes the distinction between subject and object. Through the turning, Heidegger achieves a new transcendental position, which indeed derives from the philosophy of Kant but is essentially distinguished from this by virtue of its radical orientation toward being. The turning is a legitimate continuation of the program originally announced in *Sein und Zeit*, but achieves a result which could not clearly be foreseen there—the ontological primacy of being.

In *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, death is once more presented as an existential structure of Dasein, indeed as the precise structure which requires that man's activity in the task of transforming being into history must ultimately be shattered. Being-unto-death now becomes being-unto-shattering. This new formulation indicates that death now occupies a new position—it is no longer located merely in the internal structure of Dasein, but in the relation of Dasein to being. It is an existential imparted to Dasein by being itself, for being sets Dasein in position as the necessarily shattering breach through which its holding sway is to appear. The acceptance of this situation is at one and the same time Dasein's supreme service to being and the achievement of its own authenticity.

Since man is defined by means of an interpretation of Greek tragedy, in which he necessarily ends tragically—by being shattered against the might of being and thereby attaining his true heroic greatness—the image of man sketched here can be called 'heroic-tragic.' Nonetheless, an opposing tendency begins to emerge in the picture, a certain serene reverence before being. This opposition opens up the horizon for a further development of the image of man and the role of death in the thought of Heidegger. We shall trace this development in subsequent chapters, first in the writings about poetry and language, and then in the exposition of the quadrate.

Dichter?" (1946), which were later published in the book *Holzwege* (*Woodland Trails*, HW) The writings in which the problem of language is articulated are the *Brief über den "Humanismus"* (*Letter on "Humanism,"* HB, 1947), the article "Logos" (1951) in the book *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (*Lectures and Essays*, VA), and the six essays of the book *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (*On the Way to Language*, US, 1959).

Also written in the first period after the consolidation of the turning, between 1936 and 1949, the following works cast additional light on the problems of poetry and language, and contain important statements on the central theme of the historicity of being. the two-volume work entitled simply *Nietzsche* (N I, N II), the sketch, "Überwindung der Metaphysik" contained in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, the conversation "Zur Erörterung der Gelassenheit" appearing in *Gelassenheit* (*Serenity*, GL), *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (*From the Experience of Thought*, ED), *Der Feldweg* (*The Country Lane*, FW), plus the epilogue to the fourth edition (1943) and the introduction to the fifth edition (1949) of *Was Ist Metaphysik?* (WM).

### I. Approaches to Being Itself

Heidegger's principal concern after the turning is the thinking of being itself. He continues to ask about the meaning of being, a question which remains phenomenological, because it inquires about being insofar as being reveals itself to man. But the being question has undergone a two-fold change since *Sein und Zeit*. First, the question is considered less from the standpoint of man than from the standpoint of being. Consequently what *we mean* when we say 'being' is not the main point, but rather *what* we mean, in other words, what view of itself being affords when it reveals itself to us and permits us to understand it. The consideration of the being question has shifted its emphasis from the inquirer to that which is inquired about. Second, the questioning aims now at being itself, rather than at the being of beings. To be sure, being reveals itself only in beings, but "the decisive question is . . . no longer merely that of the basic characteristic shown by beings, how the being of beings may be characterized, but it is the question: What is this being itself? It is the question about the 'meaning of being,' not just about the being of beings" (N I 26)<sup>1</sup>

new mode of truth's putting itself to work, and with it a new epoch of history (HD 98-101)

As primordial history, being is also primordial time. As the holy, it is "older than the ages," "the most ancient time" (HD 57-58) Its temporality, however, does not consist of passing through a succession of past, present, and future, as that of beings ready-at-hand does, but in the fact that it embraces all times. It is the ever-abiding, ever-present "advent of the beginning" (HD 73), which reaches back to the source of the entire past and ahead to the advent of the whole future; it is the source and totality of all times; it is primordial time itself. Thus the word *being* in the title *Being and Time* does not signify something other than that signified by the word *time*; *time* is rather "the first name of the truth of being, which truth is the essencing of being and thus being itself" (WM 17) <sup>11</sup>

### III. *Man*

In view of the intimate relationship between man and being, Heidegger's effort to think being itself affects his conception of the essence of man.

#### A. *One Who Dwells Poetically*

Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's line, "Full of merit, man still dwells poetically on this earth," confirms that the essence of man must be defined in terms of his relation to being. Heidegger reads Hölderlin's words in this way: through his conquests and achievements in the realm of beings, man amasses merit for himself in the realization of his destiny as lord of creation. But the essence of life upon earth consists in his dwelling "poetically," i.e., living in the nearness of being where he can cooperate in being's self-communication. This he does by keeping ready a place for being to appear as itself by imparting itself to beings (HD 39, 84-85). Only by dwelling poetically does man achieve his true essence; only by "taking leave of beings [and setting out] on the way to the preservation of the gracious favor of being" (WM 49) does he exist authentically as that which he is the guardian of being's truth, or the shepherd of being (HB 75, 90)

This is not merely to say that man's essence is characterized by his relation to being; rather his essence *is* this relation. In the existentiell realization of his essential structure, he exists as the protecting, sheltering

shepherd of being, keeping himself always ready for the delicate task entrusted to him. Consequently, his essence consists both in 'standing within' the illumination of being as its habitation (*Innesteher*), and in 'standing out' (*Ek-sistenz*) into the self-revealing truth of being (WM 15-16, HB 66-70, HW 55)

Man is thus one who dwells poetically upon the earth. The familiar definition summed up in the words 'rational animal' indeed expresses a truth, but does not attain the uniqueness of the essence of man. Since it considers man from the standpoint of animality and assigns him a designated place in the realm of beings, it does not do justice to his specific humanity, which consists in an ecstatic (in its root etymological meaning of 'standing-out') position within the realm of the truth of being (HB 64-66, 74-75, 89-90, N II 193-94)<sup>12</sup>

### B *Guardian of the House*

The essential relation of man to being reappears in the discussion of language. Heidegger views language as the result of being's communicating itself to beings (cf. US 267, N I 364). It is that wherein the self-revelation of being is received, preserved, and housed, in short, it is "the house of being" (HB 53). The inhabitant of this house is not being, but man, whose commission it is to be the guardian of being through his thought: "Ex-istence inhabits the house of being through thought" (HB 116). Through his dwelling in the realm of language, man lets being break into speech (HB 53), as one endowed with the gift of language, he lives "under the claim of being" (US 90). He is essentially the "bearer of the message" which he receives from being in language (US 136).

Clearly, then, language is not primarily a human instrument by which men communicate, but rather something by which being communicates itself to man, a mode of the self-revelation of being (HW 60-61, VA 212-13, 228-29). In this reversal of the usual conception, speech is not considered psychologically or genetically, but phenomenologically. Heidegger proceeds from the phenomenon of speech and considers everything from the standpoint of the concrete act of speaking. In this view, language (not in the sense of the faculty of speech, but in the sense of the concrete 'mother tongue' through which this faculty expresses itself) is always antecedently given, on the one hand as a structure which belongs essen-

Heidegger clearly stands against any individualism which would hold for an absolute autonomy of man against being, or place man in the position of the absolute ruler of the totality of beings. Since the investigations of Greek thought carried out in *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, this is no longer compatible with Heidegger's thought. However, he just as emphatically rejects any form of collectivism which would attribute absolute dominion over beings to a human community such as a people, tribe, state, or nation. He would say that these are both forms of subjectivism, because they treat man, either individually or collectively, as a subject standing over against beings as objects. As such, they miss the real essence of man, which goes much deeper than a mere subject-object relationship between man and beings, to the transcendental level of man's primordial relation to being. Moreover, it is now clear that man does not hold the position of master, but rather that of protecting servant (HB 89, HW 81, 84-85).

Consequently, the structure of being-with which forms the basis of man's membership in a historical people involves no decision either for collectivism or individualism. Rather, it is the existential structure which lies at the basis of these ontic modes of behavior as their condition of possibility. Neither is it an encroachment upon the personal uniqueness of man, which remains intact. Rather it is a structure which belongs to the essential constitution of man just as primordially as the uniquely individual 'mine-ness' of existence.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. *Death*

The conception of death as an existential appears once again in the designation of men as "the mortals" (*die Sterblichen*). Second, another nuance comes to the fore when Heidegger introduces the new concept of the death of the essence of man. Finally, death is explicitly shown to have a relation not only to man, but to being.

##### A. "The Mortals"

From the Hölderlin interpretations on, Heidegger's favorite expression for mankind is "the mortals." Hölderlin writes "Commoner, more ordinary must the fruit become; then it will be suited to the mortals," and Heidegger understands it as a statement about the self-revelation of being. The

Once more the character of death as an existential is confirmed, for the term "the mortals" signifies mortality as the proper and essential mode of human being. Mortality, in the full sense intended by Heidegger, marks man off from all other beings—on the one hand, from the immortals and, on the other, from things which are merely ready-at-hand—and at the same time indicates the relation to being which constitutes man's proper essence. Death is thus seen in the fuller perspective of being, for the mortals are those whose task it is to spend themselves in receiving, concretizing, and sheltering the delicate advent of being among beings. Consequently, what may here be called being-mortal is the same existential determination which was earlier encountered as being-unto-death. The difference is that here it is considered as the finite structure of man's existence, insofar as this is essentially determined by the transcendental relation to being itself<sup>18</sup>

### B *The Death of Man's Essence*

A new trend in Heidegger's thinking about death arises from the problematic of the history of being. In the present age of technology, man stands under an unprecedented threat of death. The atom bomb is generally viewed as the instrument of this new, universal danger. Heidegger, however, finds a more basic, ontological threat of death in the essence of technology itself "It is not the much discussed atom bomb, as one particular kind of killing-machine, that is so deadly. What has long menaced man with death, even with the death of his essence, is the absolute of pure willing, in the sense of the conscious imposition of man's will upon everything" (HW 271).

The real danger of death in the present age, as Heidegger sees it, comes not from the atom bomb, but from the theory of absolute subjectivity, the doctrinaire assertion of man as the absolute subject, the master of all beings. This is the greater danger, for it means the destruction of man not only in his ontic life, but in his very essence.<sup>19</sup> Here Heidegger overturns everyday modes of thought by reducing them to existential-ontological dimensions. He is not at all interested in a quantitative comparison of two dangers lying on the same level, but in an ontological or 'grounding' relation. The doctrine of man as the subject who is lord of all, who can manipulate the totality of beings, is by far the greater threat because it makes possible technology's claim to absolute power. On the basis of this

doctrine, man understands himself as the being which can form, transform, manipulate, build, and destroy the whole of creation.

As a result of this doctrine man forgets his vulnerability as part of the totality of beings. As history has shown, the unrestrained struggle of man against beings inexorably turns into the struggle of man against man. Man's desire to dominate other kinds of beings inevitably entails the desire of some men to dominate other men. The violence and wars of the twentieth century offer ample proof of this. The urge to create and dominate entangles man in the evils of slavery and destruction, not as a result of the machinery he invents to carry out his purposes, but because of the underlying conviction of his absolute power. Humanistic subjectivism is the greater menace to mankind.<sup>20</sup>

The essence of man consists in his relation to being; he is essentially the shepherd, the guardian, the steward of being, whose task is to care for the arrival of being among beings. But in technology, which represents the acme of subjectivism, this relation is reversed. Man is seen not as the servant of being, but as the unlimited master of all beings—a reversal which entails a direct denial of the simple, hard fact that being is not the plaything but the supreme benefactor of man. The denial cannot fail to have fatal consequences. Man loses the nearness to being which constitutes his true and proper essence. because of technology he is, to all intents and purposes, essentially dead.

But isn't technology a glorification of the might of man and thus really an exaltation of his essence? The glorification is actually illusory, because technology, if allowed to become a doctrinaire 'technologism,' necessarily tends to swallow up man's existence. Everything becomes fair game for the exercise of power; all beings are potential materials of production. Thus "the earth and its atmosphere become raw material. Man becomes human material" (HW 267); he is merely "the most important raw material" (VA 92). There is the frightening prospect "that man will lose his self in unlimited productivity" (HW 270) and become a mere "functionary of technology" (HW 271). Man would then no longer exist as absolutely distinctive Dasein, but only as something ready-at-hand, emptied of his real self, killed in his essence—a 'man' without the essence of man.<sup>21</sup>

The eventual deliverance from this danger must come from the same source as the threat itself, "from there, . . . where the issue turns on the mortals in their very essence" (HW 273). The situation demands a

rethinking of the essence of man, a rediscovery of man in his relation to being. To that end, there is a crucial need of men who can perceive and point out the danger, who are strong enough to experience and withstand the full force of the threat, who can peer unshaken into the abyss of the utter destitution of our age (HW 273, 248-49) Heidegger found in Hölderlin such a man. Following Hölderlin's example, Heidegger is endeavoring "to bring man back again into his essence" (HB 61), so that man can "find the way to his abode in the truth of being" (HB 115).

In the face of the threat to man's essence, Heidegger strives for a rethinking of the essence of man, a conversion, a *metanoia*. This is not the intrusion of a religious or theological concern in the traditional sense, because Heidegger is not trying to stimulate a conversion to God, but to being and to a new view of man in his relation to being. Consequently, his interest remains philosophical. It is not, however, without theological consequences, since Heidegger views the needed philosophical conversion as the indispensable prerequisite for a possible return of man to God or a new advent of God to men. First, the horizon must be opened up for such a confrontation, the stage must be set by accomplishing a new understanding, both of man's own self and of being, a new way of thinking in which the dimension of the holy and the realm of mystery are accorded their rightful place. This is the sense in which the following words of Heidegger are to be understood "The beginning of a new era does not occur merely because a new god bursts in from hiding, or the old god in a new way Where should he turn on his arrival, if a place has not been previously prepared for him by man? How could there ever be a suitable residence for God unless the splendor of divinity had previously begun to shine in everything that is?" (HW 249)

### C. *Death and Being*

To find his way back to his own essence, man must rethink being and his own relation to it. But a new understanding of death is also required. As the determining existential of Dasein, death especially must be seen in its relation to being. In this context, Heidegger discusses death (1) as something positive which belongs to the realm of being, (2) as a place for the breakthrough to being, (3) as the passage to authentic dwelling with being, and (4) in its relationship with language, a relation which is ultimately grounded in being.

In the discussion of the threat to man's essence posed by modern technology, the concept 'death' is obviously used analogously; in the strict sense, death is the extreme and all-embracing possibility of Dasein's individualized existence. Still, these two usages of the term have an intrinsic connection, for the menacing danger of the death of man's essence stems from the misunderstanding or the forgetting of the true essence of man, which is decisively determined by the existential of death in the strict sense. In other words, essential death threatens man because he no longer understands his own essence, and therefore misunderstands death. Thus Heidegger writes "Our age is destitute not only because God is dead, but because the mortals can scarcely recognize and cope with their own mortality. The mortals are not yet in possession of their essence. Death withdraws and becomes an enigma. The mystery of pain remains veiled. Love is not learned. The age is destitute because the unconcealment of the essence of pain, death, and love is absent" (HW 253).

But it might be objected that man, rather than misunderstanding death, can now dominate and control it as never before. He has become master of the ways and means of inflicting death, even to killing hundreds of thousands instantly. On the other hand, discoveries have also enabled man to prolong life significantly and thus to postpone death more and more; there are some who dream of doing away with death entirely.<sup>22</sup>

The attempt to make death completely manageable by technology is a proof that technological man does not understand his own essence and mortality. In trying to control death, he understands it only as an event occurring at a particular point of time, a biological condition whose intrusion should be put off for as long as possible. To be sure, this death is merely ontic; it is in the category of a thing ready-at-hand which is not yet actual, a future reality which is not yet real. The authentic understanding sees death as an existential, a constant determination of Dasein, the mode of human existence. As such, death does not merely occur at the end of a man's life, but is always and already there. Death in an authentic sense cannot be postponed any more than life itself. It is ever and already present as a positive determination of man.

The technological misunderstanding of death lies in viewing it as purely negative and consequently something to be averted. Technologism tends to consider as positive and real only what it can measure, manipulate, and control. To want to control death is a natural extension of this outlook. If death proves too elusive, intangible, or unpredictable to be

grasped and manipulated, then it is considered outside the pale of positive reality, negative and unreal. Accordingly, technology is "the firm negation of death. Through this negation, death itself becomes something negative, something completely inconstant and empty . . . But what is more real, and that means in the modern idiom, more certain, than death?" (HW 279)

Because of its undeniable and profound reality death must be thought positively and "without negation," as we read in a letter of Rilke cited by Heidegger (HW 279). Similarly in another letter, Rilke calls death "the side of life which is turned away from us, not illuminated by us" (HW 279). Heidegger interprets Rilke as referring to death not as part of Dasein's structure but as belonging to being "Death and the kingdom of the dead belong to the totality of beings as its other side. This realm is the other side of the whole network (*Bezug*) of the open" (HW 279). While this region turned away from us might seem to be something negative, it is not so "when we think of everything in the broadest circle of beings" (HW 279). Death is no longer to be explained and understood from the standpoint of Dasein alone, but in relation to, and from the viewpoint of "the whole network of the open," i.e., in and from the standpoint of being.

Thinking death positively means thinking it in relation to being. As an existential of Dasein, death is more real for man than any other reality. It is not ready-at-hand, nor does it belong to the realm of things ready-at-hand, but it is proper to man insofar as he is Dasein and stands in the illumination of being. But what can death, which at first sight appears to be the intrusion of utter darkness, have to do with the illumination of being?

Since death is not controllable by man, it represents a crucial point at which the impassioned effort to reduce all reality to the status of manipulable objects inevitably fails. Consequently, it plays a preeminently central role in man's understanding of himself and of being, since it demonstrates that man is not the absolute master of the totality of beings, nor of himself, but is ultimately naked and defenseless before the overwhelming power of being. Thus, death is the key to the adequate understanding of the essence of man, just as it points categorically to the superiority of being, to which the essence of man is related. "It is death that touches the mortals in their essence and so sets them on the way to the other side of life and thus to the whole of the pure network [of being]" (HW 280)

Since death permits man to experience his subordination to being, it is the locus of a possible breakthrough to being itself. Man can turn the negativity of his own helplessness before the totality of beings into something positive, in that he can understand death not only from the standpoint of his own life, but from the standpoint of being. Death forces man to look beyond the narrow compass of his own life to understand his existence; in this way he can "turn his defenselessness as such toward the open [of being]" (HW 280). Just as, in the earlier phase, death guaranteed the completeness of the analysis of Dasein, and authentic being-unto-death constituted the authenticity of existence as a whole, so now, in the later Heidegger, death plays a decisive role as the place for man's breakthrough to being itself.

Remarkably enough, death seems to have supplanted anxiety as the privileged avenue of approach to being (cf. SZ 184-91, WM 31-33). But this is not completely new, for death and anxiety were always closely associated. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger demonstrated that only anxiety can sustain the openness of Dasein in the face of the indeterminacy of the 'when' of death. Thus he could assert "Being-unto-death is essentially anxiety" (SZ 266). This is confirmed again, but now from the other side. Anxiety is essentially being-unto-death, because the anxiety capable of giving Dasein a glimpse into the mystery of nothingness and of being itself, is seen here to be the anxiety in which man experiences the absolute limit of his power over beings and the necessity of his own shattering against the might of being. In anxiety, Dasein gains the realization of its being-unto-death.

A rather remarkable use of the concept of death is found in Heidegger's treatise on Georg Trakl's poetry, "Language in the Poem" (US 35-82). Here death appears as the "downfall" or "destruction" (*Untergang*) to which "the soul," which is "a stranger on the earth," is summoned (US 42). At first sight, this seems quite traditional—death means that the soul of man is called from its pilgrimage on earth to its true homeland in eternity. But Heidegger interprets the passage in an existential-ontological framework and from the standpoint of the problem of being.

The soul, which Heidegger understands as man himself, is a stranger on earth not because its true homeland is elsewhere, but because it must find its true homeland here; to take his proper place among beings on the earth, man must expend much time and energy wandering and searching

neither can the animal speak" (US 215)<sup>27</sup> Thus, being-unto-death, in the sense of a conscious knowledge of one's own mortality, and speaking are modes of being proper to man; they are both existentials. "The essential relation between death and language flashes forth," continues Heidegger, "but is still not thought out" (US 215)

To meet Heidegger's challenge, let us start with man as speaker. Human speech bears unmistakable signs of finitude, which is existentially rooted in man's being-unto-death. Man is thrown into language by being immersed in a preexistent language system. He does not invent language in order to associate with other beings; rather, language is given to him as the prior framework within which he can encounter beings. But language, into which man is thrown, is not something eternal, remaining ever stable and immune to change. Language undergoes aging and renewal, introduction of new forms and decaying of old. What is important here is that man cooperates in this process by continually reshaping his language, coining phrases and putting the stamp of his ever-changing experiences upon it. Thus, his relation to language is twofold: he is thrown into it, and he projects it. In respect to language, man is both passive and active; he is the thrown one who projects.

We met this paradoxical pattern in the beginning of Heidegger's search, first in the basic three-dimensional structure constituting man's temporality. Within this structure, precedence was attributed to the element of futurity, since existence meant primarily being-ahead-of-oneself; it was only on the basis of this projectedness toward the future that existence was seen to include the elements of already-being-in and being-with. In other words, man understands himself primarily in terms of the possibilities which are realizable but not yet actual (future), then, on the basis of this, he comes back upon himself as the sum of all experiences which up to the present moment have made him what he is (past), finally, as this future-oriented past, he can authentically address himself to the beings which constitute his present ambiance (present). Since death is the uttermost possibility of man's existence, being-unto-death is the decisive structural element in that temporality which lies at the basis of all human activity, including speech. Accordingly, being-unto-death is the most radical reason for the fact that man speaks as a projecting speaker who is thrown. Being-mortal is thus the ground of man's being-a-speaker; man speaks as the appointed guardian of the house of being because he is mortal.

#### DEATH IN THE GAME OF BEING

Dwelling in the quadrate and among things takes place through man's relating himself, in his behavior toward the things he encounters, to each of the four moments of the quadrate. Dwelling occurs by means of a fourfold relation to things, which Heidegger calls "sparing" (*schonen*). Man must "spare" the four elements, help them to attain their own essence, set them free unto their own authentic nature.

Men perform the sparing which constitutes their dwelling in the quadrate insofar as they "save the earth," "receive heaven as heaven," "await the godly as the godly," and "accompany their own essence so that there might be a good death" (VA 149-51). Heidegger describes "the earth" as that which serves and supports man, bears fruits and blossoms, is spread out in stone and waters, and gives rise to growing things and animals. "Saving the earth" means using it in a proper way rather than exploiting it by wastefulness or destruction. "Heaven" includes for Heidegger the course of the sun and moon, the brilliance of the stars, the seasons of the year, weather, clouds, day and night. To receive or accept heaven as heaven is to let all these things be, rather than to interfere with them by attempting, for example, to control the weather or to turn night into day through twenty-four-hour activity. "Awaiting the godly as the godly" means waiting and hoping for "the beckoning messengers of the divinity" in order not to mistake the signs of their presence or absence. "The mortals" are the humans themselves; their attitude within the quadrate consists of "accompanying their own essence to the proper use of this essence, . . . in order that there might be a good death." Men must accept death as an existential structure of their being; they must "go along with" this structure, "accompanying" it to a good end. This they must do not only at the moment of death as the end point of life, but throughout the whole of life. Existentially speaking, dying a good death is the same as living a good life. Both mean existing authentically through accepting death as an existential, as a constitutive structure always with man.

Man, in confronting the beings of his world, should spare these beings, let them be in the full depth of their intrinsic reference to the four regions of being. This sparing letting-be renounces all attempts to force, master, compel, or do violence to things. It is a consequence of man's subordinate position to being and constitutes accordingly the authenticity of his existence as the conserver (*Verwahrer*) and steward (*Verwalter*) of being. The common denominator of all the four ways of sparing the quadrate in things is thus the letting-be. This letting-be is not to be understood as an indifference to or lack of sympathy with things, but

the language of *Sein und Zeit* death is a possibility for Dasein, a power to be. Accordingly, Heidegger now writes (in clear contrast to the common idea that men as mortals *must* die) that men are called "mortals" in the quadrate "because they *can* die" (VA 150, 177, 196, emphasis mine).

Is death then an option for man? Surely not in the sense that death is left to the free will of man, as if he could choose whether to die or not. Insofar as being-unto-death is concomitantly given with the structure of human existence, it is an essential necessity. In this ontic sense, man must die, in fact, he must die continually, whether he knows and wishes it or not. But considered existentially, man can either realize his death from within, through the conscious recognition and acceptance of the essentially necessary structure of his mortality, or he can flee from death into inauthenticity. The achieving of his true being-unto-death thus depends upon his own choice. In this sense, death is placed in man's keeping; he not only must die, he can die, authentically and as the ultimate realization of his existence. Existentially speaking, man has the ability to die, the capacity for death.

### B *The Capacity for Death*

Heidegger carries this idea a step further when he writes "They are called the mortals because they *can* die. Dying means being capable of death as death" (*den Tod als Tod vermögen*, VA 177). Beyond emphasizing the fact that man can die, Heidegger's statement indicates that man can know and understand death. The reduplicative phrase "death as death" means that man does not die blindly like a beast, but recognizes death as an existential determination of his own being. Death for man is not a flat, blank, one-dimensional wall, against which he unwittingly crashes one day, but it is something he foresees, and thus knows even before he experiences it. Man can see death multidimensionally and in perspective. Whether he develops this knowledge or not, he always takes a position with regard to his death and thus relates it to himself as a power-to-be, an ability or capacity of his own being. Thus he knows death reflexively, he knows it as death.

The reflexive knowledge of death further implies that man encounters death in his capacity as the one who understands being. Knowing death as death means understanding it as it is, within the horizon of being. Without the horizon to provide the perspective within which he knows

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death, man would not die humanly (*sterben*), but merely come to his end (*verenden*) like an animal. Thus man is not only existentially determined by death; he understands the being of death. Implicit in his being-unto-death is the fact that he is the one who understands being. The designations being-unto-death and the mortal contain two essential determinations of man heading-toward-death (*Aus-sein auf den Tod*) and the understanding of being.

The German word *vermögen*, which has been translated "being capable of," contains a plurality of meanings difficult to capture in English. The verb means to be able, to have the power or capacity to do something. However, as a noun it connotes not only power, ability, capacity, but also wealth, riches, fortune, means. In the present context the phrase indicates that the ability to die is part of the riches of man, an element of his original natural endowment. As something man is able to do, dying is one of his powers-to-be, one of the means, in fact the outstanding means, of accomplishing his existence.

But even more is hidden in Heidegger's use of *vermögen*, as is evident from another text in which he is speaking not of man's ability to die, but of his ability to think: "To have the capacity for something means to let something draw near to us in its essence, and persistently to protect this admission. Thus we only have a capacity for things that we like" (*Wir vermögen immer nur solches, was wir mögen*, VA 129) Can this idea be applied to the capacity for death? Is it meaningful to say that man has the capacity for death only because he 'likes' death? Heidegger continues "We genuinely like only something which has previously liked us in our essence, by inclining itself toward us and drawing close to us" (VA 129). Clearly Heidegger is not talking about any psychological phenomenon, any emotion or feeling of love, but rather about something in the ontological sphere. Considered ontologically or existentially, death draws near by giving itself to us as a constitutive element of our existence. It thereby brings us to our own essence as mortals. But this gift is at the same time a claim upon us, since it sets us the task of accepting our mortality in the realization of our existence. In this way death communicates itself to us, draws near, 'likes' us. We can correspondently 'like' death, insofar as we let it come near us by accepting and affirming it as an existential structure which brings us into our own essence.

Thus, the mortals are capable of death in several ways they can 'die' authentically in every realization of existence by assuming their proper

and distinctive role within the quadrate, and they can positively affirm death as the existential structure which 'lets them in' to their true essence. Moreover, they can recognize death as the outstanding feature of their original natural endowment, as the element which, above all others, confers on them the dignity of their specifically human existence.<sup>10</sup>

### C. *Authentic Mortality as Accompanying*

Having the capacity for death as death means letting death draw near to us, letting it be as what it really is, thus sparing it in its true essence. This brings us back to the idea of sparing as an essential component of man's dwelling in the quadrate. Precisely how should man, who dwells in the presence of things and in the presence of being as it appears in the quadrate, spare death? Heidegger writes: "The mortals dwell insofar as they accompany their own essence, namely, having the capacity for death as death, into the use of this capacity, so that there will be a good death" (VA 151)

Man's capacity for death as death is, as we have seen, the mortality or being-unto-death which constitutes his essence as the finite 'there' of being. As such, it is the determining existential structure of Dasein. Accompanying this structure into its proper use thus means transposing existential being-unto-death into its authentic existentiell realization. 'Accompanying' is the conscious and deliberate acceptance of the existential structure of being-unto-death as constituting the essence of man, it is man's being-unto-death authentically realized. Thus it is the same process as that which was earlier called advancing toward death; it is the ultimate determinant of the authenticity of man's being-unto-death and consequently of human existence.

But accompanying occurs within the quadrate, in man's dwelling among the things in which being appears to him. Man does not direct his attention primarily to death, but to things. He does not relate himself first and foremost to his own mortality but to things and to being which shines forth in them, within this context he assumes an attitude to death as an essential moment of the entire process. Consequently, accompanying is "not . . . an empty staring at the end" (VA 151), but the concomitant realization, the sparing, affirming acknowledgment of the structure of being-unto-death in the total process of the serene confrontation with things and with being itself. Man thus exists authentically, or accompanies

But death is the measure of the immeasurable not only in a passive, but in an active sense as well. It is not merely the appointed measure wherein being appears as the determining correlative of the breadth of man's essence, but it itself sets the limits. It performs an active measuring function by leading man through the stage of detachment from all beings, beyond the stage of nonbeing to being itself. Obviously, this does not mean that man can adequately measure the immeasurable (which would be a contradiction in terms), but rather that death can lead man to recognize being precisely as the immeasurable, as ultimately enigmatic and inexhaustible. Being is ever 'mystery' (cf. HD 124, VA 177, 256). Accordingly, the only appropriate mode of knowing being for what it really is consists in allowing it to preserve its ultimately unfathomable character.

Up to now, the phrase "of the immeasurable" has been understood grammatically as an objective genitive, indicating that being, under the title of the immeasurable, is the object which is measured through death. But it can also meaningfully be considered as a subjective genitive. In this case, it is the immeasurable itself (being) which measures that which sends death as the measure of being and of the essence of man is precisely the immeasurable, or being itself. In this reading, the measure does not stem ultimately from death, but from being, which assigns death to man or "summons him to death" (VA 256) and thus imparts itself to man in death. For it is in death that being leads man to recognize that his essence is constituted not by his relations to beings, but rather by his transcendental orientation to being. Thus death is the revelation of the authentic essence of man and of being itself.<sup>12</sup>

Through death (understood as Dasein's existential of totality) man is involved in the sublime game of being, which is the coming-to-pass of the event of being, "the sublimest game in which man is involved on earth" (SG 187). Heidegger specifies "on earth" (*irdisch*) because man is admitted to the game of the self-communication of being precisely as the mortal, i.e., as the temporal-finite playing field on which the game takes place. Thus Heidegger says "As the ones standing in the clearing of being, we are the ones sent, the ones admitted to the time-game-space. This means we are the ones needed and used in and for this playing field, needed and used to work and build upon the clearing of being" (SG 146).

Heidegger explains that this metaphor of the game refers to what he previously called transcendence or the understanding of being. "In the as

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yet rather awkward and provisional language of the treatise *Sein und Zeit* this means: the basic character of Dasein, which is man, is determined by the understanding of being" (SG 146). Man is brought to his essence as the one who understands being precisely by death, his finite mortality. He understands being, he relates to being in the finite manner proper to him, insofar as he exists as being-unto-death, just as, vice versa, he exists as being-unto-death, and relates properly to his own death, insofar as he is the one who understands being. Both these determinations are united in his essence. In the newer manner of speaking, he is involved in the sublime game precisely as the mortal.

But the mortal is not only "brought" into the game; he is also "placed" in it (SG 187). He is never a mere spectator, but essentially a participant. Moreover, he cannot participate externally without interior involvement, for the outcome of the game is of vital importance to him. His own existence is at stake, for his essence is constituted by his very participation in the game. If the game is 'lost,' he loses his own essence; he lives inauthentically in the preoccupation with mere beings and never comes to the realization of the mystery of being. This game is accordingly a matter of life and death, in the deep ontological sense that man's very essence is at stake. Thus everything hinges upon man's playing properly and wholeheartedly. His participation in this game is, in fact, the authenticity of his existence.

We can summarize this analysis as follows.

a. As the extreme, all-embracing possibility of Dasein, death is both actively and passively the measure of man's essence, as it is of being itself, since it gathers man together in a totality and in his orientation to being, even though man is not capable of adequately measuring being, which is precisely the immeasurable.

b. Death is the measure of the immeasurable in the double sense of objective and subjective genitive. Being as the immeasurable is both the 'object' which is measured by death and the 'agent' which sends death to man as the measure of his being. Death is thus the messenger of being, which mediates to man his own essence and the presencing of being itself.

c. Through death, i.e., through his own essential mortality, man is involved in the sublimest game of the truth of being. His own existence is thereby at stake, for participation in this game constitutes the authenticity of his being.

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C. *Significance of These Images*

Death as an existential of Dasein is the redoubt and the measure of being, for it lifts man out of the totality of beings and gathers him together in his orientation toward being, which conceals itself in death or, to put it another way, communicates itself to man in death as the measure of man's essence and of being itself. Several conclusions follow which are of vital importance for the relationship between being, man, and death in Heidegger's thought.

First, death as the redoubt and measure of being contains the ultimate meaning of human existence. Death lets all beings sink away into nothingness; thus it teaches that the authentic meaning of Dasein does not lie in the realm of beings, neither in any single individual being, nor in Dasein itself as an individual being, nor in the totality of beings. The meaning of man thus lies higher than beings, even higher than being itself, if this is considered solely as the being of beings. It lies rather in the sublime game of being itself, which transcends the presencing of being as the ground of beings.

Put in another way the meaning of man's existence consists precisely in his playing along in the game of the event of being, in his specific role as the finite-mortal time-game-space of this game. It lies in his cooperation in the self-illumination of being, which takes place in the double mode of communicating and withdrawing, of revealing and concealing itself. Man's participation in this process is his ex-istence, his standing-forth into the twofold motion of truth as *aletheia*, and his collaboration in the work of producing the distinction between being and beings.

The second consequence of this new aspect of Heidegger's thought about death is that being takes on a much more explicitly historical character. It sends itself epochally, and forms the all-comprehensive horizon of the total world view, the understanding of being, and the self-understanding of each particular historical era. Being appears as the "spirit of the age" (GL 18). Since death is the redoubt and the measure of being, it becomes now the key to this comprehensive horizon of understanding. Death reveals the manner in which being shows itself to the men of a particular age. In order to determine how the men of a certain epoch understand their own existence, their world, and being in general, one must investigate their concept of death. In order to answer the question what is the world view of a particular age, how does being appear

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to a particular historical people, one must first know how they feel about death.

Furthermore, death is the key to the understanding of being not only for the outsider who is observing or studying a particular group of men, but also for the men of that age themselves. Thus we can say quite generally that the understanding of being, in the sense of one's total world view, must ultimately hinge upon one's understanding of death. How one looks upon the world as a whole derives necessarily from the manner in which one looks upon himself as mortal. It is man's understanding of death that determines his total understanding of the world, of being, and of himself because death, on the one hand, is the determining, all-embracing existential of Dasein, and is thereby the central element of man's understanding of himself, and, on the other hand, is the redoubt of being and thus the outstanding locus of the self-interpretation or the self-revelation of being itself. } 2  
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Seen from the viewpoint of the finitude of man, and of being as it reveals itself, death is the existential basis and the profoundest sign of the essential finitude of man. Consequently, one authentically understands man's existence to the extent that one understands death. Similarly, death is the place in Dasein in which the finite presencing of being finds its sharpest expression, for it is in death that being shows itself in its greatest negativity, by revealing itself precisely through the complete concealing of itself. Accordingly, one authentically understands being to the extent that one understands death, which is the structural element of Dasein in which the finite negativized presencing of being appears in a unique and most distinctive way.

Heidegger gives expression to the decisive significance of death for the revealing, concealing, and measuring of being in the following formulation: "as the extreme possibility of Dasein, death is capable of the greatest lighting-up of being and its truth" (SG 186-87) This can now be understood as follows: the understanding of death is capable of liberating man from his inauthentic relationships to beings and thus freeing his gaze to look upon being, which constitutes the authentic meaning of his existence. Moreover, the understanding of death is the key to, and therefore the origin and ground of, man's total understanding of himself, the world, and being; this is true not only of individual men, but also of all the epochs of human history. } 221 ! ?

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which Dasein fulfills its existence. Moreover, it is not simply another structure like many others, but it is *the* structure which primarily determines man's essence and renders existence possible. Being-unto-death is the essential ground of man's finite understanding of being. In other words, being-mortal is the origin of man's ability to participate in the sublime game of the self-illumination of being. Man plays as the required finite game-space of the time-game of being: he can only play insofar as he is the finite-temporal mortal. It is important to note that death is thereby given a very positive function in Heidegger's existential thought. It is precisely the structure which allows man to enter into his essence, and thereby lies at the basis of his relation to being.

Furthermore, death is the redoubt and the measure of being. Accordingly, far from being that which definitively seals off the horizon of man, death is that which definitively opens his view toward being itself. Death is considered not as something which closes the door, but as the key which unlocks it. It is the place of being's greatest illumination, the locus of the concealing-revealing event of truth, the most highly concentrated gathering of the mystery of being itself (cf. SG 186-87, VA 256, US 23).

This positive view, which sees death and finitude in the light of being, explains why Heidegger's later image of man is no longer heroic-tragic, but bears the traits of reverence, readiness for service, and serenity. As the mortal, man belongs to the quadrate; his task is to 'spare' or nurture the four regions and thus to take care of being, which comes to its self-manifestation by means of the mirroring game of the four elements (VA 150-51, 178). He is the participating and cooperating playing field of the sublime game of being (SG 146). As such, man belongs to being: "man's essence as such is attentive, because he belongs to the calling command, to the presencing [of being]" (SF 28). He is present for the sake of being: "We are ourselves only . . . insofar as we point to that which withdraws itself. This pointing (*Weisen*) is our essence (*Wesen*)" (VA 135).

Man's essential assignment is to wait upon the "advent of the favor" of being; as long as this continues, he dwells humanly on the earth (VA 204). He can in no way force being, but only hold himself ready for its arrival (US 32, 154, WP 46) and prepare the way for it through his thought (VA foreword, SF 42, US 197-98, 361). Everything therefore depends on "whether we are waiting and watching, watchers who see to it that . . . the stillness of the appeal contained in the word of being triumphs" (SG 209). The essential role of the mortals is to wait; "thus

In the Heideggerian writings in which the turning takes place, the finite presencing of being is evidenced in at least three ways. First, being "presences" (*west*) as the horizon of man's transcendence; as such, it appears as a nothing, the negation of all beings, because it itself is no particular being. Second, it manifests itself in the structuredness of a world, which is always a definite, determined, and limited world, a particular world of a particular Dasein. Third, it appears as the open in which everything man encounters opens itself to his confrontation, as the unconcealedness which allows everything man experiences to become revealed to him, as the truth which illumines everything true while remaining hidden itself. Being manifests itself by simultaneously unveiling beings and veiling itself. Since it can reveal itself only by refusing to unveil itself, only by concealing itself, it is penetrated by a 'not' or a negativity. It is negativized in its very appearance, and comes to presence as finite. In all these modes of its presencing, being appears to finite man as finite.

The trait of limitation in the appearing of being remains in all the later variations of the theme of being revealing itself to man. As *physis* and *ousia* in the thinking of the Greeks, being is the emerging and abiding holding sway which rules over man by surrendering itself to his power-activity, while still remaining the unconquerable, overpowering force. As *logos* or gathering, it is according to Heraclitus also *polemos*, the primordial strife, the original sundering by which being splits itself up into beings while nevertheless remaining gathered within itself. As the combination of *einai* and *noein* in the thought of Parmenides, it is the primordial unity of the emerging and abiding holding sway (a unity which antecedes the dichotomy of subject and object) into which man is incorporated as the perceiver who brings the ever moving process of being to successive halts in beings. As the origin of all history, being is the self-communicating originator of each succeeding epoch, which, however, withdraws itself in the very act of self-communication. In art, being puts itself to work, again in a historical way, so that it always bears a definite historical stamp. Being in poetry is the holy which sends its message to man, but shows itself precisely in this message as incomprehensibly elevated, as the fullness overflowing its own bounds, as the ever constant new beginning, as what is nearest to man and yet farthest removed from him, in short, as absolute mystery. In language, being itself speaks, but in such a way that it needs human speaking in order to make itself heard. In the

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essence of things, being is present as world, as the particular historical structuredness of the four regions of being which constitute the quadrate; in revealing the essence of things, however, it remains concealed.

The finitude of being is quite different from the finitude of Dasein. Dasein is finite because it exists as being-unto-death. Being, on the other hand, is finite insofar as it appears only in finite Dasein and in finite beings for the sake of Dasein. The finitude of being thus connotes two things (1) dependence upon man, who understands being in a questioning way and therefore is capable of letting being appear; (2) the necessity of being to appear in something other than itself, in some particular being—whether this be a particular being as such or the totality of beings, or history or art or poetry or language or the essence of things—in which being must conceal itself in order to appear at all. The finitude of being therefore arises from its character as a phenomenon, as something manifesting itself to man. To distinguish this finitude from the *existential* finitude of man, which has its roots in the existential structure of being-unto-death, we could call the finitude of being, which is grounded in its character as a phenomenon, *phenomenal* finitude.

Even though the finitude of man and the finitude of being are quite different from each other, still they are inseparable. Being shows itself as a phenomenon only insofar as it appears in and through Dasein. Likewise man is man only insofar as he primordially understands and questions being in his character as being-unto-death, or, in other words, insofar as he dwells in the nearness of being as the mortal. But this mutual dependence of being and man does not mean a relationship between two elements of the same nature and equal value. The relationship is marked by a single definite direction, which corresponds to the ontological priority of being over Dasein. Heidegger's early investigations, especially in *Sein und Zeit*, seem to indicate that the initiative and priority are on the side of Dasein, but after the turning being clearly dominates. This is the most profound meaning of the turning which we have interpreted as the central movement of Heidegger's thought. The subordinate position of man and the primacy of being, established through the turning, are abundantly corroborated in the later discussions of history, poetry, art, language, and things.

### III. Heidegger's Image of Man

In the early phase of Heidegger's thought, in *Sein und Zeit*, man appears as a heroic-tragic figure. Completely reduced to his own individual re-

sources by his being-unto-death, Dasein must seek authenticity in the existentiell acceptance of his own existential structure of finitude. At the middle stage of the journey, in the consolidation of the turning through the analyses of *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, this image is still predominant. Nevertheless, one can sense the beginning of a change in the appearance of a certain reverence for being as the overpowering force, which finite, 'breakable' man is deputed to serve and administer.

At the end of the investigation, the attitude of reverence has fully supplanted the heroic-tragic characteristics of *Sein und Zeit*. Man is still finite, but his finitude no longer finds expression in a seemingly stubborn and rebellious acceptance of his own nature, but in a relaxed acknowledgment of the task of living upon the earth in the nearness of being for the sake of the self-illumination of being. Finite man is the servant of being, serene in his relation to things and open to the mystery of being.

#### A. *The First Stage*

Before the turning Heidegger's thought proceeds from Dasein toward being. In *Sein und Zeit* Dasein occupies center stage, both as the starting point and the object of the inquiry. Dasein is to be investigated as a phenomenon. It is to show itself, and is to be understood only from itself. To be sure, this total investigation is to serve as a preparation for the interrogation of the meaning of being. But this means two things

1. Dasein is to be understood from the viewpoint of Dasein alone. This leads to the appearance of complete autonomy on the part of Dasein. There is only one way for Dasein to achieve authenticity—it must accept itself and everything else as an element of its own phenomenological investigation. In this sense, Dasein, purely from the method of questioning employed, is reduced completely to its own resources and closed up within itself. The totality of this attempt to understand itself only from itself is guaranteed precisely by man's being-unto-death, for every man has only his own death to die. Moreover, he must die this death alone, for any help which might possibly come to him from others remains something external to the dying man himself.

2. The self-understanding of Dasein points beyond itself to the question of being. The existential analysis serves to work out only one element of the being-question, namely, the structure of the questioner, and is thus undertaken only with a view toward the subsequent investigation of the other moment of the question, the meaning of being itself. This means

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As the most powerful among all beings he is a mighty warrior, a titanic hero, who paradoxically must be shattered in the very performance of his assigned task.

Since this task is assigned to him by being itself, his essential role is to serve being. By accepting his own breakable and mortal Dasein, he is accordingly speaking his most profound 'yes' to the overpowering force of being. He can still be looked upon as a heroic-tragic figure, because he still has a titanic task as the most uncanny and most powerful of all beings. But now his existence has a meaning which goes beyond himself, namely his service of being. Although he himself must be shattered in the performance of the task, still his existence has nobility and meaning because of the master he serves. This new trait in Heidegger's image of man springs from the fact that being has now won a position of superiority over man, in other words, from the fact that the turning has taken place.

### C. *The Final Stage*

In the later works being is the determining factor, that which communicates itself, puts itself to work; it is the holy and the sublime, the self-expressing speaker, the ever new beginning, that which comes to presence in things and emerges in the quadrate. The authentically dwelling man sees himself being carried along by being, spoken to by being in all beings, and living under the claim of being. He no longer confronts his own finite existence alone and anxious, but dwells serenely and securely in the hiddenness of being.

Being is the unchallenged superior power which shows man the favor of needing and using him. Man is still the most uncannily powerful of all beings, but his power-activity consists in his administering and preserving the power of being among beings and in history. Insofar as he dwells authentically, he sojourns serenely among things. By his sparing and nurturing attitude toward things, he preserves his openness to being, which communicates itself to him in death and yet remains hidden as the ultimate mystery. In the face of the universal priority of being, man is the expectant and respectful shepherd of being. His authenticity is his relaxed serenity toward beings and his openness to mystery.

Thus, the transformation in the image of man stands in direct relationship to the transformation in the relation between man and being which we have called Heidegger's turning. The image of man changes

according to the varying perspectives of the different stages of Heidegger's way, so that the three sketches we have drawn correspond to Heidegger's thought before, in, and after the turning. The turning thus shows itself to be the key to the unity of Heidegger's entire thought.

#### IV. Heidegger's View of Death

It remains to explicitate the significance of the turning for Heidegger's conception of death. In *Sein und Zeit* death appears as the extreme possibility of Dasein; at the end of the way it is the redoubt of being. Is this the same view of death?

##### A. Death as the Extreme Possibility of Dasein

As the extreme possibility of Dasein, death is the existential of totality which completes the self-understanding of Dasein. Existentially considered, death is Dasein's being in relation to its end and the ultimate horizon of its power-to-be and ability to understand itself. As this horizon, death is present implicitly in every realization of existence. It tells Dasein that the last and most all-embracing and most comprehensive thing which Dasein can do and be is being-unto-death. Since being-unto-death offers the possibility of understanding Dasein in its totality it is at the same time the necessary condition for the authenticity of Dasein. Speaking concretely, the authenticity of Dasein consists in its conscious and willing acceptance of its own being-unto-death, for authentic existence and authentic being-unto-death are one and the same.

The preceding refers, of course, to the self-understanding of Dasein before the turning, in the context of the attempt to understand Dasein only in and through itself and from the viewpoint of its own structures. But immediately after the turning death appears in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* as the shattering against being. The significance of this title is that death is no longer seen merely from the viewpoint of Dasein in its own structures, but from the viewpoint of Dasein precisely in its relation to being. Shattering against being connotes that there is an inner relationship between Dasein's being-toward-death and Dasein's essential task of being the breach through which being breaks into history. In this new perspective, Dasein is being-toward-death precisely because it is the breach of being.

This new view of death is developed more fully in the later writings.

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who understands himself only on his own terms, from his own viewpoint, and with reference only to himself, liberated from all entangling relations to other beings and all illusions of the "people-self," sure of himself and only of himself because he sees and understands everything in relation to himself, feeling anxiety in the face of death because death is nothing more than the possibility of the impossibility of existence, "the shrine of nonbeing."

But the turning brings to man's finitude a new dimension and new depth. Man remains finite, because he remains being-unto-death, now called "the mortal." But seen in the context of the questioning of being itself, this now means that he is the mortal in order that he can be of service to being in its simultaneous self-revelation and self-concealment, in the historical event of its self-concealing revelation. The existential finitude of man receives its meaning from the phenomenal finitude of being, from being as the phenomenon *par excellence* which shows itself precisely by withdrawing itself.

Man's authentic finitude thus consists of a new kind of freedom. Instead of a freedom based upon a stubbornly self-assertive advancing against death, we find a relaxed accompanying of one's own nature toward its highest self-fulfillment in death, a calm acceptance and affirmation of one's own capacity for death which lets one's own self and all other beings be what they are, and thereby acknowledges Dasein's position of service with regard to being. This acceptance is a new kind of withstanding or enduring of death as Dasein's most proper and extreme possibility, but this now means an enduring of finitude in the service of being. This attitude is no longer marked by anxiety, but by calm self-composure and attentiveness, for death is no longer merely the shrine of nonbeing, but "as the shrine of nonbeing, the redoubt of being."

Accordingly the authentic dwelling of the mortals after the turning is no longer described as a passionate advancing toward death, but rather as a relaxed accompanying of one's own capacity to die up to the accomplishment of a good death. Each of these formulations bespeaks an acceptance of death as that which renders possible authentic finitude. Before the turning, however, the death which is accepted is understood merely as a structure of Dasein, whereas after the turning it is both an endowment and an assignment of Dasein given it by being itself. The ontological individuation of Dasein standing alone in its finitude, which could not help but suggest an attitude of stubborn resistance or, at best, disgruntled

keeps the problematic of *Sein und Zeit* open for a further evolution of the question of being. Since death cannot be fully incorporated into the structure of Dasein in its questioning of the meaning of being, or, in other words, since death cannot be understood solely on the basis of the structure of Dasein itself, the ultimate ground of death, and thereby the ground of Dasein as a whole, must be sought in some 'other.' In the writings in which the turning takes place, the 'other' proves to be being itself, which is simply superior to Dasein and beyond Dasein's control or disposition. Death is thus the element which makes it possible for Heidegger to make the transition from the element of the questioner (Dasein) to the element of that-which-is-questioned (being) within the total context of the being-question. Death enables him to continue his journey from the analysis of Dasein to the turning toward being itself.

The later writings further confirm the fact that death represents the point of Dasein's openness to being itself. Death as the "redoubt of being" and the "measure of the immeasurable" is the preeminent locus of being's hiddenness and self-revelation. As such, it is the point where Dasein is precisely not closed within itself but rather open to something other—to being itself. Death plays a dual role in the structure of Dasein. On one hand, it is the epitome of the finitude of Dasein, while on the other, it reveals the deepest ground and meaning of this finitude—Dasein's openness to being.

### V *The Phenomenon of Death*

The previous presentation has often emphasized the distinction between ontic-existential and ontological-existential death. It has also shown that Heidegger is primarily, and indeed exclusively, concerned with existential death, death as an ontological structure of existing Dasein. But it has also made manifest the somewhat untidy fact that these two aspects of death cannot be completely separated. Death can play its distinctive and all-important ontological role in Heidegger's thought only because it retains its ontic-existential reality. The uniqueness of death lies precisely in the fact that it is both ontic and ontological.

While the ontological side of death, according to Heidegger's central insight and prime intention, receives extensive treatment, the ontic aspect remains almost completely ignored. To be sure, this is dictated by Heideg-