

ON BEING ANTI-CARTESIAN:  
HEGEL, HEIDEGGER, SUBJECTIVITY,  
AND SOCIALITY

I. Being-in-the-world and Not-Being-in-the-world

Contrary to Heidegger's own view, both Hegel and Heidegger are, I shall claim, anti-Cartesians. (According to Heidegger, Hegel was the greatest Cartesian.)<sup>1</sup> I shall not be concerned here with the historical Descartes, the comments of either about Descartes, Heidegger's peculiar reading of Hegel, or anything like a full exposition of each position. Rather I am interested in the theoretical implications both draw from being anti-Cartesian, where that notion is understood in the following limited way.

Hegel and Heidegger understand Cartesian philosophy traditionally, as arguing that the possibility of any cognitive or even intelligible relation to the world resides in mental episodes occurring in individual minds. The world and entities within the world are, originally, significant or meaningful only as a *result* of the occurrence of such subjective states, or of some subject's intending, or linguistic, or representing, or synthesizing activities. (Both, in other words, would regard naturalistic, neuroscientific, and psy-

<sup>1</sup> See, inter alia, Heidegger's Cartesian reading of Hegel's notion of spirit in sect. no. 82 of *Sein und Zeit* (hereafter *SZ*), (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1972), pp. 433-4; *Being and Time* (hereafter *BT*), trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 484-5. To facilitate reference, I shall refer to page numbers of the Macquarrie-Robinson translation throughout, but whenever there is a question or ambiguity, I shall indicate an alteration and/or insert the German expression.

chological accounts of such cognitive relations as still Cartesian, even if not wedded to the metaphysics of immaterialism. The key issue is whether representative success, or intelligibility in our dealings with the world, is something achieved by an individual subject's activity or processing, is a *result*. Although it might sound curious to put it this way, Mentalism, or some claim that significance is conferred by individual minds, is still mentalism, no matter what *mens* is said to be made of or how it works.)<sup>2</sup>

My suggestion will be that both Heidegger and Hegel want to advance an anti-individualist and anti-mental account of the *general* possibility of any sort of "meaning," of anything being intelligible at all (words, signs, tools, the conduct of others, and so on), whether tied to a linguistic expression or not.<sup>3</sup>

For both, that is, the central *explicans* for the possibility of the "world's being disclosed," in Heidegger's terminology, is not mind, or representation, or subject. That is, for both, to understand that something is a hammer, or that a speaker means hot by "hot," or that a gesture is an insult, is not for a mental state to occur, such as a belief or a belief about what everyone else believes, or an inference about what a speaker would do in other contexts. A hammer *is* a hammer in and only in a certain network of tasks and functions and I understand such a network by appropriately participating in it, not by representing it. Thus each philosopher invokes a term of art

<sup>2</sup> The general shift in philosophy from "soul" to "mind," and then, perhaps in Descartes and certainly in Locke, to "person," or "subject," and finally to "self," as the central term linking epistemological, metaphysical, and moral problems, is obviously a longer story in itself. See Ludwig Steg, "Personbegriff und praktische Philosophie bei Locke, Kant und Hegel," *Praktische Philosophie in Deutschen Idealismus*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 81-115. Also, I am assuming, along with almost everyone else nowadays, even the most ferocious materialist, that some bit of matter cannot *mean* anything all by itself, but only as an element within some sense-making activity or practice or structure. The point of the Heidegger issues I shall be pursuing is simply that trying to explain "being an element within some sense-making practice" in terms of subjects conferring meaning by means of their activity, or even by virtue of a position within some causally interrelated network, won't get us anywhere.

<sup>3</sup> The fact that the scope of this central question is so sweeping has some immediate implications for the relevance of their treatment to the many contemporary discussions of anti-Cartesianism (or anti-individualism, anti-mentalism) in the philosophy of language. For Heidegger and Hegel, the problems of linguistic meaning, understanding a speaker, assigning intentional content, and so forth, are all derivative, neither the primary phenomena nor fruitfully discussed in isolation from a theory of *Sein* or *Geist*. As we shall see, this has a special bearing on the way both treat the "norms" they think are fundamental in such a general theory. They may of course be quite wrong in such an approach; it has been hard enough lately to defend the claim that a philosophical theory of linguistic meaning is necessary or possible. But for purposes of this paper, I shall follow their lead.

immediately suggestive of some theory of sociality, rather than subjectivity in the Cartesian sense. Meaning is possible because of our participating in *Geist* in Hegel's case, *Dasein's* being as *In-der-Welt-Sein* (ultimately *Geschichtlichkeit*, or historicity), in Heidegger's.

If this can be defended and explained in a way fair to both, the basic dispute between them will then come into view: Hegel believes that such a sociality, as origin, condition for the possibility of sense, can (ultimately if not originally) sustain itself and cohere among the subjects participating in it, only if somehow inherently "rational." Such sociality can function in making significance possible because it is governed by norms that are actively and in some sense self-consciously sustained by a community, as well as periodically undermined and altered. Such norms possess the authority they do because of some sort of progressively more reflective, ultimately more successful "self-authorizing" process. Even our ordinary "consciousness" (which Hegel calls "the immediate existence of Spirit")<sup>4</sup> always goes "beyond its own limits," "suffers violence at its own hands; spoils its own limited satisfaction." In a Heideggerian turn of phrase, he goes on, "When consciousness feels this violence, its anxiety may make it retreat from the truth, and strive to hold on to what it is in danger of losing. But it can find no peace."<sup>5</sup>

Heidegger has a different reading on anxiety and is deeply suspicious of any such claim about the possibility of sociality involving any such inherent rationality, much less any developing, teleological rationality. However, they share enough deep, common assumptions that we can ask fruitfully, I hope, What is the nature of this difference between them about such a central, even "primordial" sociality?<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, for the sake of any economy of presentation, there are many obstacles in the way of correctly "framing" this *Auseinandersetzung*. For one thing, Heidegger is probably right that they mostly and most fundamentally disagree about the ever elusive problem of "non-being." This

<sup>4</sup> *PhG*, p. 29; *PhS*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *PhG*, p. 57; *PhS*, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Such an emphasis on sociality in Hegel, and especially the term *anti-individualist*, can be very misleading, given the long history of criticisms of Hegel's "organicism," putative anti-liberal tendencies, and metaphysical monism. I mean here only to argue that Hegel rejects a "Cartesian" form of individualism, defined in the loose way suggested earlier. Hegel's own, full theory of individuality is obviously a complex and very long story, one that would require a separate discussion. (I am grateful to Rolf-Peter Horstmann for pointing out in discussion the many dangers implicit in associating the name of Hegel with the notion of "anti-individualism.")

disagreement is about how and why things simply *don't* make sense, "are not," are indeterminate, or how the possibility of making sense, and some failure of sense are "related." For another, especially in the United States, the anti-Cartesian theme has led to Wittgensteinian and neopragmatist readings of Heidegger more familiar to the American philosophical tradition. This in turn has pushed other interpreters down a well-known "anti-Cartesian slippery slope." The slope ends in insisting that what Hegel began and what Heidegger has almost brought to completion really amount to a denial that there is any great problem to be solved, that the philosophical question of how a linguistic utterance, or behavior, or comportment, or social practice, means anything, still betrays a residual Cartesianism or even a "Platonism." Practices just go on, texts just circulate, social scientists just observe, and so forth. Or philosophy should turn into a kind of cultural anthropology, cataloguing the interrelations among, and perhaps lawlike regularities of, various dispositions, responses, interactions, and so forth.

That is, the great attraction of post-Cartesian theories of the priority of sociality or social practices has arisen in the light of the skepticism that Cartesian theories of individualist mentalism seem prone to. This attraction could be called the appeal of *publicity* in theories of significance. And, as just indicated, it comes at a price. Cartesian theories may be prone to skeptical attack, but if individuals are representing something, grasping ideas, or are being caused to be in appropriate states, some possibility of explaining some individual's particular conduct is preserved. When we observe divergences in use and conduct, we don't have to say that someone is now going on in a new way, with a new concept. We can say that someone hasn't understood something.

Part of what I shall be arguing is that the Wittgensteinian and neopragmatist readings, those that greatly stress the publicity and sociality virtues, cannot be right about either Heidegger or Hegel; that they are wrong in a way that prevents the slippery slope slide; and that consideration of such issues suggests *aporias* in Heidegger about the normativity issue that should reopen some issues in Hegel.

To begin, it will be important to risk oversimplifying Heidegger by summarizing aspects of his general project in *Being and Time*, and raising questions that will lead us, I think, to the Hegelian counterclaims.

"The question of Being" (*die Seinsfrage*) is Heidegger's question and in *Being and Time* especially, that question is understood as the question of "the meaning of Being in general." Since the methodological apparatus of *Being and Time* is still for the most part transcendental, the question is investigated

by attention to the "conditions for the possibility" of any meaning of Being.<sup>7</sup> This way of framing the issue will lead Heidegger to the famous answer embodied in the book's title: "Time" is the horizon of all possible significance; human being, all Being, is radically historical; meaning or significance is something that happens (a *Geschehen*), even though what happens is not a result, or a subjective event, or a meaning conferral.

In raising the question of the possibility of the world's significance or intelligibility, Heidegger notes that, to deal with objects, other persons, social practices, and so forth, all the "beings" or "entities," is to be engaged in an always "disclosed" world, familiar and saturated with significance. Any sort of dealing, whether practical or cognitive, goes on "in the light of" such already present intelligibility, and ought to force on us the question of the possibility of such significance itself, or the meaning of Being in general. The fact that we are somehow intuitively inclined to ask this question as, What is the source of this sense making, how do we render the world sensible, make sense out of it, and so forth? has had, according to Heidegger, disastrous consequences since Plato, all in some ways especially visible in Hegel (though even more clear, later in the Heideggerian *Abbau*, in Nietzsche).

Heidegger proposes a kind of stalking horse as a way of getting to the general question of any possible significance (*Sinn*). He asks first, In what ways do we "make sense" of ourselves; what is the "meaning of *Dasein's* being"; or, again, what are the conditions for the possibility that *Dasein* could make sense to itself, could, in his words, be "at issue" for itself? And this is what issues in the most well known anti-Cartesian claims in the book. *Dasein* is not primarily a signifying subject, but "being-in-the-world." The intelligibility of the everyday world, and our own familiarity with our unproblematic presence within the world, cannot be said to be a result of individual belief states, representations, linguistic competences, ideas, intending an object, or synthesizing intuitions; activities somehow simultaneously sustained in the minds of a plurality of individual consciousnesses. Several reasons are

7 In the 1936-7 Nietzsche lectures, Heidegger characterizes the "entscheidende Frage" at the end of Western philosophy as "die Frage nach dem 'Sinn des Seins,' nicht nur nach dem Sein des Seienden; und 'Sinn' ist dabei genau in seinem Begriff umgrenzt als dasjenige, von woher und auf Grund wovon das Sein überhaupt als solches offenbar werden und in die Wahrheit kommen kann." *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), I, p. 26. For Heidegger's own account of *Sinn*, as "openness for self-concealment, i.e. truth" or "openness of Being" (not as sense of a word), see *Beiträge zur Philosophie, Gesamtausgabe*, 65 (Frankfurt am M.: Klostermann, 1982), p. 11; *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), pp. 64, 67.

given to support such a negative conclusion. Such a representation theory is said to be phenomenologically inaccurate. We simply are perfectly capable of moving about within, coping with, dealing with, items and projects in the world in a completely unthematic, absorbed way, without first or simultaneously representing the world to ourselves as such and such, and without applying rules, calculating probabilities, or consulting beliefs. There is also no phenomenological way to account for how we would *come* to "take up" the world, thematically, as suggested by the representation theory. We are never in the position of being "worldless" subjects, "receiving" ideas and beliefs about the world from others or as caused by perceptual events and "then" believing them ourselves. And finally, too many *aporiai* result from the representation picture. There would appear to be no reliable way to find our way "back" to the undeniable, common, familiar meaningful world by trying to "get there" through representations. Chronic skepticism results, always, at least for Heidegger, in an indication of some methodologically generated, or "unreal" problem.

Accordingly, Heidegger simply rejects the problem of how subjects can be said to hook up with the world in determinate ways. The problem is to figure out the ways in which they are already hooked up within a significant whole world in any dealing or discriminating within the world. He puts the point sometimes in terms of tense modalities:

When we speak of having already let something be involved, so that it has been freed for that involvement, we are using a perfect tense a priori which characterizes the kind of Being belonging to Dasein itself.<sup>8</sup>

Such claims against "subjectivist" accounts, however, should not be taken to imply an "objectivist" position. In an account of "the possibility of significance" in any of our dealings with entities, Heidegger clearly wants to formulate a position beyond such alternatives and that intention will prove of crucial significance in understanding his anti-Cartesianism and his relation to Hegel.<sup>9</sup>

8 *SZ*, p. 85; *BT*, p. 117.

9 This applies to both what we would call accounts of possible cognition and possible agency. In the latter, it is true, Heidegger denies that human deeds should be understood as caused by the presence of beliefs and desires in individual subjects; nor can they be accounted for as actualizations of natural potencies. Heidegger's own account of action comes to a head with his account of "resoluteness" (*Entschlossenheit*), which he denies has anything to do with any willfulness, or velleity. "Resoluteness does not first take cognizance of a Situation and put that Situation before itself; it has put itself into that Situation already. As resolute Dasein is already taking action" (*SZ*, p. 300; *BT*, p. 347).

There are two kinds of textual evidence, in *Being and Time*, and, I think, many other works, to support the claim that Heidegger's attack on the explanatory priority or foundational status of some sort of "individual mindedness" cannot be construed as an opening move in an eventual account of a wholly *mindless* maneuvering and coping within the world. First, there are simply the phrases Heidegger comes up with to describe the ways in which individuals (who do after all still exist in Heidegger's account) "go on" as they do within a social "network" of "assignment relations" and interconnected tasks, how *they* carry on such conventions and practicalities. The language is deliberately, even quite inelegantly, passive, but it cannot eliminate reference to some sort of *like-mindedness* and to some unusual quasi-intentional features of a taking up or sustaining a practice.

So, for example, for all the emphasis in *Being and Time* on a wholly unthematic, circumspective absorption (*Aufgehen*) or involvement (*Be-wandtheit*) in, even what the English translators call a "submersion" (*An-gewiesenheit*)<sup>10</sup> to, a common practical world of "assignments," a network of already interrelated tasks and functions that one simply "carries on" in everyday life, the question of *how* one significantly does so forces some odd turns of phrase. For example, in understanding the sense of a sign, one does not "grasp" a sense or a ready-to-hand object. But one does not merely "respond" in an appropriately differentiated way (or merely use the sign appropriately). One "achieves an orientation" by means of the sign.<sup>11</sup> To make use of that metaphor, one does not achieve an orientation just by *ending up* pointed in the right direction; one must have some sort of "sense" of where one is going if the going is to be sensible at all. This "sense" is not private; one can be sensibly oriented "for oneself" only by being oriented within some common social horizon. But there is some such sense; the orientation does not merely happen. (I am conforming to a norm, not just getting it right as a matter of fact.) Or, trying to make this point without reintroducing intentionalist (Cartesian, meaning-as-result-of-my-activity) language:

Letting an entity be involved, if we understand this ontologically, consists in previously freeing it for its readiness-to-hand within the environment. When we let something be involved, it must be involved in something; and in terms of this "in-which," the "with which" of this involvement is freed.<sup>12</sup> (117-18)

10 *SZ*, p. 87; *BT*, p. 121.

11 *SZ*, p. 79; *BT*, p. 110.

12 *SZ*, p. 85; *BT*, pp. 117-18.

(Heidegger even goes so far at one point in this giving with one active hand what he takes back with the other, passive hand, to say that our understanding does not make assignments; it "lets itself make assignments."<sup>13</sup>)

Freeing something for its involvements, letting something be involved: The phrasing is tortuous but revealing enough to make unlikely that significance, awareness, and classification in Heidegger "must be given a social behavioral reading in terms of communal responsive dispositions"<sup>14</sup> or that our coping and engaging are properly characterized as "mindless" (a characteristic phrase in Dreyfus's recent commentary).<sup>15</sup> The various significance-constituting norms carried on in our unthematic engagements with the world do not simply operate, or as a matter of fact dispose us to respond; *we* must somehow, whatever it means, "let" such norms function; "free" entities for their involvement. If we formulate Heidegger's anti-Cartesianism in terms of one prominent issue inherent in this discussion of significance, following norms without representing and attending to the norm, the problem is obvious and not addressed only by noting that Heidegger rejects "Cartesian" answers, and prefers some account that makes central "being already situated unthematically within social practices." His own language indicates that the nature of this norm following – as something I must do, achieve, sustain, and so forth – still needs to be addressed. The point is, An entity is dealt with significantly not only when it is used appropriately (something that can happen without significance, were a *Dasein* to repeat ritualistically, or merely mimic, or even just "respond appropriately," "mindlessly"), but when it is used in the light of such appropriateness, in an oriented way, with implications for future activities. (Pressing Heidegger on this point is what will make necessary the return to Hegel.)

Second, and much more famously, this sort of problem is an important one in the relation between Divisions One and Two of the published fragment of *Being and Time*. On Heidegger's account, as we have seen, when *Dasein* "understands," is truth-disclosive, lets significance happen, and so on, its understanding is a kind of non-propositional, essentially practical orientation. And what it understands is roughly "how one goes on." Understanding is always an active "projection" in the light of one's thrownness in

an established social community, or a matter of one's already having absorbed, and to be acting futurally, in the light of the relevant norms. However, Heidegger also insisted that, in all its dealings, *Dasein* is also, always, "at issue for itself"; its own meaning and significance are at issue in what it does. Another way of making the point that its dealings can never be wholly routinized or become wholly mindless would be to stress with Heidegger that these dealings or copings are not isolated, individual tasks, mere instances of respondings and appropriate initiations. They make sense for that *Dasein* by all fitting in to some sort of coherent *purposefulness*. In some way, *Dasein* takes itself to be at issue in all its dealings and copings. The problem of its own significance for itself in its dealings cannot be ignored, nor, as we shall see, interpreted in the same conventionalist way as worldly significance.

As anyone who has heard anything about Heidegger has probably heard, such a carrying on or sustaining is itself to be understood primordially in terms of being-towards-death, and such a "being-towards" greatly complicates the general Heideggerian picture of one's involvement "in a world." *Dasein*, being about its tasks, oriented everywhere towards the future, also in a way has no future (will end) and also implicitly carries on everywhere in the light of the "possibility of such an impossibility" (even, for the most part, by evading it).<sup>16</sup> Because of this dimension, or because of what is ultimately "at stake" in all of *Dasein*'s practices, *Dasein*'s absorption in the world always also has the quality of "mineness" (*Jemeinigkeit*). This is not to reintroduce individualism, but to suggest that *Dasein*'s world, like a common language, can and must have its unique appropriations, irreducibly singular ways in which the common practices are carried forward.<sup>17</sup>

So, my everyday dealings, and the objects, practices, language, and events relevant to those dealings, make sense, fit together, all in some fundamental sense, in terms of, within the "horizon" of, my "being at issue for myself" in such dealings. This introduction of the theme of a practical teleology (or anti-teleology) into Heidegger's account obviously further complicates his

16 Looking at the whole issue this way prepares us a bit for the claim that authentic being-towards-death is the "hidden basis" of *Dasein*'s historicity. *SZ*, 386; *BT*, p. 438. In the largest and most comprehensive sense, all of civilized life itself for Heidegger is to be understood as a great recognition of, and avoidance of, mortality (and so not the repression of instinctual life; the collective realization of virtue; the struggle between masters and slaves; the exhibitions of amount-propre; the rational organization of the means of production, and so on).

17 Cf. the discussion in Frederick A. Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 146–7.

13 *SZ*, p. 87. ("Das Verstehen läßt sich in and von diesen Bezügen selbst verweisen.") *BT*, p. 120.

14 Robert Brandom, "Categories in Being and Time," in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Hubert Dreyfus and Harrison Hall (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), p. 53.

15 Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). See, though, the differentiation of mindless and robotic behavior, p. 68 ff.

anti-Cartesianism. For various reasons, according to him, I *cannot* just "go on" as "they" do with regard to the issue of my own purposiveness or "fundamental" temporality, my "stretching" of my existence on from past to future. Now, in Heidegger's account, everyday activities *are* significantly purposive in the everyday way, within a network of already assigned possible tasks and functions. One gets into one's car, in order to drive to work, in order to teach one's class, in order to satisfy the conditions of one's employment, and so forth, where the interrelated network of cars, work, classes, status, employment, et cetera, is just unthematically "submitted to." In the everyday, *Dasein* "stands in subjection (*Botmässigkeit*) to others. It itself is not; its Being has been taken away by the Others."<sup>18</sup> And so begins the famous account of the dominance of *das Man* in modern public life.<sup>19</sup> But, as just indicated, and to get closer to the point where Heidegger's account begins to turn toward Hegelian issues, my "proximally and for the most part" understanding myself within such assigned functions and roles cannot be, however finally articulated, a sufficient answer to the "Who is *Dasein*?" question Heidegger originally asked. A tool "is" (is intelligible as) nothing but its role in such an assignment structure. That *cannot* be true of me.

One reason it cannot be so actually relies on the *first* of the two "anti-objectivist" points noted, and is more general than his existential attention to the problem of death. The question is, How am I taking up and *sustaining* sense-making practices, norms, if it is not by representing, calculating, or applying rules? In the language used with respect to my own Being, the question concerns what I allow or do not allow in what Heidegger calls my "falling" into the world, where "allowing" refers to some sort of a necessary "mindedness" in my activities even if not "Cartesian." In the passage where the issue is addressed with the fullest terminological flourishes, the problem is posed like this:

Can *Dasein* be conceived as an entity for which, in its Being, its potentiality for Being is an *issue*, if this entity in its very everydayness, *has lost itself*, and, in falling, "lives" *away from itself*?<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *SZ*, p. 126; *BT*, p. 164.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger therewith continues the great shift in philosophically inspired criticism of modern culture that began with Nietzsche; away from the Hegelian problems of alienation and fragmentation, the lack of any "ethical place" *within* modernized societies, to a different though connected concern with mass culture "absorption," herd mentality, conformism, homogenization; with the absence of any ethical place *outside* such routinized wholes.

<sup>20</sup> *SZ*, p. 179; *BT*, p. 223.

The prospect here sketched would indeed see a kind of mindlessness as a consequence of an anti-individualist and anti-mentalistic, social theory of meaning. But Heidegger answers his question immediately, denying that this would be the right conclusion to draw.

But falling into the world would be phenomenal "evidence" *against* the existentiality of *Dasein* only if *Dasein* were regarded as an isolated "I" or subject, as a self-point from which it moves away. In that case the world would be an Object. Falling into the world would then have to be re-interpreted ontologically as Being-present-at-hand in the manner of an entity within the world. [In the preceding discussion, this would be the mistake of interpreting "understanding" as "appropriate responding."] If, however, we keep in mind that *Dasein*'s Being is in the state of Being-in-the-world, as we have already pointed out, then it becomes manifest that falling, as a kind of Being of this Being-in, affords us rather the most elemental evidence for *Dasein*'s existentiality. . . . *Dasein* can fall only because Being-in-the-world understandingly with a state-of-mind is an issue for it.<sup>21</sup>

Or *Dasein* can only lose *itself*; it can fall only if it leaps. This claim, though, also means that Heidegger dangerously overstates his general position by interpreting *Dasein* as a kind of site or place or, most famously, clearing (*Lichtung*) where significance, Being, happens. *Dasein*, by virtue of the preceding claim, cannot simply "be" its there, be the site of disclosure. For there to "be" such a clearing, *Dasein* must "hold it open" in a certain way, attentive to certain norms and ends, purposively and in some sense, self-consciously. Heidegger has a tendency to try to outflank such points by insisting that whatever ways might be available to *Dasein* to sustain and reflect on its world's ongoing sense-making practices themselves always already reflect "how one goes on." Or, *Dasein* is radically "thrown" (*geworfen*), and there is no way to bring the "always already there" background context to the foreground, as if itself an object. But his own clarification of why *Dasein* cannot be said simply to be sensible in some socially assigned way ought to be a telling point for every form of *Dasein*'s disclosures. *Dasein* always is and is not its "there."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *SZ*, p. 179; *BT*, 223-4.

<sup>22</sup> Thus it need not be only a breakdown or a gap or obtrusiveness that can disrupt *Dasein*'s involvements and force a thematization of entities. A weapon or torture implement might not be "usable," not because it won't function and must be attended to in a present-at-hand way. One cannot "go on" as "they" do with such implements because one realizes one is not

And, in language that has become familiar nowadays, if all of this is true, it ought to raise the question of how we should account for our *conforming to norms* in social practices. Knowing that we are not applying rules, and not merely responding appropriately, mindlessly, and that the norm following is possible and renders the world significant in the way it does only in terms of human agency and purposiveness, is all not enough.

Now Heidegger has his own take on such issues and insists in his own voice that no individual *Dasein* can ever "be" anything. *Dasein's* being is "to be," to exist. This is of course why he became, against his wishes, a famous "existentialist." One of the most mysterious passages of *Being and Time* asserts the radical contrary, as he shifts attention from the world, and everyday meaning in the world (where he tends towards a kind of social positivism, or mindlessness) to the theme of authentic Being, where a kind of radical absence, and so radical possibility, becomes the theme.

Care itself, in its very essence, is permeated with nullity through and through [*durch und durch von Nichtigkeit durchsetzt*, or, literally, "shot through with nothingness"]. Thus "care" – *Dasein's* Being – means as thrown projection, the (null or nothing) Being-the-basis of a nullity [(*nichtluge*) *Grund-sein einer Nichtigkeit*].<sup>23</sup>

This claim again involves the importance of an ever impending death in Heidegger's account of how *Dasein* can be said to be at issue for itself; *Everything* "mattering" to me can provisionally be "handed over" to the They; I can "allow" everything of such significance to be assigned. But my own death and its significance for me, precisely as "mine," cannot be so handed over, all prompting a kind of "anxiety" that undermines the solidity of all of what has been handed over, all of *Dasein's* familiar norms and practices. However, that issue, and the associated themes of anxiety, guilt, the call of conscience, authenticity, and resoluteness, do not shed much light on the significance, subjectivity, and sociality issues we have been pursuing. We might come to understand that much of what Heidegger has patiently articulated as the structure of how things make sense for *Dasein* in everyday existence is an evasion, a fleeing from death, and so cannot be any sort of total absorption, free of such "negativity," but that all doesn't help us much

"one of them." One might imagine this happening in enough contexts to make it crucial to understand *how* the norms of some "They" are sustained, and how some are not or cannot be.

<sup>23</sup> SZ, p. 285; BT, p. 331.

to understand the internal structure of such sustaining and reflecting. I conclude that what positive answer there is in Heidegger to the question of the possibility of a non-individualist, non-mentalistic account of our sensible, norm-governed dealings with the world is undermined by his own analysis, and that we are only left with rejected alternatives.<sup>24</sup>

## II. "The Awesome Power of the Negative"

Human nature exists only in an achieved community of consciousness [*nur in der zu Stande gebrachten Gemeinschaft der Bewusstseyn*].<sup>25</sup>

So, the question is, if the kind of anti-Cartesian position outlined previously is correct, what is it about the "way we go on," the way we *follow* social norms without "representations," that could explain my "distance," as it were, *from* the norm, my not merely responding and initiating appropriately, but in the *light of*, and so with some possible alteration or rejection of, such presumed shared sense of appropriateness? As we have seen, Heidegger's answer to this question requires a move into unprecedented topics in Western philosophy. The lack in such conventional sense-making practices of the ability to anticipate or make any sense of my own temporality, my being-towards-an-end, in effect radically disorients all continued participation in such practices. Such a shock to the everyday confronts me with the utter "nullity" or absolute contingency of the "ground of my Being." But this account of the "primordial" *absence* of sense leaves us just with a rather Manichean duality in Heidegger's account of the fundamental, world-disclosing practical activity at the heart of his whole account: a guilty, evasive falling, a fleeing from such an absence, and an authentic but famously empty "resoluteness," a resoluteness with "nothing" to be resolute about (the terms of resolute activity, content, are possible only in a socially structured world; only in "their" terms).

<sup>24</sup> I am disagreeing here with Dreyfus's claim that one can simply distinguish a "positive" and "negative" function of the One (*das Man*), or between necessary conformity and slavish conformism, Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 151–62. As noted, Heidegger clearly intends that the topics in Division Two are required if the account of "intelligibility" in Division One is to be successful. This is not to say that Heidegger's account of *das Man* is not without ambiguities. See Olafson's note on his early use in the *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitsbegriffs* (1925); Olafson, *Heidegger*, p. 266. In other words, Dreyfus is right that Heidegger's account of social intelligibility is not a theory of intersubjectivity, but that, I am suggesting, is part of the problem.

<sup>25</sup> *PhC*, p. 48; *PhS*, p. 43.

Several controversial interpretive points would need to be established before what would have been Hegel's view about these matters could be fully discussed. There is first the claim that Hegel can be included under the non-natural kind invented here, anti-Cartesian. Here the critical text is obviously the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I shall simply have to assume that that work, as its very title indicates, does indeed comprise Hegel's attempt to subsume the broad notions of consciousness (understood as any direct intending of an object), self-consciousness (understood as any reflective self-relation or practical self-determination), and reason (understood as the normative self-constraint of universality and necessity) all under what is argued to be the more comprehensive notion of *Geist* or spirit.

This is, of course, quite a complicated argument. There are two main components to it. The first concerns what Hegel means by Spirit's own "measure" of itself, its own Notion or criterion. Hegel thus tries to direct our philosophical attention to the criteria or norms that constrain the way we directly confront and take up the world, the criteria or norms that determine the nature and limits of our satisfaction of desire and comportment toward others, and the ideal criteria in any universally justifiable procedure for resolving disputes. Now there is difficulty enough here, in understanding what Hegel might mean when he identifies a *Maßstab*, or *Begriff*, or shape (*Gestalt*) of spirit. In general, I shall understand him to be giving an account of the possibility of those human activities and interactions that are what they are *because* and only because constrained by norms in certain ways; the activities are constituted by such norm following. (I think Hegel, especially in the philosophy of objective spirit, uses the notion of right or *rechtl*ich much as we would use the notion of norm.) So, an action is the fulfillment of a contract, the punishment of a criminal, a promising, an inheriting, or even a valid argument or acceptable evidentiality test, and so forth, only because the participants take themselves to be participating in institutions governed by certain rules. Were there "really" to be no such norms, or were they to perform the same body movements but without taking themselves to be following such norms, the actions would not be those actions. Second and more importantly, Hegel argues that such norms can only be adequately understood and accounted for as historically sanctioned *social* norms. On this reading the basic question for the *Phenomenology* is whether it has a persuasive case that such epistemological and ethical issues should be understood as manifestations of the history of spirit, or as historical social norms, and whether it has a good account of what it is for something to be a norm (a "shape of spirit") and what it is for such norms to be followed. Can

there be an achieved *Gemeinsamkeit der Brauissigkeit*, and can it account for so much?<sup>26</sup>

For our purposes, among the many controversies introduced by such claims, one is particularly relevant to our Heideggerian issues, and is particularly stressed in the preface to the *Phenomenology*. Hegel asserts that such a social subject, or "living substance,"

is in truth actual [*wirklich*] only as the movement of self-positing, or is the mediation of its becoming other than itself with itself. As subject, it is pure, simple negativity, and thereby the division [*Entzweiung*] of the simple, or a doubling which opposes, which is again the negation of this indifferent differentiation and its opposition.<sup>27</sup>

This is, stated with all the systematic (and nearly incomprehensible) flourishes, Hegel's doctrine of the *Arbeit des Negativen*, the labor of the negative, and the justification for the claim that "the Absolute" is "essentially result, that it is first of all in the end what it is in truth, and therein consists its nature, to be actual, subject, the becoming of itself."<sup>28</sup>

Helpfully, Hegel also points out shortly after these remarks that "What has just been said can also be expressed by saying that reason is purposive activity [*das zweckmässige Tun*]." I take him to mean by this gloss that the norms that constrain and direct our cognitive and practical activities do so only if collectively authorized in some way, sanctioned, *rational*ly legitimated, and that this collectively self-sanctioning process is necessarily developmental, that is, purposive.

All of which, especially the claim about the rational nature of these periodic dissatisfactions, breakdowns, and reintegrations, is controversial, especially in the eyes of a modern evolutionary epistemologist, skeptic, cultural anthropologist, and so on. For now the first important point for us is simply the extraordinary stress on "negativity," becoming other to self, doubling or division (something that reaches its high — or low — point in Hegel's famous and somewhat macabre claim "The life of Spirit is not the life that shies away from death, and keeps itself untouched by devastation,

<sup>26</sup> I try to defend such a reading in "You Can't Get There from Here: Transition Problems in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> *PhG*, p. 18; *PhS*, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> *PhG*, p. 19; *PhS*, p. 11.

but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment [*Zerissenheit*], it finds itself."<sup>29</sup>

It is this account of the self-undermining, self-negating aspects of collectively sanctioned norms that brings us to the same sort of point at issue in Heidegger's anti-Cartesianism. Our question throughout was how to understand an anti-individualist and anti-mentalistic position on significance or intelligibility in a way that could still distinguish between matter-of-fact "appropriate responding" and some orientation achieved "in the light of" what is appropriate, to distinguish between an anti-subjectivism and a reductionist objectivism (i.e., a position that simply eliminated the "problem of the meaning of Being" at the outset). As we have seen, a large part of the answer for both Heidegger and Hegel has to do with attending to the conditions for our simply not being able to "go on as we do." For both, it is in understanding such a failure, or breakdown, that we can see more clearly how we were collectively sustaining the norms and conventions by means of which we were "allowing ourselves" to coordinate activities, understand each other, engage the world in a familiar, "circumspective" way, and so forth.

(And none of this, I should stress, returns us to individual mental episodes or beliefs as "where" such significance is "sustained." I can be said to be sustaining a practice in the way I act and move about within it, without my having resolved, or without my continually resolving, to sustain it. But that is another topic.)

Clearly what Hegel has denied in this context is that such failure can be as comprehensive, discontinuous, episodic, and "ecstatic" as Heidegger maintains. As we have seen from the limitations of Heidegger's case, there are good reasons to be so hesitant. By contrast, the general virtue of Hegel's position, at least the poorly sketched out fragment introduced here, is that such failure or negation is always *internal* to a practice and determinate. Our not being able to go on as we do in some way or other is as up to us or due to us as our so going on. We do not "come upon" an *Abgrund* in anticipating our death; in such a case, *weg* go on, or fail to go on, as we have done or as we cannot any longer.

There are, of course, more accessible and better known examples of Hegel's theory of sociality, all of which help make the same point. So, for example, in political terms what this means is that the true or full exercise of agency by an individual, the possibility of realizing the modern norm of

genuinely free activity without which a modern *Gemeinschaft* would not be possible, is only fully "realized" (*verwirklicht*), if the like capacity of all persons for such agency is recognized, if nothing in my deed implies the contrary, and if that mutuality of recognition is institutionally secured, ultimately in a *Rechtsstaat*. Hegel tries always to show that this is so by considering the implications of other candidate accounts of such norms of agency, beginning with the simplest sense of freedom understood as independence: my matter-of-fact ability to effect my will through sheer power alone. Such a putative independence is shown to involve a deep form of dependence inconsistent with any masterly norm, and the "master-slave" dialectic is under way.

And these sorts of claims are not of course limited to political philosophy alone. Hegel discusses the struggle to achieve some form of collectively sanctioned ("satisfying") like-mindedness as relevant to various philosophic and religious enterprises, to the European Enlightenment, the French Revolution, romanticism, and so on. And he agrees that such a like-mindedness is not sustained by individual acts of consent or by simultaneous beliefs or dispositions. Individual self-consciousness does indeed always evince such like-mindedness rather than constitute it. But we badly confuse the nature of such a shape of Spirit if we regard it as simply a network of tasks, how we go on, or who we happen to be, or what we are "absorbed" into. For the possibility of such like-mindedness is very much a question for Hegel in the way it is not for Heidegger and many of his followers. Given Hegel's claim that participating in a practice is a sustaining and affirming of a norm, such participation already presupposes the possibility of a collectively sanctioned norm. Our own practices carry with them the memory of failed attempts and new resolutions to achieve such a norm. There is no "form of life" as such, no *das Man*, then, only attempts to realize the successful like-mindedness on which individual self-determination and satisfaction rest. As is usually the case in his books, to show this, Hegel begins with the contrary assumption — that engagements with the world and others are radically individualist, unregulated by norms — and he proceeds to examine the kinds of conflicts that would have to occur for, and possible resolutions open to, such parties. By trying to show the "internal" insufficiencies of such resolutions as the exercise of sheer power, or mastery, a stoic withdrawal from or skeptical negation of the world, or a Christian, other-worldly dualism, he eventually tries to argue that a "satisfying" form of those activities by virtue of which the world could be disclosed at all must be governed by a universally sanctioned norm. In general this norm is described as a *complete* "mutuality of recognition" and, as noted, is most intuitively obvious in his account of a particular norm,

*Recht*. But the relevance of that norm, mutually affirming free subjectivity, to his accounts of modern religion, art, and philosophy is also evident.

Thus, I am suggesting that the right way to read the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is as an extensive attempt to expose the inadequacies of the very notion of a "mind-world" relation, and that these inadequacies themselves point to the primordially of an historicized "subject-subject" relation. (This is shown to be so for any number of possible "objects," ranging from sense objects to ideas to the moral law to God.) However, with Cartesianism discarded, this subject-subject relation cannot rely on any suggestion of individual, self-inspecting agents confronting and negotiating in a social context, nor on any metaphor of submission to or lostness in *das Man*. Such relations have to be understood as mutually self-forming and self-authorizing in time.

So, a general way of looking at the problem developed so far would be this: Radically anti-Cartesian theories tend to support anti-individualist and anti-mentalalist claims by appeal to the priority of participation in social practices in making possible the general intelligibility of the world, language, and others. But this sort of direction tends to treat questions of the authority or appropriateness of such practices for such agents as merely other aspects of "how we go on," as an issue itself raised and settled *within* a social practice, say an authorizing practice. And it can thus also lead to an elimination of any distinctly philosophical or normative assessment of such practices in favor of some replacement enterprise: hermeneutics, sociology of knowledge, cultural anthropology, or, in the Heideggerian case, a kind of anti-hermeneutics, an endless account of how practices break down, don't work, deconstruct, and so forth. (Not for nothing did Hegel produce his Marx and Feuerbach; Heidegger, his Gadamer and Derrida.)

But even such attempts to collapse all the traditional questions into questions about social practices or texts still confront our "Hegelian" problem: *how* such sense-making or authorizing practices are sustained and carried forward, or how and why the practices come to have and cease to have any social authority and are replaced. Whatever second-level, authorizing practice we come up with, supposedly as merely a component of the whole fabric of our "world," will itself raise the same problem and cannot be an "answer" to it. This is the problem we can call "negativity," the negative rather than absorbed relation between subjects and practice.

Heidegger's response to such issues involves, as we have seen, an account of the role of "anxiety" in the disfunction of such practices, or in general, an account of the radical finitude and contingency of any attempt to ground, reassure oneself about, such ways of going on. From the Hegelian perspective just sketched, this would look like a classic example of an "indeterminate negation," something Hegel thinks is only apparently possible. The

insufficiency or breakdown of some sort of purposive, collective practice, let us say its loss of authority (e.g., when a religious doctrine of immortality comes to appear as a cowardly evasion of one's mortality), is possible only if the practice "fails" when measured against some end or point implicitly (or explicitly) posited by it. It could not be experienced as a failure if it were measured against some incommensurable, alien practice or standard. But if this is so then the failure or negation must always be determinate, insufficient with respect to X or Y, because of A or B. Unless Heidegger wants us to understand his own account of the disorienting consequences of anxiety, the disclosure of nullity, and so forth, merely as "how we go on about sense and authority" in twentieth-century, mass culture societies, his claims about the philosophical status and implications of such an experience would not, it would appear, be able to do justice to this point. If he does interpret them this latter way, then he is acting like an armchair anthropologist, whose only defense for his own way of regarding things is that he too simply radicalizes how we go on.

Several questions naturally arise at this point. For one thing, given where this path leads, one might be greatly moved to take a second look at the supposed insufficiencies of the post-Cartesian emphasis on the explanatory priority of individual minds or mental activity, with sociality, communicative success, and general intelligibility all quite rightly seen as a result of such activity. Methodological individualism might not have been such a bad idea after all. However if one is sympathetic at all to the Hegelian themes introduced and the problems they pose for Heidegger, daunting difficulties seem to lie ahead. At the very least one would seem to be committed to the following claims about social practices:

- (i) All societies are best understood by understanding the norms authoritative in them. (Hegel is, after all, an Idealist.)
- (ii) There is a difference between historical and non-historical societies.
- (iii) There must then be a difference between the way in which some societies subscribe to and sustain such norms that makes possible a radical and continuous alteration of such norms, rather than a repetitive resanctioning with each generation.
- (iv) Our own social practices – *Geist* – are best understood as the result of this sort of continuous historical transformation. Our sanctions and ideals are not just contingent results, however, merely our way of going on about things, but can be shown to be superior resolutions of internal insufficiencies in the status of norms in prior epochs of *Geist*.
- (v) It is difficult to say, without a major book, what this distinctive, historically mutable way of sustaining norms is, but whatever it is, it has

something to do with why Hegel thinks the transformations can be understood as progressive. For Hegel, this historicity occurred first in ancient Greece and it obviously had to do with the *norm's authority*, the way it functions, *not* resting on ancestral pronouncements, tradition alone, mystery, or brute power. (Heidegger's vacuuming up all such distinctions into *das Man* would be one of Hegel's great objections here.) The norm's sanctioning force has some relation to the intelligibility and universal justifiability or at least potential intelligibility and justifiability of the very claim to authority. (This doesn't mean that pre-historical or traditional societies live in dark unintelligibility or without sense. But Hegel is not a relativist. Lots of things that could make sense don't in such practices; much that would be intelligible isn't, all not because of what they haven't learned but because of what they do not allow themselves to understand.)

(vi) Such a shift in the kind of authority possessed by norms, however incomplete and inconsistent in earlier forms, can be said to imply its own eventual telos, or resolution (*Verwirklichung*). The only kind of norm that could be sustained in a way consistent with this new form of authority is, ultimately, one affirmed and sustained by actually free, mutually recognizing subjects within social institutions consistent with such freedom and recognition.

(vii) We have reached, or now could reach, such a stage. In a phrase, human history, the history of *Geist*, is indeed the history of the actualization of freedom. One was free; many were free; all are free.

Obviously, (i) to (vii) find few takers today. However, if one takes seriously that modern forms of anti-Cartesianism have a difficult time explaining the normativity of social practices, and especially the continuous and occasionally reconceived authority of such norms for the purposive agents who subscribe to them, then avoiding this general line of thought will prove difficult. One will be left, in trying to account for such subscription and purposiveness, either with Heidegger's revolutionary account of the absence of any such authority and his Nietzschean account of sociality itself as evasion, fleeing, concealment; or with accounts of "public" or naturalized meaning, confident that ordinary language is all right or that our practices just go on, but blind to the way such practices are at issue for participants and genuinely intelligible only if the way they are at issue is understood by an interpreter. Publicity and sociality without self-consciousness are blind; self-consciousness and purposiveness without sociality are empty.

## HEIDEGGERIAN HISTORICITY AND METAPHYSICAL POLITICS

In spite of the ascendant power of technology and of the universally technicized [*gesamttechnischen*] mobilization of the globe, hence in spite of a quite specific preeminence of an ensnared [imprisoned, *eingefangenen*] nature, an altogether distinct fundamental power of Being [*Grundmacht des Seins*] is on the rise; this power is history, which, however, is no longer to be represented as an object of historiography.<sup>1</sup>

### I

In the following, I shall be mostly concerned to try to do two things. One is to explain, insofar as I understand it, some aspects of Heidegger's attack on the classical German philosophical tradition or "German Idealism."

I want especially to try to understand his account of the essay he seems to regard as the death knell for this Kantian program, and thereby, he insists, a death knell for the aspirations of modern philosophy itself: These are the lectures Heidegger gave in the summer semester in Freiburg in 1936 on Schelling's 1809 "Treatise on Human Freedom," the last essay Schelling

<sup>1</sup> This remark is from Heidegger's 1937 Nietzsche lectures. Nietzsche (hereafter *Nf*), (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), I, p. 451; Nietzsche, II, *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 186.