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## Fear, Death, and Being-a-problem: Understanding and Critiquing Racial Discourse with Heidegger's *Being and Time*

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Fear, Death, and Being-a-problem:  
Understanding and Critiquing Racial Discourse with Heidegger's *Being and Time*

by

Jesús H. Ramírez

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
College of Arts and Sciences  
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## **Dedication**

For Apa and Papa Chuche

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## Abstract

I use Heidegger's *Being and Time* to understand and critique racial discourse, but to also determine Heidegger's reach into issues like racial identity. I start by examining how his introductory statements in *Being and Time* on the term "existentiell" suggest a path towards a conception of identity. I then go into how a racial identity could, through his terminology, be conceived as what I call a "fear existentiell." I demonstrate how society assists the individual in maintaining a racialized existence that is embedded in fear. I move toward an examination of Heidegger's three concepts of death to demonstrate how two of these death concepts (*verenden* and *ableben*) are often attached to a racial identity through racial discourse. I move into a discussion that relies on W.E.B. Du Bois' conception of the black American as a problem for America and, using his seminal question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" I show that the individual's existence, as discussed in Heidegger, becomes a problem for itself through the racial discourse about its identity. I call this "Being-a-problem." At first, I discuss it as inauthentic, as it is driven by social fear and generalized discussions about racial identity; however, I later demonstrate how it can move from inauthentic Being-a-problem to authentic Being-a-problem. I end with an analysis of racial discourse, showing that it exemplifies what I call, "race reports," which are comprised of reports about the individual's racial identity that conceal a person's potential for authenticity.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In this dissertation, I use Martin Heidegger's notion of an existentiell in *Being and Time* (henceforth, BT) as a jumping off point to extend his analysis of Being into our contemporary discourse on racial identity. In discussing the meaning of Being for Dasein (Heidegger's term for the being whose existence is an issue for itself), Heidegger uses an "existentiell," a term to denote the diverse ways Dasein can be itself. Heidegger explores how *das Man* (his term for a general mass we encounter everyday via influences about how to talk, understand the world, and know ourselves) shapes discourses about Dasein, making these discussions idle, what Heidegger calls *Gerede*. One of the general moods of *das Man* is fear. Because of this, I examine a term I call a "fear existentiell," an identity that underlies how society regards certain racial and marginalized identities as fearful of, feared by, and feared. Regarding fear, Heidegger says individuals flee their real existential death (Being-toward-death or *Sein zum Tod*), preferring to view death as something remote and not uniquely belonging to one's existence. Using Heidegger's three concepts of death (*verenden*, *ableben*, and *Sein zum Tod*), I demonstrate how *das Man* encourages fear existentiell Dasein to dwell on its death as an urgent societal issue shared amongst a whole racial group, a phenomenon that helps Dasein obscure the singularizing of Dasein that it has with *Sein zum Tod*. From this, I conclude that a fear existentiell idle discourse on death leads Dasein into being inauthentic.

Because this dissertation relies on what happens in racial discourse, I use Heidegger's *Gerede* to explain how fear existentiell Dasein are often talked about as close to death, forcing

them to see themselves as a societal problem. I call this outcome for these Dasein “Being-a-problem.” Being-a-problem originates in fear, making it an inauthentic racial identity (fear existentiell). I call this “inauthentic Being-a-problem” (iBap). Since Heidegger also discusses how one can be resolute in the face of having inauthentically existed, I discuss how Heidegger’s *Being and Time* can be used to advance a critical and honest assessment of one’s situation as iBap, allowing Dasein to not be led by fear and idle talk. By using W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of “second sight,” I demonstrate how Being-a-problem can be authentic. I call this “authentic Being-a-problem” (aBap) and discuss how it can deconstruct fear and *Gerede* about its identity. With such deconstruction, Dasein can retrieve its own version of “second sight” in what Heidegger calls the *Augenblick*, the “moment of vision,” that starts with Dasein resolutely claiming its existentiell; however, this means Dasein as a fear existentiell must drop the fear and the death talk of *verenden* and *ableben*. Only in this way can Being-a-problem be authentic. Through this modified existentiell, racial discourse can be critiqued as a kind of reporting about racial identity that maintains Dasein’s alienation in present-at-hand concepts and assessments of how it exists. Consequently, chapter 7 of my dissertation is a critique of racial discourse through what Heidegger calls “ontical reports” (various academic pursuits that study existence). I describe racial discourse as ontical “race reports” that often require present-at-hand (pah) assessments of individual experiences to discuss racism. This pah analysis condemns individuals to a subject-object ontology, where people are either objects or subjects to be interrogated. The fundamental Situatedness of Dasein becomes lost in the subject-object analysis of human beings and race, as well as Dasein’s capacity to both choose and make its world. A critical self-understanding from authentic Bap identifies this present-at-hand use, so as to modify these race reports that talk in this manner, thereby, opening up a discourse on race that is predicated on

seeing how Dasein is covered up by the very kind of talk that seems designed to politically and socially emancipate it. My view of authentic Being-a-problem will serve as an attempt to rethink and then free these racial discourses from the present-at-hand terminological obstacles embedded in them.

My use of Heidegger is necessary in six specific ways: first, to examine an existentiell as an identity; second, to show how society influences these existentiells in a fearful way; third, to demonstrate how this influence leans in the direction of two kinds of death (*verenden* and *ableben*), which conceal Dasein's existential situation; fourth, to analyze the meaning of inauthentic Being-a-problem, a fear existentiell Dasein discussed as close to death; fifth, to show how a critical self-understanding is the only way to cut through the influence on one's identity, dispensing with fear and the *Gerede* about Dasein's death; finally, to be skeptical of discourses (academic or otherwise) that purport to represent identities in a generalized manner that would not allow Dasein to be free to resolutely claim its existence against the obstacles presented by racial discourse.

### **Why Care?**

Philosophers of Heidegger and race studies will benefit from this dissertation as it affirms a positive relationship between early Heidegger (*Being and Time*) and racial discourse that is seldom examined. Although I use *Being and Time* to critique racial discourse, I seek to understand how the way we talk about race runs into crises in which various genuine and non-genuine claims to racial oppression and marginalization often become entangled. I aim to provide a solution to such confluences by examining what Dasein's authentic racial identity would look like from examining fear. Additionally, I am fascinated by the link between one's authentic identity and how racial discourse appears to cover such an identity. My work on

Heidegger problematizes race studies as part of a grander issue with how racial discourse obfuscates Dasein's ownmost Being. My work frames race studies as a discursive practice in which all are involved in the spreading of grand narratives that relegate individuals into existential concealment despite this discourse's many attempts to gain more insight about the marginalization of racialized communities. As for Heidegger studies, my work allows us to see how Heidegger's *Being and Time* can be a way to study racial identity and the issue of authenticity within communities. Instead of looking at Dasein as a person who has roles like being a teacher, student, and bartender, we can see the implications of *Being and Time* for racial identity when Dasein is a black American or a Mexican immigrant new to the United States, to give a couple of examples. Thus, by examining race from the perspective of Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*, we can see that one of Dasein's daily affairs would be that it deals with its racial identity as a way of being.

### **Why Racial Identity?**

Whether in academia or outside of it, one confronts discourses on identity, where identity tends to be discussed as the when, where, who, how, what, and why of an individual. Questions of personal identity pervade national discourse, from political discussions of "identity politics" to academic discussions of one's class, race, and gender. However, from the vantage point of philosophy, I ask, "What does it mean to be *talked* about as a problem?" This question is a bit different from Du Bois' question in the *Souls of Black Folk* where he asks, "How does it feel to be a problem?"<sup>1</sup> His concern dealt specifically with race. In examining racial discourse through a Heideggerian lens, I can see what it would mean for Dasein to have an inauthentic racial identity, which compels the inquiry into what an authentic Dasein would be. I argue that

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<sup>1</sup> W.E.B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 9.

existential discourses frame and direct our understanding about racial identity through Heidegger's understanding of fear, idle talk, and death. By examining this framing, I will show how racial discourse is often driven by making connections between an identity and one's fear of death.

### **Broad Narratives**

Scholars and non-scholars alike talk about how specific groups of people are under threat in the United States and abroad. Current scholarship writes about this in the form of marginalization, according to which certain identities are discussed as under threat. Iris Marion Young states, "all oppressed people suffer some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, and feelings."<sup>2</sup> This is an expansive definition of oppression that can encompass nearly all individuals and groups. It is difficult to see how this broad definition can maintain important distinctions. A wide definition, such as Young's, may cover more people; however, it does little to preserve distinctive claims to oppression, and by extension, claims to racial marginalization. Instead, the discourses on marginalization, oppression, and racism promote a general set of narratives to understand those issues. Such discourses can obstruct the nuanced experiences in the daily affairs of people who endure such issues or power relations. As my dissertation will show, this covering up happens in racial discourse, wherein racialized communities are broadly discussed in present-at-hand terms and narratives. I discuss how the broad and terminological strokes are the result of a fear-laden and idle discourse within racial discourse.

I explore how discourse about identity forges and selects one's self-interpretation about identity. I take an unlikely approach: I use Heidegger's *Being and Time* to exhibit how the

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<sup>2</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 40.

pressure of idle talk influences one's identity, especially when that identity is often connected to fear and death. By examining this influence, I shed light on how our discourse about racial identity inevitably conceals an individual's existential self-understanding where authentic and inauthentic identity become blurred by talk. I demonstrate how the pressure of talk, as it pertains to death, exacerbates this blurring and places one in a problematic situation of dealing with a fallen discourse about identity and death while trying to authentically claim oneself as a problem.

### **Example: A Boy and a Professor**

Throughout the dissertation, my argument for the concept of a "fear existentiell" and "Being-a-problem" will use examples to show how idle talk affects Dasein's interpretation of its identity. By providing examples, I hope to demonstrate how Dasein's self-interpretative identity is often influenced by what Heidegger calls *das Man* or the They, that entity to which Dasein always holds itself accountable. Such examples also show obvious differences in racial experiences, some of which include what it feels like to endure a racial situation, others showing racially motivated actions. I use such examples to demonstrate the distinction between racially motivated situations and how we *talk* about racial situations. This allows me to consistently clarify to the reader that we are dealing with a critique of racial discourse and seeing how the descriptions of such racial experiences tend to differ from the racial situation itself. I offer a comparison between a boy, Legend Solomon, and a professor, George Yancy.

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016, a ten-year-old New Jersey black boy named Legend Solomon was playing basketball outside. Down the block from Legend were police officers in pursuit of a twenty-year-old black man whom they believed to have stolen items from a nearby convenience store. The officers saw Legend, regarded him as their suspect, and pointed their guns at him. A few of Legend's neighbors shielded him from the police, shouting at the officers to not shoot

him. The officers withdrew. Shortly after, Legend's mother posted a video of him on social media, in tears, trying nervously to express that the police "were trying to shoot me."<sup>3</sup>

Contrast Legend's experience with George Yancy's description of racial judgments cast upon him. Yancy is a professor of philosophy at Emory University and he writes in his *New York Times* opinion piece entitled, "I Am a Dangerous Professor," that

Honestly, being a black man, I had thought that I had been marked enough — as bestial, as criminal, as inferior. I have always known of the existence of that racialized scarlet letter. It marks me as I enter stores; the white security guard never fails to see it. It follows me around at predominantly white philosophy conferences; I am marked as 'different' within that space not because I *am* different, but because the conference space is filled with whiteness. It follows me as white police officers pull me over for no other reason than because I'm black. As Frantz Fanon writes, 'I am overdetermined from without.'<sup>4</sup>

Yancy observes that his skin color characterizes this idea of the "racialized scarlet letter." His skin color becomes the catalyst for a discourse about his identity as a "different" characteristic in a space usually taken up by white people, or what he refers to as "whiteness."<sup>5</sup> Yancy's descriptions suggest that he understands himself as problematic for others. Legend's case was a specific experience of nearly dying at the hands of the police, but he also bore the "racialized scarlet letter," prompting the police to draw their weapons on him. Legend's experience might be discussed as being predicated on "white spaces" and "whiteness," but his almost dying is the stand out element of his story. Legend was marked as a suspect, some *body* to watch out for, and

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<sup>3</sup> Edgar Sandoval, Thomas Tracy, Leonard Greene, "Newark boy, 10, chased by cops who thought he was a criminal 'thought they were going to shoot me,'" *nydailynews.com*, August 23, 2016, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/neighbors-intervene-shotgun-toting-newark-police-chase-boy-10-article-1.2762158> [accessed August 23, 2016].

<sup>4</sup> George Yancy, "I Am a Dangerous Professor," *nytimes.com*, November 30, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/30/opinion/i-am-a-dangerous-professor.html> [accessed November 30, 2016].

<sup>5</sup> Yancy's point about color as a mark echoes W.E.B. Du Bois' *Darkwater: Voices within the Veil*, where he writes, "Such degrading of men by men is as old as mankind and the invention of no one race or people. Ever have men striven to conceive of their victims as different from the victors, endless different, in soul and blood, strength and cunning, race and lineage. It has been left, however, to Europe and to modern days to discover the eternal worldwide mark of meanness, -- color," (1999), 24.



now, because of his experience, he will fear the police. The difference between the boy and the scholar is that the former endures a visceral experience of a proximity to death that ignites his fear, while Yancy thoughtfully reflects on his discomfort about being constantly overdetermined from without. Both represent two kinds of racial marginalization: 1) the perception of a bestial, “everywhere” and “nowhere,” a criminal, an inferior being, who reflects on racism in society; 2) the police almost shooting a boy because of a criminal perception. The former is a reflection while the latter is a violent experience. The former is prompted by discussion and assessments of accrued experiences while the latter is the observation of an actual encounter with being near death. Thus, through an examination of the origins of my meaning of Being-a-problem we can see how fear, death, and idle talk all participate in Dasein’s identity.

## **Chapter 2 - Racial Identity as an Existentiell: How Heidegger Overcomes the Abstraction Critique**

In the next chapter, I develop the notion of an “identity” from Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, an existentiell is generally deemed as “the understanding of oneself,” but Heidegger tends to be critiqued for being too abstract in his conception of human existence (33/12). Scholars think his work in BT is not grounded enough. The philosopher, Mariana Ortega, argues that Heidegger’s conception of Dasein serves as an abstraction of individuality rather than a grounded notion of personal identity. This chapter provides my interpretation of an identity as an existentiell grounded in thrown-projection. I show that if an existentiell is construed as an understanding of oneself that takes hold or neglects possibilities of itself, then this is how identities function, in that they are continuously bound by how Dasein takes hold of or neglects personal and cultural commitments (33/12). By seeing an existentiell in this way, we can view a racial or a cultural identity in terms of Heidegger’s thrown-projection. By explaining

how an existentiell is Dasein's identity, I can demonstrate how Dasein is thrown in the world, while also explaining how it presses forward into possibilities of itself through projection. I primarily use the works of Heidegger scholars Lee Braver and Thomas Sheehan to support my interpretation of an identity as an existentiell based on thrown-projection, which serves as the existential ground of an identity.

One way that concepts of identity have meaning is that people live their identity, whether it is imposed upon them by others or chosen by themselves. We are thrown into our respective identities without our consent, just as we cannot control our birth. We, as Dasein, go on living, but in the process of continuing to live we move toward and find ourselves in existentiells. Living them fills out many of our choices about what we do; however, the problem is that this "filling out" is often involuntary. I argue that thrown-projection explains this involuntary feature about identity. I use thrown-projection to highlight both the dependence that identity has on community and historical narratives, and to show Dasein's projection of itself onto possibilities made up from its always being thrown into the world.

I reply to Ortega's critique by demonstrating how my interpretation of Heidegger's notion of existentiell as grounded in thrown-projection creates an identity that has "ontical affairs." As such, Dasein attempts to be its possibilities, neglecting and taking hold of some of them in the process of working out its affairs. From these existentiells, Dasein plays out its existence in "multiplicitous" ways, as Ortega discusses in her book *In-Between* (2016). The way Dasein experiences the world will always be unique to each Dasein, even as Dasein is raced by circumstances emanating from its thrown-projection. By explaining how existentiells function as an identity outcome of Dasein's thrown-projection, I establish that not only can Heidegger's conception of an existentiell function as an identity, but it can also incorporate a racial identity.

This result of an existentiell being a possible racial identity allows me to establish what elements of Heidegger's project function in racial identity (for example, *das Man*, *Gerede*, and *verfallen*).

I argue in the next chapter that a racial identity is an existentiell that tends to be connected to fear. I call this a "fear existentiell."

### **Chapter 3 - Covered Up with Bodies: Dasein as a Fear Existentiell and Societal**

#### **De-Severance**

In this chapter, I elaborate on the idea of a "fear existentiell," using it to critique a racial discourse that uses fear and present-at-hand conceptions of "bodies" and "lives." I use Heidegger's tripartite analysis of fear to explain how Dasein can be fearful of, feared by, and feared about. This chapter's analysis allows me to bring Heidegger into the discourse on racism and show how racial identities are dominated by the mood of fear.

I discuss how a fear existentiell is talked about by what Heidegger calls *das Man*, the "They" that idly talks about Dasein through ambiguity and curiosity. Heidegger calls this idle talk a fallen discourse, where present-at-hand notions are used to understand Dasein's existence. I argue that this fallen discourse, this *Gerede*, manifests itself in racial discourse through terms such as "bodies" and "lives." These general terms are used to explain both the black and brown community's experience in relation to suffering and death. However, with the term "bodies," Dasein is explained by authors like Ta-Nehisi Coates, as encased in a container called the "body." I explain that such a present-at-hand assessment of the black individual can be critiqued through Heidegger's analysis of spatiality, wherein Dasein is not simply a thing to be put in a vessel, but a being in a world, where both "in" and "world" unite to mean Dasein's engagement with existence, not the idea of an object in another object or a subject embodied by an object.

I use spatiality once more to discuss Heidegger's notion of de-severance. From this concept of de-severance, I develop a term called "societal de-severance." It is an interpretation of Heidegger's notion of "de-severance" wherein what is remote is often brought closer to Dasein. In my interpretation, concepts of identity nearest to Dasein become a way for other Dasein to "know" each other. The problem is that this "knowing" is through *Gerede*. I use Malcolm X's critique of Americanism and his analysis of the black experience to elaborate on how societal de-severance and fear bring traditional assumptions about racial identity closer to Dasein.

#### **Chapter 4 - Bodies and Lives Matter: Death of Dasein as a Fear Existentiell**

This chapter elaborates on three kinds of Dasein's end: 1) perishing (*verenden*); 2) Dasein as a person passing away (*ableben*); and 3) existential death (*Sein zum Tod*). Fallenness is integral to Dasein's constitution and when Dasein encounters the idea of death, Dasein flees into seemingly firm ideas of death, *verenden* and *ableben*. Dasein takes comfort in these explanations, settling itself, and avoids broaching its existential death.

*Das Man* provides these firm, albeit fallen, assessments since the They has answers for everything. Thus, the They promotes these forms of death as common to all living bodies or all human lives, with respect to *verenden* and *ableben*. I discuss how *verenden* and *ableben* are attached to a fear existentiell like notes attached to an identity. In this context, I call *verenden* and *ableben* "death notes." Given that *das Man* provides Dasein with these death notes and given the previous chapter's claim that idle talk is Dasein's usual mode of discourse, the racial discourse on Dasein with a fear existentiell amounts to having an identity that is specifically geared toward fleeing one's confrontation with itself in *Angst*. This suggests that a fear existentiell identity helps Dasein flee its authenticity, where authenticity means Dasein's ownmost Being a structural and existential whole that can choose to be itself.

Fear existentiell Dasein is discussed as closer to *verenden* and *ableben*, and such discourse compels an individual to think that death is near. However, I explain how this is a faux certainty, encouraged by idle talk. This certainty pushes Dasein farther from understanding its existential ground and conceals *Sein zum Tod*. Furthermore, whole groups, not a singular Dasein, are talked about as sharing in *ableben* and *verenden*. Death becomes shared within a fear existentiell. This is how marginalized and oppressed communities are talked about in relation to death, and I discuss how Dasein is compelled to feel the urgency of this constant fallen death situation by *das Man*'s talk about racial identities. I discuss how it even becomes socially acceptable in the media and academia to discuss racial identities in this manner.

## **Chapter 5 - Being-a-problem and Du Bois' Double Consciousness**

I discuss an existentiell I call "Being-a-problem" (Bap), defining it as a fear existentiell with the death notes of *verenden* and *ableben*. My use of the term "Being-a-problem" originates from W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois asks in his text, "How does it feel to be a problem?"<sup>6</sup> He poses this question within the context of race relations in the United States during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and he discusses the problem in two ways: 1) white Americans who perceive black Americans as problems; 2) black Americans who question who they are in America. I elaborate on these issues and how they present an internal struggle that creates what Du Bois calls "double consciousness." Connecting this to Being-a-problem, I show that Dasein has its own struggle as it wrestles with the fear of *verenden* and *ableben* promoted by *das Man* even though both deaths may not be genuine to the daily ontical affairs of Dasein. This may turn into a disconnect, where there are warring interpretations of what Dasein self-interprets versus what it knows *das Man* to interpret.

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<sup>6</sup> W.E.B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 9.

I show that because Being-a-problem is a confluence of idle talk and fear about *ableben* and *verenden*, this makes Being-a-problem an inauthentic existentiell, indicating that Being-a-problem can be authentic. Fear, *Gerede*, ambiguity, and curiosity all guide inauthentic Being-a-problem (iBap), letting Dasein settle into the idea that it is merely a “body” or a “life” that is constantly under threat. On an individual level, this becomes an issue of subscribing to the talk and fear of racial discourse, even if the talk might not be a genuine connection to Dasein. Fear about *ableben* and *verenden* become the key component to Dasein inauthentically Being-a-problem. The issue of inauthenticity is particularly important to Dasein, as ambiguity and curiosity will make Dasein *certain* of itself as a “problem” in society. As *das Man* and Dasein agree with this assessment of a racial identity that is Being-a-problem, the reaffirmations from *das Man* normalize the fear of death. The fear of *ableben* and *verenden* that helps create the identity of Being-a-problem then becomes a constant narrative about one’s identity.

The problem with inauthentic Being-a-problem becoming normalized is that the normalcy interferes with *Angst*, that fundamental and latent mood of Dasein. *Angst* becomes muffled by what Heidegger calls the “loudest idle talk,” only with inauthentic Being-a-problem, the loudness is about fear of *verenden* and *ableben* (218-219/174). Heidegger says that *Angst* is the mood that allows for Dasein’s existential death, *Sein zum Tod*, to emerge for Dasein to confront itself in a resolute way. Only through *Angst* can Dasein authentically Be-a-problem. The issue is then about how Dasein has the possibility for this authentic version of Being-a-problem to emerge. I lay the foundation for this possibility in the conclusion of this chapter and elaborate on how Dasein can modify its inauthentic Being-a-problem to become authentic, wherein “authenticity,” for Heidegger, means that Dasein takes over “from itself its ownmost Being” without influence from *das Man* (308/254).

## Chapter 6 - “Second Sight” and the *Augenblick*: Seeing Authentic Being-a-problem’s Situation

In this chapter I compare Du Bois’ idea of “second sight” to Heidegger’s notion of resoluteness which leads to the “moment of *vision*” (*Augenblick*), which is Dasein’s coming back from fallenness and affirming its existence to be authentic (376/328). I examine Du Bois’ idea of second sight as an existentiell critical stance on its existence, in which black Americans begin to see more clearly the interpretations of who they are in America. With Heidegger, I point out an existential version of “second sight,” as Dasein’s resolute “moment of vision.” With the *Augenblick*, the fear discourse has been dispensed with, as well as the idle talk about death notes as being *verenden* and *ableben*.

Dasein’s resoluteness toward the *Augenblick* provides the separation between inauthentic Being-a-problem and authentic Being-a-problem. Through the *Augenblick*, Dasein as Being-a-problem claims this way to be as an existentiell for itself. Dasein chooses its problematic identity in society into which it has been thrown and from which it must project. Through the “moment of vision,” Dasein removes fear and breaks down how idle talk produces racial identity. In contrast, inauthentic Bap continues to be cast by *das Man* as an identity to fear and this Dasein continues to fear and subscribe to the idle talk that has supported those claims about it through its existence without choosing any of those narratives for itself. This means that despite the possibility of not even experiencing racial abuse or racist situations, inauthentic Being-a-problem will continue to appropriate the discourse as a “genuine” understanding of itself, bolstered by ambiguity and curiosity. With authentic Being-a-problem, Dasein has its “second sight” as the *Augenblick* and Dasein resolutely confronts itself as being marked as a

problem, understanding that the genuine problem is that of affirming one's existence versus reaffirming the fallen discourse about who one is.

The question of authenticity is the essential issue with Being-a-problem; the existentiell modification from inauthentic Being-a-problem to authentic is the movement from fear to fearless engagement with one's daily affairs. Such engagement allows Dasein to freely choose itself as Being-a-problem in anxiety. Free from the influence of *Gerede* and being in the mode of fear, Dasein can deconstruct its fear existentiell and reassess the attached death notes of *verenden* and *ableben*. In this modification, Dasein can appropriately Be-towards-death. Given that Heidegger's project starts with the presupposition of "time as the horizon of any understanding of Being," I address how authentic Being-a-problem can reclaim itself as time (19/1). In reclaiming itself, Dasein affirms it is already and always *Sein zum Tod*. Through this affirmation, Dasein no longer subscribes to *das Man*'s insistence that iBap has no time or is running out of time. Rather, authentic Bap takes over its time in the *Augenblick* and disrupts the normalizing of such death talk. As a result, claiming oneself as authentically Being-a-problem becomes a productive step toward reframing racial discourse. Claiming oneself as aBap also allows Dasein to genuinely claim its racialized existentiell in a fearless manner wherein Dasein genuinely understands itself as an existentiell that belongs to oneself and no one else.

## **Chapter 7 - Tottering Ontical Reports: Authentic Being-a-problem and Philosophies of Struggle**

At the beginning of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes

The level which a science has reached is determined by how far it is *capable* of a crisis in its basic concepts. In such immanent crises the relationship between positively investigative inquiry and those things themselves that are under interrogation comes to a point where it begins to totter (29/9).



I argue that present-at-hand issues and idle talk in racial discourse place Critical Race Theory, Race Studies, and Philosophy of Race in a crisis. These academic fields have their own investigative inquiries that are based on generalizations about racial identities, racial groups, and systems of power that are often discussed as looming threats. The farther these inquiries go toward monolithic understandings of their subject matter (people enduring racial marginalization and oppression), the more these fields experience a crisis and begin to totter as they reveal a disconnect between Dasein's singular existential existence versus the investigations into racial issues that tend to conceal this issue as demonstrated in earlier chapters.

I examine what I call a "race report," as a kind of "ontical report." Instead of assuming the concepts of racial discourse like "white supremacy" and "white privilege," I problematize these terms by showing how authentic Being-a-problem provides a way of seeing these terms as present-at-hand, totalizing racial identity rather than allowing Dasein to assert its singular existence against such a totalizing. This allows me to question what racial discourses do in dealing with issues like identity membership and self-interpretation. For instance, Dasein might ask itself about its fear existentiell: If I frame this discourse as *Gerede* and fear, then what would it mean to *be* a member of that existentiell? Should I understand *myself* as a body or as a life that is near *verenden* or *ableben* to be that identity? How integral is that fear of those two kinds of death to *my* identity? What would it mean for *me* to not have this fear or recognize those deaths as relevant to *my* existence?

I deal with these questions through Frantz Fanon's work, concluding that we will have to deal philosophically with the fact that the *Gerede* about existentiells tends to conceal Dasein in favor of a practical idle talk that is well-intentioned toward historically marginalized groups, but that ultimately runs into problems as it asserts terms like "white privilege," "white supremacy,"

and even the meaning of “racism” as connected to a monolithic power. These concepts are part of present-at-hand race reports that attempt to recognize racial marginalization and oppression. The result of recognizing marginalization in this manner is two-fold: first, while we continue to discuss racism and race in the ways just mentioned, we always risk covering individual Dasein’s real ontical affairs even though we wish to recognize them as oppressed and marginalized; second, that if we aim at authentic Being-a-problem then we can see how such a concept exposes the problems of racial discourse, though we seem bent on continuing to talk in this way, and will continue to do so on the basis of our certainty that we know how to talk about these issues. I present authentic Being-a-problem as a disruption of that tendency and show that we can at least be skeptical of our commitments to certain terms in racial discourse, asking ourselves practical questions about whether the moral commitments and gains we achieve in using such terms are worth covering over authentic Being-a-problem. And in demonstrating this, I aim to show how taking an emancipatory approach toward authentic Being-a-problem can help us understand how we can go beyond racial discourses, allowing race scholars to reflect and be critical of their participation in such a discourse rather than become automatic subscribers to it.

## **Chapter 8 - Conclusion**

I conclude with an overview of my project and I elaborate on the utility of my analysis for future research. Being-a-Problem (inauthentic or authentic) is not exclusive to any group and person. Anyone can have and accept an identity imposed upon them. By expanding beyond race and interrogating the idea of what inauthentic and authentic Being-a-problem is, we can examine how any Dasein operates in the world when the talk of Dasein is about fear, *ableben* and *verenden*. My dissertation can expand into issues of how we talk about gender identity, discourses on “identity politics” in media, politics, and even our current national debate on

migrant caravans and immigrants. In what follows, I narrow the scope of this dissertation to how the marginalized and oppressed are talked about in terms of racial identity; however, I hope to continue this project in other discourses on identity.

## Chapter 2

### Racial Identity as an Existentiell: How Heidegger Overcomes the Abstraction Critique

*“Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself.”*<sup>7</sup>

- Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*

#### Introduction

In *Being and Time* (henceforth, BT), Martin Heidegger uses the term “Dasein” to describe what is usually called human existence. Dasein is defined as that being for whom its existence is an issue (33/12). Heidegger describes the term “existentiell” as a way for Dasein to exist in the world that is made possible by our existential structures, (referred to in BT as *existentialia* in the plural and *existentiale* in the singular), some of which are what Heidegger calls “thrownness,” and “projection.” We inhabit existentiells by our having grown up in them, choosing to be them, and sometimes neglecting to be them. This chapter’s main argument is that Dasein can have a racial identity, which is an existentiell for Dasein, based on thrown-projection. I demonstrate that Dasein’s existentiell being a “thrown-projection” means that Dasein is always existing in the world by no control of its own (thrownness), yet it always moves toward possibilities of how to be itself in the world (projection), both constituting what Heidegger means by the term “existentiell,” which becomes a way to understand what is usually meant by the term “identity.”

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 33/12.

Some scholars critique this characterization of human existence as too abstract to be relevant to marginalized and oppressed people. I explain this critique through the philosopher Mariana Ortega. In her book, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (2016), Ortega argues for a notion of identity being a multiplicitous self, an identity tethered to various commitments, economic classes, cultures, histories, races, and ethnicities. In explaining her concept of identity, she critiques Heidegger for his lack of insight into the identity of racialized people and the marginalized. With Mariana Ortega's idea of a multiplicitous identity in mind, I subject her critiques of Heidegger's Dasein to my interpretation of a racial identity that is an existentiell grounded in thrown-projection. The link between an existentiell as thrown-projection occurs in Lee Braver's *Heidegger* (2014) and Thomas Sheehan's *Making Sense of Heidegger* (2016). I use both works to support my development of an existentiell, Heidegger's term for an identity, grounded in thrown-projection. Using Mariana Ortega as a representative of the "Abstraction Critique," I argue that my analysis of an existentiell, as an identity, immunizes Heidegger from the "Abstraction" criticism. My goal is to provide an understanding of how Ortega's use of identity could work in Heidegger while also tracking how his concept of an existentiell works on her notion of multiplicitous being. In this union of Ortega and Heidegger, I show how an existentiell as an identity could be extended into the notion of Dasein having a racial identity. For this dissertation's main purpose, in developing this point about an existentiell being an identity and then concluding that Dasein can have a racial identity, I connect Heidegger to a larger issue on racial discourse, with respect to how society *talks* about racial identity.

## Mariana Ortega's Abstraction Critique

In explaining her critique of Dasein as too abstract to speak to the issues of marginalized identities, Ortega elaborates on Heidegger's view that Dasein's authenticity is that it resolutely (*entschlossen*) chooses its past. Resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) is "Dasein's distinctive mode of disclosedness," which reveals Dasein's factual possibilities in terms of its engagement with things and other Dasein (343-44/297-98). By factual, Heidegger means Dasein's definite and concrete Being that is bound up with everything and everyone it encounters in the world (82/56). Heidegger explains that for Dasein to be "authentic" (*eigentlich*) or be its "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) it must be "something of its own" (68/43). Thus, Dasein's authenticity will be about a sense of ownership about its facticity (its factual existence). Inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*) is Dasein's having lost itself by being absorbed into existence through no choice of its own. Thus, Dasein's inauthenticity is about its lack of owning up to its facticity. Authenticity and inauthenticity are both modes of Dasein which come out of Dasein's "undifferentiated character," or its "averageness" (69/43). The tendency of Dasein's average mode is to move toward the inauthentic one, and away from authenticity.<sup>8</sup> Each mode is Dasein's, but the distinction is with respect to Dasein being swept up in life. "Dasein has *in each case mineness [Jemeinigkeit]*," but Dasein often gets influenced into other ways of being that do not authentically belong to it because it has not chosen those things out of its own accord yet (68/42). For much of Dasein's existence it has "lost itself and not yet won itself" (68/43). One

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<sup>8</sup> Dasein's tendency from averageness to inauthenticity is a contentious point for Heidegger scholars. Taylor Carman writes, "in its average everyday mode Dasein is neither especially authentic nor inauthentic, neither 'owning up' and gaining a proper sense of itself nor 'disowning' itself and losing its proper self-understanding," (286), while Richard Polt writes that Heidegger "will almost always portray everydayness as *inauthentic*" (45), and Hubert Dreyfus writes, "in its *undifferentiated mode* Dasein has always already *fallen in with* publicness" (235). Lee Braver writes that "Heidegger is playing on two registers of the notion of averageness," where averageness is valuable as a phenomenological concept to avoid "ideal" and "transcendent" overtones, while the second register is that "averageness represents a pressure to conform, to force oneself into the standard, losing what is unique and great" (46).

of Heidegger's tasks throughout BT is to eventually explain how Dasein *can* win itself in a resolute manner, meaning that Dasein will claim its responsibility to choose its entire existence as its own.<sup>9</sup> Mariana Ortega counters Heidegger's idea of authenticity as a resolute choice with the following point:

This sounds well and good until we take into consideration the experience of multiplicitous selves that are multicultural or that are on the margins. Just what exactly is the shared history that the new mestiza is going to inherit, the one in which she is the conquered, the colonized, the bastard, the impure, the problem? ... Heideggerian existential phenomenology cannot answer this question. It is stuck in the model that, despite being revisionary in terms of its attack against the unified, epistemic subject, fails to capture the experience of multiplicitous selves. Heidegger wishes the resolute, authentic being to find that one history that she shares with others and to repeat it, enhance it, or modify it, all while being part of the one destiny and fate of her people. The multiplicitous self, however, is caught between histories and traditions and is forging new histories as well. She cannot be the resolute authentic Dasein that Heidegger has in mind.<sup>10</sup>

Ortega says that Heidegger's existential phenomenology cannot explain the multifaceted history that makes up the facticity of the "new mestiza," the person that formidably maintains a diverse past and does not compromise it by assimilating into dominant narratives about identity.<sup>11</sup> For Ortega, the new mestiza has intersecting histories and traditions ("the conquered, the colonized, the bastard, the impure") and so it is difficult to determine how Dasein, as the new mestiza, would choose one, when the new mestiza is "caught" between many. Mariana Ortega also questions Dasein's relevance to the self as a lived experience, asking, "What does Heidegger's authentic self have to do with me?" For Ortega, the "me" is a multiplicitous self. What is the self

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<sup>9</sup> This is a simplified summation of when Heidegger writes, "*The resolution is precisely the disclosive projection and determination of what is factually possible at the time.* To resoluteness, the *indefiniteness* characteristic of every potentiality-for-Being into which Dasein has been factually thrown, is something that necessarily *belongs*" ((345/298). I have incorporated the notion of Dasein's Being-guilty, as in Dasein taking responsibility for itself, from (343/296) right before he offers his first definition of "resoluteness."

<sup>10</sup> Mariana Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self*, (New York: SUNY Press, 2016), 130.

<sup>11</sup> Ortega, *In-Between*, 131.

a multiple of? Ortega takes on the concept of Maria Lugones' "world-traveler," and she refers to Lugones' work on the idea of a collective struggle. Ortega writes,

The new mestiza that I have in mind is the one that keeps the multiple histories alive and does not try to reconcile them so as to assimilate. She needs to examine her experience of world-traveling, dissect it, and never let it lose its force; she needs to practice critical world-traveling.<sup>12</sup>

What are these worlds that Ortega travels through? This question is important to understanding her perspective because it takes us to the core self that Ortega identifies as multiple selves:

Ortega identifies herself as a woman, scholar, and Latina. These are more than just characteristics for Ortega; these are among a wide range of selves (identities) Ortega lives. Thus, the "me" for Ortega has a range of personal histories. Her critique of Heidegger is that he does not provide enough of a critical assessment of the self, where the word "critical" is, in Ortega's book, italicized to distinguish it from traditional philosophical and critical assessments. For Ortega, the idea of being *critical* is the sharp dissection of one's experiencing of the world through a social, gendered, and academic lens. It is less of the usual usage of critical in the analytic sense, and more critical in the social and political sense. Critical in both the social and political sense is the acknowledgment of those who have been marginalized and pushed into the periphery by dominant features, narratives, and figures within society. Thus, critical world-traveling speaks to this element that Ortega finds missing in Heidegger. Distinct from Heidegger's idea of Dasein's reflexivity, Ortega writes that critical world-traveling

requires even more awareness. Continually traveling worlds is already a departure from the nonreflective understanding of life that Heideggerian being-in-the-world is supposed to be, but multiplicitous selves have to be even more vigilant so that the very experience

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 131.



of world-traveling does not lose its possibility for transformation. Consequently, critical world-traveling entails both a personal and a broader component.<sup>13</sup>

Ortega holds that the critical world-traveler traverses more theoretical and political terrain than the average Dasein and so the world-traveler requires more reflection as opposed to non-reflective Dasein. I will demonstrate that if we construe Dasein's being an existentiell as an identity, founded upon thrown-projection, then we can account for Ortega's critique of Dasein not being a critical world-traveler. Exploring how an existentiell is formed by Dasein's ontological structural whole as care (*Sorge*) will bring out a number of factors that are important for Dasein's identity, such as thrownness, projection, facticity, mood (*Befindlichkeit*), and understanding (*Verstehen*), all of which will show that Dasein's existentiell as identity is multifaceted in the way Ortega's critique requires for a critical world-traveler to be.

### **Heidegger's Existentiell**

As Heidegger explains in the beginning of *Being and Time*, to be is to be born into the world in a way that is one's own (*Jemeinigkeit*). "To be or not be itself" becomes a crucial issue for Dasein (33/12).<sup>14</sup> The issue implies that we are capable of both being ourselves and not ourselves, which implies that we somehow lose ourselves throughout our existence. Dasein has what Heidegger calls "ontical affairs" to deal with (33/12). Ontical affairs are detailed according to the content of our respective lives. Heidegger dubs Dasein's certain way and understanding of its existence as existentiell. He writes

Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, or gotten

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>14</sup> The Macquarrie and Robinson translation of *Being and Time* writes about Dasein "that Being is an *issue* for it," while Joan Stambaugh's translation says that Dasein "is concerned *about* its very Being." The "*issue*" and "*about*" elements are both important to the notion of an existentiell as identity because both indicate Dasein as both a particular problem for itself insofar as it is a particular entity that exists and deals with existence, and also a general problem insofar as it must deal with existing until it does not.

itself into them, or grown up in them already. Only the particular Dasein decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold of or by neglecting. The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. The understanding of oneself which leads *along this way* we call “*existentiell*” (33/12).

A concrete example of this passage is in Heidegger’s 1920 letter to his doctoral student, Karl Löwith, where Heidegger writes

I work concretely and factually out of my “I am”—out of my spiritual and thoroughly factual heritage, my milieu, my life contexts, and whatever is available to me from these, as the vital experience in which I live. This facticity, as *existentiell*, is no mere “blind existence”—this Dasein is one with existence, which means that I live it, this “I must” of which no one speaks.<sup>15</sup>

Heidegger has characteristics that help shape *his* existence. He refers to his “facticity,” as “a characteristic of Dasein’s Being--one which has been taken up into existence, even if proximally it has been thrust aside” (174/135). It is a fact that one simply exists, but this largely gets concealed by the more specific and obvious characteristics of existing: the details of our daily lives. Heidegger articulates to Löwith that he has grown up in a particular time, with a specific heritage, and a context that make up his life, which he “takes hold,” declaring to Löwith, “I must,” which is rooted in Heidegger’s “I am.” Heidegger appears dedicated to “straightening out the question” of his issues through “existing itself.” An *existentiell* can extend to anyone as it is not about a certain type of person, but simply about the way one exists in the world. For instance, I am a man, of Mexican heritage, born in the U.S., a teacher, and a student. I do not have control over the fact that I grew up in a world with a preset idea of any of those factors about my existence, but I exert some sense of ownership over myself by being the person that lives those factors. My living requires me to respond to these roles and characteristics as they accumulate in what can be called my identity or, for Heidegger, my *existentiell*. I substantiate

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<sup>15</sup> Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan, *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927*, (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 199.

myself with an existence that is *mine*. I fill in these identities and unite them into one singular identity that is *mine*, even though the idea of them as possible roles preceded my existence. My existence as those roles is simply the way I *am* those roles as they factor into my ontical affairs. I emphasize “*my*” and “*mine*” to demonstrate Heidegger’s point that Dasein is the kind of entity in which “The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine*,” expressing Dasein’s *Jemeinigkeit*, or “mineness” (67/41). It is not enough to say that “I” exist and am engaged in various things, but that *my* existence is just that, *mine*.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of Dasein’s living as an existentiell is part of Heidegger’s grander picture of Dasein as care (*Sorge*). In the chapter, “Care as the Being of Dasein,” Heidegger says that “Being-in-the-world is a structure which is primordially and constantly whole” (225/180). Part of this structural whole is Dasein’s being factual or having facticity. This point about one’s facticity is important because it establishes that one is always thrown into the world, wherein there are ontic facts about Dasein that belong to it. Dasein does not choose this thrownness, but is tasked with confronting the situation it is in (that of *thrownness*) and eventually being responsible for it (taken up through always going toward possibilities of itself, *projection*). As thrown, Dasein is always having to deal with “how, what, when, where, who, and why” it *is* in terms of possibilities of itself. Dasein always projects itself onto these possibilities. Heidegger writes, “But thrownness, as a kind of Being, belongs to an entity which in each case *is* its possibilities, and is them in such a way that it understands itself in these possibilities and in terms of them, projecting itself upon them” (225/181). While an existentiell tells Dasein certain things

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<sup>16</sup> François Raffoul, in “Otherness and individuation in Heidegger,” cautions readers on the concept of *Jemeinigkeit* because, he writes, “The possessive ‘mine’ should not be understood in the sense of a substantial property. Dasein is not ‘mine’ as I *had* myself as a property. Rather, I am “mine” in the sense that I have the entity that I am *to be*. In fact, mineness lies in this possibility of existence. I am ‘mine’ only to the extent that I am such a ‘to-be.’ Therefore, in the expression ‘Being-mine,’ the stress should be on ‘Being:’ *Being-mine*” from “Otherness and Individuation in Heidegger,” *Man and World* 28 (1995), 344.

about itself, it does not complete the structural whole, but is part of what makes Dasein's being care, *Sorge*. Additionally, Dasein being a structural whole that is *Sorge* means that Dasein must be "there" to engage with the world as a thrown-projection. In its "there," Dasein has both state-of-mind or mood (henceforth, *Befindlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstehen*). With *Befindlichkeit*, Dasein always has a mood underlying its everyday handling of the world. This mood is "prior to all psychology of moods," and disclosive in the fact that it gives Dasein insight into its "there," or as Heidegger puts it, "that it is and has to be" (174/135). In the understanding, Dasein is not cognizing: That is how we commonly take "understanding" to be. For Heidegger, *Verstehen* is an *existentiale*, a fundamental feature of our existence. Understanding is that disclosive part of Dasein's structural whole that frees Dasein to get involved with the world, making one free to move toward its possibilities. Thus, although existentiells are important to this chapter's project of seeing how they underlie what we typically see as identity, there is an underlying structural whole that relies on Dasein being *Sorge*. By grasping this important grounding of an existentiell, we can see what it means for Dasein to be itself or not be itself as it engages with its world.

### **Dasein as Ontico-Ontological**

Heidegger uses "existentiell" and "ontic" synonymously in his discussion of Dasein's ontico-ontological being when he says "the roots of the existential analytic, on its part, are ultimately existentiell, that is, ontical" (34/13). Heidegger explains a concept called the "ontological difference." He contrasts the *ontological* and *ontical* to eventually unite them. Ontic is the various facts about an entity. The ontological is how Dasein takes issue with its

existence.<sup>17</sup> Dasein being ontological is not merely the fact that it takes issue with existence, as that would only demonstrate that Dasein is ontically distinctive in the fact that it is ontological. Rather, Dasein's always "taking issue" with itself is what makes it ontological. "Taking issue" is what Dasein is always doing. Thus, Dasein is both ontic and ontological: It is ontico-ontological. It is a fact that Dasein exists. It is also a unique fact that Dasein is in the process of working through the issue of its very Being. Such a characteristic of wrestling with one's Being cannot be said of mere things that do not "take issue" with existing.

The analysis of Dasein as an existential Being depends on clues about Dasein's Being as both ontical and ontological. I emphasize this distinction because Dasein is not traditionally understood as "Being-there," but as a subject and in the chapters that follow, we will encounter examples from scholars that demonstrate how one's identity is akin to a subject, even an object. However, Dasein is not a subject or an object. Heidegger's term for one's existence, Dasein, with "Da" meaning "there" and "Sein" meaning "Being" helps him move from subject-oriented language like "human being," "person," or even "human life." Viewing one's existence as just another ontic subject or object conceals the ontological structure of Dasein, as a structural whole that is *Sorge*. About this ontic focus, Heidegger writes that

Ontological inquiry is indeed more primordial, as over against the ontical inquiry of the positive sciences. But it remains itself naïve and opaque if in its researches into the Being of entities it fails to discuss the meaning of Being in general (31/11).

Heidegger pushes against the focus on the ontic, by explaining that the ontological is the primordial ground for Dasein that needs elaboration. Heidegger determines the meaning of Being by looking at its structural and ontological basis, as well as the ontico-existential factors

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<sup>17</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus makes the distinction "between that which concerns beings and that which concerns ways of being," *Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time," Division I*, (1994), 19.

of Dasein's existence. However, from this basis, he can make the point that there is a way to be that any Dasein has as its own and that the factual and ontical arrangement of characteristics govern the way to live in the world. If you have the characteristics of a tall man, for example, there will be a way to be that goes along with such a stature. Yet, your tallness will not be the same for all tall Dasein. Similarly, if one has the characteristics of being light-skinned and dark-skinned in a society that has diverse perspectives on those characteristics, then having such skin (light or dark) will be loaded with meaning. Despite these different views, there will be several ways for any Dasein to *be* its skin color. Only a Dasein, in its own way, will determine how to make that characteristic a part of its way to be in the world. The way to be that any Dasein has as its own, Heidegger calls "existentiell"; I call this "identity."

### **Heidegger Scholars on the Many Uses of "Existentiell"**

At different points of BT, an "existentiell" serves as a descriptor or adjective for various terms in both divisions of *Being and Time*. In Division 1, Heidegger uses existentiell to describe a kind of "manner," "interpretation," "primordially," and "signification." Then in Division 2, he uses existentiell as a kind of "Being-towards-death" (*Sein zum Tod*), "question," "projection," "modification," "understanding," and most notably with terms like "way," "manner," "understanding," and especially, "possibility" during his discussion of resoluteness. Heidegger's different uses of "existentiell" provides Heidegger scholars with many ways to define "existentiell."

Some scholars use existentiell as something more concrete and substantive than a descriptor, like a role or life path. For instance, Hubert Dreyfus says that an existentiell is a way of expressing Dasein's roles in life, writing that it is a "kind of understanding," namely "an individual's understanding of his or her own way to be, that is, of what he or she is" (Dreyfus;

1994), while other Heidegger scholars view this term as a choice about how to live (Braver; 2014). Thomas Sheehan writes that an existentiell is any specific person, but he also explains that it can be an act and a kind of understanding (Sheehan; 2015). William Blattner concisely writes that an existentiell is simply “pertaining to some ontic aspect of us” (Blattner; 2006).<sup>18</sup> Richard Polt defines an existentiell as “pertaining to some individual Dasein’s own existence” and asserts that this kind of “understanding is defective” and that we are “partially aware of it” (Polt; 1999).<sup>19</sup> He further implies that the idea of an existentiell is implicit, limited in what it tells Dasein about itself in contrast to our existentiality, which provides a general structure for all Dasein. Thus, “existentiell” is the source of an immense amount of theoretical work for initially just being a term for Dasein’s understanding of its ontical affairs. The different renderings of existentiell demonstrate that the term stands for the “how, what, when, where, who, why” of Dasein’s *ontical* existence.

In addition to his use of the term as a descriptor, Heidegger points out how an existentiell is a type of understanding. For example, he writes that “Unless we have an existentiell understanding, all analysis of existentiality will remain groundless” (360/312). If an existentiell is a kind of understanding of oneself that we grow up in, got ourselves into, deliberately choose or neglect, then he seems to be saying, “Unless we have an *individualized* understanding of Dasein then all analysis of existentiality will remain groundless.” What is likely the case, given his other uses of existentiell (especially with reference to “possibility”), is that he means, “Unless we have an individualized ‘how, what, when, where, who, why’ understanding, all analysis of existentiality will remain groundless.” Another related possibility is that he means, “Unless we deal with *my* existence, existential inquiry remains groundless.”

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<sup>18</sup> William Blattner, *Heidegger’s Being and Time*, (New York: Continuum, 2006), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Polt, *Heidegger*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 35.

“Existentiell” is also a kind of existence, but as the term increases in use, especially when Heidegger connects it to “possibilities” in Division 2, the term turns into a way of saying “single identity of Dasein.” An “existentiell” allows Heidegger to emphasize that Dasein deals with the world in *its* way. An existentiell is then a way of being that expresses Dasein’s *Jemeinigkeit*. Given this move toward *mineness*, an existentiell can be about any Dasein. Recalling Heidegger’s first discussion of an existentiell in BT, this issue is still about whether Dasein is “itself or not itself.” All at once, this existentiell living is about the six questions of my existence previously mentioned, indicating that Heidegger requires incorporating the possibilities that Dasein has taken up and neglected into the ontic conception of who Dasein is.

### **Sheehan on Existentiell and Meaning**

Thomas Sheehan describes an existentiell as a specific person, way to be, mediation, and act. “I use the adjectives ‘existentiel’ as referring to any specific person.”<sup>20</sup> An “existentiell” (Sheehan spells it as “existentiel”) points to an individual Dasein. Sheehan explains mediation as Dasein “making sense of things both practically and theoretically,” as opposed to unmediated, which is an “intuitive grasp of things.”<sup>21</sup> Mediation is an act, an “existentiel act,” a “productive seeing,” which is the way Dasein makes sense of its world. Sheehan writes

To have things meaningfully present requires a “productive seeing”—or better, a productive doing, a finite and fallible “taking-as” on the part of ex-sistence. This entails the ever-present possibility of taking something incorrectly, as well as the need to always re-take things over and over again as new evidence and new hermeneutical possibilities emerge.<sup>22</sup>

The person, the way to be, mediation, and act are packaged in a set of ontic characteristics that are shaped by a ready-made meaning. Sheehan writes, “Being-in-the-world-of-meaningfulness

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), xvi.

<sup>21</sup> Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, 60.

<sup>22</sup> Sheehan, 94.



is what makes possible the existentiell-personal aheadness-and-return of our everyday activities.”<sup>23</sup> Every day and in every activity, Dasein projects itself through the existentiell as a personal way, an act, and mediation, which are all grounded in Dasein’s thrownness. Dasein is thrown into the world with a certain arrangement of ontical facts that “fill in” the meaning of one’s identity. Dasein then projects: It is always making moves toward its possibilities, whether through neglecting or taking hold. Thus, Dasein is a thrown-projection.

Thrownness is part of the basis of Dasein. About this basis, Sheehan writes that “As thrown-open, human beings are a priori thrown into the labor of mediation, condemned to (or better, liberated for) making sense of things both practically and theoretically.”<sup>24</sup> Dasein makes practical and theoretical sense of things from its existentiell understanding of the world. Dasein’s facticity provides the content for an existentiell understanding to work with. In one sense, for Sheehan, we are trapped and forced into dealing with our existence because we are always thrown into the mix of things. However, in a liberating sense, being thrown sets us up to freely choose or neglect possibilities to be or not to be.

### **Braver on Thrown-Projection**

Thrownness is not unique to Sheehan’s assessment of what contributes to an existentiell. Lee Braver also shares this view of thrownness and connects it to projection. Returning to my interpretation of an existentiell, we can call Heidegger’s existentiell an identity and not compromise the idea that thrownness and projection co-produce the basis of an existentiell. Thrownness provides the setting and characteristics for which Dasein will eventually be responsible.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 101.

Lee Braver's assessment of an existentiell as thrown-projection emphasizes Heidegger's explanation of existentiells in Section 4 of BT when Braver writes "Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself or got itself into them," where the "chosen" part is "projection" and "got itself into them" is "thrownness."<sup>25</sup> He states

But we are to some degree unformed, which means that it is up to us to form our selves. We become a particular kind of person by living a particular life, making what Heidegger calls "existentiell" decisions, which means that they pertain to specific Dasein, as opposed to "existential" features that all Dasein have.<sup>26</sup>

Braver connects the concept of "existentiell" with deliberate decisions about one's life, these turn out to be a manifestation of Dasein's projection onto possibilities. Braver says

When we are in-the-world we know how to move along its lines of significance: we understand how to be a student by knowing how to use pens and paper and desks and chairs properly. Heidegger explains this understanding as projecting things onto their possibilities.<sup>27</sup>

Projection is Dasein's forward movement into its possibilities. Braver explains this in terms of a student "knowing how to use pens and paper and desks and chairs properly."<sup>28</sup> The "know how" is important as Dasein's individual acts, mediations, and choices are guided by an understanding of what it is doing in a very average and minimal sense, but fulfilling enough of the "how" and "what" of being a student.

For Heidegger, thrownness constantly places Dasein into a factual arrangement of characteristics that comprise the details about our respective selves. An individual did not have a say in its origin, nor in the facts surrounding it. It is only later in life where Dasein has to play

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<sup>25</sup> Thank you to Dr. Lee Braver and Dr. Joshua Rayman for discussing this concept with me as we examined how existentiells could be thrown-projection, which helped me link thrown-projection to it being the basis for identity.

<sup>26</sup> Lee Braver, *Heidegger*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2014), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Braver, *Heidegger*, 54.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

catch up and assume responsibility for the things it has decided and not decided on.<sup>29</sup> Because of this, Dasein literally plays catch up to its possibilities, in the form of attempting to decide, inauthentically or authentically, to act, mediate, and choose a way to be. Braver writes, “Dasein is its thrown basis by projecting itself ‘upon possibilities into which it has been thrown’” (330/284), which means that the range of possibilities open to us is limited by the facts we are thrown into.<sup>30</sup> Braver writes

As we said, thrownness and projection are equi-primordial, braided together in complex and deep ways. Projection is the more active aspect, meaning what I chose to do, whereas thrownness indicates those facts which I simply find to be the case, but rather than being in conflict, the two can only exist together.<sup>31</sup>

Projection is Dasein’s always doing something about its situation. For example, imagine a surprise birthday party was thrown for you. Whether you wanted it or not, the party is happening to you and you to it. Now you find yourself within the boundaries of that event that dictate how you act, how to think about it, and the choices you make as an “all-of-a-sudden-party goer.” In virtue of the party being a surprise, you find yourself in a party, and so are forced to project yourself into a limited range of possibilities. You can leave, you can stay and be bored, you can stay and have fun, but whatever you do it is a possibility that is tethered to the *thrown* party. “Suddenly being a party-goer” is your temporary possibility that you are currently engaging in, and you can neglect it or take hold of it. Whatever you do in your projection will be a response to the situation that comes across as happening to you, since it did not occur out of your own accord. Yet, since the party is about you, you are somehow responsible for the whole thing.

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<sup>29</sup> Braver writes, “we were born, ‘thrown’ into this life and a host of particular features about our particular life (collectively called facticity), but not of our doing and not by our choice. We did not decide to be born, or where or when or as what, nor did we enact our own creation. We are, before our first breath, beneficiaries of people and events that we had no part in, even though we owe our very existence to them” 86.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 55.

Now imagine a different “party” that is “thrown” for you. You are born in Venezuela and the government, for many reasons that are too various to get into here, cannot provide basic life necessities for you to survive. It is 2019, and every day this is the “party” that is “thrown” at you. Though you may strongly identify with being a Venezuelan and leaving your country would make you feel deeply conflicted about who you are, you decide to make the long trek to the Colombian border where there are more economic options. In moving from the example of being a party-goer to the example of being a potential refugee, we can see that in being a thrown-projection (regardless of the setting and ontic facts about one’s situation), Dasein’s identity reveals itself to be an ontical affair. It is an ontical affair in the sense that Dasein must decide to be or not be itself, to assess what possibilities remain, given all the ontical factors of its existence in play.

With the two examples above in mind, an interesting idea emerges from Braver’s and Sheehan’s account of an existentiell: Dasein’s deliberate choice can sustain an existentiell, but an existentiell can also be Dasein just doing things. Dasein, sometimes by choice and, most of the time, just by thoughtlessly acting in the world, projects possibilities and these can vary. Dasein projects its identity by Dasein either deliberately choosing or by just always moving toward possibilities for itself.

Acting on and thoughtless responsiveness to one’s situation appear to dominate the way in which Dasein sustains its identity as a possibility of itself. Dasein’s identity is what it actively moves toward and the possibilities it leaves behind. As Braver puts it, we “live our thrownness” by projecting our possibilities that are limited to the facts that we find ourselves in.<sup>32</sup> If possibilities are taken as “ways to be” and these “ways” are taken as identities and roles, then we

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 87.

see that one's thrownness provides a factual template for Dasein to act on. An existentiell, seen as an identity means that Dasein's ability to be itself is always limited to its ontical arrangements and ontical circumstances. Such arrangement and circumstances can be limited by history. With history in mind, we can begin to see how some Dasein find themselves as being, for example, thrown-projected as raced, sexed, gendered, and classed. These are all crucial factors in what we typically call "identity."

### **Replying to Ortega's Abstraction Critique**

Ortega says Heidegger's project, for all its revolutionary aims and accomplishments in phenomenology, "fails to capture" a certain kind of self, but in what sense are we to take "fails to capture"? If that phrase means that Heidegger is unable to evaluate the specific content of an individual, then this is correct, as accomplishing that goal is not his project. However, if the idea of "capture" means that his project would then allow us to phenomenologically frame those experiences as ones about Dasein being itself or not itself, then Heidegger successfully captures all experiences of Dasein to the degree that those experiences are Dasein's ontical affairs, which it takes hold of or neglects and which Dasein must authentically own through resoluteness. To that end, understanding an existentiell as an identity demonstrates that any Dasein, in a sense, is a "multiplicitous self... caught between histories and traditions" and "forging new histories."<sup>33</sup>

To Ortega's critique of Heidegger as not historically considering one's multiplicitous identity, we can see that Heidegger's view of Dasein's historicity, in conjunction with the understanding of existentiell as an identity, encompasses the process of Dasein's past constantly presenting itself in Dasein's future. Dasein's historicizing is the fact that it deals with a range of possibilities limited by past and tradition. Heidegger writes that "Dasein has grown up both into

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<sup>33</sup> Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self*, 130.

and in a traditional way of interpreting itself' (41/20). Dasein studies its history, engaging in historiology. However, Dasein need not research history to be historical. Dasein, by virtue of its kind of being, *is* its historicity. Dasein necessarily engages with its past, and since Dasein is its past, Dasein always deals with its historicity and questions the meaning of Being. Engaging the question means dealing with the traditional answers clung to by researchers of history (41/20). The issue is with concealment. Heidegger believes that clinging to tradition conceals Dasein's historicity. The critical point for Heidegger is that Dasein cannot just deal with its traditionally understood history at the risk of concealing itself further than it already has.

By looking at historicity, we can see that Dasein's clinging to the idea of an objective tradition prevents it from understanding its responsibility for its circumstances. By responsibility, Heidegger means Dasein's resoluteness. Resoluteness is the choosing of oneself where the self is comprised of one's past, present, and future. There are a range of possibilities that exist within that framework, where the said framework can be cultural, political, and personal, all depending on the Dasein in question. Therefore, to be resolute for Dasein as a critical world-traveler would be to say "yes" to all the questions Ortega poses as a world-traveler. Ortega asks,

Just what exactly is the shared history that the new mestiza is going to inherit, the one in which she is the conquered, the colonized, the bastard, the impure, the problem? Or is it the one in which her ancestors fight and resist until they no longer can? Or is it the newly formed history of the good mestizos, "Hispanics," the ones who assimilate and become part of the great large family of this "America"?<sup>34</sup>

As discussed before, Ortega says that Heidegger's existential phenomenology cannot answer these questions because Dasein is an abstraction that does not have to deal with its history. On the contrary, to the extent that Heidegger's historicity manifests itself in Dasein's ontical affairs,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

the answer to Ortega's questions involve *everything* about Dasein's identity. For example, at various times, I am a Chicano, Mexican-American, student, and teacher, and I must live these roles because, in a way, I have no other choice, but in another way, I choose to. Additionally, as an existentiell, there is a talk about my ontic existence that I cannot avoid. I must live these roles and even deal with the talk about them because, as Dasein, I am always thrown into an existence that I did not choose, but always project. It is in this that the tension Ortega observes in her idea of the multiplicitous self takes root. It is then up to me to deal with the tension emanating from the dynamic of an existentiell being comprised of thrownness and projection. I think this is what Ortega wants to tease out from her notion of the multiplicitous self; therefore, her view and my interpretation are consistent with each other, and by implication, her view appears to be consistent with Heidegger's project.

An existentiell taken as an identity provides an opportunity for Dasein to reflect on how it exists in a world where its identity is center stage. Whether Dasein takes on this opportunity would then be a matter of Dasein's will to inquire about the kind of discourse surrounding one's identity and then how one deals with that talk. Individually, the idea of an existentiell identity fleshes out the dynamic of a world-traveler that Ortega finds missing in Heidegger's view of Dasein. I argue that it is not missing. On the contrary, it is because of the dynamic composition of Dasein as a thrown-projection, which makes it have an existentiell in the first place and if one's existentiell is one's having an identity then the concept of an identity becomes the condition for Dasein to have any identity, including that of a critical world-traveler.

### **Dasein's Racial Identity**

Earlier, I discussed an existentiell as an identity. An existentiell is the outcome of Dasein's thrownness and projection. An existentiell, as an identity, has ontic characteristics and

Dasein deals with these aspects of itself as it lives, reacts to people, and receives reactions. An existentiell understanding of one's racial category can influence how it projects itself into possibilities of what roles it can be or not be. The racial categories serve as roles that Dasein ends up finding itself in and acting through. Dasein has existentiells which are forced upon individuals. They are thrown into roles. For example, Luis J. Rodriguez writes about the imposition of an identity that he had to confront as a high school freshman from the East Hills in Los Angeles. In his autobiography *Always Running: La Vida Loca; Gang Days in L.A.*, he writes

If you came from the Hills, you were labeled from the start. I'd walk into the counselor's office for whatever reason and looks of disdain greeted me – one meant for a criminal, alien, to be feared. Already a thug. It was harder to defy this expectation than just accept it and fall into the trappings. It was a jacket I could try to take off, but they kept putting it back on. The first hint of trouble and the preconceptions proved true. So why not be proud? Why not be an outlaw? Why not make it our own?<sup>35</sup>

As seen from Rodriguez's experiences as a youth, the performance of being this existentiell comes with acknowledging a threatening element to how he is regarded by another Dasein. In Rodriguez's case, the prejudicial stereotype about his identity precedes him. He is thrown into a world where his existentiell means something. Not seeing a way out of his existentiell, Rodriguez gets closer to deliberately confirming his counselor's expectations. Thus, Rodriguez simply becomes *that* existentiell. Rodriguez has both got himself into his possibilities and he has grown up in them. In this instance, he takes hold of this identity of being someone to be feared. He chooses to make it his own. His world has possibilities that are about his existence and those possibilities do not require his input.<sup>36</sup> As Dasein, Rodriguez expresses an idea about existence that is like what Heidegger interrogates in BT: the idea that we are influenced by a general kind

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<sup>35</sup> Luis J. Rodriguez, *Always Running*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 84.

<sup>36</sup> I mention this example again in the section entitled "Existentiells" as we see how Rodriguez ends up "choosing" the existentiell imposed upon him by his counselor and other high school staff.



of talk about others.<sup>37</sup> Rodriguez has an ontical arrangement that we can call his racial identity. He is Latino, he lived and still lives in East Los Angeles; he was a gang member; he is a writer; he is a father. We would probably need to speak with him to understand the “how” and “why” of his existence as he understands it, and we would then know his existentiell understanding of his being. Another way of saying this is that Dasein finds itself inhabiting various roles.

Existentiells like one’s cultural upbringing, ethnicity, and race, do not usually arise from choice. These kinds of roles or identities are the ways of being that people find themselves in. While people may deliberately choose their existentiells as exemplified by Rodriguez, people are also bound to existentiells that have their respective assumptions about how one must act.<sup>38</sup> Whether such existentiells are chosen or not, Dasein must engage in the world through an identity. (an existentiell). For example, if an ontic arrangement of facts is that one is Latina then that has its own existentiell assumptions. Such a phenomenon occurs in *The Moths and Other Stories*. In this book, Helena María Viramontes writes about the hardships of various young women growing up as Chicana and dealing with the background of roles that precede them. She writes about a girl named Naomi confronting her father’s prejudices about what women should and should not do:

It was Apá who refused to trust her, and she could not understand what she had done to make him so distrustful. TÚ ERES MUJER, he thundered like a great voice above the heavens, and that was the end of any argument, any question, because he said those words not as truth, but as verdict, and she could almost see the clouds parting, the

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<sup>37</sup> I will elaborate on how this something else that informs Dasein’s existentiells is what Heidegger refers to as the They, the Anyone, and *das man*. I use the terms interchangeably as Stambaugh and Macquarrie & Robinson use the They and the German term *das man* interchangeably in their translations of *Being and Time*, while Charles Guignon and Hubert Dreyfus tend to use the Anyone in *Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger’s “Being and Time,” Division I* (1994) and *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge and Being-in-the-world* (1983), respectively.

<sup>38</sup> In *Making Sense of Heidegger* (2014) Thomas Sheehan says that to understand oneself and how one wishes to project oneself out into the world and future, Dasein require *existentials* (components that make Dasein’s existential structure) in place so that the *existentiell act* can come about. According to Sheehan, Dasein has its possibilities because the existential background is already there.

thunderbolts breaking the tranquility of her sex. Naomi tightened her grasp with the thought, shaking her head in disbelief. ‘So what’s wrong with being a mujer?’ she asked herself aloud.<sup>39</sup>

Here, Naomi, as Dasein, is bound to her existentiell possibilities as governed by her father’s authoritative stance about what a woman should be. The existentiell possibilities become a limiting factor. They are not only managed by Naomi, but to a grander extent they are already set out for her by her father. Her father, in his own way, has an idea of what it is to be a woman and he intends to make Naomi be that way, not for her to choose it, not for her to be proud of it. With Naomi’s story, we see how Dasein exists as an existentiell governed by both Dasein and its world, which can be at odds with other assumptions regarding those existentiells. One’s racial and cultural identity is given meaning by all the circumstances of its existence, including those circumstances that other people use to impose ideas of identity on others.

## **Conclusion**

My interpretation of an existentiell allows me to say that Dasein is born into an identity/role in which it is a recipient of circumstances, but that Dasein also chooses factual aspects of itself through action and reflection. Critics like Mariana Ortega remark that certain existentiells have an advantage over non-world-travelers when it comes to critically reflecting on different ties to history and various current life situations. Her criticism suggests that the existentiell of being a critical world traveler has more critical substance than other identities.

Given my interpretation of an existentiell as an identity, Ortega’s assessment seems at least partially true because there are some identities that require more reflexivity than others, but this is not because of a multiplicitous self that is tied in different directions like with the example of Naomi in Maria Viramontes story. Rather, the reflexivity has to do with how existentiells are

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<sup>39</sup> Helena María Viramontes, *The Moths and Other Stories*, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1995), 36.

already meaning-laden in society versus how Dasein identifies with these existentiells. For instance, Viramontes' Naomi character was dealing with the expectation of what her father deemed a woman to be versus Naomi's experience. Rodriguez's autobiography contends that he was thought of as a gang member by his own high school counselor, though this was not how Rodriguez identified himself prior to the judgment his counselor imposed upon him. The existentiells of Dasein versus society's ideas of them bring us to the primordial in-betweenness and tension with identity. And so, we have arrived at how Heidegger's existentiell can serve as a phenomenological and ontological source for Ortega's world-traveler.

As Braver discusses, as Dasein, "We will always 'lag behind' our selves because we must rely on something given just in order to examine our beliefs. However, even though we didn't create our selves, this doesn't mean that they're not really us."<sup>40</sup> I think this is right. There is always a possibility that Dasein is lagging behind because it was never choosing itself "from the ground up."<sup>41</sup> In all of the examples presented (with Rodriguez and Viramontes) the issue is how Dasein will catch up from lagging behind, given that these notions of identity were those that Dasein found itself in by way of existing. In what way can any of these Dasein figures be themselves if they are always playing catch up? The answer is in the *Eigentlichkeit* of their existence, their authenticity.

Finally, I think Mariana Ortega's concern about Heidegger's project not being able to speak to the concerns of the marginalized and multiplicitous self is worth further consideration beyond my current interpretation of an existentiell in this chapter. There is something about certain identities that needs clarification from an existential and ontological perspective, and this can happen with *Being and Time*. There are existentiells that, through their ontical content,

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<sup>40</sup> Braver, 87.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 87.

evoke a heightened atmosphere of threat and fear. The next step in dealing with how Heidegger's *Being and Time* can explain specific content about Dasein is by examining how certain identities have the sense of fear and threat about them. I develop this issue of an existentiell as established in fear in the next chapter. I will examine Heidegger's analysis of fear to demonstrate a kind of identity I call a "fear existentiell." Thomas Sheehan writes, "Our urge to survive resists death and the chaos of things going their own way apart from us—and yet our mortality is our very bondedness to the chaos that will finally swallow us."<sup>42</sup> In the next chapter, I will develop an argument as to why such chaos takes its toll on an existentiell, making it fearful, feared, and feared for. Showing this fear existentiell to be rooted in *Gerede* and Dasein's mood of fear, I will demonstrate that this "chaos of things" can be attributed to the way we talk about certain identities in relation to fear.

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<sup>42</sup> Sheehan, 114.

## Chapter 3

### Covered Up with Bodies: Dasein as a Fear Existentiell and Societal De-Severance

*“I’d walk into the counselor’s office for whatever reason and looks of disdain greeted me – one meant for a criminal, alien, to be feared.”<sup>43</sup>*

- Luis J. Rodriguez, *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I elaborate on what it would mean to have an existentiell sustained by fear. Building on the work of the last chapter where I discussed how an identity is an existentiell with an underlying structure of thrown-projection, I show in this chapter that an existentiell can be influenced by the inauthentic mood of fear and idle talk, a fallen discourse that Heidegger calls *Gerede*. I call the union of an existentiell and the mood of fear in a single identity a “fear existentiell.” Given that Heidegger discusses the phenomenon of fear in three ways within *Being and Time* (BT), I argue that a fear existentiell encompasses all three, where Dasein can be fearful of, feared by, and feared for by other Dasein.

#### Taking Dasein as Present-at-hand: Dasein as a Body

Our current analysis of existentiells will take us along this path of dealing with the nature of the discursive type of covering up that occurs with Dasein. Some Dasein are more interpretatively layered because they are “taken as” something they are not more than other Dasein are. Heidegger alludes to the general possibility that Dasein is “taken as” something it is not when he says

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<sup>43</sup> Luis J. Rodriguez, *Always Running*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 84.

for even entities which are not worldless—Dasein itself, for example—are present-at-hand ‘in’ the world, or, more exactly, *can* with some right and within certain limits be *taken* as merely present-at-hand. To do this, one must completely disregard or just not see the existential state of Being-in (82/55).

We see that though Heidegger has already established that Dasein is not a present-at-hand entity, it is *taken as* that and when this kind of covering occurs, the likely reason is that one is neglecting important existential features of Dasein. When Dasein is interpreted as having just an ontical identity, it becomes theorized about in a present-at-hand way. That Dasein might be just overly interpreted, causing Dasein’s existentiality to be overlooked via a present-at-hand interpretation. Ontic things are analyzed in the mode of being present-at-hand (pah), *vorhanden*, but Dasein is not merely an ontic thing. For Heidegger, things have modes of being: one mode is pah and the other is ready-to-hand (rth), *zuhanden*. A person works toward a goal, grabbing whatever available to complete that goal: Heidegger calls this availability ready-to-hand (rth). When something goes wrong in the completion of a task (no matter how simple or complex), the ready-to-handness breaks down; it is then in present-at-hand mode. The breakdown suspends the availability and the absence of the tool presents itself to Dasein, becoming present-at-hand.

Heidegger argues against the notion that Dasein is either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand, but he consistently addresses the issue of Dasein being “taken as” present-at-hand. In section 7 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger elaborates on “discourse” and “letting something be seen” (56/32). Discourse allows something to be seen that is already discoverable within the world and Dasein gets the truth of that entity through inquiring about it. As a result, whether the discussion is about the truth or falsity of a thing, discourse hinges upon the discoverability of an entity, how that leads to truth, the covering up of something, and how the discovery leads to falsity (57/33). The idea of an entity (Dasein or non-Dasein) being *covered up* is a constant issue

in BT. Heidegger's *covering up* is a "putting something in front of something (in such a way as to let it be seen) and thereby passing it off *as* something which it is *not*" (57/33). Dasein is *covered* through an over-reliance on the ontic themes about entities as seen through various disciplines that tend to side step or forget about the question of Being. Consequently, Dasein can be taken as something it is not through discourse. That this occurs does not necessarily make Dasein become that very pale portrayal under analysis, but the portrayal still functions as a *covering* that is taken as a substitute for Dasein's Being, however mistaken such a substitution may be. Dasein then has the capacity to become clothed in discourse to the point where it is taken as something it is not.

Heidegger explores the idea of Dasein that are less interpretatively covered up by remarking on "primitive Dasein." Primitive Dasein is an extreme case of very little interpretation. Heidegger says it is nearer to how Dasein engages the world because it has fewer interpretations to cover it up. The opposite extreme is the over-interpretation of Dasein we see when Dasein is taken as something with many present-at-hand interpretations. The purpose of Heidegger's synopsis of a primitive Dasein is to demonstrate that when we discuss individuals, we often throw interpretative layers over Dasein's everydayness, characterized as one's *averageness* or "undifferentiated character" (69/43). About this primitive Dasein, Heidegger writes that it would be "less concealed and less complicated by extensive self-interpretation on the part of the Dasein in question" (76/51). If primitive Dasein is prone to be more bare in its "bringing out the ontological structures of phenomena in a genuine way" then this implies that a heavily interpreted Dasein has an everydayness that is more covered up by discourses, meaning that a primitive Dasein would be more authentic in the bareness of its ontological structures.

## Dasein's Fallenness

Dasein's everydayness is characterized by idle talk (*Gerede*), curiosity, and ambiguity, all of which help Dasein embed itself in *das Man's* world (219-220/175). Heidegger calls Dasein's absorption in the world of *das Man* "falling," (*Verfallen*). *Rede*, as discourse, is an existential structure (*existentiale*) of Dasein, but *Gerede* is the fallen version of such discourse. It reveals to "Dasein a Being towards its world, towards Others, and towards itself—a Being in which these are understood, but in a mode of groundless floating" (221/177). Idle talk helps Dasein interpret everything about existing. "Curiosity discloses everything and anything" and ambiguity lets Dasein see everything, "but only in order that Being-in-the-world should be suppressed" so that "Dasein is everywhere and nowhere" (221/177). Although I discuss *Gerede*, ambiguity, and curiosity more in depth in the next chapter, it is crucial to understand that these are features assisting in Dasein's embeddedness in the world. *Verfallen* shows us that Dasein is not itself in an *eigentlich* (authentic) way but is always absorbed in an *uneigentlich* (inauthentic) understanding of itself, allowing it to interpret itself in any way that makes it tranquil and assured of its everyday existence. Thus, if Dasein has a manner of speaking that covers up its ownmost Being-in-the-world, then we can call this a "fallen discourse." If Dasein has a present-at-hand ontological understanding of human existence, then this can be called a "fallen ontology." And whether one is speaking of a fallen discourse or ontology, it should be noted that Heidegger is not saying that Dasein's fallenness itself is "bad" or "deplorable" (220/176), but just demonstrative of Dasein's not being itself, being inauthentic, being alienated from itself, and "entangled [*verfängt*] in itself" (223/178).

A heavily interpreted Dasein suggests that Dasein has a fallen interpretation that covers up its ownmost Being. With the discussion of existentiells as identity in the last chapter, Dasein



can be interpreted as an existentiell that it is not. Thus, whereas Heidegger offers a positive significance to primitive Dasein being understood as phenomenologically bare for analysis, “extensive self-interpreted Dasein” provides a positive opportunity to analyze the extensive discursive interpretation of that Dasein. In other words, if we compare a naked Dasein to a clothed Dasein, the bare version would give a positive analysis for genuine phenomena, while a layered Dasein would give us a positive analysis of a layered version. The issue, for Heidegger, is that if we are attempting to understand Dasein with the fewest interpretative layers, then refraining from taking Dasein as a present-at-hand entity becomes a key part of accomplishing that goal. Thus, primitive Dasein is one extreme that Heidegger presents, while the opposite extreme is how we tend to layer and conceal Dasein through present-at-hand treatments of individuals.

When Dasein is treated as present-at-hand, it is theoretically removed from its everyday engagement with the world and becomes a locus of examination. For example, in the Rodriguez quote from the top of this chapter, he recalls being taken as a thug. He was treated as someone to be feared by his counselor. The counselor regarded Rodriguez as a present-at-hand theme. If we take Rodriguez’s assessment as true and see that the counselor indeed took him to be a thug and treated him as such, then we have an individual imposing a present-at-hand assessment on another person. Thus, despite Heidegger saying that the rth/pah categories only apply to non-Dasein, we exhibit a tendency to take each other as these categories. Thus, even in using terms like “bodies” in place of “individuals” or “persons,” we take another Dasein as present-at-hand. At that point, it does not matter the intention that guides the use of the term “body.” We have already made Dasein into an externalized entity, objectified for our analysis and separated from its daily engagement with the world. It is still a “taking as,” a present-at-hand “taking” where

Dasein is taken something that it is not. Regarding Dasein as a “body,” however, is incomplete as it does not address Dasein as a structural whole, but rather imposes a present-at-hand theme upon Dasein. Additionally, such imposition also conceals Dasein, as it puts Dasein’s ontic characteristics in front of the individual; thereby, the term, “body,” hides Dasein. We need only look to our everyday discourse, including academic discussions, to see examples of this phenomenon of taking Dasein as a “body.” Furthermore, when psychological and sociological analyses discuss persons as bodies, then this talk can transfer to non-expert discourse, as shown by the heavy use of terms like “black and brown bodies” within the media and social discourse. This is a point I will address in the next section of this chapter.

The “cover up” continues in the form of taking Dasein as present-at-hand when we use *themes* to analyze individuals. Examples of themes are the analyses of individuals as soul. For philosophy, this helped Descartes explain the rational soul. For Christianity, an individual as a soul helps explain one’s transcendence into heaven. Themes about the individual help people understand the world. Even the idea of the individual as a subject can be a theme. Heidegger attends to how Dasein is conceived as a subject early on in *Being and Time*, pointing out that various disciplines “thematize” Dasein as a subject by explaining Dasein as merely a biological, anthropological, and psychological subject, to name a few. When Dasein is treated as a theme, it becomes thematic. Despite Heidegger saying about Dasein that “So neither is it be presented thematically as something we come across in the same way we come across what is present-at-hand,” we still interpret Dasein as pah theme in our studies of the individual (68/43). Heidegger provides examples of thematic studies of Dasein in Section 10 of *Being and Time*, referring to how we often study individuals through “anthropology, psychology, biology” (75/50) and later on “ethnology” (76/51). In those studies, scholars assume conceptions of individuals to explore

them within the preset boundaries of those studies. A psychologist, for example, does not need to explore the meaning of Being to understand why a patient is afraid to ask his boss for a pay raise. Assumptions about what an individual is within the domain of psychology will be enough for a psychologist to determine the patient's issue with his boss. The psychologist needs to know the necessary present-at-hand interpretations that are instantiated in the discipline and then apply them. Connecting this to Heidegger's analysis of the present-at-hand, scholars tend to take Dasein *as* present-at-hand. Dasein becomes a theme, a category because it treats itself as an object of analysis. As mentioned, some Dasein are described as black and brown "bodies" in contemporary discussions of racism and prejudice. This description evokes fear, which itself gives Dasein a sense of urgency and worry when dealing with its racial identity.

### **Bodies as Present-at-hand or Ready-to-hand?**

A heavily interpreted Dasein, as opposed to primitive Dasein, is noticeable in the talk about the "body" or "bodies." One of the most notable uses of the terms "body" and "bodies" with regard to race in academic and popular culture is Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* (2015). The "body" is a persistent theme in his book. Starting off as an extended letter to his son, Coates' work turns to social commentary on race. "Son, Last Sunday the host of a popular news show asked me what it meant to lose my body."<sup>44</sup> He continues to reflect on the term "body" as if it were imposed upon him, saying, "I am accustomed to intelligent people asking about the conditions of my body without realizing the nature of their request."<sup>45</sup> A few pages later, Coates ruminates on the destruction of the body by authorities, saying

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<sup>44</sup> Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 5.

<sup>45</sup> Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 5.

Sell cigarettes without the proper authority and your body can be destroyed. Resent the people trying to entrap your body and your body can be destroyed... All of this is common to black people.<sup>46</sup>

It is at this point where Coates begins to take what started as an imposed term by society at large, the body, and then appropriates it for his project, wherein the body, constantly threatened to be destroyed by the police, is “common to all black people.”<sup>47</sup> Consequently, Coates moves from the body as societally imposed to appropriating that imposition and then thematizing himself as an existentiell that is a present-at-hand thing. He objectifies himself. Using Heidegger, Dasein is “taken as” an object in Coates’ text, even though Coates is also commenting on being taken as an object. He writes a few pages later: “I tell you now that the question of how one should live within a black body, within a country lost in the Dream, is the question of my life, and the pursuit of this question, I have found, ultimately answers itself.”<sup>48</sup> Here we have Heidegger’s *ontico-existentiell* manifested in Coates’ writing. Coates, as Dasein, has ontic characteristics (his black body) that he identifies as historically and socially loaded with significance and how he finds himself in it (thrownness into facticity), trying to handle this issue of his life (his projection), or to put the issue another way, Coates is dealing with his ontical affairs as a self-interpreted body.

For Coates, the black body is a term he takes on as a theme for his existentiell. Because he seems to constantly take himself as merely an ontical object, and because he argues that others do as well, the ontical object turns into a present-at-hand objectification of himself as an available idea for study. And in this way, Coates and others who subscribe to a similar construction of their identity as present-at-hand, make themselves available to themselves and to

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<sup>46</sup> Coates, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 12.

other Dasein as a present-at-hand theme that is also available, on the ready, for discussion. The “body,” the “black body,” the “brown body,” turn into quick and accessible terms for the sake of the grander project of determining one’s racial identity in U.S. society. Coates even suggests how the body is foundational to all kinds of inquiries when saying, “You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.”<sup>49</sup> So the “body,” becomes an accessible term, ready to go, to assess one’s existentiell, until it cannot serve this function, which would be the death of the body and/or life. In using “bodies,” Coates gains the urgency of the black individual being under constant threat by society. The placement of bodies at the fore also emphasizes how society treats black individuals as *merely* bodies.

One might ask, “What does Coates lose in using ‘bodies’ if it provides the moral urgency and rhetorical framing he needs to draw attention to racial issues?” Ontologically, Coates loses Dasein. Applying Heidegger’s terminology, the use of “bodies” puts an ontic characteristic in front of Dasein. While “bodies” grants insight into social issues experienced by individuals of a racial group, “bodies” also covers up those individuals who do not take themselves as “bodies,” though they may be taken as such by others. Covering up is one loss, but Coates’ use of “bodies” also loses the authentic disclosure of Dasein, where the disclosure means that Dasein can authentically see itself rather than an inauthentic disclosure. He effectively loses authentic Dasein. This is because he appropriates “bodies” from a society that he understands as treating black people as merely “bodies.” However, his goal of critiquing that concept does not change the fact that he appropriates the concept to self-interpret. Thus, Coates participates in a fallen ontology that loses Dasein by covering Dasein in a present-at-hand theme of “bodies.” This

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 10.

places Coates in a problematic position: He needs the term and uses it, but he does not want society to reduce him to this appropriation. Yet, Coates is doing what society always does anyway to participate in racial discourse. We use terms to critique any discourse and, in that effort, we sometimes adopt those terms as designations for our identities, thereby losing the rhetorical force of the critique and covering up Dasein as well. This outcome gets to a paradox that Heidegger addresses throughout *Being and Time*: Dasein tries to get to the root of its issues with existing, but does so in ways that conceal those very issues. Thus, not only does Coates lose Dasein in a racial discourse that appears to rely on “bodies,” but we all lose authentic Dasein in our racial discourse when taking Dasein as present-at-hand.

When we take Dasein as a bodily theme, we treat it as present-at-hand. It is a mistake to do this because we treat Dasein as something it is not, but the mistake happens throughout Dasein’s discoursing. When Dasein’s existentiell is “taken as” present-at-hand, but then becomes readily accessible in its identity, the identity (not Dasein itself, but just the onto-existentiell identity of Dasein) becomes ready-to-hand. In this way, the identity usage is subject to a breakdown, which means it goes back into the present-at-mode mode. The implication is that when we use thematic terms about our identity (for example, terms in racial discourse like “bodies”), Dasein thematizes itself as present-at-hand. This presents the possibility that a term like “bodies” functions as a tool for a racially discursive project. Though this is, according to Heidegger, a phenomenological misapplication of a non-Dasein mode onto Dasein, the breakdown works in a similar fashion to that described in *Being and Time*.

In the current investigation, Dasein thematizes itself as pah through self-interpretation, involving itself in a constant process of interpreting oneself as this pah mode. By doing this so frequently and with regularity, what seemed to start as a pah concept is now a recurring theme

that becomes more regular, ready, and available for more self-interpretation. The breakdown occurs, as in Heidegger's explanation, when that regularity is disrupted in one way or another, when the thematizing no longer functions as it did. The pah theme's lack of workability is perhaps attributed to the theme, or concept, being incongruent to Dasein's everydayness. However, the Dasein that has already been thematizing itself in this manner, has already established that this is part of its identity, its existentiell, so the breakdown may never even occur. The existentiell, having already been imposed upon throughout history and tradition, is then taken up to the point that this is how such a self-interpreting Dasein takes itself as. The reason why taking oneself as a body recurs is due to the persistent theme of fear attributed to the particular body under investigation, a body (as brown or black) under societal stress and threat. However, if that fear does not align with the everyday dealings of Dasein, then the breakdown of that regularity occurs, with Dasein's existentiell re-emerging as something to address. Dasein's identity becomes an ontical affair.

The problem with the process just described is that identifying oneself as an object or theme answers too little and sometimes nothing about Dasein's everyday existence. For instance, I deal with other Dasein not just as an individual with the ontic characteristics of a brown body, but of the existentiells of student, teacher, son, Chicano, and so on. When these existentiells are taken as a whole, one can engage with a world more appropriately wherein the engagement pertains to one's own existence. Jeff Malpas refers to this as a "unity" to one's life, wherein he writes

the unity of my life, and of myself as a person, is the unity, always incomplete, of an ongoing and interconnected set of activities and projects as worked out in relation to an

encompassing environment or locale—it is also a unity that is recognized as such by the one whose life it is.<sup>50</sup>

One's existence becomes the emphasis and pivot point to address the extent to which narratives about its ontic characteristics are indeed *about* oneself. I can itemize myself and pick out an ontic feature, but such a determination would be incomplete in assessing my interactions in the world. Such a thematic or object reduction may hit a breaking point. Once that break occurs, that very path thematizing and objectifying concept may prove incomplete in its ability to represent my identity.

### **Fear Existentiell**

In the basic way we know fear, people are scared for themselves, each other, of things, and situations. Dasein and non-Dasein beings can be considered threats, reduced to objects of fear. Oren Magid writes, "*In fear*, when Dasein is faced with a determinative entity within the world that threatens a determinate detrimentality, *entities within the world can be more or less relevant to its attempt to flee a threat.*"<sup>51</sup> The mood of fear highlights what is at stake for a fearful individual, prompting Dasein (the individual) to consider other beings as relevant to its fear. Not only are people fearful, but they are scared on behalf of others, perhaps thinking they recognize threats to others that everyone else may not see clearly. From these considerations, we see how an existentiell *can* be loaded with a fear-laden meaning. I call this fear-laden meaning in which Dasein can be fearful of, feared by, and feared for, a "fear existentiell."

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<sup>50</sup> Jeff Malpas, "Death and the End of Life," from *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press), 185.

<sup>51</sup> Before this, Magid provides an illustration of Heidegger's examination of fear, saying "If I fear a head-on-collision with a sixteen-wheeler that has crossed into the wrong lane and is headed for my Smart Car, this sixteen-wheeler functions as that before which fear is fearful" from "The Ontological Import of Heidegger's Analysis of Anxiety in *Being and Time*" *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 54, Issue 4 (December 2016), 450-451.



Examining Heidegger's tripartite notion of fear as a fallen mood gives us a lucid understanding of how fear takes hold of Dasein. Unpacking fear allows us to see how the talk about certain existentiells can reinforce fearful and threatening themes that *seem* genuine to one's experience. Heidegger describes three features of fear: 1) the fearsome; 2) the definiteness of our fear; 3) what is feared about. I incorporate all three into the term "fear existentiell." The first one, the "fearsome," is "in every case something which we encounter within-the-world and which may have either readiness-to-hand, presence-at-hand, or Dasein-with as its kind of Being" (179/140). Something is threatening and possesses this fearsomeness when it adversely affects Dasein's "Being-alongside." That which is fearsome is definite, and discomforts Dasein. Although the fearsome is definite, it threatens because Dasein does not know when or if it will come. As Heidegger says, "it can reach us, and yet it may not" (180/140). Thus, if Dasein has fear attributed to it then it may become the fearsome by the They's idle talk. In such a situation, the societal fearsomeness provides content for one's racial identity.

The fearsome occurs when the fear approaches and increases its relevance for Dasein. The more significant to Dasein, the clearer this fear gets. Dasein figures it out. Threatening assumptions about certain roles and identities in society become definite content for an existentiell. The fear becomes part of Dasein's space. It is unavoidable. Thus, Dasein's clarity as to this fearsomeness increases the possibility of disrupting Dasein's everydayness. The discomfort from this disruption makes the fear and the threat more salient to Dasein, producing a "fear existentiell." Dasein, now established as a fear existentiell, has an existentiell that is related to a fallen mood: fear. As such, Dasein is out of its undifferentiated character and toward the mode of inauthenticity. With fear, Dasein has lost itself. As a fear existentiell, Dasein's anxiety (*Angst*) is covered up. As a fear existentiell, Dasein is inauthentically itself, regardless of the

idle talk about its identity being true or false. It is here where we can see a phenomenological basis for what is often called “prejudice,” “racism,” and “stereotyping.” These notions that come about in our idle talk about racial discourse necessarily cover up Dasein’s disclosure in an inauthentic way, disclosing Dasein as a fear existentiell.

We might ask, “Who embodies the fearsome that becomes articulated in a fear existentiell?” The answer lies in an examination of what the They talks about when dealing with identities. For instance, we know of a general discussion about concepts like black and brown bodies where the word “body” is often connected to its annihilation. We discussed this with Coates’ use of the term. We have discussions about institutions and systems that are unequal in their distribution of power, characterized by police brutality, gang violence, and impoverished living conditions usually related to how black and brown communities are affected. Such discussions take place in fields like Critical Race Studies (CRT) in which editors Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, put forth two common interests in CRT,

The first is to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and, in particular, to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideals such as ‘the rule of law’ and ‘equal protection.’ The second is a desire not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to *change* it.<sup>52</sup>

Even the notion of “white supremacy” is something to regard in a somewhat fearful manner if you are a person of color, as this supremacy subordinates whole groups in a large social structure. The idea from society’s general discussion on race is that if one is black or brown, one is in a situation of “fear,” an embodied fearsomeness. However, for some, the connection is

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<sup>52</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, (New York: The New Press, 1995), xiii.

hazy: there is a fearsomeness, but it may be a general idea of threat in society that is so vague that such a threat merely *could* be detrimental to Dasein, but could also not be detrimental to Dasein without a clearly articulated threat. For instance, how would one talk about the fear of “white supremacy” without a white person actively subordinating a person of color? One would need to appeal to an already available articulated notion of both the threat of white supremacy and the concept of white supremacy itself. White supremacy would be discussed as an always-there system, though an individual may not “see” it, in which case it is “there” in one sense and “not there” in another. Some may even reply that the simultaneous “there and not there” validates the insidious nature of white supremacy; however, this would only reassert an assumption of white supremacy as an articulated object of fear. For some though, a concept like white supremacy would be clearly articulated through a present-at-hand analysis where fearing it would constitute a “fearing as such,” an “articulated” fear where racial identity may be discussed as that which is always systemically threatened by discriminatory institutions, policies, and people in power.<sup>53</sup>

The fear of white supremacy would then produce an articulation about the concept that animates it into our daily existence, making it relevant, even if it had not been relevant to our lives before such conceptualizing took place. Such a concept like white supremacy would then be an example of “*That which fear fears about*,” revealing Dasein’s “there-ness” (180/141). An idea, a notion, a concept would then serve as something to fear about. If something is going to hurt me and I sense it, then I clearly understand that I exist in the world because I respond by wanting to survive. Even though being afraid distorts our perception about threats, we are clear

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<sup>53</sup> Keep in mind that we needn’t appeal to the veracity of racial discrimination within institutions that cause the deaths of black and brown individuals. We need only identify that the *talk* about it exists. The talk is enough to help us understand the way existentiells can operate for people with “fear existentiells” imposed upon them by the They, a They that Dasein (as a fear existentiell) is also part of because Dasein is a they-self.

about the fact of our existence and the fact about our desire to survive. In the case of a fear existentiell, Dasein becomes aware of circumstances about the way it exists, perhaps even how one performs that identity to keep its “there-ness” intact.<sup>54</sup>

Dasein’s ontic characteristics tie into narratives (the talk) about Dasein just being an ontic entity, concealing Dasein’s ontological structure. For instance, other Dasein probably regard me as an ontic entity before considering me as an ontological Being. The phenomenon of other Dasein assessing me as ontic or as present-at-hand does not negate my Being an issue for myself or transform me into something non-Dasein. However, it might compel me to *think* about myself as present-at-hand. In a fallen understanding, I am taken as something non-Dasein, a theme or a concept. The phenomenon highlights the way in which one’s existentiell can conceal Dasein’s fundamental ontological issue by being covered in idle talk. Someone might look at my ontic characteristics for clues about my existentiell identity: perhaps my brown skin or my appearing to be of Latino descent would suffice as clues to my identity. Looking at ontic features of Dasein means that another Dasein may incorporate an available (ready-to-hand) theme about who I am. For that reason, we can say that the narratives about Dasein’s ontic features may reveal an individual to be a fear existentiell if the talk pushes it in that direction.

Finally, existentiells, as thrown-projections, have histories (due to Dasein’s facticity) influenced by talk that leads to Dasein’s situatedness. That situatedness of Dasein’s ontic existence connects to ideas about it, ranging from its race to its gender (although this is not

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<sup>54</sup> Being-with participates in this sense of clarity because other Dasein will sometimes make the idea of one as a threat more salient by “fearing for” this Dasein or perhaps fearing Dasein. For instance, I am brown-skinned, and as a Mexican-American, I am a member of a community that is sometimes talked about as a threat. Another Dasein might respond by “fearing for” me and saying, “Wait a minute! He is law-abiding and does not do anything wrong!” This other Dasein might even “leap in” for me and take over my interactions regarding this notion of threat. “Fearing for” may derive from a sense of justice (a generous interpretation for the sake of argument), but it still counts as participating in a kind of talk that is very much making salient that my fear existentiell is threatening.

exhaustive). Here, of course, we are only discussing race, but the logic holds when discussing gender as well. If there is a historical narrative about Dasein's existentiells, then its history is understood through that discourse in very general ways. Such talk serves as an ontical report about Dasein's existentiells, not its existentiality.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, the inclusion of those identities talked about as near death (as the end of the black, brown, poor, and marginalized body and/or life) in these narratives is a logical extension of Heidegger's skeletal framework for existentiells outlined in *Being and Time*, allowing for what I have been calling "fear existentiells." The construction of this talk about Dasein as a fear existentiell derives from Dasein's structural connection to other Dasein and in the next section we will see how this structural connection makes the link between talk and existentiells possible through Being-with.

Given a certain history and tradition, an existentiell may be influenced by fear where some consider that identity a threat, that identity might think it is threatened, or that identity might be feared for. From the perspective of one living through an existentiell guided by fear, one might be spurred into self-reflection. For instance, if I think people fear me, I may want to ask: "What is it about me that people consider threatening?" The answer to this question partly rests with how I understand the way in which others and society construe me in a general way. Whether or not the threat is real, *the talk about a threat is real*. For Heidegger, the fallen concept of general *talk* is referred to as *Gerede* or "idle talk," a way of discussing Dasein that *covers up* existentiality.

### **Idle Talk and Fear**

A Dasein with an existentiell that fears is compatible with the easy accessibility,

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<sup>55</sup> Heidegger mentions an "ontical report" about entities, saying that "We are not going to make an ontical report on those entities which can often and for the most part be 'fearsome'" (BT 179/140). I hold that "ontical report" functions as an idle way to refer to Dasein as a fear existentiell, where even though "ontical report" refers to entities, this does not prevent Dasein from idly using it to regard another Dasein.

superiority, and influence *das Man* has on Dasein. *Das Man* is the “They,” the Others that Dasein lives according to throughout its existence.<sup>56</sup> *Das Man* is influential. When the mode of fear is added to idle talk, all these attributes of the accessibility, superiority, and influence of the They are heightened. Heidegger says that in idle talk, the They are “bringing the hearer to participate” and what this means is that you and I, as Dasein, are easily welcomed into the discourse of *das Man* (212/168). Since we are brought to participate, we take on the average way that the They understands things. Heidegger writes, “What is said-in-the-talk gets understood; but what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially” (212/168). Since the superficial and approximate ways of talking are welcoming to Dasein, one is settled and does not have to engage in any kind of talk that singularizes Dasein because idle talk has everything covered with its general ways of dealing with matters. Such superficial ways of talking make Dasein understand only the average and obvious pronouncements of *das Man*. The surface level of the talk makes spreading the understandings of the They an easier task.

The accessibility of the talk also assists with how it maintains superiority, as it invites all in and even begins to *prescribe* what Dasein should do, think, and how to talk. The pronouncements become the focal point and, as Heidegger says, “Things are so because one says so” (212/168). However, this also indicates that another reason why idle talk is easy is because it authoritatively dictates how one talks and what Dasein says. Heidegger says that the talk

even spreads to what we write, where it takes the form of ‘scribbling’ [*das “Geschreibe”*]. In this latter case the gossip is not based so much on hearsay. It feeds upon superficial reading [*dem Angelesenen*]. The average understanding of the reader will *never be able* to decide what has been drawn from primordial sources with a struggle and how much is just gossip (212/169).

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<sup>56</sup> Heidegger writes “But this distanciality which belongs to Being-with, is such that Dasein, as everyday Being-with-one-another, stands in *subjection* [*Botmässigkeit*] to Others. It itself *is not*; its Being has been taken away by the Others” (164/126).

The fact that all topics seem to be covered in idle talk demonstrates that even the act of disputing opinions is already embedded in *Gerede*. For example, if there is general idle talk about the subject of race existing there will also be counter claims of race not existing. When compared to each other, both are diverging opinions; however, if both opinions remain general and superficial then a genuine critical analysis of that issue will elude the discussants. At which point, Dasein will skim the surface of the issue as is usually done in idle talk and the They will remain, saying “everything without previously making the thing one’s own” (213/169). The They’s authority, when idly speaking, helps set the stage for how Dasein struggles to think for itself when living as an existentiell dominated by idle fear talk.

We talk how They talk. We like what They like. We generally do what the They do because of our absorption into *das Man*. Heidegger writes that the They’s *publicness* obscures Dasein. The They presents more acceptable and comfortable interpretations of Dasein that tranquilize it. The They placate Dasein. Because the They provides so much, Dasein rarely realizes its responsibility to itself. The problem is that while this is true of the They, *das Man* is not existentially responsible for what Dasein does; Dasein is still accountable to itself, it must clear away any obstacles that prevent it from taking responsibility for its existence. Heidegger writes, “Dasein has to clear away and break up the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way” (167/129). Clearing away the disguises is extraordinarily difficult to do, considering what Heidegger says a few pages before: “Everyone is the other, and no one is himself” (165/128). If I am not myself and I am as much of the They as the They is me, then my understanding of myself is limited to *das Man*.

## ***Das Man* Listens to Dasein**

Heidegger implies how *das Man* superficially listens to Dasein. The They listens to Dasein in its fear, hearing about the general threats scaring Dasein. Dasein fears a threat that may or may not occur. The threat may or may not arrive. Dasein is fearful, held in suspense, of what may arise to threaten it. This feeling of fear is fallen. It covers up Dasein's constant anxiety. In *Angst*, Dasein confronts itself as groundless. It has no foothold in anything and rather than contend with this unsettledness, Dasein flees into fear where being scared and fearful is more definite and its issues about threats clearer. Dasein is more at home in fear even though it is a threatening feeling, whereas anxiety is not at home. The They cannot listen in on Dasein in its uncanniness, but the fallen mood of fear is something the They can deal with. In fear, *das Man* still has a grip on Dasein's behavior and language, but anxiety is alien to the They.

Heidegger discusses how *das Man* makes sure Dasein behaves as one behaves, talks as one talks, and fits into the broad idea of what They have of Dasein. Heidegger writes that "Everyone keeps his eye on the Other first and next, watching how he will comport himself and what he will say in reply" (219/175). This demonstrates that while *das Man* holds on to what Dasein says and does, this does not necessarily imply that the They is listening in any meaningful way.

Rather, given Heidegger's later discussions of authenticity and hearing Dasein's "call to conscience," *das Man* can only listen to Dasein in the they-self mode, a mode in which it only understands familiar and unnuanced speech. The they-self cannot reflect on the authentic call that comes from Dasein's anxiety; hence, the they-self is fallen. In this inauthentic and fallen mode, Dasein has no roots and is alienated from itself. As a result, *das Man* is limited to listening to a privative variation of itself, leaving authentic Dasein, hushed and concealed. When the They listens to and hangs on every word of Dasein then *das Man* is communicating with a



pluralized and commonplace entity, not a singular Dasein. It may seem then that *das Man* is scrutinizing Dasein without knowing Dasein in any substantial way.

Interpretation is already embedded in *Gerede*. Heidegger writes that “In language, as a way things have been expressed or spoken out [*Ausgesprochenheit*], there is hidden a way in which the understanding of Dasein has been interpreted” (211/167); language conceals this interpreted understanding, making it present-at-hand despite being Dasein-like. This interpretedness already disperses the possibilities of the average understanding and its *Befindlichkeit*. The perverse interpretation is taken as *Verstehen*. *Das Man* speaks in an average and routine way that perpetuates this interpretation. Therefore, there is no genuine connection between Dasein and idle talk. There is only that non-genuine connection wherein Dasein is alienated from itself. There is no involvement with Dasein outside of its they-self. With such listening, *das Man* acquires a brief account of Dasein that already fits with the judgment of who Dasein is to the They.

### **Dasein-with, Being-with, and “Bodies”**

Heidegger’s notions of Being-with (*Mitsein*) and Dasein-with (*Mitdasein*) help establish the origins of how Dasein co-constructs talk in a fallen way, which leads to the problem of taking Dasein as present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. As discussed earlier, ready-to-hand and present-at-hand are modes of Being for non-Dasein entities. A non-Dasein entity is ready-to-hand when it is available for use. It is present-at-hand when it breaks down or goes missing. Dasein has a mode of Being called “Being-with” in which Dasein’s Being-in-the-world is already a with-world. The “withness” of the world entails that Dasein is automatically with other Dasein. Heidegger holds this to be a positive mode of Dasein, so that when Dasein is ontically alone, that solitude is just a variation of Dasein’s Being-with. From Being-with, Dasein deals with other

Dasein in many ways (i.e., not merely just physically being with another Dasein, but working with another Dasein, sharing the same norms, etc.). The dealing with other Dasein is Heidegger's Dasein-with.

Dasein-with occurs through our ontical affairs with others and we have existentiell understandings of how these affairs play out. With these understandings are also the various identities that help us function in the world and those are loaded with their own facticity: Histories and traditions help make up Dasein's facticity, which then governs all our different existentiells. Dasein has a history that it did not choose or create and now it is thrown into a world in which it must deal with ramifications of that history. In concert with this thrownness, Dasein can make decisions about being itself or not itself and so projects possibilities of itself within its world. Thus, Dasein may take up a tradition and move forward into some possibility, which will then be its response to being thrown into both history and tradition. Since Dasein is not isolated, but is a Being-with, other Dasein participate in these existentiells in many ways by believing in them, judging from them, and acting from a tradition and history about the existentiells.

Being-with and Dasein-with are always happening as part of Dasein's "Being-in" the "world." "Being-in" the "world" is not like how coffee is in a cup or how the Cartesian mind is in the body. Rather, Dasein's "Being-in" relates to space. "Space" is not the distance between objects or outer space. The "Being-in" of Being-in-the-world is what Heidegger calls an *existentiale*. "Being-in" cannot be in the world in an ontical sense. The "world" in an ontical sense "signifies the totality of those entities which can be present-at-hand within the world" (93/64). Heidegger says that the "world" refers to the "realm which encompasses a multiplicity of entities" (93/64). "World" is also where Dasein lives, its environment (93/65). Finally,

“world,” as an ontological concept is Dasein’s worldhood, which is Dasein’s context of involvements that Dasein is always involved in. Heidegger says, “The world is therefore something ‘wherein’ Dasein as an entity already *was*” (106/76). Dasein’s ontological world is that which Dasein is “Being-in” and this “is a state of Dasein’s Basic Being” (79/54). Thus, Dasein’s state of being is different, unlike the Being of ontic things that are in ontical worlds. A human body can be in an ontical space. Unlike the ontological conception of Being-in-the-world, a body can be in a space and we can talk about that “body” and “space” in present-at-hand ways that cover up Dasein’s ontological Being-in-the-world. For example, Coates essentially talks about the body in the space of the United States and how that space threatens the black body. The problem with this conception of the body and of space is that it reifies an idle conception of Dasein’s existence that covers up Dasein’s anxiety by using present-at-hand language that gives way to discussions of fear.

With a body conceived as an ontic thing, space becomes non-ontological too. For Dasein, one might say that, as an ontico-ontological being, it is also “in” a present-at-hand space, but since Dasein is ontological, its “Being-in” is about how it is involved in projects, those tasks that make up its ontological world.<sup>57</sup> The focus on Dasein being just a body is important to a grand conception of Dasein’s existence, but it is not enough and in certain discourses it is often prioritized over Dasein’s Being, as we already examined with Coates’ prioritizing of the body. A more elaborate conception of Dasein as an ontico-ontological being will then allow us to understand not only *what* Dasein is but *how* Dasein exists. The *how* of an individual’s existence then involves how it is viewed by others and the availability of roles, identities, stereotypes, and various other psychological assumptions in the space that is Dasein’s world. To avoid reducing

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<sup>57</sup> Hubert Dreyfus writes about this in *Being-in-the-world*, saying that Dasein’s Being-in is how it is involved in a situation that requires ways for Dasein to engage in it. See Chapter 9, “The Three-Fold Structure of Being-In.”

one's existence to a mere entity, as can often occur, Heidegger says that conceiving Dasein as being "inside" space is tantamount to saying that Dasein is an object within a larger object.

Thus, a person's existence is not just a thing contained in space.

### **Fear Existentiells in Space**

Fear existentiells exist within a context of involvements and Dasein utilizes the concept of a fear existentiell and applies it to others. Heidegger's analysis of spatiality allows us to understand how we are always involved in this phenomenon. Dasein is born into the world, the valuations and significance of identities in society are already in the world; it is just a matter of which one Dasein is thrown into. In looking at Heidegger's spatial framework, he is not saying that useful entities (and existentiells) are empty and then fill up in significance to the extent that Dasein has projects and tools that it needs to use to accomplish them. Such a rendering of Dasein's relation to spatiality suggests space itself is just present-at-hand, but Dasein does not merely measure distance. If Dasein needs to analyze something scientifically then, yes, Dasein measures, but this is an exceptional way to deal with things compared to Dasein's usual comportment. Similarly, with fear existentiells, one does not fill the value of the other individual as if, at first, a person was an empty vessel. Rather, the societal assessments about threat and fear are already in the world, with some of them being closer to a person, while other existentiells are not. The nearness and proximity depend on many factors about Dasein (psychological, cultural, and so on). The spatiality of Dasein helps us see that even roles and identities are in a general "region." Heidegger writes that in a region, Dasein is always in a context of involvements where the ready-to-hand is "yonder" and then brought back "here." For example, as I write this, my cup of water is "yonder" and I retrieve it, bringing it back "here." These terms, "yonder" and "here," are relational. Given that Dasein is engaged in a world of

involvements, when Dasein tries to accomplish tasks, like say, understanding another Dasein, it takes something that is “yonder” and brings it “here” to where it is. Dasein uses these concepts to make sense of the identity of another Dasein.

Bringing something from “yonder” to “here” requires de-severance. Dasein makes the “remoteness of something disappear” (139/105). De-severance is what makes measuring possible because Dasein eliminates the “farness” of something, brings it into its purview, and then opens the possibility for a present-at-hand analysis like measuring points between two objects. Dasein is spatial, which has the characteristic of both directionality and de-severance, and this, in turn, makes possible our ontic notions of distance. Heidegger says, “*In Dasein, there lies an essential tendency towards closeness*” (140/105). With de-severance being an *existential* (i.e., a structural feature of Dasein’s Being), the fact that Dasein tends toward closeness is then a structural part of its essence as an ontico-ontological entity. The proximity of things also comes about from technology.<sup>58</sup> The nearness of things through technology can also mean that ideas and concepts are brought nearer to Dasein in the sense that Dasein increases its relations of significance by using technology to make things closer.

For Heidegger, Dasein’s relation to things is much more than *what is in* space. He writes how regions, the “wheres” and “yonders,” are always ready-to-hand and that Dasein works within a context of involvements. The “wheres” in Dasein’s world have “directionality” and “de-severance.” Directionality is the goal of Dasein’s involvement in a region. Within these regions, “Places themselves either get allotted to the ready-to-hand in circumspective concern, or

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<sup>58</sup> Heidegger writes in section 23 of *Being and Time*, “With the ‘radio,’ for example, Dasein has so expanded its everyday environment that it has accomplished a de-severance of the ‘world’—a de-severance which, in its meaning for Dasein, cannot yet be visualized” (140/105). In our current social media days, the Internet has brought the world toward clarity. Dasein are closer to each other, in a way. I will expand on this to say that the closeness has veiled such an opportunity through Dasein’s tendency toward idle talk via its fallenness.

we come across them” (137/103). Take Heidegger’s illustrative example of how regions work when he discusses churches and graves. Both ontic things are in a region that is part of Dasein’s project. Heidegger says that “the regions of life and death, which are determinative for Dasein itself with regard to its ownmost possibilities of Being-in-the-world” are where the sun sets and rises for certain Dasein (137/104). The regions of life and death are abstract, yet Dasein makes sense of these regions in relation to where things are at. This sense making helps Dasein realize possibilities integral to the way it understands the world, and we can include how Dasein understands others in terms of their existentiells.

Dasein’s de-severance annuls distance and this de-distancing occurs with fear existentiells. To examine fear existentiells, we see that the narratives leaning towards the ontic and present-at-hand are a kind of talk that is more available in Dasein’s space. Dasein “measures” other Dasein from available existentiells. Such a measuring allows Dasein to get the gist of another Dasein. To this end, we may say that this is a “societal de-severance” that includes ideas of “existentiells” as racial, prejudicial, monolithic, and generalized stereotypes, assumptions, fears about people, threats, and so on. This is consistent with Heidegger’s idea that we are in regions where things have directionality. From such determinations, we can see that something like societal de-severance would help us understand how concepts and ideas are conceptually near to Dasein.

### **Societal De-Severance**

Fear existentiells are spatially available to Dasein as available concepts. While the analysis of *zuhandenheit* explains that a thing or even a concept is available to use, the notion of spatiality examines the proximity of something, and so spatiality tells us about the conditions for why something is just always there for us versus far away. For example, if a person is

stereotyped by the color of their skin and this prejudicial judgment turns out to be inconsistent with how the person engages with the judging Dasein, then the regularity of that stereotype breaks down and the individual is regarded differently. The project of stereotyping is disrupted. Dasein is taken as a theme or object with regularity, but because of the disruption, the theme or object turns into a present-at-hand concept, gets removed from its regular usage, and the misjudged Dasein is still taken as present-at-hand, but now that becomes suspended. Our continual engagement with each other reflects that we make these mistakes, even though Heidegger writes that we are *not* present-at-hand entities, nor can we be made into them. I think this is right, but it is also the case that Dasein tends to frequently make this mistake, which results in the covering up of other Dasein. Heidegger writes

When Others are encountered, it is not the case that one's own subject is *proximally* present-at-hand and that the rest of the subjects, which are likewise occurrents, get discriminated beforehand and then apprehended... Theoretically concocted 'explanations' of the Being-present-at-hand of Others urge themselves upon us all too easily; but over against such explanations we must hold fast to the phenomenal facts of the case which we have pointed out, namely, that Others are encountered environmentally (155/119).

Since we have this kind of engagement with each other through existentiells, I interpret Heidegger's spatiality to elaborate on a term I call "societal de-severance." Heidegger views de-severance (de-distantiality) as a distance that makes something seem close, despite it being ontically far away. In societal de-severance, existentiells are close to us, yet far away from Dasein's existentiality. In response to this distance, Dasein attempts to bring something closer by upholding a way to identify it. The process starts with existentiells about another Dasein already being available to Dasein in a ready-to-hand way.

Societal de-severance does not bring other Dasein *ontologically* closer, but only *seemingly* closer and remains so because we simply think we know the other person. Malcolm

X's speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet" is a case of this. His analysis of being branded as a threatening black man by white America is an example of societal notions about existentiells being readily available. Malcolm X writes:

I'm one of the 22 million black victims of the Democrats, one of the 22 million black victims of the Republicans, and one of the 22 million black victims of Americanism. And when I speak, I don't speak as a Democrat, or a Republican, nor an American. I speak as a victim of America's so-called democracy. You and I have never seen democracy; all we've seen is hypocrisy. When we open our eyes today and look around America, we see America, not through the eyes of someone who has -- who has enjoyed the fruits of Americanism, we see America through the eyes of someone who has been the victim of Americanism. We don't see any American dream; we've experienced only the American nightmare. We haven't benefited from America's democracy; we've only suffered from America's hypocrisy. And the generation that's coming up now can see it and are not afraid to say it.

If you -- If you go to jail, so what? If you black, you were born in jail. If you black, you were born in jail, in the North as well as the South.<sup>59</sup>

When Malcolm X talks about the treatment of blacks in the excerpt above, he is discussing a kind of dealing with other Dasein that happens automatically. In his experience, his fear existentiell of being "born black" becomes that which is societally de-severant for other Dasein. Since this societal de-severance is constant, what is spatially close to Dasein (Malcolm X, in this case) is the notion of being "born black" and how one becomes the recipient of American hypocrisy that talks of dreams but bestows nightmares. The fear existentiell about Malcolm X is available to other Dasein and X understands that he is perceived as a threat, but he also addresses black American fear. The existentiell is a role rooted in the time that Dasein exists in and X is pointing out that to exist as a black man in the 1960s means one is constantly viewed as an object of fear and that this inevitably means black Americans will have to be on guard and fearful of individual and institutional reactions to them. He understands himself as a person, but also

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<sup>59</sup> Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," 1964, *Digital History*  
[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=3624](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=3624), (accessed August 1, 2018).



recognizes he is not seen this way by many people in the country and certainly not by those in power.

Heidegger's analysis of Dasein is useful to understand this passage from Malcolm X. X's account of black Americans being the victims of American hypocrisy demonstrates how Dasein is thrown into a world where it is forced to move into possibilities related to identity. For Malcolm X, the possibility of being an American, like white Americans, is a dream that he cannot take hold of because America will not allow it. America participates in Malcolm X not taking hold of a possibility to align with an idealized national identity. Rather, X's passage complicates what it means for Dasein to even *have* a possibility. X, as a fear existentiell, is a Dasein existing in a part of the world, the United States, with a history of overlooking the plight of black people; thus, whether in the North or South of the U.S., the black individual is relegated to being perceived and treated as a criminal. A person may come to exist (be thrown into) being an identity and be regarded as feared, making this issue one of Dasein's principal ontical affairs that it must deal with through projection. Furthermore, the notion of being an American like white Americans are is not de-severable for Malcolm X. If that concept is "yonder" it certainly cannot be brought to Malcolm X's "here." Thus, Malcolm X's speech, combined with a Heideggerian analysis, allows us to see what a fear existentiell looks like when one is raced as black. To the degree that X engages with a more substantive physical threat to his existence as he lives it is something that only he can deal with as it would be *his* affair, but his passage discloses what being a fear existentiell Dasein who is black *may* look like for others. The problem though, is that *his* issue does not belong to anyone else but *him*. His identity as a black American becomes an affair of *his* everyday existence, given the events in his life, as well as the idle talk imposed upon his identity.

## Reinforcing Imposed Identities: Solitude and Leaping In

The limitations by the They continue as Dasein's Being-with and Dasein-with can sometimes produce an outcome in which threatened Dasein are taken over by other Dasein. When Dasein is marked as threatened in society (Malcolm X's speech on black America reflects this) there may be a tendency for other Dasein to take over for Dasein with a fear existentiell. In short, a non-fear existentiell Dasein may try to "save" a fear existentiell Dasein by pointing out societal threats on Dasein's behalf, trying to save that Dasein from harm. Such a phenomenon can be explained by Heidegger's analysis of solicitude (*Fürsorge*).

With solicitude, Heidegger distinguishes between "leaping in" (*einspringen*) and "leaping ahead" (*vorausspringt*). Solitude comes from Dasein's care (*Sorge*), where Dasein is concerned (*Besorge*) about another Dasein (157/121). Heidegger says that "leaping in" and "leaping ahead" are two extremes of solicitude. "Leaping in" is the attempt to take Dasein's place and absolve it from handling its situation. It is an attempt at substitution. François Raffoul writes of "leaping in" that

This solicitude is clearly inauthentic, in at least three respects: first, because it treats the other Dasein as something ready-to-hand; second, because it consists in *taking the place* of the other, such a substitution representing for Heidegger an inauthentic relation to others; and third, because it disburdens the other Dasein of his/her care, a third characteristic, which represents for Heidegger inauthenticity *par excellence*, if it is the case that inauthenticity consists of a fleeing Dasein in the face of its own existence and of its weight.<sup>60</sup>

"Leaping in" is protective and restrictive, but "leaping ahead" liberates and lets Dasein choose for itself (158/122-159/122). However, I hold that when other Dasein are afraid for another fear existentiell Dasein, the saving, or "leaping in," restricts a "feared for" Dasein to the point that its own assessment of its spatial world is not considered. Consistent with Raffoul's observation of

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<sup>60</sup> François Raffoul, "Otherness and individuation in Heidegger," *Man and World* 28 (1995), 351.

*einspringen*, a fear existentiell, as it relates to another Dasein, is taken as ready-to-hand and is treated as an object that another Dasein can control. The inauthentic mood of fear will compel other Dasein to “fear for” the racial identity under threat. Consequently, other Dasein will take a paternalistic approach to the fear existentiell Dasein (ontico-existentially viewed as a raced identity) and try to handle everything *for* the fear existentiell. The issue, as Raffoul points out, is that in “leaping in,” other Dasein disburden the fear existentiell Dasein from its care, allowing it to comfortably flee its own situation.

Rather than “leap in,” Malcolm X is an example of how other Dasein can “leap ahead” for individuals who have a fear existentiell. In his speech *To Mississippi Youth*, he says that, “One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself.”<sup>61</sup> He then describes what I interpret as “leaping in” on an everyday level, by saying that “it is very important to think out a situation for yourself. If you don’t do it, you’ll always be maneuvered into a situation where you are never fighting your actual enemies, where you will find yourself fighting your own self.”<sup>62</sup> Malcolm X understands that individuals who share in this identity of fear are under a threat of violence in America, but also under the threat of people trying to disburden them of their freedom by attempting to think *for* them.

I emphasized Malcolm X’s speech as exemplifying *his* life because a key point in *Being and Time* is Dasein not getting alienated by *Gerede*. X is speaking to a large audience and talking about “Americanism” and the struggle of black Americans, providing a narrative of the black American experience. This makes X’s speech subject to Heidegger’s critiques of ethnology, anthropology, and psychology, which demonstrate how Dasein is taken as present-at-

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<sup>61</sup> Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, “To Mississippi Youth,” (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 137.

<sup>62</sup> X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, 138.

hand. These disciplines take the regularity and patterns of human behavior, whether past or present, and hold them up for analysis to create an ontical report about Dasein, creating a regional ontology, a localized way to understand people. As such, Dasein is held up in suspension to be examined. However, sometimes we experience breakdowns in the regularity of our daily experiences that compel us to regard ourselves in suspension. Such a break occurs with Malcolm X's examination of "Americanism." His analysis identifies a breakdown between the normal experience of "Americanism" when one is white versus the break in that normalcy when one is black. A Dasein (Malcolm X), construed by other Dasein as a fear existentiell, is thrown into a society with a government that demonstrates institutional privileges for other existentiells. Malcolm X even says that he sees this democracy through the eyes of a victim of it and not a beneficiary. Thus, Dasein tries to exist through a fear existentiell and this allows X to question the imposition of such talk about his identity: he questions the circumstances of how this existentiell is imposed on him. He says, "If you black, you were born in jail," which is to say, in ontological terms, that the narratives about your ontic embodiment precede your existence. One cannot doubt that in 1964 this was the case for black persons. Certain features of civic life are better now in the U.S., but we are still in a country where Dasein are born into discriminatory narratives.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I attempted to understand what Heidegger's *Being and Time* can say to readers about race and identity. I accomplished this by advancing an idea I call "fear existentiells." I agree with Heidegger that seeing space in a present-at-hand sense is a hindrance to identifying the ontological features of space and this setback prevents us from seeing that spatiality can include something I call "societal de-severance." Space in a present-at-hand sense

is especially problematic for racial discourse when examining how the terms “body” and “bodies” serve as a vessel for an individual to be in. This conception results in turning the body into a container (an object) that you put something in (that something being the individual). By using Heidegger’s idea of space to examine the use of “body” by thinkers like Coates, we see that, once again, Dasein is covered up. For Heidegger, Dasein’s space is nothing like an object in another object; instead, space is a Being-in, exemplified by Dasein’s engagement with what is close and near. Seen in this way, concepts like identity can be conceptualized as near or far to Dasein. As it turns out, in a society with a fallen racial discourse, idle talk concepts about Dasein’s identity are often near to Dasein. They are around. I examined how the nearness of conceptions of identity could be influenced by fear, which is a phenomenon that specifically relates to individual Dasein often referred to as “black and brown.” The kinds of things brought nearer to Dasein from societal de-severance are fear existentiells. Our Dasein-with, and thus our Being-with, makes our interaction determinative for Dasein’s identity and in the case of Dasein who are often discussed as historically marginalized, coercive. So influential are we toward each other, that we co-construct each other’s existentiells. The ideas of these existentiells are made available to a society that talks about certain existentiells in terms of fear. I used Malcolm X’s “Ballot or the Bullet” as an example of this point regarding fear existentiells and their connection to societal fears and threats. Malcolm X repeatedly says that the black experience deals with threats from a larger democratic system that does not allow the black person to thrive. I gleaned ontological and existential Heideggerian interpretations from his statements. Hence, I spoke of thrownness in Malcolm X’s statements and I examined a notion of conceptual spatiality in keeping with my notion of “societal de-severance” to develop the closeness of fear existentiells.

The spatial closeness of existentiells deals with Dasein's Being-with because they are concepts that are sometimes available to Dasein, while at other times these concepts emerge out of a regular availability to become present-at-hand. The more encumbered and communal interpretation of Dasein does not mean that Dasein is reduced to subjectivity and being relative, but it means that when you conceive of it as Being-in-the-world in which its Being is an issue for it, you must consider the community of involvement and its dealings with that. Perhaps some people's lives are marked by specific motifs. Perhaps a community is marked in a certain way, but this is not a controversial claim because it states a fact that some lives seem more interpretatively layered by society than others. If true, then the societal representation of certain existentiells sets the stage for certain Dasein to reckon with time and death in a way that might steer them toward inauthenticity. Consequently, one of the "talks" is about what it means to talk about black and brown bodies. We have, in our society, targeted ways to discuss death aimed at specific identities. For political, rhetorical, expedient, and moral reasons, we talk about certain Dasein; however, this talk about certain fear existentiells prohibits a fuller discussion of a Dasein's existential and possibly authentic relation to death.

Utilizing ontical and present-at-hand analyses is helpful for types of knowledge, but they may also obstruct underlying existential issues for Dasein when such knowledge binds Dasein to its body. Take, for instance, a Dasein construed as a *body*. Present-at-hand analyses are particularly evident in disciplines and movements that discuss "black bodies," "brown bodies," and so on. By viscerally talking about the body, the talk holds the public's attention, promoting recognition of the issue.<sup>63</sup> What might Heidegger say about this? He writes, "But even if Others become themes for study, as it were, in their own Dasein, they are not encountered as person-

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<sup>63</sup> I say "attempt" because the rhetoric also risks normalizing threats for a fear existentiell Dasein. I discuss that risk further in chapters four and five.

Things present-at-hand” (156/120). Dasein does not choose its body, nor the societal gossip about its body, but Dasein confronts the talk about it and that talk could be arrived at through a present-at-hand analysis in Dasein’s everyday dealings with others. The talk reifies Dasein as an objective theme.

To conclude, if certain Dasein have fear existentiells, if societal talk motivates those existentiells and if that talk deals with notions of death, then some existentiells appear closer to threats than others; however, what must still be clarified is how those threats constitute a closeness to death. In the next chapter I outline one kind of threat that Dasein is instructed by the They to be always fearful of: death. I hope to have problematized existentiells with my addition of the concept I call “fear existentiells” to clarify that certain Dasein have a peculiar relationship to society when it comes to threat and in the next chapter, I will examine how the two main discussed threats of *ableben* (which is Dasein’s passing away in an ontic sense) and *verenden* (the perishing of a biological body) often conceal Dasein’s *Sein zum Tod* (Being-toward-death). By outlining what Heidegger means by these three kinds of death, I hope to demonstrate how Dasein becomes a societal problem for itself and other Dasein as the threat of death looms over its fear existentiell.

## Chapter 4

### Bodies and Lives Matter: Death of Dasein as a Fear Existentiell

*“Bigger, you’re going to die. And if you die, die free. You’re trying to believe in yourself. And every time you try to find a way to live, your own mind stands in the way. You know why that is? It’s because others have said you were bad and they made you live in bad conditions.”*<sup>64</sup>

- Richard Wright, *Native Son*

#### Introduction

The They gossips about Dasein’s death. As Dasein lives through a fear existentiell, its identity is constructed by *das Man* through *Gerede*. In the last chapter, I discussed how the idea of Dasein as a body can be used as content for what I call a “fear existentiell.” Fear existentiell discussions are various notions and ideas spread through academia, the news, and social media that talk about specific identities in relation to fear, like race and ethnicity. Anything that can be construed as idle talk is a medium for themes and concepts about existentiells to travel through. For example, George Yancy discusses the idea of race as embodied, that black individuals essentially live their history and political status via their body.<sup>65</sup> We also saw this with Ta-Nehisi Coates in the previous chapter. Another example is found in the 2016 journal article, “Brown Bodies and Xenophobic Bullying in U.S. Schools: Critical Analysis and Strategies for Action,” where the authors Monisha Bajaj, Ameen Ghaffar-Kucher, and Karishma Desai explain how “misinformation about youth who inhabit brown bodies (in the U.S. and abroad) have given rise

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Wright, *Native Son*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 499.

<sup>65</sup> Yancy describes the black body as a “historical text” in *Black Bodies / White Gazes*, (2008).



to behaviors identified as bullying.”<sup>66</sup> However, when death is included in the discussion of fear existentiells, Dasein’s identity becomes *about* death. Since the death discussion about fear existentiells tends to talk of Dasein as a body or a life, death talk for such existentiells leans toward one’s body ending (*verenden*) or one’s life ending (*ableben*), as Heidegger would label them in the second division of *Being and Time*. I call the application of these terms to a fear existentiell a “death note,” meaning a brief account of one’s ontico-existentiell end, a memo of sorts to put a fear existentiell Dasein on notice about its end. Such talk reminds Dasein about its *verenden* or *ableben*, depending on the context of the talk. Heidegger has a third kind of death that is non-ontic and non-existentiell, Dasein’s existential death, Being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tod*). The problem is that the death notes of fear existentiells hide this Being-toward-death from Dasein. When a fear existentiell is talked about as near death, more layers of concealment are applied to it than what I will refer to as “average Dasein,” an entity that does not have consistent death notes applied to its existentiell.<sup>67</sup>

I begin by exploring Heidegger’s analysis of how curiosity and ambiguity connect to idle talk and how it provides optimal conditions for the maintenance of a fear existentiell. *Gerede* tranquilizes Dasein, immersing and bombarding people with definite narratives about the world. I discuss curiosity and how Dasein quickly attends to different things of importance to its existence. Within curiosity, Dasein lightly engages with people, things, and subjects, but does not deal with them beyond a superficial interaction. I point out how curiosity helps in fostering fear existentiells. Additionally, ambiguity helps in the spread of fear existentiells because it

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<sup>66</sup> Monish Bajaj, Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher, & Karishma Desai, “Brown Bodies and Xenophobic Bullying in U.S. Schools: Critical Analysis and Strategies for Action,” *Harvard Educational Review*, Winter 2016, 86, pp.481-505.

<sup>67</sup> Save for the application of death notes about humans in general dying, the fear of death one has about getting older, or notions of death that arise from being diagnosed with a terminal illness, the fear existentiell death note is a societal diagnosis that one is likely to die sooner than others simply by being a member of a group considered as being near death.

legitimizes contrary claims and generalizations about individuals. The They promotes the truth of opposing claims and this tranquilizes Dasein, allowing it to be settled in whatever it thinks is true. In the case of a fear existentiell, *das Man* supports Dasein's fear of threat being near or not near by allowing Dasein to accept both situations as true. By examining how curiosity and ambiguity support *Gerede*, I discuss how both features of idle talk make it such that a fear existentiell has a sense of urgency from *das Man*. I point out that *Gerede* urges Dasein to speculate about itself in a way that seems like it is alienated from society, when Dasein is, in fact, existentially hidden from itself.

I examine how a fear existentiell is connected to what I call a death note. This note is not about Heideggerian existential dying, but *verenden* and *ableben*. I explain Heidegger's discussion of perishing (*verenden*), the kind of death that is the end of organic bodies. Dasein is often talked about as a body that perishes, especially when the discussion refers to Dasein with a fear existentiell.<sup>68</sup> I then turn to the more robust notion of death, the passing away of Dasein's human life (*ableben*). I discuss how *ableben* is closer to Dasein's existential meaning because it addresses Dasein living as, at least, a conscious entity in a world with which one can engage. Though despite such involvement, *ableben* is still encumbered by *Gerede* and only allows Dasein to flee its existential death (*Sein zum Tod*). Finally, we arrive at *Sein zum Tod*. Being-toward-death is the kind of existential and ontological ending of Dasein that is concealed by idle discussions from the They. *Sein zum Tod* is Dasein's death as an existential Being and deals with Dasein's main concern of "being an issue for itself" and how Dasein comes to understand

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<sup>68</sup> This notion of *verenden* is also a way of interpreting the idea of "black and brown bodies" in current discourses on bullying, hate crimes, systemic racism, and police brutality.

itself as the possibility of its impossibility (32/12).<sup>69</sup> Heidegger emphasizes this kind of death through his concept of *Sein zum Tod*.

### **Curiosity About Fear Existentiells**

A fear existentiell is susceptible to concealment in curiosity and ambiguity through idle talk. To begin with, curiosity has no real focus, allowing *das Man* to dictate what issues are important for Dasein and how anything should be understood. The They automatically understands the world in an ontic and existentiell way. If one takes on the understanding of *das Man* then one is rewarded with calm, which means one will not have to wrestle with difficult problems that would lead to any existential restlessness arising from anxiety (*Angst*). Since *das Man* prescribes what to be curious about, one is implicitly guided to find out more about the familiar. Heidegger writes

Curiosity, for which nothing is closed off, and idle talk, for which there is nothing that is not understood, provide themselves (that is, the Dasein which is in this manner [*dem so seienden Dasein*]) with the guarantee of a 'life' which, supposedly, is genuinely 'lively' (217/173).

The They compels Dasein to submit to a quick generalization that gives Dasein a sense of sharpness and acuity about its existence. In other words, the lively Dasein in idle talk is the one who curiously understands its world and the manner of engaging it. If this is the case, then such conditions are fruitful for all kinds of judgments, even those stemming from prejudice, no matter whether the judgments turn into positive or negative stereotypes. Incorporating all views and merely touching upon them makes Dasein arrogant about its existence. Dasein becomes a "know it all" of sorts. Heidegger writes that curiosity "concerns itself with a kind of knowing, but just

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<sup>69</sup> Heidegger writes, "Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein" (294/250) and "Death reveals itself as that *possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped, [unüberholbare]*" (294/250-251).

in order to have known” (217/173). Rather than investigate its existence to the point of getting nearer to understanding itself in its *Angst* (Dasein’s fundamental *Befindlichkeit*, which is always there, but concealed), Dasein takes up whatever judgments it wants to remain settled and tranquil with itself. Dasein tries to take hold and dabble in all perspectives, when all it is really doing on an ontological level is evading its *Angst*. Dasein, with its “versatile curiosity and restlessly ‘knowing it all,’ regards itself as knowing everything about its existence, even allowing itself to be certain about its death” (222/178).

The ramifications for Dasein as a fear existentiell are that it will accept any fallen views about its identity, even the ones that are steeped in the urgency about its death. The issue with such acceptance is two-fold: 1) the views of *das Man* may not align with Dasein’s everydayness; 2) even if some of the views were true, Dasein is still evading a confrontation with itself in *Angst* that is necessary to authentically modify a fear existentiell and turn it into an authentic existentiell. Authentication of a fear existentiell cannot happen in curiosity. In curiosity, Dasein skims over itself and if a fear existentiell is applied to Dasein’s identity then that fear will be skimmed over as well. Heidegger writes “When curiosity has become free, however, it concerns itself with seeing, not in order to understand what is seen but *just* in order to see. It seeks novelty only in order to leap from it anew to another novelty” (216/117). Curiosity bolsters a cursory glance at fear, even when the object of that fear is death. Glancing does not allow Dasein to break from idle talk so that it may arrive at its primordial issue with itself: Being-toward-death is always the case for Dasein.

### **Ambiguity About Fear Existentiells**

The ambiguity regarding fear existentiells allows *das Man* to say as much as it wants to Dasein. In ambiguity, any entity of the They can have a say about someone. Consequently,

ambiguity produces multiple points of view to consider and they can be regarded as accurate and true for any Dasein. Heidegger writes,

When, in our everyday Being-with-one-another, we encounter the sort of thing which is accessible to everyone, and about which anyone can say anything, it soon becomes impossible to decide what is disclosed in a genuine understanding, and what is not (217/173).

Ambiguity answers questions from curiosity and leaves Dasein making all sorts of claims that are legitimate within the context of its general understanding. Dasein cannot make a genuine decision when it is difficult to assess what counts as genuine understanding in the first place. Without clarity, a fear existentiell Dasein can entertain any synopsis of a threat, however legitimate or not. When Dasein eventually decides on what to be fearful about then it is questionable as to whether there is even an actual threat that afflicts Dasein.

Any Dasein can, in fearing another Dasein, cast a Dasein as a being to be feared, as someone to be threatened by. For example, when I was a senior in high school in 1999 and saw video footage of two white high school kids in black trenchcoats shooting their school mates at Columbine High School, I became fearful of white teenagers in black trenchcoats walking around school. I cast them as individuals to be feared. I was not the only one fearful of kids in black trenchcoats because my high school briefly banned any student from wearing black trenchcoats at school. Between classmates and I, the white kids in black trenchcoats became feared existentiells. Consequently, we became fearing existentiells. These kinds of problems come about from ambiguity because Dasein can assess any of *das Man's* available interpretations, even if such a narrative comes from fear.

There are two more issues with ambiguity that are important to remember with regard to fear: 1) “Everything looks as if it were genuinely understood” (217/173); 2) “Dasein is always

ambiguously ‘there’—that is to say, in that public disclosedness of Being-with-one-another where the loudest idle talk and the most ingenious curiosity keeps ‘things moving’” (218-219/174). When things look genuinely understood, Dasein has “made its mind up,” so to speak. It knows what it needs to know about a situation, a topic, and even another Dasein. That semblance of genuine understanding combined with fear means that Dasein becomes firm in the idea that another Dasein merits fear. Relatedly, if Dasein fears for another Dasein then all the information that it thinks it understands about the situation is all that is needed to “protect” that other Dasein. And if Dasein fears about some threat in its life, perhaps the idea of death looming around the corner, then convincing Dasein otherwise would not work. The semblance of genuine understanding may make Dasein stubborn about actual circumstances that may suggest there is nothing to fear. This last point relates to the second issue with ambiguity: The “loudest idle talk” convinces Dasein to believe in its “genuine” understanding. For example, the “loudest idle talk” could be news reports about terrorism, and then “curiosity keeps ‘things moving’” to tap into Dasein’s fear about it. Even in scholarly articles, Dasein may read about the fear of what is now known as terrorism from the “alt-right”, and things are kept moving because of the talk. The “loudest idle talk” goes from one thing to the next, not caring about the veracity of those items. Instead, Dasein’s subscription to that ambiguous and curious idle talk is all that matters; combined with fear, the talk becomes more convincing.

### **Existential Alienation for a Fear Existentiell**

A further consequence of Dasein’s being influenced by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity when it is a fear existentiell is that it becomes exposed to an *existentiell* version of existential alienation. Heidegger examines how Dasein is always *uprooted* in an existential sense: One is always lost in *das Man*. However, in idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity, Dasein does not regard

itself as lost in anything. In the case of a fear existentiell, the talk of such a Dasein is that it is ousted by society, which makes it seem as if it is existentially alienated. Yet, this societal ousting has its source in the fallen mood of fear. The difference for Dasein as a fear existentiell (as opposed to existential alienation) is that there is an increasing sense of urgency to reconciling issues of curiosity and ambiguity because it is constantly told and reminded of its existentiell social alienation. For example, in Richard Wright's *Native Son*, the main character, Bigger Thomas, speaks with his lawyer, Max, about being executed. Max says,

Bigger, you're going to die. And if you die, die free. You're trying to believe in yourself. And every time you try to find a way to live, your own mind stands in the way. You know why that is? It's because others have said you were bad and they made you live in bad conditions. When a man hears that over and over and looks about him and sees that his life is bad, he begins to doubt his own mind. His feelings drag him forward and his mind, full of what others say about him, tells him to go back.<sup>70</sup>

Bigger Thomas serves as an example of a fear existentiell Dasein who has lived with stress. As Max points out, Bigger has been told about a certain way to be and, try as he might to resist such pressure and urgency about his identity, Bigger is thrown into a form of existentiell alienation. Max advises Bigger that "what others say about him" will always influence his being. Later, Max tells Bigger to try to believe in himself. In this example, Bigger (Dasein) has a sense of urgency and Max provides a way for Bigger to take his existence and impending death with a sense of calm. Heidegger writes,

When Dasein, tranquilized, and 'understanding' everything, thus compares itself with everything, it drifts along towards an alienation [*Entfremdung*] in which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is hidden from it. Falling Being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquilizing; it is at the same time *alienating* (222/178).

This is Dasein in its "Versatile curiosity and restlessly 'knowing it all'" masquerading "as a universal understanding of Dasein" (222/178). An individual, as a fear existentiell, may be

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<sup>70</sup> Richard Wright, *Native Son*, 499.

ousted by both societal judgments and actual institutions regarding identity, and such a person may even feel the pressure of death approaching. In an existentiell sense, Dasein as a fear existentiell is Being-hurried because it is running out of time. The ousting is not necessarily an existential alienation, though it is an existentiell one. Heidegger would demarcate existential and existentiell alienation. The former would be Dasein confronting itself in its nothingness through *Angst*, whereas the latter kind of alienation does not necessarily require such a confrontation.

Bigger's lawyer seems to be addressing the possibility of *existentiell* alienation by emphasizing how Bigger's feelings have been dragged forward and that others have made him skeptical of himself. His lawyer pin points the issue that, in a way, Bigger has not had a chance to be himself. If his lawyer is correct about Bigger, then this sounds like Dasein drifting "along towards alienation." Both cases have an impending kind of alienation, one existential and the other existentiell. With the former, *das Man* helps tranquilize Dasein in its movement away from itself, and with the latter, Bigger's lawyer seems to suggest that society somehow pressured Bigger into murder; thereby, emphasizing how society has assisted in shaping him into a fear existentiell.

### **Dasein's Many Deaths and the Presentation of Death Notes to a Fear Existentiell**

When it comes to death, Dasein as a fear existentiell tries to complacently understand its end and the They obliges, providing Dasein with consistent reminders about its death via what I have been calling a death note.<sup>71</sup> My assessment of a fear existentiell being led into death note talk contradicts Heidegger's claims that the They find such talk to be a nuisance because, as we will see, *das Man* is more than willing to discuss the death of a fear existentiell as *verenden* and

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<sup>71</sup> This represents a twist on Heidegger's claim that death is something often addressed as a nuisance to the They. Heidegger writes, "Indeed the dying of Others is seen often enough as a social inconvenience, if not even a downright tactlessness, against which the public is to be guarded" (298/254).



*ableben*. In our time, Dasein as a fear existentiell is welcomed to identify his existence with death in those two forms.<sup>72</sup> Such Dasein are reminded about it to the point that it becomes a note to oneself about one's end; hence, the term death note. One example of a death note being attached to a fear existentiell is in the way non-white people are discussed as bodies. In the last chapter, I focused on Coates, but here is a response to such "body" talk by Tanya Steele, a writer for the popular online site *IndieWire*.

This term, "Black body," should be reserved for art, for the canvas. A canvas is a flat surface. A child sitting in a chair is not. Somehow, this term has made its way into our conversation about Black lives. #BlackLivesMatter disrupts the idea that violence is simply done to our bodies. Yet, I see writers continue to use the term "Black bodies." Why? What purpose does that serve? Why do we detach the body from the person? No one attacks, solely, a Black body.<sup>73</sup>

Steele identifies that the black body is discussed as near death, its personhood removed from common discourse. As I noted in the last chapter regarding Coates' use of the body, one response might be that the use of "bodies" is a critique of how society reduces brown and black people to objects, as "bodies." However, as discussed in the last chapter, the critique loses its rhetorical force because the term reinforces the reduction to "bodies" by implicitly reasserting a traditional and fallen ontology. Steele points out how a flawed term like the "body" has entered racial discourse and detaches the body from the person. In the last chapter, I pointed out that not only is there a detachment, but the body is placed in front of the person. Such placement, seen through Heidegger's ontology, conceals Dasein. The fallen terms that permeate racial discourse reduce it to an idle discussion that is promoted by *das Man*. The idle talk on race continues with death. With respect to Heidegger's work on this issue, I discuss two kinds of death for Dasein:

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<sup>72</sup> For instance, the idea of being "woke" includes the notion that a person of color in the U.S. is woke when he or she understands that their life is near death because of unequal treatment under the law or through police violence.

<sup>73</sup> Tanya Steele, "I Am Not a Black Body - #SpringValleyHigh," *IndieWire*, October 30, 2015, (accessed on October 14, 2018).

*Verenden*, which means the perishing of biological bodies, and *ableben*, the passing away of human life. *Das Man* attaches death notes of *ableben* and *verenden* to Dasein's fear existentiell. When a fear existentiell is talked about as a body-toward-perishing, then this signifies *verenden* and when this Dasein is discussed as a human-passing-away, then that is *ableben*. For *verenden*, such death notes reduce a fear existentiell Dasein to a body. For the *ableben* death note, human life is recognized, but not its existentiality.

### ***Verenden* of Fear Existentiells**

Heidegger first examines *verenden*: the end of the living. This is often translated as “perishing.” In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes, “In our terminology the ending of anything that is alive, is denoted as ‘perishing’ [*Verenden*]” and then he later states that when studies of Dasein originate from a more biological view, “Dasein moves into that domain of Being which we know as the world of animals and plants” (284/240-241). Since *verenden* does not address Dasein's existentiality no longer existing, he does not dwell on the ontic end that is *verenden*. Consequently, *verenden* is a neutral end when it comes to authenticity and inauthenticity. Such terms do not apply to perishing. However, the notion of *verenden* being applied to Dasein as a fear existentiell is normalized through *Gerede*; *verenden* becomes a common possible occurrence for all black and brown bodies, which reasserts the “body” as being in front of Dasein.

The *Gerede* about the death note of fear existentiells tends to be about being embodied as black and brown, producing specific talk about raced bodies where *verenden* is the object of fear. Dasein becomes scared that death might occur. For example, Tommy Curry, often discusses the black individual as a black body. Curry writes about the effect of the black body on the white

mind in a news item about a black man in a wheelchair killed by the police. Curry writes about this man,

The mere contact with his Blackened body activates the neurosis of the white mind whereby the physical proximity the white observer has to the Black male body triggers a fleeing of the white mind from the reality, or more accurately the relation to Blackness, the white body cannot escape.<sup>74</sup>

Providing what I interpret as an example of a fear existentiell with a death note, Curry argues that the “Blackened body” ignites both fear and fleeing by the “white mind” and we can discern the purpose of such body talk: to warn individuals about death by the police and to examine the urgency of the near end of the black body by explaining how this point is a matter of survival for those embodied in the “Blackened Body.”

Such body talk is not relegated to scholars of philosophy of race and Critical Race Theory like Curry. The *Gerede* about Dasein as a fear existentiell is commonly accepted on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. For example, a quick search of “black bodies” on Twitter yields the following:

Horrifying. This is exhibit A of the root to many recent events. There is an inherent & deeply subconscious implicit fear of black bodies in many in our culture today. And that is evil and a problem. And that’s where the conversation (and justice) should be centered.<sup>75</sup>

Jefferson Bethke, a self-described family man and lover of Jesus Christ, has 157,000 followers with the above tweet receiving 190 retweets as of this writing. Despite the differences between the mode of communication for each respective thinker, the body idle talk is similar in both

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<sup>74</sup> Tommy Curry, “This Nigger’s Broken: Hyper-Masculinity, the Buck, and the Role of Physical Disability in White Anxiety Toward the Black Male Body,” *Journal of Social Philosophy*, September 1, 2017 (accessed October 15, 2018), 326.

<sup>75</sup> Bethke, J. [JeffersonBethke]. (2017, September 7). [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/JeffersonBethke/status/1038171338488201216>

kinds of media: a fear existentiell is discussed as a body with a death note. The purpose of each mode of communication is likely similar as well: both authors, in their own way, are using the talk of objectification to highlight the emergency society faces regarding the death of the black body.

Reports about the death of black and brown people by police actions compel discussants to talk about violence against these communities, but the philosophical and layperson commentary on these reports becomes part of the *Gerede* about fear existentiells when deaths are framed as *verenden*. Even in a moral defense of non-white communities, scholars and non-scholars participate in the spread of death notes among fear existentiells. However, in using the notion of fear existentiells and death notes, I critique their defenses as reifying *verenden* narratives, as their applicability to individual Dasein requires more philosophical scrutiny. If we remove such moral commitments from these defenses of “black and brown bodies,” we are left with influential idle talk about non-white communities as bodies near *verenden*. In other words, we are left with idle talk that reduces Dasein’s death to perishing.

When people talk about Dasein as *verenden*, they are reporting about death reports related to historically marginalized groups. The critique of my claim would be that authors of body-related death notes, like Curry and Bethke, are reacting to the plethora of actual deaths of black and brown lives by fearful racist institutions and actors; therefore, these authors are exempt from “participating” in *Gerede* about the end of fear existentiells. Yet, the purpose of such body death note talk demonstrates that the goal is to have Dasein recognize the urgent plight of fear existentiells. If you are non-white, then it is deathly important for you to understand the reality of these matters. If you are white, then it is crucial, albeit not mortally so, to understand what is happening to non-whites, particularly those classified as black and brown bodies. In any case,

Dasein is persuaded into recognizing a certain kind of reality for a certain kind of people. Whether or not this reality is existentially true of an individual Dasein is not considered because the *Gerede* is related to one's membership in a group identified as a fear existentiell body.

The best-case scenario for the advocates of such body and death talk is that Dasein as a fear existentiell subscribes to this talk, believing its body to be near death. But to do this, the authors of body death note talk must convince Dasein that they are under an atmospheric kind of threat, essentially diagnosing Dasein as a feared body that is societally near the end. In such a scenario, the *Gerede* about the body and its end objectifies the individual as no more than a bodily member of a general community that is afflicted with a near death problem. To diagnose the community with this societal problem, scholars who take on such body talk are doing something quite interesting: they are applying what could be taken as a singularized existential event (Being-toward-death) to a whole community, which turns "death" into a relational community event. As a community event, death becomes the death of a marginalized group to the point where it is "our" death when one is a member of that fear existentiell community. When one member of the group dies, the community takes over that individual death. Discursively, that death is no longer about the individual, but about the death of the group. In this way, one's death is shared by everyone to the point of no longer being *one's* death. Consequently, the singularizing Being-toward-death is taken as pluralizing death, which conceals the "ownmost" feature of existential death.

Such a passing over of one's existential self being towards its end is what Heidegger aims to avoid in his discussion of Dasein's death. For Heidegger, to solely consider Dasein's end as *verenden* is to withdraw both the ontological and existential features of Dasein's death. Heidegger writes

From the foregoing discussion of the ontological possibility of getting death into our grasp, it becomes clear at the same time that substructures of entities with another kind of Being (presence-at-hand or life) thrust themselves to the fore unnoticed, and threaten to bring confusion to the Interpretation of this phenomenon--even to the first and suitable way of presenting it (285/241).

The concept of *verenden* cannot handle an analysis of Dasein's existential end and instead invites more confusion. Talking about a fear existentiell as *verenden* entangles Dasein in a way of talking about itself that automatically conceals its existential issue. It does so in a manner that requires a proximity to death that may not even be true for a Dasein who is a member of a fear existentiell group.

### ***Ableben* of Fear Existentiells: How *Ableben* Talk Falls Back on *das Man***

With a fear existentiell, Heidegger's *ableben* is expressed as the death of lives in racialized communities, rather than just black or brown bodies. For Heidegger, *ableben* is Dasein's dying off or passing away. More than the perishing of a body, *ableben* is Dasein's end as a human being. Unlike *verenden*, *ableben* is not neutral when it comes to the issue of authenticity or inauthenticity: *Ableben* is Dasein's inauthentic end. Heidegger writes

In so far as this is the case (the reference to Dasein as ontically as well as ontologically ending), Dasein too can end without authentically dying, though on the other hand, *qua* Dasein, it does not simply *verenden*. We designate this intermediate phenomenon as its "demising" or "*ableben*" (247/291).

*Ableben* lets Dasein deal with death inauthentically while possibly catalyzing existential death, but this seldom occurs and most Dasein die inauthentically in *ableben*.<sup>76</sup> Despite the inauthenticity of *ableben*, it represents a step toward a more robust idea of death that is divested of "existentiell commitments," as Heidegger described (292/248). From the view of a fear

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<sup>76</sup> David Krell, in *Daimon Life* (1992), says that *ableben* is "in between perishing and dying in order to prevent an inappropriate Dasein from dying like an animal, to preclude its collapsing into just-plain-life when it dies ignobly, but also in order to preserve a certain propriety for Dasein when it dies properly" 97.

existentiell that is encumbered in *Gerede* about death notes, those existentiell commitments tend to conceive Dasein as a life member of a racialized group rather than Dasein in its existentiality.

### **The Certainty of *Ableben* for a Fear Existentiell**

If *ableben* is the inauthentic ending of Dasein and if it provides a sense of certainty of one's end then Dasein, as a fear existentiell, only engenders fallenness towards its end.

Heidegger writes

*The fact that demise, as an event which occurs, is 'only' empirically certain, is in no way decisive as to the certainty of death. Cases of death may be the factual occasion for Dasein's first paying attention to death at all. So long, however, as Dasein remains in the empirical certainty which we have mentioned, death, in the way that it 'is', is something of which Dasein can by no means become certain (301/257).*

Dasein is empirically certain about death, may believe death to be around the corner, and may even have empirical certainty about who will kill it. John D. Márquez writes about this empirical certainty of death from a sociological perspective in his description of Latinos as the “living dead.” He says

This essay argues that while entrapment and exploitation account for the economic exploitability of Latin American immigrants and of Latinos writ large, the border death toll is more a reflection of the role that race has played in structuring modern nation states like the United States. The death toll, moreover, is largely the result of how Latinidad has been produced as an ethno-racial signifier of peril within the sociologies of U.S. sovereignty. To account for this condition, this essay introduces the term racial state of expendability.<sup>77</sup>

Gonzalez takes the immigrant death toll at the U.S. border as an “ethno-racial” sign that Latinos are expendable. He incorporates the language of author Achille Mbembe to say that segments of the Latino population are the “living dead.”<sup>78</sup> This demonstrates that death as *ableben* is

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<sup>77</sup> John D. Márquez, “Latinos as the Living Dead: Raciality, Expendability, and Border Militarization,” *Latino Studies*, 2012, (Vol. 10, No. 4), 473.

<sup>78</sup> John D. Marquez, from Achille Mbembe on “the living dead.” Marquez writes about Mbembe that “Colonial formations and the ‘post-colony,’ Mbembe argues, are describable as ‘death worlds’ in so much as the lives of natives are characterized by an evolution from ‘living dead’ to ‘plain dead’” 478.

perfectly compatible with what I have described as fear existentiells and death notes. Through being a fear existentiell, Dasein is almost guaranteed to *ableben* because the idle talk about Dasein, as a life member of a racialized group, sustains its fallenness right up until the death. Even with legitimate claims to certainty about death tolls regarding fear existentiells, the certainty is about Dasein as merely a “case of death,” that then reduces Dasein to somehow being lifeless. With respect to Gonzalez’s project, Dasein need only be Latino/a to be a possible case of death. If Gonzalez is correct and the Latino/a is a possible case of death, the “living dead,” then the Latino(a) becomes a theoretically “unalive” being that is also “an object of ‘concern’” (282/238). Heidegger writes about the unliving that

From a theoretical point, even the corpse which is present-at-hand is still a possible object for the student of pathological anatomy, whose understanding tends to be oriented to the idea of life. This something which is present-at-hand-and-no-more is ‘more’ than a lifeless material Thing. In it we encounter something *unalive*, which has lost its life (282/238).

For Heidegger, Gonzalez would be regarding the “living dead” Latino(a) as a “mere corporeal Thing” that is “unalive” (282/232). The Latino(a) would be the unliving entity who has death looming over it to the point of being dead already. When applying Heidegger’s view of the unliving to Gonzalez’s conception of the Latino(a), we have an idea of a zombie, popularized throughout cinema and television. However, both living and dead Latino(a)s individuals *are not* zombies. When Gonzalez speaks of them as the unliving, he is treating that community as if he is already mourning them, as if they have already “been torn away from those who have ‘remained behind’” (282/238). Latino(a)s become unliving present-at-hand objects of concern that Gonzalez is “tarrying alongside” by “mourning and commemorating” them “in a mode of respectful solicitude” (282/238).



## Fear Existentiell and the Faux Certainty of Death

Gonzalez is certain that specific groups pass away, and an abundance of data makes this empirically certain; however, the certainty is made possible by *Gerede* about fear existentiells. Heidegger is not trying to dissuade individuals from the certainty of empirical data about people passing away. He is pointing out that empirically assessing death, no matter how robust the data or feeling of its nearness, does not approximate death's existential significance for Dasein. Rather, Heidegger's point about empirical certainty is that it is part of a fallen discourse and cannot account for Dasein's authentic ending. Such a distinction about authenticity demonstrates the extent to which an issue can psychologically and empirically seem near without existentially being an issue for Dasein.

Heidegger's assessment of how "averageness" plays a role in Dasein's commitment to certainty is reflected in *Gerede*. For Dasein, "everydayness concedes something like a *certainty* of death," but not all certainty is the same (299-300/255-256). When Dasein is Being-certain, its death is realized as a possibility for itself and no one else. The other certainty about death, referred to already as "empirical certainty," emanates from inauthentically Being-toward-the-end when it is empirically probable for Dasein. Instead, if Dasein is a fear existentiell that is probably-certain-about-its-death, then this understanding will be idle to the extent that this is a common event for everyone with a similar existentiell. Death is shared in empirical certainty. Such an empirical certainty does not single out Dasein to authentically own its death but compels Dasein to fall back into an *ableben* narrative that *das Man* can experience.<sup>79</sup>

Through fear existentiells, "certainty" is attained insofar as Dasein is a member of a group that is led into believing that their *ableben* is imminent. For a fear existentiell, one is a

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<sup>79</sup> Heidegger writes, "Dasein lets the testimony of the thing itself which has been uncovered (the true thing itself) be the sole determinant for its Being towards that thing understandingly" (300/256).

member of an identity that is taken as a body or life destined to an expedited death, Being-hurried. Part of the averageness of that existentiell is existing in a role wherein one understands he or she to be a member of a prejudicially or racially targeted community. Heidegger writes that “Everydayness confines itself to conceding the ‘certainty’ of death in this ambiguous manner just to weaken that certainty by covering up dying still more and to alleviate its own thrownness into death” (299-300/255-256). Because the idea of death has a *Gerede*-motivated kind of certainty, death loses its singularity. In contrast to such qualities, *ableben* increasingly becomes defined in this empirical certainty. Dasein’s “Being-certain” of its *Sein zum Tod* becomes concealed.

### **Expecting *Ableben* as a Fear Existentiell Versus Anticipating *Sein zum Tod***

For a fear existentiell, Dasein must overcome an especially concealed framing of its existence because the They ascribes death notes about its *ableben* or *verenden*. The consistency of such death note talk for a fear existentiell instructs Dasein to expect *ableben* rather than anticipate existential death (*Sein zum Tod*) as a possibility that is integral to its existential structure. *Sein zum Tod*, for Heidegger, is as follows:

The full existential-ontological conception of death may now be defined as follows: *death, as the end of Dasein, is Dasein’s ownmost possibility--non-relational, certain, and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped. Death is, as Dasein’s end, in the Being of this entity towards its end (302/258).*

For Heidegger, existential death is something that Dasein takes over once it exists. *Sein zum Tod* is an individualized phenomenon that Dasein always holds as a possibility. The individuation of death and its possibility are misinterpreted through *das Man* via Dasein’s expecting *ableben*. Such an expecting contrasts with Heidegger’s point that “when Dasein dies ... it does not have to do so with an Experience of its factual demising, or in such an Experience” (291/247). Even more so with fear existentiells, *ableben* is expected to be actualized and such an expecting is

constantly reinforced by the They. For Heidegger, death can never be actualized, but remains always possible. If death were to be actualized, its status as being possible would no longer be in effect. *Sein zum Tod* is a possibility for Dasein that is always there so long as Dasein is in the world; however, death's being a possibility does not depend on experience or even thinking about it all the time. Yet, as I have demonstrated, we see that this is precisely what *das Man* does for Dasein as a fear existentiell. When one has a fear existentiell, one is always thinking about death.

This is the way one comports oneself when one 'thinks about death', pondering over when and how this possibility may be actualized. Of course, such brooding over death does not fully take away from it its character as a possibility. Indeed, it always gets brooded over as something that is coming; but in such brooding we weaken it by calculating how we are to have it at our disposal (305-306/261). Thus, while these ideas of death are perpetuated, Dasein as a fear existentiell is engrossed in a brooding idle talk about death.<sup>80</sup> It is this atmosphere that makes anticipating existential death increasingly out of reach for a community of *individuals*.

## Conclusion

Rather than wait to understand the individual in question, *das Man* jumps to a conclusion that it finds likely but still too general. Why is this so? *Das Man* of our contemporary society is inclined to encourage Dasein to take notice of death's perceived proximity for it. Heidegger's point is that "The dying of Others is seen often enough as a social inconvenience, if not even a downright tactlessness, against which the public is the guarded" (298/254). Yet, if we take that

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<sup>80</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus' foreword for Carol White's *Time and Death* (2005), goes further, saying that "the constant closing of possibilities could not be the kind of ontological dying Heidegger has in view." This would remove the bio-, historio-, ethno-, and psychological as ontological possibilities, and more like roles that can no longer be when Dasein existentially dies. Dreyfus continues, "The gradual closing down of possibilities does not have the right ontological structure to deal with death of one world and the birth of another," and what Heidegger is talking about is more like a Kierkegaardian "discontinuity or leap" xxi.

quote in a contemporary setting, with the current *Gerede* about death, we see that one who is a fear existentiell is motivated by *das Man* to concede to the threat of death and suffering even though it may not be there in Dasein's averageness. Dasein as a fear existentiell does not encounter criticisms of "tactlessness" or "social inconvenience" when discussing its *verenden* and *ableben* as a body in today's U.S. society; rather, to concur with claims of suffering and death becomes a sign of one's acumen about societal conditions for the marginalized and oppressed. As a person who tends to be considered a fear existentiell, it becomes socially acceptable and advantageous to "speak your truth" about the threat of death and the proximity to it through one's marginalized existence, even if one's connection to ontic death and suffering is remote. Rather than tactless, it becomes a sign of social acuity to which the public is supportive.

Such encouragement and fostering of speaking one's truth about what we can call "oppression" or "marginalization" creates a nebulous ambiguity where death, oppression, and marginalization are conflated, so that one need not actually experience any of these things, but may only subscribe to the ambiguity of how one belongs to these issues. One might simply be a member of the marginalized identity group to subscribe to such issues. As such, what affects the group would then be thought to affect the member. This type of membership is ambiguous because it suggests that someone is simultaneously part of an issue while not being part of the issue. Ambiguity is also demonstrated by the fact that in our current technological expression of *das Man* in social media, we can see various notions about death as they are relevant to racial groups that are discussed as near death. The result favors the influence of *das Man* over the existentiell and ontical everydayness of the individual. Heidegger discusses how the They talk about death with a sense of authority, relegating Dasein's concerns to being cowardly. However, at least in U.S. society, *das Man* seems prone to accept the probability of expected death from

marginalized people. They absorb Dasein's fear existentiell, telling the individual their death is imminent. Even if death is not near, the problem of such death notes being imposed becomes the greater issue, creating a problem of how one is authentically related to such talk. Reduced to a fear existentiell, Dasein must figure what about the idle talk is *genuine* to its existence. Such a Dasein may ask, "Am I somehow a problem?" In chapter 5, I call those fear existentiell Dasein who are talked about as near death "Being-a-problem," and I will argue that the issue of Dasein's end becomes a serious problem for such a Dasein because its identity as a fear existentiell is viewed through *Gerede* about death, covering up its existential end.<sup>81</sup> The idle talk conceals Dasein's *Angst* (anxiety) and the ontological fact that it is always *Sein zum Tod* (Being-toward-death). Rather than an individual considering existential death for itself, a fear existentiell Dasein who is talked about as being near death becomes a problem for itself and society.

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<sup>81</sup> "Being-a-problem" comes from Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) where he states, "Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy, by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All nevertheless, flutter around it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying it directly, How does it feel to be a problem?" 9.

## Chapter 5

### Inauthentic Being-a-problem and Du Bois' Double Consciousness

“... *Being a problem is a strange experience...*”<sup>82</sup>

- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

#### Introduction

“Being-a-problem” is Dasein’s having an identity that is perpetually associated with *verenden* and *ableben*. *Sein zum Tod* is Dasein’s existential death, its end as an onto-ontological being, but this death is a problem for all Dasein and is not discussed in idle talk. *Verenden* and *ableben*, however, are often discussed in *Gerede* and frequently attributed to certain existentiells in the form of what I call “death notes.” Dasein is spoken of as near death because its embodied color, race, and ethnicity are conceived of as proximate to *verenden* and *ableben*. Dasein bears ontic and existentiell characteristics that leave it open to identification by others, but not only is death covered up, so is Dasein’s conscience, which Heidegger characterizes as Dasein’s existential possibility of hearing its own call. The fear existentiell, coupled with a death note, takes Dasein as being a perpetual problem in its world, what I call “inauthentic Being-a-problem” (iBap). This categorizing has an extra layer comprised of a death note which muffles Dasein’s possibility of hearing its conscience.

I begin this chapter by reviewing the background of inauthentic Being-a-problem. I discuss it as a way to be, an existentiell, that is interpreted through a Heideggerian lens, but the

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<sup>82</sup> W.E.B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 9.

origin is from W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois discusses the problem of being a black person in society, manifesting a double-consciousness where black Americans deal with a divided self-perception: being seen through the eyes of white America and oneself. I use this division to understand how the existentiell of inauthentic Being-a-problem deals with a veil of perceptions between Dasein spoken about and *das Man* speaking about Dasein.

I elaborate on how we get a fear existentiell, as discussed in the past two chapters, to the existentiell of inauthentic Being-a-problem. Inauthentic Being-a-problem is a combination of a fear existentiell and a death note brought together through idle talk in which Dasein's everyday societal issue is the idea that *ableben* and *verenden* are near, depending on which narrative is impressed upon an individual (sometimes it is both). Because of the death note, existential death becomes concealed. In place of Heidegger's analysis that discussions of death are public annoyances, I argue that the opposite happens with iBap, for in contemporary U.S. society, recognizing *ableben* or *verenden* is a sign of social awareness, creating a feedback loop of reinforcement regarding identity and death.

One might then inquire as to why this is even an issue in the first place, since it would be important for marginalized identities to know about impending death, in an ontico-existentiell sense, but I counter that inauthentic Being-a-problem contains an inherent tendency to conceal Dasein's *Angst* while advancing fear. For this reason, I compare fear to *Angst*, showing how fear conceals Dasein's *Angst*, which then blocks any possible catalyst for existential death. In an analysis of *Angst*, I show that because inauthentic Being-a-problem is mired in fear and death notes, anxiety is effectively covered over. Since *Sein zum Tod* is thought to spark *Angst* by both Heidegger and Heidegger scholars. I examine how this catalyst is inoperative for Being-a-problem. If a "spark" is normalized through a persistent death note attached to a fear existentiell,

then *Gerede* about iBap effectively prevents Dasein from engaging with its fundamental mood of anxiety, *Angst*. Instead, Being-a-problem is kept in the mode of fear, which prevents it from being an authentic Being-a-problem. This keeps Dasein in a levelled down discourse about death and implicates both itself and other Dasein like it in the urging of death narratives upon certain individuals, obscuring *Angst*.

### **W.E.B. Du Bois' Double Consciousness and How One Can *Be* a Problem**

I have discussed how *das Man*, through *Gerede*, influences certain Dasein into regarding themselves as particular existentiell. When fear is attributed to an existentiell, it is then taken as a “fear existentiell.” If a person of color is part of a demographic that is largely connected to the talk of marginalization and oppression then that person is likely being linked to a kind of death note talk. If this person is curious about whether this is evident in life then the proof is with *das Man*, where the current news and social media, discuss an existentiell in the mode of fear. Upon doing this, one will find a distinction: those identities often talked about as near death or threat and those that are not often spoken of in this way. *Gerede* death discussions signal that some identities are discussed in terms of being problems in society.

The origin of my concept of Being-a-problem is from Du Bois' question from *The Souls of Black Folk* where he asks, “How does it feel to be a problem?”<sup>83</sup> Du Bois' question is about black Americans' self-perceptions and how they see themselves through the eyes of others, white Americans. For Du Bois, the white American seeks to ask this question almost out of sheer confusion and curiosity (in the usual non-Heideggerian sense of the word) about how black Americans handle existing in this country. Not having a clear answer, the white American simply sees black people as peculiar problems. Because of this conclusion of black Americans

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<sup>83</sup> Du Bois, 9.



as feeling like problems, Du Bois speaks of the white American self-perceptions as goodness, light, virtue, and lawfulness. From such a positive assessment about themselves, white Americans are puzzled by black Americans. In *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*, Du Bois writes about “whiteness” as the “dominant world” that “discourses about me” with a tone that says

My poor un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born—white!<sup>84</sup>

For white America, if everything is so good on the white side of life then how can a black person *be* in this country? From the whiteness perspective that Du Bois considers, how can a black person really *be* anything but a problem? Recognizing this reduction to being considered a problem, Du Bois writes that “being a problem is a strange experience,” which produces

a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.<sup>85</sup>

For Du Bois, you are conscious of yourself as a black individual and, as a black American, you are judged by white America. You understand yourself as a warring composite. To have this is to possess an ambivalence and you are tasked with constantly sorting it out because your mental well-being (even physical, sometimes) depends on it. Du Bois’ “double consciousness” and the notion of “ambivalence” that pervades it, has even influenced Robert Ezra Park’s concept of the “marginal man,” where such a person “is not accepted because of racial prejudice and because he

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<sup>84</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Dover, 1999), 18.

<sup>85</sup> Du Bois, 11.

shares the cultures of two distinct peoples.”<sup>86</sup> However, in Du Bois’ double consciousness, the concept is “explicitly formulated to capture a situation created by racial oppression that led to the oppression of black Americans.”<sup>87</sup> The “situation” is one that not only resembles the problem of “marginality,” but is also an issue where a person becomes a site of ambivalence.

The internal war Du Bois describes through his concept of double consciousness is about self-interpretation and the interpretation of others, a phenomenon like inauthentic Being-a-problem. With iBap, Dasein has a fear existentiell with a death note. The fear existentiell is rooted in a basic notion of identity that I discussed in chapter 2 as an existentiell, which comes from thrown-projection. The link between one’s existentiell and thrown-projection leads to Dasein’s racial identity as a possibility that one can own up in take hold of or neglect. However, since Dasein tends toward inauthenticity due to its fallenness, this racial identity is taken up by *das Man* before Dasein gets a chance to “win” it and lay claim to it. *Das Man* has already weighed in on it and taken hold of it as an identity with fear of *verenden* and *ableben*. Consequently, Dasein as iBap is limited by *das Man*’s take on this existentiell by promoting how it is an identity wherein threats of death loom. The addition of a death note to a fear existentiell incorporates ambiguity and curiosity because then Dasein becomes confident of this fear element and uses the gossip of *das Man* to get what it thinks is a genuine understanding of itself and the world. Thus, with inauthentic Being-a-problem, there is an internal war in Dasein’s fear existentiell because the *Gerede* about death is inauthentic, whereas Dasein’s real death as *Sein zum Tod* remains its possible, albeit concealed, authentic end.

For Heidegger, Dasein’s inauthentic end is shared by all and relational while the authentic end is singularized in Dasein as its ownmost, not to be shared. Inauthentic Being-a-

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<sup>86</sup> Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 145.

<sup>87</sup> Morris, *The Scholar Denied*, 145.

problem has the potential to move from this conception of inauthentic end to authentic death. It can resolve this internal war by acquiring a genuine understanding of how fear operates as a fear existentiell. When this self-interpretation is understood, Dasein can siphon the fear from its inauthentic Being-a-problem, no longer be a fear existentiell with a death note about inauthentically ending, and finally claim its authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*).

### **Encouraging Concealment**

Out of this analysis of fear existentiells and death notes is the problem that Dasein encounters itself as both a social issue that is idly discussed and an existential issue for itself that *das Man* is structurally incapable of understanding. This is important because Dasein must decide whether the expected *ableben* ascribed to it is real or whether it is *Gerede*. To this end, Dasein must wrestle with overcoming the They talk about death because this talk targets its racial identity.

In inauthentic Being-a-problem, *das Man* encourages a kind of fleeing in its death talk. Instead of running from the talk, the They leans toward the extreme of more death talk about a fear existentiell. For instance, recently in popular culture, which I take to be a social media version of *das Man*, the actress Anne Hathaway said the following in an Instagram post:

White people- including me, including you- must take into the marrow of our privileged bones the truth that ALL black people fear for their lives DAILY in America and have done so for GENERATIONS. White people DO NOT have equivalence for this fear of violence.<sup>88</sup>

The statement demonstrates that rather than a nuisance, such death talk is welcomed.<sup>89</sup>

However, her all-encompassing statement about black people fearing for their lives talks about

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<sup>88</sup> Anne Hathaway Instagram post on the death of Nia Wilson, July 25th, 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Her statement is an example of how a Dasein can fear for, on behalf, of another Dasein and “leap in” for Dasein, a point I discussed in the previous chapter.

death as something for blacks to expect as an imminent event of which black individuals constantly live in fear about. Rather than Heidegger's assessment of Dasein fleeing from *ableben* talk, here we see how the They delves into it as a method of highlighting an emergency plight about racial identities. Such a framing of one's passing away as an event to fear, expect, and await, means that Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem is being existentially concealed.

### **How the Fear in Inauthentic Being-a-problem Conceals *Angst***

As a fear existentiell with a death note, inauthentic Being-a-problem is an identity that lends itself to brooding over one's end. Fear is the root of Dasein's dwelling on death. The union of fear existentiells with death notes in inauthentic Being-a-problem shows that fear is integrated into such an identity. Since fear plays a key role and since this fear is about death, inauthentic Being-a-problem turns out to be an identity that is structured to conceal Dasein's *Angst* in favor of expressing its "kindred," albeit fallen, mood of fear (230/185). Understanding Heidegger's distinction and relationship between fear and anxiety reveals how troublesome iBap can be for Dasein as its *Gerede* about death compels it to expect its end.

*Angst* is Dasein's basic state-of-mind, which allows for the world to reveal itself to Dasein.<sup>90</sup> Because of *Angst*, "ontical 'information'" and Dasein's "existentiell point of view" are disclosed as aspects that Dasein flees towards for comfort and reliability because such information and points of view have always been ready-to-hand for Dasein.<sup>91</sup> An individual's security also lies in the fact that the ready-to-handness of the world is definite, providing a sense

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<sup>90</sup> Heidegger writes "that the *world as world* is disclosed first and foremost by anxiety, as a mode of state-of-mind" (232/187).

<sup>91</sup> Heidegger writes, "One of Dasein's possibilities of Being is to give us ontical 'information' about Dasein itself as an entity. Such information is possible only in that disclosedness which belongs to Dasein and which is grounded in state-of-mind and understanding" (228/184); about an "existentiell point of view," he says, "From an existentiell point of view, the authenticity of Being-one's-Self has of course been closed off and thrust aside in falling; but to be thus closed off is merely the *privation* of a disclosedness which manifests itself phenomenally in the fact that Dasein's fleeing is a fleeing *in the face* of itself" (229/184).

of “being-at-home” (*zuhause-sein*) for Dasein. “Being-at-home,” Dasein flees itself as *Angst* reveals Dasein’s groundlessness, whereas “Being-at-home” lets Dasein settle such a dreadful basis by covering it up with inauthentic points of view about how to exist in the world. In contrast to the comfort of inauthentic points of view, *Angst* unsettles Dasein as it feels a sense of uncanniness (*unheimlich*) or not-being-at-home (*Un-zuhause*) about a world that has been shown as indefinite, as groundlessness and nothingness. In such disclosure, one finds *nothing* at all.<sup>92</sup> Heidegger writes that, “In anxiety one feels ‘uncanny’” (233/188). In *Angst*, all that ready-to-handness that Dasein is accustomed to and supported by simply “sinks away.”<sup>93</sup> For iBap, this sinking away would mean that the information and perspective about what it is (fear existentiell with a death note) would sink away in *Angst*.

Fear is the physical manifestation of *Angst* and *das Man* instructs inauthentic Being-a-problem to brood over death. “Fear is anxiety, fallen into the ‘world’, inauthentic, and, as such, hidden from itself” (234/189). *Angst* reveals itself in the “world” as physiological. “Only because Dasein is anxious in the very depths of its Being, does it become possible for anxiety to be elicited physiologically” (234/190). With *Angst*’s being done away with and addressed as fear, Dasein dwells on the threat of death and becomes confident about this death through ambiguity and curiosity. Settled in this fear, Dasein is at “home” with its identity as a fear existentiell. Heidegger writes

And only because anxiety is always latent in Being-in-the-world, can such Being-in-the-world, as Being which is alongside the ‘world’ and which is concerned in its state-of-mind, ever be afraid (234/189).

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<sup>92</sup> “What oppresses us is not this or that, nor is it the summation of everything present-at-hand; it is rather the *possibility* of the ready-to-hand in general; that is to say, it is the world itself. When anxiety has subsided, then in our everyday way of talking we are accustomed to say that ‘it was really nothing’” (231/187).

<sup>93</sup> “In anxiety what is environmentally ready-to-hand sinks away, and so, in general, do entities within-the-world” (232/187).

If inauthentic Being-a-problem dwells on *ableben* or *verenden* then it mulls over an inauthentic expression of anxiety, and in this fear it still continues to be absorbed in the world.<sup>94</sup> The constant *Gerede* in society about the threat of one's end keeps fearful Dasein encumbered in its flight from *Angst*.<sup>95</sup> Dasein's existentiell may be threatened, but it prefers the security of fear's definiteness to the indefiniteness anxiety brings. *Angst* abruptly occurs, relentlessly pursues Dasein, and does not require an emphatic way to see a bare nothing or darkness.<sup>96,97</sup> Clearly defined fear and the *Gerede* of threat are unnecessary to elicit anxiety, counterproductive to the reflection that *Angst* brings about. If Dasein makes everything dark and fearful to better "grasp" at the nothing of *Angst* then one's absorption into the world becomes more immersive and self-concealing.<sup>98,99</sup>

### **Brooding and Empirical Public Certainty for Being-a-problem**

If "anxiety individualizes" one because it grips Dasein in uncanniness, then fear communalizes as it brings one back into the normalcy of *das Man* (235/191). When Dasein as iBap dwells on *ableben* or *verenden* it does so with a community of similar existentiells. Fretting over death occurs because the talk of fear and death is principally about Dasein's group membership, not how it exists as an existential and ontological whole. However, this shared brooding about one's life or body ending does not automatically cause *Sein zum Tod* or *Angst*.

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<sup>94</sup> "On the other hand, as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the 'world.' Everyday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized *as* Being-in-the-world" (233/189).

<sup>95</sup> "This existentiell-ontical turning-away, by reason of its character as a disclosure, makes it phenomenally possible to grasp existential-ontologically that in the face of which Dasein flees, and to grasp it as such" (229/185).

<sup>96</sup> "Anxiety can arise in the most innocuous Situations. Nor does it have any need for darkness, in which it is commonly easier for one to feel uncanny" (234/189).

<sup>97</sup> "This uncanniness pursues Dasein constantly, and is a threat to its everyday lostness in the 'they,' though not explicitly" (234/189).

<sup>98</sup> "In the dark there is emphatically 'nothing' to see, though the very world itself is *still* 'there,' and 'there' *more obtrusively*" (234/189).

<sup>99</sup> Heidegger writes in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2014) that "Original anxiety can awaken in existence at any moment. It needs no unusual event to rouse it. Its sway is as thoroughgoing as its possible occasionings are trivial. It is always ready, though it only seldom springs, and we are snatched away and left hanging" (160).

Instead, Dasein weakens death by dwelling on it.<sup>100</sup> The *Gerede* about death as *ableben* or *verenden* never means that Dasein is near *Sein zum Tod*. Rather, this distinction between the shared *Gerede* about kinds of death and actual *Sein zum Tod* highlights a critical issue for inauthentic Being-a-problem, which is dealing with whether the idle talk is true of *its* existence as an individual. The concern is that since Dasein immerses itself in the *Gerede* of *das Man*, *Sein zum Tod* will be concealed, and that will be especially detrimental to Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem because it is steeped in the mode of fear.

Fear is integrated into an existentiell and it conceals anxiety. This hiddenness proffers a sense of communal dwelling, mulling, and brooding, making certainty about *ableben* or *verenden* a community effort. Certainty is having a belief that one believes to be true and having the support of the They in such a claim, but Being-certain does not depend on the support of *das Man*. Inauthentic Being-a-problem is supported by the communal and empirical certainty of death. As we come to recognize how the They talk about Dasein, we see an ambiguous but accepted public grammar about death, whether implicitly or explicitly expressed, and we are taught this grammar all our lives. We feel “certain” of issues like death. Empirical certainty about group death makes it easy to speak monolithically about racial groups. For instance, in the newsletter *The Harvard Crimson*, Ruben E. Reyes, Jr. writes in an article entitled “Black and Brown Bodies” that as black and brown skinned people

We have different histories, and our black and brown bodies move through the world differently, but there is much more that connects us than divides us. Solidarity feels natural because it is our black and brown bodies, saturated with the dark melanin of our

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<sup>100</sup> Denis McManus, in “Being-Towards-Death and Owing One’s Judgment,” suggests “that the reason that the inauthentic’s ‘brooding’ on the ‘when’ of death ‘weakens’ it is that true readiness for death—like that for *parousia*—is not knowing *when* it will happen but readiness for it to happen at *any* time. That is to treat death as a constant possibility rather than focusing on its ‘when,’ its character as an event that will come to pass at some particular moment” (260). McManus says that conceiving of Being-towards-death in the sense of being truly ready for it allows death to have its sting.

ancestors, that are buried in the soil as nutrients for the plants and riches of this country.<sup>101</sup>

Reyes uses words like bodies in a *verenden* sense, rejecting any sense of personhood about his subject matter. If the reader is black or brown, then this person may even take on the fear expressed by the author, a fear that is a manifestation of a produced mood from *das Man*. And while this expression is undoubtedly meant to shine a light on the plight of a whole group of people (black and brown people in the United States), it reifies certainty about one's being a deathly problem.

Whether or not death is publicly verified as certain becomes the consequence of what matters to the They and not Dasein. Heidegger is concerned with Dasein's existential assessment of itself, not for Dasein to seek confirmation about itself from *das Man*. Heidegger's issue is not that everyone *ought* to experience existential death but that everyone has an existential and ontological structure, and that its ownmost, non-relational, and unshareable possibility toward death is the case for everyone to individually *be*. The fact that we usually do not deal with this feature of ourselves is a testament to Dasein's continual fallenness. The continual fallenness of Dasein, as it tries to relate its death to itself, is a problem for those Dasein that are iBap and who also receive and perpetuate the talk of *verenden* and *ableben* through death notes.

### **Normalizing Death Notes and Obstructing Possible *Angst* Disruptions**

*Sein zum Tod* allows *Angst* to come through a significant death related event and this implies a distinction between anxiety and Being-toward-death. *Angst* is Dasein's basic and latent mood. Existential death is different from *Angst* in that some extraordinary event occurs for

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<sup>101</sup> Ruben E. Reyes, Jr, "Black and Brown Bodies," *Harvard Crimson*, July 15, 2016.



Dasein, which becomes the vehicle for anxiety to take over. *Sein zum Tod* can be a catalyst for *Angst*, whereas *Angst* just happens. *Angst* does not need a spark. The role of such a catalyst for death is crucial for Dasein, but especially for inauthentic Being-a-problem when it comes to the issue of normalized *Gerede* about death. If death is normalized for inauthentic Being-a-problem then the talk of *verenden* or *ableben* may nullify a catalyst for *Sein zum Tod*. *Gerede* already complicates Dasein's possible authentic connection to death. Since inauthentic Being-a-problem is mired in idle talk about death, such a Dasein will have difficulty recognizing a catalyst for *Sein zum Tod*.

Scholarship on Dasein's death suggests that Dasein has a normalcy to its existence (average Dasein) that is breached by *Angst* or the onset of *Sein zum Tod*. Iain Thomson writes that

Our sense of uncanniness or not-being-at-home in the world derives from and testifies to this anxiety-provoking lack of fit between Dasein and its world. This means that, insofar as one lives in an unquestioned sense that one is simply doing what one should be doing with one's life, confronting one's *Angst* will expose one's fundamental lack of fit with the world and thereby catalyze the temporary collapse of the life projects one has been pursuing with a sense of naïve good conscience.<sup>102</sup>

The part about Dasein living "in an unquestioned sense" is interesting as it supports the notion that Dasein has a normal way, a default mode, of engaging its world. One is normally not questioning (from) *uncanniness*. One is normally fallen into the world. Furthermore, Dasein's default "way to be" seems to be in the pursuit of plans with what Thomson calls a "naïve good conscience."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Iain Thomson, "Death and Demise in *Being and Time*," *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 271.

<sup>103</sup> Thomson, "Death and Demise in *Being and Time*," 271.

Individuals are normally not troubled in this existential sense of crisis that Heidegger discusses, and Thomson alludes to this normalcy. However, in general people are usually not discussed as near death in an existentiell sense either, so even the presence of lay discussions about *verenden* and *ableben* are atypical from what we see in the usual assessments of Dasein. However, certain people *are* discussed as near death. William Blattner characterizes *Angst* and *Sein zum Tod* as more like “depressive episodes” that breach the regularity of one’s existence.<sup>104</sup> Blattner writes, “By ‘death,’ Heidegger means the condition of existential anxiety (or depression), and of this condition we cannot be epistemically certain.”<sup>105</sup> Inauthentic Being-a-problem would be atypical and abnormal in comparison to the normalcy that pervades a typical existentiell Dasein existence, where an individual does not question itself regarding how soon he will die.

The distinction regarding the normalcy of Dasein and the atypical way of inauthentic Being-a-problem emphasizes how a “lack of fit” and “naive good conscience” are both things that are *actually* normal for inauthentic Being-a-problem. Such talk allows this Dasein to wrestle with a lack of fitness in society and to cultivate a skeptical approach to society. This lack of fit goes back to the sense of existentiell alienation discussed in my earlier chapter with respect to Wright’s *Native Son*. While such a stance may grant one a certain kind of social awareness about threats to one’s fear existentiell in society, the existential issue remains, where the phenomenon that will “catalyze the temporary collapse of the life projects” becomes increasingly out of reach when *verenden* and *ableben* are normalized.<sup>106</sup> With Dasein as Being-a-problem,

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<sup>104</sup> Blattner writes about the individuation of death that “First, in a major depressive episode, others are of no use to one, because one ceases to care about them. Direct appeals and offers of help from one’s intimates have no power. Second, when one is existentially dead, it is *one’s own* life that makes no sense, not someone else’s,” in *Heidegger’s Being and Time: A Reader’s Guide* (2006), 151.

<sup>105</sup> Blattner, *Heidegger’s Being and Time: A Reader’s Guide*, 149.

<sup>106</sup> Thomson, 271.

such catalysts may not be able to breach through to a Dasein who is consistently discussed in the context of fear and death; consequently, such a Dasein may *not* have a collapse of life projects.

The issue of the catalyst being weakened by *Gerede* about death compounds when interpreting *Angst* as fear because when ambiguity and curiosity combine with fear, Dasein thinks it “knows it all” in terms of its self-understanding and why it is afraid of perceived threats.

Dasein, with fear and idle talk, knows what it needs to know about itself in relation to threats.

For instance, Blattner writes that

No self-understanding is immune to being undercut by anxiety; anything we take for granted about ourselves can be dissolved by the corrosive effects of anxiety. Dasein’s existential finitude (limitedness) is its constant, because essential, vulnerability to anxiety/death.<sup>107</sup>

*Angst* abruptly arrives, and it might be that it can puncture through *any* kind of self-understanding, even that of iBap. However, the kind of self-understanding Blattner has in mind might be what Thomson refers to as “naive good conscience,” unreflective and unquestioning. Indeed, anxiety may be corrosive to *that* understanding, but I question *Angst*’s efficacy and *Sein zum Tod* being a spark for anxiety as applied to inauthentic Being-a-problem. This Being-a-problem is essentially set-up to see itself through the filter of a constant fear that muddies a clear distinction between the death of an existentiell Dasein and the death of existential Dasein.

### **Existentiell Conscience Versus Existential Conscience**

Working with the distinction between existentiell and existential, Dasein has a they-self conscience and its own conscience, where the former is determined by *das Man*, while the latter is by itself in *uncanniness*. Thus, there is a They conscience (existentiell conscience) and an uncanny conscience (existential conscience). This existential conscience tries to pull you out of

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<sup>107</sup> Blattner, 149.

yourself “as a crowd-absorbed being.”<sup>108</sup> The manifestation of this conscience is the “call,” (322/277). One’s conscience is a They-less and homeless Dasein. Dasein, in its uncanniness, silently announces itself as a call. Dasein calls itself and the effect of this call is that Dasein can authentically become itself, as opposed to continue to live inauthentically. This call bypasses *das Man*, with the They not understanding it. Instead, *das Man* calls Dasein to attend to non-existential matters that are related to a traditional kind of existentiell conscience, like how a conscience is mainly about morality and psychological assessments of what Dasein should do, should have done, should feel guilty about, should blame, etc. Thus, when Dasein self-interprets as an existentiell conscience, it is “at home” but it tends to misconstrue things like guilt, accountability, and responsibility. Combine this existentiell conscience with fear and the problem forms into misconstruing the source of a threat, and who may be accountable for the existence of its feeling fearful. Such a misunderstanding of who is responsible for the fear has a problematic effect on how Dasein even registers what counts as a threat, as Dasein may believe threats and fears to be constant, and from various sources.

The problem with misconstruing this threat is how it affects anticipation, attestation, and what Heidegger calls “abrupt arousal.” In anticipation, Dasein must be ready for *Sein zum Tod*. Anticipation is leaving oneself open; however, the issue with the threat from fear, is that while it may be empirically true that fear existentiells are affected, the empirical reality for the group that is feared for, and feared psychologically, compels Dasein to be in a fear mode to keep itself alive. The talk effectively closes Dasein off from the existential issue of itself. Closing off also means suppressing attestation because now that Dasein is giving into the notion of death as looming over it in an empirical sense, Dasein cannot anticipate and hear the call of itself in its

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 167.

own uncanniness. It cannot attest via this fear. The death note and idle talk normalize “abrupt arousals.” Consequently, if something jostles Dasein as iBap, who may not have the benefit of a “naïve good conscience,” it requires something more disruptive to bring into *Angst*. However, if the idle way of talking about death targets certain existentiell Dasein, then it is difficult to see how death-related *Gerede* will provide an adequate disruption to arouse Dasein into *Angst*.

### **Attestation and the Inadequacy of Abrupt Arousal for Dasein’s Inauthentic**

#### **Being-a-problem**

Attestation requires canniness’ disruption, but this is difficult when Dasein is inauthentic Being-a-problem. Attestation is Dasein hearing the call of its conscience. Dasein’s uncanniness originates from Dasein’s constant and latent mood of anxiety. We can understand the term uncanniness by the juxtaposition of this mood with the general calming mood that They prescribes, the sense of being at home (canniness). Attestation opens the possibility of hearing the call to itself because Dasein is its own possibility. *Das Man* is constituted in such a way as to muddle Dasein’s hearing itself; therefore, Dasein struggles to hear itself. Heidegger writes, “The presenting of these possibilities, however, is made possible existentially through the fact that Dasein, as a Being-with understands, can listen to Others. Losing itself in the publicness of the They, it fails to hear its own Self in listening to the they-self” (315/270-271). Dasein’s existential structure is for hearing, but the They, also an *existentiale*, must hear the call to be “modified in an existentiell manner so that it becomes authentic Being-one’s-Self” (313/268). Thus, if Dasein is an inauthentic Being-a-problem, then it must be wary of the normalizing of the very thing required to bring out attestation: Disruption. Dasein as inauthentic Bap must be concerned about this because the normalizing comes from its they-self.

When the disruption is significant enough, Dasein's conscience is in preparation mode, ready to hear a call. And this is where we start seeing the blueprint for what one's conscience is to Dasein and how ordinary interpretations of conscience resemble Heidegger's more foundational explanation of conscience. Heidegger writes, "When one is confronted with such a phenomenon as conscience, one is struck by the ontologico-anthropological inadequacy of a free-floating framework of psychical faculties or personal actions all duly classified" (316/271). As for inauthentic Being-a-problem, if the upheaval is significant enough, then like all other Dasein, one's conscience can be ready to hear, to attest. Yet, with the upheaval having to be more than just an abrupt arousal to break from disruptive normalcy, we must be careful not to assess the quality of the upheaval from the vantage point of psychical faculties that are reacting to events, words, and ontic moods, all of which are traditionally referred to as one's "conscience." Put another way, the requirement of an upheaval for inauthentic Being-a-problem puts the psychical evaluation of one's societal problems into perspective: The issue of inauthentic Being-a-problem may not be sufficiently captured by hearing unpleasing statements or even thinking one's self to be near *verenden* or *ableben*. Therefore, inauthentic Being-a-problem is not just about the They's talk that floats around, but also the way one's psychological disposition, the "existentiell conscience," is affected by *Gerede*. If, from the outset, the conscience is solely understood as a set of floating psychical faculties, then we risk evaluating the They's talk on present-at-hand terms from a present-at-hand conscience, which bolsters the idea that the determinations of death and racism are suitably captured by one's *feelings* of being close to death, which solidifies Dasein as iBap.

## Conclusion

We seem to be dealing with a current discourse about death that incentivizes *das Man* into thinking that recognizing people as inauthentic Being-a-problem via perceived death notes grants awareness and understanding. It is, perhaps, a mark of empathy and social understanding to grant these narratives as true, even if the existential issue goes unexamined. Thus, if I believe your certainty and I take the certainty of your death as truth then I affirm your “truth.” However, what if I am affirming your claims of death because they come from your existentiell as a feared member of society? Doing this may help me recognize your position in society, but not necessarily your existence. It appears that this might be the case for many Dasein classified as Being-a-problem, which means that the *Gerede* may not substantively be about *your death*, but about the death of the group you are thought to be a member of. Dire consequences result from such assumptions, as the push into inauthentic Being-a-problem may simply cause Dasein to immerse itself more in death notes. One may become an unofficial spokesperson of the group, a nobody-in-particular, only a “somebody” in the sense of being a member of the racial group that is always dying.

Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem endures the concealment of the call to conscience because of the specific death narrative attached to certain Dasein. I have focused on race because I am familiar with existing as a raced individual where I must deal with *Gerede* about race on a personal and public level. Coming from a community that shares in the same racial existentiell characteristics of color, one tends to be at least minimally aware about death notes regarding one’s racial identity. Perhaps not the specific term, “death notes,” but one knows that the social conversation often relates to issues of fear, threat, and death.

I have used the U.S. as an example in various chapters by appealing to Du Bois, Malcolm X, and Mariana Ortega, but the idea of iBap and of fear existentiells goes beyond this.

Inauthentic Being-a-problem can apply to other fear existentiells with death narratives. No matter the kind of inauthentic Being-a-problem, the issue remains that one's self-interpretation conceals authenticity. The "muffling" of Dasein's existential issue is real, but when this occurs for inauthentic Being-a-problem, "hearing" the call and dealing with one's authentic connection to this existentiell becomes a great issue of self-identification. In the next chapter, I develop a solution for Dasein to modify itself from inauthentic to authentic Being-a-problem.



## Chapter 6

### “Second Sight” and the *Augenblick*: Seeing Authentic Being-a-problem’s Situation

“He turned his attention to it.

‘Yes, here it is. Well, what of it? Let the pain be.’

‘And death ... where is it?’

He sought his former accustomed fear of death and did not find it. ‘Where is it? What death?’  
There was no fear because there was no death.”<sup>109</sup>

- Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

### Introduction

Inauthentic Being-a-problem fears *verenden* and *ableben*. As this existentiell, Dasein endures a struggle between the *Gerede* about its death and the averageness of its existence. Dasein who is essentially “marked for death” can only attest via a genuine understanding of its world, which comes from answering its own call to conscience. Dasein needs to “see” this Situation, but how? In the last two chapters I discussed how *Gerede* covers up Dasein’s ownmost Being as a structural whole. The talk about Dasein’s death for iBap normalizes *verenden* and *ableben* to the point of concealing Dasein’s *Angst*, quelling the “call to conscience.” As such, iBap cannot be resolute and cannot be authentic. How will authenticity emerge from this dire situation for inauthentic Being-a-problem if Heidegger writes that “the call is precisely something that *we ourselves* have neither planned, nor prepared for, nor voluntarily performed, nor have we ever done so. ‘It’ calls, against our expectations and even against our will” (320/275). Furthermore, *Angst* cannot be called forth by inauthentic Dasein. I cannot

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<sup>109</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories*, (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1960), 155.

brood over death as inauthentic Being-a-problem and summon *Angst* because it is not a psychical event that I can summon.

I argue in this chapter that the best inauthentic Being-a-problem can do is to prepare to hear the call by taking the *Gerede* about its death as a phenomenal fact about its racial identity.<sup>110</sup> This does not mean that iBap appropriates the content of the talk as its own. I posit that Dasein, to be authentic, accepts the talk as talk, and nothing more.<sup>111</sup> This notion of acceptance is rooted in the juxtaposition of the *Gerede* about one's existence and the everydayness of one's ontical affairs. Using this method helps Dasein prepare to hear the call to conscience. Once heard, Dasein begins to quiet down the "loudest idle talk" and leaves open the possibility of being resolute toward the "moment of vision" (*Augenblick*), wherein Dasein authentically "wins itself" by seeing its Situation. My existentiell model for this method is Du Bois' "Second Sight," in which Du Bois says that black Americans can see the different interpretative angles from a white American perspective and from their own perspective. My goal for this is a positive analysis of authentic Being-a-problem where Dasein lets fear go, meaning that when Dasein chooses itself as an existentiell problem, it can be authentic existentiell that no longer fears *verenden* and *ableben*. Rather, Dasein chooses itself as a fearless authentic Being-a-problem who recognizes *Gerede* as an obstacle to its genuine self-interpretation.

### **Who's "Calling" Me?**

Dasein calls itself. "This call is an appeal to the they-self" (319/274). However, Dasein still has the capacity to win itself and be authentic (68/43). Even with inauthentic iBap, despite

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<sup>110</sup> Lee Braver writes, "We cannot bring on the call; we can only prepare and wait for it, which he (Heidegger) calls wanting to have a conscience" (90), *Heidegger*.

<sup>111</sup> This notion of acceptance does not compromise what the death talk is designed to represent (that racism, death, police brutality, and suffering exist). Instead, it simply becomes a matter of fact that such talk exists and will continue to be the case.

all the chatter about death and fear, this Dasein can possibly hear the call to choose its existentiell existence. The problem is with how the call can actualize itself. Irene McMullin writes in *Time and the Shared World* (2013) about the problem with the “call to conscience:”

The difficulty, as Heidegger recognizes, is how this neglected capacity for responsibility can become a possibility for actualization if Dasein has given in to the tendency to fall away from itself: how to choose choice when the capacity for choosing has been forgotten?<sup>112</sup>

Dasein has neglected its own capacity to take responsibility for existing. Dasein tends toward falling and the more absorbed it is in the world, the more it maintains itself in fallenness. Thus, the actualization of the “call” is a crucial issue. The problem seems more grim for iBap as *Gerede* is more explicitly about fear and death than with other Dasein who are non-iBap. Yet, the fact that certain Dasein are more heavily interpreted than others when it comes to death does not change *Angst*'s capacity to suddenly grip iBap, but the over-interpretation of one's iBap can muffle the hearing of the call. What *can* change with inauthentic Being-a-problem is its ability to prepare to hear the call, to be ready for that call in an existentiell way, which Heidegger calls “*wanting to have a conscience*” (334/288). Thus, iBap cannot summon authenticity by just psychologically willing it, but it can get ready to hear the call that comes from uncanniness by being silent rather than participating in death note talk.

Dasein's readying itself is necessary because of a meddling They who help constitute Dasein's they-self; therefore, when the They hear a message communicated to Dasein, the They has trouble registering it because the call is coming from uncanniness, a state-of-mind that the They only registers as an alien voice. Dasein's they-self, however, *can* hear this foreign voice and understand it as somewhat familiar. Heidegger writes, “The call reaches Dasein in this

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<sup>112</sup> Irene McMullin, *Time and the Shared World: Heidegger on Social Relations*, (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 211.

understanding of itself which it always has, and which is concerned in an everyday, average manner. The call reaches the they-self of concerned Being with Others” (317/272). The They does not know what to do with such a foreign message, so the They talks over the call and tries to reach Dasein as a they-self that is always absorbed in its fallenness.

*Das Man* has limitations in knowing Dasein, but almost especially so for Dasein as iBap. When the They call to iBap, the entity called to is what the They have already taken Dasein to be, namely its existentiell. It is how They take you; hence, the call is more to Dasein as an ethnographic and anthropological present-at-hand subject because these are the usual ways that the They regard Dasein as a they-self. Consequently, when the They appeals to Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem, the pah conception is reinforced. The process is a feedback between Dasein as a they-self and *das Man*, the They. Dasein is not a pah entity, but is taken as such through these perspectives. Rather than hearing a call, the They hears a plea from the they-self of inauthentic Being-a-problem. *Das Man* registers iBap as a problem it might have to solve, and so the plea *das Man* “hears” from the they-self is “Solve me.” *Das Man* turns the individuality of Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem into a moral cause that is far from interrogating this iBap’s latent existential Being (317/273).

If I am cast as a problem then, using the common sense idea of guilt, I look for the culprit. I might blame myself, historical circumstances, and maybe even current powerful systemic conditions. For every problem, the They will have an answer, per Heidegger’s discussion of idle talk. The They will attempt to solve me on *my* behalf, determining itself as responsible to the extent it must do something with this traditional guilt and possible framework of relationships that it may find itself caught in with me as a problem. Therefore, other representatives of *das Man* will even attempt to “leap in” for iBap under the guidance that it has

some typical guilt connection to iBap. However, this move by *das Man* absolves iBap from determining a solution for *oneself*. Rather than other Dasein “leaping ahead” to allow me to exert ownership of my existence, the They will try to take my place and be part of the solution to my existence as a problem. Of course, Heidegger says that the “call” has no message or voice and that it is simply Dasein calling to itself for Dasein to be responsible for its own existence. However, since the They do not understand that plea, they will take Dasein as a certain ontico-existential identity and will speak to that version of Dasein since it is the only one it registers as a salient voice to respond to. *Das Man* will automatically heed the plea to “Solve me,” though this plea does not come from Dasein’s existential conscience.

### **Traditional Guilt Hides Being-Guilty**

*Das Man* takes up the “Solve me” issue for iBap, attempting to answer by tranquilizing Dasein into common narratives about “who is at fault.” Heidegger explains that the everyday understanding of guilt is a “sense of ‘owing,’ of ‘having something due on account.’ One is to give back to the Other something to which the latter has a claim” (327/281). One way that *das Man* deals with inauthentic Being-a-problem’s claim is that the They will not consider itself responsible for iBap’s existence. A second answer is that it *will* determine it is guilty for inauthentic Bap’s condition. In the first case, the They will not do anything at all, but in the second case *das Man* may do something to absolve itself of this guilt: *das Man* may “leap in” for the inauthentic Being-a-problem.

The *Gerede* about inauthentic Being-a-problem holds that, when race is discussed in society, the guilty party must constantly recognize the culpability of the social group to which they belong to. All of these narratives could be true, and we could come to learn how historical events lead to a present situation of racism, sexism, or just about any other unjust inequality

between people; however, the existential issue remaining for Dasein as inauthentic Bap is that the ontological guilt of taking responsibility for one's existence is concealed by traditional notions of guilt which are bolstered by historical narratives about fear existentiells. Dasein's existential conscience does not decree what is moral or about the norms of society: It does not say to itself that it should "feel" guilty because it has done someone wrong or that it must compensate another aggrieved individual. Rather, the conscience simply hears the call to take responsibility for its own Being.

The They will not look to Dasein's existentiality, but instead remain focused on the existentiell and ontic factors of Dasein to determine who and what is responsible for Bap's plight. The They may even fear for Dasein as Being-a-problem and perpetuate ambiguous notions of responsibility. To be sure, in a society that discusses and idealizes notions of justice, equality, and morality, the normal approach to understand who and what is responsible for someone experiencing injustice is necessary. It would be important to then keep in mind that *das Man* may say that one should fear *for* Dasein as iBap, as those who are considered iBap are discussed as victims of historical and systemic injustices. Yet, such ethical significance is part of the issue as to why Dasein's existentiality is hidden from itself amid all the talk.

### **Overstating the Problem of Being-a-problem and Dasein's Hyper-awareness of Its End**

For Heidegger, the ontological idea of guilt is at the basis of those ontic guilt narratives to which Dasein has adopted through fallenness. The ontological guilt Heidegger advances is that which sees that the basis of Dasein is thrownness and that one must still *own* one's existence as this null basis. Owning one's existence would be an affirmation of existence in the form of choice. Dasein's inauthentic Being-a-problem blocks this ownership because the narratives about its existence are caught up in traditional understandings of guilt and responsibility. The

They has constantly “inauthenticated” Dasein’s existence through chatter and Dasein has always acquiesced. Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem requires a reflective inventory to determine the extent to which *Gerede* has overstated the case for its Being-a-problem in the first place. In other words, for iBap the question would be whether the *Gerede* about one’s existence as a fear existentiell is genuine to Dasein.

Dasein’s inauthentic Being-a-problem has a connection to guilt that is a hyper-realized assessment of how we ordinarily understand traditional guilt, wherein the content of the idle talk is focused on two things: one’s death and who caused it. Death does not show up in Heidegger’s analysis as a common discourse in one’s everydayness, but what happens when such a death discourse *is* rampant? Kevin Aho talks about death in relation to terminally ill individuals who are jostled out of the normalcy of their lives due to the knowledge of their imminent death and the subsequent frailty of their bodies. Aho writes that, “Illness reminds us not only of the frailty and vulnerability of our own bodies, but of the structural vulnerability of our own self-understanding and ‘ability-to-be.’”<sup>113</sup> Aho says that some terminally ill patients are caught off guard with their newly discovered vulnerability. Such a person might determine the physiological cause and perhaps “accept” that he or she will die. However, Aho’s analysis still retains death as a disruption that sometimes sends an individual into anxiety. The character of disruption is key. When the knowledge, feeling, and idea of death loses the disruption, then *Angst* continues to be concealed. Dasein becomes hyper-aware of death, decreasing the potency of the disruption to act as such. Furthermore, the cause of death for inauthentic Being-a-problem is attributed to society and institutions, making such a Dasein hyper-aware of who and what may be responsible for its death.

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<sup>113</sup> Kevin Aho, “Heidegger, Ontological Death, and the Healing Professions,” *Medicine, Healthcare, and Philosophy*, March 2016, 19(1), 62.

In iBap's hyper-awareness of death, *das Man* overstates the case and the responsibility for one's existence is lost in favor of a traditional guilt narrative that supports the notion of a debt. For instance, the oppressor owes the oppressed. Heidegger argues that responsibility towards owning one's existence lies at the root of our ontic and existentiell translations of guilt as "owing" someone or paying a "debt." Dasein is existentially structured to have this Being-guilty as its authentic possibility. However, inauthentic Being-a-problem is discussed by the They in such a patent way that the relationship between iBap and whoever is thought to be responsible for iBap's condition takes over one's ownership of existence as one's *ownmost*.

With inauthentic Being-a-problem cast as the subject that requires attention, the They has a general entity to which it is in debt. Inauthentic Being-a-problem is an opportunity for *das Man* to exhibit everyday guilt and to then atone. Hence, the They will support a fear existentiell Dasein to fully embrace Being-a-problem, even if it is inauthentically appropriated. To be a bit more specific, as it is with U.S. society, the collective guilt of racism (a manifestation of traditional guilt) makes the They want to make-up for its debt and in so doing, the They will believe in any semblance of the notion of iBap and concede all that it entails without scrutinizing the existential consequences for the Dasein embodying it. By being involved in *das Man's* everyday guilt matrix, iBap Dasein further immerses itself in a situation that siphons its appropriative power of understanding that constitutes its Being. It is with the *Augenblick* that Dasein can see through this kind of guilt narrative, gain clarity about its Situation that is genuine to its existence, and understand how that collective guilt plays a role in covering up its ownmost Being.



## Du Bois' "Second Sight"

I use Du Bois' idea of "second sight" as a model for how iBap can break away from *Gerede* and fear and "see" its Situation in the "moment of vision." As I discussed in the last chapter, Du Bois discusses an emerging ability out of the black individual's "double consciousness:" this ability is called "second sight." Referring to African American folklore, Du Bois writes that

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.<sup>114</sup>

Second sight tends to suggest a prophetic vision, but with Du Bois' use of it, one sees the diminishment of their humanity by another, and the "seeing" of the black American as Being-a-problem. The "seventh son," according to folklore, could see the future and ghosts. Henry Louis Gates Jr. even points out that these abilities were allotted to "those children born with a caul, a membrane that sometimes covers the head at birth."<sup>115</sup> Du Bois seems to merge the meaning of both the caul and the abilities, wherein the caul serves as the veil the black person is born into, creating a layer that prevents "true self-consciousness" but motivates seeing oneself through the veil. Born into such a filter that obfuscates one's true self, the individual becomes aware of himself as a problem, an irreconcilable difference between the world's view of black people as such, and the black person's attempt to self-identify as a black identity in a white world. A dynamic process unfolds and turns into the ability called "second sight."

A significant feature of second sight is that it enables distinctions about identity. Nahum Dimitri Chandler writes in *The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* that Du Bois'

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<sup>114</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 10.

<sup>115</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 10.

privileged example, that by which he was led to question this racialized logic, recognized through a mode of reflection that we are certainly within rights to remark as “second-sight” (*first of all existential and given in the form of an autobiographical reflection*) was the problem of intermixture.<sup>116</sup>

Chandler expresses Du Bois’ issue that a racial logic of race hierarchies and categories is monolithic, yet such a logic did not square with Du Bois’ understanding of the varieties of issues within racial categories. Dealing with “intermixture” meant that Du Bois’ black person dealt with his European ancestry, which then lent itself to the possibility of European features. Du Bois writes that, “All this theory, however, was disturbed by certain facts in America, and by my European experience. Despite everything, race lines were not fixed and fast.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, one crucial feature of second sight is that monolithic categories about racial identities were not nuanced and had to be pitted against one’s experience to recognize possible disconnects between the theoretical *Gerede* (“all this theory” and “race lines”) against one’s daily existence (that “theory” was “disturbed by certain facts in America, and by my European experience”).

The *Augenblick* in authentic Being-a-problem is like Du Bois’ “second sight.” Whereas Du Bois looks at the issue of identity from a racialized perspective, the *Augenblick* in authentic Bap sees the difference between the *Gerede* about any kind of fear existentiell identity and one’s daily ontical affairs. For this reason, this main feature of the *Augenblick* is useful for figuring out the value of pitting monolithic ideas about identity against one’s daily existence. From the *Augenblick*, Dasein resolutely faces its existentiell in terms of one’s autobiographical inventory and the kinds of *Gerede* that are relevant to Dasein’s existence. While one may take the inauthentic and authentic to be monolithic categories in themselves, they are necessary and they help ground distinctions about Being-a-problem: 1) that as iBap, Dasein is often told by others

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<sup>116</sup> Nahum Dimitri Chandler, *The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* (New York: Fordman University Press, 2014), 94.

<sup>117</sup> Chandler, *The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought*, 94.

about what its existentiell means in society; 2) that Dasein is both its inauthenticity and its possibility for authenticity, and as such, resoluteness toward the “moment of vision” lets Dasein’s authentic mode of itself emerge, which means that Dasein does not have to be “fixed” into present-at-hand categories.

The second point carries on an aspect of the original folkloric notions about second sight: knowing one’s future. However, in the sense of authentic Bap, this is not about predictions, but more about understanding oneself as futural and possessing all the possibilities of its being that it could either take hold of or neglect throughout its existence. With this futural aspect of the *Augenblick*, one can gauge how its chosen existentiell emanates from Dasein’s being a thrown-projection wherein Dasein finds itself in the world with certain ontic characteristics and existentiell histories, determines its way of being, and projects on authentic possibility of itself. This complex relationship, fostered by resoluteness toward the *Augenblick*, allows Dasein as iBap to recognize the interplay of its facticity and appropriative determinations of its identity. The *Augenblick*, as a kind of second sight, sees one’s present existence for what it is, chooses it, and can fearlessly distinguish between *Gerede* and the discourse that is genuine to its existence. However, the *Augenblick* must start somewhere. Du Bois’ second sight emanates from a bivalence of interpretations and from it, one begins to see through the veil of interpretations about being one’s racial identity and being American. With the *Augenblick* one sees a Situation and breaks down the interpretative disconnects, seeing the talk as talk. However, as discussed earlier, one cannot will *Angst*, the “call of conscience,” and summon the *Augenblick*. Dasein as iBap can only prepare by keeping-silent.

## Preparing for Authenticity While Being Inauthentic

Du Bois' "second sight" is an existentiell model to understand how Dasein can prepare for authenticity. "Second sight" is the ability that Du Bois observes in black Americans in which life becomes a constant matter of racialized interpretations to contend with. Dasein as iBap wrestles with multiple fallen interpretations that block it from its ownmost authentic Being. Authenticity produces its own kind of sight in which it lets Dasein see through these interpretations. Authenticity comes about through Dasein's "resoluteness," which is its "*reticent self-projection upon one's ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety*" (343/296-97). Resoluteness lets Dasein be responsible for its existence and makes one anticipate its whole potentiality for Being by letting Dasein see the various ready-to-hand involvements and solicitous Being-with others in its Situation (344/298). The wholeness of Dasein implies that Dasein, as care, is its end. Part of Dasein's structural whole is its Being-toward-death. Dasein sees this as the "Situation" and anticipates the completion of its wholeness right to the end of itself. Dasein's authenticity is *its* choosing itself as an ownmost whole potentiality-for-Being, even choosing the possibility of its impossibility (354/306). When Dasein sees the Situation, it understands that it cannot go beyond an existentiell possibility for itself, so it must resolve itself to choose a way to be in the world. Resolved, Dasein lets itself be vulnerable to existence by "letting itself be encountered undisguisedly by that which it seizes upon in taking action" (374/326). In this way, Dasein not only sees the Situation, but resigns itself to it by making itself free for whatever occurs, even its end.

Recall that, for Du Bois, "second sight" lets black Americans see through the veil, and with Dasein, Heidegger explains that one must let go of being committed to our absorption in *das Man* and its talk. However, inauthentic Dasein (by extension, iBap) cannot summon this

seeing of the Situation that authentic Dasein sees. This brings me to the way that Dasein can prepare itself to be authentic: Dasein as iBap must want to hear the call. It must want to have a conscience in the sense that it wants to be responsible for its existence (342/295). In letting go of its absorption in *das Man*, Dasein can take a deliberate, voluntary, willful, and intentional step toward cutting back on the noise of *das Man*. I submit that Dasein does this by the following: 1) It calls out *Gerede* about death as *Gerede*; 2) It overcomes fear through such “calling out.” Calling out *Gerede* about death seems like a simple device, but doing so, in my view, is effective because it highlights the disconnect between a *Gerede* that explicitly and loudly talks about ordinary interpretations of death for racial identities, and the daily affairs of inauthentic Being-a-problem.

The problem with ordinary interpretations is that they tend to misunderstand phenomena that have deeper meanings. Charles Guignon writes in *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* that Heidegger “leads us past the ‘surface’ meaning of our language to light up the forgotten deep meaning.”<sup>118</sup> Guignon observes, as Heidegger does, that phenomena like death have these common understandings, and that most often these are misleading ways to know how to make sense of a phenomenon. Heidegger writes, “Whenever we see something wrongly, some injunction as to the primordial ‘idea’ of the phenomenon is revealed along with it” (326/281). Guignon says that Heidegger’s dialectical method is a handy way of making sense of the distinction between the ordinary and the latent meaning of phenomenon. Although Guignon’s method represents an approach that has superficial discourse oppose underlying phenomena, I posit that Du Bois’ “second sight” serves as a model for a comparative analysis of one’s everydayness to fear and death laden discourse about inauthentic Being-a-problem. More

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<sup>118</sup> Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 82.

effective than a dialectical method, “second sight” allows Dasein to assess a disconnect and call out what is seemingly wrong and superficial when pitted against everyday ontical affairs. How could this be done with the *Gerede* about iBap? First, by calling death notes idle talk, Dasein declares some sense of “offness” about Dasein’s alleged *verenden* and *ableben*. These kinds of death are real for organisms and humans, but they only *feel close* for Dasein, and one might guess that there would have to be more to these kinds of death than just *feeling close*. Using “second sight” would also reveal how overly emphasized the talk of these deaths is for certain racial groups in society. “Second sight” would let iBap distance itself from the common use of death notes, thereby quieting the “loudest idle talk,” giving Dasein the opportunity to lower *das Man*’s volume on the *Gerede* about these deaths, so that Dasein can “hear the call” and resolutely take action on its Situation.

### **From “Second Sight” to Coherence and Anticipatory Resoluteness**

Dasein did not initially choose the existentiells it found itself inhabiting, even if it ends up choosing some of them in the future. The same outcome holds for Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem. Heidegger writes, “Although it has *not* laid the basis *itself*, it reposes in the weight of it, which is made manifest to it as a burden by Dasein’s mood” (330/284). Dasein can *never* get this kind of power to “throw” itself into Being, so it is left to inauthentically or authentically choose. However, through anticipatory resoluteness, Dasein can gain the power over its existence to remove the self-inflicted concealments. Heidegger writes

Anticipatory resoluteness is not a way of escape, fabricated for the ‘overcoming’ of death; it is rather that understanding which follows the call of conscience and which frees for death the possibility of acquiring power over Dasein’s existence and of basically dispersing all fugitive Self-concealments (357/310).

For the most part, Dasein inauthentically chooses but in anticipatory resoluteness, one understands that it exists as a possibility to no longer be in the world and that it still must choose

a way to live. Dasein “chooses to choose” an existentiell, but out of its own accord. Heidegger writes about “hearing” the “call of conscience” that “in this phenomenon lies that existentiell choosing which we seek—the choosing to choose a kind of Being-one’s-Self which, in accordance with its existential structure, we call ‘*resoluteness*’” (314/270). If Dasein, as inauthentically Being-a-problem hears this “call” after having prepared itself to hear, then it can genuinely and existentielly, choose to choose itself, thereby, affirming its Situation as its *own*. In this regard, Being-a-problem *can* be authentic.

In understanding itself as having inauthentically absorbed all the *Gerede* and fear about its identity as a problem, Dasein presents to itself the opportunity to “win” what has been lost. Dasein as iBap must then face the fear and *Gerede* that has been part of the gossip of its existence and how this has concealed its Situation. Dasein may determine that a false appropriation of identity narratives occurred based on the influence of *das Man*. However, even if this happens, Dasein must take responsibility for itself to the extent that Dasein subscribed to these narratives, whether he fell into them or chose them. The process of coherence between the narrative of this existentiell and the ontical affairs of Dasein is necessary because it leads to Dasein admitting to what is and is *not*; thus, Dasein becomes honest in what *belongs* to itself on an existentiell level, so that it can prepare to “choose to choose,” to be authentic. Without preparing for such a resolution, inauthentic Being-a-problem cannot understand its responsibility to itself.

### **Keeping-Silent**

At the point of applying this existentiell inventory to oneself, Heidegger explains that Dasein is ready for resoluteness and must keep silent so as not to participate in the fallen chatter about one’s existence. For Heidegger, Dasein’s resoluteness must reckon with its ontological

guilt and, consequently, the way of discoursing about it. Dasein deals with guilt in “keeping-silent” (342/296). This is how Dasein becomes authentic, by resolutely meeting itself, face to face, in its uncanniness.<sup>119</sup> This uncanniness is Dasein’s anxiety and the resoluteness toward it must exist so that, unlike its they-self, Dasein will not shirk from it. Therefore, Heidegger says that “Wanting-to-have-a-conscience becomes a readiness for anxiety” (342/296). The recognition of such a readiness will help prepare Dasein for authenticity.

Heidegger explains that Dasein’s confrontation is new to it as Dasein is always postponing itself, evasively turning away. I have already discussed how this turning away is always reified by the They for iBap. I argued that it seems to happen on a more intense scale because of *das Man*’s discursive associations with death by the They. For Heidegger, the They has continuously welcomed this existentiell escapism; consequently, Dasein is never really with another Dasein. Even in the moral rhetoric that aims to recognize and bring the plight of the racially oppressed to light, the narrative of inauthentic Being-a-problem by *das Man* standards offers a present-at-hand escapism for such a Dasein afflicted by the talk. Dasein cannot really understand and listen to another Dasein because its structural fallenness always makes it alienated from itself and from Others. Dasein does not even know itself, let alone know the Other. Heidegger writes,

Only by authentically Being-their-Selves in resoluteness can people authentically be with one another—not by ambiguous and jealous stipulations and talkative fraternizing in the “they” and in what “they” want to undertake (345/298).

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<sup>119</sup> Michel Haar writes, “Anxiety and boredom both lead to a narrowing of time, a decisive instant where Dasein, squarely facing the repeatable character of its past and anticipating its future to the extreme limit, finds itself able to assume its own temporality. Now the silence of anxiety—which makes possible the silence of the resolution by which *Dasein* projects itself authentically, temporalizes itself – is situated, it would seem, outside all epochal continuity, outside the ‘universal’ history of being” (161). The “silence of anxiety” is, I think, an appropriate ontological model for our ontico-existentiell existence, in which getting a moment of quiet time from the noise of everyday life is an ordinary and common-sense way to regroup and reinsert oneself back into daily affairs.



Dasein, Heidegger says, is “already in irresoluteness” and so when Dasein is ready to meet itself authentically, Dasein resolutely “appropriates untruth authentically” (345/299). This is helpful for figuring out how inauthentic Being-a-problem deals with the untruth that permeates its existence. If you are a fear existentiell who is talked about in connection with a death note, then you must deal with the possible untruth of the talk as it relates to Dasein’s ontical affairs. You may know the “truth” of your “general situation,” but this amounts to just Dasein “losing itself in those ‘opportunities’ which are closest to it, and pays Dasein’s way by a reckoning up for ‘accidents’ which it fails to recognize, deems its own achievement, and passes off as such” (347/300). As discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, Dasein’s constitutive spatiality ensures that, in fallenness, it will tend to hold on to what is nearest, even when what is nearest are the death notes about one’s existentiell as a racial identity. Even things unplanned for, like “accidents” are things Dasein can appropriate, though they may be untrue to its ontical affairs. For example, I, as a Mexican-American man, may hear about Mexicans dying at the U.S. and Mexico border and appropriate the plight of those individuals to my existence, even though my relationship to those deaths is peripheral to *my* existence. Thus, we can imagine a racial Dasein who reckons up the “general situation” of his community and takes the death of the fellow members of his racial category as *his* death.

### **Gauging Untruth**

As Heidegger explains, Dasein’s ability to properly gauge untruth is helpful to it because it can begin to understand that through its existence, it has been “‘lived’ by the common-sense ambiguity of that publicness” (345/299). We even saw this value in “second sight.” Through this sight, Dasein as iBap can prepare itself to hear the call to authenticity and then “take action.” However, this idea of “taking action” should not be confused with a practical sense of “taking

action.” Dasein realizes that it never authentically subscribed to the “common-sense” and ordinary interpretations of its identity and its death, but that it just accepted them this whole time. All this time, the They lived through Dasein as a they-self, inauthentically Being-in-the-world. The fact that Dasein gets to the resolute way of Being will not change the dominance of the They, but now Dasein’s resoluteness cannot be moved and it can live through itself (345/299). The proper gauging of untruth also allows Dasein to know more clearly its thrown Situation as immersed in the They. Heidegger writes, “*For the “they,” however, the Situation is essentially something that has been closed off*” (346-347/300). The They remains ignorant to the Situation that resolute Dasein understands. Here, we see yet another reason why it is dangerous to appropriate inauthentic Being-a-problem for oneself when it is not authentic to oneself: The They does not easily let such a Dasein escape its influence because inauthentic Being-a-problem presents an opportunity for *das Man* to have more influence over Dasein.

### **The *Augenblick* Reckoning with Time**

When Dasein as *Bap* resolutely chooses itself, it does so toward the *Augenblick*, a “moment of vision” (376/328). The *Augenblick* is Dasein’s “authentic Present” as opposed to the inauthentic present, which is how we commonly think of the term “now.” “The moment of vision, however, temporalizes itself in quite the opposite manner--in terms of the authentic future” (388/338). The *Augenblick* allows Dasein to authentically project itself toward the future in an existentiell way. In terms of authentic Being-a-problem, Dasein chooses itself in the *Augenblick*.

The *Augenblick* allows Dasein to see through the *common* guilt matrix that it plays a role in with others. Due to its inauthentic Being-a-problem, this seeing through means Dasein has the possibility of appropriately reckoning with time. Towards the end of the second division of

*Being and Time*, Heidegger discusses how Dasein reckons with time in a common and fallen way, distinguishing this way from Dasein's primordial temporalizing. There is a key section when he discusses the "temporality of *fear*" that I hold is pertinent for a fear existentiell with a death note: Being-a-problem (391/341). When Dasein is faced with fear, it is "bewildered" and Dasein "forgets" itself (392/342). Something is always expected to happen. We discussed expecting in relation to the empirical certainty of death in chapters 4 and 5, but here the expecting of some "oncoming evil" begins to bewilder Dasein's reckoning with time in such a way that time is reinforced as a traditional "sequence of 'nows,'" which is the more common way to understand that time is a linear and sequential relationship among the past, present, and future (475/423).

Fear affects our bewilderment with ourselves and the world. Resoluteness puts this fear into perspective by seeing the Situation. Heidegger says, "He is who resolute knows no fear" (395/344). Dasein can gauge truth versus untruth when it resolutely reckons with time: To see that time is not a matter of a constant being taken away, but a structural feature of Dasein's existence, so that it can never actually be taken away. Yet, given my elaboration of inauthentic Being-a-problem, the notion of time being something that *can* be taken away *becomes* the dominant theme for one who has such an identity. That is, when one is inauthentic Being-a-problem, one is placed in a mode of Being-hurried, an emergency state of existence, wherein "time is not on your side" because death is always looming over the fear existentiell. Thus, all the more relevant are Heidegger's words for Being-a-problem when he states that "Here it is not as if the finitude of time were getting understood; quite the contrary, for concern sets out to snatch as much as possible from the time which still keeps coming and 'goes on.' Publicly, time is something which everyone takes and can take" (477/425).

Yet, in applying the *Augenblick* as an ontological form of second sight for Being-a-problem, Dasein resolutely sees through these imposed themes of time and the fear of death, which would compel one to be in a state of Being-hurried, a phenomenon that constantly afflicts those who are Bap. The *Augenblick* allows Dasein to see through the “inauthentic *awaiting*” of the moment of death by reflecting on the distinct factors that support such inauthentic time-reckoning (478/425). Those factors range from the *Gerede* about identity, the notions of death as *ableben* and *verenden*, and one’s structural fallenness. Once Dasein gets a grasp on this, then it may be able to finally determine that the issue has been its constant subscription to an uninterrogated idle talk in inauthentic Bap and from this, it can “see” its Situation and be authentic.

## **Conclusion**

I have concentrated on how *das Man* helps Dasein frame narratives about identity and death, such that people are “seen” in a certain way. This is a contentious approach. I do not wish to take away the impact of historical marginalization from individuals, as I hold that oppression is real and a fact about the world. Rather, I question one’s certainty of it for one’s self. It is important to problematize the way we talk about death in connection to marginalized groups because those groups are comprised of individuals with vastly different experiences in virtue of being their own persons. More importantly, when death is discussed in a general way, we are likely losing out on a critical and existential approach to a given member of this community’s perspective on death. We are effacing what is essential about their historical Situatedness, that which we usually call “personhood,” but which for Heidegger would amount to world and the history of Dasein.

The question of Dasein's authenticity from Bap is integral to the talk of the They. In some societal beliefs, the They propagates the belief that whole groups are near death. These groups are often called "marginalized" or "oppressed." Discourses about the plight of marginalized communities allow society to recognize problems of various forms of inequality. However, the issue of Being-a-problem is whether the authentic connection one has to such narratives is true or if an individual who is Bap is inauthentically appropriating a narrative about death in virtue of Dasein being a member of a racial group. The issue for inauthentic Being-a-problem is not whether it is true that certain groups are marginalized, oppressed, and near death; I take such claims, non-controversially, to be true. The main point for inauthentic Being-a-problem is whether Dasein is genuinely or non-genuinely connected to those claims of death, oppression, and marginalization.

Dasein as iBap cannot be resolute with fear and *Gerede* determining its existentiell. The issue is not that violence does not exist, that suffering does not exist, that *ableben* does not exist for communities who have endured historical oppression; the issue is that *das Man* idly skims over these issues with attempts to engender a discourse about marginalization through a present-at-hand way that does more to conceal the notion of authentically Being-in-the-world by relegating the conversation to a present-at-hand analysis about *ableben*, *verenden*, conscience, and guilt. This influences Dasein to be unprepared to hear itself and normalizes a narrative about a proximity to *ableben* and *verenden*, in cases where the talk is about the "body" and "bodies." The reason why this influence is so powerful is because it is about surviving, which is an issue that short-circuits Dasein into a fearful mode of existence, a kind of Being-hurried. There is a way out, though, for Dasein as Being-a-problem. For Dasein to be authentic, coming from the existentiell of Being-a-problem, one must resolutely critique these death notes and see if they are

true to one's existence. The question that one must ask is the following: Is there coherence between *Gerede* about my identity and my everyday existence? Another way to put the question: Am I viscerally near the death that is frequently discussed in social media and academic discourse? I suspect many individuals will answer *no*. If the answer is *no* then one gains a critical insight into the workings of the "veil" that exists between what They say and how one, as Dasein, lives every day in its existentiell understanding of itself. But what if the answer is *yes*? In *that* case, one still gains the critical insight about what is said in *Gerede* versus how one lives. A racialized Dasein may even affirm its Situation and authentically choose Being-a-problem.

The development of this ontological and existential version of a "second sight," as the *Augenblick*, establishes that *Gerede* about death, marginalization, and feelings threaten nuanced distinctions that are relevant to individuals. We are not all the same in our marginalization, oppression, connections to racism, and so forth. However, when idle talk treats us the same, we have a problem. I have provided a template for inauthentic Being-a-problem and what it looks like from the preparation of hearing the call to be authentic to how one can "see" its Situation and reclaim itself as time in one's authenticity, bypassing the idea of Being-hurried and silencing *das Man*'s "loudest idle talk" about death. In the next chapter, I discuss race and iBap in terms of an academic racial discourse that tends to lose out on important distinctions regarding individual racial marginalization and oppression. I examine how scholars tend to use terms like "white privilege," "white supremacy" and even "racism" in ways that reassert Dasein as a traditional ontological subject, rather than an inauthentic Bap that has the possibility of emancipating itself from these discourses to prepare for authenticity.

## Chapter 7

### Tottering Ontical Reports: The Crisis of Race Studies

*“I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me, they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.”*<sup>120</sup>

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

#### Introduction

At the beginning of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that

The level which a science has reached is determined by how far it is *capable* of a crisis in its basic concepts. In such immanent crises the relationship between positively investigative inquiry and those things themselves that are under interrogation comes to a point where it begins to totter (29/9).

I explain how we can use the notion of Being-a-problem to critique what I will call “race reports,” ontical reports about racially marginalized communities. In doing this, I will demonstrate how race reports are themes based on a present-at-hand conception of Dasein. Such themes are as follows: They are binary methods for framing racial talk, psychological profiling of racial communities, the scholarly reduction of Dasein to bodies, and the seemingly necessary concealment of Dasein’s existential situation to advance the narrative of being a threat and being threatened. I examine how the present-at-hand analyses of the race report make racial discourse problematic: that is, terms like “white privilege” or “white supremacy” (I use these concepts as examples throughout this chapter) can be demonstrated to be too general to be appropriately

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<sup>120</sup> Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 3

assigned to one's individual existential situation. Another result of my analysis is that we find something I will call "marginal appropriation," where those who are inauthentically Being-a-problem may assign themselves the issues of the marginalized based on a subscription to these race reports about their fear existentiell. Furthermore, with such appropriations from Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem, we see a reinforcement of such a Dasein as a problem needing to be solved. With that, I introduce what is normally called "the white savior" complex, but here I call it the "savior's gaze" in which individuals who wish to "leap in" and save the objects of their gaze only reinforce the ontical race reporting about Dasein; consequently, such a "leaping in" skips over Dasein's existential situation. I discuss the positive contributions of my work, wherein I hold that authentic Being-a-problem allows Dasein to affirm its racial identity while also re-forging an opportunity for a new racial discourse that is less reliant on fear and more focused on "leaping ahead." In this "leaping," Dasein rediscovers itself as its ownmost Being by centering on the importance of its daily engagements with other Dasein and with the world. Dasein then resolutely reaffirms the *Augenblick*, holding to its Situation as it is, rather than being driven into existential concealment by *das Man*'s idle talk about racial dynamics and marginalization.

### **Being "Critical"**

The problem with distinguishing authentic Being-a-problem (aBap) from inauthentic Being-a-problem (iBap) is that both existentiells have their version of "seeing" the Situation for what it is. With aBap it is the resoluteness toward the *Augenblick* and with iBap it is Heidegger's ambiguity, but cloaked in the notion of being "critical" of race. Heidegger writes that ambiguity is a form of communication where "Everyone is acquainted with what is up for discussion and what occurs." In racial discourse, we all already know what the "body," "lives,"



“white supremacy,” “white privilege,” and even “racism” mean (217/173). Furthermore, in this ambiguous “critical” way to think, “everyone also knows already how to talk about what has to happen first” (217/173). And finally, with “critical” racial discourse Dasein (as well as other Dasein) are “in the know,” and are “Being ‘in on it’ with someone [*das Mit-dabei-sein*] when one is on the scent, and so long as one is on it, precludes one’s allegiance when what has been surmised gets carried out” (218/174). In other words, when one is “critical” in racial discourse, certain assumptions about terms have already been made and if we all follow along with this shared discourse, then everyone is “on the scent” for racism. In being “critical” we are all on the trail to identify the terms of racial discourse instantiated in our ontical affairs. We effectively read racism into our lives. It could be argued that being “on the scent” could be applied to any academic endeavor with its own presuppositions. Heidegger writes early on in *Being and Time* that “Every inquiry is a seeking [Suchen]. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought” (24/5). Thus, the ambiguous claim about racial discourse may be true, but it is also true for other inquiries. A “seeking” that is “guided beforehand by what is sought,” in Heidegger’s view, is an acknowledgment that questions are always about some object of inquiry, as opposed to an inquiry that is not only “seeking,” but already knows the details of the object of inquiry. Such an “already knowing” is the case when one investigates the existence of racism as it exists in systems, structures, and within people’s intentions.

### **The Issue with “Ontical Reports”**

I will use “ontical report” as a general label for those research projects, theories, and ideas that serve as an ontical classification of the racially marginalized. I call them “race reports.” A race report is a fitting label because the talk about the marginalized is often about alarming and shocking assessments of people suffering and dying under oppressive conditions.

Theories about marginalization often use ontical reports as they allow practitioners to ground their ideas in a concrete experience of suffering and death.

Section 26 in *Being and Time* entitled “*The Dasein-with of Others and Everyday Being-with*” supports this notion of an “ontical report,” wherein Heidegger writes that, “Theoretically concocted ‘explanations’ of the Being-present-at-hand of Others urge themselves upon us all too easily” (155/119). The fact that we exist within a world of the They means we end up using the explanations of that world to understand it. These explanations (ontical reports) are nearest to us. In chapter 3’s discussion of “fear existentiell,” I discussed nearness in terms of a concept I called “societal de-severance,” in which the factual and ontical aspects of Dasein are thought more salient to other Dasein as they are external, providing the quickest access to getting a picture of identity. Since it is an ontical fact about Dasein’s ontico-ontological constitution that Dasein uses the concepts closest to it to deal with the world, the idea of Dasein taking hold of what appears nearest to it is consistent with Heidegger’s interpretation of Dasein. All Dasein assess other Dasein and all Dasein are already with each other in the sense that everyone is existentially and ontologically already Being-with. However, as discussed in chapter 3, Dasein-with is what most concerns our inquiry into existentiell because Dasein-withness is essentially Dasein and other Dasein having a shared engagement with the world, always involved in each other’s projects. Because present-at-hand taking in of other Dasein initially occurs on the purely ontical level, Heidegger writes that the problem with the ontical reports is that they do not get into the ontological foundation of the subjects they are interrogating.

### **Philosophers of Struggle**

I think Heidegger’s criticism applies to some philosophers of struggle as well. Within the domain of philosophy, the philosopher of struggle must engage with ontical reports, but this

introduces a possibility that the reports themselves will negate ontological considerations because the essence of the individual's philosophical plight will already be assumed under the category of marginalization. For instance, if an ontical report is about the marginalized experience of the black man, then the assumption about the ontical report is about the struggle of black men. One must seek the general struggle. If an ontical report is about the marginalized experience of the brown-skinned woman, then the ontical report is then about the struggling brown-skinned woman, not as an existential being dealing with the world, but as an entity, an object reduced to the status of a body. The particular person is effaced, leaving the general identity to be the focus of the inquiry. The assumption is that if the ontical report is about marginalized people, then the history of those people as a mass group is the central story to be told about the individuals assumed under that category. The reports turn into general profiles about masses of people and those schemas about those individuals can be in the form of psychological profiles (i.e., Samuel Ramos writing about "the Mexican man" in *The Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*); they can be ethnologies, sociological studies, and anthropological explanations.

Each of these disciplines is, to repeat a Heideggerian phrase, an "inquiry guided beforehand by what is sought" (25/5), only in these cases, "what is sought" is already disclosed in a heavily interpreted way because of the regional ontological assumptions required for those disciplines to be what they are. In the case of philosophies of struggle, "what is sought" in each investigation is an all-encompassing notion of marginalization and oppression. These kinds of research projects foster results that necessarily become monolithic in their descriptions of people. For instance, Enrique Dussel, a philosopher of struggle, assumes power relations of the center and the periphery in *The Philosophy of Liberation* (1985), even stating how power relations start

with the “I conquer,” which then supports his search for the “conqueror” and the “conquered” in his philosophical inquiries.<sup>121</sup> Thus, he is “on the scent” for power in his investigations and, wherever division is found, power has already been determined as the main feature of a center/periphery model. In *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (2008), Nelson Maldonado Torres similarly searches for a “warrior paradigm” promulgated by Western colonial powers that have dominated the oppressed through the spread of reason and violence all over the world.<sup>122</sup>

### **How Ontical Reports Conceal Dasein**

Ontical reports, with their emphasis on present-at-hand understandings of Dasein, conceal an ontology of Dasein. Combining Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of appearance with his analysis of what is immediate, we can see how research projects can conceal Dasein’s ontological existence. Heidegger says that the idea of semblance is about a relationship between what is apparent and what is hidden by it, and therefore things *seem to be*; things have a *semblance*. Heidegger writes, “Indeed it is even possible for an entity to show itself as something which in itself it is *not*” (51/28). When something “shows itself” by appearance, this does not have to mean that we see what that entity is. In fact, Heidegger says that this “showing itself” by appearance signals that the entity is not showing itself, as it always has a hidden element (52/29). Thus, when something appears evident through immediate experience, we need

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<sup>121</sup> Dussel writes in *Philosophy of Liberation* (1985) about traditional Western ontology that begins with Descartes’ “I think.” Dussel says, “That ontology did not come from nowhere. It arose from a previous experience of domination over other persons, of cultural oppression over other worlds. Before the *ego cogito* there is an *ego conquiro*; ‘I conquer’ is the practical foundation of ‘I think.’ The center has imposed itself on the periphery for more than five centuries,” 3.

<sup>122</sup> Nelson Maldonado Torres’ *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (2008) critiques Heidegger for being 1) too abstract as we saw with Mariana Ortega in *In-Between*; and 2) a proponent of the “war paradigm” due to his ties to the Nazi party.

to be cautious as to whether this is just a kind of appearance. Additionally, it may be a problem to generalize and report from such an appearance.

The use of ontical reports conceals Dasein's existential situation by way of generalizing ontic and factual aspects of Dasein's existence. Although these are key to Dasein's going about in the world, the focus places the ontology of Dasein on ontic features and path themes. Because we see that this ontical report functions as a present-at-hand analysis, we infer that this serves as a layer over Dasein that *makes us think we understand* its existential situation, when a present-at-hand notion is actually taking over. A result of such an approach is that Dasein is concealed by a psychological profile of a people and their closeness to *ableben*. It is no wonder why thinkers like Frantz Fanon determine there can be no ontology of the oppressed because Dasein's possibility of authentically Being-a-problem is always concealed by present-at-hand analyses of the suffering of the oppressed.

Heidegger's claims about scientific research projects (whether in the life sciences like biology or human studies like sociology) reflect his understanding of the limitations of how a common theoretical study of Dasein can lend itself to an incomplete understanding of Dasein.<sup>123</sup> Heidegger writes, "Sciences are ways of Being in which Dasein comports itself towards entities which it need not be itself" (33/13). Practitioners studying the marginalized need not be those Dasein that they study. By the very nature of the "study of marginalization" or the "study of the oppressed," one is likely "studying" at a distance from the object of inquiry. Such a point does not mean scholars cannot inquire and produce knowledge about the marginalized, but it does

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<sup>123</sup> In German academia, the sciences take up a majority of the disciplines, while humanities are in the minority. Thank you to Dr. Joshua Rayman for pointing this out.

mean that there are limitations to what can be known and generalized about.<sup>124</sup> Especially troublesome is the fact that these ontical reports disregard Dasein's singular existential situation, in favor of attributing and associating *verenden*, *ableben*, and suffering to certain groups.

Although Heidegger's aim was not to look at the experience of the marginalized, his analysis of Being can be applied to *how* we tend to study the racially marginalized in present-at-hand ways. Heidegger writes

Whenever an ontology takes for its theme entities whose character of Being is other than that of Dasein, it has its own foundation and motivation in Dasein's own ontical structure, in which pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic (33/13).

When we apply a general theme about Dasein in a way that is other than what and how it is Being-in-the-world, we reinforce false ontological assumptions in the form of Dasein just being a present-at-hand subject. Furthermore, by merely seeing Dasein as just marginalized or raced, race reports about Dasein focus on the ontical to the point of declaring that individuals are simply too different to have a similar existential structure. Even by differentiating Dasein in this manner, some may even use this as a basis to *deny* Dasein with a race report as having any kind of ontological structure at all, as they would be reduced to an object, a non-Dasein entity.

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<sup>124</sup> Stephan Mulhall writes in "Human Mortality: Heidegger on How to Portray the Impossible Possibility of Dasein" that "The moral is clear: if we are to find a way through this impasse, we must begin from our best available understanding of Dasein's distinctive kind of being as such, or in general. And this implies a further constraint on the resources available to us: we can no more help ourselves to the deliverance of ontic sciences at this point in our ontological inquiries than we can at any point. Heidegger argued extensively in the opening chapter of Division I that fundamental ontology in general and the existential analytic of Dasein in particular, must be sharply distinguished from the business of anthropology, psychology, biology, and theology, and he reiterates his objections in the opening chapter of Division II. To begin with, the results of any ontic science will presuppose a regional ontology that it is necessarily incapable of validating, but which no fundamental ontology can take for granted. But more importantly, the prevailing division of cultural labor between psychology, biology, and anthropology also presupposes a particular conception of the human being that is their common preoccupation; it assumes the human mind, body, and spirit can be studied in isolation from each other, and hence that the human being is a composite construction from these isolated elements" (301).

It is important to identify how such an ontical report conceals Dasein in reports attempting to reveal one's struggle because philosophies of marginalization and struggle usually connect to an idea about a marginalized group's expedited death. These reports conceal Dasein and reduce him to an inauthentic Being-a-problem in which *Gerede* about death notes and fear is prominent in its identity, while the possibility of an authentic Being-a-problem lays dormant. From the outset, understanding what authentic Bap is would help problematize the ontical reporting about marginalized people. Authentic Being-a-problem does not lend itself to overarching themes of oppression or marginality in the way ontical descriptions do. Instead, authentic Bap aims to gain insight from individual ontical affairs, and this is so when we consider how the *Augenblick* or "second sight" can serve as ways to "see" one's Situation and then to deliberate about the *Gerede* regarding one's *own* existence versus the existentiality of Dasein. Authentic Bap allows there to be an in-between, interrogating Being in Heidegger's existential analytic while questioning *das Man's* use of ontical reports to understand the marginalized. As an in-between, aBap does not reject the disciplines whose practitioners aim to understand the marginalized. Rather, aBap as an existentiell uninfluenced by fear and *Gerede*, can complicate the applicability of those reports because it does not pivot from obvious assumptions related to death notes, race, and fear. Rather, the preparation for one to be authentic, as well as what aBap is in its authenticity, demonstrates a development from iBap to aBap. In this development, the identity of both existentiells have the capacity to prepare for authenticity (iBap) and then to be authentic (aBap). In iBap, this happens consciously: it is the decision to prepare by simply comparing *Gerede* and one's ontical affairs. In aBap, one is authentic by "seeing" the Situation and choosing to Be-a-problem, wherein, ironically, Dasein critiques the ways in which one has been problematized by ontical reports and *Gerede*.

## Problematizing Race Reports

Familiar to each race report is that they inform the talk about identities in society, filling out the idea of Dasein being close to death and struggle, which in turn reinforces the meaning of that fear existentiell in society. The race report displays a threat of continued and imposed subordination due to historical injustices with a type of death found in narratives about invisibility and reductions to nothingness.

Frantz Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “Whatever the field we studied, we were struck by the fact that both the black man, slave to his inferiority, and the white man, slave to his superiority, behave along neurotic lines.”<sup>125</sup> Fanon’s approach is *psychological* here, emphasizing the internal sense of inferiority to describe the black man. Heidegger would construe this psychological approach as present-at-hand because Fanon is seeing Dasein as a “concrete possible idea of existence” (69/43). Rather than focusing on the Being of the black man, Fanon focuses on the ontic features that are facts about the individual. Heidegger writes that Dasein “*can* with some right and within certain limits be *taken* as merely present-at-hand,” but that doing this means that Dasein’s Being-in must be disregarded or just not seen in an existential way (82/56). By present-at-hand, Heidegger means to say that something is external, held up for analysis and separated from everyday Being-in-the-world. The present-at-hand analysis takes the subject of its inquiry out of its world, placing it in separate “subject” and “object” categories. Heidegger addresses this point about pah analyses when he says that Hegel took the concept of spirit “As something present-at-hand and thus external to spirit” (485/434). Additionally, present-at-hand can be “unchanging” and “stable” as when Heidegger writes, “The idea of a standard implies unchangingness; this means that for everyone at any time the standard,

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<sup>125</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 41-42.



in its stability, must be present-at-hand” (470/417). Disregarding Dasein’s existential state requires focusing on ontic features of Dasein that are external, unchanging, and stable. Fanon examines such features for his purposes as he wants to uncover how the black man is displaced from the idea of what a human being is and how this displacement psychologically affects both him and other black men.

To understand the marginalized is to interrogate their experiences. However, I question whether what is being provided by these thinkers is an investigation into marginalized experiences and testimonials or simply the schema of a present-at-hand report, which informs the reader about experiences from marginality. What if the ontical and present-at-hand schema imposed upon the marginalized negates their Being in an existential manner? I think this negation occurs in view of Heidegger’s conclusions regarding taking Dasein as present-at-hand. However, the emerging issue is that there is effectively no choice but to discuss Dasein of the periphery or oppressed than in this present-at-hand manner. I have demonstrated this in previous chapters in my analysis of inauthentic Being-a-problem and the way U.S. society idly discusses death as *verenden* and *ableben*, thereby participating in the concealing of Dasein’s authentic death and authentic understanding of itself. In what follows, I will explain how my use of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* develops the concept of authentic Being-a-problem so that I can positively complicate this issue of ontical race reporting. Authentic Bap will break down the constructs produced by these ontical reports, thereby questioning their utility to help in revealing more about the existential plight of the marginalized.

Building on my analysis and distinction between inauthentic Bap and authentic Bap in the last chapter, I hold that the monolithic appraisal of peripheral communities through present-at-hand “ontical reports” does more to conceal these marginalized communities than reveal their

individual and existential struggle. These reports prevent us from adequately theorizing due to idle synopses of inauthentic death and struggle in the form of generalizations, and the monolithically characterized interactions between the powerful and the oppressed.

### **Fanon on the Race Report: The Phenomenon of Race *Gerede***

Frantz Fanon argues that colonialism cannot breed an ontology of the oppressed; however, Fanon introduces a critical ontical report to his postcolonial analysis: he discusses what I am calling a “race report.” In my explanation of a race report, I have said that such a report hinges on a connection between the narrative about one’s race and fear of death. Fanon expresses this fear of annihilation in *Black Skin, White Masks* by explaining how Western philosophy’s lack of ontology about the lived experience of the black man turns the black man into a null object. He writes, “I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.”<sup>126</sup> Fanon sees that others view him as and reduce him to an object, which leads to a scathing critique of ontology where he states:

Any ontology is made impossible in a colonized and acculturated society. Those who have written on the subject have not taken this sufficiently into consideration. In the weltanschauung of a colonized people, there is an impurity or a flaw that prohibits any ontological explanation. Perhaps it could be argued that this is true for any individual, but such an argument would be concealing the fundamental problem. Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Not at all. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. From one day to the next, the Blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90.

<sup>127</sup> Fanon, 90.

Fanon mentions the “being of the black man,” but then we must ask what that *being* means. Throughout his text, he appeals to his lived experience and psychological analyses of his experiences with white people. In appealing to his ontical affairs, Fanon is moving outside the scope of general talk about racial identities. Yet, “the being of the black man” is linked to both the “white man” and the “eyes of the white man,” suggesting an appeal to an essential “being” of the black man, which is a categorical move that obstructs one’s own experience since it appeals to the broad notion of the “being of the black man.” Also, the “white man” and “eyes of the white man” suggest a binary relation of white/black that occludes an individual connection to one’s ontical affairs by framing oneself as half of the issue (the other half is white). To be fair, Du Bois employs a black/white binary as well, but in his case, he develops a break from that, a disruption through “double consciousness” and “second sight,” which sees through the veil of that binary. Instead, Fanon moves from a psychological profile and then to a binary. He takes himself out of a fallen discourse of totalizing narratives toward his everydayness, but then goes back to the pah assessments in the form of a binary and a general profile of the “being of the black man,” which cannot be ontological, given his critique of ontology.

Another interesting point about race reports is that they conceal other race reports. As I have discussed in previous chapters, U.S. talk (to give a specific context) about race is replete with discussions about racism, prejudice, white privilege, the annihilation of marginalized bodies, language that acts as psychological “triggers,” and black/white binaries. In fact, as Juan Pereda has demonstrated with his analysis of the black/white binary, U.S. history often overlooks the historical impact of Latinos in racial matters because of the concealing talk about black/white binaries.<sup>128</sup> Another way to put this is that race reports conceal other race reports and other racial

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<sup>128</sup> Delgado and Stefancic make a similar, albeit brief, point in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (2001).

discourses. This concealing is not only consistent with Heidegger's concept of *Gerede*, but with *Mitsein* (Being-with) and *Mitdasein* (Dasein-with) because Dasein and other Dasein are always in the project of co-creating *Gerede*, and this co-creating of *Gerede* includes discussions of race, racism, oppression, and marginalization.

### ***Mitsein and Mitdasein***

One of the productions of *Gerede* is race reports; these reports are projects that function through *Gerede* (idle talk) and are co-produced by Dasein's *Mitdasein*, which emanates from Dasein's *Mitsein*. Being-with is Dasein's mode of Being, whereas other non-Dasein entities fall under ready-to-hand or present-at-hand. When Dasein encounters other Dasein, it is not two parallel subjects as if an "I" is with another "I." "By 'Others' we do not mean everyone else but me--those over against whom the 'I' stands out" (154/118). Instead, *Mitsein* is a shared engagement with the world through the work and projects we all share in. For example, race reports conceal other race reports. These reports have authors responding to each other, influenced by the work of others, making a race report a shared project that is in "The world of Dasein," which is a "with-world [*Mitwelt*]" (153/118). To be "in" this ontological world of shared work is Dasein's "Being-in," which itself "is Being-with Others" (153/118). While Being-with is Dasein's mode of Being, Dasein-with reveals itself as we work on projects that require ready-to-hand tools and materials produced by other Dasein. Heidegger writes that "the Dasein-with of Others is often encountered in terms of what is ready-to-hand with-in-the world" (156/120). Thus, if we take race reports as a shared project about present-at-hand understandings of Dasein's racial identity then we can see these reports as productions of *Mitdasein* (originating in *Mitsein*).

Race reports are a co-production of *Mitdasein* that allow Dasein to encounter other Dasein, but the content of those reports represent another issue: Their explanations of Dasein

hide both *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*. For instance, Heidegger writes that “Theoretically concocted ‘explanations’ of the Being-present-at-hand of Others urge themselves upon us all too easily” (155/119). Race reports are such explanations, created from Dasein-with and grounded in Being-with. The reports of racial identities as groups disclose Dasein as Being-present-hand, when ontologically what is the case is that “Others are encountered *environmentally*” (155/119). Hidden behind these pah explanations is how Dasein is essentially Being-with. “This Dasein-with of the Others is disclosed within-the-world for a Dasein, and so too for those who are Dasein with us, only because Dasein itself is essentially Being-with” (156/120). These reports distance Dasein from other Dasein instead of disclosing that Dasein is essentially with other Dasein. Consequently, the race reports serve to ontologically create a distance among Dasein, even though such reports seem designed to bring Dasein closer to each other.

To understand this withness, Dasein must “*look away* from ‘Experiences’” seeing itself as “the ‘centre of its actions’” (155/119). Race reports, however, focus on profiles and generalizations about experiences, even making one the center of actions in the form of testimonials about racial marginalization. This focus turns “Others” into “themes for study,” even though we always encounter Dasein when being engaged in our usual everyday projects. Experiences are important to Dasein as authentic Being-a-problem because they represent Dasein’s everyday dealings and projects. Yet, when experiences become homogenized into a narrative or theme of oppression, *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein* are concealed.

From my examination of *Mitsein*, *Mitdasein*, and *Gerede*, one can see how an ontical report about race is the output of *Gerede*, and that what we understand about race through what we read and see is susceptible to idle talk’s authoritative rule and indistinct generalizations about people. Idle talk productions of ontical reports (race reports included) are already set-up to fail

at capturing the existentiality of Dasein, yet the issue remains: These reports have an internally discursive difficulty with existentially understanding one's existence when one is a fear existentiell and thought to be close to death. Authentic Being-a-problem deals with the idle talk about one's fear existentiells, but what if the already monolithically determined person is not suffering oppression? What if that person would not identify with marginalization? What if the idle chatter negates an individual's genuine connection to oppression, but that individual remains concealed because she does not adhere to the fear existentiell of oppression? These questions are the result of applying authentic Being-a-problem to race reports; that is, Dasein as authentic Bap problematizes race reports by the very individuals marked as Being-a-problem via *Gerede*. With aBap, we admit an obvious point that some Dasein are talked about idly (*Gerede*) and we also admit that because the talk falls under *Gerede*, there is ambiguity to the idle talk about race just as there is ambiguity about any other subject idly discussed by Dasein.

### **The Problem with Uniting a Race Report and One's Ontical Affairs**

By admitting this *Gerede* point about authentic Being-a-problem, we introduce the possibility of how they can disingenuously and nominally co-opt oppression when one is only dealing with the idle chatter about oppression and not necessarily the imposition of it on their daily lives. Dealing with an experiential versus a primarily discursive form of marginalization forces us to contend with tough questions about whether people who are thought to be facing *ableben* or facing oppression are indeed facing it. The phenomenon of talk versus experience is a tricky issue as even the mere attempt at assessing a distinction means some individuals run the risk of feeling invalidated in what they believe to be their enduring of marginalization or nearness of death. However, if scholars do not interrogate the distinction, then we run a higher risk of conflating people's psychological and lived experiences, perhaps

even invalidating the lived experiences of the marginalized while attempting to validate the solely discursive psychological connections to oppression and death. For example, the comedian Chris Rock, once joked that “An old black man went through some real racism. He didn’t go through that ‘I can’t get a cab’ shit. He was the cab! White man just jump on his back, ‘Main Street!’”<sup>129</sup> Rock provides insight into his assessments regarding the claim to a form of marginalization, racism. His joke is both an epistemological suggestion and social commentary: that we need to remember historical and contextual differences about racism so as not to resort to saying that all racism is equal. I provide Rock’s joke as an example of how we have intuitive notions of differences about degrees of marginalization and oppression, whether those degrees take place under the categories of racism, sexism, and classism. Thus, since we acknowledge distinctions (in Rock’s case, we uncomfortably laugh about them), then they seem worth interrogating to get a better handle on how we understand marginalization and proximity to death within ontical race reports.

Frantz Fanon, as evidenced in his works *Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* provides the example of a psychological profile within a race report, but racism *was* also imposed upon him. The actual imposition of race versus a discursive one is an important distinction. As Emmanuel Hansen explains

Corresponding to the exaltation of the French way of life was a deprecation of the African way of life. Training at home was no different. Fanon recounts that whenever he misbehaved he was told to “stop acting like a nigger.”<sup>130</sup>

For Frantz Fanon’s psychological explanation of the phenomenon of racism, he says that elements of fear, inadequacy, a yearning to stand out and expose one’s being in facing annihilation are all issues the black man has suffered. Not only did he speak from firsthand

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<sup>129</sup> Chris Rock, “Bigger and Blacker,” HBO, July 10, 1999.

<sup>130</sup> Emmanuel Hansen, “Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary Intellectual,” *Transition*, No. 46 (1974), 27.

experiences, but he also elaborated on how there was an essence to the lived black experience. Thus, as with Rock's commentary, there is a history of objectification, and for Fanon, there is the psychological element that fears *ableben*. The *Gerede* about the black man's ontical report steep itself in history and experiences of gazes, reinforcing the fear existentiell. Yet, the problem remains as to what occurs when a discursive idea of racism unites with one's ontical affairs, shedding light on whether Dasein endures racism.

An ongoing historical discussion of Dasein's fear existentiell contributes to the confusion about whether racism occurs or if Dasein is reflecting on his being a member of a historically oppressed group. That Dasein is historical means that it *is* its past, whereas the ontical race report about Dasein includes a traditional account of the past. Dasein contends with its historicity through *das Man's* on-going historical discussion about racial identities in general. For Frantz Fanon, a black man, there is a historical talk about him even if that talk is not about who Fanon is on an existential and singular level.<sup>131</sup> Even if the talk is generally about him, the generality can still affect how Fanon navigates the world and interacts with other Dasein. Furthermore, if the material circumstances of Fanon's existence are his being a black man in Algeria in which he served in the French Forces, studied in France, worked in French hospitals, and then worked to free Algeria in the mid-twentieth century, then we also have the idle talk of *ableben* concerning the political turmoil of that time and place. Fanon's fighting in the Free French forces brings him ontically near *ableben*, and his experiences of marginalization bring him near to a kind of oppression, though not as vividly as him fighting in battles.

Fanon's appeal to the past also helps him underscore the importance of his experience and how the past informs confrontations with the white gaze. Fanon writes that the "real world

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<sup>131</sup> The philosophical question would be, "What does it mean for this history to be about me?"



robbed us of our share.”<sup>132</sup> Fanon says that his black body sets him apart from the white body. The gaze of the white body upends the black body, making the black body hesitate. For Fanon, the world denies his presence because he is a black body and rather than being integrated into society, his body becomes a disruption. Disruption is *imposed* upon him by the gaze and by the past. By contrast, the world normalizes the white body. Fanon provides an example, engaging in a phenomenological analysis of grabbing a pack of cigarettes; he says that this (his act) is not an imposition, that he is doing this by his own volition and that this movement is “a genuine dialectic between my body and the world.”<sup>133</sup> Fanon responds to this racial imposition by imposing himself. Fanon writes, “Since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known.”<sup>134</sup> Fanon describes a situation wherein he enters a train car, and the white people leave, and he suggests that rather than fall back into a public default model of being a docile black man, he asserts his presence. His assertion allows him to disrupt the space, demonstrating that marginalizing confrontations are co-produced: Other Dasein impose their gaze and Dasein reacts.

### **Marginal Appropriation and the Savior’s Gaze**

Unlike Fanon, what about others who are discussed as inauthentic Being-a-problem but cannot attest to having experiences where they can claim a genuine connection to death and struggle? For these individuals, they are Being-a-problem, but it is still left to them to understand their connection to *ableben*, *verenden*, and struggle. Perhaps their connection is nominal. Perhaps idle talk from the They just categorizes them within an existentially concealed zone, firmly encased by present-at-hand analyses that focus on more psychological components

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<sup>132</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 91.

<sup>133</sup> Fanon, 91.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

that emphasize their fear of *ableben* and their alleged endurance of struggle. For instance, Fanon examines the *inferiority complex* (a psychological concept) experienced by blacks who went through the pressures and violence of colonialism. One of the first aspects of this complex is a two-fold experiencing of oneself through one's self-reflection and the reflection of whites.

The black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow Blacks, the other with the Whites. A black man behaves differently with a white man than he does with another black man. There is no doubt whatsoever that this fissiparousness is a direct consequence of the colonial undertaking.<sup>135</sup>

The black man engages with this intense fusion of dichotomous gazes. However, this is an ontical report about "the black man." It is valuable, and it helps us understand Fanon's experience, but it does not tell us about the "being of the black man." To an extent, Fanon's description can help us understand the experiences of the black man, but once such a report goes beyond him, the report moves from his existential space to an existentiell space about the black man. Thus, while it helps us understand Fanon, the description may only serve as idle talk regarding the black experience. At that point, we risk concealing a different kind of existential situation for Dasein only because we may be using the given report to provide us with a blanket overview of individual Dasein that resembles the author.

I argue for de-layering the concealment of Dasein's existential plight so that Dasein can deliberate about the issue of its existence being genuine to its everyday existence, which is the main thrust of authentic Being-a-problem. As noted earlier, inauthentic Being-a-problem has not dealt with removing fear or the *Gerede* about *verenden* and *ableben*. Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem must disclose itself in an authentic way by resolutely facing itself in *Angst*. In removing the fear first, Dasein is closer to dealing with *Angst* and then closer to the "moment of

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 1.

vision” in which it can claim its present in a resolute fashion. And for a racial identity, this means distancing oneself from the present-at-hand thematizing about its Being. Removing the path concealing layers from optical reports allows us to better recognize how idle talk about fear existentials imposes itself onto individuals, which is a dynamic that lends itself to marginal appropriation. An example of marginal appropriation is when other people make historically marginalized individuals believe in their present marginalization by trying to save them from injustice. This kind of gaze is like the notion of a “savior complex,” where one identifies the injustice against another person and steps in to save that individual from enduring more injustice. Such a gaze is different from the kind of white gaze that Fanon talks about because the white gaze has no goodwill involved: it is a matter of a person objectifying another person to siphon off that person’s humanity, to make that person feel less like a person. For example, Fanon writes,

So what are we getting at? Quite simply that when Blacks make contact with the white world a certain sensitizing action takes place. If the psychic structure is fragile, we observe a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person. His actions are destined for “the Other” (in the guise of the white man) since only “the Other” can enhance his status and give him self-esteem at the ethical level.<sup>136</sup>

Fanon’s assessment of the gaze severs him from his “actional” quality. It makes him think twice and “check” himself. Fanon becomes obligated to live through another person’s gaze.

Heidegger’s point recalls that Dasein is lived by the world. “Dasein, as a they-self, ‘lived’ by the common-sense ambiguity of that publicness in which nobody resolves upon anything, but which has always made its decision” (345/299). Regarding inauthentic Bap, one is a walking problem pleading to be solved, allowing us to see how Fanon fits within the iBap category as he tries to secure his self-esteem and sense of ethics through the white man. The “savior’s gaze” also

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<sup>136</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 132.

removes the “actional” quality of a person by “leaping in” for a Dasein reduced to his fear existentiell, judging Dasein by an ontical race report. The savior’s gaze is “good” for the savior because the savior understands its service to the fear existentiell; thus, when saviors “leap in” to help they are doing something positive for the bearer of the fear existentiell. This “leaping in” for iBap is also an imposition as it may even force such a Dasein to think through the inauthentic Being-a-problem inquiry that I have been discussing thus far, compelling one to ask, “Am I a problem?” The savior’s gaze, guided by a race report that is both psychologically and historically motivated, “takes over” and robs Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem of a sense of agency about controlling its situation. This “leaping in” affects Dasein by reinforcing the fear of death notes (*verenden* and *ableben*). In Dasein-with, other Dasein that leap in for inauthentic Being-a-problem are saying, “You are a suffering subject. I can handle your fear for you.” However, for Dasein to resolutely deal with its existence, it must face that fear and continually claim itself as authentically Being-a-problem to extinguish that fear. Leaping ahead is different. In this kind of solicitude that comes from *Mitsein*, what Dasein does for the Other is “leap ahead of him [*ihm vorausspringt*] in his existentiell potentiality-for-Being, not in order to take away his ‘care’ but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time” (158/122). Dasein does this for other Dasein that are iBap by not participating in the fear-laden racial discourse. In this lack of participation, Dasein will relate to other Dasein in its existentiell possibility to be authentic, “not a ‘*what*’ with which he is concerned” (159/122). By not participating in racial *Gerede*, Dasein exhibits the kind of solicitude that “helps the Other to become transparent to himself *in* his care and to become *free for* it” (159/122). Given the distinction between “leaping in” and “leaping ahead” as it pertains to the “savior’s gaze,” we can see how individuals who profess to be “allies” can be thought of as “leaping in.” Also evident is that race reports perform a similar

kind of “leaping in” in the broad covering over that is performed by such ontical reporting. Such reports are used to “save” the fear existentiell Dasein, yet they do not lay a path for Dasein to eliminate that fear from their identity in a way that allows individuals to be authentic.

### **Authentic Being-a-problem and the Problematizing of Concepts from Race Reports**

The concept of authentic Being-a-problem as an existentiell helps us re-evaluate the dynamics and utility of concepts like white privilege, black/white binaries, racism, and prejudice within U.S. racial discourse. So far, I have reassessed how marginality is discussed and appropriated by appealing to distinctions between inauthentic Bap and authentic Bap. I have done this by examining how influential ontical reports are when we examine marginality from the perspective of race. Essentially, an ontical report sets up a way of talking about issues, and this way tends to conceal Dasein’s existentiality. From Frantz Fanon, we have seen how ontical race reports utilize individual psychological profiles linked to a fear existentiell. We have also seen the *Gerede* about certain fear existentiells and how this talk produces ambiguity by conflating historical and personal experience with the talk about marginality. Because white privilege, black/white binaries, and racism are dominating the intellectual landscape in the United States, aBap can help us understand our specific racial dynamics. I use Charles Mills as an entry point to elaborate on what these terms may mean. In *Blackness Visible* Mills discusses white privilege and the inability of whites to understand their privilege. Mills writes,

Without even recognizing that it is doing so, Western philosophy abstracts *away* from what has been the central feature of the lives of Africans transported against their will to the Americas: the denial of black humanity and the reactive, defiant assertion of it. Secure in the uncontested *sum* of the leisurely Cartesian derivation, whites find it hard to understand the metaphysical rage and urgency of the *non*-Cartesian *sums* of those invisible native sons and daughters who, since nobody knows their name, have to be the men who cry “I am!” and the women who demand “And ain’t I a woman?” From the beginning, therefore, the problems faced by those categorized as persons and those categorized as sub-persons will be radically different. One can no longer speak with

quite such assurance of *the* problems of philosophy; rather, these are problems for *particular* groups of human beings, and for others, there will be different kinds of problems that are far more urgent. A relativizing of the discipline's traditional hierarchies of importance and centrality thus becomes necessary.<sup>137</sup>

Mills discusses a sense of privilege from the Cartesian *cogito* and how whites do not understand the “metaphysical rage” of those reduced to nothingness by Descartes’ formulation.<sup>138</sup> His comments about this kind of philosophical privilege are consistent with what I have discussed so far regarding the features of ontical race reports. Whites are generalized as being “Secure in the uncontested *sum* of the leisurely Cartesian derivation,” implying how Descartes’ formulation of the “cogito” sprang from a relaxed state, likely due to his being white. Meanwhile, Mills affirms that non-whites are in an emergency situation, where rage and defiance become the cornerstones of their philosophical input. Mills’ analysis speaks to the indisputable historical fact of African slavery, but he allows that history of a people to take over individual existential situations that, within the category of blackness, undoubtedly hold radical differences. Ironically, Mills wants to affirm radical differences between groups (whites and blacks), but he could go further and examine the existentially radical differences of people within the assumed black category. However, this is not his project. His project, as I have noted with respect to race reports, relies on the monolithic categorizing of individuals. With his project, he can arrive at the urgency and difference of non-white philosophical problems versus the leisure of white philosophical problems by preserving generalizations based on historical reports about races.

Mills’ commentary is also consistent with the general notion of white privilege. In their article, “Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible,” Stephanie M. Wildman

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<sup>137</sup> Charles Mills, *Blackness Visible*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998),10.

<sup>138</sup> Mills on “metaphysical rage” in *Blackness Visible*, 10. Rene Descartes’ writes in *Meditations on First Philosophy* “Here I make my discovery: thought exists; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am: I exist--this is certain,” (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 19.

and Adrienne D. Davis write that “Whites do not look at the world through a filter of racial awareness, even though whites are, of course, a race. The power to ignore race, when white is the race, is a privilege, a societal advantage.”<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Mills points out that whites have a kind of metaphysical obtuseness because they are “secure in the sum.”<sup>140</sup> Both points of view about white privilege tell us that 1) whites cannot see their privilege; 2) whites have a societal advantage that lies in their inability to see race. Others, like Jose Medina in *The Epistemology of Resistance*, have argued that this inability of whites is an epistemological disadvantage and vice that makes them less knowledgeable about the world.<sup>141</sup> These various views on the matter of white privilege reveal that the terms used within an ontical race report construct a racial binary divide between those “in the know” (non-whites) and those “not in the know” (whites). With discussions of white privilege, we have a binary within a race report. Individual assessment of racial experiences is disregarded, which is a critical change because in the previous section we had Frantz Fanon’s work advancing individualized assessments of one’s racial experiences to uncover existential dimensions in experience, yet the concept of white privilege seems to inherently deny individual reflexivity. The individualistic point is removed to advance a larger systemic feature about white privilege: It is a product of a system of white supremacy. To resolve this debate between those seemingly categorized as “in the know” versus those “not in the know,” we can let our ontical affairs dictate how we existentially confront issues like white privilege. By taking this approach, we can cache out the pragmatic fruit of white privilege for

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<sup>139</sup> *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, “Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible,” Stephanie M. Wildman and Adrienne D. Davis, ed. by Richard Delgado, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 577.

<sup>140</sup> Mills writes, in *Blackness Visible* that whites are “secure in the uncontested sum of the leisurely Cartesian derivation” 9.

<sup>141</sup> Jose Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 30.

Dasein on an average and practical level, rather than imbuing our everydayness with the concept of white privilege.

The concept of white supremacy has an essential function within a racial binary because it severs us from the individual approach to assessing racism from the individual perspectives of white people; thus, white supremacy places racism on a systemic level. For instance, in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic discuss the basic tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that 1) “racism is ordinary, not aberrational—‘normal science,’ the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience, of most people of color in this country,” and 2) “most would agree that our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the dominant group.”<sup>142</sup> From these tenets, we see that the field of CRT assumes a binary report of dominance and subordination, that most people of color in this country experience racism on an everyday level, and that this is part of a system of “white-over-color” ascendancy. Critical Race Theory assumes white supremacy. If one were to remove the systemic assumption of these tenets, individual determinations of racial dynamics are left over. However, to have individual reflexivity left over would mean that issues in racism would lean towards non-systemic and more subjective assessments. Yet, if we remove an individual perspective from discussing racial dynamics and keep the systemic tenet then white supremacy is automated, operating irrespective of whether someone holds a racist position and regardless of whether a racial minority feels that he or she is going through a form of racialized injustice. Once again, there are two results: 1) A white person has white privilege because of white supremacy, irrespective of individual recognition of it; 2) A non-white person is, in virtue of their non-whiteness, automatically thrown into an unjust system of white supremacy,

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<sup>142</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 7.



irrespective of whether they recognize this or believe it to be true. With the first result, we have a sort of “racial surrender” to white supremacy where if one is white, one must surrender to the racial dynamics of a system of white supremacy. With the second result, we have another kind of racial surrender to white supremacy where if one is black then one resigns oneself to the idea that the white supremacist system operates by subordinating the black individual, whether or not this subordination is expressed in that non-white individual’s ontical affairs. An example of the first result is from Wildman and Davis, who both write that “I simply believe that no matter how hard I work at not being racist, I still am. Because part of racism is systemic, I benefit from the privilege that I am struggling to see.”<sup>143</sup> An example of the second result comes from Shelby Steele, writer of *The Content of Our Character*, who says

I see in people’s eyes from time to time, and often hear in the media, what amounts to a judgment of people like myself: You have moved into the great amorphous middle class and lost your connection to your people and your cultural roots. You have become a genuine invisible man. This is a judgment with many obvious dimensions, many arrows of guilt. But, in essence, it charges me with selfishness and inauthenticity.<sup>144</sup>

As Steele points out, by living as if one does not recognize this system, then he is charged “with selfishness and inauthenticity.” Steele’s personal reflection also denotes a common element in racial discourse from both the media and the judgment of others: For one to be authentic in a certain racial group means one must subscribe to assumptions of what authenticity means. This is like when Heidegger writes about ambiguity that “Everyone is acquainted with what is up for discussion and what occurs, and everyone discusses it” (217/173). “Everyone” is acquainted with the idea that an unjust system exists. If one does not believe this or appears to benefit from that system, then one’s authenticity is questioned. Dasein’s daily engagement in the world and

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<sup>143</sup> Wildman and Davis, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, 577.

<sup>144</sup> Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 22.

with other Dasein is disregarded with such assumptions, as demonstrated by Steele's reflection. The acceptance of such assumptions suggests that even the everyday Being-in-the-world of inauthentic Being-a-problem would possibly be diminished in favor of more systemic analyses and assumptions about racism. Furthermore, such assumptions make Dasein's reflexivity about its life practically unnecessary for understanding racial dynamics. The "race report," and the theoretical assumptions made within it, are already thinking for Dasein.

## **Conclusion**

Ontical race reports are part of the problem regarding how we understand racial dynamics in the United States. Fear existentiells help produce ontical race reports and ontical race reports help sustain fear existentiells on an academic level. Meanwhile, the individual existence reported on has two choices: 1) subscribe to the talk; 2) keep silent so as not to participate in the talk. The issue is that our racial discourse takes just the *Gerede* and fear as enough to believe oneself and to believe others as marginalized. Thus, if idle talk is concerned with "white supremacy," racial binaries, and historical facts about marginalization, then the mere link between those concepts and the one's identity is thought to be enough to make one marginalized or oppressed. However, this obfuscates Dasein's ownmost Being because the concepts of racism and marginalization do not disclose Dasein's ability to choose itself, but instead act as external present-at-hand concepts that speak about Dasein's Being from outside of Dasein's ownmost.

Linking Dasein to a present-at-hand category of marginalization becomes a work of *Gerede*, ambiguity, and curiosity. Dasein, marked as an inauthentic Being-a-problem, is "everywhere and nowhere," as almost anyone can fall under that category by claiming marginalization (221/177). Iris Marion Young wrote that, "all oppressed people suffer some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs,

thoughts, and feelings.”<sup>145</sup> As discussed in my introduction, this is a broad narrative. If oppressed Dasein is hindered in any manner of expressing needs, thoughts, and feelings then Dasein is oppressed. With a view to oppression, Dasein ambiguously knows all it needs to know about oppression. In curiosity, this oppression can be experienced with little depth, so long as Dasein gets some sense of hindrance in expressing itself. In this way, oppressed Dasein is “in a mode of groundless floating” because it just as easily could not feel oppressed; therefore, Dasein cannot genuinely own such an oppression if it is grounded on a generalization about suffering, rather than a genuine connection that is constitutive of Dasein’s everyday ontical affairs (221/177). As such, terms like marginalization have too much explanatory power and may be rendered meaningless. Furthermore, if the ambiguity continues, then there may be real consequences that affect Dasein who are genuinely and authentically Being-a-problem. For example, an undocumented Central American family that is split up at the U.S./Mexico border endures a form of authentically Being-a-problem in the sense that there is a genuine present moment to attend to and own up to that the Dasein of that family can see as their own Situation and they can see this through the *Augenblick*. Discourses of marginalization and oppression that are “everywhere and nowhere” put genuine claims to marginalization at risk of existential concealment through the proliferation of that idea that marginalization and oppression *can* be anything one lays any kind of claim to.

Distinctions are necessary for practical and ethical reasons because they allow us to make determinations about groups and individuals, so we can focus and attend to people in need. Thus, it may seem as if we are theoretically gaining something by pointing out differences of privilege and power in a racialized system. However, the gain may not outweigh the cost of

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<sup>145</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 40.

perpetuating concepts like marginalization and death where they might not be genuine to Dasein's ownmost Being, thereby concealing the existential plight of people who may need to be seen the most so we can begin to help them to alleviate their conditions. The problem is that by talking about race, oppression, and marginalization in the tottering ontical reporting way, we conceal the individuals we try to help through the discourse that seems designed to free people of such marginality and this dynamic is precisely what puts these race reports in crisis. Handling this crisis will require a reevaluation of how we use these reports to understand Dasein.

Authentic Being-a-problem is incompatible with the concept of white supremacy, racial binaries, and terms like "white privilege" because each of those items requires that an individual interprets them into his daily existence. What if they are not? What then? Is Dasein not authentically its racial identity, discussed as under threat, because it cannot claim these issues as one's ownmost? Such questions come about because the concepts originate in a racial discourse that is in crisis. The purpose of such concepts is to diagnose the products of racism on a systemic level, with its focus on race reports, the narratives about how racism epistemologically spreads are paramount. For example, the idea of white supremacy is theorized as a kind of metaphorical contagion, which turns white people into unwitting racists, or at the very least, beneficiaries of white supremacy. Wildman's and Davis' points follow from this as they infer that white supremacy makes a white person racist no matter what. The notion of authentic Being-a-problem is incompatible with these views because it requires the *Augenblick*, a more primordial form of Du Bois' "second sight," about the very assumptions thought to be self-evident by philosophers of race and critical race theorists. Authentic Being-a-problem frames issues of racism regarding *Gerede* about fear existentiells, and whether they genuinely or non-genuinely are being discussed about Dasein. Because authentic Being-a-problem frames racial

dynamics in this way, the accompanying fear of white supremacy and racism is relegated to being a byproduct of the phenomenon of idle talk. From the perspective of authentic Being-a-problem, the terms themselves (i.e., “white supremacy,” “white privilege,” and the like) are built around ontico-existential categories and assumptions that cannot deal with the question about the meaning of Being for Dasein because the terms reinforce present-at-hand thematizing, rather than freeing Dasein to both authentically choose and see its own Situation.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated that an existentiell, grounded in thrown-projection, is an identity. I showed in chapter 2 that an identity, as an existentiell, has existential features that ontologically satisfy what is commonly referred to as an “identity.” I subjected my reevaluation of an identity as an existentiell to Mariana Ortega’s critique of Heidegger’s conception of Dasein in BT as being too abstract to elaborate on marginalized identities like a racial identity. However, Heidegger’s idea of an existentiell, reevaluated as an identity that is founded on thrown-projection, can account for the abstraction critique by incorporating Dasein’s history as one of its ontical affairs, as well as its culture, skin color, ethnicity, and race. Additionally, the ontical circumstances of Dasein’s existence help shape its ontical affairs, therefore, Dasein’s living through a culture, having values, shaped by a past, tied to different personal and public commitments, are all part of what makes Dasein’s ontical affairs what they are. With some of these circumstances, Dasein finds itself either taking hold of the possibilities from them or neglecting them. Dasein finds itself in a situation where its issue is always about being these possibilities or not, and this is where we have the idea that Dasein can have an identity, more specifically, a racial identity.

In chapter 3, I explained how *Gerede* and fear forge this racial identity in a certain way, making a “fear existentiell.” I explained that fear is Dasein’s fallen mood that influences the *Gerede* about Dasein’s identity. Heidegger explains a tripartite notion of fear: the fearsome, the definiteness of our fear, and what is feared about. These types of fear participate in Dasein’s

racial identity. Dasein deals with the “fearsome” when it is threatened by something or some Dasein. Dasein wrestles with the definiteness of fear when concerned about impending threats in its world. In “what is feared about” Dasein fears on behalf of another Dasein. Dasein’s racial identity is always subject to these kinds of fear and is “taken as” a present-at-hand threat, even though that is not Dasein’s mode of existence. Rather, Dasein’s mode is in Being-with; however, this is often concealed when Dasein takes another Dasein as a present-at-hand threat to be concerned with. Present-at-hand conceptions come in the form of taking Dasein as a “body” that is subject to destruction. I used Ta-Nehisi Coates’ work on “bodies” as an example of Dasein being taken as an object that is feared about, but I observed how this is a fallen obfuscation of Dasein’s ownmost Being. Rather than revelatory, such a fallen understanding blocks Dasein from being disclosed in its existentiality. I used Malcolm X’s speech “The Ballot or the Bullet” to demonstrate how his critique of Americanism is a way to understand how black Americans have been marked by society as objects of fear, those for other Dasein to be threatened by. I used Heidegger’s notion of spatiality to point out that this kind of phenomenon occurs because Dasein has been construed as a spatial object in relation to other subjects and that Dasein has certain notions and ideas (however prejudicial or racist) of identity that are nearer to it, which help it view other Dasein as threats to fear. I call this phenomenon “societal de-severance.”

In chapter 4, I showed that “death notes” are often attached to a fear existentiell, explaining that the *Gerede* about these notes are manifestations of two concepts of death from Heidegger: 1) *verenden*, the death of an organic body; 2) *ableben*, Dasein’s human life passing away. I showed that *Gerede* in social media and in academia discuss a fear existentiell as sometimes “bodies” and sometimes “lives,” sometimes fear existentiells are discussed as both

“bodies” and “lives.” The discussion of Dasein as a “body” represents *verenden* discourse about Dasein’s death and reduces Dasein to a mere ontic entity, effacing Dasein’s claim to its ontological existence. Dasein becomes the “body” that will die, but as discussed in a present-at-hand way where it turns into a theme for a marginalized racial identity, as in when one discusses the destruction of the “black body” or the “brown body.” Dasein also turns into a present-at-hand theme when construed as a “life,” hence, the discourse of racialized communities as “lives” under threat is a fallen discourse that obfuscates Dasein’s ownmost Being.

In chapter 5, I discussed how fear, as a fallen mood, and *Gerede*, as fallen discourse, create what I call “Being-a-problem.” However, this Being-a-problem is inauthentic, and Dasein’s issue is how it can reclaim itself as its ownmost Being despite being inauthentically covered up by fear and *Gerede*. I discussed the ways in which Dasein is inauthentic in its Being-a-problem, and how the usual way of understanding Heidegger’s concept of Dasein takes a different turn here because of how the *Gerede* about inauthentic Being-a-problem stifles disruptions into *Angst*, that mood that allows Dasein to confront itself so as to reclaim the possibility of being authentic.

In chapter 6, I examined how Dasein can be an authentic Being-a-problem existentiell after a seemingly bleak outcome for inauthentic Being-a-problem in chapter 5, wherein it looked like there was no exit for inauthentic Dasein to emerge out of that existentiell mode. However, I proposed an exit that tried not to make the movement from authenticity to inauthenticity a psychologically willful decision in the common sense understanding of choice. My solution for a way toward authenticity comes from Du Bois’ “second sight” where one sees the discourse for what it is in comparison to one’s daily existence and then calls it out. This, I hold, is consistent with Heidegger’s *Being and Time* in which Dasein begins to compare the ordinary interpretation



of death with the lack of such a phenomenon occurring in Dasein's ontical affairs, which should suggest a disconnect for Dasein. This disconnect may reveal the possibility that death is more constitutive of one's existence than the way death seems to be advanced in society. For Du Bois, "second sight" is an ability that Du Bois observes about black Americans in which they can see through the veil of interpretations about their identity as Americans. I took this as an onto-existential model for what Heidegger calls the *Augenblick*, Dasein's "seeing" its Situation, which compels it to take action by choosing to choose its existential of Being-a-problem. The *Augenblick* allows Dasein to "see" and then return to its Situation as having responded to a call to conscience that makes Dasein choose itself in an authentic sense.

I discussed how the call of conscience presents an unusual problem as Dasein does not present-at-handedly understand the call to conscience only to then choose authenticity. This would be inconsistent with Heidegger. Rather, my solution is that Dasein examines the incongruence between *Gerede* and its undifferentiated everydayness. This helps Dasein reframe the *Gerede* as an obviously inconsistent talk when compared to daily existence. My solution is consistent with Heidegger's basic point about using ordinary interpretations to uncover one's averageness, so that Dasein may win itself again. Furthermore, when it comes to the specific issue of inauthentic Being-a-problem, we have a fear existential with a hyperawareness of the ordinary interpretations of death as the body perishing and the life passing away. Such interpretations of death become so bold and patent in their presentation to iBap, that a phenomenological distinction between the two may lead to Dasein's distancing itself from the fear promoted by such idle talk. Once such distancing occurs, Dasein though still inauthentic as Being-a-problem is at least attempting to prepare itself to hear a genuine and authentic call that will reveal its Situation. In that effort, Dasein can quiet the chatter about its supposed death,

which then allows it to be silent. Through silence Dasein can prepare itself to hear the call of conscience to be an authentic Being-a-problem.

In chapter 7, I showed how the constructs from race reports can only go so far in helping us understand the existential situation of racial identities. In fact, such reports support masking Dasein in a fallen discourse. I discuss Frantz Fanon as an example of a psychological kind of race report and how he subscribes to both psychological profiles of the black man and black/white racial binaries. The binary does not reckon with what belongs to Dasein in a genuine way, but instead promotes an idle talk that even conceals other race reports. The fact that this happens is, I hold, an issue that requires more attention in a field that is increasingly focusing on the plight of the marginalized, especially under our current presidential administration. For the oppressed, bearing existentiells with a history of subjugation, enduring the oppressive treatment of others, and dealing with the closing of actual material possibilities means that for Dasein as inauthentic Being-a-problem, existence becomes an issue for it. While I examine these race reports using Heidegger's terminology of inauthenticity, existentiells, and the present-at-hand, the revelations are as follows: When one attempts to interrogate the meaning of Dasein's racial identity out of Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*, one notices how racial discourses that incorporate death, marginalization, and oppression talk inevitably hide an existential Situation that authentically belongs to Dasein.

### **Critiques**

I conclude with some critiques and replies. The first major critique of my work would be that the idea of inauthentic Being-a-problem makes the *feeling* of death less real, less important. This critique would suggest that my argument is downplaying the suffering and death of marginalized and peripheral people. This concern can be restated in the following question: Am

I, the writer, disregarding the feelings and stress that people of color feel about the issue of their individual deaths in society? No. Instead, I argue that my thesis demonstrates how inauthentic Being-a-problem, that fear existentiell with the death notes of *verenden* and *ableben*, devalues the life-shattering experience of *Angst* where one understands one's self as Being-toward-death; in such devaluation, one's *Sein zum Tod* is covered by a death that is always about to end, a conception of "body" and "life" that is the *unalive*, yet still in society. There is a chance that Dasein could, as inauthentic Being-a-problem, use this discourse to somehow access this *Angst* that would allow Dasein to be resolute toward the *Augenblick* and then be fearlessly Being-a-problem (aBap). However, Dasein would have to separate from this mood and *Gerede*. There would have to be a disruption, but this returns to a problem we already examined: The "loudest idle talk" about iBap's *verenden* and *ableben* conceals that disruption. The first step then is to extricate oneself from the fear of *verenden* and *ableben*. This would be a step toward the goal of authentic Being-a-problem, where inauthentic Being-a-problem is modified from originating in a fallen discourse and from being a *das Man* influenced existentiell to Dasein having no fear in *choosing* itself as Being-a-problem. It is with making this choice that Dasein, as authentic Being-a-problem, can actually *affirm* its racial identity and genuinely confront its problematic status in society, as demonstrated by the work of W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois does not open *The Souls of Black Folk* by saying that he is not a problem in society. He affirms this status and then uses it to problematize the idea of *his* Being-a-problem. I find this to be an emancipatory approach to one's racial identity, and I believe my work provides both an existentiell and existential justification of the necessity of one's racial identity to be *free* from a totalizing racial discourse that obfuscates one's situation. In this freedom, Dasein can "win" its racialized existentiell back from being lost in fear.

All claims to racism and marginalization are not the same. A philosophical analysis of racial discourse must confront the problem of false equivocations about racial marginalization as we see increased claims of racism and prejudice throughout society. Such an analysis would also allow us to observe what may be an apparent disconnect between claimants' lives and their racist claims. Once again, we cannot say of another's racial experience that he or she is *not* going through something, but we can observe the appearance of a disconnect and ask questions about it. We cannot judge someone to be authentic or inauthentic. However, through Heidegger's analysis of how fear and *Gerede* operate, we can delve into claims that clearly demonstrate that racial identities ought to be in a perpetual state of emergency. And in inquiring about such urgent claims, we can attempt to maintain the different claims to racial oppression so as not to falsely equivocate what could be drastically different claims to racial experiences. Maintaining distinctions in what individuals go through, although tedious, would allow us to have the kind of racial discourse that requires individuals to "see" one another in a way that does not restrict them to present-at-hand categories of identity.

The second critique of my view is that the suffering and death that people endure and/or find themselves experiencing are relegated to the level of existentiells in my account and so thought of as *unreal*. This critique may come from a misunderstanding of the function of existentiells and existentials as discussed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. For Heidegger and, per our discussion in chapter 2, existentiells are ways of being. We, as Dasein, inhabit these roles. We genuinely perform them. They belong to us because we are thrown into them, but we come to a point in our lives where we may have to question how genuine they are to our ontical affairs. What prompts us to question this is not only our relationship to these identities, but in observing how others relate to those identities. As Being-with (*Mitsein*), Dasein is always

already with other Dasein because this is a structural feature of who Dasein is. And as Dasein-with (*Mitdasein*), Dasein engages others in the world, always sharing in each other's projects, even when we do not think we are doing so. As such, Dasein is structured into socially constructing various things we engage with in the world, one of those things being existentiells. Inauthentic Being-a-problem is an existentiell that is not just made up by a single Dasein, but many Dasein participate in it. Historical narratives, prejudices, stereotypes, and fears are all items involved in the creating and sharing done by Dasein in their Dasein-with, grounded in Being-with. Dasein has grown up in these existentiells and so is socially constructed to act through them as well. This is all real. Heidegger, by discussing *Gerede* and existentiells, does not say that such concepts are fake. He simply says we are swept up in talk and absorbed into a world in which we have lost ourselves, which suggests that the identity concepts we traditionally subscribe to may not genuinely belong to us.

This critique might continue with the claim that I am still reducing something like systemic racism and prejudicial practices in institutions to idle talk. One might say that white supremacy exists with or without an existential analysis of fear, death, and Being-a-problem, and that nothing will change by analyzing these real life concerns of racism and prejudice with terms of inauthenticity and a fallen discourse.

My reply to this critique moves from the practical explanation of my project to the existential one. We have all been talked about and gossiped about in our lives. People have talked about you. For example, perhaps someone has said that you are not a good driver and, upon hearing this, you start thinking twice about your driving techniques, second guessing yourself on the road. Let's add to this situation and say that now the gossip is that you are a dangerous driver, that your being on the road puts all other drivers at risk. Let's say that some of

those drivers are told the same thing about *their* driving skills. We now have an atmosphere of fear on the road, which makes many people on the road defensive and overly cautious when driving, to the point of even causing a couple of accidents and hours of heavy traffic. Now imagine that we are no longer talking about people gossiping about driving that leads to fear, but now we are discussing people gossiping about racial identities and how this perpetuates fear. In both cases we have a kind of idle talk. In some cases, we might reply that we *need* to know certain things about drivers, and that, analogously, we *need* to know about racism, marginalization, and oppression as they afflict racial identities.

I think that this last need is not controversial. I agree with that need. However, we also *need* to know what that same discourse does *not* tell us, namely, how that needed discourse tends to obfuscate the existential situation of the individual “gossiped” about. As Ralph Ellison points out in *Invisible Man*, “When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.”<sup>146</sup> Saying that systemic racism is real does not change the *need* to evaluate issues of what a discourse about death and suffering mean to Dasein who appear to be especially targeted by such a fear and death discourse regarding their individual identities. When we idly talk about systemic issues and then connect them with *ableben* and *verenden*, we phenomenologically cover Dasein with empirical and psychological generalizations. These *path* assessments encase Dasein in inauthenticity. If we want to “see” others in *their* situation then we must be cautious to not phenomenologically construct an edifice of fear in front of their existence because such constructions risk covering up Dasein, and we end up merely seeing our construction of that Dasein reflected at us. Thus, a critique of such discourse is needed for the sake of practically quieting the concealing features of

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<sup>146</sup> Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 3.

such talk. Existentially, quieting aspects of this talk in our lives means we can prepare ourselves to hear a call to reclaim our Situation. Existentially, by preparing, we give ourselves the opportunity to authentically make a choice to affirm our identities, which means we can affirm how we exist in the world, even if it means we affirm that we are authentically Being-a-problem.

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