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Nostalgia and (In)authentic Community: A Bataillean Answer to the Heidegger Controversy

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Nostalgia and (In)authentic Community: A Bataillean Answer to the Heidegger Controversy

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
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<u>Abstract</u>

Heidegger's relationship with Nazism has been debated since the 1930s. In the late 1930s, Georges Bataille wrote an incomplete text that would have added to these debates, "Critique of Heidegger: Critique of a philosophy of fascism." I draw on this fragment and Bataille's writings from this era in order to develop a fuller critique of Heidegger and his relationship to fascism. This expanded critique completes the promise of Bataille's original fragment, offering a full Bataillean criticism of Heidegger and displaying the connections between his philosophy and Bataille's understanding of fascism. This critique hinges on Heidegger's concept of authenticity and community, as a Bataillean reading would interpret these ideas as mere inauthentic useful concepts in the name of a nostalgic vision of the ancient Greeks. Heidegger wanted to fight against modern technological alienation—exemplified by the modern sciences and founded on subject based modern metaphysics—by returning to a more originary relationship with Being, but, on Bataille's reading, without the will to pervert modern ideology and the political system. This desire for a return renders his *Destruktion* of the history of metaphysics means to an end, further calcifying preexisting values. As a result of this inability to pervert, Heidegger's return promotes the reconstitution of contemporary political structures with a strong centralized authority figure empowered to guide this nostalgic return.

Introduction

The debate around Heidegger and Nazism has been raging since he joined the party on May 1, 1933. The primary question is whether his magnum opus, *Being and Time*, lends itself to fascism or whether Heidegger's time in the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, or NSDAP for short) was merely an episode in his life—unrelated to his phenomenology. France has been debating Heidegger since the 1940s, at least. Periodically new publications reignite this debate beyond the confines of the academy: especially Victor Farias' *Heidegger and Nazism* (1987), Emmanuel Faye's *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* (2005) and Martin Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* (2014).

One voice absent from this debate is Georges Bataille. In the latter half of the 1930s, Bataille wrote and partially edited a text that was likely intended as an addendum to one of his books. What makes this text noteworthy are the title and its topic—"Critique of Heidegger: Critique of a philosophy of fascism." This is one of the few texts that Bataille wrote that directly criticizes or mentions Martin Heidegger. Bataille's "Propositions" only mentions Heideggerian time. *Inner Experience* offers a multitude of explicit references to Heidegger, but none of these are more than mere references, and no substantial criticism is offered in "Propositions" or *Inner Experience*. Bataille's later references to Heidegger are more substantial, but do not address the Nazi question. Thus, "Critique of Heidegger" offers the only sustained text on the thinker. It is obviously incomplete, containing summaries of themes to be explicated. The question then is, what is the benefit of focusing upon this incomplete and unpublished material? There are at least

three reasons to pursue this line of inquiry. First, there is little written on the relationship between these two figures. Heidegger is arguably the most important philosopher of the 20th century and Bataille, though often overlooked, had an important influence on arguably the next two greatest figures in twentieth-century continental philosophy—Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. The absence of scholarship on the relationship between Bataille and Heidegger is problematic, because they represent two prominent contemporary traditions, proto-postmodernism and phenomenology, respectively.

Second, this critique was written at a time of flux in the early French reception of Heidegger. The early 1930s saw cursory and celebratory readings of Heidegger. In the 1940s, Heidegger became a bigger name through the publication of Jean-Paul Sartre's early novels, plays, and *Being and Nothingness* (1943), but then he was read exclusively through the lens of Sartre's existential philosophy. Bataille's fragment long predates the first public debates about Heidegger's relationship to Nazis, the Denazification hearings. The only French criticisms to pre-date Bataille's critique are by Emmanuel Levinas and a few Marxist philosophers. For the latter, there is no contemporaneous text, for these criticisms were recounted later. My reconstruction of Bataille's critique, then, is an attempt to revive a train of thought and to contextualize an early critique of Heidegger in France.

Third, a thorough explanation of this text presents the possibility of rescuing Bataille from his own problem of fascism by explicating his own much misunderstood understanding of it. Bataille's critique of fascism is surprising and original considering the history of debate on the topic and later social philosophers' definitions of fascism. Walter Benjamin once claimed

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that Bataille "worked for the fascist."[1] This statement is indicative of just how abnormal

Bataille's political thought was for the era. In fact, Bataille was clearly an opponent of fascism

with his multiple publications critical of the political movement. However, the fact that he was

also critical of liberalism and was too extreme for the Surrealists and Marxists of his time led

many to assume that he was in favor of extreme right-wing politics. By expanding on what

Bataille meant by the term "fascist" I will not only clarify Bataille's own political views, but

enable a better understanding of Bataille's reading of Heidegger's fascism.

This dissertation will twice contextualize Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger." First, I will

expand on the early reception of Heidegger in France in an attempt to contextualize Bataille's

work. The French reception of Heidegger originates with a chapter in Georges Gurvitch's *Les

Tendances actuelles de la Philosophie Allemande*, continues with Emmanuel Levinas' response

to Gurvitch, expands with important translations of Heidegger, and culminates in the philosophy

of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. These readings form a French tradition that frames

Heidegger's thought as an anthropological exploration of the self in relation to society. I

examine the development of Heidegger's reception in France in order to identify the relevant

context: what materials Bataille is drawing on and what readings of Heidegger informed his

criticisms.

The second chapter will shift to Bataille's fragment, "Critique of Heidegger: Critique of a

philosophy of fascism." While this text purports to be about Heidegger, in reality Bataille is

drawing largely on secondary sources and Edmund Husserl to construct his reading of

Heidegger. As a result, the fragment can only provide some suggestive lines of inquiry

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[1] Giorgio Agamben, "Bataille et le paradoxe de la souveraineté", *Liberté – Montreal* 38, no. 3 (1996): 88; my
translation.

concerning the question of Heidegger's relationship to Nazism, for it draws upon a misinterpretation of Heidegger. Interpretation of the fragment to this point has been restricted to an essay by Stefanos Geroulanos published alongside his English translation of "Critique of Heidegger." Geroulanos' essay, "The Anthropology of Exit: Bataille on Heidegger and Fascism," addresses Bataille's fragments and Heidegger's relationship to Nazism; however, I contend that Geroulanos misinterprets some key sections of the fragment and fails to fully explicate Bataille's criticism. As a result, Geroulanos misses the opportunity to voice a full Bataillean answer to the Nazism question. To fill this void, I will use Bataille's fragment and Geroulanos's essay as a jumping off point for the development of a thorough critique.

Chapter Three addresses four different issues. First, I will prepare the way for a fuller development of a Bataillean critique of Heidegger and Nazism by offering a Bataillean critique of fascism as such, specifically, National Socialism. Bataille offers a unique understanding of fascism that is in tension with other anti-fascist, leftist, and communist thinkers. Thus, the second part of the chapter will address the accusations that Bataille supported fascism, whether directly or not. By countering arguments claiming that Bataille is a fascist himself, I can reaffirm the legitimacy of his understanding of fascism. Visceral reactions to Bataille depended in part on the assumption that he was a closet fascist providing a bizarre definition of it in order to avoid guilt. Most of these arguments hinge on three ideas: 1) a fear of social effervescence leading to fascism; 2) Bataille's use of the language of *Kriegsideologie*—the conflict-laden language popular between the World Wars; 3) an assumption that Bataille's politics promote a standard conception of the state.

The last two sections of chapter three build upon the foundation of the dynamics of fascism offered by Bataille. These latter sections are divided between an explication of the

general tension between the two figures and a direct critique of Heidegger's political thought from a Bataillean perspective. I focus on three primary, interconnected themes in which Bataille is in tension with Heidegger. The first is that Heidegger's Dasein and its relation with *Mitsein* (Being-with) fail to break from the profane world of knowledge and work, according to Bataille.[2] Instead of tearing the self from the world of beings, Heidegger is firmly situated within the history of metaphysics of which *Being and Time* is critical.[3] This criticism runs deeper, as Bataille's concept of death and the self are intertwined with the death of others, but *Being and Time* fails fully explicate the communal aspect of Dasein. Yes, there is *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*, but the lack of an authentic form of Being-with is a glaring omission. This failure is reinforced by the fact that the anticipation of death is always an isolated and personal experience. Thus, for Heidegger death in a communal setting is contaminated with the chatter of *das Man*. Bataille would agree that this chatter is vapid and that the authentic experience of being-towards-death is beyond the confines of language, but he argues that being-towards-death can be a shared experience. All of these issues culminate in a general critique of the role of heritage, destiny, and authenticity in *Being and Time*. Bataille interprets Heidegger's authenticity as a disingenuous attempt to go beyond the worldly experience of the everyday from the confines of a comfortable fireside seat within professional academia.

The final chapter is a second contextualization. The purpose of this second contextualization is to place the Bataillean critique of Heidegger within the larger Heidegger controversy that continues to this day. I will situate the Bataillean critique among other voices,

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[2] I will not italicize "Dasein," as most English translations choose to leave it untranslated and treat it as a borrowed word. However, *Mitsein* is often translated as "Being-with." As such, my adoption of *Mitsein* will remain italicized, because it is the German term that is usually translated.

[3] My use of capitalization for the word "being" is to draw a distinction between two senses of the word. Speaking loosely, "being" indicates individual things or entities and "Being" indicates the characteristic or aspect that all beings share.

particularly Faye, that proclaim Heidegger's early philosophy as fascist at its core. While I think

there a case to be made here, I think figures like Faye overstate their case and ignore the larger

philosophical criticism and project that Heidegger pursued. The majority of this chapter will be

dedicated to finding general themes in the *Black Notebooks*. After exploring the implications of

the *Notebooks*, I address how these implications relate to the criticism of the last chapter. As a

result, this dissertation will offer a novel perspective on the long running Heidegger controversy,

which has been refreshed with the publication of the *Black Notebooks*.

Chapter I: Early French Reception of Heidegger

Even today there are varying interpretations of Martin Heidegger, yet despite or because of these differences he has become one of the most important philosophers of the last century. His influence has been seen across the philosophic spectrum and has varied over time and place. While there are now multiple schools of thought that interpret and use Heidegger in different ways—whether it is the Pittsburgh school's analytic reading, the phenomenological tradition, hermeneutics, et cetera—one tradition can be labeled "the French Heidegger," which from the beginning was an outlier. The French Heidegger gained influence following Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, but from the beginning it hinged on a series of curious interpretive choices. The earliest reception in France consists of mere mentions and references to a new German thinker, but the actual grappling with his magnum opus, *Being and Time*, does not begin until the Georges Gurvitch—an important figure in early 20th century sociology of law and knowledge—lectures, *Les Tendances actuelles de la Philosophie Allemande*, originally published in 1930. The lectures were dedicated to a multitude of phenomenologists, but the culmination of the course was to address the most novel thinker of that tradition, which at the time was Heidegger. The final chapter offered a cursory glance at the developments and depth of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

Emmanuel Levinas' early works on Edmund Husserl and Heidegger offer the next mentions of Heidegger in France. What separates Levinas' work from Gurvitch's is the laudatory nature and the depth in which Levinas addresses his subjects. If Gurvitch offered the

first focused reading, Levinas gave the French world its first close reading. He also gave the first French attempt to appropriate Heidegger for novel purposes in his book, *On Escape*. Jean Wahl's "Heidegger and Kierkegaard: An Investigation into the Original Elements of Heidegger's Philosophy" (1932) marks another early attempt to situate Heidegger in the philosophical tradition and to interpret his philosophy simultaneously. While not participating in the clear narrative of Gurvitch and Levinas' response, it does mark an influential existentialist reading. At the time, unless one were willing to read Heidegger in the original German, secondary sources such as those of Gurvitch and Levinas provided the normal mode of access to Heidegger in France. However, that changed with Henry Corbin. While his first attempt at translating Heidegger, a translation of the essay *Was ist Metaphysik?* in 1931, was published, he clearly was not satisfied. In 1938, with Heidegger's approval and a short preface contributed by him, Corbin published *Qu'est-ce que la Métaphysique?* The first collection of Heidegger in French, this became the authoritative primary source for Heidegger, a one-stop shop for Heidegger texts. Another key development in French Heidegger reception at the time was a series of lectures by Alexandre Kojève on Hegel, which attempted to hybridize Heidegger with Hegel. Kojève used Heidegger's concept of Being-towards-death to explicate Hegel's life and death struggle for recognition. The sheer number of influential intellectuals that attended Kojève's lectures gave a lasting impact to his interpretation of both Hegel and Heidegger. The last major strand of early French Heidegger reception was Marxist. Although they did not offer written criticisms, Marxists, especially Henri Lefebvre, later discussed their initial impressions of Heidegger's philosophy. Their criticisms principally hinge on the apparent lack of practical import offered by Heidegger's philosophy.

The purpose of this survey is to show that the French reception of Heidegger prior to the writing of Georges Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger" is limited, yet already provides the outline for a dominant view that will be promulgated by Sartre. What follows is an in-depth look at each of these figures' interpretation of Heidegger, or in Corbin's case his translation choices, and what they say about the Heidegger presented to French scholars. An issue that pervades this tradition, from Corbin to Kojève, is that the French read Heidegger as performing an anthropological activity. This anthropological reading of Heidegger stems from both a focus on the second division of *Being and Time* and consistent translations of Heidegger into a standard language of the atomic individual. This tradition culminates in, and explains, Jean-Paul Sartre's own reading of Heidegger, which is often mischaracterized as an isolated misreading. In fact, Sartre's interpretation of Heidegger is clearly informed by this French tradition. Thus, examining this series of readings, we can better understand Bataille's critique from out of a larger French tradition.

Gurvitch, West of the Rhine

The first French lecture and print work on Heidegger is Georges Gurvitch's *Les tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande: E. Husserl, M. Scheler, E. Lask, N. Hartmann, M. Heidegger*—the lectures were given in 1928 and published in 1930. This collection is a series of lectures on the development of phenomenology, from Husserl up to Heidegger: although there is no evidence that the lecture on Heidegger was given in 1928.[4] What is noteworthy is that Gurvitch not only situates Heidegger within the phenomenological tradition by explicating his work constantly by reference to other "phenomenologists," such as Emil Lask

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[4] Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 15.

and Nicolai Hartmann, but regards him as the synthesis of the phenomenological movement up to that point.[5] Thus, the first French attempt at an explicit reading of Heidegger construes him as the culmination of the tradition of phenomenology. The full importance of this reading becomes clear when we compare it to Levinas' closer reading. The goal of this section is to offer a reading of Gurvitch's interpretation of Heidegger, followed by some general comments on his interpretation of Heidegger. This section will act as a model for later sections.

The final chapter of Gurvitch's *Les tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande* starts by claiming that Heidegger, unlike Lask and Hartmann, who used a neo-Kantian approach, attempted to develop and modify phenomenology from within phenomenology. The key idea is that Heidegger's approach attempts to resolve three traditional problems for phenomenology, "a) the impossibility of solving the problem of knowledge of the real, b) the lack of a sufficient examination of the problem of the irrational, and c) ignorance of the necessary connection between the description of immediate data of pure intuition and their dialectical verification."[6] Heidegger attempts to resolve the phenomenological problem of the real, the irrational, and the synthesis of intuition and understanding through an analysis of "existence itself."[7] Gurvitch's mentioning of traditional problems is an allusion to Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl's method is grounded on perception as a first step in bracketing the non-essential, which allows one to finally see things-in-themselves. Husserl does not ground these perceptive assumptions and holds metaphysical assumptions about essences and things-in-themselves. Additionally, many of Husserl's works follow in the modern tradition that treats epistemology as first

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[5] It is questionable to label these figures as phenomenologists, as they were clearly in the neo-Kantian camp. Yes, Heidegger identified Lask as taking Husserl's philosophy further. Lask was largely influenced by Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, which is his most Kantian work.

[6] Georges Gurvitch, *Les tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande: E. Husserl, M. Scheler, E. Lask, N. Hartmann, M. Heidegger* (France: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrinm 1949), 207; my translation.

[7] Gurvitch, 207.

philosophy. Heidegger resolves these problems by emphasizing pre-theoretical understanding of

Being and Dasein's social embeddedness. In Gurvitch's interpretation of Heidegger, philosophy

is considered the universal phenomenological ontology. This enterprise originates in an

interpretation of the Being of humanity.[8] Gurvitch clarifies that this endeavor is not to be

confused with biological, psychological, or anthropological interpretations, all of which assume

that the philosophical questions are resolved. Nor is this universal phenomenological ontology a

theological or subjective idealism. Last, the phenomenological analytic must be distinguished

from philosophical anthropology, something later commentators failed to acknowledge, which is

merely a regional ontology, i.e. a subset of the broader ontology under consideration. Although

Gurvitch says it must be distinguished from philosophical anthropology, he undermines this

distinction later in the chapter as his reading of Heidegger and his interpretative choices portray

an anthropology.

    In the second section, Gurvitch focuses on a description of *das Man*, the They, which he

renders creatively as the anthropological *monsieur tout le monde*: instead of the more logical

indeterminate neuter subject, *on*. He correctly points out that knowledge of the world is not

offered in presence to be analyzed, but through active participation or concern. This concern

extends over society and one's fellow people in *Fürsorge* (solicitude), and eventually leads to an

allusion to the more basic form of concern, care. Care, or *souci* (worry) as Gurvitch translates it,

becomes expressed in *das Man* by attempts to calm it and to reduce it to nothing, in short,

avoiding it. *Das Man* represents everyone and no one, and thus overruns all of mundane

existence with its averageness. This produces a situation in which a universal leveling off of

everything and everyone veils and covers over the structure of existence, in turn removing

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[8] Gurvitch, 208.

responsibility from the individual and others. *Das Man* produces the situations that allow for the fallen character of this existence. On the other hand, authentic care is "the existence which has found itself," in which care becomes anguish (Gurvitch uses *angoisse* to translate Heidegger's *Angst*) "before the abyss which surrounds on all sides the neglected humanity; the moral conscience, the vision of death and the resigned resolution lead from boredom to anguish."[9] In short, care is an authentic way of Being that has come to confront its own state in the world by overcoming the banal understanding of *das Man*.

Heidegger states that the fallenness of *das Man* is not to have a pejorative, ethical meaning, but Gurvitch quickly dismisses this skeptically, though he still recognizes it as an indispensable mode of existence. This dismissal of *das Man* as neutral leads crucially to a value-laden reading of Heidegger in which those things that incline one to authenticity become exalted, while those that incline one to falling into the world of *das Man* become problematic. From this division, one can quickly develop moral and socio-political implications from this philosophy, implications that Heidegger may not have accepted.

According to Gurvitch, it is through anxiety with regard to authentic existence that one is able to escape from the worldly appeasement of *das Man*. Anxiety stops the continual motion of *das Man* and forces one to confront the very phenomenon of Being-in-the-world. In this confrontation, one experiences anguish and the world no longer offers refuge. One's cares slip away and one is left to confront the absurdity of the world, allowing one to finally confront one's self, liberating oneself. Contrast this, again, with *das Man*'s version of anxiety, fear, which leaves one with concerns for a thing within the world, a thing to run from and avoid. Fear never

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[9] Gurvitch, 213.

gives one the opportunity to confront oneself or the world as such, but keeps one engrossed in the world and its concerns.

Gurvitch understands Heidegger as saying that anxiety is most concrete at the limit of death. Death is not an event within the world, but that which limits existence itself. It is in the face of death that one attains one's ownmost possibility of Being and is separated from others. While *das Man* tries to claim that everyone dies, as a way to alleviate the anguish of death, the existential interpretation of death gives one courage and anticipatory resoluteness in the face of death. The result is a sense of freedom. This is seen in the call of conscience, the voice of anxiety which calls to one. The call of conscience stems from the self and is addressed to the self. As such conscience is neither positive nor negative, but a necessary part of existence. It is the embodiment of the neglected character of existence that *das Man* typically ignores. The examination of our conscience leads to *Entschlossenheit*, resoluteness. Resoluteness is care for one's own essence, through the means of finding one's self by an understanding of one's self.

Section five of Gurvitch's chapter addresses the concept of truth for Heidegger.[10] Being-in-the-world is an essential aspect of existence; as such it is impossible to separate human existence from the world and vice versa. Hence, we cannot conceive of humanity without a world, as in idealism, nor a world without humanity, as in realism. Gurvitch further indicates that Being-in-the-world does not correlate with the subject/object distinction, but that according to Heidegger the subject/object distinction is a secondary relationship that is dependent upon Being-in-the-world. Yet, inexplicably Gurvitch focuses on an idealist thread in Heidegger, despite what was just stated. Gurvitch refers directly to division I, chapter 6, where Heidegger

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[10] Section four of Gurvitch's lecture is on time, and focuses on contrasting it with Bergsonian time, which is beyond the scope of this project; as a result it will be passed over.

writes: "If the term idealism should only mean the understanding that being can in no way be explained by 'what' presents a transcendental element for the latter, idealism must be essentially preferred to realism."[11] This emphasis ignores lines of *Being and Time* like "Both idealism and realism have—with equal thoroughness—missed the meaning of the Greek conception of truth."[12] Specifically, Gurvitch focuses on the idea that Being exists insofar as Dasein exists. This is interpreted to mean that Being is dependent on the understanding of Being; therefore implying that Heidegger's philosophy is a form of existential idealism. Gurvitch continues, "Truth is an element of existence, so it is not linked to knowledge and judgement. The truth precedes them and is independent of them. But truth does not precede existence."[13] What then is truth? Truth is that which has been unveiled, or in Gurvitch's terms, "discovered." Yet, it is the essence of *das Man* to flee from truth, which produces the veil. Gurvitch takes this idea of truth as discovery as yet more evidence that Heidegger is an idealist. He interprets Heidegger as an idealist dependent on temporality, as discovery is based upon the ecstasis of the future, and is in turn a manifestation of primordial time. The connection seems to be a presumption that time and truth are equally dependent upon Dasein for their existence, and therefore Heidegger is an idealist.

The final section of Gurvitch's text, a series of critical remarks on Heidegger's thought, most clearly mentions that Heidegger's "temporalist existentialism" has two traits: an irrationalism and a tendency towards dialectics. The latter is seemingly a description of the hermeneutic circle. Heidegger outwardly disagrees with both traits. Gurvitch claims that there

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[11] Gurvitch, 224-225.

[12] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), §7, 57, 34. Citations of *Being and Time* will be formatted as section number followed by the English pagination and later German editions' pagination.

[13] Gurvitch, *Les tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande*, 225.

are specific manifestations of these traits that Heidegger has a problem with, romantic irrationalism and Hegelian dialectics. Irrationalism is supposedly visible in Heidegger's concepts of abandonment and malaise, as seen in the concept of angst. In Gurvitch's words, "Heidegger's 'Anxiety' is the act in which the impenetrable and opaque character of the Absolute, of the One, as an *abyss*, is offered as an insurmountable limit of the positive and qualitative infinite itself."[14] In short, Gurvitch believes that this insurmountable limit entails that Heidegger's philosophy is an irrationalism. Gurvitch's language further implies that this Absolute and One is the divine. Thus, the label of irrationalism is merely coded language to claim that Heidegger is offering a form of negative theology. However, this search for an absolute basis for ideas like anxiety and primordial time displaces Heidegger's thought, putting it into a context that he himself rejects. Heidegger is looking for a ground of the life that we experience; however, to look for an ultimate cause, beyond the relations to time, is to fall into a theological reading.

Gurvitch locates a dialectical trait in Heidegger's treatment of *das Man*. The flight and return to one's self from *das Man* is found within a dialectic of time. Specifically, "Primordial time succeeds in synthesizing the ecstases of past and present under the supremacy of the *ecstasis* of the future, is this not a dialectical totality balancing the contradictions in a superior 'concrete whole?'"[15] Gurvitch argues that any development of the ground of time, which is read as a dialectic in which "the future" resolves the dialectical tension, is in turn dialectical. Furthermore, he asserts that Heidegger's solution to epistemological issues is also dialectical. He infers that Heidegger's "existential idealism" is a dialectic of traditional concepts of realism

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[14] Gurvitch, 229.
[15] Gurvitch, 230.

and idealism, as explained above. Gurvitch states that another dialectic is seen between the given and constructed which is synthesized in Heideggerian "discovery." He rightly recognizes a tendency of triads in Heidegger, such as the ecstases or the listed modes of Being in the first division—present-at-hand, ready-to-hand, and existence. However, the tendency to categorize in threes does not entail that one is performing dialectics, as dialectics requires a reconciliation of a negative and positive in a new concept. The existence of a third term does not necessitate that it was formed from the other two.

Gurvitch's translation choices are problematic too. Particularly problematic is the rendering of Dasein as *l'existence humaine*, or human existence. The first time Gurvitch uses this term it is a literal translation of the German, *Dasein des Menschen*; however, he uses this phrase as the norm for all translations of Dasein for the remainder of the text. The problem is that it allows a reader to interpret Heidegger's philosophy as an anthropological ontology, despite Gurvitch saying quite the opposite. To reduce Dasein to human existence fails to capture the subtlety of Heidegger's thought, where a better translation that captures the idea of *Da-Sein*—being there—would be either *être là* or *soyez là*. The consistent use of *l'existence humaine* compounds the issue. Instead of realizing that the focus on Dasein is a step in addressing the more fundamental questioning of Being, Dasein becomes imbued with traditional concepts associated with the subject. This shift in terminology indicates what Gurvitch sees as Heidegger's goal and intention, to analyze the Being of humans or humanness in general. The problem is reinforced when one considers the translation of *das Man*, which Gurvitch renders as *monsieur tout le monde*, everyman. This translation literally makes *das Man* worldly. *Monsieur tout le monde* could be literally translated as "Mr. all the world." While the translation works on one level, it carries with it the baggage of being tied to the world, *le monde*, which is the very

thing that *das Man* forgets. The translation inclines the audience uneducated in Heidegger's concepts to an anthropological reading.

The other major translation issue is the rendering of *Entschlossenheit*, resoluteness, as *resolution résignée*—resigned resoluteness. This is curious, as the idea of moral resignation is absent from Heidegger's work. By including the word 'resigned,' Gurvitch makes resoluteness a value-laden concept. A final problem is not a translation but an association. Gurvitch often links finite existence with the terms 'limited' and 'humiliated.' To associate finitude with limited beings is understandable, especially considering the traditional contrast with a perfect divinity in the Western tradition. However, humiliated implies a religious judgment of the lowliness of finite entities. Even etymologically, the Latin root of humiliation relates to abasement. The impact of these curious choices is not obvious, yet they lead to a heavily moralized anthropological reading of Heidegger, which transforms Heidegger's work into something that it is not. If we are to address the Heidegger Nazism debate, then Heidegger's intentions and his own interpretation of his work matter greatly. Gurvitch's early reading was not hugely influential on phenomenologists, but it was a first popular reading and it marks a general trend of the early French interpretation of Heidegger. Of primary importance in Gurvitch's interpretation are the anthropological aspects attributed to Heidegger, and to a lesser degree the moralistic reading of fallenness and authenticity.

Gurvitch's reading of Heidegger is not completely problematic, as he does notice some aspects of Heidegger that are passed over by later French philosophers. In contrast to later readings, particularly Sartre's, Gurvitch is explicit that there is no bad or good consciousness, that Dasein is non-anthropological, that it is neither subject, nor object, and that Heidegger is neither idealist, nor realist, since we cannot conceive of Dasein without world or world without

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Dasein. However, Gurvitch ignores these claims later in the lecture and stresses the idealist, value-laden, and anthropological elements of Heidegger's work. Hence, he is aware of how Heidegger is breaking with the larger tradition by rejecting these old dichotomies. The brute fact of Being-in-the-world is an *existentiale* that rejects realist-idealist/subject-object categories and in some ways hybridizes both of them. As a result, Gurvitch grasps the fact that the subject/object schema does not apply. Thus, Gurvitch is not completely wrong in his reading of Heidegger; however, his is not a close enough reading, and in many ways it represents a reading by the old, neo-Kantian guard. This is exemplified by how he ends this lecture, in which he offers critical observations. These critical observations include claims that while Heidegger disagrees with dialectics, he is always performing them. This section also includes a major focus on Heidegger's failure to ground value judgments in his philosophy. Heidegger does not give a criterion for making value judgments, yet he employs heavily moralized language in his ontology. This could be read in the heavily theological language seen throughout Heidegger's comparison between authenticity and inauthenticity, which surprisingly fails to make a direct appearance in Gurvitch's reading—although there is a regular discussion of these themes, including fallenness, et cetera. As a result, Heidegger lends himself to Gurvitch's moralistic reading. The latter's translation choices both evidence and reinforce this moralistic reading.

Beyond these issues, it must be noted what is absent in Gurvitch's reading of Heidegger, and which is a long-running trend in the French interpretation of Heidegger. While solicitude is mentioned and *das Man* is given attention, there is no mention of Heidegger's for-the-sake-of-which and in-order-to, which are informed by the world of *das Man*. These are necessary as they inform our actions and behavior, as our goals and possibilities are informed by the world of *das Man*. Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger regards Dasein as thrown into a world that

restricts its possibilities and relationships, which Dasein can acknowledge when it authentically projects and chooses its possibilities. One is born into a world with preexisting meanings and relationships between objects, ideas, and peoples. These relationships create and restrict possibilities available to Dasein and communities. The for-the-sake-of which and in-order-tos that inform how one is a teacher or ditch digger is culturally and historically conditioned. The full depth of this conditioning is not recognized by *das Man*, but it is partially understood and given in an adulterated manner. Likewise, if I wish to become a samurai, that project is unavailable to me, as I am thrown a hundred and fifty years too late, in the wrong part of the world, and in the wrong economic class.

At a deeper level, *das Man* informs my cursory understanding of what being a person entails, how time works, et cetera. These possibilities and relationships are obfuscated by *das Man* and fallenness, but how I understand these possibilities can act as the springboard to further understanding. We do have an expanded realm of possibilities and interpretations available to us; however, this realm is obscured by popular understanding. For example, it is "possible" that someone from the 8th century would believe in the germ theory of disease, but this possibility is highly restricted by the world in which they are thrown and *das Man*, which includes its vague and basic understanding of structures. If Dasein is to be authentic or have an authentic moment, then Dasein must operate in a world defined by *das Man* and fallenness, and realize possibilities that might be beyond these boundaries. Thus, the focus on authentic existence ignores the importance of the fallenness of *das Man* and how it constitutes Dasein. Note that this also ignores the role of history in informing our possibilities. Gurvitch seems to be speaking of the authenticity of an isolated, atomistic individual who is outside of history. This interpretation of authenticity minimizes the role of the collective and the necessity of inauthentic existence in the

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performance of authenticity. In short, Gurvitch is ignoring the aspects of Heidegger that are in tension with the neo-Kantian tradition. This reading is not an isolated problem, as it regularly recurs throughout this tradition.

Levinas, an Insider's Reading

Emmanuel Levinas' work is noteworthy on two fronts: the first is not the specific arguments he addresses, but the time and depth he dedicates to explicating the work. While "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," published in 1932, is not Levinas' first mention of Heidegger, or his first foray into phenomenology, it does mark his first piece dedicated solely to Heidegger. Heidegger is mentioned in "Freiburg, Husserl et la phénoménologie" (1931) and is a recurring figure in *Husserl and the Theory of Intuition* (1930), usually as the next logical step and a critical one that should build upon Husserl's work. These early references were usually laudatory while acknowledging Heidegger's debt to Husserl. For example, Levinas wrote, "Such a powerful and original philosophy as Heidegger's, even though it is in many respects different from Husserlian phenomenology, is to some extent only its continuation."[16]   Additionally, the depth of "Martin Heidegger and Ontology" attempts to clarify and expand Gurvitch's questionable, simplistic interpretation of Heidegger. Levinas' work is also noteworthy in that by the time he published *On Escape* (1935), he was beginning an attempt to move beyond the philosophy of Heidegger. *On Escape* marks an attempt to use Heidegger productively to develop and build upon his thought. This is in contrast to later figures, like Kojève, who attempt to hybridize Heidegger's thought, but not to move further down the path that Heidegger developed.

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[16] Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Andre Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), xxxiv.

In "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," Levinas begins by claiming, much like Gurvitch, that Heidegger marks the high point of the phenomenological movement. Furthermore, Heidegger marks a point of originality and force of thought, which explains the difficulty people have in understanding him. With this in mind, Levinas' goal is to focus on Heidegger's own thought and to summarize what is most crucial in his philosophy. Levinas begins by focusing upon the fact that neo-Kantian thought is one of Heidegger's biggest targets, specifically the neo-Kantian focus upon the problem of knowledge. The problem of knowledge is the search for a criterion in which knowledge can be legitimately known. A presupposition of this approach is that truth is not identical to what is known, or knowledge in general. Truth entails a correspondence between a thought and thing, presupposing that thought is a free activity that is independent of its object. This entire problematic is based on a concept of an independent subject that is discrete from its world. This history, with the tradition of the *cogito* and the problem of knowledge, has led to idealism. Levinas' focus on neo-Kantian thought and idealism seems to be in direct response to Gurvitch's claim that Heidegger subscribes to an "existential idealism." As a result, Levinas is explicating the very tradition that Heidegger is critical of, and explaining how much Heidegger differs from the tradition. While not explicit, Levinas is displaying this contrast between Heidegger and the idealist tradition to counteract Gurvitch's linking of the two.[17]

Levinas continues by explaining that idealism leads to another set of problems. In what sense can we call the subject a substance when it is by its very definition a temporal entity? It is an entity that is not completely independent, nor ever self-same. To side-step this issue, the history of subjective analysis avoids confronting time as primordial and instead views it as a

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[17] Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, 21.

derivative perception, not native to the subject. This is the point at which Levinas begins to distinguish Heidegger from those that came before him. Levinas first does this by stating, "Now time is not a characteristic of the *essence* of reality, a *something*, or a property; it is the expression of the *fact of being* or, rather, it is that *fact of being* itself."[18] In short, to exist is to be temporalized. In contrast to neo-Kantianism, ontology is not merely realism, nor is it the study of the essences of being; it is a study of existence through the fact of one's own existence.

By preparing the ground for a discussion of Heidegger through a critique of neo-Kantian thought, with its emphasis on epistemological concerns, Levinas is highlighting Heidegger's break with the tradition. It is from this point that the essay shifts to explicating Heidegger's thought. The obvious starting point is the ontological distinction between beings and Being (or in Levinas' language, the difference between be-ings and being), between entities and that quality of existence that they have or relate to. The concern and study of the former is what Heidegger terms ontic, while ontology and ontological entities relate to the latter. Yet, while this distinction may point to a difficulty of understanding Being, the understanding of Being is, in reality, part of the very character of human existence. To even function in our world presupposes such an understanding. However, to have a more thorough and authentic understanding of Being is the very basis of "the fundamental drama of human existence."[19] This is clear in reference to time, which for Heidegger is not merely a frame in which existence takes place and is to be understood within; rather, Being in its authentic form is temporal. This understanding of Being is not an essential attribute added to the substance of human beings, but the mode of Being of Dasein, a fundamental break with the philosophical tradition.

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[18] Emmanuel Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," *Diacritics* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 13.
[19] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 16.

Contra Gurvitch, Levinas clarifies that Heidegger is not giving an ontological argument and applying it to human beings. Gurvitch alleges, "Being is characterized by the fact that its essence is absolutely inseparable from its existence."[20] This reading interprets Heidegger as performing an ontological argument, but instead of proving the existence of God—according to Gurvitch, Husserl performed the same argument to prove the existence of pure intentional consciousness—Heidegger is trying to prove the foundational nature of Dasein's existence in its existentiality. Levinas indicates that this argument does not indicate that existence is contained within human essence, but that our essence and its determinations are modes of existing, i.e. ways of Being. Heidegger reserves the word "existence" for this sort of Being, in contrast to *Vorhandenheit*, present-at-hand, the Being of inert reality. Gurvitch's failure to make this distinction is a primary reason for his misinterpretation of Heidegger. By misunderstanding the distinction Gurvitch puts the existence of Dasein on par with that of brute being. This distinction leads to a focus on Dasein as the way towards an understanding of Being, as an object among objects. Dasein is key because it is a being whose Being becomes an issue for it. In short, Dasein is the being with an understanding of its own Being. Dasein has a pre-theoretical understanding of the Being of beings. How I interact with a chair is different from how I will interact with a puppy or a broken machine. These varying approaches are not theoretically justified in Dasein's understanding, like a readily accessible footnote to our behavior, but are how Dasein behaves toward itself and other sorts of beings. As Levinas is aware, Heidegger's concept of existence is not a precursor or first premise for ontology, but the type of Being that we partake in and of which we have a basic pre-theoretical understand; it is implicit in our basic understand of Being.

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[20] Gurvitch, *Les tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande*, 207.

Levinas further illustrates Dasein's relationship to Being through a similar relationship in Husserl's understanding of intentionality. Intentionality for Husserl is the idea that our consciousness is always a consciousness of something; it is always directed. This relationship constitutes the very nature of consciousness. As such one should not imagine consciousness as self-contained and primary, as if it only transcends itself in becoming conscious of an object. Consciousness is always transcending as it is always beyond itself; it is always a consciousness towards something. Dasein's relationship to Being is similar. Being is revealed in Dasein not as a theoretical concept, but as part of the very innate striving of Dasein and its concern for its own existence. One should not interpret Dasein or consciousness as self-contained entities that relate to an exterior world. Both phenomena, consciousness and Dasein, are defined by their intertwined relationship with "exteriority"—Dasein is always already within a world of concerns and consciousness is always a consciousness of something.[21]

Levinas states, "*The phenomenon of the world*, or more precisely, *the structure of 'being-in-the-world' presents the precise form in which this understanding of being is realized.*"[22] The nature of Being-in-the-world, and its underlying dynamic of care, are integrated into the very existence of Dasein. This integration ties into Dasein's finitude, which, in Levinas' terminology, grounds the subject's subjectivity. Being-in-the-world renders the common sense understanding of the world possible. Likewise, the understanding of world as the unity of all knowledge is derivative and purely ontic. Instead, it is within an environment (*Umwelt*) that we are solicited by beings. In the first analysis world is revealed to be close to Dasein. At root Being-in-the-world is an understanding of Being itself. Transcendence for Heidegger is reserved for going

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[21] The rejection of an interiority of Dasein would undermine the distinction of interiority and exteriority: without one there cannot be the other. My usage of the distinction is to explicate Dasein's otherness as the atomistic subject of the modern philosophical tradition, although the language is problematic for Heidegger's concept of Dasein.

[22] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," 18.

beyond beings towards Being. This transcendence offers the conditions of subject-object

relations. In other words, Being-in-the-world is self-transcendence. Note how this differs from

Gurvitch's reading of Being-in-the-world. Gurvitch is driven to contextualize Heidegger's

concept of Being-in-the-world within the idealist and materialist traditions, whereas Levinas

instead focuses upon the idea of the environment to explicate just how one relates to Being-in-

the-world.

Dasein is always thrust amidst its possibilities as a result of its Being-in-the-world. This

being placed into one's possibilities and abandoned to them alone is termed by Heidegger

Geworfenheit, or "thrownness". Gurvitch does not address this topic, but Levinas translates this

term as "*dereliction*." This translation mirrors other translations, such as fallenness as *déchu*.

Déchu translates to fallen or dethroned. Whether referring to an angel or someone in power, the

term indicates a fall from a position on high. *Dereliction* and *déchu* both hint at a general trend

in Levinas' translation choices, a general theological bent in his reading of Heidegger's

inauthentic existence. Despite the implications of this translation choice, Levinas rightly

emphasizes the non-theological and non-moral aspects of the term 'fall,' as Heidegger denies

that these terms have theological or moral meaning. Fallenness is a mode of existence in which

Dasein shuns or avoids its authentic existence. Dasein lapses into mundane life by avoiding

authentic existence. As Levinas explains, "*Dasein* does not understand itself in its true

personality but in terms of the object it handles: *it is what it does*, it understands itself in virtue of

the social role it professes."[23] Fallen Dasein is lost in the world of things and is familiar with the

They, or *das Man*. Levinas states that this transition to fallenness, again, is not an external

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[23] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 25.

occurrence that happens to Dasein; fallenness is an inner possibility in relation to authentic existence.

Here a comment must be made about Levinas' translation of *das Man* and Dasein. There is a general problem with translating *das Man*, as seen in Gurvitch's translations too. The term *das Man* is not used in "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," but it is first introduced in this discussion of fallenness. Levinas specifies that fallen Dasein knows another personality, the one (*l'on*) or everyone (*tout le monde*).[24] Although not stated, this is a clear reference to *das Man*. *Das Man* is typically translated as *tout le monde*, which, again, means everyone or literally all the world. However, Levinas decides to adopt the former translation, *l'on*. *L'on* avoids the typical identification with worldliness, but describing it as synonymous with *tout le monde* does little to break with the anthropological reading—despite Levinas' attempt to undermine such a reading. The obvious solution to this would be to leave *das Man* untranslated or give an extended explanation of how the French term for everyone instills worldliness into the *das Man*. On the other hand, Levinas early in this essay offers a distinction between Dasein and *Daseiendes*, translating them as *l'être ici-bas* (Being down here) and *l'étant ici-bas* (The being down here).[25] The point is to distinguish between Dasein as a mere being divorced from circumstances and Dasein as a contextualized being. Levinas proceeds to use 'Dasein' the remainder of the text. These translation choices are laudable due to the difficulties presented by Heidegger's vocabulary.

According to Levinas, "Philosophizing thus amounts to a fundamental mode of *Dasein*'s existence. But, as such, philosophy is a finite possibility, determined by dereliction, by the

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[24] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 24.
[25] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 16.

project-in-draft and by the fall, that is, by the concrete situation of existence that philosophizes."[26] When fallen we understand ourselves, but only through categories and terms borrowed from the world of things, i.e. present-at-hand terminology. Issues like the reification of humanity or the idea of subjectivity stem not from philosophical errors, but from the fallenness of Dasein. Accordingly, the authentic possibility of existence involves first and foremost a gathering of one's bearings, a regaining of an ontological understanding of Dasein— hence the importance of analyzing everydayness, as in the claim that everyday Dasein is always already fallen. As Levinas expounds, "It is determined by the fundamental structure of the fall, by the chatter and the equivocation which comprise it. In virtue of the very state of things, Heidegger conceives of the history of philosophy as a *destruction*, namely, essentially as an attempt to get back one's bearings after the fall."[27] In this quote, the history of philosophy embodies fallenness, and in some ways embodies an understanding of *das Man*. However, there is a countermovement to break away from the everyday understanding of Being, and to regain an authentic understanding of Being.

The text continues with angst, *angoisse*, which presents the structure of Dasein. In angst "The one 'for whom' we are frightened is 'ourselves'; it is *Dasein* attained and threatened in its 'being-in-the-world.' On the other hand, we encounter the object of fear *in* the world by virtue of a determined being [*être*]."[28] Angst's object remains indeterminate, "*Anguish presents a way of being in which the nonimportance, the insignificance, the nothingness of all innerworldly [intramondains] (innerweltlich) objects becomes accessible to* Dasein."[29] Angst returns Dasein back to the world as world, not the world as totality of things or tools. The object of angst is

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[26] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 26.
[27] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 27.
[28] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 30.
[29] Levinas and the Committee of Public Safety, 30.

identified with its "for whom," i.e. with Being-in-the-world. This is distinct from fear, which is a concern for one's Being due to an entity within the world. So, instead of drawing one to consider the structure of Being and the world, fear leaves one firmly within the world and its concerns. Levinas' "Martin Heidegger and Ontology" gives the impression that it was written as a response to Gurvitch. This is reflected in Levinas' overwhelming focus on Being-in-the-world and its transformations in different contexts. Gurvitch's reading of Being-in-the-world merely focuses on its relationship to anxiety and breaking with the world of *das Man*. In contrast, Levinas spends more time explaining how Being-in-the-world works as a phenomenon. Yes, there are transformations that Being-in-the-world goes through when dealing with anxiety, yet there are important structures that Gurvitch glosses over, structures that further separate Heidegger from his neo-Kantian predecessors.

Three years after "Martin Heidegger and Ontology," Levinas published *On Escape* (1935). What makes this text significant is that it marks a break with the project of explicating Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophies. This break is achieved by going beyond the ontological focus of early phenomenology. The text is heavily indebted to Heidegger's work as the basis for an ontological break. It even begins with a suggestion of Heideggerian Being-in-the-world: "The revolt of traditional philosophy against the idea of being originates in the discord between human freedom and the brutal fact of being that assaults this freedom. The conflict from which the revolt arises opposes man to the world."[30] The "brutal fact of being that assaults this freedom" is exposed in the opposition between the individual and the world. The question becomes, how do we break from the grip of the world that surrounds us in our Being? That is to say, how do we go beyond the world into which we are thrown? The weight of the assertion of the world

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[30] Emmanuel Levinas, *On Escape*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 49.

maintains itself and nothing else. In other words, Being *is*, plain and simple. Traditionally,

Western thought tried to harmonize our Being and the world. This is typically seen in trying to

transcend our finitude by exceeding its limits or communicating with a supreme being, the

infinite. Levinas points out that the approach favored by modern sensibilities is to attempt to

transcend the problem. However, this approach hides the antagonism between the self and the

world. This and a later reference to modern thoughts or sensibilities seem to be veiled references

to Heidegger himself.

Levinas' second reference to Heidegger is clearer as it makes direct reference to their

generation:

> As if it had the certainty that the idea of the limit could not apply to the *existence* of what
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> is, but only, uniquely, to its *nature*, and as if modern sensibility perceived in being a
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> defect still more profound. The *escape*, in regard to which contemporary literature
>
> manifests a strange disquiet, appears like a condemnation—the most radical one—of the
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> philosophy of being by our generation.[31]

Here the word generation is used not only in its typical manner, a grouping of individuals of the

same age or time. Generation is used by Heidegger in §74 of *Being and Time*, which was

borrowed from Wilhelm Dilthey, in an additional sense. Generation in this sense is the

ideological inclinations of a community, which only comes to an end when the dominant

inclinations are overtaken by or hybridized with other inclinations. Generation, for Dilthey and

Heidegger could extend for multiple generations, in the typical sense, before the ideological

inclinations are altered.   Instead, what we are looking for is a means to escape Being; this desire

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[31] Levinas, 51.

for escape is a rejection of the developments identified with Heidegger, Sartre, et cetera: the philosophers between the World Wars that were rebelling against the neo-Kantian tradition. In other words, the scouring for a fundamental grounding is falling into the old trappings that motivated this new generation. Levinas describes this escape in Surrealist terminology: "Escape is the quest for the marvelous."[32] In our experience of Being a new discovery has occurred, not a mere characteristic, but a permanent quality of our presence. Instead of heading into an unknown that is reachable through Being, escape is encapsulated in the objective of "getting out."[33] This getting out is not assimilable to renovation or creation. This experience is on the individual level, "the need to get out of oneself, that is, to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I is oneself."[34] In this experience the I flees itself, due to the sheer fact of existence or becoming. Hence, the idea of escape is the next step in grappling with the problem of Being.

Levinas finishes the first section by asking, "Is it the ground and the limit of our preoccupations, as certain modern philosophers would have it? On the contrary, is it nothing else than the mark of a certain civilization, firmly established in the fait accompli of being and incapable of getting out of it?"[35] Again, a reference to modern philosophers is a veiled reference to Heidegger. This quote addresses Heidegger's view that Being is the ground and limit of our preoccupations. In short, Being is the ground of our experience of the world, which is rooted in care and temporality. Levinas is trying to move beyond Heidegger's view by recognizing that

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[32] Levinas, 53.
[33] Levinas, 54.
[34] Levinas, 55.
[35] Levinas, 56.

this construction of Being predates one's being. There is no escape from this construction of

Being, as we are thrown into a world with this established construction.

Escape is not merely death or a stepping outside of time. Instead, Levinas pursues a line

of questioning through the concept of *need* to explicate the concept of escape. Need inspires the

individual to search for its satisfaction. This search turns an individual away from the self and

towards things other than oneself. The mode of need that corresponds to suffering is malaise.

This disquiet or being ill at ease while suffering from need appears as an attempt to get out of the

situation. This need for escape is, according to Levinas, the fundamental aspect of our Being.

When one fulfills a need, the satisfaction of this need is accompanied by pleasure. Satisfaction is

"fulfilled in an atmosphere of fever and exaltation, which allows us to say that need is a search

for pleasure."[36] Pleasure does not arise as a whole, but only incrementally or as a development,

never becoming whole. Pleasure has no goal, but "[i]n the very depths of incipient pleasure there

opens something like abysses, even deeper, into which our existence, no longer resisting, hurls

itself."[37] The experience of pleasure is akin to inebriation, until pleasure finally disperses. Once

the final bit of pleasure fades, we regain the moment. Reentering the moment leaves one

disappointed as pleasure did not give lasting satisfaction of one's needs, leaving one solely with

shame. This leaves pleasure as a state of abandonment, a getting lost. Need is then a source of

freedom from Being.

Shame experienced at the end of pleasure gives a further hint as to our escape from

Being, unlike pleasure alone, which is fleeting. Shame is not to be taken in a moral sense, as is

the norm, arising from negative behaviors. Instead, shame arises from moments when we cannot

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[36] Levinas, 60.
[37] Levinas, 61.

make others forget about our own nudity. It is rooted in an inability to hide and cover over what we wish to do as such. This root does not apply only to what we wish to hide from others, but also, in its deepest manifestation, what we wish to hide from ourselves. This desire to hide from ourselves is an impossibility as we are never truly capable of fleeing from ourselves. However, this comes to an end upon the body losing a sense of "intimacy," the character of an existence of a self.[38] Thus, "[i]t is therefore our intimacy, that is, our presence to ourselves, that is shameful. It [our self-presence] reveals not our nothingness but rather the totality of our existence. Nakedness is the need to excuse one's existence. Shame is, in the last analysis, an existence that seeks excuses. What shame discovers is the being who uncovers himself."[39] This is similar to Heidegger's own distinction between fear and anxiety. Fear is to a specific entity that causes one worry; anxiety is that which allows the world to slip away such that one sees beyond the standard confines of understanding. Levinas' shame is not related to a specific behavior or aspect that induces it, but to an essential part of one's totality. Perhaps in this quote we find the first attempt of escape with a possibility of success; to eliminate the sense of self allows one to finally have the ability to escape Being.

Malaise, on the other hand, is exemplified by the experience of nausea: "In nausea— which amounts to an impossibility of being what one is—we are at the same time riveted to ourselves, enclosed in a tight circle that smothers."[40] This experience of being riveted to ourselves is the experience of pure Being that Levinas promised earlier in the text. Yet, "this 'nothing-more-to-be-done' is the mark of a limit situation in which the uselessness of any action is precisely the sign of the supreme instant from which we can only depart. The experience of

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[38] Levinas, 65.
[39] Levinas, 65.
[40] Levinas, 66.

pure being is at the same time the experience of its internal antagonism and of the escape that foists itself on us."[41] The experience of nausea is itself shame-inducing, not because we exhibit a loss of control, but because it is the confrontation with the very fact of having a body, "of being there."[42] While the phrase "of being there" (*d'être là*) invokes Dasein, "there being," it may be unintentional. However, considering Levinas' underlying criticism of Heidegger in the text, he likely chose this phrase purposefully. By identifying Dasein with having a body, Levinas is claiming that Dasein is always in tension with itself. Levinas began the essay discussing Western philosophy's habit of trying to harmonize self and world; however, the underlying tension is inherent to a self that is essentially part of a world. It is a misunderstanding of the tension inherent in the self that motivates countless attempts to alter the world, instead of trying to surpass Being. The implication is that this mistake justifies the application of the logic of tools to the world and people.

On Escape consistently seeks to break from the demands of Being and displays the constant failures that exist in contemporary ontology. Levinas concludes: "And yet the value of European civilization consists incontestably in the aspirations of idealism, if not in its path: in its primary inspiration idealism seeks to surpass being. Every civilization that accepts being—with the tragic despair it contains and the crimes it justifies—merits the name 'barbarism'."[43] What should be pursued is idealism's dream of breaking with Being without slipping into the same errors of the tradition. One must find a new pathway to escape Being without ignoring it or without having something to say. As a result, one must break with the "common sense" of *das Man*, historical interpretations of Being, and ontology in general to avoid falling into the ever-

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[41] Levinas, 67.
[42] Levinas, 67.
[43] Levinas, 73.

present barbarism of the cruel use of the world and others. Levinas is pointing towards

Heidegger as a thinker firmly planted in such a tradition. Heidegger's obsession with the

Seinsfrage (the question of Being) is what handcuffs him to barbarism, i.e. Hitlerism. Levinas'

On Escape and "Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l'hitlérisme," respectively printed in

1935 and 1934, are after Heidegger's time as rector.[44] So, the underlying critique of Heidegger

in both pieces is obviously linked to his Nazism, despite his piece on Hitlerism being more

general. Levinas calling for a break from Being is a declaration of Heidegger's guilt. Instead of

following in Heidegger's footsteps, Levinas seeks to move away from a philosophy that would

contribute to the tendency of Heidegger and Western thought in general towards barbaric beliefs

and actions. Levinas' escape from Being is against Heidegger and an attempt to move beyond

him.

What is of importance in these two works is the depth given in these readings, especially

in contrast to that of Gurvitch, and the realization of the importance of Heidegger's thought as a

necessary step in the development of Western philosophy. "Martin Heidegger and Ontology"

gives the first glimpse of a close reading that grapples with the material on its own terms,

simultaneously resolving issues that arise from Gurvitch's reading. However, *On Escape*'s break

with Heidegger is apparent. *On Escape* offers a direct confrontation with and an attempt to

expand beyond the limits of Heidegger's early thought. At this point there had been no widely

accessible version of Heidegger's text in French, unless one was willing to venture into the

original German. This material would be entering the scene as completely novel, and dealing

with foreign materials, as this is years prior to Corbin's French translations. Levinas' reading is

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[44] The criticisms in "Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l'hitlérisme" are largely present in *On Escape*; however, *On Escape* expands on these criticism. As such, I focused on one instead of both texts.

offering a glimpse into something new, something different, for people hoping to break with the dominant tradition of neo-Kantian thought. Levinas' works are more well-versed than Gurvitch's, but they are not without fault. Levinas is largely addressing Gurvitch, but this leads Levinas to ignore many aspects of *Being and Time* that could dispel the developing anthropological reading. Levinas' translation choices incline Heidegger's French reception to a theological tradition that focuses on subjectivity. *On Escape* makes this worse as it dog whistles to people passingly familiar with Heidegger. However, Levinas' going beyond focuses on the subject, allowing one to reincorporate the subject back into Heidegger, in the sense that one taking Levinas' focus on the subject would be disposed to read Dasein as the traditional notion of the subject.

Wahl on Kierkegaard and Heidegger

Jean Wahl's "Heidegger and Kierkegaard: An investigation into the Original Elements of Heidegger's Philosophy" was originally published in *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. 2, 1932/1933. *Recherches Philosophiques* was a highly influential journal that had an impact on later existentialist philosophers. "Heidegger and Kierkegaard" was later published again in 1938 as an appendix to Wahl's collection, *Études kierkegaardiennes*, which became the best secondary source on Kierkegaard in France. Although previous works by Wahl mention Heidegger in reference to Alfred North Whitehead and others, this essay marks Wahl's first attempt to address Heidegger directly. While a thorough reading of Heidegger, it also contributes to the anthropological reading of Heidegger. The influence of Wahl's anthropological reading on Sartre is obvious, as Sartre cites Wahl in *Being and Nothingness* in claiming that Heidegger is influenced by Kierkegaard. Sartre's reasoning is drawn directly from

Wahl's essay.[45] Sartre's rejection of the 'empty' concept of the self in idealism results in his favoring of a concept of the self drawn from the likes of Kierkegaard. The foundation of the Kierkegaardian self instilled with content is the choice available to the self. This subject must assert itself by a choice between the aesthetic, the proximate (native situation and abilities), which comprises one's meaning in life, and the ethical or religious, the eternal validity of God and its will.[46] However, the ethical is not a complete rejection of the world, as one must accept the world in which they are entangled and accept the role God plays within it. Thus, the subject has content in the world in which it occupies, but the possible relationship to the fundamentally other, the divine, diminishes the worldly aspects.

Wahl starts his essay, "Heidegger and Kierkegaard," with a Fritz Heinemann quote that claims that Heidegger attempted to "put the acosmic self of Kierkegaard back into the world."[47] Heinemann understands Heidegger as attempting to join two distinct tendencies: an existential subjectivism and a realist objectivism. The majority of Wahl's piece inspects the Kierkegaardian influence on Heidegger through these two tendencies.

Kierkegaard states that the more one thinks objectively, the less one exists. In this sense the *cogito* does not accurately describe the state of humanity. In a similar criticism of Descartes, Heidegger claims that Descartes investigated the *cogito* and the *ego*, but ignored the *sum*. It is in the *sum* that one will notice that it is not the *I* that performs thinking, but an other, the anonymous crowd that participates within the *I*, *das Man*. In *das Man* each individual is interchangeable. As a result there is a leveling down and anonymity which *das Man* imposes

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[45] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 65.

[46] William A. Johnson, "The Anthropology of Soren Kierkegaard," *The Hartford Quarterly* 17 (1978): 44-45.

[47] Jean Wahl, "Heidegger and Kierkegaard," in *Transcendence and the Concrete: Selected Writings*, ed. Alan D. Schrift and Ian Alexander Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 107-131, 109.

upon the individual. Again, each individual is interchangeable with another, and no one is

oneself. This is the realm of forgetfulness of Being, a realm of ease and distraction. In this

realm *das Man*'s optimism takes over. Wahl points to all of these characteristics, which are

again found in Kierkegaard's description of the crowd and the press. Heidegger, much like

Kierkegaard, sees in the dominance of *das Man* the reduction or negation of possibilities. What

happens in everyday life restricts what one is able to do. On the other hand, sometimes the

opposite phenomenon occurs in which everything becomes possible, albeit as imagined

possibilities. What occurs is a simultaneous loss of possibilities and a loss of oneself in the

possible.

For both Heidegger and Kierkegaard, temporality is what is lost in the babble of *das

Man*. Temporality is then separated from care. According to Wahl, this is for Heidegger and

Kierkegaard the basis of existence, in other words, the essence of temporality itself. In Wahl's

words, "the efforts of the 'They' to cover up the 'I' uncover it; and the moment that will allow us

to pass from the 'They' to the 'I' will be the moment in which we become aware of our

despair."[48] Wahl reads the realm of *das Man* as, at its root, a realm of despair. Wahl expands on

this theme and finds Heidegger employing Kierkegaard's work on despair in his discussion of

uncanniness in *Being and Time*. There is guilt even when we are unaware of it, whereas anxiety

only appears when we are aware of it.

Wahl acknowledges that anxiety reveals the greatest universality, that of the world and

one's individuality, along with the role of death. Revelation through anxiety is summarized as a

shift from inauthentic existence to authentic. So when this essay states that Heidegger tries to

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[48] Wahl, 112.

put Kierkegaard's "acosmic self" back into the world, it is the shift from inauthenticity to authenticity that is in question. One is always participating in Being-in-the-world, but to have a "real" sense of selfhood and to recognize one's self as part mired in world requires one to approach the world authentically. Wahl explains that it is in the unfolding of anxiety that one breaks with *das Man* and is no longer interchangeable. This lack of interchangeability is seen most visibly in death, which is always one's own. In other words, no one can die for you. You must always experience your own death and no one can do that for you. Wahl explains that Kierkegaardian guilt is another concept that one can only experience for oneself, which according to Kierkegaard, cannot be integrated into a system. Guilt and death are binary. There is no more or less for either category, nor are they absent one moment and there the next. However unaware one is of the inevitability of death or guilt, one is always guilty and facing down death. According to Wahl, Kierkegaard's phenomenology of guilt allows for Heidegger's existential phenomenology to be developed.

Wahl further explains Heidegger by stating that finitude is a necessary realization of existence. In this one becomes aware of one's dejected nature, that is, one's thrownness. Dasein is a being that is not brought into the world by itself, but with a facticity that determines certain characteristics and limits of its Being. In the face of this situation, anticipatory resoluteness, the combination of anxiety and anticipation of death, "reveals to the human being the fact that he was lost in the 'They,' and brings him before the possibility of being himself."[49] When one embraces their facticity, one will base themselves on what was the case. This embrace of facticity leads to the repetition of one's self. It is a return to the past that is reproduced, in which the self accepts itself and embraces its heritage. This section of Wahl's work is important as it

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[49] Wahl, 116.

marks the first essay in the French reception to explain the role of repetition and heritage in Heidegger. However, it seems to hold little sway in the later reception, and Wahl moves on quickly from the topic.

At this point, Wahl turns to the concept of Heideggerian truth. Wahl describes Heidegger's view as a combination of subjectivist and objectivist presuppositions of pragmatism: "Heidegger shows that, within truth, there is a structure that is determined by a union of projection and retrospection, of *not yet* and *already*, of a *not yet* that in some way concerns an *already*."[50] Truth has a structure of care that along with intelligence is linked to existence. Truth is a characteristic of reality that is revealed in authenticity. Wahl sees Heidegger as uniting a theory of truth and a theory of existence into something equivalent to a theory where subjectivity is truth. Yet, here there is one point where Heidegger and Kierkegaard are fundamentally different, as for Heidegger the individual is existentially open to the world. What is revealed for Heidegger is not mere human existence, but a human within a world. Wahl's reading is clearly following the quickly developing French tradition of an anthropological Heidegger.

If we return to the issue of our finite existence, the influence of Kierkegaard on Heidegger remerges. The realm of *das Man* destroys the relationship of Being and beings. This error stems from one's fallen character, "For our finite existence, it is therefore necessary to say both that the human being is in the truth and that he is in the nontruth: that he is open and that he is at the same time closed off. Kierkegaard said: subjectivity is truth, and subjectivity is error."[51] This quote exemplifies Wahl's interpretation of the relationship between the subjectivity of *das Man* and the limbo between error and truth that one occupies, for both Heidegger and

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[50] Wahl, 119.
[51] Wahl, 120.

Kierkegaard. For Dasein as a finite being that has the capability to discover unveiled truths, the subjectivity of *das Man* reduces these capabilities and places the veil back over what was revealed. Wahl's language, again, reinforces the anthropological interpretation of Heidegger. As the use of Kierkegaard above indicates, Wahl interprets Heidegger as saying that *das Man* places subjectivity back into Dasein. However, Wahl misinterprets Heidegger when he states, "subjectivity is truth," as this insertion of subjectivity into an authentic Dasein is to miss the larger point: Heidegger's Dasein is rebelling against subjectivity and the language of the subject. Dasein is not a subject and Heidegger's conception of truth is not a rejection of universality. Truth is the underlying dynamic of unconcealment of Being.

Wahl claims that, in contrast to Nietzsche or Kierkegaard, Heidegger's philosophy is a less existential philosophy. However, there is a danger in attempting to take existential experiences and translate them into concepts. These existential concepts are inseparable from the experience that spawned them and, as a result, risk losing their authenticity. Specifically, Wahl's concern is that "Heidegger certainly only takes from the religious ideas of Kierkegaard the aspects that concern human things; he moves within the moral world, he pulls, so to speak, the categories of the religious down onto the moral plane."[52] Thus, Wahl is worried that Heidegger's relocation of these religious ideas of Kierkegaard may lead to a displacement that causes them to lose their authentic understanding of the world and life.

The final third of "Heidegger and Kierkegaard" is dedicated to clarifying Heidegger's philosophy in ways that cannot be explained by reference to Kierkegaard. First is the distinction between the ontic and ontological. This section is significant as Wahl gives credit to Levinas for

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[52] Wahl, 122.

explaining this distinction well. Additionally, Wahl sees that Levinas explicates how Being-in-the-world is different from typical realism, showing he was familiar with Levinas' work on Heidegger. Other observations by Wahl include knowing that our thrown nature does not allow the subject to create itself, as idealism is inclined to claim. This observation depends on the idea of the ecstases that identify with different aspects of Dasein. Dasein is always already thrown into a world with a shared history, looking to the impossibility of Being in the future, i.e. death, and encountering entities within the present. None of these ecstases are closed off from the other, but they are all intertwined.

Wahl's essay affected the impact of Heidegger in French philosophy in a two-fold manner. "Heidegger and Kierkegaard" brings up aspects of Heidegger's philosophy that were yet to be addressed, primarily heritage, history, and repetition. The essay also contextualizes Heidegger by reference to a slightly more established figure. Although Kierkegaard wrote in the mid-19th century, he was not an established philosophical figure in France, as his texts were not yet widely available in France or translated into French. Jean Wahl was one of the major figures to popularize Kierkegaard in France. So, while contextualizing Heidegger with Kierkegaard might be illuminating for some French existentialists, Kierkegaard's philosophy was not of the stature of someone like Descartes. Explicating Heidegger via Kierkegaard can help, but it could not eliminate problems that had become entrenched.

The second manner in which Wahl's essay impacted the French tradition is reinforcing its problems. Wahl gives little emphasis on fallen characteristics that inform one's life, even if living authentically. All of the philosophers covered thus far ignore secondary for-the-sake-of-whichs and other structures informed by *das Man*. The essential for-the-sake-of-which is Dasein's existence; however, to achieve this fundamental for-the-sake-of-which one must know

ways to achieve this goal.[53] The potential way to use tools and achieve this project is informed

by Dasein's relation to *Mitsein* and *das Man*. As a result, this entire tradition of interpretation

places an emphasis on the possibility of an authentic life and the inauthentic is merely dismissed

as a lesser life to be demonized, despite being an essential. Heidegger does not help avoid this

interpretation as his language is heavily moralistic, despite repeated assertions that these

concepts are not to be moralized or evaluated as such. Yet, Wahl and the like do little to temper

this problem. This tradition of interpretation leads directly to Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist

reading, and the lack of focus on the early parts of *Being and Time* contributes to Sartre's

Cartesian reading of Heidegger. As a result, Sartre should be seen not as a mistake or a

misreading, but as the inevitable result of an entire tradition of anthropological interpretations of

Heidegger.

The First Official Translation

Henry Corbin wrote the French translations of Heidegger definitive for generations.

Corbin's translation, *Qu'est-ce que la Métaphysique?*, was published as a collection in 1938.

However, that does not mark his first attempt at translating the title essay, "What is

Metaphysics?." Corbin's first attempt at translation occurred in 1931; however, it had problems.

Dominique Janicaud writes:

> Returning to more serious matters, let us quickly examine the reasons that drove Corbin
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> to disavow his first translation of the lecture "What is Metaphysics?" The first version
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> does not give the impression of carelessness when one limits oneself to the lecture's
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> "literary" passages, but the technical lexicon of Heideggerian ontology has clearly not

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[53] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §18, 116-117, 84.

been mastered. *Dasein* is translated as "*existence*" without any further clarification; the term *l'existant* [the existent] is also used to translate *Seiende*; more problematically, this same word is also translated as *l'Être* [being], which is definitely an error.[54]

Following his first translation Corbin had a series of meetings with Heidegger in 1934 and 1936. As a result, Corbin was able to complete a new translation that had the seal of approval from the master. This collection included sections of *Being and Time* along with multiple early Heidegger essays—such as "On The Essence of Ground," "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics"—and a lecture on Friedrich Hölderlin that at the time must have seemed random, as it was unknown just how much of a role Hölderlin would play in Heidegger's career, or his lectures in 1934-35. After publication, Corbin's collection became the go to source for reading Heidegger, especially after word of mouth raised his stature, as can be seen in the previous sections. There was a demand to read Heidegger's philosophy as a primary source. This demand was justified due to conflicting secondary texts, such as Levinas and Gurvitch's disagreement over the application of the ontological argument to Being and debate over whether Heidegger was a neo-Kantian.

Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique? contains only a few chapters of *Being and Time*, solely from the second division. Hence, it does not provide a thorough resource for resolving debates over *Being and Time*. Sections within the collection include §46-53 on Being-towards-death, and §72-76 on temporality and historicality. This decision easily reinforces problematic, eventually Sartrean, readings by ignoring Heidegger's larger goal. This neglect of earlier parts of *Being and Time* makes it difficult for a reader to recognize that Heidegger is attempting a *Destruktion* of the philosophical tradition, including the subject. Although the rest of the

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[54] Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, 26.

collection does give the possibility of resolving the issue of the absence of the introduction and parts of the first division of *Being and Time*, a reader would have to be aware of this absence to undertake this resolution. The result is a partial picture of Heidegger's early thought that excludes key concepts like care and Being-in-the-world. Instead, these terms and themes, at best, had to be pieced together from the other essays. Nor would the reader be aware of Heidegger's attempt to reinterpret the history of metaphysics. As a result, something like Sartre's Cartesian inclinations were being introduced into a heavily ontic version of Heideggerian thought and language.

Beyond the effects of Corbin's inclusions for *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* the other major consideration is his translation choices. There is one major translation choice that had a lasting impact, the rendering of Dasein as *réalité-humaine* or human reality. First, it must be noted that the term is hyphenated, thus emulating Heidegger's own propensity to create neologisms in this manner. Part of the reason Corbin made this choice was to circumvent "unusual or irritating neologisms."[55] Corbin tries to offer an explanation that *réalité-humaine* is not to be interpreted as a reality among others specified by the adjective 'human,' i.e. reality in general or a mathematical reality, but *réalité-humaine* is an existential. This warning combined with the hyphen indicates that *réalité-humaine* is to be taken as a singular whole. Notwithstanding these steps, *réalité-humaine* was interpreted just as Corbin feared, as Sartre adopted the term in *Existentialism is a Humanism* in a purely humanistic sense.

Corbin's other translation choices worth mentioning are a collection of terms that also share a use of *réalité*. First is the rendering of *Erschlossenheit* (Disclosure) as *réalité-révélée*, or

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[55] Henry Corbin, foreword to *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?: Suivi d'extraits sur l'être et le temps et d'une conférence sur Hölderlin*, trans. Henry Corbin (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 13; my translation.

revealed reality. This translation places an emphasis on the concept of reality as something

independent of Dasein's intervention. Second is the rendering of *Vorhandenheit* and

Zuhandenheit as *réalité-des-choses-subsistantes* (reality of subsisting things) and *réalité-utensile*

(instrumental reality), respectively. Interpreting present-at-hand and ready-to-hand, respectively,

based upon the term reality again seemed to create a division between the interpretative nature of

these "realities," which is more in the spirit of Heidegger, and the idea of multiple senses of

reality that are to be understood and interpreted through specific lenses. In this sense, these

translations are making a similar mistake to the one that Corbin was trying to avoid when dealing

with a translation of Dasein.[56] This trend is to so pervasive that Dominique Janicaud describes

these references to reality as "almost obsessional."[57] Thus, these translations portray Heidegger

as a philosopher concerned with a reality that exists independently of Dasein's interventions.

Beyond these issues, the translation was a landmark in the development of a French

Heidegger. It supplied those interested in Heidegger's thought a means to read Heidegger

directly, without reading the German, but with a series of questionable decisions that came to

fruition with Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.[58] Specifically, the idea of *réalité-humaine*

promoted an anthropological reading that is only reinforced by the developments of Kojève's

Heideggerian reading of Hegel.

Kojève's Heideggerianism

Alexandre Kojève's lectures were renowned. They were held from 1933-1939 and

attended by a legion of names who became influential to varying degrees, including Maurice

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[56] Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, 27.
[57] Janicaud, 28.
[58] Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 1 (September, 1969): 31-57.

Blanchot, Jacques Lacan, Raymond Aron, André Breton, Éric Weil, Raymond Queneau, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Roger Caillois, Jean Hyppolite, Emmanuel Levinas, Henry Corbin, Georges Bataille, and more.[59] The lectures were consistently on G. W. F. Hegel's philosophy, specifically on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. What made them so influential was the way that they strained their participants and how broad Kojève's influences were; "he presented a reading of Hegel that drew from Einstein's physics, Bergson's intuitionism, Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger's ontology, and Marx's politics."[60] The hybridization in the lectures shows in its influence on many of the participants, including Levinas and Bataille. Kojève's lectures are worth mentioning in this context as they mark an early use of Heidegger in an original philosophy.

There are only two explicit references to Heidegger within Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, and they are relegated to footnotes. The first states:

The first attempt (a very insufficient one, by the way) at a *dualistic* ("identical" and "dialectical") ontology (or more exactly, metaphysic) was made by Kant, and it is in this that his unequaled greatness resides, a greatness comparable to that of Plato, who established the principles of "identical" (monistic) ontology. Since Kant, Heidegger seems to be the first to have posed the problem of a dualistic *phenomenology* which is found in the first volume of *Sein und Zeit* (which is only an introduction to the ontology that is to be set forth in Volume II, which has not yet appeared.) But this is sufficient to

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[59] It is unclear if Sartre was present at these lectures, but his understanding of human nature rooted in an essential freedom and his reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic are obviously drawing from Kojève.

[60] Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France 1927-1961* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 67.

make him recognized as a great philosopher. As for the dualistic ontology itself, it seems to be the principal philosophic task of the future. Almost nothing has yet been done.[61]

This explicit reference identifies Heidegger's understanding of types of Being and places it within the confines of Kojève's own understanding of a dualistic ontology. First, Kojève places Heidegger in a tradition relating Kant's dualistic ontology to Heidegger's ontology. For Kojève, their "identical" ontology applies to the natural world, to nature. On the other hand, Kant's and Heidegger's supposed "dialectical" ontology involves actions within the realm of humanity and history. As Dominique Pirotte describes it, "For Kojève, let us specify, it is a question of establishing on the one hand an ontology—non-dialectical—of nature, dominated by static identity, and on the other hand an ontology—dialectic—of man, dominated by negating action."[62] Kojève's ontology is a natural monism, which humanity encounters within the dialectic nature of humanity itself, creating this dualist, dialectical ontology. This transforms Heidegger's understanding of ontic and ontological considerations into different ontologies that fit neatly into Kojève's own Hegelian system.

However, this runs into a problem, as to describe Heidegger's philosophy as dualistic is to misinterpret it. At best one can describe ontic experience in a dualistic manner, but this only applies to one region of Being. However, to identify two different types of Being, Dasein and nature, as dualistic is to ignore the sheer variety of types of Being acknowledged by Heidegger: at a minimum he mentions the present-at-hand, ready-to-hand, and existence. Dasein is to have privileged access to Being and to be in a privileged position to ask the question of Being, i.e.

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[61] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 215.

[62] Dominique Pirotte, "Alexandre Kojève lecture de Heidegger," *Les Études philosophiques*, no. 2 (April-June 1993): 210; my translation.

having access to the totality of Being. By ignoring the nature of Dasein, Kojève is forcing the

square peg of Heidegger into the round hole of his own philosophy: "The full extent of Kojève's

displacement lies in the fact that he elevates the human being to the rank of being, reserving to

nature only an ontic status. The ontico-ontological difference is indeed revaluated as an ontico-

anthropological difference. General ontology is doomed to be fully an ontology of man."[63] Thus

Kojève is fully placing Heidegger into a realm of philosophical anthropology. Kojève's

interpretation of Hegel and Heidegger replaces the ontological with this anthropological dialectic

of humanity. This is perhaps the clearest case of an anthropological reading of Heidegger.

Fundamentally, Kojève and Heidegger are talking about different things.

The second explicit reference to Heidegger is at the very end of Kojève's ninth lecture in

1934-1935. This reference occurs in a larger conversation on atheistic thought:

> Since Hegel, atheism has never again risen to the metaphysical and ontological levels. In
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> our times Heidegger is the first to undertake a complete atheistic philosophy. But he does
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> not seem to have pushed it beyond the phenomenological anthropology developed in the
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> first volume of *Sein und Zeit* (the only volume that has appeared). This anthropology
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> (which is without a doubt remarkable and authentically philosophical) adds,
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> fundamentally, nothing new to the anthropology of *Phenomenology* (which, by the way,
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> would probably never have been understood if Heidegger had not published his book):
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> but atheism or ontological finitism are implicitly asserted in his book in a perfectly
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> consequent fashion. This has not prevented certain readers, who are otherwise

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[63] Pirotte, 212.

competent, from speaking of a Heideggerian theology and from finding a notion of an afterlife in his anthropology.[64]

First, the claim that Heidegger was necessary to understand the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is predicated on reading *Being and Time* as an anthropology grounded in our finitude. However, Kojève ignores the fact that *Being and Time* as a whole is a preparatory study for defining Being itself, a claim that is apparent from the introduction of *Being and Time*. Heidegger explains in I.2 of the introduction of *Being and Time*,

> The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about—namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term "*Dasein*." If we are to formulate our question explicitly and transparently, we must first give a proper explication of an entity (Dasein), with regard to its Being.[65]

The process that Heidegger is describing is an inquiry into Dasein, which is the being that is capable of questioning Being. By explicating Dasein and its mode of Being, one is capable of understanding the underlying phenomenon in question, Being. Ignoring this aspect, Kojève is reading Heidegger as a thinker who does not go beyond the works of Hegel, but only illuminates aspects of this anthropology. In other words, Kojève reads Heidegger's Dasein as a purely anthropological concept within phenomenology, without acknowledging the *Destruktion* of the

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[64] Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 259.
[65] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §2, 27, 7.

tradition, the underlying desire to define or find Being, and many other aspects. These absences create a massive void, which cannot result in anything but an anthropological Heidegger.

Throughout Kojève's lectures, his dependence on the "master-slave dialectic" in interpreting Hegel is obvious. Kojève's reading became a seminal interpretation of Hegel, which only reinforced the importance of the "master-slave dialectic." However, Kojève's reading of the dialectic has Heidegger's Being-towards-death baked into it. Kojève's understanding of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* hinges on a reading of chapter four, specifically, self-consciousness and desire. It is through self-consciousness and desire that human-beings come to be. It is through desire that the entity that is human becomes aware of itself. This transformation is first achieved through our base animal desires, such as hunger and fatigue. The problem, according to Kojève's reading of Hegel, is that these desires only make one conscious of the self, but do not make one self-conscious. Self-consciousness presupposes desire, and as such can only be formed within an animal life. This marks a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the development of self-consciousness. To obtain self-consciousness we must transcend our animal reality. There must be desire directed to non-natural objects. The only necessarily obtainable non-natural object is desire itself. To become self-conscious one must desire the desire of another individual, simultaneously granting a multitude of beings and society as a whole.

This movement of self-consciousness necessitates conflict with others who also desire recognition. The self discovers that there are others that have the same aspiration of transcending animal existence. The scarcity of figures to offer recognition leads to what Hegel calls *Kampf auf Leben und Tod*, a struggle of life and death. The initial relationship between individuals is a conflict over prestige and recognition. This development continues through the

figures of master and slave, eventually leading to the development of world history, revolution, and the eschatological end of history.

Kojève explains *Kampf auf Leben und Tod* through Heidegger's understanding of angst, which supplies the ontological foundation for this conflict. In the master-slave dialectic it is only the slave who can obtain self-consciousness, by overthrowing the master. The master does not gain self-consciousness like the slave, who sacrifices freedom to maintain life and lacks equal recognition. Thus, the master is constantly frustrated in attempts to receive recognition from an other. However, "Kojève's understanding of Heidegger supposes that the anxiety produced in Heidegger's concept of being-towards-death is equivalent to the fear for one's life in the struggle of life and death."[66] Kojève misinterprets Heidegger's angst as the mere confrontation with the end of life. For Heidegger, angst is to be distinguished from the mere fear for one's life. Angst is confronting one's self and Being-in-the-world in general. For Heidegger, angst is the authentic way of confronting the world. The approach towards the world in angst is distinct from fear in the face of death. Fear is a worry associated with a specific entity in the world, i.e. that about which one fears, namely, oneself and one's own life. Heidegger states that death does not represent a worry or a possibility; death is a limit event whose structure aids in structuring our Being. Thus, Kojève interprets Being-towards-death as a form of resolute action in confronting the possibility of death, "In Heidegger, the confrontation with death can lead to an authentic understanding of *Dasein*, of one's relationship with being. In Kojève, the final overcoming of the fear of death as manifested in the transition from theism to atheism and the rule of reason leads to the reconciliation of the universal with the particular and the end of

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[66] Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 82.

history."[67] This struggle of life and death and one's confronting death are in Kojève's eyes the motor for a development beyond theism to an atheistic understanding of the world. Eventually, it leads to the end of history. This is contrasted with Heidegger's understanding in which confronting death and Being-towards-death are but means to escape the authority of *das Man* and finally encounter Being.

What one is left with after reading Kojève is a use of Heidegger to create something novel. This experience does not leave one with a reading or interpretation of Heidegger, but an adaptation and utilization of Heidegger's philosophy. Kojève takes the concept of Heideggerian Being-towards-death in isolation from the rest of *Being and Time* and incorporates it into Hegel's philosophy. The separating of Being-towards-death from its context as the keystone for an authentic Being-in-the-world minimizes its potency. Hegel has often been interpreted as doing an anthropological project, so adding aspects of Heidegger's philosophy naturally leads to the expectation that Heidegger's philosophy is anthropological as well. Yet again, one is left with a foreshadowing of philosophy to come, with its summit displayed in the work of Sartre. Sartre was heavily influenced, whether directly or not, by Kojève's reading of Hegel, especially his reading of the Master-Slave dialectic, which is identical to Kojève's.[68] Kojève's misuse of Heidegger primes Sartre's specific interpretation of Heidegger.

A Brief Marxist Response and Sartre

Last is an early criticism of Heidegger. While there are no French Marxist texts on Heidegger from the 1930s, there is a 1959 discussion amongst a group of Marxist thinkers on the

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[67] Kleinberg, 83.
[68] Gilles Marmasse, "The Hegelian Legacy in Kojève and Sartre," in *Hegel's Thought in Europe: Current, Crosscurrents, and Undercurrents*, ed. Lisa Herzog (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 239-249.

topic. "Karl Marx et Heidegger" primarily focuses on the relationship between the titular figures, specifically in relation to later Heidegger and his criticisms of technology. In this text, French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre states that his first encounter with Heidegger dates back to the 1930s. Paul Nizan first informed Lefebvre of Heidegger and later Jean Wahl lent him a copy of *Sein und Zeit*. Lefebvre describes a general Marxist response: "In Heidegger's thought we saw a cathartic of nothingness, a sort of absolute purification through pure and desperate contemplation. This catharsis seemed to us incompatible with our taste for action."[69] The heart of this criticism is an identification of Heidegger's thought with the traditional armchair philosopher. While Heidegger's thought may be illuminating, it does not lend itself to performing real world transformations. This lack of action, for a thinker who identifies with Marx, seems untenable to Lefebvre and his cohort. This is not a specific criticism of the "truth" of Heidegger's thought, but of its focus and practicality. Hence, "Karl Marx et Heidegger" offers another perspective critical of Heidegger. This is key because the French reception of Heidegger includes few critical appraisals. Gurvitch includes problems that he identifies with Heidegger. Levinas does offer an attempt to exceed Heidegger in *On Escape*. Beyond these two figures, this remembrance by Lefebvre is it. The early French reception is primarily an attempt to comprehend; criticism was a secondary concern.

This collection of sources is not an exhaustive listing of early French texts dealing with Heidegger, but it includes the most thorough and influential. Specifically, Levinas' secondary sources, Corbin's translations, Kojève's lectures, and to a lesser extent Wahl's essay, had the biggest influence on the French reading of Heidegger. By hybridizing these, Jean-Paul Sartre

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[69] Kostas Axelos, "Karl Marx et Heidegger," in *Arguments d'une Recherche* (Paris: LES EDITIONS DE MINUIT, 1969), 93-107, 96; my translation.

developed his own famous (mis)interpretation of Heidegger, culminating in his *Being and Nothingness*.[70] This interpretation drew largely on the errors and questionable choices available. Sartre drew upon Corbin's translation of Dasein as *réalité-humaine*, or human reality, and his translations of *What is Metaphysics*?[71] Wahl's understanding of Heidegger's angst as deriving from Kierkegaard also affected Sartre.[72] Sartre drew upon Kojève and his inclination to read Heidegger as a philosopher of death performing an act of philosophical anthropology. While Sartre's view of death differs from Heidegger's, there are definite signs of influence.[73] Sartre did eventually read *Being and Time* during his time as a prisoner of war. Earlier, he procured a copy while staying in Berlin, in 1934, but gave up quickly.[74] Even later, he relied heavily on Simone de Beauvoir, whom read it in German during the war. He considered the material too dense and jargon-heavy. It is only after this collection of trails were developed that Sartre had the ability to journey into the Heideggerian wilderness. As a result, Sartre's reading is heavily indebted to and colored by these precursors.

This leaves one with the realization that a majority of the early reception of Heidegger is a series of minor mistakes that culminate in Sartre, who popularized and calcified Heidegger for a generation. Thus, Sartre is not a villain in this story, but an inevitable result of these developments. Ironically, it was not Sartre's serious philosophical texts that popularized Heidegger for the following generation, but his literary and popular works that pushed phenomenology to the forefront of people's minds. *Being and Nothingness* is known as a book

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[70] An example of this argument would be R. Aronson's "Interpreting Husserl and Heidegger: The Root of Sartre's Thought."

[71] Gavin Rae, "Much Ado About Nothing: The Bergsonian and Heideggerian Roots of Sartre's Conception of Nothingness," *Human Studies* 39 (2016): 249-268.

[72] Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 130.

[73] Gary Cox, "Heidegger and Sartre on Death," *Cogito* 13, no. 3 (1999): 171-175.

[74] Jean-Paul Sartre, *War Diaries, Note Books from a Phoney War: November 1939—March 1940*, trans. Quintin Hoare (Finland: Verso Classics Edition, 1999), 184-186.

that everyone read, but no one ever finished. Sartre's novels *Nausea* and *The Wall*, and plays

like *No Exit* and *The Flies* had gained Sartre renown. *Being and Nothingness* borrows heavily

from Heidegger, but it was too unwieldy to popularize a reading of Heidegger; this job was

performed by the publication of Sartre's 1945 lecture, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, which is

much shorter and more accessible than *Being and Nothingness*.

Within *Existentialism is a Humanism* there are a couple of direct references to Heidegger

that created a popularized reading. Early on, Sartre compares religious and atheistic branches of

existentialism. The former include Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, while Sartre identifies

himself and Heidegger with the latter. This atheistic conception of existentialism states that

there is one sort of being for whom existence precedes essence. That being is a human being,

which Sartre directly identifies with Heidegger's human reality, Corbin's translation of Dasein.[75]

The other reference to Heidegger is in the context of a discussion on abandonment.

Abandonment is Sartre's concept of the absence of any transcendent source from which we can

derive meaning or an essence.[76] As such, human beings are without an external source of

meaning or purpose, and are therefore open to develop our own meaning within this life. These

direct references to Heidegger in *Existentialism is a Humanism* primed the audience to interpret

Heidegger through a Sartrean lens, especially after Sartre included himself and Heidegger in the

same set of atheistic existentialists. Heidegger, thus, became an anthropological-existentialist

philosopher to the French intelligentsia. With Dasein becoming human reality, fallenness is not

seen as a necessary part of existence, and the question of Being becomes a secondary concern.

Heidegger and *Being and Time* became part of an anthropological tradition infused with a subject

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[75] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 22.
[76] Sartre, 27.

focused ontology: the traditions that galvanized Heidegger. This tradition of interpretation leads to a November 10th, 1946 letter from Jean Beaufret, in which he asks Heidegger about the development of French existentialism: exemplified by Sartre. Heidegger's critical response, "Letter on Humanism," was published in 1947.

The question becomes, if this is the interpretation of Heidegger up through the 1930s, where and how does Bataille's own incomplete work fit into this narrative? Because it was only published recently, Bataille's fragmentary writing played no role in the development of a French reading of Heidegger. However, there are still the questions of what influences Bataille is drawing on and how does he reiterate ideas and criticisms previously explicated?

Chapter II: Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger"

This chapter's initial goal is to give a detailed reading of Georges Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger: Critique of a philosophy of fascism." The purpose of the first chapter will become evident, as Bataille's critique is based on problematic interpretations. The previous chapter displays the sources available to Bataille, and only after reading "Critique of Heidegger" can one determine which sources Bataille was familiar with or drew from. One should be struck by the fact that Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger" is problematic and in need of explication to divine his argument against Heidegger. More importantly, if Bataille is drawing on a tradition that is just beginning to grasp Heidegger's opaque philosophy, then Bataille's reading of Heidegger is going to be muddled. Bataille's critique in isolation is not going to help address the original debate at hand, namely is Heidegger's Nazism implicit within his philosophy? The primary reason is that Bataille does not draw a direct connection between Heidegger and fascism. "Critique of Heidegger" does not accomplish what it purports. That does not entail that this text is not without merit.

An accompanying essay published alongside the recent English translation of "Critique of Heidegger"—Stefanos Geroulanos' "The Anthropology of Exit: Bataille on Heidegger and Fascism"—does not address our question either. Geroulanos does explicate much of "Critique of Heidegger," but Geroulanos' essay has some flaws. The primary issues are two-fold. First, I disagree with Geroulanos' interpretation of intention within "Critique of Heidegger." Intentionality plays a major role in Bataille's text, so this is a serious concern. Furthermore,

Geroulanos' work can be taken further. As such, the initial goal of offering a detailed reading of "Critique of Heidegger" is a means to end. The end is to display that both Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger" and Geroulanos' "The Anthropology of Exit" are lacking when addressing the Nazi question for Heidegger. As such, this chapter is laying the ground for what follows, the development of a novel Bataillean argument and answer to the Heidegger question.

The actual text, "Critique of Heidegger: Critique of a philosophy of fascism," starts with Bataille's equivalent to *amor fati*, "Love, the fact of chance."[77] This reference to chance is also alluded to in his essay, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," and his unpublished "La Chance." Chance became a common motif in his war-time texts, such as *Guilty* and *On Nietzsche*. Bataille's nascent conception of chance is a force that outstrips any form of conceptual planning or strategic thought, i.e. attempts and thoughts aimed at productivity or utility. As such, for one to fully embrace life one must embrace chance occurrences that are beyond one's control or understanding. It is in this experience of chance that one breaks away from calculable existence and embraces life in all its fortunes and misfortunes. One of the highest manifestations of embracing chance is in the embrace of love and the presence of a loved one. In this embrace of love, one does not experience life in its projects, but instead one finds in life the experience of luck. In the experience of life through chance one experiences a tear of Being, a break from the calculable world of everyday life. What is necessary is to break from the homogeneity and exit from such an existence. Bataille states, "The aspiration to something wholly other is stronger than the need to justify the will to flee."[78] This reference to a will to flee appears as an allusion to Levinas' *On Escape* and is a recurring motif in the text. Instead of merely fleeing from Being,

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[77] Georges Bataille, "Critique of Heidegger: Critique of a philosophy of fascism," trans. Stefanos Geroulanos, *October* 117 (Summer 2006): 25.
[78] Bataille, 26.

Bataille is claiming that the desire to be other than the homogeneous subject of modernity is stronger. How then are we to exit from Being? One can exit Being through a fleeing from degradation. In this escape from degradation, one experiences not only anxiety, but the experience of being torn. Dasein, or as Bataille renders it, "The I am there," is a region that protects from determination and/or intention.[79]

Intention, in the Husserlian sense, conflicts with itself when creating the intentional form, yet the form cannot exist without intention. In other words, Bataille perceives intentionality as a self-contradicting form. The ego is revealed only in intention, yet it is simultaneously destroyed by its presence. This use of "the ego," *le moi*, is a reference not to Heidegger, but to the unadulterated self of Husserl's pure ego. Thus, the ego is grounded in intentionality, the nature of consciousness as directed towards an object and the fact that there is no consciousness without an object. But intentionality upends the individuality of the ego, raising the structure to a universal. This usage of the ego hints at a break from Heidegger's Dasein. In other words, Dasein does not allow a true break from homogeneity, and as a result, to escape one must appeal to a different conception, the ego.

Bataille quickly shifts to discussing the ego, which exists for Being outside of one's self. It is impossible to exist merely for one's self. Here there is a note, "which amounts to saying: dying (Heideggerian transcendence)."[80] Here is a conflation of death and transcendence. This seems problematic as transcendence is defined in "On the Essence of Ground," a text that Bataille relied on, as we shall see below, as that which allows for Dasein to be world-forming

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[79] Bataille, 26.
[80] Bataille, 27.

and constitutes all comportment.[81] Furthermore, this concept of transcendence must be sought, not in the objective realm, but in the very basis of subjectivity. Considering the context of what Bataille is saying, one cannot transcend without being a member of a collective realm.

Bataille says something akin to Heidegger, that death acts as a limiting possibility for Dasein. In Heideggerian terms, death is always one's ownmost (it individualizes) and is non-relational (no one can die for you). Being-toward-death is the authentic understanding of death, in which one knows that death is not some far off event, a not yet to occur later. Instead, death is already a part of one's self: allowing one to analyze one's existence with a recognition of one's finitude. Thus, Heideggerian death is not world-forming per se, but alters the way one relates to the world. While death and Heideggerian transcendence are quite different, they both participate in the constitution of individual Dasein. Bataille appears to be offering a critique of Heidegger through the means of authenticity. For Bataille, one is already embedded within a society, which Heidegger would agree with—as in Heidegger's *Mitsein*—however, this becomes problematic as soon as one breaks with *das Man* and tries to enter into a relative isolation in authenticity.

This aspect of "Critique of Heidegger" remains in a later reference in 1947-48. Bataille's "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy" states,

> In Heidegger the authentic appears as a consciousness of the authentic, it is apparently no
> more than the nostalgia for rare authentic moments, which occur in a life of professorial
> studies, given over to the *knowledge* of the authentic. This life does not seem to be

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[81] Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 97-135, 108.

dominated by a terrible passion: one cannot be surprised by a slippage, which is not

necessary but possible, from the authentic to Hitlerism.[82]

This commentary a decade later contains a clear statement on Heidegger and fascism, or more

specifically, Hitlerism. The more crucial aspect of Bataille's criticism is his critique of

authenticity, not an ontological state of authenticity but one that occurs through consciousness.

Thus, this criticism based upon authenticity was a running thread for over a decade, and acts to

reinforce this reading from "Critique of Heidegger."

What then is freedom in this collective realm, where there is an outside of one's self?

Bataille's answer is that "Free in the world where my submission is nevertheless required, how

could being free have here any meaning other than happy?"[83] One's freedom is through chance,

which is beyond one's reach. As soon as one's enjoyment comes to an end, one experiences fear

and feels the need to justify the shift in circumstances. Through chance one encounters

experiences beyond calculation, which can bestow happiness. Equally through chance, the

disintegration of happiness occurs. This disintegration leads one to expect fluctuations of fortune

to occur and to think that the fluctuations are necessary to reintegrate happiness into their

existence. Thus, this is not free in the traditional sense, but a freedom in the face of a restrictive

collective realm. The only sense of freedom available to Bataille in this totalizing realm is an

embrace of the fluctuations of chance that entails happiness and misery. In many ways, this is a

call to savor life while maintaining a "stoic" understanding of inevitable changes.

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[82] Georges Bataille, "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy," in *Altered Readings: Levinas and Literature*, trans. Jill Robbins (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 155-180, 161.
[83] Bataille, "Critique of Heidegger," 28.

According to Bataille, immediate and habitual life—into which we are thrown—is a prison. Inevitably human life escapes from the prison of habitual life. This realm of money and measurable acts maintains its form even when one escapes it, maintaining the shape created by relations and equivalences. Accordingly, the ego inscribes itself within the realm of zoological and juridical equivalency. The ego becomes a function of a system with a fixed character, "meaning that, without the sanction that results from the constant menace of misery, the system itself would be deprived of all *importance*."[84] This measurable system is dependent on punitive measures, whether legal or social, to maintain its value and use. The needs of material life suggest the necessity of an ego of equivalence within the system, a system that presupposes the void of social existence. Bataille concludes, "Thus, out of the circle of banal realities entangled in each other, factories, ateliers, rooms, offices, laboratories, classrooms, with the limited function that each such place implies for each person, the exit from human existence takes place necessarily in the order of becoming self-conscious."[85] In this quote there are two noteworthy aspects. First is the reemergence of exit or escape from human existence or Being. Second is the use of the term "self-conscious." The use of Kojève's understanding of Hegel's master-slave dialectic makes this section denser than it appears. Bataille states that if one is to become self-conscious, then one must exit from human existence. Furthermore, if we are taking the master-slave dialectic as a point of departure, then how does the concept of desire relate to the exit from human existence? Remember that self-consciousness requires the desire for the desire of another, which takes one beyond animal existence. In other words, it is the desire for recognition

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[84] Bataille, 29.
[85] Bataille, 30.

from an equal. According to Bataille, breaking with the servile utility of the homogeneous world

of Being is a necessary prerequisite or by-product of truly achieving recognition as an individual.

The manner in which one is liberated from the world differs based on circumstances of

place and time, namely, the society in which one is situated. In our modern era, aristocratic and

religious constructions, whose meaning does not respond or answer to the demands of utility, are

gradually disappearing. The forces that transform one into a function of society have imposed

themselves as the ultimate reality. Old values have fallen by the wayside and are tolerated only

in a form of impotent ruin. Yet, these values still hinder the free individual. Bataille gives the

example of God, who is now dead and is no more than an illusory outgrowth of the ego.

Likewise, nations still impose themselves on their citizenry, yet nations are no longer the signs of

glory and pride they used to be. Earlier in the text, Bataille declares that society is torn between

authority and anarchy. However, democracy is not a middle ground that avoids this tension, as

Bataille states that the self of a society diminishes within democratic structures.[86] Notice that the

reference to the self of a society implies a societal type of Being. Thus, democratic structures

cause the character or self of a society to become generic and formless.

Nations have become husks of their former selves, justifying themselves through

constraint and fears of a collective catastrophe. Now nations are hardly distinct from industrial

and financial organizations, rendering the nation nothing more than a garb covering over these

enterprises. This section is another implied criticism of Heideggerian authenticity. Specifically,

Bataille is critical of the idea that all forms of authenticity follow or fit the same general

architecture. While Heidegger recognizes that historical differences will cause authenticity to

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[86] Bataille, 27.

differ, the general structure of the development does not change. Heritage and *das Man* will give different authentic paths, but the way to such a path and its theoretical space is uniform. One must be informed by *das Man*, and break from its homogeneity to authentically understand one's Being and make decisions honestly. Bataille expects that an exit from Being, or the standardized understanding of Being, must vary according to the tradition, the historical situation, and the individual's own contextual information.

Bataille continues by explaining that the modern conception of the ego must distance itself from relics of an intellectual past to reach the heights of Cartesian rigor, likely a reference to Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. Much like the husk of the state that remains and the old values mentioned above, this philosophical vestige must be retrofitted to regain its prior value. According to Bataille, through intentionality the ego loses its particularized character and instead finds itself raised to a universal value. The dynamic experienced in intentionality is universalized to apply to all subjects, thus leveling all beings to a singular schema. This elevation to a universal value makes the ego escape from a Husserlian pure ego. The pure ego is no longer pure, and is now defined by a scientized understanding of the self. Yet, it is only through intention that the pure ego becomes a self-consciousness. This dynamic leaves the ego as a middle step, or in Hegelian language, a passing moment. Contra Heidegger, this dynamic is not due merely to being situated between birth and death; instead, the very process that determines the ego destroys it. As Bataille succinctly puts it, "The determined ego is, by the sheer fact of determination, an exhausted ego."[87] In contrast to Heidegger, Bataille is saying that

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[87] Bataille, 33.

one is thrown into the world and situated between life and death, but one is not given a flexibility due to the intransient world in which one is located.

How do intentionality and self-consciousness relate to this thrownness? Earlier in the text, Bataille states that the manner in which the understanding of the world varies depends on a foundational valuation. One can read this as stating that Being-in-the-world and the limiting of possibilities, due to thrownness, determine intentionality as a whole. Only by an exit from this homogeneous world in which we have all been thrown can we finally achieve recognition and self-consciousness. When Bataille claims that a determined ego is an exhausted ego, he is claiming that when one is thrown into the fallen world, i.e. one is already determined to a severe degree. One is without reserve and, thus, the ego can return to a realm of play only by breaking with determination and the system of intentionality. Subjectivity within this homogeneous world is the very thing that defines the ego, but it concurrently prohibits the ego.

Bataille concludes, "If intentionality holds the meaning of life, this is only to the extent that it must be maintained in order to maintain the very phenomenon of life as this last has materially tied itself to the services of intentionality."[88] Intentionality is not a necessary conception of consciousness, but one that is historically situated and developed. Life holds the meaning of life insofar as it is tied to intentionality. Hence, a break or escape can occur only through a break with intentionality or with the system of intentional understanding of the ego. In essence, one must break with the concept of the self-contained subject that relates to the world through consciousness. Bataille is trying to critique and break with the homogeneous world of modernity. In a Nietzschean turn, he is signaling the need for a revaluation of values. Escape is

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[88] Bataille, 34.

possible only by breaking from the modern conception of the subject. One must start from scratch and offer new values from which to develop a new conception of the ego, or perhaps no conception of the ego. Only then can one break with the old realm of homogeneity in which politics such as fascism are allowed to thrive.

Dating Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger: Critique of a philosophy of fascism" is difficult, as there is no clear date or marking, nor are the files from which this document was found in a clear chronological order. Stefanos Geroulanos dates it somewhere in the period of 1934-1937.[89] This estimate is based on Bataille's handwriting and terminology, which is consistent with the period.

Another possible approach would be to look at his reading habits during the time period and see how well they synch with "Critique of Heidegger." This approach could be accomplished by looking at his library records from the era. He did check out Georges Gurvitch's *Les Tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande: E. Husserl, M. Scheler, E. Lask, N. Hartmann, M. Heidegger* in December of 1931, yet this coincides with his writing on Nicolai Hartmann in "The Critique of the Foundations of the Hegelian Dialectic." Bataille might have read the chapter on Heidegger, but there is no evidence to justify this claim. Bataille then checked out Emmanuel Levinas' *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* in June of 1932 and again two months later. While not familiar with Levinas' explicit works on Heidegger, he did read a work on Edmund Husserl that mentions Heidegger. Levinas' *De l'évasion* (*On Escape*) was published alongside Bataille's "The Labyrinth" in 1935's edition of *Recherches Philosophiques*, so Bataille was likely familiar with Levinas' text. Bataille went from reading

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[89] Stefanos Geroulanos, "The Anthropology of Exit: Bataille on Heidegger and Fascism," *October* 117 (Summer, 2006): 3 footnote.

Levinas on Husserl to reading Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* on April 2, 1932. Thus,

Bataille's reading habits indicate a familiarity with phenomenology. The first volume of

Recherches philosophiques contained A. Bessey's translation of Heidegger's "On the Essence of

Ground," which Bataille checked out twice, February and September of 1933. In June, 1934

Bataille checked out *Recherches philosophiques*, Vol. 2, (1932-1933), which contains Jean

Wahl's "Heidegger and Kierkegaard: An investigation into the Original Elements of Heidegger's

Philosophy." In January 1935, Bataille checked out Jean Wahl's *Vers le concret: études

d'histoire de la philosophie contemporaine*. *Vers le concret* is a collection of three essays, on

William James, Alfred North Whitehead, and Gabriel Marcel. These essays are not about

Heidegger in any meaningful sense, but they do include passing references. Last, Bataille

checked out Henry Corbin's translation *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* in August 1941.[90]

However, this is much later than the expected date of Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger."

These library records create the image of familiarity with phenomenology, and familiarity

with a French reading of Heidegger in relation to Kierkegaard through Jean Wahl, and one

Heidegger essay. It must be mentioned that it is claimed that Bataille read *Being and Time* in

January of 1934.[91] This claim seems problematic, especially considering there is no direct

reference given. The work from which this claim is obtained draws from a multitude of

biographies, but one is left unsure as to its exact source. If stated by Bataille, he likely either

misstates when he read *Being and Time*, gave up part of the way through, or he did not grasp it.

The primary reason is that he does not draw upon *Being and Time* for his critique. Nor does

Bataille draw on it for his mentions of Heidegger in earlier texts. He is most likely drawing on

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[90] Jean-Pierre Le Bouler and Joëlle Bellec Martini, "Emprunts de Georges Bataille à la Bibliothèque Nationale, (1922-1950)," in *Oeuvres Complètes: 12, Articles 2, 1950-1961* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 549-621.
[91] "Chronologie," in *Romans et récits* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), XCV-CXLII, CVI.

secondary sources and a heavy dependence upon Bessey's translation of "On the Essence of Ground." Additionally, this line of reasoning is why I am skeptical of "Critique of Heidegger" drawing on Corbin's translations. Bataille's critique does not show any of the telltale signs of reading Corbin's translations, nor a knowledge of Heidegger as a primary source. Bataille does seem familiar with the majority of the French tradition. Based on these aspects of his reading, it is likely that Geroulanos was on target in dating the text.

At this point, an explanation is necessary. The previous chapter did not mention A. Bessey's translation of *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, or as he titled it, *De la Nature de la Cause*. The reason is twofold. First, while the translation was early in the reception of Heidegger, 1931-1932, it is hard to argue that it was influential. Both Sartre and Bataille read it, but Sartre—the more influential figure in relation to Heidegger—was to be more influenced by other figures' works. As such, Corbin's translation of multiple works had a longer lasting impact on the French reception of Heidegger than this single translation. Corbin also translated *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, in his collection *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?*. The second issue is that when it comes to interpretative choices, Bessey's sins are identical or similar to other translators. Bessey's rendering of Dasein as *l'être humain* and similar translation choices fall prey to the same anthropological reading as Corbin's r*éalité-humaine*, or Gurvitch's *l'existence humaine*. As a result, Bessey's translation did not need to be placed in the larger narrative about Heidegger's reception in France, as it was largely ignored in its time.

In this fragment there are multiple threads that indicate the likely sources from which Bataille is drawing. The most obvious is the talk of intentionality and the ego. While Heidegger does speak of intentionality in "On the Essence of Ground," it is more common in Husserl's phenomenology. There is a correspondence between Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* and

Heidegger's "On the Essence of Ground," although Bataille may be comprehending the concept of intentionality through a reading of Levinas' early works on Husserl. Likewise, the discussion of the self or ego is largely absent from Heidegger's early corpus, excluding minor aspects of "On the Essence of Ground," as much of Heidegger's career was dedicated to undoing the tradition of the self and the ego. This absence points to a Husserlian influence on Bataille's interpretation. The other major influence, although it could be argued that it is merely coincidental, is the similarity between Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger" and Levinas' *On Escape*. This is seen most clearly in the emphasis on an exit, break, or escape from Being. The final influence is Hegel, which was largely informed by Bataille's time in Kojève's lectures. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kojève was drawing on Heidegger's concept of Being-toward-death. Thus, in this fragment Bataille makes two moves that are dependent on Kojève. First is the association of Heideggerian transcendence with death. Second is the use of the language of self-consciousness, which presupposes certain aspects of Being-toward-death, as seen in the struggle for recognition.

A few of the early French Heideggerian works, while important in the general development of the French Heidegger, were largely ignored by or unknown to Bataille. While it appears that Bataille read Wahl's essay, it does not seem to play a large role in Bataille's reading. Anxiety, for example, is mentioned only once in the fragment. Bataille's understanding of anxiety may be Kierkegaardian, but there is no such evidence in "Critique of Heidegger." Nor is there any indication of Bataille's reading Gurvitch's chapter on Heidegger, despite drawing on another chapter of Gurvitch's book years earlier, and Corbin's translation was a year or two away from publication. Thus, these two threads are obviously absent from "Critique of Heidegger."

<u>"The Anthropology of Exit"</u>

Stefanos Geroulanos is responsible for both the translation of "Critique of Heidegger" and an explanatory article published alongside it, "The Anthropology of Exit: Bataille on Heidegger and Fascism." One must consider the accompanying article in explicating Bataille's argument. I contend that while both Bataille's fragment and Geroulanos' essay are informative, and do offer a general critique of a French Heidegger, they do not address the Heidegger of *Being and Time*. These texts, Bataille's critique and Geroulanos' article, only address aspects of some of Heidegger's early essays, primarily "On the Essence of Ground." Moreover, this is why the following chapter becomes necessary, as there is a more thorough Bataillean argument available that can directly address the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and his early essays by drawing on a multitude of different early texts by Bataille.

Geroulanos' text dedicates many pages to contextualizing "Critique of Heidegger." This includes justifying his dating of "Critique of Heidegger" to 1934-1937 and explicating concepts within the fragment through other texts in Bataille's corpus. The heart of Geroulanos' essay is the assertion that "Critique of Heidegger" functions on three levels: 1) it critiques Heidegger's thought; 2) it explains Heidegger's relationship to fascism through modern anthro-theological politics; and 3) it presents an exit from modern reality in a manner similar to Levinas.[92] A secondary aim of Geroulanos' piece is to show that Bataille credits Heidegger with allowing a re-enchantment of the world, i.e. a break with classical ontology. Simultaneously, Bataille believes that Heidegger is censoring this re-enchanted world for the sake of authenticity,

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[92] Geroulanos, "The Anthropology of Exit," 16.

ignoring the tumult of Being. Bataille, therefore, seeks an escape from pre-existing thoughts and Being in a manner akin to Levinas.

Geroulanos' first level, the critique of Heidegger's thought, begins by identifying both Bataille's and Heidegger's linking of death with transcendence as a ground for concern with finitude, although they disagree about the inauthentic social world, that Bataille terms the homogeneous world. According to Geroulanos, Heidegger downplays the role of world in favor of the more elementary distinction between Being and beings. Bataille, in contrast, does not place Being within the realm of beings or world, but identifies Being as worldly. This placement of Being occurs through a twofold attack on Heidegger. First, Bataille transforms Dasein into *le moi*, the ego or the I. The choice of *le moi* is important, as *le moi* is formless, singular, and undirected. As such, these qualities are to be expected in the sort of beings that we are. Furthermore, Geroulanos construes the use of *le moi* as a reference back to Husserl's phenomenology, which Heidegger tried to improve.

On the other hand, Geroulanos interprets Bataille as seeing the world as singular and not based around the ego. The ego, while the source of intentionality, displays one's insufficiency to satisfy one's desires. This insufficiency confronts Heidegger's view on Dasein, i.e. that beings manifest as a whole. As Geroulanos describes it, "The antisubjectivist critique of subjective sufficiency suggested here by Bataille's 'ego' is precisely a consequence of the rejection of this wholeness."[93] In summary, Geroulanos perceives Bataille as performing a rejection of the subjective individual through the means of insufficiency. Moreover, this latter criticism acts to reinforce the former. Bataille focuses on the inability of *le moi* and the world to fulfill the

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[93] Geroulanos, 17.

demands of each other. One is confronted with a conflict between intention and determination that is without resolution, a conflict between insufficiency and desire versus homogeneity. Geroulanos correctly states that Heidegger would view Bataille's criticisms as too anthropological. Conversely, Bataille would interpret Heidegger as too Kantian, as Geroulanos explains: "because [Heidegger] emphasizes world as something encompassing men and the entirety of their relations and thus does not sufficiently demarcate the world as a battlefield for the intentions and insufficiency of my ego against those of others, as a realm from whose restrictive forces man continually seeks to escape."[94] Here, we start to receive an explanation of the difference between Heidegger's and Bataille's interpretations of Being. For Bataille, Being does not envelop Dasein and the massive web of interconnections and relationships, but is a realm of conflict between the intentions and insufficiency of the ego, according to Geroulanos.

This brings to light my primary problem with Geroulanos' reading of "Critique of Heidegger." The above quotation makes it clear that Geroulanos is interpreting intention as the purpose behind an individual's action. While this interpretation makes sense in reference to a conflict between the world and what one wants, the text itself makes it clear that Bataille is referring to the phenomenological conception of intention: the fact that consciousness is always a consciousness of something or about something. Bataille distinguishes the ego from Dasein by writing, "The I am there: the region of the I am there where existence takes place (in the existential sense). This region protects from a determination or an intention. Nevertheless, this fact distinguishes itself from intention ~~of the~~, because it conflicts with itself [*elle se discord*] when achieving intentional form. Yet it cannot exist without intention."[95] Bataille is stating that

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[94] Geroulanos, 17.
[95] Bataille, "Critique of Heidegger," 26; the crossed out phrases are present in the original.

Dasein is displaced by determination or intention. Unfortunately, Dasein is in conflict with itself through intention. Dasein is simultaneously dependent on intentionality for its existence and undermined by intentionality. Reading intention as synonymous with the purpose of an action dissolves the tension on which Bataille's critique is dependent. The overriding thread in this essay is the nature of intention in reference to Husserlian intentionality. So, Geroulanos seems to be playing on the ambiguity of the term "intention." He is ignoring the Husserlian aspects of "Critique of Heidegger," which ground Bataille's critique of intentionality. Due to this absence, the full conception of self-consciousness does not arise. As such, Geroulanos does not recognize the purpose of Bataille's critique.

Geroulanos concludes this section by claiming that Being occurs when the ego and world clash. This is why Being can be "expressed or recognized as love, chance, tear, or tumult."[96] For Bataille, phenomenology does not present this clash and, as such, phenomenology contributes to the world of homogeneity. For example, intentionality is perceived not as restricted to one's formless ego, but as standardizing one's ego. Standardization is seen clearly in the advent of self-consciousness through intentionality. Self-consciousness forces homogeneity on the ego, but allows the self to interact with the world. Thus, Bataille finds in Heidegger a ground that prohibits an exit from standardized and material degradation. Geroulanos explains,

> If Heidegger helps us see the malaise, anxiety is merely a substitute for old, noble, failed
> values, and fails to engage the tear in me and between me and the world. It fails to
> emancipate the individual, it gives a false and unself-conscious aura of individuality

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[96] Geroulanos, "The Anthropology of Exit," 17.

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while accepting that this life is by and large bound by and lost in society. Rather than break with the misery of homogeneity, it makes individuals believe in their own (false) transcendence.[97]

Geroulanos argues that Bataille rejects Heidegger's concepts of anxiety and authenticity. Anxiety operates as a veil for the hackneyed values of our world, because it does not play on the tear between the ego and the world. Rather, anxiety acts to give the illusion of authentic selfhood, while focusing on the socially enveloped nature of life. In short, it gives the individual the "experience" of transcending *das Man*, while simultaneously failing to emancipate the individual from the anonymous shackles of the populace.

For Bataille, it is not the experience of anxiety that exposes one to Being, but the experience of being torn that exposes Being and makes a being self-conscious. Anxiety merely offers a fanciful idea of heterogeneity in the face of death. The deception of anxiety conceals that life is a manner of dying that maintains the subject's self-sufficiency and the its desire to dominate the world. Meanwhile, anxiety dismisses the subject's efforts to distance and break from the needs of the world. This contrast becomes manifest in Bataille's criticism of Heidegger's views on freedom. Heidegger views freedom as the condition of the possibility of existence. Diverging from Heidegger, Bataille asserts freedom in the space that opens upon the experience of being torn while simultaneously being forced into submission by the world in which one is native.

The second level that Geroulanos identifies in Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger" concerns the political. Geroulanos starts by maintaining that Bataille's claim that the Being of

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[97] Geroulanos, 18.

societies diminishes in democracy creates a similar dynamic to Heidegger's application of

Dasein to non-human entities. This dynamic allows Bataille to speak of Being in the political

realm, beyond the discussion of the sum of individuals' needs or preferences. One could speak

of categories such as humanity and life as they are constituted in a manner similar to a collective

will. Through this dynamic, one is able to see the relationship between new ways of Being and

the implied political formations that would be expected as a result. This is the root of Bataille's

problem with fascism. Fascism is incapable of embracing a new way of Being; it still falls

victim to the value of utility that dominates our present way of Being. The only avenues that one

can use to escape, tear and tumult, are erased under fascism. They are perceived as weaknesses

and thus are eliminated in the name of reinforcing homogeneous society's wants and values.

Geroulanos summarizes that Bataille is not critical of democracy alone, but the underlying

"modern secular anthropology."[98] This underlying criticality leaves Bataille motivated by the

same rejection of modern anthropology that motivated Heidegger.

 Geroulanos summarizes Bataille's view of Heidegger in this way: "Heidegger thinks up

an escape from the oppression of inauthenticity of modern life, but also because of his

destructive illusion of authenticity and heterogeneity, he renders real escape impossible."[99]

Heidegger provides a thinking that is capable of moving beyond the degradation of modern life,

but through authenticity, traps one in modernity. Metaphorically, one escapes one's jail cell only

to remain trapped within the prison. Geroulanos' reading of Bataille's critique of fascism is

largely correct; however, this critique can be further interpreted through a more thorough

understanding of Bataille's views on fascism. Note how Bataille is largely critical of "modern

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[98] Geroulanos, 21.
[99] Geroulanos, 21.

secular anthropology." According to Geroulanos' reading, Bataille is identifying Heidegger with

the typical French reading of Heidegger. The dependence on an anthropological-existential

reading of Heidegger leads to a very specific manner of criticism. However, this manner of

reading fails to address how Heidegger himself acts as a critic of modernity.[100] This failure is

thus a problem with Bataille's reading, not with the work of Geroulanos.

Geroulanos' final level of reading focuses on the similarities between Bataille's and

Levinas' criticisms of Heidegger, more specifically, their calls for escape or exit. Both Bataille

and Levinas reject positivism, Hegelian eschatology, and Heideggerian architecture. However,

there are some important ways in which Bataille's conception of escape differs from that of

Levinas, which was explained in the previous chapter. Geroulanos identifies two key

differences. First, he locates an empirical aspect to Bataille's exit. More specifically, the closer

one gets to death the more one focuses on the experience of recoil and tumult. This claim

culminates in specifying that Bataille's vitalism is not the remainder of a Bergsonian *élan vital*,

but a result of this empirical aspect of his ontology. The second key difference is the fashion in

which each figure deals with partial exits. According to Geroulanos, Bataille does not reject

instances of exit from Being as insufficient, but prefers to subsume them to a larger exit from

subjectivity and homogeneity. Additionally, the need for exit would differ based upon the

political and philosophical contexts. Thus, Bataille's exit from Being expands beyond Levinas'

considerations. Geroulanos describes it in this way: "Bataille's exit is not necessarily allied to a

move away from the totalizing collapse of subjectivity on the subject, but to a call for a contrast

of subjectivity to the world and to heterogeneity (or claims thereto) within society and

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[100] This aspect of Heidegger is clear in his constant critiques of Kant, Descartes, and science in general in *Being and Time* and later, despite the changes in terminology.

modernity."[101] Bataille is not embracing a collapse of the subject as a concept, but instead

attempting to move beyond the old subject-world dichotomy. The goal is to further the contrast

between subject and the heterogeneous world. Thus, the result is a questioning of ontological

difference in Heidegger. Being is not a being, but it is informed and explicated through a

relationship to beings. While expounding on the relationship between Levinas and Bataille may

be hermeneutically useful, it does not address Heidegger directly. Instead, this is a manner of

moving beyond the work of Heidegger in a way that is informed by Heidegger.

  "Critique of Heidegger" is a curious artifact. It does address "Heidegger," specifically, a

Heidegger of the French tradition. Moreover, "Critique of Heidegger" can be situated strongly

within the tradition: located prior to the massive influence of Corbin's translation, but still

indebted to Wahl, Levinas, and Bessey's translation. Yet, unlike the sketches offered in the first

chapter, the fragment makes a novel association between Heidegger and fascism. The

combination of these two factors leaves one unsatisfied when addressing Bataille's claim that

Heidegger's philosophy is fascistic, because this work is inspired by a French tradition of

interpretation that deviates from the source—as it is only drawn from partial texts and early

readings of dense, novel material. Additionally, as this text is informed by this tradition of

interpretation, it is no longer answering the question at hand. Despite this problem, there remain

aspects of "Critique of Heidegger" that apply to a more thorough reading of Heidegger's early

corpus: examples include Bataille's critique of modernity and the desire to break with Being.

Yet, one could go further with a critique inspired by Bataille's philosophy of the same era. Once

we go beyond the errors of early French Heideggerianism, which ignored Heidegger's early

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[101] Geroulanos, "The Anthropology of Exit," 24.

texts, we can create a Bataillean critique by combining other early works with "Critique of

Heidegger." That is the exact purpose of the next chapter.

Chapter III: Bataille on Fascism and Heidegger

Bataille's definition of fascism is primarily explicated in his "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," (1933) but there are additional aspects explained in other texts, for example, "Propositions" and "Nietzschean Chronicle" (1937). These three texts combined offer a thorough view of Bataille's understanding of the phenomenon of fascism. However, they do not fully situate Bataille in the debates of his era. Bataille occupied a questionable position in regards to fascism, often accused of working with or playing with fascist ideas. What follows is an explication of the texts themselves and an attempt to unify them into a single interpretation of fascism by focusing on shared themes within the texts. This unification is followed by an exposition of how, contrary to many readings of Bataille, he does not endorse fascism. The shift in focus is to undermine the misguided labeling of Bataille as a fascist, which one might use to justify dismissing the forthcoming argument as fascistic itself.

The goal is to create a stronger anti-Heideggerian Bataillean argument than that offered in the unfinished "Critique of Heidegger." Bataille's philosophy is in tension with early Heidegger, despite their commonalities informed by their criticisms of modernity. There are multiple intertwined threads for which Bataille was critical, or would be critical, of Heidegger. All of these criticisms orbit concepts of selfhood, community, death, and authenticity. Specifically, Bataille reads Heidegger as pursuing a concept of authenticity that remains within the confines of the profane world of work, while minimizing the role of death in the development of authentic community. This leads Heidegger into the dead end of heritage and destiny. I will

then connect this expanded critique onto Bataille's concept of fascism. Only upon completing

this project can we fully address what Bataille means when claiming that Heidegger is the

philosopher of fascism, as indicated by the title of Bataille's fragment. This Bataillean argument

asserts that Heidegger's nostalgia for a "Greek" world and his *Destruktion* of the philosophical

tradition led him to embrace fascism. This embrace is not merely an event in his life, but a

necessary implication of his philosophy and the political circumstances of his time.

<u>"The Psychological Structure of Fascism"</u>

The majority of the "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" is an exposition of political

structures in relation to homogeneity and heterogeneity. Building upon Marxist ideas, Bataille

attempts to explain the cultural/societal superstructure and its relationship to the economic base,

specifically in reference to fascism. Put simply, what is the relationship between economic and

social circumstances that begets fascism or fascistic tendencies? The two main terms—

homogeneity and heterogeneity—are defined early in the text. Similarly, much of Bataille's

writings on expenditure, the gift, and sacrifice are drawn from Mauss' *The Gift: The Form and*

Reason for Exchange in Archaic Socieities. The homogeneous is "the commensurability of

elements and the awareness of this commensurability."[102] The basis of homogeneity lies in

productivity, a homogeneous society being a productive society. By nature homogeneity

excludes all that is not productive or hinders homogeneity. Heterogeneity, on the other hand,

entails all unassimilable elements, both in the social and scientific realms. So, those objects and

individuals that are beyond the reach and use of homogeneity are necessarily excluded, being

labeled heterogeneous. Heterogeneity includes all unproductive expenditures, entities, and

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[102] Georges Bataille, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 137-160, 137.

things considered sacred. The sacred can be further divided between the pure and the impure, both of which evoke shock, but not an individualistic sense of shock. The pure, high, and noble are not endorsements of the values entailed, but instead are an acknowledgment of the history that gave these values the labels of high or noble. If new values are to arise, they must be considered in relation to pre-existing values. They do not arise in isolation and as such must be contextualized within existing systems of values.

Social homogeneity is fragile and is at the mercy of violence and dissent. As a result, homogeneity is and must be vigilantly protected from perversion or heterogeneous elements. This protection is achieved through imperative elements, elements that destroy these unruly forces or put them to use in the homogeneous system. However, the state itself is not one of these imperative forces; the state resides somewhere between the homogeneous classes and sovereign entities, and it is the latter from which the state draws its imperative powers. The state is a constant interplay between authority and adaptation. Adaptation applies to parliamentary practices, and authority to those unassimilable entities.

Bataille argues that within these theoretical confines it is the developments of economic life that entail the decay of homogeneous existence. In a typical materialist Marxist move, he argues that developments of economic circumstances beget changes in the society at large. The dissociations of homogeneity reach dangerous levels only when a large enough part of the population has ceased to benefit from homogeneity. This dissociation represents only a negative version of social "effervescence," informed by the structure of social elements from which they are derived. The ambiguous term "effervescence" seems to refer to the explosive energies of a community, a matter of affectivity on a social scale. Heterogeneous processes only enter into play when the internal contradictions of homogeneity become too dissociated, and the

heterogeneous is required to resolve this dialectical tension. Heterogeneous elements have the ability to resolve these tensions, but without subversion these resolutions will remain consistent with homogeneous powers. In this tension, higher heterogeneous powers are both immobilized and immobilizing, as the majority of these powers are dedicated to maintaining legal and political frameworks. Lower classes are what allow for a break through subversion. Subversion occurs when lower concepts and terms transform due to a focus on upending sovereign forms, i.e. demanding the high become low and vice versa. Thus, the only escape from the restoration of homogeneous order is to allow the influence of lower classes to subvert and invert the current value system and sovereign forms.

The heterogeneous realm is excluded from homogeneous society, but how the high and low are excluded differs. The lower forms are constantly rejected, but this rejection of the lower pushes homogeneity to embrace the higher forms to a degree. As a result of homogeneous society not containing an end in itself, homogeneous society must derive purpose from imperial forces. This sets up a tenuous situation in which royal powers are the purpose of homogeneous society and royal powers require that such a society benefit a monarch. This is reflected in the legal situation of a monarch, who is not subject to laws but can be restricted by them. The monarch has a positive role in unification of homogeneity, providing a goal for the unification, i.e. supplying a moral imperative to homogeneous society.

While this relationship is true for sovereign entities in general, monarchical sovereignty is distinct from military and religious power; these powers meet in a specific manner for monarchical power. The specifics are what distinguish different power structures. Military powers, through the figure of the chief, homogenize the heterogeneous soldier, independent of social homogeneity. Military powers are distinct from royal powers, which are dependent on

social homogeneity. However, military power is not enough to hold sway alone, as there is need

for an external attraction to maintain power, a religious power, which acts as the source of social

authority.

Fascism is also characterized by a foundation composed of both religious and military

elements, neither of which can be clearly demarcated within fascism. Yet, the militaristic

element seems preeminent. Bataille clarifies, "But the religious value of the chief is really the

fundamental (if not formal) value of fascism, giving the activity of the militiamen its

characteristic affective tonality, distinct from that of the soldier in general."[103] So, while the

military character appears to be the fundamental aspect of fascism, the religious value derived

from the chief is the defining characteristic of the military under fascism. No longer are the

soldiers a representative of military power, but they take on a religious value through association

with the Führer. Beyond this superficial focus upon the military, what distinguishes fascism

from monarchical forms is its ties to impoverished classes. Royal society merely repulses the

impoverished while fascism coopts impoverishment. This cooption is not merely symbolic;

exploited elements are included in the affective process through negating the character of these

elements, rendering them benign. In contrast to socialism, which attempts to allow one class to

rise up, fascism tries to unify the classes under a single banner. This unification is achieved

through fascism's military affectivity, in other words, the disaffected and exploited classes are

included at the cost of negating their own character or nature. Bataille explains this militaristic

affectivity by comparing it to the recruit's individuality being diminished by means of uniforms

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[103] Bataille, 154.

and parades. The disaffected classes are effaced, so that all that remains is a generic person that can easily slot into the fascistic system.

How does this process come about? How does fascism come to prominence? For Bataille, the opportunity for fascistic change comes during times of crisis within the existing system. The problem is with the general rule of thumb, which has been that imperative forces only worked towards restoration. However, when a return to the status quo is not possible, there lies the possibility of fundamental changes, which include the possibility of fascistic systems. The break with monarchical systems gave the populace a chance to participate in the political, but socialist subversion is not the only politic in this situation that is alluring. This is also a militaristic organization that can draw the populace into a sovereign orbit. With this new outlet for effervescence the majority will choose imperative elements over subversive ones, out of familiarity. In this situation, two effervescent forces that are hostile to one another and the established system are in conflict. However, the system in place will prefer elements that are familiar; the recently excluded bourgeoisie is preferred to the never incorporated proletariat. Hence, the movement of former republics running towards fascistic thought is a result of crises of the established system. Bataille does offer hope at the end of this text:

> A system of knowledge that permits the anticipation of the affective social reactions that traverse the superstructure and perhaps even, to a certain extent, do away with it, must be developed from one of these possibilities. The fact of fascism, which has thrown the very existence of a workers' movement into question, clearly demonstrates what can be expected from a timely recourse to reawakened affective forces.[104]

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[104] Bataille, 149.

One should be left with the realization that affective social forces can bring about change, and fascism acts as a proof of this reality. However, if one wishes to avoid this fate, then an appeal to the proletariat's affectivity is necessary to subvert traditional values and bring about fundamental changes to the system. Perhaps, this process must do away with the history to some degree too.

Note that Bataille is not merely calling for socialism. Outside of his time with the Democratic Communist Circle, Bataille was never an adherent of communism, and even during this period he was more of a provocateur. While the text in question arises from this period, being published in *La Critique sociale*—the journal associated with the Democratic Communist Circle—the text is skeptical of socialism's power. Socialism in this instance merely inverts, but does not subvert values. "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" is a work that explains the origin and character of fascistic governance and society. This is achieved through a recognition of the underlying dynamics that inform fascism, and even how to break with the status quo but avoid the pitfall of fascism.

"Nietzschean Chronicle"

Bataille's potential, subversive, affective escape is further elaborated in "Nietzschean Chronicle," which focuses on the story of Numantia. While it is clear that Bataille is referring to the Cervantes' play, *The Siege of Numantia*, it is unclear whether he is also drawing on the historical siege of Numantia, although it seems irrelevant, as Bataille is focusing on general themes shared by both the event and the play.

Bataille begins the text by focusing on the idea of critiques, one passive and one active. The former is concerned with crises of conventions and/or sovereignty; the latter is an individual

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critical attitude toward these conventions. In this active critique, the individual develops by

criticizing conventions, but this growth is at the expense of the stability of society as a whole. At

the same time, the individual life takes on a tragic meaning in turn. Bataille continues by

discussing communal passions and their necessity to "constitute human strength."[105] When

communal passions lack that power, it becomes necessary to appeal to the mechanizations of

politics, alliances, contracts, et cetera. As these mechanizations are the norm, when one breaks

with this realm one realizes the barrenness of the world. The decomposition of a society affects

not only the economy and institutions, but also moral/religious principles. Beyond this

decomposition is a void that we are inclined to evade; hence, the individual or community feels

as if something is missing. This feeling, in turn, leads to a deep nostalgic yearning for a lost

world. In short, decomposition causes one to seek a never existent, fictional past in order to fill

this void.

Bataille claims that this yearning for a bygone era plays right into the hands of fascistic

solutions, as it is easier to reconstitute an imagined past than to create anew: "[t]he

RECOMPOSITION OF SACRED VALUES starts when the boots of human existence are

repaired, and it can obediently march straight ahead once again under the whip of hard

necessity."[106] "The boots of human existence" refers to the capability to address the necessities

of daily life and projects. Only then can sacred values be recomposed. In the current state,

leaders of revolutionary forces acknowledge this drive, but only in the form of irrational urges.

The demand for a bygone era, in which one finds a larger tragedy in the community than the

individual, played a role in the genesis of fascism. The result is military discipline, with a calm

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[105] Georges Bataille, "Nietzschean Chronicle," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 202-212, 203.
[106] Bataille, 204.

yet brutal attitude towards that which is not captivated by its allure. Bataille continues, "The community does not demand a fate similar to that of the different parts it brings together, but it demands as an end that which violently unifies and asserts itself *without alienating life*, without leading it to the repetition of emasculated acts and of external moral formulae."[107] According to Bataille, a community's goals are not the sum of the individual desires of the collective, but desires that forcefully unify without reducing life to hackneyed moral codes and the impotence of projects. Put succinctly, the call of a lost world can lead in the opposite direction of fascism. This possibility is the difference between Nietzsche and the fascists. The reconstitution of religious and militaristic elements, which place life in connection to the past, produce a byproduct that liberates sacred figures and myths, in turn promising a new future. This is indicated by Bataille referencing the *Vaterland* and *Kinderland* from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The *Kinderland* is not a mere negation of the *Vaterland*, but instead takes on a larger importance. Instead of drawing on an articulated past and future, the *Kinderland* calls on chthonic forces to drive one. This drive is not to action, but to embrace life or 'tragedy.' So contra the figure of the sun as a leader, the people of Numantia represent an acephalic entity. Numantia and this entity offer the image of a *Kinderland* that entails a new mythos of a people without a leader.

There are two consistent themes in this claim. First is the idea that life is like a tragic play. A character suffering a horrific fate due to a flaw or the divine is similar to our essential relation to death. As observers of tragedies, we partake in the subterfuge of identifying with a character who faces death or dies. However, we do not receive a sense of catharsis, but a temporary unveiling of our relationship to death—a *memento mori*. Tragedy speaks of the joys

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[107] Bataille, 204.

of life and the maleficence of that joy.[108] Death is a necessity that one will eventually confront;

yet, in embracing life one is partaking in the joy that entails one's demise. Daily life may ignore

this characteristic, but fateful misfortune is the ground of life. Tragedy allows us to identify with

the hero with a fatal flaw, who suffers a fate that we will suffer too.

The second theme is the image of the acephalic entity. Yet, the most prominent use of

this image is during the late 1930s, which coincided with Bataille's work with a journal and

secret society, both of which he had a hand in creating and both of which were named *Acéphale*.

The journal was the face shown to society, with a cover illustrated by André Masson: bearing a

headless figure with a flaming heart in hand and a dagger in the other, with stomach viscera

exposed and a skull over the genitals. The journal was publicly distributed and contained many

of Bataille's texts most critical of fascism: such as "Nietzsche and the Fascists," "Nietzschean

Chronicle," and "Propositions." The specifics of the secret society are vague. It was not an

attempt to cause upheaval or to create a large community, but to form a small, leaderless group.

The lack of a head in this society makes it so that it will never adhere to a political party or

movement. In short, the journal and society act as models contrary to fascism in every way, all

while playing on mythical concepts.[109]

Numantia, both the play and the actual city, represents not an individual's tragedy, but

the tragedy of a people. Bataille comments that this communal tragedy leaves Numantia

inaccessible to many, as most only have eyes to see the individual's tragedy and a grander scope

is beyond the comprehension of most people. The citizens of Numantia are tied together in a

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[108] Georges Bataille, "Hegel, Death, and Sacrifice," in *The Bataille Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 279-295, 290.

[109] Allan Stoekl, introduction to *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), xx.

religious truth. The truth is that death is the fundamental object of communal activity, i.e. the

shared terrors of a community that tie them together. In this situation, the *Vaterland* only has an

external meaning when directed against this religious truth, as the other that drives dramatic

actions. However, military existence is based on an absolute negation of death; as a result,

militaristic life and thought actively prohibit dramatic displays. Bataille explains that this

militaristic ideology views death as a means of reinforcing adherence, as something to avoid or

celebrate as a means of protection.

In short, militaristic ideology subordinates everything to a unity at the cost of fulfilling

greater human desires. In this restriction of possibilities, "the fatherland even represents the

greatest obstacle to this unity of life that…can only be based on a communal awareness of

profound existence, the emotional and riven play of life and death."[110] The *Vaterland* disallows

the unity of life, because such a unity is based on the rejection and revaluation of the *Vaterland*.

To embrace the unity of life, the *Kinderland* must be founded on a communal acknowledgement

of the power of death. As such, Numantia lacks any meaning for the lone individual or the

Vaterland. The play took on a meaning distinct from individual dramas or national feelings, but

instead was based on political passions. Even the mythological themes in the play are rather

foreign to the political realm. Numantia exhibits just how shallow contemporary political

struggles of the 1930s were, and perhaps they still are, which Bataille described as "[a] vast

decomposition of men linked only by what they refuse."[111] Interpreting Numantia as an

expression of anti-fascist struggles maybe be comforting,

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[110] Bataille, "Nietzschean Chronicle," 209.
[111] Bataille, 209.

But tragedy confronts the world of politics with an evident truth: the battle joined will only take on a meaning and will only be effective to the extent that fascist wretchedness comes face to face with something other than troubled negation—namely the heartfelt community of which Numantia is the image.[112]

People are gathered together only by death or a leader, and the death of a leader is a tragedy. It is in death that an obsessive value is given to the community and communal life. Only in this collective loss can force or affectivity take perverse and powerful forms enough to confront fascism directly.

"Propositions"

The last text to consider is "Propositions," half of which is on the death of God and half on fascism. The first claim is that tragedy takes place in the revaluation of values. This is followed by a debatable definition that, "[t]he most perfect organization of the universe can be called God."[113] According to this definition, fascism reconstitutes society based on existing elements, and in its totalizing mode is the closest to this description of God. As a consequence, the death of God is the disintegration of a community. However, existence is always between the two poles of decomposition of the "divine" and the deifying of it. A recomposed society, regardless whether it is revolutionary or fascistic, halts this movement temporarily, but it is only a matter of time until decomposition resumes. These standard movements hint at the possibility of a religious upheaval that could move life beyond servility.

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[112] Bataille, 209.

[113] Georges Bataille, "Propositions," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 197-201, 197.

The mythological representation of this movement is the acephalic man, who expresses "sovereignty committed to destruction and the death of God, and in this the identification with the headless man merges and melds with the identification with the superhuman, which IS entirely 'the death of God.'"[114] Bataillean sovereignty entails a rejection of projects and utility, an embrace of chance and losses, and a willingness to be lost in the present. Thus, the acephale is to embrace chance and life, while rejecting utility and any all-encompassing divinity or state. This reference to the *Übermensch* is further developed by Bataille, as both it and the acephalic individual refer to time as an imperative object with an explosive freedom of life. In both cases time becomes the object of ecstasy, whether in the form of catastrophe or eternal return. This conflation between the ecstatic time of the acephale and the *Übermensch* is grounded on their similar breaks from the experience of time as a series of discrete nows. This interpretation of the *Übermensch* and eternal return will later form the basis of Bataille's war time texts on Nietzsche and chance. This is the point where Bataille offers another reference to Heidegger, as this ecstatic time is "as different from the time of philosophers (or even from Heideggerian time) as the Christ of erotic saints is from the God of the Greek philosophers."[115] Typical of Bataille, this ecstatic time can be found only in infantile chance and things, such as bodies, the abyss, blood, et cetera. These qualities are in contrast to the ideas of the immutability of entities, projects, and utility. If this is the case, then war fought to prolong a nation is merely a futile struggle against time and chance. This nationalistic/militaristic life attempts to refuse the power of death by subordinating it to glory, to face death without fear.

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[114] Bataille, 199.
[115] Bataille, 200.

<u>Consolidation</u>

Now, it is possible to consolidate this information into a single reading of Bataille on fascism. There are common themes that weave the texts together: for example, the affective nature of both fascism and subversive forces that can overturn societies. The latter is informed by decomposition and tragedy which are required for subversion of values and society to occur. Each of these themes appear in at least two of the three texts, and each helps to explicate the others. What results is something akin to a singular movement or occurrence that is explained through an abstraction of these "individual parts." From this collection of themes a singular narrative can be formed.

Affectivity appears in all three texts, but under different guises or terms. Affectivity appears as energies and forces in "Propositions." In "Nietzschean Chronicle," collective terror or communal feelings represent affectivity, and effervescence is the form of affectivity in "The Psychological Structure of Fascism." Regardless of their label, they all operate in the same way. These energies operate on the individual level like shock from abject items; however, when it comes to political aims, communal affects become the focus. The benefit is that these collective energies motivate each individual, but also foster a sense of community.

The heart of this affectivity is dependent on the decomposition of society or the current form that it occupies. Typically, this decomposition originates in the margins of a homogeneous society, but once it reaches a critical mass, decomposition begins to threaten the integrity of the whole. Decomposition "only represents the negative form of social effervescence: the dissociated elements do not act before having undergone the complete alteration that

characterizes the positive form of this effervescence."[116] In short, decomposition represents the negative side of effervescence, which only becomes active once it becomes positive or constructive. In typical circumstances, the general movement is to return to familiar forms through re-composition following the deterioration of decomposition. Instead of this effervescence transforming into a motor for something new, it remains negative and only allows for a reconstruction into previous forms. This movement is the norm, especially in classical monarchical and democratic forms. However, when it becomes impossible to return and reconstitute previous forms, fascism or other perverse forms can come to the fore. Only when perverted does social effervescence contain the potential to transform a community or a system of governance into something other. However, fascistic forms tend to come to power due to their familiarity to the system as a whole. When unable to return to the status quo, the system is inclined to return to a form that is most similar to the status quo, e.g. fascism adopting bourgeois ideology to form a religio-militaristic head to guide society. How then can one avoid this fate and fight against it?

This affectivity is also seen in Bataille's use of the term 'tragedy.' While absent from "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," tragedy plays a dominant role in the other two texts. In "Propositions," tragedy occurs in the reevaluation of values. As a group overturns and transforms values, tragedy is the necessary occurrence or outcome. For our consideration, the relevant form of tragedy is not on an individual level, but a communal one. While tragedy for the individual is unfortunate, tragedy for a community changes the world around it, including what is deemed worthy of positive and negative evaluations. This is explicated more clearly in "Nietzschean Chronicle." Bataille compares communal forces held together by tradition or

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[116] Bataille, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," 140.

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monarchical authority, and "a bond of fraternity…established between men, who among themselves decide upon the necessary consecrations: and the goal of their meeting is not a clearly defined action, but life itself—LIFE, IN OTHER WORDS, TRAGEDY."[117] This community is not formed by an external force or social pressures, like tradition, but joined together through a shared life in which the baser aspects of life take on meaning, including death itself.

In this sense, Cervantes' *The Siege of Numantia* embodies such a community in an extreme sense. The characters in *Numantia* sacrifice their property, their loved ones and themselves in order to avoid Roman control. This ultimate collective sacrifice embodies the sort of tragedy and collective affectivity that Bataille describes as uniting a community. The scale of this sacrifice is what is so haunting in this tragedy, that one is not merely confronted with a loss or many individual losses, but the loss of a community. This loss of community is inaccessible to individuals, because tragedy typically pulls on the heartstrings of the individual and their familiarity to an individual's loss. Communal life operates on the level of a community's shared fears and a recognition of death, a truth that is ignored or avoided in the name of convenience. Consequently, *The Siege of Numantia* operates on a communal level that is often left in the shadows and from which modern people tend to hide. *Numantia* confronts the viewer with political passions. While this idea may seem absurd in the face of fascist versus anti-fascist conflicts, it is only indicative of the shallowness of these current political passions. *Numantia* should lead an observer of this style of conflict to the revelation that fascism must be confronted with not just a simple negation, but a community in the mold of *Numantia*, which is willing to sacrifice its very existence for the political passions of the community. This differentiates it

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[117] Bataille, "Nietzschean Chronicle," 205.

from fascism because fascism's very being entails the destruction of a community's character in order to consolidate it into a single, homogeneous whole. Fascism primarily works within the structure of a nation-state, not communities.

While the above does explain the origin of Fascism and how a community must relate to it in order to resist it, little of this explains the behavior of fascism. The majority of this behavior is derived from "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," and is explained above. The key is hybridization and the unification of military and religious powers into a single form. While the military forms its own brand of homogeneity within the heterogeneity of violence and sovereignty, what dominates fascism is actually its religious aspect with the leader as a focus of devotion. Despite Bataille's proximity to Germany, much of this critique can also be applied to Italian fascism. When discussing fascism's development in France, Bataille sees the development of fascism as two-fold, an Italian and a German front. The characteristics that define the Führer for Bataille's conception of fascism equally define il Duce. Moreover, the use of affective energies to consolidate the classes under the single authoritarian umbrella is structurally in both nations.

Claims of Fascism

Thus, Bataille is a potent critic of fascism, yet he has been labeled fascistic or simply a fascist multiple times. Although this issue may seem tangential, it is grounded in a concern for the legitimacy of Bataille's critique. Notwithstanding the clear fallacy of rejecting a critique on the grounds that the author expresses similar views, this form of ad hominem argument provides a convenient mode of refutation. The notion that Bataille's critique of Heidegger is in bad faith might thereby be raised as an objection to Bataille. For this reason, it is necessary to address these claims to Bataille's fascism in order to circumvent any blanket dismissals of his critique of

Heidegger. This will also provide an opportunity to delve deeper into Bataille's political ideals as a means of reinforcing the later critiques.

Some of Bataille's contemporaries accused him of being a fascist of some stripe. Pierre Klossowski, who co-founded the College of Sociology with Bataille and Roger Caillois, recalled that "recent German exiles (Walter Benjamin first and foremost, but also Hans Mayer as we shall see) grew worried that the College was toying with explosive ideas without realistically weighing up the consequences. But to speak as [Benjamin] does, about Bataille and the 'profound temptation of fascist cynicism' requires full substantiation, with written proof."[118] There have been many since Benjamin to point to similarities between the College of Sociology and fascism.[119] The College of Sociology was a group spearheaded by Bataille, Caillois and Klossowski, which held regular lectures in Paris between 1937 and 1939. Attendees included figures like, Benjamin, Kojève, Wahl, André Masson, Michel Leiris, Hans Mayer, and Jean Paulhan. The goal of the College was to provide a study of sacred sociology that goes beyond the limits of Durkheim, or the coincidence between the obsessions of discrete individuals or shared obsessions of individuals within a community and the structures overseeing social groupings.[120]

The phrase "explosive ideas" refers to the inclination of College members to play with ideas of social affectivities, which will be discussed more below. The College was founded on the displeasure and frustrations with social fragmentation and the failures of contemporary liberal-democratic institutions. This frustration was shared by fascist intellectuals, and both

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[118] Michel Surya, *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson (New York: Verso, 2002), 268.

[119] Again, you can look at the works of Richard Wolin, or look at Carlo Ginzburg's "Germanic Mythology and Nazism: Thoughts on an Old Book by Georges Dumézil," which contains a short segment about whether the College of Sociology is contaminated by Dumézil's thought: Dumézil was Caillois' teacher.

[120] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, "A Left Sacred or a Sacred Left? The *Collège de Sociologie*, Fascism, and Political Culture in Interwar France," *South Central Review* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 40-41.

groups attempted to counter this by appealing to a romanticized organic community. However, one key difference between the members of the College and right-wing thinkers of the era was source of the transgressions: the former was apolitical, the latter political.[121] By attempting to form a community or sacred outside the confines of standard politics, Bataille and other members of the College are promoting something other than the forced consolidation of fascism. Caillois describes this difference as a distinction between three classes of individuals: the armed lout, the tragic man, and the man of law and discourse.[122] The armed lout is one who looks at death as an external pleasure and is primarily motivated by preparation for combat. The tragic man is one who is aware of their human existence, its contradictory forces and its absurdity, and realizes the necessity for transgression. The man of law and discourse is the embodiment of modern parliamentary liberalism. Thus, the armored lout and the tragic man are in conflict with the man of law and discourse, but how and why differs. The armored lout can force the man of law and discourse to follow his whims, but the lout cannot stifle the tragic man. According to Caillois, the tragic man is one who embraces life, while the armored lout is alienated entity, a force always in need of another to serve. This self-characterization points to the primary difference between the goals of fascism and the College of Sociology; fascist thinkers viewed the sacred as a means to promote a consolidation towards undermining liberal-democracies. The College attempted to place the fragmentary world into jeopardy by emphasizing the transgressive nature of sacredness.

What was more libelous were the claims of Boris Souvarine, founder of the French communist party and the Democratic Communist Circle (of which Bataille was a member), who

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[121] Nikolaj Lübecker, *Community, Myth and Recognition in Twentieth-Century French Literature and Thought* (London: Continuum, 2009), 47.
[122] Roger Caillois, "Brotherhoods, Orders, Secret Societies, Churches," in *The College of Sociology*, ed. Denis Hollier, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 145-156, 147.

claimed that Bataille was intellectually compromised as a supposed follower of Heidegger. This

ignores the fact that the only Heidegger Bataille likely read prior to 1940, when he read Corbin's

translations, was Bessey's translation of "On the Essence of Ground." Moreover, every time

Bataille mentions Heidegger, he is critical. Even further, Souvarine claimed that Bataille's

disagreements with Simone Weil were based upon her Jewishness. This he tried to justify on the

characteristics attributed to the character Lazare, supposedly based upon Weil, in Bataille's novel

Blue of Noon.[123] Souvarine was right to believe that Lazare was based on Weil: as both were

Jewish, Marxist, and took actions to support anarchists during the Spanish Civil War. However,

to use someone's likeness in a novel is not the same as disagreeing with them because of one's

religion and ethnicity. Moreover, Bataille wished Weil would join the circle, however she had

reservations. As she describes it, "Now the revolution is for him [Bataille], a catastrophe—for

me, a methodological action in which one must endeavor to limit the harm done; for him, the

liberation of the instincts, and above all those that are currently considered pathological—for me,

a superior morality."[124] There were clear differences, and Weil did not expect an organization

with wildly differing ideological grounds to function. In short, Bataille and Weil's tension was

due to their differing philosophies, and it was not unheard of for Bataille to be conflicting with

"allies." Perhaps Souvarine is referring to Bataille's Nietzschean ideals, and thus the conflict is

grounded in a Nietzschean critique of Judaism and slave morality. However, there is no reason

to believe this is Souvarine's claim, except out of intellectual generosity.

     The most virulent attack comes from Richard Wolin's article, "Left Fascism: Georges

Bataille and the German Ideology." Throughout the article, Wolin compares Bataille to many

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[123] Surya, 291.
[124] Simone Weil, "Draft of a letter to the Circle," quoted in Simone Pétrement's *Simone Weil: A Life*, trans.
Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 208. The quote in question is not from a complete text,
but from a partial letter only available in Pétrement's biography of Weil.

proto-fascistic German thinkers. Wolin draws a connection between Oswald Spengler, Ernst

Jünger and Bataille in relation to an "aesthetics of violence" that is common to the generation

situated between the wars.[125] In an aesthetics of violence, war has a positive position. War

destroys the individualization of the individual and subjectivity that grounds bourgeois society.

Wolin says that, "It is in this spirit that he [Bataille] celebrates the nonutilitarian nature of

military combat as a type of aesthetic end in itself." He summarizes,

> In Bataille's thought war serves as the harboring of a cultural transformation in which the
>
> primacy of self-posting subjectivity would be replaced by the taboo values of an
>
> 'ecstatic' community: a community no longer governed by the identitarian prejudices of
>
> visual culture—by norms of transparency, sameness, self-equivalence—but instead by
>
> those of self-laceration, difference, and finitude.[126]

Thus, Wolin believes that Bataille's concept of community is to develop through such things as

war and conflict. Wolin double downs on this model, "for it is a model that embraces an

aesthetics of transgression as the norm for social action."[127] As war is seen as a transgressive

behavior, it is the basis of social action, or in other words community forming or reinforcing

behaviors.

Wolin's interpretation is heavily dependent on quotations from one of Bataille's later

work, *The Accursed Share*, written between 1946 and 1949—which was after World War II.

One such example cited by Wolin is "*Glory*…expresses a movement of senseless frenzy, of

measureless expenditure of energy, which the fervor of combat presupposes. Combat is glorious

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[125] Richard Wolin, "Left Fascism: Georges Bataille and German Ideology," in *The seduction of unreason : the intellectual romance with fascism : from Nietzsche to postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 151-186, 160.
[126] Wolin, 161-162.
[127] Wolin, 165.

in that it is always beyond calculation at some moment."[128] However, this is not necessarily a glowing endorsement of war. Recognizing combat's possibility to be beyond calculation is not the same as endorsing combat as a means to exceed bourgeois society. More importantly, this quote given by Bataille is in the context of a conversation on rank in a potlatch. Potlatch is a Native North American tradition of a ceremonial feast in which possessions are destroyed or given away to opposing tribes. The opposing tribes are then by tradition or social pressure expected to return, with interest, the possessions given away or destroyed. Hence, Wolin's quotation of Bataille distorts his view by ignoring its context. Bataille states that glory and warfare are misunderstood if one does not understand them through the acquisition of rank. The clearest form of obtaining rank and its relationship to expenditure is the potlatch. Moreover, do we not recognize the glory and bestow accolades in relation to one's willingness to confront death and the severity of chance in combat? The embrace of chance is what makes one glorious and "Combat is glorious in that it is always beyond calculation at some moment."[129] This omission shows that Bataille is not recognizing combat as the highest form of useless expenditure, but recognizing it as a strong form that is honored through rank. There are countless other ways that one or a community can confront chance and the laceration of Being.

Moreover, Wolin's claim hinges on a conception of community. War acts as a catalyst by taking disparate, atomized individuals and putting them into an ecstatic collective. However, the crux of this interpretation is a misinterpretation of the Bataillean concept of community. The concept of community is not the usage in the common vernacular. Bataille's call for a community is to actually destroy the traditional sense of community. As the "Programme

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[128] Original Georges Bataille's *Accursed Share*, quoted in Richard Wolin's "Left Fascism: Georges Bataille and the Germany Ideology," 161.

[129] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Volume 1 – Consumption*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 71.

(Relative to *Acéphale*)" states, "1 Form a community creative of values, values creative of

cohesion."[130] This call to form a community based on the creation of values implies the

destruction of existing communities. However, proposition 7 suggests that proposition 1 refers

to a universal community; "Fight for the decomposition and exclusion of all communities

national, socialist, communist or churchly – other than universal community."[131] Thus, this

concept of community is a rejection of nationalist, socialist, or typical religious communities.

One is confronted with the idea of a universal community that is a break with the existent

communities founded on old ideals or values.

Drawing on "Nietzschean Chronicle," this revaluation is a rejection of the *Vaterland* and

an attempt to form a nascent community, a formation of a *Kinderland* based on new values. As

stated by Jason Kemp Winfree, "The entire force of revolutionary creativity rests for Bataille in

the emotional bond that wells up within the masses as refusal, the atmosphere of hope and rage

that swells like an uncontainable wave."[132] This wave of affective energies is exactly the thing

that many worry about and focus on when they claim that Bataille is playing with energies

beyond one's control. Yet, the tradition of community on the left, namely communist and

socialist movements, fails to account for a multitude of things. While a Marxist analysis may

explain much of what goes on in economic/productive systems, it fails to address drives and

desires at play in systems of exchange. Yes, the typical interpretation is that these parts of the

superstructure follow the structure of the economic base. However, the reality of these drives

and desires outstrips these economic systems, along with the systematic formulations that arise

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[130] Georges Bataille, "Programme (Relative to *Acéphale*)," in *The Bataille Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott
Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), 121, 121.
[131] Bataille, 121.
[132] Jason Kemp Winfree, "The Contestation of Community," in *The Obsessions of Georges Bataille: Community
and Communication*, ed. Andrew J. Mitchell and Jason Kemp Winfree (Albany: State University of New York
Press, 2009), 31-46, 33.

upon the dissolution of economic/political systems. This failure is part of what made a piece like "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" necessary. Typically these desires and drives are ignored in left-wing politics and communities, yet these are the very media that Bataille is embracing to develop a new community.

The result of embracing affective energies is the demand for a new community that is not in the mold of communities that already exist. This demand for a new community founded on shared values is not for a community based on facts, like ethnicity or nation, but an elective community in which one participates based on shared values. Accordingly, chance rears its head as a blind force that permits a break with existent communities and enables the opportunity to join others in which they share values. The coincidence of values is based on chance occurrences too. It is not a grouping based on shared qualities of distinct subjects, but an overlapping of insufficient beings who exist in a hostile world. We are by definition beings that are fractured, "There is no being without a crack, but we go from enduring the crack, the degradation, to glory (the beloved crack)."[133] All beings are impoverished or insufficient, and that is a problem with traditional interpretations of subjectivity, which ignore this fundamental lack. It is in sharing aspects of this lack with others that new communities arise. It is through these cracks that one is opened to the rest of the world and others to interact and communicate. Thus, again, "Community is constituted in the overlapping of wounds, the sharing not only of what cannot be shared, but the sharing of a suffering that is neither mine nor yours, a suffering that does not belong to us, but which gives us to one another, and in doing so both maintains and withdraws the beings so configured."[134] One is drawn into a community with others who share

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[133] Georges Bataille, *Guilty*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany: State University of New York Press Albany, 2011), 19.
[134] Winfree, "The Contestation of Community," 41.

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characteristics that come about through chance. Only through a shared experience of wounds can an affective quality come about that can form the basis of a community.

Yet, one might object that this play of forces may incline one towards fascistic developments. While the heterogeneous affective communities of fascism do depend on organizations grounded in affectivity, the heart of their draw is not based on values, in Bataille's sense. Instead, fascism tries to transform values into facts, such as attempts to scientize concepts of race, or to make nation into an indubitable fact. In Bataillean terms, fascism tries to violently transform the heterogeneous force of attraction into homogeneous productivity, to take these affective forces and ossify them within a solid system of productive projects.

In relation to Benjamin's criticism, the fact that multiple strands of thought overlap in their challenges to individualism and modernity does not mean that they are promoting the same ends. As Michèle Richman points out, "It is one thing to assert that it is virtually impossible to 'foresee' (as Bataille does), the unpredictable nature of effervescent energies. It is another to discredit thoroughly intellectual efforts to understand their functioning, thereby effectively discouraging future speculation on the role of collective thought and action in relation to politics in the modern period."[135] Thus, one need not criticize another for attempting to understand these energies just because of their unpredictable nature. Additionally, any attempt to use these energies in a progressive manner is consequentially discredited. As Richman pithily states, "all roads to revolution do not inevitably lead to Rome or the Reichstag."[136] Trying to employ these affective energies does not necessarily result in tyranny.

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[135] Michèle Richman, "Fascism Review: Georges Bataille in 'La Critique sociale'," *South Central Review* 14, no. 3/4 (Autumn-Winter 1997): 24.
[136] Richman, 24.

This strand of criticism largely focuses on the Durkheimian aspects of Bataille's philosophy. Émile Durkheim was an influential early French sociologists.[137] The language of homogeneity and social effervescence are derived from Durkheim's sociology. Additionally, much of Bataille's understanding of the perverting potential for a society or community stems from Durkheim, primarily his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. For example, Durkheim explains of revolutionary energies:

> Under the influence of some great collective shock in certain historical periods, social interactions become much more frequent and active. Individuals seek one another out and come together more. The result is the general effervescence that is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs. The result of that heightened activity is a general stimulation of individual energies. People live differently and more intensely than in normal times. The changes are not simply of nuance and degree; man himself becomes something other than what he was. He is stirred by passions so intense that they can be satisfied only by violent and extreme acts: by acts of superhuman heroism or bloody barbarism.[138]

Durkheim's goal was not to prescribe, but to formulate an accurate sociological understanding of religion that does not fall into the pitfalls of presuming religious structures or prioritizing contemporary European models. This description of galvanizing affective energies leading to barbarisms is similar to the above quote from *The Accursed Share*: they are not promoting these actions, but describing a common occurrence. This move of affectivity developing a communal

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[137] Bataille read Durkheim's *Elementary Forms* in late 1931, and often checked out Mauss' and Hubert's *Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, which discusses sacrifice at length.
[138] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 213.

identity in the moment is common in Bataille's philosophy. In these moments, individuals go beyond their normal behaviors and circumstances to escape the confines of their community or society. Durkheim sees this occurrence as a precursor to the development of new values and communities founded on these affective experiences.

Despite Durkheim's influence on Bataille, there are some important ways that Bataille differed. The ideas in the above quote are reinforced in the book's conclusion:

> Thus there is something eternal in religion that is destined to outlive its succession of particular symbols in which religious thought has clothed itself. There can be no society that does not experience the need at regular intervals to maintain and strengthen the collective feelings and ideas that provide its coherence and its distinct individuality. This moral remaking can be achieved only through meetings, assemblies, and congregations in which the individuals, pressing close to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments.[139]

The symbols that are imbued with religious significance are not due to a divine system or power, but the affective energies projected onto these items create sacred object or concepts, which would include gods. For Durkheim, the contemporary western epoch is informed by the French Revolution; its new ideals were formed and calcified in the aftermath of the affective energies that overcame the community. This revolution is prototypical for Durkheim, however Bataille views such slipping into solidified state structures as a problematic fall into the realm of utility.

If Durkheim is describing the development of a church and rituals informed by affectivity, then Bataille is describing communal momentary mystical states that cannot be

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[139] Durkheim, 429.

formulated as ideals: such ideals are bastardized once transformed into language. Durkheim's

sociology acts as a descriptive model for Bataille, but Bataille's proscription is to interrupt the

formation of a religion or ideology. So, when *Acéphale* and the College of Sociology—both

organizations Bataille helped found—claimed to seek or create a new sacred or a sacred

sociology, it was not a call for a new organized religion, but a new set of values and organization

of ideas.[140] This difference stems from how Durkheim and Bataille interpret the sacred and

profane dichotomy. Durkheim explains that the sacred is protected and isolated by prohibitions

and the profane is that to which prohibitions are applied: separating it from the sacred. However,

Durkheim states that they cannot be fundamentally other to one another: "The sacred thing is, par

excellence, that which the profane must not and cannot touch with impunity. To be sure, this

prohibition cannot go so far as to make all communication between the two worlds impossible,

for if the profane could in no way enter into relations with the sacred, the sacred would be of no

use."[141] Bataille's understanding of the sacred is grounded in heterogeneity and a rejection of

utility, the former of which is a term Durkheim applies to the sacred and profane dichotomy. For

something to be sacred, it must be heterogeneous, i.e. outside the realm of utility: productive

labor and projects reduce the object to purpose and exclude it from sacrifice or fruitless

expenditure.

Durkheim explicitly states that the sacred would be of no use if the two realms cannot

enter into relations; however, that is the *raison d'etre* of Bataillean sacredness. Likewise,

Durkheim describes the grounding of religion as a homogeneous group of heterogeneity that

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[140] Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois, "Sacred Sociology and the Relationships between 'Society,' 'Organism,' and 'Being,'" in *The College of Sociology*, ed. Denis Hollier, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 73-84, 82.
[141] Durkheim, 38.

centers a constellation of concepts, beliefs, rites, et cetera.[142] Bataille takes this idea and alters it

too; he explains that it is through wounds and tears in beings that new beings come to be.[143] The

sacred is the communication between beings that enables new beings. However, this new sacred

is not reducible to a homogeneous whole, as this characterization of homogeneity undermines the

very fragmentary nature of Bataillean sacredness. In other words, Bataille's search for a new

sacred is a search for a new connection between beings that cannot be utilized. If the sacred is to

become congealed and a homogeneous system develops around it, no collective "existence" is

possible. The barriers against expenditure created by homogeneous systems must be broken for

connections of the heart and communities to form.[144] This new connection must remain outside

of the homogeneous realm, and must not consolidate difference into a homogeneous whole, as

seen in royal or authoritarian power. The result is a constant breaking of systems in order to

form a new sacred, in the form of relationships and communication between beings. This sacred

is ephemeral by its nature, as homogeneous/profane society will want to restrict the sacred and

coopt it into the profane system. So, while Durkheim was a major influence on Bataille's

terminology and sociological thought, there are some changes that allows his philosophy to offer

different social prescriptions.

One problem with these fascist interpretations of Bataille is that they ignore an earlier

piece by him, "Le problème de l'État," published prior to "The Psychological Structure of

Fascism." In "Le problème de l'État," Bataille attacks a pro-state view. He begins by pointing

out a historical trend of increasing constraint and domination by the state. This trend blankets all

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[142] Durkheim, 38.

[143] Georges Bataille, "The College of Sociology," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 246-253, 251.

[144] Georges Bataille, "Attraction and Repulsion II: Social Structure," in *The College of Sociology*, ed. Denis Hollier, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 113-125, 123.

current intellectual and political interpretations, including both fascism and workers' movements. Workers' movements are linked to a war with the state, but in the current situation it is workers' movements that are withering away. It is totalitarian states that are drawing on vibrant forces. Bataille summarizes the historical situation in this way: "The revolutionary consciousness that awakens in this world of constraint is thus led to consider itself *historically* as nonsense: it has become, to use the old formulas of Hegel, *torn conscience* and *unhappy consciousness*."[145] The demand for revolt and the consciousness that promotes such revolutions are impotent in the modern political situation, which leads one to an alienated consciousness that is at odds with itself and the world. All of this revolutionary spirit depends on optimism, yet by its very nature this consciousness is dependent on the system of production that produced it; thus, it is torn from the beginning.

Bataille continues, revolutionary affectivity has no outlet except this torn and unhappy consciousness. It is in misfortune that one finds the painful affects in which neither God nor the master of the revolting workers lose their power. Now disbanded and left in disarray, the exploited class of workers is measured and compared to the power of gods—in the form of the homeland—and the most brutal of masters to yet exploit them, i.e. fascism. Regardless of this situation, it is the despair of it that fuels the affective energy of revolution. In short, the misfortune and exploitation of this historical moment leave the disaffected in a state of impotent rage. They are impotent insofar as they lack the means to alter the political structure; however, it is this very misery and frustration that stimulate collective affectivity.

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[145] Georges Bataille, "Le problème de l'État," in *Oeuvres Complètes I: Premiers Écrits 1922-1940: Histoire de L'Oeil-L'Anus Solaire-Sacrifices-Articles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 332-336, 332; my translation.

According to Bataille, despair is the most powerful affective behavior with the greatest dynamic value. Hence, despair represents the best hope for breaking from the current circumstances that put the theoretical ideals into question. As Bataille explains, "The future does not rest on the minute efforts of some rallyers [*rassembleurs*] of incorrigible optimism: it depends entirely on general disorientation."[146] Thus, one should not expect a collective of communists or liberals to be able to challenge the impending threat; instead, the future depends on the power of disorientation. By disorientation one should understand the political situation at the time, specifically the pincer of the fall of labor movements in pre-World War II Germany and the dominance of liberalism. This fact of disorientation, according to Bataille, was uncertain if contemporary theories could explain and go beyond it. Therefore, those who speak or fight against fascism might begin to understand that their formulas and theories are juvenile. As Michel Surya summarizes it, "In short, nothing was to be expected of anyone who did not make hatred of the state a motive to carry the heartbreak further and deepen the misfortune, nothing was to be expected of anyone who did not desire 'generalized disorientation.'"[147] Thus, one would fall back into the old state apparatus if one did not go further. Bataille sees this falling back as having happened in violent uprisings already three times, in Russia, in Germany, and in Italy. In many ways, this falling back mirrors what would come in "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," the idea that old structures would reinforce themselves after upheaval, instead of allowing perversion or straying from the status quo.

In contrast to the impotence of contemporary revolutionary movements in this moment, unpredictable events can remove the hurdles preventing successful revolutions. Bataille claims

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[146] Bataille, 335.
[147] Surya, *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*, 171.

that only the "violence of despair" is enough to draw attention to the real problem of the state. In this moment, the problem of the state appears with monumental force, in the form of the police, which causes any hope to dwindle. The truth ignored by principles is that social difficulties are not solved with principles, but with strength—as learned in the examples of Russia, Germany, and Italy. Bataille ends by claiming, "It is in this sense that it is necessary to say at the present time in the face of three servile societies—that no human future deserving that name can be expected except from a liberating anxiety of the proletarians."[148] When faced with the reality of recent Italian, German and Russian history one must, if they wish for a future worthy of the name human, seek the anxiety stemming from the proletariat. Only in this sense can one escape the horrible fate of statist oppression and exploitation. Bataille offers a possibility for democratic institutions; only when in the hands of a proletariat party and appreciating the previous three failures can these institutions be resurrected through anguish. However, this anxiety must be based on a sovereign force, a hatred of statehood itself. Only through the rejection of a state could there exist a collective powerful enough to reject fascistic energies.

Consequently, a major problem with identifying Bataille with fascism on the left is that his philosophy is strongly anti-statist. If we take seriously the criticisms of Souvarine, Wolin, or Benjamin, the question becomes, what sort of fascism has no state? Is this a type of fascism at all or something completely other? It would have to be the latter, as the only remaining connection with fascism would be the association of these affective energies, and perhaps a desire for an embrace with the proletariat; however, Bataille and fascism would use affectivity and embrace the proletariat in different ways. Furthermore, considering Bataille's constant desire and yearning for a leaderless community, an acephalic community, how does this work

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[148] Bataille, "Le problème de l'État," 336.

with fascism's tendency to be organized with a monocephalic hierarchy? The standard

identification of fascism is as a right-wing authoritarian nationalism. Thus, it is ridiculous to

characterize Bataille as fascist when he rejects both centralized power and nation-states in

general. Despite looking at multiple aspects of Bataille's philosophy and its relationship with

fascism, the one common complaint is the use of affective energies, based on Durkheim's

sociology. It must be noted that there was a time when Durkheim was seen as proto-fascistic for

this same reason, specifically through his discussion of *Gemeinschaft*.[149] What this strain of

argument, specifically from the likes of Wolin, is forgetting is just how prevalent the

Kriegsideologie was between the World Wars. Yes, there are similarities between Bataille and

figures like Spengler and Jünger. Yet, this valorizing of war and the ties to death and the

community exist in countless other thinkers not associated with fascism: see Max Weber, Georg

Simmel, Sigmund Freud's "Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod," Edmund Husserl's "Fichtes

Menschheitsideal," et cetera.[150] These themes exist across the political spectrum of the time,

hence it is ridiculous to associate all thinkers at the time with fascism on this basis.

There is one glaring omission in Bataille's conception of fascism, anti-Semitism. Anti-

Semitism is a major theme within the larger Heidegger controversy, and a multitude of works

have been devoted to explicating it.[151] However, Bataille's aim is fascism as a whole, which

would include Italian fascism. In the 1920s and 30s, Benito Mussolini did speak positively of

the Jewish community and the Zionist movement, and dismissed the idea of the master race.[152]

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[149] Svend Ranulf, "Scholarly Forerunners of Fascism," *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy* 50, no. 1 (Oct. 1939): 16-34.
[150] Domenico Losurdo, *Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community, Death, and the West*, trans. Marella Morris and Jon Morris (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2001), 18-21, 24.
[151] See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's *Heidegger, Art, and Politics*, Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Heidegger and "the jews"*, and the deluge of new essays on this topic after the publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*.
[152] Maurizio Cabona, "Mussoinin and the Jews," *Telos* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 109.

There were prominent members of the movement that were overt and vocal anti-Semites, such as Roberto Farinacci, but there were no official anti-Semitic policies or language. However, following the rise of Hitler in Germany anti-Semitism became important. As the alliance between the nations developed, Italy began to develop its own version of anti-Semitism and beginning in 1938 enacted a series of Racial Laws in the mold of Nazi Germany, which restricted their civil rights, banned them from university and public office, stripped them of assets, and ultimately placed them in confinement and internal exile. This is a quick and crude overview of Italian fascism's relationship to anti-Semitism and the specifics are up for debate, but the point is that anti-Semitism is neither a necessary, nor sufficient condition of fascism. Moreover, anti-Semitism is hardly specific to fascism. It plays a fundamental role in "Western" ideology and history—from the Gospel of John to the treatment of Conversos during the Spanish Inquisition and rampant political/ideological anti-Semitism of the late 19th and early 20th century—and perhaps Heidegger's thought is guilty despite his attempted break from this tradition. However, Bataille's concept of fascism does not concern anti-Semitism. As a result, Bataille has nothing to add about Heidegger's relationship to anti-Semitism. However, I will address aspects of Heidegger and anti-Semitism in the next chapter.

Bataille contra Heidegger

Bataille's philosophy is in tension with early Heidegger on several intertwined fronts: death, authentic community, and the authenticity of *le moi* or Dasein. These themes hinge on Heidegger's lack of appreciation for the capacity to break from Being, which is possible through limit experiences and one's community. Moreover, Heidegger's *Mitsein* and a community's destiny directly contrast with Bataille's community formed through bonds of the heart—formed through the shared experience of death—which are beyond calculations of our utility based

world. To put it succinctly, Bataille believes that experiencing the death-of-the-other acts as a ground for one's own experience of joy-in-the-face-of-death, and community.[153] For these reasons, Bataille's concept of an authentic individual in relation to history and heritage is at odds with Heidegger. I should note that my comparisons have set down their work as if it were a series of sequential moments. However, both of these figures view their philosophies as holistic. Hence, this process will be a series of abstractions from their philosophies, unable to capture the entirety of their thought in a single stroke. Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempts to describe elements abstracted from unitary phenomena, like Dasein and Being-in-the-world. Bataille's oeuvre is dedicated largely to describing the limits of communication, and experiences are beyond the reach of language. Thus, this comparison will be fractured by the very nature of the philosophies discussed.

"Critique of Heidegger," which was discussed in the previous chapter, will act as an entry point for these comparisons through the idea of intention and the self. In general, Heidegger focuses on the disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*) of beings through language and action.[154] Bataille's earlier criticism of intentionality acts as a counterpoint to Heidegger. Bataille's *le moi* is an underdetermined self that is capable of being worldless, or at least that experiences moments of worldlessness. In short, if Heidegger's Dasein discerns beings in the world, Bataille's *le moi* does the opposite by tearing itself from the world of beings. It is true that Heideggerian anxiety, *Angst* in the original German, is an attunement (*Befindlichkeit*) in which

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[153] Bataille's phrase, *La joie devant la mort*, is not hyphenated, however I am doing so to indicate that it is a single concept.
[154] This theme is made more explicit in later Heidegger, but it is germinating in *Being and Time*. We see it in the pre-theoretical understanding of a being's Being, however this is not an eternal transcendental quality and therefore is informed by thrown qualities.

Being-in-the-world and that which appears in the world become irrelevant.[155] Anxiety causes

one to break from beings and allows one to accurately see possibilities available to Dasein. Yet,

Heideggerian anxiety is an anemic break from the world as it is but a means to an end, towards

authenticity, whereas Bataille's *déchirement*, the act of being torn into pieces, is an experience

that is an end-in-itself.

However, the major tension between Heidegger and Bataille comes from this "self" and

its connection to a community or collective. Much of Heidegger's concept of authenticity is

developed in contrast to *das Man*. However, one cannot be simply divorced from *das Man* as

"Dasein's projection of itself understandingly is in each case already alongside a world that has

been discovered. From this world it takes its possibilities, and it does so first in accordance with

the way things have been interpreted by the 'they'."[156] One is informed and given possibilities

from one's heritage—the hidden handing down of possibilities via one's thrownness —and *das*

Man, "the they," in the form of possibilities, in-order-tos, and for-the sake-of-whichs.[157] The

inauthentic categorization of *das Man* is a necessary part of the development and still remains

constitutive of Dasein's authenticity. Despite this necessary role of *das Man*, Dasein is to break

from the stupor of *das Man* to become authentic. Heidegger does not sufficiently develop the

conceptions of *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*, being-with and being-with-other-Dasein, in *Being and*

Time. Hence, he fails to provide a full account of an authentic community beyond the

inauthentic *das Man*. *Mitsein* is an ontological existential in the first division, yet it does not get

a treatment in the second division. The other and the communal do appear in division two during

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[155] I typically use translations from the Macquarrie/Robinson translation, however their translation of *Befindlichkeit*, as state of mind, is problematic: Heidegger explains that moods are not experienced by psychological subjects. I decided to break from the Macquarrie/Robinson translation, and using Stambaugh's translation, attunement, despite its ambiguity with the term mood.

[156] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §41, 239, 194.

[157] Heidegger, §74, 435, 383.

discussions of historicity and destiny, but an authentic community is not clearly explicated. The sections of *Being and Time* on destiny and communal historicity are brief and lack the thoroughness for which the text is known. However, an approximate concept of an authentic community can be discerned from the text.

Heideggerian destiny is not the mere sum of individual fates. Our shared thrownness and the fact that we occupy the same world bestow the same set of possibilities on us. This guides our fates in advance. Destiny is the unique "fate" of a community. Only in communication and struggle does destiny become free.[158] Heidegger states that Dasein's fateful destiny in and with its "generation" is the entirety of authentic historizing. Generation is not defined by Heidegger, but it is inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey, who defines generations and epochs by their tendencies, which in turn define the life-horizon that frames and organizes individuals. This horizon is the ground of possibilities, experiences, and thoughts that are largely available for individuals and groups of each generation. These generations or epochs are dominated by certain tendencies, but these dominant tendencies do not eliminate other contradictory tendencies. Repressed tendencies bring about a new epoch when the tensions and problems within the dominant tendencies create a demand for their overthrow.[159]

Returning to Heidegger, there are obvious indicators of the influence of Dilthey's concept of generation on his idea of heritage and historicity. In Heidegger's "Rektoratsrede," entitled "The Self-Assertion of the German University" (1933), he further explains the development of the community's destiny. Heidegger's communal destiny develops through epochal struggles, but this struggle keeps open opposition and is indispensable for an authentic community. It is

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[158] Heidegger, §74, 436, 384-385.
[159] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works: Volume III – The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 197-199.

only through conflict with autonomous opponents that a site is created in which a communal

destiny can cohere.[160] Whether this development of destiny between autonomous opponents is

dialectical, in the Hegelian sense, or a liberal dialectic is unclear, but it is influenced by Dilthey's

view on differing inclinations. This site and the history associated with it are constituted as an

event and narrative that occurs as a people is pulled towards its destiny. Its history and the

forward thrust it provides an epoch are communal by nature. As a result, Heidegger is offering a

view of destiny, a communal fate, in which the thrownness of the collective and its internal

struggle develop the community and allow it to "choose" its destiny. This development is

analogous to Dasein's, insofar as it has the freedom to choose to throw off the yoke of being

thrown into the mindlessness of *das Man* and instead choose its fate willingly. Obviously, one

cannot become un-thrown, but to read the situation and make a choice within those confines is

the freedom of which Heidegger speaks. Heideggerian freedom, in *Being and Time*, entails one

projecting into the future free from the mindless devotion of *das Man*. However, this freedom

does not extricate one from socio-culture circumstances, but allows one to determine the

possibilities offered by these circumstances and to willingly choose their individual

commitments.

While a community may have a destiny and a history, how one relates authentically to

these is where the problems arise. Bataille's understanding of community was prodded by his

experience of the failures of his communist contemporaries, the impotence of liberal

democracies, and the impending horror of fascism. For Bataille, community is something forged

through shared experience, not from a history or destiny. Without a destiny or a telos, Bataille's

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[160] Martin Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," in *Philosophical and Political Writings*, trans. Karsten Harries, ed. Manfred Stassen (New York: Continuum, 2003), 2-11, 11.

community is not towards an end, but is a rejection of work and projects. If a community does

have some purpose, it is not an end-in-itself, as it is always for another. Community is a

collective version of Bataille's striving for something beyond the totalized explanation of utility.

This is the basis of his rejection of the state as the guiding force of a community, as the state will

always subject the community to its goals.

Bataille claims that society is not a composite entity.[161] It is not composed of amassed

individual units, but is a unique entity. This rejection of a social ontology typical of

contractarianism, in which individuals are prior to the state, makes something like internal

struggle less obvious, as it is not merely the individuals that compose the collective conflicting

with one another. Instead, violent struggle within a city or state stems from individuals being

divided into factions, such that these factions believe that society is for them, instead of the

contrary. Bataille is rejecting the view that community is composed of atomistic individuals

accumulating into a group or factions. He is simultaneously rejecting the idea that distinct

factions composed of individuals are not informed or defined by these individuals. Phrased

differently, factions and communities are not collections of individuals who guide and define its

characteristics and mission, nor are factions formed prior and indifferent to the individuals within

it.

The remaining dynamic available to Bataille is that these factions are preexisting, created

through prior occurrences of effervescence solidifying into sacred objects, given a forward thrust

by the individuals who feel themselves to be part of these factions and guided by sacred ideals.

In such a situation, social struggles represent "a pathological situation whose condition is

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[161] Georges Bataille, "Le fascisme en France," in *Oeuvres Complètes II: Écrits posthumes 1922-1940* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 205-213, 211; my translation.

necessarily an authoritarian *reunion*."[162] This authoritarian reunion is a necessary step to consolidate and quell social struggle between pre-established groups, which dispels the illusion that society exists for the individual or for factions. This monocephalic consolidation is nothing new, and the resorption that occurs in such consolidation is based on previous forms of society, as mentioned in "Psychological Structure of Fascism," which was written around the same time as "Le fascisme en France." In this state structure, one can belong to the ecstasy towards death only by moving beyond the reign of those who reduce the totality of humans.[163]

While monocephalic consolidation is the norm within a state structure, society as a whole tends to gravitate towards a nucleus of a small group of people bound together by "bonds of the heart."[164] These bonds form by approaching death and ascertaining the mortality common among members of this "group." In Heideggerian terminology, this community forms through Dasein's experience of Being-towards-death, which in an authentic moment allows Dasein to recognize its own death mirrored in the possibility of the other. Death may be one's own-most, but Bataille's total man is able to recognize the experience in the face of death of others, and to form communities, in contrast to state or society, on such a reciprocal relationship. Thus, Bataille's concept of an authentic community is not a faction typical of politics, but something other, according to Bataille's survey.

In contrast, Heidegger's Dasein is partially constituted by the existential *Mitsein*. To adopt the language of *Introduction to Metaphysics*, *Mitsein* grounds the polis, which is to be

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[162] Bataille, 211.
[163] Bataille, 213.
[164] Georges Bataille, "La joie devant la mort," in *Oeuvres Complètes II: Écrits posthumes 1922-1940* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 244-247, 245.

distinguished from the state.[165] Heidegger does not want to understand the polis as a political

entity. The polis should be understood as the site of history. Accordingly, the polis grounds the

possibility of all work and history.[166] Heidegger's polis is necessary for any concept of work,

which is enabled by *Mitsein*. To put it succinctly, *Mitsein* is the ground of utility. Any practice

of art, religion or politics is founded on the polis, as a site of history. Insofar as these practices

depend on the polis, they are political. The products of these practices are constituted by and

constitute history. The history of a polis gives these practices their meaning and is the referent of

their work. This work simultaneously reinforces the historical narrative and aids its further

developments. Thus, Dasein is thrown into a world in which Dasein is given possibilities, which

in turn are given through a polis or community. Yet, these possibilities act to bolster the thrown

possibilities going forward and, to a minor degree, allow the reconceptualization of the tradition

from which they stem.

Bataille would largely agree, as Being is always Being-with (*Mitsein*).[167] Displaying the

influence of Kojève, he argues that language is the medium of all expression and comprehension

of existence, i.e. it grounds Being-in-relation. In other words, one is always already informed

and given possibilities through *Mitsein*. This clearly mirrors Heidegger's own concepts of

thrownness, heritage, and knowledge of the world and possibilities through *Mitsein*. Yet,

Bataille differs from Heidegger in the latter's acceptance of one's groundedness in the

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[165] *Introduction to Metaphysics* is a revised lecture course from 1935, which is later than our consideration at this point, but the relevant ideas differ in minor ways from *Being and Time*. The primary reason to draw from *Introduction to Metaphysics* is the succinct language and terminology it offers. The language of *Introduction to Metaphysics* is more forceful, or even violent, than that of *Being and Time*, but the dynamics at play are already present in both Heidegger and his influence, Dilthey.

[166] Gregory Schufreider, "Heidegger on Community," *Man and World* 14 (1981): 39.

[167] Georges Bataille, "The Labyrinth," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 171-177, 173-174.

transcendence of Being.[168] The authority given to this transcendent ground undermines the radical freedom sought by Bataille. As such, Bataille rejects this foundation of work and projects. His ideal of community is not the world of utility. The community is not a concrete thing that persists over time, but an ephemeral and transitory collective that has no purpose or objective. To borrow from Jean-Luc Nancy, this community is an "inoperative community."

Its opposite, an operative community like Heidegger is proffering, produces the possibility of work and performs this work. In turn, an operative community creates in-authentic relations that, in Bataille's eyes, are grounded on a subject-centered metaphysics. For Bataille, the subject is passive in its relationship to its community and must give into the demands of work and projects: even Dasein, which as a concept was created contra such metaphysics, would fall into this category. The demands of the community are authoritative decrees to fit a mold. Heideggerian authenticity is informed and defined in relation to these communal demands. One cannot escape the polis from within Heidegger's metaphysical confines. Heidegger's Being-towards-death is a necessary step for authenticity, but authenticity is constituted by the polis' inclination. As a result, Bataille would read Being-towards-death as means to an end, insofar as Being-towards-death is part of the world of utility/work. The polis or the state is founded on a logic of accumulation and utility, which are based on means-ends interpretations of the world and Being. The world of work has utility as a fundamental value that informs interpretation and understanding. Dasein is always already within a community and society, which instill their inclinations into "authentic" concepts like Being-towards-death. Thus, the possibility of Heideggerian authenticity hinges on utilitarian understanding of the self and the community.

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[168] As in the Heidegger of "On the Essence of Ground."

However, Bataille is seeking moments where one can be outside of society and, if I may invoke Aristotle, become god or beast.

Fundamental to this question of community is the role of death in relation to authenticity and an authentic community. For both Bataille and Heidegger fear is not relevant when confronting death. Bataille interprets the moment when one faces death as an authentic moment where one is divorced from the world. When fear is absent, one's relation to death remains. Similarly, Heidegger sees fear as the approach of *das Man* towards death. Fear has a specific object, the rustling in the bushes or the person wielding a gun: unlike anxiety, which has no specific object. Death is one's ownmost possibility, which one relates to through anxiety and opens the possibility of authenticity. Only by recognizing the limit that is death can one make informed decisions about one's Being.

For Heidegger, death is the impossibility of Dasein, i.e. the event in which Dasein is not. If this dynamic applies to Dasein, then why is the death-of-the-other not the impossibility of *Mitsein*? Authenticity demands that one recognize the role of *Mitsein* in the constitution of Dasein. This existential, *Mitsein*, grounds any recognition of the thrown community that one inhabits, and offers possibilities, in-order-tos, and the very framing in which one lives. Thus, death-of-the-other should call into question these thrown possibilities. Would there be an ontological possibility that grounds *Mitsein*, a Being-towards-death-of-the-other? One is thrown into a community or polis, but death-of-the-other calls into question the permanence of such a community. Dasein's essential social embeddedness remains; however, the potential to be in another thrown situation becomes apparent. One could have been thrown into another situation; things could have been otherwise. Being-towards-death-of-the-other exposes the possibility of a community being otherwise or undermined by the impossibility of others. The other

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experiencing his or her ownmost possibility opens one to the possibility that this community can collapse and one could be surrounded and informed by different others. The transitory nature of community and its constant evolution and collapse are inevitable. This absence is glaring for a Bataillean reading of *Being and Time*. Heidegger's focus on heritage and historicity as the basis of a community places a priority on the thrown situation of Dasein; however, Bataille is focusing on the community that could form despite any thrown characteristics, perhaps in direct opposition.

In §47 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger does approach this possibility of Being-towards-death-of-the-other, but quickly dismisses it. This seems less a matter of disagreement, and more of an oversight. Heidegger's focus was on explicating Being-towards-death and asking whether one could reach such an experience through death-of-the-other. However, Heidegger's description of the death-of-the-other is laden with emotional overtones, indicating that Heidegger is thinking of the loss of a close personal connection: "In such Being-with the dead, the deceased *himself* is no longer factically 'there'. However, when we speak of "Being-with", we always have in view Being with one another in the same world. . . . Death does indeed reveal itself as a loss, but a loss such as is experienced by those who remain."[169] Being-towards-death-of-the-other would not lead to one's own Being-towards-death, nor would one share in the deceased's ownmost possibility. Instead, Being-towards-death-of-the-other opens Dasein to a recognition of a shared existential quality that can be limited by death.

No, the death-of-the-other is not my death and I cannot experience their Being-towards-death, but, I can recognize the shared (im)possibilities of my death and the death of the other

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[169] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §47, 282, 238-239.

Dasein. Again, just as death is the impossibility of Dasein, so is death-of-the-other the impossibility of the current state that exists through *Mitsein*—of *Mitdasein*. When faced with the death-of-the-other, the possibility of the *Mit* being erased presents itself, as those that would be situated by the proposition "with" are no longer. Being-towards-death and Being-towards-death-of-the-other collectively disclose the commonality of the (im)possibility of losing aspects of the existentials that connect one to those that partially constitute oneself, specifically the *Da* (there) and *Mit* (with).

Yes, an essential part of thrownness is the contingency of community. Likewise, *Mitsein* is not eliminated in this experience, as it is constitutive of Dasein. However, Heidegger fails to address the underlying fracture of Being that is available in Being-towards-death-of-the-other; he is ignoring the "ethical" ground of Being and Being-with. This "ethical" ground is not of a normative system of ethics, but an ethic in the sense of an essential relationship to alterity. This relationship to otherness is based on shared existential aspects with other beings. To state it differently, the fundamental structure of Dasein does not offer a ground for a community that goes beyond thrown contingencies. However, Being-towards-death-of-the-other offers an avenue to go beyond the contingencies and acknowledge the liminal space of *déchirement* where traditional thought and life falters.

Without this commonality that stems from respective impossibilities, Heidegger's conception of community would be stuck within the profane, according to Bataille. This is reflected in Bataille's later criticism of Heideggerian authenticity, such as 1948's "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy." These later criticisms are rooted in long-running trends in Bataille's philosophy, such as a focus on experiences that outstrip language and a

rejection of the world of work and utility.[170] As mentioned in chapter II, Bataille checked out

Corbin's Heidegger anthology from the library in 1941. So, this later criticism was more

informed by personal experience of reading Heidegger, a larger popular conversation about

Heidegger in the philosophical community, and perhaps a stronger familiarity with Sartrean

interpretations of Heidegger.[171]

In this later text, Bataille reads Heidegger as consumed with nostalgia for the rare

authentic moments in a sheltered profane life.[172] This profane role of authenticity is disclosed by

how authenticity, itself, is disclosed. The authentic presents as an awareness of its presence.

This consciousness of the authentic is then a form of knowledge of the authentic. For Bataille,

ensnaring authenticity in knowledge and interpreting it through the medium of language and

public categories prohibits authenticity from taking subjectivity to its limit. This is the root of

Bataille's statement that Heidegger's authenticity stems from an experience of professorial life.

It is the knowledge developed and further sought within the confines of the ivory tower, and not

the experience of the limits of subjectivity, that frames Heideggerian authenticity. The

professorial aspect of Heideggerian authenticity appears throughout his nostalgia and hope for a

return to pre-Socratic Greek thought. Heidegger constantly sought to break from the perverting

and veiling of Being that originated from Plato and was reinforced through the translation of

Greek thought to Latin, which has effects through the present. This trend in *Being and Time*[173]

becomes a focal point for Heidegger during the 1930s, and continues throughout his career.

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[170] Bataille, "La joie devant la mort," 246. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany: State University of New York Press Albany, 2014), 98-99. There are many other examples available.
[171] Le Bouler and Bellec Martini, "Emprunts de Georges Bataille à la Bibliothèque Nationale."
[172] Bataille, "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy," 161; quoted in Chapter 2.
[173] *Being and Time* §7, 63, 39 speaks of Greek thought as diminished in the present. *Being and Time* §34, 208, 165 states that the Greeks spend much of their time talking, but had "eyes to see." In other words, the ancient Greeks spoke not in the prattle of the present, but in a discourse that accurately captured Being.

Heidegger's nostalgia for a "pure" relationship with Being, as in the ancient Greeks, manifests as an intellectual exercise with the goal of a return to this "*Vaterland*." Early in his career, Heidegger is not acting proactively to promote this change, but is speaking in university lecture halls and expanding on the failures of western metaphysics from the comfort of his academic offices. This renders Heidegger's *Destruktion* of the philosophical tradition as moot, or at best an insincere gesture, as it is always promoted with the end of this nostalgia.

Heidegger's thought was not monolithic. However, this desire for a return is a consistent theme, despite the model of this return going through alterations. With the use of the word return, I am playing with two senses of the term. First, I am speaking of a return to a location. However, I am not speaking of location in the sense of time and place, but a return to the relative location in a web of connections to Being. We are to return "to" Being like how one is "in" someone's good graces. This example uses different prepositions; however, I think this analogy captures the sort of "location" to which Heidegger wants to return. Second, which plays off the first, the description of a return to "the Greeks" is not a literal return to circa 500 BCE. It is instead a mirroring of ancient Greek to recapture an originary Greek experience of Being, which he does explicate. I am describing, in Heideggerian terminology, a *repetition* of ancient Greek thought. It is not a mere copy and paste of their thought, but an adoption of it as a model to apply to our current situation. The model this repetition is drawing on varies; but I argue that Heidegger's return consistently seeks the same end.

For example, John Caputo's *Demythologizing Heidegger* is organized around a division of Heidegger's works into eras defined by their mythology. Caputo argues that the earliest

Heidegger did not hinge on the "myth of Being," which formed in the early 1930s.[174] I agree

with Caputo: Heidegger's first Freiburg lectures are guided by Aristotelian and Catholic mythos,

and not the "myth of Being" directly. Speaking in broad strokes, these two thoughts are taken as

equal components to a pre-theoretical understanding of Being. Early Heidegger tried to draw on

these two threads and formulate a revolutionary philosophy of struggle. Caputo argues that this

philosophy of *Kampf* present in the earliest lectures come to fruition in the works of the 1930. In

these early lectures, Heidegger emphasizes a radical concept of philosophy, more specifically the

act of philosophizing. Unlike the academic field, philosophizing's "aim is not to reproduce the

most sedimented formulas of the classical texts but radically to appropriate these writings,

disputing them 'destructively' in order to make contact with and retrieve the founding

experiences that gave rise to them at a time when philosophy and life were not disjoined."[175]

The radical questioning of philosophizing is to touch the root where philosophy and life were

connected. This may not be the same myth of Being that characterizes his later writings;

however, Heidegger had not yet identified this founding experience. Upon sweeping away the

dirt on this foundation, Heidegger recognized a more fundamental problem: Being. This

recognition did not alter his overarching goal, but only the end point. In other words, Heidegger

was points towards the myth of Being prior to recognizing it as such.

Heidegger's detached professional nostalgia is further problematized when addressing the

theme of language. For Bataille, Heidegger's philosophy and conception of existence are tied to

language, which determines the conceptual framework in which phenomena are interpreted.

Even the way people express their total existence to themselves is through the medium of words.

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[174] John Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 3-4.
[175] Caputo, 42.

Thus, any expression of Being for Dasein is mediated through language, which undermines any conception of Dasein as autonomous, as it is always a "being in relation."[176] More specifically, Bataille would interpret Heidegger's Being-towards-death as already integrated with *das Man*'s prattle by the very presence of language, despite Heidegger's attempt to appropriate or create a genuine language of Being. Yes, another cannot experience anyone else's limit of death, but the language of this experience and of the authentic potential is *Mitsein* laden with the stain of *das Man*. This only bolsters the failure of Heidegger to acknowledge the potential of a community that Being-towards-death-of-the-other could produce, the possibility of an authentic community beyond the standard ideas of community or state.

Bataille further claims that this sterile version of authenticity is not "dominated by a terrible passion."[177] This lack of overwhelming passion opens Heidegger to slipping into Hitlerism. Bataille views Heidegger as dominated by a desire to encapsulate Being in the philosophic discourse and wants of professorial life, i.e. personal career advancement. Ignoring the inflammatory personal claims, Heidegger disagrees, as he states that authentic Being-towards-death is an impassioned freedom-towards-death, which releases one from *das Man*.[178] When distilled, this disagreement is about how each philosopher conceptualizes passion. Bataille is describing a boiling-over, a surfeit, of affective energies. For Bataille, Heideggerian authenticity is damaged by the application of dispassionate language to describe it. Heideggerian authenticity is not driven by an overwhelming affectivity, but by decisions and realizations informed by rationality divorced from *das Man*. Language must use its hooks to grasp authenticity, but in doing so language damages and rends authenticity. Heidegger's concept of

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[176] Bataille, "The Labyrinth," 173-174.
[177] Bataille, "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy," 161.
[178] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §53, 311, 266.

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passion abstracts life from the deluge of affects that invigorate it and restricts passion to a resoluteness towards a lucid grasping of beings. Bataille is right to a degree to characterize Heidegger in this manner, as Heidegger interprets Nietzsche's will to power as an expression of passion.[179] Passion, such as hate and love, alters how one addresses beings. Affects, in contrast, appear and take hold of us; there is no act of willing with affects. Thus, Bataille's criticism of Heidegger lacking "passion" is rooted in an ambiguity of the term. If we apply this distinction from Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures, then Heidegger is speaking of passion and Bataille is speaking of affects.

Bataille offers a different authentic experience, one that does not stem from a nostalgia based on a fatigue with the world, in the form of joy-in-the-face-of-death.[180] This feeds back into a consideration of community. Facing death takes one outside of one's self towards an experience that is beyond the confines of profane considerations. Feelings of overwhelming jubilance within the sacred form the bonds of the heart. While this is part of the appeal of military and religious practices, as they can arrest this experience, these practices will annihilate the experience in this process, similar to Heidegger's knowledge of the authentic. For those that do not run into the arms of these institutions, they can determine and find their shared mortality, grounding an authentic sense of community. This community is fundamentally other to communities that exist and are expounded in the profane realm.

This Bataillean criticism of Heidegger focuses on the worldliness of Heideggerian authenticity and the limits of Being-towards-death in relation to others. Heidegger's resulting community is guided by a destiny that is other to its constituents, but is still modeled on the

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[179] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes I and II*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 47-50.
[180] Bataille, "La joie devant la mort," 244.

profane communities of utility. Thus, Heidegger ignores the explosive potential of a community that breaks fundamentally with this world and history.

Correspondence between Bataille's Criticism and Views on Fascism

Bataille's views, on multiple fronts, are in tension with Heidegger's philosophy. There are overlaps in their philosophies: both figures are critical of modernity and the history of philosophy associated with it; however, how and why they are critical of modernity differs greatly. Much of Heidegger's philosophy is informed by a rejection of modernity. Primarily this is achieved in *Being and Time* through his *Destruktion* of the philosophical tradition.[181] This rejection is more than a problematizing of the tradition that incorporates Aquinas and Descartes. Heidegger's *Destruktion* of the philosophical tradition develops as an unraveling of the subject and replacing it with the concept of Dasein. The objective of Heidegger's *Destruktion* is a return to the rootedness in Being exemplified by ancient Greek thought without the intermediaries that distorted this relationship. Later, Heidegger stated that German, as a language, was closest to Greek, and thus was able to recapture a pure relationship to Being.[182] The origins of this thought are, again, noticeable in *Being and Time*. The implication is that the German language was the only means by which a rootedness in Being could be achieved. In other words, it is only through the German that a return to ancient Greece could occur.

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[181] A primary example of this is the distinction between present-at-hand and ready-to-hand, the former being the standard scientific attitude of supposed disinterested observation and theorizing. However, most interactions are performed in a ready-to-hand manner, which is more primordial. This distinction points to a basic misunderstanding belying modern philosophical theorization and epistemology, which is taken as first philosophy from the modern era largely to the present.

[182] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 2010), 5. This sort of claim was not unheard in German at that time and dates back to at least 18th century German Romanticism.

This idealization of ancient Greece/Germanness is the *Vaterland* to be reinvigorated. Nostalgia proposes a simplification of reality to embrace a regressive change. Nostalgia is reductionistic insofar as it reduces events to a simplistic dynamic in which a given moment is regarded as good and the present or other times are not, often structured within a narrative of decline. This simplification is often formed by ignoring the complexity of the world in the past and the present. Heidegger exemplifies this approach in his depiction of an authentic Greek experience towards Being. His valorizing of the ancient Greeks is a highly selective version of ancient Greece. Heidegger does not mention larger aspects of ancient Greek society: such as religion, warfare, history, politics, slavery, et cetera. Even within the literary tradition of the ancient Greeks, Heidegger restricts his thought to a very minor collection:

> Thus Heidegger's Greeks, insofar as they are authors (and not just speakers of Greek), are the authors of a very small selection of celebrated texts, from Homer through Aristotle, with the emphasis on the fifth century (Heraclitus, Parmenides, Sophocles) rather than on earlier or later periods. This list corresponds to a selection from the canon of school authors taught in German humanistic Gymnasien since the nineteenth century—but here freighted with a portentous metaphysical weight.[183]

In a nutshell, Heidegger does not view all of Greekness as having a purer relationship to Being, but only draws upon a small number of figures within the niche of the philosophical tradition. Heidegger pursues this niche due to their closeness to Being, not because he is doing history, as in the academic discipline. This ignores many important factors that motivate these figures' philosophies, such as Aristotle's drawing on his contemporary environment (most obviously in

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[183] Glenn W. Most, "Heidegger's Greeks," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 10, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2002): 91.

Nicomachean Ethics and *Politics*) and the influence of Pythagoras and popular beliefs on Plato. By passing over these motivations, Heidegger's selectiveness may have caused him to miss key aspects of the Greek's relationship to Being.

It is not Greeks in general that Heidegger reveres, but a specific subset of qualities he associates with Being that he personally values. The values that Heidegger chooses to emphasize and foist upon his contemporary Germany are sought and then abstracted from the Greeks: they included reflectiveness, love of nature (contra technology and culture), awareness of the roots and underlying ideology of their language, et cetera. Heidegger did not disentangle these aspects of "Greekness" from the larger whole, but preferred to crudely patch several elements of ancient Greek thought, and then closely dissected these patches. Heidegger's Greeks were but a persona, a mask, placed upon the face of the "real" Germany. The *Vaterland* that embraces Being is not a reinvigoration and watering of Greek roots, but a specific understanding of Germany and its history that Heidegger desired to reprioritize.

Moreover, this representation of "Greekness" is not an embrace of the world as it is, but a return to a "more authentic" time and place. It is not life-affirming; instead, it reduces one's life or existence to nostalgic ends. Additionally, Heidegger's *Vaterland* is informed by the shared historicity of the polis. The historicity of Dasein and the polis a priori gives the past a significance. From this past one is given a field of intelligibility, heritage. Authentically, Dasein should inherit possibilities from this heritage, but willing choose from them. Thus, the *Vaterland* and its heritage are the rootedness of Dasein and a polis. This is the reason why part five of the second division is drawn upon to explain Heidegger's experience with Nazism—this part of *Being and Time* discusses historicity and its role of constituting Dasein, its potential projects, and

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its fate—and according to Karl Löwith, Heidegger said as much.[184] Thus, Bataille was right to

point towards the comfort of an academic life of the 1920s in his later criticism. It is only from a

detached perspective that one could see one's current situation as capable of reviving a past.

This perspective ignores the world as it is and favors a view that focuses on what was or what

was believed to be the case. Yes, one is informed, given possibilities and understanding by one's

history, but Heidegger's *Destruktion* and remedies ignore this role of history. History and the

past are an ecstasis, but one that cannot be drawn from to replace the present or future. A

deceased loved one may bestow information or property after death, but you cannot recreate a

new loved one.

Heidegger's nostalgia for this idealized *Vaterland* inclined him to embrace National

Socialism. Under Bataille's understanding of fascism, this embrace of fascism undermines the

very goal of Heideggerian authenticity. Fascism through its military and religious value

consolidates all classes, both economically and in other senses, into a single amorphous

"people." The reality of fascism is a reduction of the "people" into *das Man*, a single

anonymous norm in which one is erased of individual characteristics. The very thing Heidegger

was attempting to overcome in authenticity is only further strengthened by the structure of

fascism. This is why community was an important theme for this expanded critique. *Das Man* is

the ground of community for Heidegger—in the form of in-order-tos, secondary for-the-sake-of-

whichs and possibilities offered through our collective thrownness—and a community's destiny

is again rooted in a collective end. Once this community is coopted by fascist governing it is

reduced to the shared destiny of the anonymous *das Man* of the state, by a *das Man* that enforces

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[184] Karl Löwith, "My Last Meeting with Heidegger in Rome, 1936," *New German Critique*, no. 45 (Autumn 1988): 115.

adherence legally through violence and consolidates group variations—which may offer

variations of a society's *das Man*—into a single authoritarian whole. Thus, Heidegger's

rejection of the anonymous and universal *das Man* does not open one up to difference, but

founding such a project on a nostalgia for a lost time causes Heidegger to reject one *das Man* for

a new, older *das Man*: of Plato, Aristotle, et cetera. Perhaps this "better" *das Man* is more in

touch with Being, but it still reduces the individual to a restrictive categorization and structure of

proper Being. In short, Heidegger promotes a break from a generic conformity that erases

difference to a more severe conformity that erases even more differences in line with his

preferred *Vaterland*.

It is not a mere biographical quirk or personal failing that explains Heidegger's adoption

of Nazism and refusal to reject it in public, although late in life he describes his time in the party

as his "life's great stupidity."[185] The *Vaterland* is the basis of his *Destruktion*, not just his

preference for it but its perceived need, of the tradition. His *Vaterland* primed him for fascist

ideology and motivated his joining the party. It is only in the 1930s that Heidegger applies this

nostalgia to active participation in politics and his contemporary reality, culminating in his time

as Rector of the University of Freiburg. The clearest statement of this application is in his

"Rektoratsrede," titled "The Self-Assertion of the German University." In this address,

Heidegger associates the German people and their destiny with the return of a "pure" relationship

with Being, specifically through the leadership of the Führer. The Führer was to lead and

return—although these two terms would be synonymous—the German people to an ideal

future/past.

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[185] Martin Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us," in *The Heidegger Controversy*, trans. Maria P. Alter and John Caputo, ed. Richard Wolin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 91-116, 103.

Heidegger's philosophy, which motivated his political activities, assumes the possibility of a return or revival of the past by means of a future. There is a level of naïveté at play. The future occurrence of the past is unable to be the same; history differs from the circumstances of the present. Likewise, there is a disingenuousness in any modern *Vaterland*, as any attempt to revive such a past with its relationship to Being is only going to be pursued because of this relationship to Being. Is it really an authentic relationship to Being if one runs to it to have this authentic relationship? Analogously, can one be happy by just doing things that happy people do? Can you be actually happy if you are just doggedly pursuing a model that is completely other to your own situation? What makes another happy may differ from what makes you happy. Likewise, what makes another happy may not be possible or practical for your circumstances. This emulation of happiness mirrors Heidegger's criticism of the sciences and the Western tradition. These two failed to recognize that each unconcealment is a single instantiation of truth; instead, these unconcealments became calcified and transformed into categories for universal application. Similarly, Heidegger is taking a "purer" unconcealment of Being, calcifying it and using it as a model to "unconceal" Being in the present. At best, this recurrence is a simulacrum of the past; at worst, this recurrence is an authoritarian demand for the world to adhere to these categories. In short, Heidegger's return to Being is inauthentic and cannot justify its model.

I do believe that Heidegger was disappointed in the party, as he claims in his famous *Der Spiegel* interview, and believed it was something other. However, it was his naïveté that found hope in this ideology, the hope that someone like an enlightened leader could lead to a fundamental recapturing of purer thought. Fascism, according to Bataille, is defined by an intense reunification of societal and governmental practices. The decomposition required to

achieve this nostalgic rebirth is likely to fail as society is inclined to a recomposition most similar to its previous form. A fundamental return to "Greek" thought is too other to function and take root in the present. If Heidegger rejected contemporary thought exemplified by the United States and Russia, he may have seen German fascism as a break, but one that fundamentally lacked the potential that he sought. While the Black Notebooks make Heidegger's anti-Semitism beyond doubt, anti-Semitism does not make one a fascist. However, fascism was the only available means to satisfy his nostalgia. Furthermore, Bataille's version of Nietzsche's *Kinderland* is not the mere negation of the *Vaterland*. Nor is the *Kinderland* a call to arms or to action, but a cry to embrace life, which must be founded on a recognition of death. Because of Heidegger's lack of a collective recognition of Being-towards-death-of-the-other, he cannot move beyond a yearning for a Greek/German *Vaterland* towards something that appreciates the present. This philosophic restriction does not only incline Heidegger to fascism, but renders him unable to go beyond it or to rebel against it.

I want to end this chapter with a caveat. This Bataillean critique recognizes Heidegger's nostalgia as a strong source of his political leanings. However, does all nostalgia lead to this sort of nostalgia? An example brought to my attention is the American Founding Fathers, who were greatly influenced by Greek and Roman history and thought. However, I want to point to a fundamental difference between Heidegger and the thought expressed by the likes of Thomas Jefferson: the difference between a return to a previous time and ideals, and the usage of these ideas to express contemporary ideals. Jefferson's May 8, 1825 letter to Henry Lee describes it well:

Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, [The Declaration of Independence] was intended to be an

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expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, &c.[186]

Jefferson interprets the American ideal as a synthesis of the sentiments of his time, which finds expression in Aristotle and the like.

This sentiment is reinforced in his letter to Isaac H. Tiffany (August 26, 1816), the majority of which is a criticism of Aristotle's *Politics*: "so different was the state of society then, and with those people, from what it is now & with us, that I think little edification can be obtained from their writings on the subject of government."[187] If we take Jefferson as emblematic of the Founding Fathers, then it seems clear that they are critical of ancient thought, yet see value in it as a symbol. To characterize it as a return would ignore the multitude of influences through different eras. So, perhaps there is a nostalgia, but it is not restricted to a single era or point in time. Additionally, the popularity of literary sources, like Joseph Addison's *Cato, a Tragedy*, developed a view of ancient thought, but not a faithful one. Addison's play used Cato the Younger as a paragon of republicanism and maintaining one's beliefs in the face of death. However, it is not Cato's own life, but the figure of Cato that is the emphasis. It is not a return to a figure and an appropriation of a concept, but the use of a symbol for a larger movement.

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[186] Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, Jr., May 8, 1825, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Volume X*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 343.
[187] Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson to Isaac H. Tiffany*. -08-26, 1816, Manuscript/Mixed Material, https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib022558/.

Chapter IV: The *Black Notebooks* and Concluding Remarks

The recent publication and translation of Heidegger's personal notebooks, collectively

known as the *Black Notebooks* (*Schwarze Hefte*), have reignited the Heidegger controversy.

These notebooks bear different titles, each containing ruminations, thoughts in development, and

critical appraisals of his previous work. At this point only the first five sets of notebooks have

been published (*Überlegungen II-VI*, *VII-XI*, *XII-XV*, *Anmerkungen I-V*, and *VI-IX*) and only the

first three translated into English.[188] The *Notebooks* are supposed to offer an unfiltered version

of Heidegger's thoughts. Thus, the *Black Notebooks* are to be the definitive confirmation of

Heidegger's anti-Semitism and fascist beliefs. If one performs an honest and charitable reading,

these hopes will be dashed. It is undeniable that Heidegger mentions the Jewish people and

Judaism in a negative sense; however, it is not that simple. Heidegger might fall into a situation

similar to Nietzsche: his criticism of "Jews" is part of a larger criticism of Western thought, yet

is still questionable—such as his genocidal eugenics and his appreciation or idealization of war.

The National Socialist adoption of Nietzsche simplified this debate for many, besmirching his

name internationally and reducing him to a precursor to National Socialism.[189] However,

Heidegger was a member of the NSDAP; so, it is not simply a matter of misappropriation.

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[188] The list starts at *Überlegungen II-VI* because the first notebook, *Überlegungen I*, is lost. We are unsure if it even exists anymore.

[189] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 290-292, 300. Although I am citing Kaufmann, who was a major early proponent of the argument that the Nazi adoption of Nietzsche was based on quote mining and misinterpretation, this is a very common claim. I also want to mention Bataille's own work to salvage Nietzsche from the damage that the Nazis did to his reputation, specifically "Nietzsche and the Fascists" in *Visions of Excess*.

Heidegger associated himself with the NSDAP by joining the party. As rector, he served with the most extreme of the party's members and instituted some of its policies.

Even though they cannot serve as the definitive treatment of Heidegger's relationship to Nazism, the *Black Notebooks* provide a useful window into the question. A close reading problematizes the arguments of Richard Wolin, Emmanuel Faye, and the like. Faye's work, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935*, will stand in for this general movement, as it was published nearly fifteen years ago and the articles in popular magazines and newspapers in the English language are all informed by Faye's interpretation, such as *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times*.[190]

What follows is an explication of Heidegger's own statements addressing Judaism and National Socialism, and how both fit into his larger historical narrative of the forgetting of Being. My account opposes the popular view exemplified by Emmanuel Faye. He believes that Judaism exemplifies the origin of the decline and is problematic. However, the modern form of the forgetting of Being and Judaism goes far beyond blaming a single group. For Heidegger, the problem is diffuse and enemies are everywhere, not restricted to individual sets of people. Heidegger's narrative of decline and his nostalgia informs his eschatological view, his anti-Judaism, and his apparent coldness to the Holocaust. Furthermore, I will address how the material from the *Black Notebooks* only reinforces the Bataillean critique in chapter 3, especially in reference to community and nostalgia. Both Heidegger and Bataille were critical of modernity, and their philosophy was provoked and shaped by their resistance to modernity.

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[190] Examples include Joshua Rothman's "Is Heidegger Contaminated by Nazism?" in *The New Yorker* (April 24, 2014), John Keenan's "Heidegger, Hitler's 'spiritual guide'" in *The Guardian* (Jan. 20, 2010), Philip Oltermann's "Heidegger's 'black notebooks' reveal antisemitism at core of his philosophy" in *The Guardian* (March 12, 2014), and Adam Kirsch's "The Jewish Question: Martin Heidegger" in *The New York Times* (May 7, 2010).

However, their differences are what ground the Bataillean critique. The resistance to modernity and its values are achieved in two fundamentally different manners: Bataille wants to reevaluate values, creating something new, whereas Heidegger demands fidelity to an origin to create a new beginning. Both want to form contemporary values in order to create a new world, but their methods and models result in fundamentally different political consequences and adherences.

The Black Notebooks and Anti-Semitism

The *Black Notebooks* are published with an epigraph: "*The entries in the black notebooks are at their core attempts at simple designation—not statements or even sketches for a planned system.*"[191] This epigraph sets the tone for the reader, that these are not systematic thoughts or an explicit argument, but ponderings and assertions. However, the quote originates from a later *Notebook*; Heidegger did not issue a warning before writing the *Notebooks*, but instead made this realization or acknowledgement years later.[192] There was not an intended manner to approach the *Notebooks*, some master interpretative key. Thus, anyone looking for a definitive, pure version of Heidegger hidden away in the pages of the *Black Notebooks* will be disappointed. There are small inklings of arguments in development; but for the most part, it is merely a collection of assertions about philosophy and his life.

The popular view of these *Notebooks* is that they contain the smoking gun that confirms Heidegger's anti-Semitism and his faithful adherence to National Socialism. However, the contents of the *Black Notebooks* only expose ideas that were already apparent from close readings of *Being and Time* and later writings. The contents are of interest to Heidegger scholars

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[191] Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings II-VI: Black Notebooks 1931-1938*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), xi. Excluding this citation, all citations of Rojcewicz's translation will be of the section and entry number (if available), followed by the page number.
[192] Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen II*, GA 97, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2014), 133.

and those wanting to see the development of specific Heideggerian concepts. However, anyone

looking for long lost evidence will be disappointed. At this point, the primary focus has been on

a collection of eight to ten different passages, which amount to approximately three pages total,

compared to the over a thousand pages of the *Notebooks*.

These three pages of material address the concept of Judaism and Jews. However,

Heidegger's comments on Judaism are not the same as the party. Instead, Heidegger's anti-

Semitism functions on a specific ideological axis. Heidegger had critiqued modernity in *Being*

and Time and continued to do so throughout the rest of his life, especially in the form of

Machenschaft: the mechanization and calculation of life. Modernity is a development in the long

decline of the forgetting of Being. This loss of a purer relationship to Being is the nostalgia that

was discussed in the last chapter. Heidegger's historical narrative of decline is catalyzed by the

adoption of Christianity by the Romans. He believed that the Romans were not great thinkers;

rather, they applied Greek thought haphazardly to their circumstances. In other words, the

Romans failed to address the current forms of unconcealment; instead, they utilized Greek

unconcealments to the Roman's situations. The result is the formation of universal categories

derived from non-universal occurrences.[193] However, this act of ignoring is reinforced by a more

subtle form of forgetting: Judaism.

Judaism and its later instantiation of Christianity play an essential role in Heidegger's

narrative. Mirroring Nietzsche's argument from the first book of *On the Genealogy of Morals*,

Heidegger believed that Judaism was an inversion of life, placing an emphasis on identification

and planning. Instead of letting Being reveal itself, Judaism forced the categorization of beings

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[193] The distinction between truth as unconcealment and conformity is present in §44 of *Being and Time*. Yet, the specifics of this narrative are explicated in his Parmenides lectures. See, Martin, Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 49-54.

as a means to preserve life. This desire for preservation is magnified in the concept of eternal salvation in Christianity. Judaism is ascribed the blame for this development, because Christianity began as an offshoot of Judaism. This should be obvious as Christianity's messiah is a Jewish man, the Old Testament based on the Jewish Tanakh, et cetera. Heidegger interprets these Christian developments as the result of it being a combination of Jewish *Machenschaft* and Platonism, primarily the idea of an eternal realm of truth (the Forms) that one has access to in death.[194] *Machenschaft* is the consolidated term for the mechanical and technological developments of modern life, all through the process of violently categorizing and calculating beings. In short, Judaism represents a rejection of our finitude and a refusal to experience Being-towards-death. Much of Heidegger's discussion of Jewry or World Jewry is framed by this grand narrative of decline and the rise of *Machenschaft*, which coincides with a shift of truth as unconcealment to correspondence.

The *Black Notebooks* do not offer anything novel on this front. Just as in *The Age of the World Picture*, Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* portray modernity as engendering rootless and detached existence. In *The Age of the World Picture*, Heidegger focuses on Descartes as the epitome of modern philosophy, just as he did in *Being and Time*. If one is in essence a Cartesian *res cogitans* (thinking thing), then the bodily and historical characteristics of the individual are circumstantial and irrelevant. The core of the individual is not of this world, unlike their sublunary aspects: location, sex, people from which one originates, et cetera. In short, considering the individual primarily as thinking entity leaves the individual (Dasein) rootless, the effect of which is magnified over time.[195] The aura of individuality and uniqueness is sapped in

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[194] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes III and IV*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 88-89.
[195] Karsten Harries, "Nostalgia, Spite, and the Truth of Being," in *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks: 1931-1941*, ed. Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 207-22, 217.

the process of universalizing subjectivity, especially an individual defined by otherworldly qualities. So, Judaism and the later developments of Christianity and Roman thought are reinforced through history; Descartes and other modern thinkers act to further augment the rootlessness of Dasein.

Heidegger's philosophical career was largely dedicated to reversing the deterioration of Dasein's relationship with Being. Considering this trend, the claim that Heidegger's membership in the NSDAP was merely seizing an opportunity to provoke changes in modern thought and ideology appears to be accurate to some degree. The fall of the Weimar Republic was an opportunity to enact a new politic and a new Germany: the people who were to have a unique relationship with Being. For Heidegger, the fall of the Weimar Republic was a chance to extract the roots of cosmopolitan liberalism, i.e. to combat the rootlessness associated with modernity and its ills. This rejection of cosmopolitan liberal ideas was common in Germany at the time; Paul Yorck von Wartenburg and Oswald Spengler were two other notable critics of cosmopolitanism. For example, Yorck emphasized a German homeland, which was not defined by geography.[196] Likewise, this Germany was not defined by the struggle of individuals, but of Diltheyan generations. Heidegger wanted to return to "Greek ideals" through the development and transformation of the German university system, creating a new generation that reverses the developments of *Machenschaft*. This demand for the transformation of the university system is stated explicitly in his *Rektoratsrede*.

For Heidegger, these multiple approaches of undoing the rootlessness of modernity hinge on the underlying labor of a thinker. The role of the thinker is to defend the homeland against

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[196] This is specified in his correspondence with Wilhelm Dilthey, which influenced Heidegger's concept of historicity and was the topic of *Being and Time* §77.

internal enemies that pervert Being. Essentially, Being involves conflict and decision. This

conflict and decisionism required to embrace Being is the reason for the *Destruktion* of

philosophy and Western thought. *Destruktion* is a tool to open the ground for the *Volk*, via

critical vigilance towards the tradition.[197] This development of the *Volk* is a reformation of the

community: based on a collaborative purification of enemies. Thus, the thinker is one who

identifies the enemy of a people, and guides the ideological extraction of this enemy.

Heidegger's grand narrative of decline, a simultaneous forgetting of Being and development of

Machenschaft, requires a collective struggle to develop or reinforce the dominant ideas of a

generation.[198] In essence, Heidegger's entire narrative is primary and the actual figures and

peoples that have played a role in this narrative are of secondary importance. As a result, the

figure of Judaism is completely replaceable with any other faith or ideology that fathers

expectations of predictability and enables an avoidance of death.

If Heidegger's problem with Judaism is based on the perceived ideology it engenders,

then does that entail a distaste for Jews in general? In discussing the *Black Notebooks*, Jesús

Adrián Escudero draws a useful distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism: the former

based on biology and race, the latter based on religion and culture.[199] Based on this language, it

would be uncontroversial to say that Heidegger was anti-Judaic; but, to say that Heidegger was

an anti-Semite is more complicated. Heidegger had complex and conflicted personal

relationships with Jewish individuals, most often mentioned are Edmund Husserl and Hannah

Arendt; however, personal relationship do not necessarily undermine one's prejudicial ideology.

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[197] *Destruktion* is not a mere elimination of the past, but a reinterpretation and a critical appropriation. This is present in the earlier parts of *Being and Time* and when discussing repetition and reciprocal rejoinder, *Being and Time*, §74, 438, 386.

[198] This concept is elaborated in reference to Dilthey's influence on Heidegger, discussed in the previous chapter.

[199] Jesús Adrián Escudero, "Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* and the Question of Anti-Semitism," *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual 5* (2015): 36.

Early in his tenure as rector at Freiburg, Heidegger prohibited the hanging of an anti-Jewish poster by the Nazi student organization; later, he made efforts to protect Werner Brock and Helene Weiss, both of whom were Jewish students and his assistants.[200]

Likewise, Heidegger had long criticized essentialist arguments offered by the sciences, including biology, such as evident in Nazi biologism. He explicitly criticized biology in *Being and Time*.[201] He also strayed from the party line on the racial and biological arguments for German superiority, favoring the spiritual language of German greatness and the *Völkisch*.[202] An exemplar of Nazi biologism was Hans F. K. Günther, a prominent and influential Nazi racial theorist who proposed social and biological theories of race based on anthropological and phenotypic qualities. He wrote that "'Race' is a conception belonging to the comparative study of man (Anthropology), which in the first place (as Physical Anthropology) only inquires into the measurable and calculable details of the bodily structure, and measures, for instance, the height, the length of the limbs, the skull and its parts, and determines the colour of the skin (after a colour scale), and of the hair and eyes."[203] Heidegger undermines the entire enterprise in his Nietzsche lectures by stating: "What goes wrong in biologism, however, is not merely the transfer and unfounded extension of concepts and propositions from the field proper to living beings to that of other beings; what goes wrong already lies in the failure to recognize the metaphysical character of the propositions concerning the field." He continues, "Thus biology proves that, as a science, it can never gain power over its own essence with the means at its

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[200] Karl A. Moehling, "Heidegger and the Nazis," in *Heidegger: the Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1981), 31-44, 33, 36.
[201] See §10 of *Being and Time* for an earlier example.
[202] Joshua Rayman, "Heidegger's Biological Nietzsche," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 36, no. 3 (2017): 338.
[203] Hans F. K. Günther, *The Racial Element of European History*, trans. G.C. Wheeler (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1970), 2.

disposal."[204] Nazis used biology as a justification for their racist ideology, although not exclusively. In short, race was understood as a biological category that would assign the capabilities of individuals in an essentialist manner. Heidegger's statement undermines this train of thought. He rejects all biologisms on two fronts: 1) the application of biological concepts regardless of circumstances; 2) an inability to justify its concepts or recognize its metaphysical grounding. The reckless application of concepts enables the perverse application of previous unconcealments and acting based on these concepts. Thus, biologism, of which Nazi ideology represents an important instantiation, is, simply, the universal application of a biological model. Additionally, biologism can neither justify its model, nor comprehend the metaphysics that underlies it.

Additionally, if Heidegger's critical attitude towards Judaism makes him an anti-Semite, this criterion would also make him anti-British, anti-American, anti-Socialist, et cetera.[205] Heidegger rails against these peoples, but this set of peoples changed over time. For example, Heidegger began to criticize England after the Munich agreement fell apart in 1939.[206] When Italy declared war on Greece in 1940, Heidegger responded by claiming that Italy hated and wanted to destroy Greece due to an unconscious awareness that Greece was the roots of Western history, not Rome.[207] Despite all his valorizing of Germany, Heidegger also belittles fellow Germans, specifically the Alemanni:

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[204] Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes III and IV*, 45.
[205] Harries, "Nostalgia, Spite, and the Truth of Being," 210.
[206] Andrea Zhok, "The Black Notebooks: Implications for an Assessment of Heidegger's Philosophical Development," *Philosophia* 44, no. 1 (2016): 28.
[207] Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings, XII-XV: Black Notebooks 1939-1941*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), XIV, 161.

And here it is also good that otherwise the land east of the Black Forest watershed breaks

away from the clamorous "Alemannia" which, barren in spirit, has become inflated with

those who do not belong to it. Now also becoming clear to me is the foreignness of these

loud persons incapable of surmising who Hölderlin is and who Hegel and Schelling were

but indeed capable of broadcasting their constant noise between the Black Forest and the

Vosges into the void (which they believe is fullness).[208]

Heidegger dismisses his fellow Germans as a source of loud chatter or gossip (*Gerede*), the

communication of *das Man*. Those peoples east of the Black Forest are too inculcated by foreign

thoughts and ways of Being. A similar sentiment is found earlier in the *Black Notebooks*: "The

longer I carry out my work, whether badly or well, here in my adopted homeland, all the more

clearly do I see that I do *not* belong, and *cannot* belong, to Alemannia as it is behaving

convulsively and barrenly here to the upper Rhine… It is then just like the native 'Alemanns' to

fancy themselves the genuine ones and dissociate themselves from the 'Swabians.'"[209]

Heidegger's discomfort is due to the "barrenness" of the land and its people. He is claiming that

the native people of the region believe they are genuine or authentic, but their belief is

unfounded or mistaken. So, even fellow Germans are strongly criticized by Heidegger.

Heidegger's criticisms were widespread and shifted over time, indicative of non-essential

justifications for his criticism. If there was an essential aspect, then his views should not have

been so mercurial.

Finally, it was well-known that he was not ideological in step with the NSDAP; it was

strongly stated by Ernst Krieck, who declared: "The meaning of this philosophy is outspoken

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[208] Heidegger, *Ponderings, XII-XV*, XIV, 157.
[209] Heidegger, *Ponderings II-VI*, V 66, 255.

atheism and metaphysical nihilism, as it formerly had been primarily represented by Jewish authors; therefore, a ferment of decay and dissolution for the German nation. In *Being and Time* Heidegger philosophizes consciously and deliberately about 'everydayness'—there is nothing in it about nation, state, race, and all the values of our National Socialist view of the world."[210] Krieck is claiming that Heidegger's philosophy was opposed to the party's ideology and does not adopt the language of the party. Similarly, Heidegger's explication of "racial breeding" in his Nietzsche lectures is a criticism of Nazi ideology. Racial breeding is considered the height of *Machenschaft*, as this approach exploits nature and humans as mere resources to control the present.[211]

Heidegger minimizes the racial and scientific aspects of National Socialism, despite it being an essential part of the NSDAP's platform. The NSDAP combined the idea of racial and cultural Judaism into a single whole and this combination was informed by a larger racial and cultural schema of understanding that applies to all people. Racial breeding is a natural extension of this schema, which justifies any effort to minimize some populations or promote the reproduction and well-being of others considered superior. Accordingly, Heidegger is critical of the NSDAP's consolidation of race and culture. Heidegger's criticism of Judaism is concerned with the latter, as the former is seen as an extension of *Machenschaft*. Within the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger restates similar conclusions:

> Racial thinking makes "life" a form of breeding, which is a kind of calculation. *With their emphatically calculative giftedness*, the Jews have for the longest time been "living"

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[210] Ernst Krieck, "Germanischer Mythos und Heideggersche Philosophie," *Volk im Werden*, II (1934), 247, quoted in Karl A. Moehling, "Heidegger and the Nazis," in *Heidegger: the Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1981), 36.
[211] Heidegger, *Nietzsche: III and IV*, 231.

in accord with the principle of race, which is why they are also offering the most

vehement resistance to its unrestricted application. The instituting of racial breeding

stems not from "life" itself, but from the overpowering of life by machination. What

machination pursues with such planning is a *complete deracializing* of peoples through

their being clumped into an equally built and equally tailored instituting of all beings.

One with the deracializing is | a self-alienation of the peoples—the loss of history.[212]

Heidegger associates racial thinking and racial breeding with the mechanization of a people. The

biological designation of race and the bio-politics of racial breeding reduce a people to the mere

collection of qualities within specific biological and genotypic categories. These categories are

based on a universalized schema, thus diminish the history of the community to mere irrelevant

circumstances. So, the reduction of a people to mere physical categories coincides, for

Heidegger, with the loss of a community and its history. His criticism attacks biological

definitions of race and people in favor of a spiritual and historical definition. However, this

emphasis on a spiritual people is grounded on metaphysical, not racial, concerns: "The question

of the role of *world-Judaism* is not a racial question, but a metaphysical one, a question that

concerns the kind of human existence which in an *utterly unrestrained* way can undertake as a

world-historical 'task' the uprooting of all beings from being."[213] Thus, the heart of Heidegger's

concerns are the spirit and soul of a world, not a race or a mere people. The emphasis on

Germans and their history is of import insofar as they are to be the people who are to address the

metaphysical issues of modernity. It is not about protecting the purity of a race for its own sake,

but protecting of a people that can beget change.

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[212] Heidegger, *Ponderings XII-XV*, XII 38, 44.
[213] Heidegger, *Ponderings XII-XV*, XIV, 191.

These caveats are all necessary if a reader is to follow the principle of charity. This lack of charity is perhaps the biggest failing of Faye and other popular critics of Heidegger, as they quickly ignore or dismiss such complications. However, these caveats do not absolve Heidegger. The primary issue is that Heidegger's criticisms of other nations and peoples are not strongly intertwined with his narrative of decline. Other Germans, Americans, Russians, Communists, et cetera are all contaminated by modernity, but only the Jews are associated with its origin and further development. In short, Heidegger associates the Jews with the seeds and the burgeoning of modernity and *Machenschaft*. The stain of modernity covers most peoples, but the stain upon the Jewish people is of the most saturated and vibrant color. Heidegger is anti- many things, but his anti-Judaism appears to be stronger than the other anti-s. These caveats do not resolve Heidegger, but they do undermine the blanket statements offered by some of the strongest contemporary critics.

Emmanuel Faye and his *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* have reignited the Heidegger debates, but undeservedly so. Many pieces have been written pointing out the failure of Faye to address Heidegger's philosophy, and when he did it was far from charitable. Faye instead relies on the biographical facts and the company that Heidegger keeps to make his case that Heidegger's philosophy was fascist at its root.[214] However, the quality of Heidegger's character or his judgment about acquaintances is not the question. It is fundamentally the quality of his philosophy and whether it is tainted with the ideology of the Third Reich. Yes, this question is extremely broad and vague. What is the ideology of the Third Reich? There is no easy answer, as it was far from monolithic: like all movements. Faye does

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[214] See Robert Bernasconi's "Race and Earth in Heidegger's Thinking During the Late 1930s" and Thomas Sheehan's "Emmanuel Faye: The Introduction of Fraud into Philosophy."

distinguish between Nazism and Hitlerism in the realities of the Third Reich, "Nazism is

dedicated to the promotion of a 'pure' race in the community of the people and tends toward

radical discrimination, followed by the physical elimination of all that opposes it or simply

differs from it. Hitlerism seeks primarily to impose domination and total possession of each and

all by the will and spirit of the Führer. The domination and destruction of individual

consciousnesses targets first and foremost minds, and spreads through speech and writing."[215]

According to Faye, Heidegger did not subscribe to the Nazi ideology, as he did not ground his

philosophy in a conception of race or the physical elimination of alterity. However, he does

embrace Hitlerism, i.e. the Führer embodies the spirit and the will of the people insofar as the

Führer's will is by fiat that of the people. I think this is a helpful distinction, as Heidegger does

adopt the language of Hitlerism and the *Führerprinzip* in his writings while he was rector.[216]

Additionally, this claim coheres with Heidegger's own interpretation of his life—in which he

believed in the potential for change that Nazism represented, but was disappointed in its failure

as it fell into the very historical trend he was fighting against.

However, this division and categorization of Heidegger as a devotee of Hitler is

contradicted by one of Faye's earlier claims. In his first chapter he discusses Heidegger's

philosophy prior to 1933. In comparing Heidegger to Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß, Faye

acknowledges that both figures distanced themselves from biologism, yet their views are

compatible with Nazism racism.[217] Faye is right in stating that there were many members and

supporters of the NSDAP that rejected biological explanations, favoring spiritual and cultural

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[215] Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 146.
[216] Martin Heidegger, "Follow the Führer!," in *Philosophical and Political Writings*, trans. D. D. Runes, ed. Manfred Stassen (New York: Continuum, 2003), 12-15.
[217] Faye, *Heidegger*, 21.

explanations of superiority. However, this is a part of Nazi ideology, to varying degrees. Faye is claiming that Heidegger was merely an adherent of Hitlerism and not the racial ideology that promoted the destruction of alterity, yet simultaneously he justified his anti-Judaic views on cultural grounds: like many adherents to Nazism did. You could argue that Heidegger was inconsistent and perhaps suffering from a degree of cognitive dissonance, but Faye wants a more definitive conclusion. The overriding trend in Faye's work is to show connections to Heidegger and others at the time, but he fails to address his philosophy directly. Faye argues via association and implication. Thus, he can at once claim that Heidegger believes in non-biological Nazism and later claim that Heidegger embraces the authoritarianism of Hitlerism, not Nazism. The lack of consistency and careful consideration result in the facile labeling of Heidegger as a Nazi. The reality is that Heidegger's work changed over time, despite certain constant ideas and concerns; likewise, Heidegger's relationship to the NSDAP changed: from hope and an attempt to steer the movement ideologically to disappointment and adopting a different method of addressing modernity. Heidegger's time with the NSDAP seems primarily motivated by his philosophical concerns, which evolved over time based on how well he thought that his approach and concepts could aid in the reconnecting with Being and the unraveling of modernity. When Heidegger realized the party would not address his concerns, he pulled away. His philosophy was the horse that dragged the cart of political support. In short, if one is looking for evidence that Heidegger's philosophy is fascist, then his support of reactionary movements or Nazism must address his philosophy, not his biography in isolation.

The element of Heidegger's relationship to National Socialism that evokes most visceral response is his apparent indifference to the realities of the Nazi's extermination programs. Multiple figures argue that Heidegger never addressed the horrors of the Holocaust, or

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minimized the suffering loss of life associated with it.[218] Primarily, he is condemned for a

remark that he did not publish: "Agriculture is now a motorized food-industry – in essence, the

same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the

blockading and starving of nations [the Berlin blockade was then active], the same as the

manufacture of hydrogen bombs."[219] This association or equation of the Holocaust with the

most devastating nuclear weapons is understandable; but, to compare the Holocaust to modern

factory farming initially appears questionable. However, Heidegger is not merely addressing the

moral harms, but is again seeing these phenomena as different instantiations of the same

dynamic, i.e. modernity and *Machenschaft*.

For Heidegger, the crimes of the Nazis are but another manifestation of modernity, in

which the modern subject is a defaced individual and the world or nature are reduced to means

for our calculative avoidance of our finitude. Extermination camps were created by the same

logic of technological destruction as blockades that starve people to pressure governments,

atomic weapons to destroy lives in mass, and the large scale manipulation of land and animals

for the production of food. All of these manifestations are informed by a reduction of decisions

to statistical considerations to achieve specific goals. Additionally, his claim that these other

occurrences are "essentially" the same as the Holocaust does not help. However, the phrase "in

essence," in the above quote, is often transformed into claiming that these events are equal or

identical to one another; thus, he is minimizing the Holocaust and downplaying German guilt.

The "in essence" does not imply that these events are equal, but that these losses are part of this

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[218] This is the standard interpretation of Farias, Faye, et cetera. Also see Johannes Fritsche, "Heidegger and Machination, the Jewish Race, and the Holocaust," *Critical Horizons* 19, no. 4 (2018): 324-325. and Harry Redner, "Philosophers and Anti-Semitism," *Modern Judaism: A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience* 22, no. 2 (May 2002): 118-119.

[219] The published version of this quote, "The Question concerning Technology," truncates this quote, but the original draft by Heidegger was translated and published in Thomas Sheehan's "Martin Heidegger and the Nazis."

deeper dynamic. This apparent coldness is not unheard of in grand narratives and eschatological thinking: Hegel is equally guilty of spurning the fates of individuals and communities in favor of the exploits of the world-historical individual or hero, which are means to further develop world spirit. This is reflected in communists who see tragedies as a mere pittance if it begets the revolution. The same occurs in the relationship between Christian Zionism and the American Evangelical concept of the Rapture—where the support of Israel is founded on the expectation of its destruction, as its destruction is a necessary step in the prophetic return of Christ—which, again, makes deaths irrelevant as long as the utopian end come to fruition. Heidegger sees these losses of life and communities as problematic, but his focus is still on the larger scale conflict underlying the destruction. Thus, commentators that focus on the apparent coldness miss or dismiss his focus on the ideology and history that allows for such horrors to occur. Heidegger is not justifying the Nazis or putting all these events on equal footing, but trying to dissolve the events' shared roots.

Denouement

The underlying trend in Heidegger's thought, despite its varying manifestations, is a criticism of modernity and an attempted return to an uninhibited relationship to Being. This overwhelming concern is reflected in the *Black Notebooks*, which has many sections dedicated to distinguishing his own work from common confusions associated with it: misinterpretations of *Being and Time* as anthropological.[220] As mentioned above, there are multiple times that he explains how National Socialism and its ideologues are misplacing their efforts for misguided

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[220] For some examples see Heidegger, *Ponderings: II-VI*, II 53, 16, II 126, 35, VI 122, 357.

goals. Often in the first set of *Notebooks*, Heidegger clarifies his understanding of community

and people: both terms common at the time and of important to our Bataillean critique.

In the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger's goal is a relationship to Being. However, it is not

empowered by an individual, nor can it be appropriated by a community. It is not a mere

classification to be applied to one or many; instead, Being applies essentially. What is of import

is the claim that, "The alone-ness of the individual out of the essential ground of things cannot be

pressed into the 'individuality' of a community, even if this latter is ever so zealously based on |

the 'thou-relation' and ever so apparently avid for 'authority.'"[221] In the last chapter, it was

argued that the idea of an authentic Heideggerian community is modeled on Dasein and its

authentic relationship to Being. However, each and every Dasein is alone in confronting death—

despite being thrown into a collective activity and world. This experience of alone-ness in

Being-towards-death cannot be forced into the confines of an operative community.

Fundamentally, a community might require similar relationships to that which is fundamental as

does the individual, but it requires a different sort of relationship. A community develops

through the conflict and communication of generations, and lacks a clear sense of direction. Yes,

the poet or thinker plays an important role in the development of generations, but the only one to

have a clear power of decision for the community would be the hero or leader, the most

problematic character of which we see clearly in Heidegger's glowing remarks on the Führer.

For a community the decisionism that grounds authenticity for Dasein is only mimicked in a

figure with the authority to enact his/her decisions.

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[221] Heidegger, II 113, 30.

However, Heidegger's concept of community and the problems with standard arguments about community are further expanded in these notebooks. In the *Black Notebooks*, he argues that a people and a community are not a sublated unity. To interpret them as such is to ignore the multifaceted aspects of a community. It is not merely reducible to its constituent parts. When one argues that a community is a sublated unity, one ignores the essential aspect of peoples, which is the site of destiny, and veils the subjective character that grounds the modern conception of community. This mistake is further exacerbated by its calcification through biological definitions of people and individuals.[222] At its heart, the problem of addressing communities and peoples in the modern sense is the application of misappropriated concept, creating a Frankenstein's monster composed of patches of different concepts. These concepts fail to embrace the flux inherent in truth as unveiling.

For Heidegger, an authentic community must have a pure relationship with Being; however, as explained in the *Black Notebooks*, there is no mere return to Being. Heidegger states that the Greeks are too far advanced, so that there is no mere return, but only an attempt to catch up. The way for us to catch up is to throw ourselves into the originary questioning of Being.[223] This mirrors his discussion of repetition in *Being and Time*: on the level of Dasein and overcoming of metaphysics. Later, Heidegger explains that we must place ourselves back at the beginning because we have lost our way. Instead, our correct path opens Being essentially to us. In other words, the end of this path of openness to Being is a new beginning.[224] Moreover, a new awakening must avoid falling into Christianity, or modern thought and politics. The awakening lacks a power to point towards the call towards Being. Without these clear indications and goal

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[222] Heidegger, VI 179, 379.
[223] Heidegger, II 121, 34.
[224] Heidegger, II 193, 60.

for a movement, it collapses back into old concepts and valuings. Heidegger further explains

that we must become subservient to the mystery of "fallow ground and seed, germination and

growth, wind resistance and fruitfulness."[225] These themes are found in his published works,

lectures, and the *Black Notebooks* display these ideas in development. These notes offer

additional illuminating details. As such, there are some important aspects for this Bataillean

critique, such as the mention of falling back into old concepts and valuing. This mention has a

similar tone to Bataille's thoughts on the dynamic of the reconstitution of the state and how it

allows the state to fall into fascism, which points to a general trend in which both Heidegger and

Bataille have similar ideas and address similar problems with modernity; however, they strongly

differ in their explanations of the problems and how to solve them.

Bataille's own thought, like Heidegger's, was largely directed against modernity. Their

similarities appeared multiple times in the last chapter, but they differ in goal and approach.

Habermas describes the difference in this way: "Bataille establishes the principle of modernity

not in relation to a rootlessly autonomous self-consciousness puffed up in an authoritarian pose,

not in relation to cognition, but in relation to the success-oriented utilitarian action that serves the

realization of any given subjective purpose."[226] Bataille's version of modernity is a value system

grounded on utilitarian use-value. In contrast, Habermas ascribes to Heidegger an understanding

of modernity in which the individual is a rootless self, which grounds the further development of

Machenschaft.[227] In short, Habermas is correct in identifying the difference in Bataille's and

Heidegger's approach towards modernity. Heidegger does address the perversion of knowledge,

which identifies knowledge as a means and a manipulable tool. However, Heidegger

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[225] Heidegger, II 153, 45.

[226] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence
(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 214.

[227] Habermas, 133.

understands a perversion as necessarily a loss of a more accurate or faithful relationship to Being as the ground of knowledge.[228] Again, Heidegger sees the problem of modernity as a lack of fidelity to a fundamental relationship or aspect. In contrast, Bataille addresses a problematic view of life and humanity based on utility and projects. It is not problematic because it lacks fidelity to an unsullied version of knowledge or the individual, instead it fails to embrace life and always defers life—for a later time or for meaning. Although Bataille valorizes some non-European communities and their rituals as less beholden to calculative thought, the transformative power he seeks to unfurl is not a fidelity to our Being; it is the ability to pervert current values and to open a chance for new values to arise. Heidegger rebels against modernity via fidelity towards Being, Bataille via perversion of modern values. The former wants to create something faithful to something long forgotten; the latter wants to create something other by distorting current institutions, practices, and values. This difference is similar to an observation offered by Durkheim,

> [T]he former gods are growing old and dying, and others have not been born. This is what voided Comte's attempt to organize a religion using old historical memories, artificially revived. It is life itself, and not a dead past, that can produce a living cult. . . . A day will come when our society once again will know the hours of creative effervescence during which new ideals will again spring forth and new formulas emerge to guide humanity for a time.[229]

Much like Comte, Heidegger's attempt to revive a system—for Durkheim, religions are fundamentally systems of values developed by a society—of thought and a relationship to Being

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[228] Heidegger, *Ponderings: II-VI*, IV 52, 162.
[229] Durkheim, 429.

from the past cannot create a new system. It is only in novel experiences of effervescence that can create new ideals. In short, it is only through contemporary passions that a community can form that may alter the modern ideals.

In the same section in which Heidegger mentions alone-ness, he explains: "The one who publicly accedes to the 'configuration of an actuality' must not speak of 'new orders of values' as his end-all and be-all."[230] Once one publically endorses a model of the world, one is unable to promote and emphasize new values. It seems that the underlying idea is that to endorse a model, especially one that naively asserts a concept of reality and actuality, is to accept a set of valuations. Thus, one is dishonest or self-defeating in pushing for new values and simultaneously supporting a model with set values. His philosophy of Being demands a relationship that values, among other things, fidelity to allowing unconcealment and rejecting systematization, authenticity—or the potential for it—of the individual, community rooted to its location and history. If we are to apply this impossibility to endorse the actuality of a set of values and speak of new values to Heidegger, then his *Destruktion* of the tradition cannot offer a new value; instead, *Destruktion* does not create from whole cloth, but unconceals the fundamental revelations of Being. Heidegger confirms this by stating: "thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against Being."[231] The very act of creating values is anathema to Heidegger's project, as the creative act of valuing ignores the values Being entails. In short, Heidegger is fundamentally opposed to the creation of values, in the mold of a Bataille or Nietzsche. *Destruktion* is akin to tearing the leaves off an artichoke. Each leaf has a bit of flesh, but after peeling away these layers, the heart is revealed. Bataillean perversion of values would

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[230] Heidegger, II 113, 31.
[231] Martin, Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 217-265, 251.

be akin to creating a new use for the artichoke and its parts, instead of digging for the "all-important" edible heart. The former is a process of finding what lies beneath, trying to obtain a core; the latter is an open form of play to create anew.

Heidegger is the most influential philosopher of the last century, yet his own biography casts a massive shadow over his thought. His membership in the NSDAP rightly raises questions as to the implications of his philosophy and its politics or ethics, but these questions should be beyond the surface level criticism lobbed by Faye and others. Additionally, his influence increases the demand for a Heideggerian ethical and political philosophy. There are revolutionary readings of Heidegger's views of history, thrownness, and repetition that hinge on the possibility of altering and breaking from *das Man* and its history. To some degree, Heidegger is arguing for this very sort of break from *das Man*. Heidegger's desire to unwrap philosophical history to reach its core and recognize the concealment of Being is a form of altering society and Dasein. Just as many others have acknowledged, this Bataillean argument recognizes that Heidegger's "revolutionary" desires are regressive. This philosophy of return inclines his thought to conservativism and perhaps even reactionary politics. While his philosophy of return can be used to create something that is evocative of an old idea, it lacks the transformative power to do more than merely reenact these old ideas. This restriction equally applies to his narrative of decline and *Machenschaft*, as both are based on a loss of these "purer" old ideas. A new community must necessarily imitate ancient communities. Ideas do have afterlives in the Benjaminian sense in which the interpretation and role of texts or practices alter over time, based on contemporary circumstances and history of reading. Yet, to repeat ideas and demand fidelity to their essence minimizes or rejects such an afterlife. Heidegger does not recognize the full potential available in his philosophy to change and pull away from *das Man*.

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This failure is indicative of his personal inclinations, and perhaps he was ignorant of such a potential for perversion.

This is a large part of the appeal of a Bataillean reading of the Heidegger controversy. Through a Bataillean lens, Heidegger's thought is reductive towards the individual's potential to break from the restrictive values of modernity. Likewise, Heidegger's desire for a decisionism and a politics of authenticity drives him to a politics in which institutions will fiercely snap back into place after any disruption or fracturing, inclining him to fascistic politics. As indicated in Theodor Adorno's *Jargon of Authenticity*, Heidegger and his contemporaries utilized a language of returns and rediscoveries. However, a return does not open possibilities to go beyond or to alter: it is backwards looking. Collectivity and community must form from shared experiences divorced from the mechanization of daily life and recognition of individual and collective finitude. This root of their community is reflected in the potential of communities. Again, Heidegger offers the promise of a community with a connection to a fundamental ground, Bataille's community is fleeting by definition. The manner of bringing these changes is different too. Heidegger's new politics and societal view must happen from the realm of ideology or be instilled from the top down. Bataille's imposition to temporarily break from modern life reveals the arbitrary and temporary nature of utility and modernity. Does it work to a specific future? No, but it opens the possibility of the novel to develop through play with the systems and alterity that is already available. A Bataillean critique of Heidegger would essentially reduce to this contrast between fidelity and play as ethical, metaphysical, and political considerations. This sort of contrast would go well beyond the confines of applying to Heidegger and fascism, as Bataille's demand for play and transgression complements his anti-state leanings. Likewise, this

play opens ontological and philosophical experimentation, allowing new values to develop that

are not rooted in the problematic identity metaphysics of the past.

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