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Primordial Freedom: The Authentic Truth of Dasein in Heidegger's 'Being and Time'

Craig M. Nichols

Heidegger's project of an existential fundamental ontology in *Being and Time*¹ is novel in so many ways that one can easily lose sight of what Heidegger is actually

¹ References to *Being and Time* will be indicated in the body of the text with SZ, followed by the page number of the original German edition [Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993)] and the page number of Joan Stambaugh's recent translation [Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of "Sein und Zeit,"* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996)]. I have chosen to highlight Stambaugh's translation for two reasons. In the first place, her renderings go a long way toward breaking apart certain locutions which have tended toward a rigid "scholasticization" of Heideggerian thought. Second, Stambaugh has a particular sensitivity to the influence of German idealism on Heidegger's thought and reflects this in various translation choices, whereas the standard Macquarrie and Robinson translation—certainly an outstanding achievement in its own right—in my opinion, fails to capture this crucial aspect of Heidegger's masterwork in a sufficient manner. For example, Stambaugh's rendering of *Vorhandenheit* as "objective presence" not only preserves the essential meaning of the "present at hand" (as Macquarrie and Robinson have it), but also highlights the fact that many of Heidegger's formulations in *Being and Time* have a notably Kantian resonance (and this vis-à-vis Hegel, I would argue). Nevertheless, for the sake of uniformity, I have rendered the technical term "Dasein" without

trying to accomplish. For instance, it is all too seldom recognized that Heidegger is undertaking both a deepening and an overturning of German idealism's conception of freedom.² That a "positive" conception of freedom guides the later Heidegger's thought becomes ever clearer after the *Kehre* of c. 1930. But what has not always been so clear to Heidegger's interpreters is the fact that the early Heidegger is pursuing this concept with equal intensity. The point of this essay will be to show that *Being and Time* itself is fundamentally concerned with the problem of freedom—more so perhaps than with the problems of being or time! One might even say that primordial freedom is the meaning of the unifying "and" of *Being and Time*, and hence more fundamental than either of the two concepts considered alone. Furthermore, an analysis of Heidegger's conception of freedom in *Being and Time* will make it easier to understand the meaning behind the later Heidegger's ubiquitous insistence that the essence of truth is freedom.³ This essay will therefore discuss Heidegger's "positive" conception of freedom in *Being and Time*—i.e., a freedom which finds its meaningfulness only in the "light" of its historical constraints. Such an understanding of freedom—freedom with a content, a "toward which"—stands as an alternative to the common, "ordinary" understanding of what may be called "negative" freedom, an uncritically conceived notion of freedom understood as a mere lack of restraint, or simply a freedom *from*.

The centrality of the concept of freedom in *Being and Time* begins to manifest itself in Heidegger's analysis of the ontological structure of *Sorge*, (care, the meaning of the being of Dasein—the appearance of the "in itself" of Dasein). The phenomenon of *Sorge* is initially grasped out of the need to circumscribe the totality of the structural whole of Dasein, which is tersely defined as "*entangled-disclosed, thrown-projecting being-in-the-world which is concerned with its ownmost potentiality in its being-together with the 'world' and in being-with with the others*" (emphasis in original; SZ 181/170). Just as Heidegger's prior discussion of the phenomenon of

hyphenation (Stambaugh has "Da-sein" to indicate Heidegger's special use of the term: literally, "there-being").

- ² This essay is borne out of the greater context of developing an interpretation of Heidegger's thought which recognizes his entire *Denkweg* to be understandable only in terms of his appropriational confrontation with German idealism in general, and Hegel in particular. Heidegger's concept of freedom in *Being and Time* represents a crucial aspect of that confrontation.
- ³ Note especially his development of this conception in the 1930 essay, "On the Essence of Truth," an essay Heidegger declares to be the key "moment" of his *Kehre* [Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 136-54].

worldhood forbade an ontic piling of entities one upon another to achieve an *universum*, so also the totality of Dasein forbids such a manner of disclosure. Rather, Heidegger isolates the phenomenon of *Angst*, which he considers to be one of the most far reaching and most primordial possibilities of disclosure, and uses it as the phenomenal basis for the revelation of the totality of Dasein as *Sorge*. *Angst*, (the oppressive nature of the *nothingness* encountered in Dasein's authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world; the fact that Dasein might *not* actualize its *being*—i.e., might not *be*—authentically; SZ 187/175), discloses Dasein's fundamental possibility of "*being free for the freedom of choosing and grasping itself*" (emphasis in original; SZ 188/176). And this is its ownmost potentiality of being. The uncanny nature of *Angst*, the existential "not-being-at-home with one's self," reveals Dasein as always already ahead of itself, always "beyond itself," thrown into a world of possibilities which it may or may not actualize for itself (SZ 191-92/178-79). *Besorgen*, (the essential "being concerned about," or "taking care," which was previously determined to characterize the "for-the-sake-of-which" of worldliness in general), is shown to depend upon *Sorge*, Dasein's "being-ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-a-world." Likewise, *Sorge* explains the *Fürsorge* (concern) revealed in our relations (*Mitsein*) with the others we encounter in the world (*Mitdasein*) (SZ 193/180).

In thus circumscribing the structural whole of Dasein, *Sorge* emerges as the primordial, unifying phenomenon between the traditional schism of theory and praxis, (thematized by Plato and taken up into the Kantian architectonic as the division between phenomena and noumena, or theoretical vs. practical reason). This is due to Heidegger's revolutionary conception of freedom—a *freedom as revelation* which not only founds the very possibility of something like a "free will," but also the disclosure of beings. In Dasein's "being-ahead-of-itself" (in *Sorge*), beings are "freed up" to be the kind of beings which they potentially "are" (in our prethematic use of them), and at the same time (*gleichursprünglich*) Dasein is thrown into its potentiality for becoming an authentic self (through its quasi-ethical deseverance from *Das Man*, the inauthentic "they-self") (SZ 193/180). Freedom is thus thought by Heidegger as Dasein's authentic potentiality for being, a potentiality which reveals the being of beings as they are "in themselves," including both innerworldly beings and Dasein itself. *Sorge* makes possible Dasein's self-actualization, its "realization," both conceptually and practically, of its concrete, *existentiell* potentiality. This "realization" is attained in the freedom of resoluteness.

Resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) indicates for Heidegger the authentic mode of being-toward-death (i.e., the existentially constitutive anticipation of the ultimate nonrelational possibility of Dasein) in which Dasein "owns up" to the *nihil*, the abyss, present within itself (i.e., the nothingness encountered within the meaningful

horizon of its own being). By veiling Dasein's ownmost nonrelational possibility through the several modes of falling prey—idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity (SZ 166-80/156-68)—“the they” constantly endeavors to tranquilize and soothe Dasein in the face of the nothingness of death; “*the they does not permit the courage to have Angst about death,*” says Heidegger (emphasis in original; SZ 254/235). Resoluteness consists in the freedom from the they attained in becoming free for one's own death (SZ 264/243-44). Heidegger thus summarizes authentic, existentially projected being-toward-death as the revelation of a primordial freedom: “*Anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility to be itself, primarily unsupported by concerned taking care of things, but to be itself in passionate anxious freedom toward death which is free of the illusions of the they, factual, and certain of itself*” (emphasis in original; SZ 266/245). Dasein recovers or retrieves its “self” from the they-self by making the decision not to simply go with the flow of average everydayness, but rather, in a concerted “making up for not choosing,” Dasein must adhere to the disclosive call of conscience, which summons Dasein to its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self (SZ 267-69/247-49).

Heidegger's play on the term *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness) indicates that freedom is in fact the fundamental category underlying the entire movement of thought throughout his deconstructive fundamental ontology. Meaning literally “unlockedness”—being freed and open for some possibility (ultimately death)⁴—*Entschlossenheit* is the most primordial truth of Dasein (SZ 297/273). For Heidegger (both early and late), authentic philosophy is discourse concerning the possibility and actuality of freedom. By opposing Kant's conception of authentic freedom as the autonomous self-determination of the will (*Willkür*) guided by the moral law (*Wille*), Heidegger attempts to retrieve the meaning of authentic freedom as it reveals itself as the constitutive nature of the prethematic unity of theoretical and practical reason (i.e., the “truth” of *Sorge*—being “true” to its “self”—is *Entschlossenheit*).

Heidegger's attempt to discover the original unity of theoretical and practical reason, which necessarily collapses the Kantian dichotomy between truth and freedom into one original line of questioning, gives rise to the crucial question: how can Heidegger declare that we have knowledge of things in themselves (most importantly here, the “noumenal” being of the self, which appears as the phenomenon of *Sorge*) and yet also retain the Kantian demand that knowledge be restricted to the limits of a finite exercise of reason (a corollary of Heidegger's critique of tradi-

⁴ Cf. Joan Stambaugh's translation note (SZ 270/249).

tional metaphysics)? Heidegger solves this problem in a move very similar to Hegel—both conceive of truth as radically historical—however, Heidegger resists the progressive inclination of German idealism to transform finitude into a dialectical-speculative infinitude. For Heidegger, truth is first discovery (*apophansis*, “letting be seen”), and only secondarily and derivatively can it be conceived as correspondence or agreement (*copula*) between a subject and predicate (SZ 218-19/201). The appearance of beings as they are in themselves is their truth. Heidegger formulates this in terms of the originary, historical manifestation of the concept of truth—its first revelation—to the Greeks: “The being-true of the *logos* as *apophansis* is *aletheuein* in the manner of *apophainesthai*: to let beings be seen in their unconcealment (discoveredness), taking them out of their concealment” (SZ 219/202). Truth is thus *a-letheia*, the recovery of beings from the oblivion (*lethe*) of concealment. “Dis-covering” or “un-covering” the being of entities belongs to Dasein as a fundamental mode of being-in-the-world. We are thus always already “in the truth” (SZ 221/203), involved with it in various degrees of authenticity, insofar as we are ahead of ourselves, thrown into a world of significance. The fact that the meaningfulness of the world is always already there points to a historical dimension in every innerworldly encounter. That the meaning of the beings encountered in the world must accrue historically is a correlate of Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of temporality. For Heidegger, only an uncritical, and hence dogmatic, conception of time thinks in terms of an ontic succession of “moments.” The meaning of human being, Dasein, likewise accrues historically. This meaning is given by being itself. And yet, it is not merely passive (i.e., from the past). Dasein’s projective nature (equiprimordial with thrownness) opens a horizon of possibility for beings to manifest in novel, yet “fateful,” ways (especially Dasein’s own potentiality-of-being, which grants authentic self-disclosure). In this sense, “truth” is a locution for a historical *metaxy*⁵ of presencing between past (thrownness) and future (projection). As such, truth *initially* has nothing to do with propositions, correctness, or logic, as traditionally conceived. Rather, primordial truth as *discovery* (thrown-projective being-in-the-world) yields the *discoveredness* (the presencing of innerworldly beings) which allows derivative propositional “truth” to be correct or incorrect.

In order to illustrate Heidegger’s conception of the historical nature of truth as a solution to the phenomena/noumena, or truth/freedom dichotomy in Kant, it will

⁵ The Greek adverb *metaxy* refers to a “between” of either space or time, respectively. As such, it is a fitting expression for Heidegger’s conception of the “place” of freedom in which beings manifest as historical revelations of being.

be instructive to consider a criticism from one of Heidegger's detractors. William F. Vallicella presents a version of the not uncommon view that Heidegger's attempt at overcoming the dualism of phenomenon and thing in itself is insupportable and commits him to an implicit doctrine of things in themselves.⁶ Vallicella argues that since, for Heidegger, being "is" only so long as Dasein "is," and at the same time, beings "are" whether or not Dasein "is," Heidegger's ontological phenomenology is in fact a reduction of being to truth, which entails an idealism of being, on the one hand, and a realism of beings, on the other.⁷ Thus conceived, the essential problem is that being (the truth of beings) would be dependent upon Dasein, but not beings themselves. Beings would still be "there" in some sense, but they would not be manifest, or cleared (which requires Dasein). For instance, if the result of a nuclear holocaust were the extinction of every Dasein from the face of the earth, nevertheless, Vallicella argues, there would still be entities (rocks, bacteria, etc.) surviving annihilation, but they would simply have no truth; they would exist as they are "in themselves," without the forms of appearance pertaining to the conditions of a possible experience. Thus, according to Vallicella, Heidegger conceives of being as "the extrinsic aletheiological condition of the revelation of beings."⁸ Conceiving of being as both truth and as intrinsic to beings would be an equivocation because the ontological difference lying at the heart of Heidegger's enterprise insists that being is the condition for the revelation of beings, not their common structure or cause. Therefore, wanting to have it both ways, Heidegger's "overcoming" of the Kantian dualism of phenomenon and thing in itself is an illusory victory.⁹ But this view misses the subtlety of Heidegger's temporal interpretation of *Sorge*.

Vallicella's argument is negatively useful in that it brings to light the meaning of being-in-the-world as a fundamental-ontological hermeneutical circle. Indeed, Heidegger *does* say that "being (not beings) is dependent upon the understanding of being, that is, reality (not the real) is dependent upon care" (SZ 212/196), and also, "*In accordance with the essential kind of being appropriate to Dasein, all truth is relative to the being of Dasein*" (emphasis in original; SZ 227/208). Nevertheless, there is no dogmatic presupposition in these statements of a dichotomous subject-object relation preexisting the manifestation of beings in their truth (i.e., as they are in

⁶ William F. Vallicella, "Kant, Heidegger, and the Problem of the Thing in Itself," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (March 1983): 35-44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

themselves). Heidegger also acknowledges that the earth would not disappear (in Berkeleyan fashion) with the annihilation of every Dasein (SZ 211-12/196). However, with the annihilation of Dasein, the earth would cease to be a “world.” And what is “the earth” if not an extant entity which is itself phenomenally dependent upon Dasein as being-in-the-world? The world (i.e., worldhood) is phenomenologically prior to the earth (i.e., the ontic conception of a planetary body which “contains” the sufficient ontic substances to support biological life, etc.). Arguments such as Vallicella’s either misconceive or ignore the phenomenon of being-in-the-world, which indicates that we are always already “in” a meaningful relationship with innerworldly beings. Calls for proof of the reality or existence of the “external world,” to which Kant himself succumbed (SZ 204/189), always come too late. Being has already revealed beings before the question of the reality of beings can be raised. Therefore, counterfactually positing a “world” without Dasein becomes either nonsensical or superfluous.¹⁰ Indeed, cockroaches, bacteria, and the like will probably outlive Dasein on the earth. But, *if so*, they will certainly not “*be* there,” and thus the “if so” itself will vanish. Such counterfactual claims resort to a precritical dogmatism which attributes an unjustified ontic status to subjects and objects and likewise elevates the traditional canon of logic to an infinite, atemporal role as arbiter of meaningfulness within a finite, temporal cosmos. Vallicella’s presupposition that being must be either intrinsic or extrinsic to beings falls into this precritical

¹⁰ Note, Heidegger is not saying that it is meaningless to speak about a time that either pre- or postdates Dasein. Rather, because Dasein exists *now*, we are granted the possibility of speculation concerning a time when Dasein “*was* not” or “*will* not *be*.” For instance, speculation concerning prehistoric animal, geological, or even cosmological entities is meaningful only because these past entities stand in a particular historical relation to Dasein. That is, these entities have meaning only in relation to Dasein’s historicity and, therefore, speaking of them as a part of our “world” (or any other derivative conception of “world,” for that matter) is only possible because Dasein is the kind of being which is characterized by worldhood (i.e., Dasein is the particular being whose being is constituted by always already being-in-a-world). Heidegger states this point clearly in the following passage with reference to the possibility of conceiving of entities which postdate Dasein: “The fact that reality is ontologically grounded in the being of Dasein cannot mean that something real can only be what it is in itself when and as long as Dasein exists. . . . However, only as long as Dasein *is*, that is, as long as there is the ontic possibility of an understanding of being, ‘is there’ [*gibt es*] being. If Dasein does not exist, then there ‘is’ no ‘independence’ either, nor ‘is’ there an ‘in itself.’ Such matters are then neither comprehensible nor incomprehensible. Innerworldly beings, too, can neither be discovered, nor can they lie in concealment. *Then* it can neither be said that beings are, nor that they are not. *Now*, as long as there is an understanding of being and thus an understanding of objective presence [*Vorhandenheit*], we can say that *then* beings will still continue to be” (SZ 211-12/196).

cal paradigm. Rather, being has already revealed beings in their truth (*an sich*) to Dasein through the disclosive nature of Dasein's being-in-the-world before any conception of "inner and outer," "subject and object," or "intrinsic and extrinsic" can show itself.

A possible reason that some of Heidegger's interpreters have fallen into this dogmatic trap is a failure to grasp the significance of Hegel for Heidegger's fundamental ontology. If one understands the relationship between transcendental subjectivity and the emergence of the objectivity of objects within that sphere to be an essentially static, ahistorical relation (as Kant does), then a veil is immediately cast over the historicity of innerworldly beings—they thus *seem* to be things which "were there" (ontically and atemporally) prior to our encounter with them. Even though Heidegger accounted Hegel subject to the vulgar conception of time and an elevator of traditional logic to metaphysical status, he nevertheless learned the lesson from Hegel (originally through the lenses of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, but later through a direct, appropriative *Auseinandersetzung*) that Kant's conception of objectivity must be transformed into an historical process of becoming. Hegel overcame the Kantian phenomena/noumena dichotomy by elevating the finite Kantian ground of the possibility of experience (transcendental apperception) to a dialectical-speculative, in-finite (i.e., "non-foundational") process of becoming—a process which is itself finite in the special sense that it attains "closure" in the system of absolute Spirit (*Geist*). The novelty in Heidegger's solution to the basic problems raised by German idealism, (which culminate in the problem of freedom, understood by Hegel to mean the Self-actualization of absolute Spirit), reveals itself in the way in which he removes the *negatively conceived* Kantian thing in itself while retaining Kantian finitude. He cuts a path between Kant and Hegel, so to speak, by "retrieving" the conception of primordial time from the midst of the Kantian architectonic (i.e., from the Schematism) and thereby shows both Dasein and innerworldly beings to be subject to the historicity of being. He is in this way able to provide a counter-position to Hegel's absolute position within the tradition, a position in which temporality is taken up into logic. Heidegger reverses Hegel's ontotheo-logic with his novel conception: *being is time* (i.e., the meaning (*Sinn*) of being (*Sein*) is revealed to be primordial time). In this way he demonstrates why the "in itself" of innerworldly beings (which presences as truth) is radically historical. Because being "is" time, beings are revealed not "in time," but "from time itself." This becomes clear in Heidegger's account of temporality as the ontological meaning of care.

In searching for the ontological meaning of care, (the being of the “in itself” of Dasein¹¹), Heidegger must raise the question of the meaning of being in general, for this is what makes the meaning of Dasein’s being possible in the first place. What is meaning? For Heidegger, meaning signifies that “toward-which” (*Woraufhin*)¹² a possibility is projected (SZ 324/298). Projecting discloses that “something” which makes something (i.e., a being) possible. What is projected as the possible being-a-whole of Dasein (through anticipatory resoluteness toward death) is the authentic being of Dasein. But since Dasein’s being is never an actual (*wirklich*) whole, it “is” fundamentally as authentic possibility (*Möglichkeit*). That which makes Dasein’s authentic potentiality possible is the projected understanding of being as the source (*Ursprung*) of the meaning of Dasein’s being; or, as Heidegger puts it, “meaning signifies the upon-which [sic, *Woraufhin*] of the primary project of the understanding of being” (SZ 324/298). What does projection mean in this context? It is a mistake, (all too often made), to think of projection as the subjective act of an agent, casting meaning forth upon the beings it encounters (including itself). Projection is rather Dasein’s hermeneutical situation of standing open in the revelation of being. The projection of the toward-which (a situation into which we are thrown) opens a horizon of meaning within which being can reveal beings as meaningful. The horizon of meaning thus opened up signifies the essential range (*horos*: boundary, limit, definition) of the possibility of a being *as* the sort of thing that it “is.” Every experience of beings, (whether one has in mind innerworldly beings, the being of others, or the self-understanding of Dasein), is grounded in a projection of the meaning of being in general. In this projection, meaning is *given*. It is not given by a subject—Dasein is not a subject anyhow—but by being (*Sein*) itself through the disclosiveness of Dasein’s “there” (*Da*).

¹¹ One must always keep in sharp focus the fact that care, for Heidegger, is not to be conceived ontically as a species of feeling. For instance, it does not refer merely to a worrisome mood. Rather, it defines the *a priori* ontological structure of being-in-the-world as temporally conceived.

¹² Theodore Kisiel makes a strong point in favor of rendering *Woraufhin* as “toward-which” rather than “upon-which.” He states, “*Das Worauf* is the conceptual predecessor of ‘*das Woraufhin des primären Entwurfs*’ (SZ 324), ‘the toward-which of the primary project’ of Dasein which in BT [*Being and Time*] is formally defined as its ‘sense’ (*Sinn*). It already means ‘meaning’ in the transcendental context of early 1919. From this earlier context of its genesis, we also see why the English translation of this crucial term in BT as the ‘upon-which’ is in need of teleological correction” [Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), n. 16, 518].

Projecting thus means opening oneself to being, which Dasein always already does as factually existing (although it has within its charge the decision of doing so authentically or inauthentically). Beings “presence” in this opening (horizon), an opening “freed up” by the temporalizing of Dasein (which in turn makes possible the meaning of Dasein’s being as care). We are now in a position to understand the definition of care which encompasses its total structure; care is “ahead-of-itself-already-being-in (a world) as being-together-with (beings encountered within the world)” (SZ 327/300). The three modes of temporality—future, past, and present—are implicit in this definition. Being ahead-of-itself describes the projective aspect of Dasein’s constitution, the fact that it “is” always already *beyond* its present actuality by “being” existentially, here and now, its *future* possibilities. However, Dasein always already “finds” itself thrown into this situation, hence indicating that it “is,” here and now, as already *having been* thrown into its present circumstances. But again, Dasein “is” its *present* circumstances, in the here and now, as being-together-with the beings it encounters in its world, i.e., it encounters the *presence* of the beings which *present* themselves to Dasein’s circumspection. Thus, Dasein, as care, “is” existentially its future, past, and present at any given “moment.” The three temporal modes of being constitutive of Dasein *temporalize* themselves prior (*a priori*) to any linear, leveled-down conception of time such as that represented by, e.g., a biographical chronology of events “charting” the span of one’s life. Such a thing can only be conceived after, or as a result of, the primordial presencing of Dasein as a being which “is” its future, past, and present as projecting, thrown, being-in-the-world. The temporalizing of Dasein thus occurs as a circuitous “coming-to-itself” in which it first approaches (i.e., moves *forward* toward) its authentic self through resolute being-toward-death. This spontaneous, future-oriented “forward movement” enacts a retrieve of the authentic nullity, or nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*), which characterizes Dasein’s authentic response to the call of conscience. This retrieve is the authentic appropriation of being already (i.e., from the past) thrown before the *Angst* of being-toward-death. In thus coming to itself *futurally* from the *past*, Dasein discloses the meaning of being (*Sein*) as an arrival of beings (*Seienden*) in the unconcealedness of a *present* encounter (cf. SZ 323-28/297-302).

Because each of the modes of temporality indicate a different mode of openness to the revelation of being, Heidegger refers to the phenomena of expectation, having been, and enpresenting as the *ecstases* of temporality (SZ 329/302). Temporality *temporalizes* in the unity of the *ecstases* of future, past, and present. Although Heidegger lays particular emphasis on the projective *ecstasis* of futurity in *Being and Time* (he states plainly that “*The primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future*”; emphasis in original; SZ 329/303), he nevertheless is care-

ful to indicate that “temporality does not first originate through a cumulative sequence of the *ecstases*, but always temporalizes itself in their equiprimordiality” (SZ 329/302). The reason why the *ecstasis* of futurity is given primacy in the order of explicating the existential analytic of Dasein is because the entire point of *Being and Time* is to reopen the horizon of *Möglichkeit* which had been effectively closed by Hegel’s absolute System. Hegel’s System represents the culmination and inclusion of every possibility opened up by the ground-laying ontologies of Plato and Aristotle. For Hegel—and the entire Western metaphysical tradition (whether its adherents recognize it or not)—*Möglichkeit* (possibility) has given way to *Wirklichkeit* (actuality). This is the essential meaning of Hegel’s famous claim that the rational is the real (cf. *Encyclopedia Logic*, §6). Heidegger’s statement, “Higher than actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] stands possibility [*Möglichkeit*]” (SZ 38/34), at the close of the introduction to *Being and Time* is an indication that the entire “work” (indeed the entire “project” of his path of thinking) takes Hegel as its *pointe de depart*. Heidegger endeavors to deconstruct this System down to its source so as to reopen Western thinking to the possibilities it may have missed at the Presocratic inception of its thinking of being. This explains why Heidegger became especially preoccupied with Parmenides and Heraclitus following the *Kehre* (i.e., following the initial task of taking apart metaphysical thinking by working through the presuppositions of metaphysics in the late 1920s). Following this line further would lead us into the religious dimensions of Heidegger’s thought. But that would lead too far beyond our present inquiry into the early Heidegger’s interpretation of primordial freedom. It will suffice for our present purposes to show that the triune *ecstases* of temporality (with futurity at the head) point to an understanding of truth *as freedom*, made possible by a retrieval of Kantian finitude (again vis-à-vis Hegel). And this returns us to the problem of historicity.

The future is primary for Heidegger because it reveals the fundamental meaning of finitude. In his own words, “The ecstatic quality of the primordial future lies precisely in the fact that it closes the potentiality-of-being, that is, the future is itself closed and as such makes possible the resolute existentiell understanding of nullity [*Nichtigkeit*]” (SZ 330/303). Dasein, as temporally finite, is closed with regard to its possibilities; its ultimate nonrelational possibility is death, which it “is” as being-toward-death. It thus comes up against a nothingness, an abyss, within its retrieve of its authentic self from lostness to the they-self. Facing this nothing, embracing this *Angst*, involves owning up to our possibilities as *appropriating a fateful destiny*. According to Heidegger, “The resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself discloses the actual factical possibilities of authentic existing *in terms of the heritage* which that resoluteness *takes over* as thrown” (emphasis in original; SZ 383/351).

This “*handing oneself over* to traditional possibilities” enacts¹³ the primordial freedom described above as the originary unity of theoretical and practical reason. In this sense, freedom “is” fate. But fate is nothing other than authentic historicity. Heidegger’s account of this fact of existence is poignant:

Only being free *for* death gives Dasein its absolute goal and knocks existence into its finitude. The finitude of existence thus seized upon tears one back out of endless multiplicity of possibilities offering themselves nearest by—those of comfort, shirking and taking things easy—and brings Dasein to the simplicity of its *fate*. This is how we designate the primordial occurrence of Dasein that lies in authentic resoluteness in which it *hands itself down* to itself, free for death, in a possibility that it inherited and yet has chosen (SZ 384/ 351).

Resoluteness (authentic projection) delivers Dasein over to its heritage (authentic thrownness) in being free for death. Furthermore, because Dasein’s fate (*Schicksal*) is entangled with the fates of the others it encounters in the world (i.e., its being-in-the-world is a being-with-others), Dasein is revealed to have a destiny (*Geschick*). Destiny does not signify a conglomerate of individual fates, but the occurrence of a community, of a people, which is guided beforehand by an originary temporalizing revelation in its being-with-one-another in the same world. According to Heidegger, “The fateful destiny of Dasein in and with its ‘generation’ constitutes the complete, authentic occurrence of Dasein” (SZ 384-85/352). The authentic retrieve of Dasein’s fateful destiny is the appropriation of historicity. This appropriation is governed by freedom—it “is” freedom. Freedom governs the return from the they-

¹³ The “enactment” of primordial freedom, for lack of a better word, is not meant to suggest a subjective act. And yet, Heidegger himself recognized the subjective ambiguity, the metaphysical shadow, overlaying his existential analytic of Dasein. This recognition “projected” him forward into the *Kehre* and culminated in his mature thinking of *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation, or as the recent translation of Heidegger’s *Beiträge* has it, “enowning” [see Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning*, trans. Kenneth Maly and Parvis Emad (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999)]. Realizing, enacting, enowning, properizing, are various attempts to render a conception which formally names the whole of Heidegger’s path of thinking. The properizing event of being, “Its” enacting/enactment (*es gibt*), is not something an agent “does.” It is something which is freed up, let be, to happen. But this “letting be” itself can only be thought in terms of the properizing event of freedom. There are not two events here, the freedom enacted and the potential freedom lying somehow behind it. Rather, freedom names the revelatory character of the giving of being itself, *together with* what is given. The freedom of *Entschlossenheit*, “unlockedness,” is the early Heidegger’s initial breakthrough on the way toward this post-metaphysical conception of primordial freedom. A fuller discussion of the later Heidegger’s development of freedom/*Ereignis*, however, lies beyond the scope of this paper.

self to the authentic self and in this sense is Dasein's authentic "self-determination." Resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*, "unlockedness") is thus the primordial freedom of Dasein. But this very freedom is a "delivering over" to one's fateful destiny. Freedom "is," therefore, only insofar as it is historically determined. Such is the case because freedom "is" as the open temporal *ecstases* of the revelation of being, in which beings are "freed up" (i.e., let be) to presence as the kind of beings that they are "in themselves."

We are now in a position to affirm our tentative opening assertion that primordial freedom is the meaning of the unifying "and" of *Being and Time*. If being is time, and time means temporality, our assertion would be tantamount to saying that temporality, or rather, the event of temporaliz-*ing*, is primordial freedom. A closer look at "time as temporality" will help clarify the point. Heidegger makes sure to stress that only Dasein is, strictly speaking, "temporal." It is Dasein as ecstatic, horizontal temporality which first temporalizes the "world time" that constitutes a "within-timeness" of at-hand and objectively present entities (SZ 420/385). Primordial time, i.e., temporality, is thus the condition for the possibility that innerworldly beings can be encountered as "in time." Nevertheless, because within-timeness "stems" from the temporality of Dasein, historicity (Dasein) and within-timeness (innerworldly beings) turn out to be equiprimordial phenomena (SZ 377/345). This represents, for Heidegger, a solution to the traditional subject-object schism. Issuing forth from primordial time (Dasein as temporality), world time (common, public time) is "*more 'objective' than any possible object because, with the disclosedness of the world, it always already becomes ecstatically and horizontally 'objectified' as the condition of the possibility of innerworldly beings*" (emphasis in original; SZ 419/384). Therefore, world time is found equally in physical as well as psychical phenomena (contrary to Kant's opinion; SZ 419/384). On the other hand, world time is "*'more subjective' than any possible subject since it first makes possible the being of the factual existing self, that being which, as is now well understood, is the meaning of care*" (emphasis in original; SZ 419/384). Time is thus neither subjective nor objective nor a combination of the two. It is not something objectively present; i.e., it is not a "thing." It is rather *the* fundamental condition for the possibility of objectivity in general. This is precisely what Kant sought in the Schematism of the first *Critique* but was unable to attain because he was unable to wrest himself free from the dogmatism of the thing in itself. By recognizing that innerworldly beings (*Dinge*) are in themselves (*an sich*) historical in terms of their disclosure by free, fatefully destined Dasein, Heidegger is able to remove the stigma of a reified "something" standing behind the thing "as it appears" (whether Kant intended such a reification or not). Truth, understood as disclosure of beings, is thus radically historical, in that it comes *from time itself*, while "at the same time" it

radically historical, in that it comes *from time itself*, while “at the same time” it is radically finite, in that it comes from the ecstatic openness of “free” Dasein. Truth “is” therefore the manifestation of time *as primordial freedom*. Or, more simply put, being is time as primordial freedom.

What connection, by way of conclusion, does this “positive” conception of freedom (as I have characterized it), have to a negatively conceived notion of freedom as “freedom *from*,” or mere lack of restraint? The connection may seem somewhat obscure, but a guiding clue has already been provided by Heidegger’s conception of temporality. Indeed, the difference between temporality (an *a priori*, quasi-transcendental structure) and common, public time (“clock time”) parallels that of primordial freedom (the *revealing* of historically “grounded” truth) and common, ordinary freedom (the ability simply to do what one “wants”). Heidegger’s analysis shows that if freedom does not “first” have an intimate connection with truth, the very possibility of having an open choice standing before oneself could never arise—the openness of choices, their essential range and meaning, is historically determined. Negative freedom, if asserted merely on its own merits, turns out to be a thoroughly dogmatic conception since it must rely on unjustified presuppositions such as the “acting agent,” a being whose being has not been clarified. Worse yet, negative freedom reveals itself to be the opposite of what it claims. A freedom absolutely “free” from truth (i.e., historical constraint, the givenness of definite possibilities) would be nothing more than a chaotic enslavement to one’s capricious passions. There would be no *reason* (i.e., ground of determination) for choosing one path over another. But more to the point, there would not even be a path to choose. Whereas a negative conception of freedom may be useful in certain scientific or quasi-scientific contexts, such as political or social theory, forgetfulness of the intimate connection between freedom and truth can lead to unfortunate and even dangerous illusions with respect to the actualization of desired political and social ends.