

## Chapter V: The Fallacy of Individualism

Kant's definition of what it is to be a human culminates in the individual who can freely reason, thereby being a moral entity. Freedom comes from the very essence of what reason means. It is the action of logically deliberating, without any outside "influences" to determine its choice or then it would be a mere "impulse."<sup>1</sup> Can one achieve even a modicum of such a separate and isolated position within one's environment? Outside influences are embedded in one's values and beliefs, which make a person human. One may be able to consciously separate the recent actions of another from her deliberations in order to reach a fair and just universal law, or can she? For example, an international tribunal wishes to decide whether the killing of innocents is acceptable behavior in any circumstance. The individual justices may purposely deliberate this matter without taking into consideration the actions of the suspects they will be judging. However, this entire deliberation is already influenced by one's social and historical environment. The term 'innocent' already sets up the outcome of the deliberation. Furthermore, an individual is inseparably bound to her community making the whole system the arena where ethics should be found and what it is formulated for.

The question simply becomes, is Kant's free reasoning individual correct or even attainable? In order to answer this, one must first ask what is it *to be* human. Heidegger's main project within *Being and Time* is to resurrect the meaningfulness of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Kant. Foundations. 286-7. P.A. 4:286. "Now I affirm that we must necessarily grant that every rational being who has a will also has the Idea of freedom and that it acts only under this Idea. For in such a being we think of a reason which is practical (i.e., a reason which has causality with respect to its object). Now we cannot conceive of a reason which, in making its judgments, consciously responds to a bidding from the outside, for then the subject would attribute the determination of its power of judgment not to a reason but to an impulse. Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles, independently of alien influences; consequently as practical reason or as the will of a rational being it must regard itself as free."

“word ‘being.’”<sup>2</sup> In order for him to accomplish this, he must investigate humanity which contemplates the importance of existence, or what it means to be. Heidegger’s exploration becomes an ascent into a philosophical description of the self, by addressing what it is to be Dasein (roughly: the uniqueness of the human experience).

Whether one investigates political, ethical, or religious philosophy, the question can be raised as to what is the fundamental aspect that unites these seemingly distinct disciplines of inquiry together? More broadly, what is it about humanity, which gives it the ability to carry out its varied inquiries in the first place, or even allows it to ‘grasp’ the world in an intelligible whole as it does? It is the gift of language. Language shapes humanity’s perceptions of the world by picking out certain relations, while ignoring others. Language encapsulates one’s thoughts and only allows one to see what one has words to express. It is a type of limiting prison, but it is more akin to a life raft, which provides shelter from a sea of horizon-less confusion by encapsulating one within the safety of intelligibility. Human nature is found in language and without it one would not be human.<sup>3</sup> Heidegger’s view of humanity poses a grave challenge to Kant’s entire project of the free individual, if language is viewed as an essential element to its constitution. The challenge arises from language’s shaping and defining constraints on an individual’s perception of the world around her, thereby making any sense of a Kantian freedom seem quite impossible. The categorical imperative may be used to make universal laws, by logically ordering given premises and checking for any

---

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. Trans. Macquarrie, J. & Robinson, E. San Francisco: Harper, 1962. 19. Heideggerian # (H:) 1.

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Basic Writings. “The Way to Language,” ed. Krell, David. Trans. Neske, G. San Francisco: Harper, 1992. 398. “Man would not be man if it were denied him to speak—ceaselessly. Ubiquitously, with respect to all things, in manifold variations, yet for the most part tacitly—by way of an “it is.” Inasmuch as language grants this very thing, the essence of man consists in language.”

inconsistencies and illogical outcomes. However, the premises one uses are composed entirely of one's native language, which has already carved out specific ways to see and interrogate the world. Alone, the categorical imperative cannot uncover the hidden presuppositions within the language that forms the premises used to check the morality of a given action. Furthermore, language is a product of a given community, which is supplied to a speaker from birth as she matures as a person. This language will limit the possibilities from which the speaker can see and act within her environment. The individual is a product of her community, and is never free or separate from this community because of language's defining and shaping force. This implies that there is no true individual as in the subject/object distinction. This results from language being a part of the systematic whole with humanity, which a human cannot divorce herself from in order to be seen as an objective universal law-giver.

Humanity is uniquely different from all other evolved creatures on Earth, because it is not born ready to exist in this world. As compared to its closest genetic cousins, the great apes, human infants are a pathetic lot. We lack almost any instinctual abilities at birth, save for the sucking instinct. However, it is the ability to learn complex language that sets humans apart from all other life. Without this ability, humanity could not be the beings who have the ability to contemplate their own being, their own existence. If humanity's nature is to be understood, language itself must be explored.

Where does this language come from? It is clear that human beings have the capacity to speak, but so much of what makes humanity human is dependent upon language in the first place. Ability alone does not necessitate its fulfillment. Heidegger clearly asserts that this mystery cannot be "raked up empirically" by interrogating a

language itself.<sup>4</sup> This approach would be utterly futile, as demonstrated by the Analytical school of thought's attempts to ground language not in humanity, but by investigating language as a wholly separate object from humanity. Language is observed as an object of science, as an independent creation of humanity. If language is to be interrogated based upon its empirical "verifiability" in order to determine what is "factually significant," then much of what is said will become meaningless.<sup>5</sup> For instance, one cannot verify the assertion that language is an evolutionarily beneficial trait, which humanity acquired as a fortuitous accident.

Language's origins are forever lost, in the distant past, to empirical investigation. It may be a good guess, but it is utterly meaningless, because of the restrictions placed on language's usage by the Analytical camp. Furthermore, how can one verify the truth of a statement being factually significant if, and only if, it is verifiable? One cannot. These word games, which focus on the isolated statement and fail to see the relational whole of language and its users, entirely miss the point of the real question. What is it about humanity which gives language its power, and vice versa? These questions can only come through an investigation into the a-verifiable, the neither verifiable nor unverifiable. Language must be first understood, before any claims about any given statement within language can be made. Heidegger points out that language is the product of the "equiprimordial" components of "discourse", which are "state-of-mind" and "understanding."<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger. Being. 206. H:162.

<sup>5</sup> Ayer, A. J. Language Truth & Logic. New York, Dover, 1962. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger. Being. 203. H:160-1.

One's state-of-mind is simply the mood one is in, which can determine how aware one is of one's environment. More importantly, one's mood is a direct tie to one's past, because it arises from one's previous experiences. Moods are necessary to connect one to one's environment; one must have a lens through which to 'see' the world. Therefore, there is no 'objective,' mood-less point of view. An objective transcendent point of view arising from the use of reason alone is impossible; it would be an un-human action to make a decision without one's past influencing one's decision. Moods are valueless to a certain extent, because it is the context of any given situation that determines the effectiveness of any mood. For example, a deputy sheriff could be in such a mood that his current duties are of an extreme second-hand nature. The deputy's mood is much like a sense of bored arrogance. This mood may cause this deputy to fail to see the threat a suspect poses, because the deputy cannot see the handle of a gun protruding from underneath the suspect's seat. The deputy's mood flavors his perceptions causing this new encounter to appear to be the same as all the rest. Existing within a culture where a deputy's power and superiority to the average citizen are stressed may further exacerbate this mood. The deputy's state-of-mind will be such that no citizen could pose a threat, because of their perceived inferior tactical status. Some moods may make certain relations more clear than others, but all moods cause one to notice relations in the world.

Whereas moods are directly tied to one's past, understanding is one's ability to project possibilities, or ways of existing, into the future. Understanding is the "know how" of every day life.<sup>7</sup> Using the above example, during the deputy's traffic-stop, he is already projecting possibilities into the future as he approaches the driver. These

---

<sup>7</sup> Polt, Richard. Heidegger: An Introduction. New York, Cornell: 1999. 65.

possibilities may involve contacting the driver, issuing a ticket, or even taking the next sergeant's exam. The important thing is that understanding makes it possible to be a human, because it leads one out of the present into the future; it gives one varied choices to choose from in the future. Understanding allows one to act by providing a way to exist.

Discourse, or talking, is the "articulation" of one's mood and understanding; it is the uniting of these two temporal focusing aspects of humanity.<sup>8</sup> In order to effectively communicate about one's life and surrounding environment, one needs to be able to unite one's past experiences and future possibilities into the present. Without discourse's unifying force one may have a past and be able to project future possibilities, but there would be no bridge to unite the two. The past would become a series of random experiences and one's future would be robbed of any meaningful possibilities, because the past would not yield up its lessons to the present. Discourse makes language possible through its unifying force, which meaningfully brings one's past and future into the present. In order for language to be possible, one must have a sense of a past and future, which determines the present to a certain extent. Discourse's relation to language proper can best be understood in the way that a deputy's legal authority is related to her duties. The deputy's authority makes possible her ability to enforce the law; her duties bring the concept of her authority into actual existence. Language is the way discourse exists within the world as an actual quasi-living "entity."<sup>9</sup> For example, the deputy sheriff's

---

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger. *Being*. 203. H:161. "*Discourse is existentially equiprimordial with state-of-mind and understanding.* The intelligibility of something has always been articulated, even before there is any appropriative interpretation of it. Discourse is the articulation of intelligibility. Therefore it underlies both interpretation and assertion."

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger. *Being*. 204. H:161. "The way in which discourse gets expressed is language. Language is a totality of words—a totality in which discourse has a 'worldly' Being of its own; and as an entity within-

role at the time of the traffic stop would have no intelligibility if there was not a past of training, a personal history of a life that ‘chooses’ to be a deputy, or a knowledge of the society’s expectations of the deputy’s purpose and role. Furthermore, without a future of possibilities, the deputy would not have a sense of what to do in the present moment; there would not be a know-how of what her next actions would be.

Discourse is the “fundamental way in which patterns of meaning” give rise to language, which make it possible for the deputy to communicate all of this to herself and others.<sup>10</sup> One speaks to oneself, or others, with words already imbued with meaning. Language is merely the formal expression of this meaning. The interesting aspect of discourse is its inseparable relatedness to language. One’s language is shaped by one’s culture, which imbues words with mythologies, conceptual paradigms, and beliefs. Language is preceded by discourse, yet one’s language limits the possibilities of discourse’s expression by creating blinders. These cultural blinders divide up the world in specific ways limiting and influencing what one may see.

Discourse is “rooted” in a human’s way of existing; it is the very way humans communicate, which makes “language ontologically possible.”<sup>11</sup> In order to make sense of language and discourse, humanity itself must also be investigated, since it is humanity which makes language possible in the first place. This may seem like a confusing claim, if one asserts that human nature is found in language. However, this confusion is the result of attempting to isolate and separate a human from her humanity, as a physicist

---

the-world . . . Discourse is existentially language, because the entity whose disclosedness it articulates according to significations, has, as its kind of Being, Being-in-the-world—a Being which has been thrown and submitted to the ‘world.’”

<sup>10</sup> Polt. Heidegger. 74.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger. Being. 206. H:163.

might attempt to study a quark in isolation. This cannot be done when dealing with humans, because they are relational beings that exist within a system, as a whole.

Humans are beings of action; they exist tied to a specific past with a forward-looking perspective, which discourse makes intelligible. Humans are constantly in a state of to-be-ness, or in German, Dasein. Dasein refers to a human's very existence, or way of being within an inherited social and historical location in time. Dasein is the who which makes human beings unique, as thinking and self-aware. However, it is beyond a merely Cartesian thinking-thing, or even simple self-awareness, because it is not defining the what but the who of one's I-ness. More clearly put Dasein is not looking at a human and asking what is it, as in simply asking for the definition of homo sapiens. It is more akin to asking someone who are you, as in what makes one fundamentally unique. Dasein is an active concept denoting the ordinary physical and mental aspects of a person, which one uses to relate to one's environment. Dasein is found in the interactions one has with one's inherited social and historical surroundings, which define and make a person who she is. However, one can become future-looking and modify this pre-existing societal framework, but one can never escape it. Simply put, Dasein is the act of existing; it is the struggle of a finite and sentient entity that creates meaning out of an otherwise chaotic universe, by use of a ready-made lens. This ready-made lens is language. However, where does this ready-made filter come from within Dasein's environment?

Both Kant and Heidegger agree that a human being cannot exist solely in a vacuum as a mere thinking machine. However, Heidegger goes further by asserting a human being cannot ever be free from the environment she exists within. One cannot

transcend the given into a free and objective realm; it is simply an impossibility due to humanity's very nature. It must be given 'outside' experiences and tools with which to be in the world in a meaningful way. Dasein's ability to understand and gain meaning is made possible by its becoming one with the world through interaction. Dasein is necessarily a part of the empirical world, but it is more importantly part of the world of "meanings and purposes."<sup>12</sup> Being-in-the-world, or existing as a part of a systematic whole, provides Dasein with a total interactive system, which allows it to define itself. One finds one-self in this pre-existing world, which provides one with an inherited understanding. One is not separate from this world, as in the subject/object distinction, but is one with a historical and temporal "environment."<sup>13</sup> This one-ness is caused by Dasein's need, and even sheer inability, to exist outside of the world with its many interactions, which provide a historical and cultural lens to interpret one's existence. Individuals are not independent entities existing within a wholly separate sea of otherness, but are a part of the greater whole. Human existence is an inseparable interconnected system. This implies that an adequate understanding of language will not be gained by separating it from Dasein to be studied like some rock in a scientist's laboratory. Language is the integral instrument of Dasein's ability to be interconnected to its environment.

Dasein's potential to be a self is fulfilled by being given a "pre-ontological" interpretive filter from its historical and temporal environment, which is the influence of one's society, or *the they*.<sup>14</sup> The they gives Dasein understanding by providing

---

<sup>12</sup> Polt. Heidegger. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger. Being. 118. H:85.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger. Being. 168. H:130.

intelligibility to an otherwise chaotic universe, through the medium of language by way of discourse. One finds oneself within one's larger social setting, but the they is not a specific group or organization; it is more the historical social thought of a time. This provides one with interpretations of the world through a society's myths, culture, and history, without a choice in the matter. These interpretations influence one's decisions and actions, without one's awareness for much of the time. This influence causes one to live an inauthentic life by "falling" into the they's influence; it is a life that is for the most part void of freely choosing one's own path.<sup>15</sup> Falling is blindly existing within the they's norms without any true reflective thought into one's actual existence; any reflective thought is aimed at the they's existence. Falling is an avoidance of facing up to one's own finite existence, and using this to freely choose from the varied possibilities that are available within one's own social and historical location in time. Dasein simply accepts the roles and rules of its social and historical time. It is an act of omission, a passive choice like floating above the currents. This influence by one's larger social-sphere is an "inconspicuous domination" of oneself, which can force Dasein to conform and be the 'same' as everyone else.<sup>16</sup> Originality and difference are suppressed, but the they is not a deterministic type force, because one can "find" one's own unique self within the loud voice of a society.<sup>17</sup>

The challenge to Kant's view of human nature can now be fully addressed. Dasein's very nature is inseparably tied to its language, which connects it to its culture and history as a systematic whole. Any separation of this whole would result in the

---

<sup>15</sup> Heidegger. Being. 223. H:178.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger. Being. 164. H:126.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger. Being. 167. H:129.

breakdown of Dasein's ability to relate to the world around it. Language grabs hold and requisitions humanity as its own. Language "appropriates" humanity and assigns it a limited number of images of the way it should be, or is.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, discourse expresses the intelligibility of the world, which is achieved through understanding. Furthermore, moods necessitate an intelligible past. Both understanding and moods require a language in order to allow one's thoughts to form into complex wholes, in order to achieve a "web of meaning," which acts as a bridge between the past with the future.<sup>19</sup> Language is the essential aspect of humanity, which makes it able to exist as a community within a larger international arena. It allows for societies to come together and grow into cultures, which give human beings common myths, histories, and purposes to apply to existence. Language discloses the world to Dasein by providing a nexus of meanings to be applied to the surrounding environment, which necessarily precedes "interpretation and assertion."<sup>20</sup>

Without language, existence would be a series of sensory experiences, but there would be no framework to categorize and prioritize this existence. To be certain, the framework of language creates an "ontologically determined" finite set of "possibilities," which Dasein can use for its own specific existence.<sup>21</sup> For instance, one may be given the tools to divide the world between the relations of two economic models, either capitalism or communism. This framework dictates how one necessarily perceives everything from economics, to politics, and even ethics. These two paradigms offer humanity the choice of either existing as an individual or as a community. Even within the words of

---

<sup>18</sup> Heidegger. Basic. 417.

<sup>19</sup> Polt. Heidegger. 52.

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger. Being. 204. H:161.

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger. Basic. 169.

‘individual’ and ‘community’ a whole set of beliefs and values are strongly embedded, depending upon the social and historical location of the speaker. Language transmits the beliefs of what the nature of humanity is and in the process these strings of words begin to own the speakers. This is accomplished by connecting the complex whole of the world of purposes and meanings through the use of language.

One automatically receives the embedded values of its society in one’s language, which shapes and defines the world around oneself. This passive acceptance of the they’s assigned possibilities is a “falling” into the complex whole of the myths, beliefs, and asserted histories of one’s language group; it is a fascination with all that is not one’s own, all that is “Others.”<sup>22</sup> This falling is an unavoidable and necessary part of Dasein’s existence. Dasein uses language in a way that a history and future are woven deep into the words by existing within “the they.”<sup>23</sup> Words cannot be understood in complete isolation, they are meaningful only when they exist within a web of other words. A dictionary is a prime example of this: one word needs many others in order to give it meaning, to make it intelligible. One understands words by their connection to other words, but this connection is imbued with cultural values. For instance, the word ‘Goliath’ in a dictionary will simply describe the name of a Biblical character. However, depending upon one’s culture, that single word can transmit a host of myths, beliefs, histories, and, above all, values. Goliath brings with it a myth of a giant, a belief in a specific religion, history of the underdog beating the assured winner, and the value of being fearless in the face of a daunting problem. Many words carry underlying messages

---

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger. Being. 220. H:176.

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger. Being. 210. H:167.

in this same way, which give them a power to shape and influence one's perceptions of the world around one.

They use language to provide Dasein with an understanding of the world. This happens because "communication" is not a simple giving of information between two entirely separate beings; it is a sharing, as in a type of union, created by having a "co-state-of-mind."<sup>24</sup> This may sound mystical in nature, as if the nature of Dasein was somehow psychic, but it is thoroughly mundane and understandable when one recalls Dasein is a being-in-the-world. There is no subject/object distinction in Dasein's universe, and because of this everything is heavily interconnected through common meanings and purposes, even an 'individual's' thoughts.

In order for communication to exist in the first place, a common set of relations must be understood. For instance, a deputy sheriff may attempt to communicate an experience to a civilian. However, if this deputy relates this experience using terms and phrases that are specific to his profession alone, there is no co-state-of-mind. It is a completely meaningless and purposeless set of unintelligible words to the civilian. This is best understood when one is reading an article and comes across an unknown word. The context of the article and surrounding words will allow one to fill in the gap. This is how "keeping silent" is actually a very important form of discourse.<sup>25</sup> Silence speaks to this co-state-of-mind by its relation to the context of the communication. Words are part of the greater whole and have no meaning without this connection. The "unspoken," or keeping silent, can speak volumes, if done as a part of the discourse.<sup>26</sup> For instance, a

---

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger. Being. 205. H:162.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger. Being. 208. H:164.

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger. Basic. 420.

Nazi defendant could remain silent when asked how could he have killed thousands of Jews solely based upon orders. His silence either speaks of arrogance or shame without him actually making any statement composed of words. Statements fit “thematically” within the whole web of a society’s myths, history, and shared beliefs, thereby making them intelligible.<sup>27</sup>

For Dasein, language allows the world to be fully understood, interpreted, and thus acted upon in order for Dasein to express its full “potentiality-for-Being.”<sup>28</sup> However, within this exchange between the they and Dasein, discourse leads to an inauthentic existence. This form of communication is superficial and is more like “gossip,” than meaningful discourse; it is mere “idle talk.”<sup>29</sup> This form of communication is not an active way of discussing anything, where material is taken in by the speakers and possessed. It is more akin to simply watching a subject from afar; there is no depth and passion for the subject matter because it is not truly one’s own. It is an acceptance of a society’s interpretation of an issue; it is authoritarian in nature and “discourages” any further investigation.<sup>30</sup>

For example, idle talk might discuss the differences between communism and capitalism. It might speak of the economic benefits of one or the other. It may assert what human nature truly is and which system is more in accord with it. However, the acceptable questions and answers have already been determined in this word game. No issues of depth are reached, such as, are there truly only two choices? One may not ask how have these two systems and their apparent incompatibility influenced and made

---

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger. Being. 207. H:164.

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger. Being. 210. H:167.

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger. Being. 213. H:169.

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger. Being. 213. H:169.

humanity what it is in its current location in time. Idle talk dismisses philosophy as an inefficient use of time because existence is simply what it is, because they has already determined existence and other matters of importance. In idle talk, one's "state-of-mind" has already been "determined"; this is a complete programming and determining of Dasein's possibilities.<sup>31</sup>

A Kantian style free choice of transcending the given influences of everyday life in order to make a choice based upon reason alone appears to be a meaningless claim. Language is not only an integral part of humanity; it also serves as the bridge that binds human beings to this world and to each other. Ethics and politics are disciplines concerned solely with human interactions within this world and therefore must take this into consideration. Language with its many hidden values, beliefs and histories will necessarily influence all choices one makes. This is due to its limiting power over what one can see within this world. The categorical imperative, as well as Kant's use of reason in order to discover his God, cannot escape from language either. Reason can only logically structure the premises submitted to it, but it cannot check the validity of the premises themselves. Neither can it root out all the hidden values within the words themselves, because language only opens the world to a limited extent. One's place in a social historical context only enables one to have a limited amount of possibilities; it restricts the questions one can interrogate the world with. Therefore, the answers one uses to logically order will always be incomplete and corrupted by a host of outside influences. The individual is nothing more than the systematic whole of her relations to her community, which is set in time with a specific history.

---

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger. Being. 213. H:170.

One cannot be a true individual who can escape the quasi-cage language traps one in by its limited and distorting lens. However, one is not ever a true individual to begin with. One is part of an interconnected whole, which cannot be escaped from. One's humanity is found within this liberating prison, which flows with the lifeblood of language. This whole shapes one and determines one's future by providing a limited set of possibilities. The only freedom that exists is to temporarily rise above the given and restructure it, but not destroy it and create something new. This conception of freedom is simply learning to be authentic, which may yield itself to discovering some base universal law. This universal law would be grounded within humanity at an even more fundamental level than one's ability to manipulate premises through the use of reason.

Dasein's possibility to exist authentically allows one to momentarily escape from the "propriated essence of language," like the poet who is able to shatter the given and rearrange it.<sup>32</sup> The poet takes what is given and opens new vistas onto the world, only being restricted by the limited possibilities of her language. The they and language are inseparable; metaphorically one uses the other for its own specific purposes. Culture uses language to shape its language group and language uses the community to come alive and exist within the empirical world. Freedom from the suppressive force of these two influences is found by the tension created in facing one's own mortality in an authentic, or serious, way. This freedom is achieved by the modification of what is already given and it is never a complete escape from it. Authentically facing one's death is not the simple admittance that everyone eventually dies, but it is a way of "choosing" an

---

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger. Basic. 418.

existence and making it one's "own."<sup>33</sup> Facing one's own mortality is a way of looking forward in time to one's non-existence, as a real and inescapable event, which then serves to cause one to turn inwardly and reflect upon one's life. Facing one's death is used over other events in one's life, because it is the total cessation of what it is to be human, namely to be.

"Anxiety" is the result of one properly confronting one's own death; it is the whole-hearted acceptance of this inescapable personal event, which causes one to look for the 'true' meaning in one's life.<sup>34</sup> This anxiety produces a temporary separation of Dasein from its typical way of perceiving the world and the many relations it has to it. This is not a Kantian ascent into the clarity one has when entering into the realm of freedom, because it is a descent from all that is meaningful. It is more akin to the total eclipse of all meaning in life one has when drowning, and one is forced to fight to rise above the suffocating waters. All meaning and understanding is shattered, causing one to struggle to rise above the confusing muddle and reestablish a meaningful connection with the world. All that is ordinary and simply accepted, as real, can now be fully questioned; anxiety causes a productive and fruitful crisis. Anxiety allows for one to seek out the many possibilities, which arise out of one's past. These possibilities may then be projected into one's future allowing one to make a free choice. Anxiety allows for one to break down the they's beliefs, myths, and histories, as well as language itself, in order to restructure them, as one's own unique work of art. The result of this crisis is never a making-new-of-something; it is always taking what-already-is and modifying it as one's own. It is being authentic in one's own existence.

---

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger. Being. 68. H:42-3.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger. Being. 295. H:251.

In order to demonstrate the power of Heidegger's argument and to provide a brief recap of this chapter's main points, I will provide an example from my own life. As a deputy for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, I have existed within a society with a unique history and language. The history of the department exists within the larger society of Los Angeles and the United States. Within my specific culture, a certain language of words and actions had been drilled into me. For example, a 'civilian' is a derogatory term, which is used to express the significant difference between us and all others. Another term used is 'shoot to stop' a suspect, which means shoot until the suspect is dead. Even the term 'suspect' is a value-laden term, which amounts to 'guilty of a crime'.

The idle talk of the department is the reducing of humanity's mortality to the death of someone else; after all, the badge makes one indestructible. The world that I was thrown into has a long history of myths, beliefs, and ideals, which are mostly composed of bravery, comradery, and even brutality. The accepted ways of speaking about civilians and suspects grab hold of and heavily influence one's actions. The they dictates how one should act and behave, it commands one's values. Inauthentic existence is achieved by not questioning what has already been decided, unless of course the questions are acceptable and never challenge the accepted norms of the deeper issues at stake. However, authenticity can be achieved and one can look into the possibilities available within the entire society to choose and affirm one's own existence. For me this was achieved by my own anxiety. I have encountered many tense situations and handled many dead body calls, but it was only when I looked toward my own finitude that I was able to look into my own possibilities and make a free choice.

One night while on patrol, I received a call to respond to an automobile accident on one of the local freeways. As I arrived on the scene, the hulk of a charred metal automobile frame stood isolated on the empty road. The paramedics were rushing a burnt, unidentifiable child to the hospital, who had somehow clung to life. The interior of the vehicle was chalky blackened metal; except for the reclined bodies, everything else had been incinerated. The bodies were black like charcoal, except for the white teeth that grimaced out of their lipless mouths. They had the typical death pose of a burn victim, which is a slight fetal position with their arms gathered to their chests in resemblance of a mock prayer. Their bodies were burned to the point that their sex was unidentifiable, and no outer flesh was left. In the intense fire the flesh on their stomachs had burned off, exposing the charred remains of their intestines. The child who was pulled from the wreckage died en route to the hospital, and its body was in the same state as the other two. If it had lived in that condition, then so had its family as the temperatures rose and literally cooked them to death. The reason for the graphic detail is to bring home the point that this was truly a defining moment with all the sights and smells associated with it.

I had a past that gave me the know-how for what my actions should be in such a situation. This past had also given me a set of beliefs and myths that were supposed to answer any questions of why. The family had painfully burned to death in a raging inferno; humanity's finite existence was made painfully aware to me in that instant as it never had before. In the process, I looked at my own existence and felt an anxiety, almost a loss of meaning. What was the point of life if everything amounted to nothing in the end? These questions forced me to turn inward and reflect upon the meaning of my own existence. What was all this for, what was my own existence for? My past, my throw-ness into my social and historical location in time came into question, as I whole-

heartedly accepted my own finite existence, my mortality. From this I looked into the varied and finite possibilities available to me, and projected them onto my future. My authentic choice was to re-affirm my existence as a peace officer, but to modify it. This modification was an attempt to define my job, instead of it defining me, by enrolling for a degree in philosophy in order to investigate my own existence further and apply what I learned to my profession.

However, one exists in the they and the authentic continually needs the inauthentic; there is no position granting one continued authenticity in all aspects of life. Dasein is not granted a religious conversion to authentic heaven, it is simply a description and investigation of the way humanity exists. One may be able to see possibilities that were once hidden through the use of reason, as Heidegger has done in his philosophy. Reason alone is nothing more than a tool, likewise a lone individual is nothing more than a plant-like biological machine. Without the systematic whole of one, one's community, and one's social historical context the human animal lacks its humanity. Kant's political philosophy ultimately fails because humans are not individuals with innate self-serving rights, they are parts to a systematic whole. This intimate and inseparable connection to the whole makes any type of Kantian objectivity impossible. Furthermore, the objective reasoning individual Kant argues for robs ethics of its very humanity by robbing the individual of her necessary connection to her community. It is within this connection, or the systematic whole of humanity, that a true ethics should be searched for. An ethical and political system must take this into account if it wishes to do more than argue for the values its creator's society holds dear. Kant's ethics fails to see the community make-up of humanity, which leads him to create a system that is devoid of all feeling for others

and misses the fact that ethics and politics form a comprehensive whole. Together, ethics and politics are more about ready-made duties, than individual rights.

Kant's moral law cannot transcend the empirically given, it can only guide one's actions based upon the preconceptions of one's inherited surroundings. This in no way implies right, virtue, morality, or even justice. Kant's mistake was to forget the power of the poet, the power of the simple word-smith. The poet uses the power of art to break apart language and discover all the given possibilities available to her. Kant's paltry view of a reasoning individualistic economic creature fails to capture the fullness of humanity, which is found in its many relations from art to love. The fear of the susceptibility to corruption of all the other aspects that make one uniquely human has caused Kant to miss the fact that reason alone cannot give him what he seeks, namely an absolute, or undeniably legitimate, eternal ethics to guide humanity through the ages.

However, this does not mean that some authoritative law cannot be found within humanity itself in order to hold the Nazis, the Afrikaners, or a host of other international criminals accountable for their actions. A Heideggerian/Kantian approach has the possibility of providing a universal law, which receives its authority not from mere might but from the fullness of what it is to be human. This possibility will now be explored in depth.