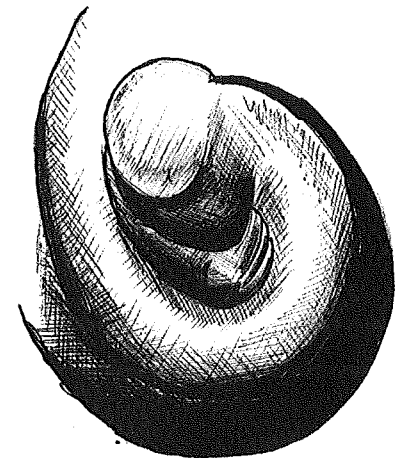


THE REED

Journal of Existentialism



SPRING 2005

THE REED

St. Olaf's Journal of Existentialism

Spring 2005
Northfield, Minnesota

Founder's Note

Peder Leif Kjeseth

Thinking Reed. It is not in space that I must seek my human dignity, but in the ordering of my thought. It will do me no good to own land. Through space the universe grasps me and swallows me up like a speck; through thought I grasp it.

Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*

Officially, one could say this publication is an undergraduate journal of philosophy centered around the school of thought most commonly known as “existentialism.” However, the term “existentialism” has many definitions and can refer to altogether different issues. On the one hand, “existentialism,” or perhaps more aptly “so-called existentialism,” is a label conferred upon an intellectual movement that can be traced back to the 19th century philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard. I include the term “so-called” because the actual term existentialism was not coined until the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre broke on the scene defining the term and movement. Moreover, many of the thinkers associated with the movement, such as Sartre’s contemporary, Albert Camus, flatly rejected the title. Despite the confusion surrounding the term, a definition of existentialism can and will be provided.

Perhaps a more commonly known usage of the root word “existential” refers to a moment or experience in life that forces reflective analysis of what it means to exist. For instance, Mary may allude to her recent automobile accident as an “existential moment” because the episode caused her to take stock of what she has, her life, and how she chooses to live it. A Volvo ad promises that their new rugged series is an answer to the “existential crisis” occurring in the individual’s soul. Existentialism in this sense is a basic, gut reaction to an event in one’s life. Both elements of existentialism are represented in this journal, as the authors of the work explore the multifaceted dimensions of the term.

“So-called existentialism” as a whole is a response to the school of thought labeled as essentialism. Essentialism holds that there does indeed exist a lasting essence within any given thing. For Plato, there existed a trans-temporal world in which the essence of things existed. In Plato’s view, our senses were unreliable, and in order for an individual to be sure of what he knew, he had to access this world through his intellect. Aristotle later disagreed with Plato and asserted that the essence of things exists within the thing itself. Joe did not need a trans-temporal world in order to understand that the thing in his hand was a cup, simply because the cup possessed cupness in itself. Essentialism led nicely into Christianity and Thomas Aquinas who held that God conferred Joe’s essence upon his flesh and that Joe’s soul existed within him. Christianity

FOR THE OLD LADY IN BAKER LAKE

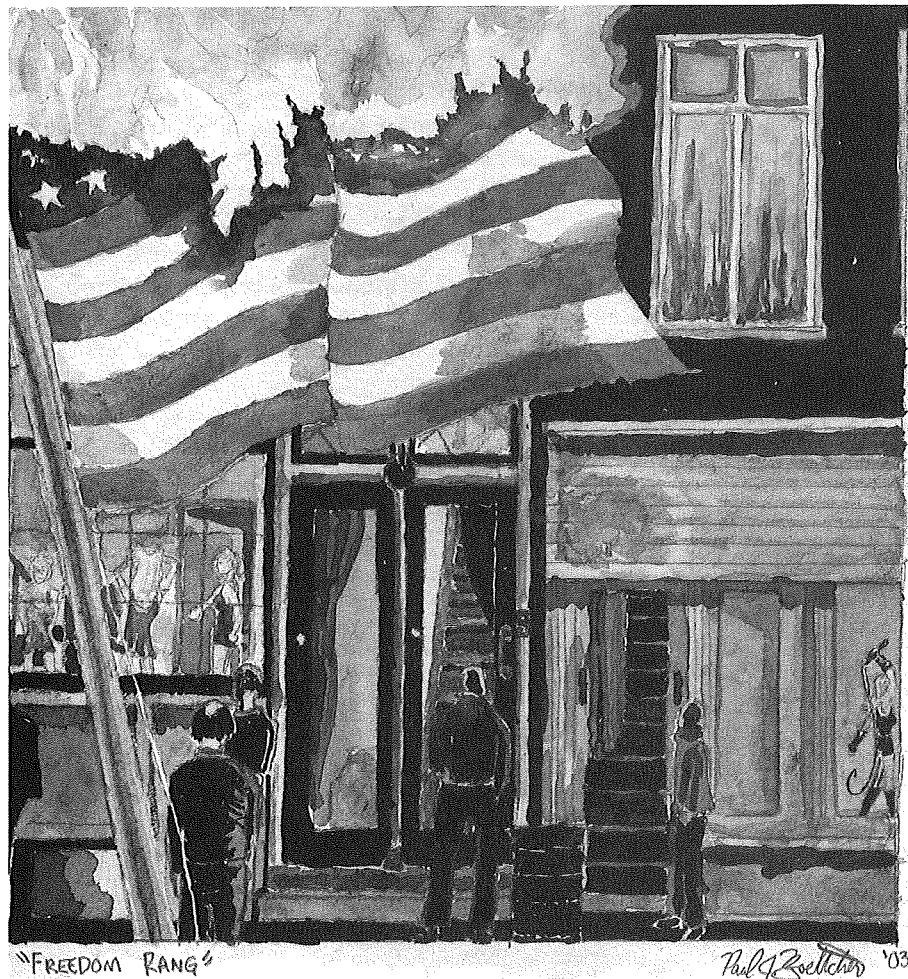
by Matt Nienow

You are a pale old woman, nothing close
to the dark balm of your Mexican mother,
throating firm, bulbous words of Inuktitut –
no more tongue tripping, dribbling sweet honey
Spanish, no more thinking of me, no more
thought to the years I took away from you,
no more wanting what none of us will ever have –

the delicate beauty of a shallow-
rooted tree in strong winds, each knotty arm
moving the earth, rhythmically, below
the porous duff, the supple floor rising,
like the heart pulsing in the chest of a body,
to be light enough to walk the thin ice
without fear – light enough to lift up
in a wind we can never bottle.

You know the feeling, like your whole body
was yawning – it comes from immensity
of tundra, from the hand to mouth feast
and famine of a broken tradition,
from arctic terns screaming death, diving through
arctic air, waiting to let loose the weight
of their puppet bodies, tossing in the wind.

I remember your dream to grow old and
become the wrinkled version of yourself.
You wanted the beauty of obvious wisdom,
something you believed the Inuit had –
all wearing tattered and worn skin, raw and brown,
gnawing on old words and ways with toothless
smiles, but all you ever really knew
was the dull aching pull to belong
to a past of ice and ever frozen
ground, to a people reaching for a life
out on the land where you are an outsider
even under the loose pallid curtain
of wind-battered skin, a morass of folds.



Freedom Rang, by Paul Boettcher

came to be dominated by an essentialist philosophical and theological orientation. It was not until a Dane by the name of Soren Kierkegaard began writing in Copenhagen that the premise of essentialism was contested. Kierkegaard was the first of many thinkers to put an emphasis on the individual and the degree of choice involved in the development of a person. The individual is presented with a seemingly infinite array of possible forms of reality and is left to will one or another for himself. For Kierkegaard, Joe is this or that because Joe willed this or that form of existence. Joe chose and willed to become a Christian, a Jew, or a secularist. His belief in the wealth of possibilities is one reason why Kierkegaard wrote under numerous pseudonyms presenting various, and at times, conflicting positions.

The importance placed on individual choice and will is a common theme threaded throughout “so-called existentialism.” Other thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, wrote poetically on the beauty and power of individual choice and will. Joe and Mary are what they create of themselves. In a meaningless world, the only meaning Mary can hope to make sense of is the meaning that she ascribes to herself and the world. As Sartre wrote, each person is infinitely free to do and make of themselves as they please. To consider oneself under the dominance of another entity or power is to live in what is one of the most famous notions to arise from existentialism, “Bad Faith.” Bad Faith was explicated by Sartre, and is the denial on the part of the individual that he has control over himself and his experiences. For example, Mary lives in “Bad Faith” because she believes her unhappiness is due to a meaningless job that she cannot afford to leave. Her life is hopeless because she has no choice in the matter and must continue on this way. “Incorrect,” says Sartre, Mary simply is not willing to recognize that she has control of the situation and can at any moment choose another option. According to Sartre, the individual is infinitely free to pick among any number of possibilities; and in doing so, the individual has chosen whatever consequences may befall him. Thus, the individual is responsible for his own reality, whether it be disastrous or glorious.

A unique and freeing aspect of existentialism is that it has a literary outlet. Writers such as Camus, Kafka, Dostoyevsky, and Percy, have explored existential issues in brilliant literary pieces. Themes such as absurdity, free will, irrationality, disunity, revolt, and disillusionment appear and reappear in literary works considered to be existential, as well as those that are not. In this journal many of the submissions, whether wittingly or not, are literary excursions into the realm of existentialism. A phenomenological approach often provides what may be the best literary tool for some of our writers who furnish vivid episodes of pure consciousness. In all, *The Reed* attempts to represent the many faces of “so-called existentialism” and phenomenology, in both its academic and literary manifestations. Enjoy.

A note to our readers:

Existentialism, as we understand it, has been perennially concerned with relating philosophical issues back to the human. Based on the state of contemporary philosophy—and its relative ignorance of the topic—we believe it is important to emphasize today the significance of Existential thought. With the apparent craving in our society for self-help programs, ethics courses, social activist groups, et cetera, there is an apparent demand for philosophy that can inform the individual. We see Existentialism as filling this void, as a link between abstract philosophical theories and systems and human action and meaning. Distinct from both Analytic and Continental thought, yet cooperative with both, Existentialism offers a unique and needed path for exploring the philosophical issues that matter to human beings.

The Reed functions as a forum for Existential themes at the undergraduate level. Our hope is to create a textual space wherein Existentialism can be explored through various mediums, such as philosophical essays, short fiction, poetry, and artwork. We hope that *The Reed* will continue to grow as it taps into all the manifold existing demands for Existentialism in the world today.

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To Submit a Work: *The Reed* is an interdisciplinary journal of existentialism printed each spring. If you are interested in submitting a work for publication, please send an email attachment to thereed@stolaf.edu. To find out more about *The Reed*, visit our website: <http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/philosophy/reed/reed.html>.

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presences. This methodology, however, cannot be employed in the field of fundamental ontology because it misses important connections between objects and their connection to Da-sein's understanding.

¹³ Heidegger himself would not use the word 'conceptual.' The characterization of Da-sein's understanding as 'conceptual' is intended to express the lack of objectivity, in an absolute sense of objective, in Da-sein's understanding of the beings themselves.

¹⁴ One might attempt to conclude the existence of beings themselves by asserting that the beings themselves must cause the representations which we experience. Yet, within this interpretation of Heidegger, causality would be another concept through which we understand the beings themselves. Thus, to assert that they are independent causes is only a statement which Da-sein can make from within network of meanings. One is still left unable to say anything about beings themselves. Even to say that they are 'beings,' in the sense of existent things, is only a name which Da-sein applies to understand that which we consider to be the being itself.

¹⁵ The idea behind the term 'characteristic potentialities' is that Da-sein can grasp at least certain definite capacities of the beings themselves through its interactions.

¹⁶ I use the word 'improper' since Heidegger does not go so far as to say the question is meaningless. His point is that it does not allow for one to gain the 'proper' ontological understanding.

¹⁷ Of course, the word 'only' here has no negative connotation. It simply relates that there is no alternative.

¹⁸ The skeptic I am discussing is essentially characterized by Descartes standard of knowledge and skepticism in the *First Meditation*. The skeptic requires certainty regarding all epistemic matters of knowledge and truth. I employ the skeptic, since it seems inaccurate to describe Descartes as maintaining a limited conception of knowledge resulting from the standard of certainty. Clearly Descartes believes that one may arrive at many metaphysical conclusions, whereas the skeptic does not.

¹⁹ I am connecting the concepts of truth and knowledge (or understanding). This connection seems legitimate as Descartes, the Cartesian skeptic, and Heidegger all appear to make the same connection.

²⁰ I contend that even ego sum is not an absolutely certain fact. The skeptic remains able to create thought experiments involving an infinite god who could bring about such states of affairs that, while I think ego sum, I in fact do not exist. If one attempts to argue that this state of affairs is meaningless and inconceivable, I would respond that hypothetical thought experiments involving an infinite god can discuss meaningless possibilities which remain possible, though inconceivable by ourselves. To argue an infinite god could not create such state of affairs is to limit the infinite power of the god to our limited perspective.

Heidegger, *M., Being and Time*, J. Stambaugh (trans.), Albany: SUNY Press.

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, G. Grube (trans.), Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated.

Notes

¹ *Ego Sum* literally means “I exist.”

² Descartes provides three thought experiments which attempt to show the dubitable nature of mathematics as well as sense perception. Later in the *Meditations*, Descartes asserts their validity, but they are not intuitively certain such that they could provide a certain foundation for metaphysics.

³ Descartes eventually concludes that the essence of the ego is that it is an incorporeal mind.

⁴ Not necessarily only be the ego, but also the mind, a thinking thing, etc.

⁵ ‘Da-sein’ is Heidegger’s term for the human person. ‘Innerworldly beings’ is a term designating the external things which we observe to be within the world.

⁶ One might question how Descartes is able to maintain that substance is something which exists by itself and at the same time argue that both Thought and Extension are substance, even though they depend on God for their existence. This seems to be a question that Descartes leaves unresolved and it is sufficient in essay to note that the term is used in two different ways.

⁷ “Da-sein” is Heidegger’s term for the human person. In German, “Da-sein” is a combination of the verb “sein,” which means ‘to be,’ and the adverb “da,” which means ‘there.’ Thus, one could literally translate “Da-sein” as ‘there-is.’

⁸ Da-sein is a part of the world without its own consent. In other words, Da-sein does not choose to be a part of the world, but is ‘thrown’ into a world of which it is always a part.

⁹ The implicit understanding which Da-sein initially and always possesses is like an unconscious form of knowledge which influences the mind and our understanding of the world, but which is itself not consciously recognized.

¹⁰ As Da-sein is fundamentally connected to the world through attunement and gains an explicit understanding through the fore-structure of the understanding, it may be noted that Heidegger is developing a phenomenological description of the world and innerworldly beings. By his lights, phenomenology is the most proper methodology for the investigation of fundamental ontology.

¹¹ These two characteristics, as in the case of handedness, are definite potentials of the beings themselves which Da-sein is able to understand through its interactions with these beings.

¹² Heidegger describes an analysis of objects in total isolation, which is Descartes method for discerning an objects essential nature, as an investigation of objects as objective

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cairo 6am, <i>Meredith Johnson</i>	6
The Transformation of Minds, <i>Seth Heringer</i>	7
Art, <i>Jenny Kochsiek</i>	12
Coping With STEVENess, <i>Jason Zencka</i>	13
A Dualism Can Only Be Half Wrong, <i>Elizabeth Russell James</i>	17
Art, <i>Amanda Visconti</i>	20
Heidegger’s Ontology, <i>Erik Christopherson</i>	21
Freedom Rang, <i>Paul Boettcher</i>	38
For the Old Lady in Baker Lake, <i>Matt Nienow</i>	39

individuality. In response to this question Kierkegaard states that there is one thing that will outlive even this equality. He says that “even though the equality of all the dead is that now all is over, there is still one difference, my listener, a difference that cries aloud to heaven – the difference of what that life was that now in death is over” (85). But what is this difference in life? Kierkegaard never explicitly tells what it is, but he hints at it in two specific places – in his discourse on the value of work and in his opening story of a Godly man’s life and death.

During his discourse on doing the right work, Kierkegaard hints at the nature of proper work. He says of it, “Then earnestness grasps the present this very day, disdains no task as too insignificant, rejects no time as too short, works with all its might even though it is willing to smile at itself if this effort is said to be merit before God, in weakness to understand that a human being is nothing at all and that one who works with all one’s might gains only the proper opportunity to wonder at God” (83). Kierkegaard here speaks highly of work, yet he also has earnestness smiling humorously at the idea that its work has any merit before God. One would think that an infinitely significant work would deserve some merit, even to God. Yet this is not so for Kierkegaard because work really only allows us the “proper opportunity to wonder at God” (83). Thus, a connection is established between proper work and the ability to experience God. Somehow, in the process of a mind being transformed, it is changed to be able to wonder at him. This transformation is a “difference” that outlasts death.

The second place where Kierkegaard hints at what difference in life matters after death is in the introductory story about the life and death of a Godly man. He introduces this man by telling us: “In the grave there is no recollection, not even of God. See, the man did know this, the one of whom it must now be said that he no longer recollects anything, to whom it would now be too late to say this. But because he knew this, he acted accordingly, and therefore he recollected God while he was living” (71). Kierkegaard began his discourse with such a story because he wanted to give a living (sort of) example of what it is to have a transformed mind. The first and most important description of the man is that he recollected God. In fact, he was so close with God that “if he were not with God now, God would miss him in life and know his dwelling and seek him there, because the deceased walked before him and was better known by him than by anyone else... God’s house was to him a second home – and now he has gone home” (72). He was this close with God because throughout his life his “recollection of God remained the same, a guide in all his activity, a quiet joy in his devout contemplation” (72). This is the difference that will live on after death. This is the infinitely significant work. Through it all grow closer to God, making it the only thing that survives our annihilation in death.

Death changes things. It changes life to death, happiness to mourning, and success to failure. Kierkegaard, by reflecting upon death, tries to use this transformative power to change human minds. He wants to transform the equality in death to the

spatial, temporal, Da-sein is unable to conclude that the beings themselves are independent existing things. This characterization of the beings themselves is not a definite potentiality, which may be recognized by Da-sein’s understanding. Surely one could not say that the characteristic ‘independent existence’ is only a potential that is present with Da-sein’s understanding. This component of ‘independence,’ in this characterization, involves an attempt to ‘step outside’ Da-sein’s concepts and network of meanings, which, of course, cannot be done. Da-sein is unable to conclude that the beings themselves, through which we formulate the idea of innerworldly beings, exist independently of Da-sein fundamental understanding.

Heidegger argues that Da-sein’s ability to recognize the limits of the understanding does not commit one to a belief that Da-sein and the innerworldly beings are part of an illusory world. This understanding also does not invalidate Da-sein’s inquiry through the hermeneutic circle. The inquiry itself is only possible because our concepts and fundamental understanding provide a foundation. The idea of ‘beings themselves’ is itself contained within our conceptual understanding, as ‘being’ is a concept of Da-sein’s understanding. In a sense, Da-sein’s fundamental understanding allows for ‘everything’ to be potentially understood. ‘Everything’ of which Da-sein can think, is already understood in some way. It makes no sense to talk about ‘that which Da-sein is unable to acknowledge,’ as Da-sein could not even recognize and refer to a thing, as ‘that which Da-sein is unable to acknowledge.’ It is inappropriate to think that Da-sein is committed to a world of illusion. Everything of which we can think, Da-sein is able to understand, in some form, and Da-sein cannot think of anything that it cannot understand in at least a limited way. This argument suggests that philosophy can only proceed with ontology through a phenomenological methodology.¹⁷ It also implies that Da-sein fundamentally and correctly understands itself as being-in-a-world. Da-sein, therefore, has an accurate understanding of definite potentialities of innerworldly beings. Heidegger’s ontology allows for a conclusion, which the Cartesian epistemology fails to provide. We exist within a world and can accurately understand the beings in that world.

Having adopted such an interpretation of Heidegger’s position, this essay concludes with a discussion of the concept ‘truth.’ Though Heidegger’s account may allow for Da-sein to acknowledge that innerworldly beings exist outside of the understanding, does his account allow for Da-sein to consider this fundamental understanding to be ‘true?’ Based upon Heidegger’s ontology, is the only ‘real’ form of ‘truth’ an extreme skepticism that rests content with absolute uncertainty? The question then becomes whether phenomenology constitutes an accurate means to discover ‘truth.’

One might employ a classic thought experiment of epistemology to elucidate the problem. It seems to remain possible that I am a brain in a vat and that all my perceptions and ideas are only the result of a scientist stimulating my brain. The world

potentialities are actual characteristics of beings themselves, which can be understood by Da-sein. One example is found in handiness. Heidegger writes, "It is only because useful things have this 'being-in-themselves,' and do not merely occur, that they are handy in the broadest sense" (65). Beings in themselves have certain potentialities, i.e. the capacity for handiness, which allow Da-sein to understand a capacity of the beings themselves. Spatiality and temporality are two other characteristic potentialities of beings themselves.

The latter reading of Heidegger's position is bolstered by Heidegger's discussion of metaphysical realism and idealism. In this section, Heidegger attempts to avoid the discussion of idealism and realism by rejecting the Cartesian question introduced at the beginning of this essay. His argument stems from his ontology of Da-sein. Based upon his conception of Da-sein as being-in-the-world, Heidegger argues that it is 'improper' for Da-sein to ask the Cartesian question, "Are we in contact with the world?"¹⁶ Da-sein is being-in-the-world and fundamentally understands itself to be a being-in-the-world. It seems strange for a being, which fundamentally understands itself as within a world, to ask if it is within a world. As this concept of being-in-the-world is a fundamental component of Da-sein's understanding of itself, Da-sein's cannot abandon this understanding of itself through a few thought experiments. Through a similar line of argument, one might conclude that Da-sein fundamentally understands the beings themselves, as existing independent of its understanding, since Da-sein fundamentally conceives of these beings, as independently existing beings. From this perspective, it appears that Da-sein is able to understand certain characteristics of the beings themselves, one of which is, that they exist independently of the human mind.

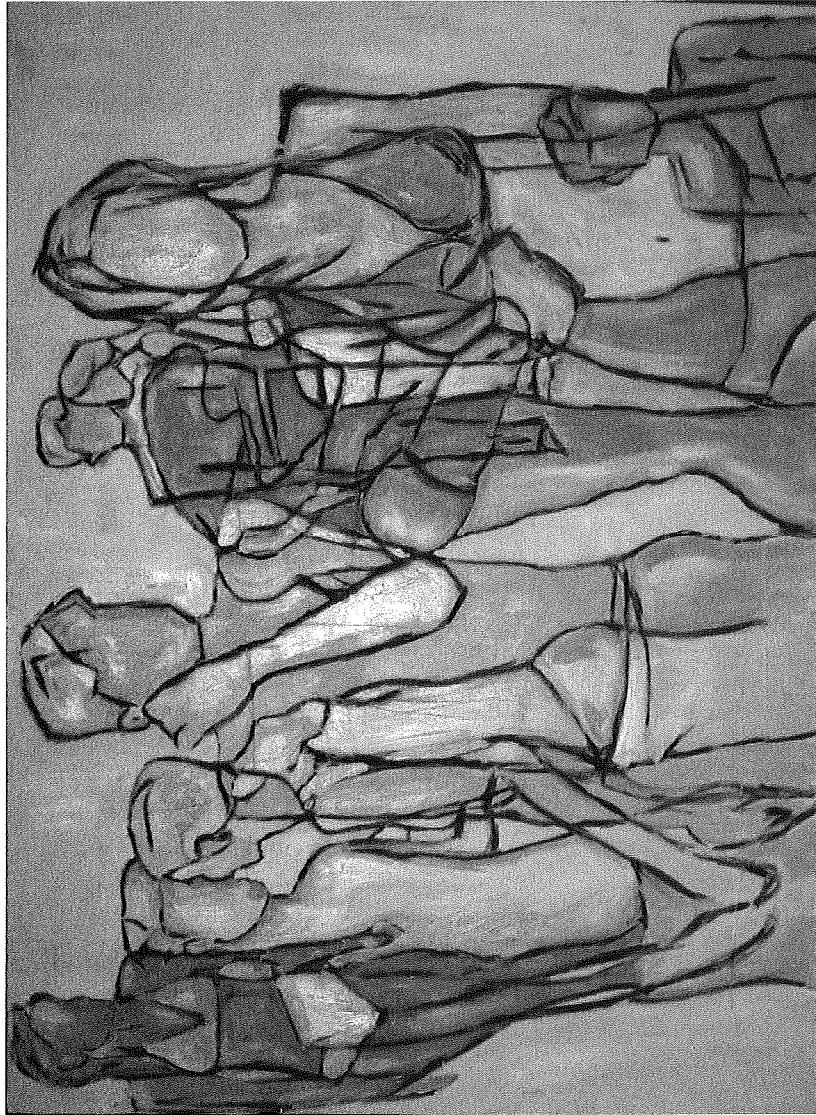
I must admit the difficulty in attempting to synthesize these two ideas. On the one hand, it seems that Heidegger is adopting a Kantian picture of reality involving concepts of the understanding which are ascribed to the beings themselves. On the other hand, however, it appears that Da-sein, as being-in-the-world, is able to achieve an understanding of the beings themselves. Overall, I interpret Heidegger to argue that Da-sein fundamentally understands itself to exist within a world and also understands the innerworldly beings to exist independently of Da-sein's understanding. Yet, this fundamental understanding does not allow Da-sein to conclude that beings themselves are independently existent things. As related in the first characterization of Heidegger's position, Da-sein remains able to be conscious that our understanding of beings themselves is bounded by the concepts and meanings through which we understand them. Thus, Da-sein is unable to understand the beings themselves in an absolutely objective sense, and cannot conclude that beings themselves are 'independently existing things.'

I think this reading of Heidegger is consistent with the second characterization of Heidegger's position. While Da-sein remains able, in a way, to acknowledge the beings themselves through the definite ways in which we understand the beings, i.e. as handy,

equality before God, feelings of insignificance to a sense of infinite worth, and wandering minds to ones that focus upon recollecting God. By doing these things, Godly men will not only survive annihilation, but they will go "home" to be with God.

Notes

Kierkegaard, Soren. *Two Ages*. Translated by Howard and Edna Hong. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. 1978.



by Jenny Kochsiek

Analysis:

After considering Heidegger's ontology, a question might arise concerning whether the beings themselves have an existence that is independent of the human mind. The question is: if one is willing to accept phenomenology as the proper methodology for philosophic investigation, can one assert that the external world exists independently of the mind, or would such a proposition be to prescribe characteristics to the external world, which are only a result of Da-sein's worldliness and the way that Da-sein understands these beings through its interactions? I contend that Heidegger himself wavers regarding this issue in *Sein und Zeit*.

At certain places in the text, it seems that Da-sein cannot reach any conclusion regarding the beings themselves, but can only understand these beings through Da-sein's conceptual framework.¹³ If the proper methodology for investigating the fundamental ontology of the beings themselves is phenomenological, then is our understanding of beings themselves greatly limited, since we may only understand the objects as they appear to us? This question easily arises in connection with the Heideggerian concept of "world." Heidegger describes the 'world' in the following way:

World is ontologically not a determination of those beings which Da-sein essentially is not, but rather a characteristic of Da-sein itself. (60)

The 'world' is a concept or a meaning that Da-sein brings to objects and not a characteristic of beings themselves, when considered independently of Da-sein's worldliness. This description leads to numerous questions concerning the possibility of attaining any true knowledge about the beings themselves. How can we know that the true nature of the beings themselves can be grasped by Da-sein's fundamental understanding? From this perspective, phenomenology appears to be a form of Idealism. Da-sein's fundamental understanding of innerworldly beings, is only a conceptualized form which develops from the beings themselves.

Da-sein's fundamental understanding is such that it believes that innerworldly beings exist independently of the mind. Yet, this fundamental understanding does not allow Da-sein to connect this characteristic to the beings themselves. Since any type of understanding regarding the beings themselves is only accessible through Da-sein's concepts, one cannot acknowledge that the beings themselves exist independently of Da-sein's understanding. This is to ascribe the conceptualized characteristic 'independent existing thing' to the beings themselves, which constitutes an attempt to 'step outside' Da-sein's fundamental understanding. It is impossible, however, to step 'outside' Da-sein's fundamental understanding, and therefore, one cannot assert that the beings themselves exist independently of our interactions with these beings, as 'independently existing thing' is merely a concept of Da-sein's understanding.¹⁴

At other places of the text, Heidegger's description of Da-sein's understanding appears to avoid Idealism. Through the various ways in which Da-sein interacts with innerworldly things, the beings themselves disclose definite potentialities.¹⁵ These

the-world. That mistake in turn leads him to an improper understanding of the beings with which Da-sein interacts. Heidegger asserts,

Descartes does not allow the kind of being or innerworldly beings to present itself, but rather prescribes to the world, so to speak, its “true” being on the basis of an idea of being (being = constant objective presence) the source of which has not been revealed and the justification of which has not been demonstrated. [...] his ontology is determined by a basic ontological orientation toward being as constant objective presence. (Sein und Zeit, pg. 89)

Descartes attempts to understand the fundamental ontology of innerworldly beings independently Da-sein’s attunement and fore-structure of understanding, which for Heidegger are the source of all Da-sein’s understanding. The Cartesian analyzes innerworldly things as “objective presences,” ignoring the fundamental way in which innerworldly beings are disclosed to Da-sein, as being-in-the-world, and overlooks the unity of these characteristics.¹² This then leads him to another mistake, the belief that mathematics can indicate the essential nature of innerworldly beings.

Heidegger also thinks that Descartes analysis of the human person is mistaken. He writes, “Descartes understands the being of ‘Da-sein,’ to whose basic constitution being-in-the-world belongs, in the same way as the being of *res extensa*, as substance” (91). Descartes conceives the ego to be essentially a mind or “thinking thing,” and assigns a substantial nature to this mind. This leads him to conclude that *ego* is the incorporeal substance Thought. Once again, Descartes does not allow for the being of Da-sein to reveal itself through disclosure, and remains unable to grasp the fundamental ontology of Da-sein, which is initially and always present in Da-sein’s fundamental understanding of itself and others.

Of course, Heidegger concedes that Da-sein can analyze innerworldly beings as objectively present and that in the realm of natural science, this analysis yields beneficial results. His point, however, is that the fundamental understanding of Da-sein, which forms the foundation for all explicit knowledge, does not understand objects as objective presences. Da-sein’s fundamental understanding of external things as innerworldly creates the possibility itself of analyzing innerworldly beings as objective presences. It allows for the very possibility of an explicit understanding in which Da-sein understands “something ‘as’ something.” Therefore, this fundamental understanding needs to take priority in one’s ontological account, as it constitutes the primary and initial way in which Da-sein always understands the objects within the world.

COPING WITH STEVENESS

by Jason Zencka

Part One: Recognition

You’ve tried so hard, but you’ve been failing as long as you can remember. You don’t hold jobs for very long and the prospect of a balanced credit bill has slipped completely beyond the boundaries of conceivability, much like punctuality, or proper spelling, or the correct buttoning of shirts. The end of your most recent romantic relationship was a predictable disaster, though when she told you were ‘just awful’ in bed and the way your hair smelled made her dry heave, it took you by surprise, at least for a moment. What’s wrong with you? Are you stupid? Are you lazy? Are you completely depraved? It’s certainly a possibility, but most doctors would say it’s highly unlikely. According to recent medical research, it’s much more likely you’re STEVE.

What is STEVENESS?

STEVENESS, also known as STEVE SURPLUS DISORDER, is a neurological ailment that, according to a recent survey, affects 15-25 percent of adult Steves in America. Its major symptoms include complete organizational depravity, failure, anxiety, inability to focus in crucial or non-crucial situations, and inability to interact well with persons of the opposite or same sex. Other, less universal symptoms include depression, insane driving, frequent verbal ineloquence or incoherency, failure to finish individual part of group project due three weeks ago and then tendency to lie and say you lost it, and lethargy. Addiction to sex (usually auto-erotic), sugar, alcohol or television, failure to ‘get over’ relationship with mother, inability to change one’s mind, confusion, failure to understand things, continuous failure to make the right decisions, inability to deal with failure, and the inability to turn off already-seen episode of “Seventh Heaven” despite remembering not liking it the first time and a long-professed aversion to the WB are also commonly reported side-effects. While ugliness is often associated with STEVENESS, a chemical connection to STEVENESS has yet to be proven.

In other words, STEVENESS is a systematic tendency toward failure, towards atrophy, towards entropy, towards confusion found in some adult males, stemming from deep-seeded neurological failings. As the saying goes, ‘it’s all in your brain.’ Tragically, STEVENESS prevents many otherwise inoffensive young men from achieving, realizing, or articulating their dreams. In some extreme cases, even picking out the right soup and sandwich from a deli menu can bring a STEVE to the brink of extreme apathy. Many people afflicted with STEVENESS spend their whole life thinking themselves failures, when actually they are just STEVE. While STEVENESS was once thought to be environmentally-contracted, it’s now believed that there are many genetic factors as well. No matter where it comes from, however, what’s most important is to know that

it's here, it's real, and it's likely permanent. The best thing you can do if you are in fact STEVE, is to learn more about your affliction.

Part Two: Acceptance and Education

Once you've better understood what STEVENess is, you can better place yourself within its catalogue of symptoms. Remember that there is always room for hope. STEVENess isn't easy, but many STEVEs have come to terms with their challenges and grown to lead productive and fruitful lives. It's a matter of knowing your limitations and working through them. If you have been recently diagnosed, try to set yourself up with a network of other, like-minded STEVEs. Let your friends, your spouse, your boss know, "hey, I'm STEVE, and while that's going to make things tougher for the both of us, I'd like you to know I'm still enthusiastic about what we're doing." While twenty years ago, the medical credibility of STEVENess was discounted, these days, more and more people are opening themselves up to a more tolerant, accommodating worldview. Still, if you find yourself having trouble in the workplace or with someone you love, refer them to some good literature on STEVENess, a genre growing in richness and critical viability. For example, "I'm Not Human Trash?," by Dr. Steve White and Dr. P. Stephen Earlenmacher, and "Yes, There IS a Name for You," by Dr. Steven Solomon Everett have become industry standards. Before anything, though, it's important that you are properly diagnosed. See a doctor or order our free checklist and evaluation sheet online (to be filled out by coworkers, parents, siblings, or old girlfriend(s)). Many people think they have STEVENess and spend years trying to treat something they don't have. Even if you have one or more of the above symptoms, it might not be STEVENess at all. Often, it turns out to be a thyroid problem.

Part Three: Case Studies

Steven Carl Jenkinson, better known to his friends and coworkers as "Steve," had been working in insurance for several years when he began to experience high-intensity symptoms of latent STEVENess. An avid procrastinator, Mr. Jenkinson had sloughed his way through high school and college, spending most of his time drinking and watching movies before his uncle eventually employed him at the persistent request of Steve's mother. He never married. Through dangerous, self-medicating stratagems of religion, family pressure, and an alcohol and pornography-based reward system, Steve had staved off some of the more conspicuous symptoms of STEVENess for many years. In the fall of his 40th year, however, he eventually dropped these techniques, declaring his struggle with his neurological disadvantages to be 'too much.' He lost motivation, appeared progressively more disheveled, displayed signs of mental lethargy and depression, gained fifty pounds and somehow lost all three of his toupees and staged a merely halfhearted campaign to find them. Coworkers were alerted to these changes by a marked increase in self-directed mumbling and a series of strange odors reported

Heidegger constructs a positive account of the ontology of innerworldly beings based upon Da-sein's fundamental understanding of innerworldly beings. One way that Da-sein fundamentally understands innerworldly things is through their handiness. Heidegger writes, "The less we just stare at the thing called a hammer, the more actively we use it, the more original our relation to it becomes and the more undisguisedly it is encountered as what it is, as a useful thing" (65). Da-sein fundamentally understands a hammer, as a tool, which is handy and may serve our purposes. This is how a hammer is most often involved in our practice. The fundamental ontology of innerworldly things is disclosed to Da-sein through its practice and interactions with these beings. The handiness of innerworldly beings is said to be a fundamental possibility of that being, which Da-sein is able to understand. Heidegger writes, "It is only because useful things have this 'being-in-themselves,' and do not merely occur, that they are handy in the broadest sense and are at our disposal" (65). This quotation suggests that the "being-in-itself" contains the potential or capacity for it to be a handy thing. Since Da-sein fundamentally understands "things at hand" as "handy," and thus, this component of our understanding composes a part of our foundation of knowledge concerning these beings, this characteristic should be considered a part of the ontology of innerworldly beings.

A second way in which Da-sein understands innerworldly things is through spatiality. We fundamentally understand things as 'here,' 'over there,' etc. Heidegger writes, "Space, which is discovered in circumspect being-in-the-world as the spatiality of a totality of useful things, belongs to beings themselves as their place" (96). In other words, space is a concept disclosed to Da-sein through a totality of innerworldly things, as they are either near, far, there, etc. A third way Da-sein understands innerworldly things is temporally. Da-sein's understanding is described as a form of projection. He writes, "As understanding, Da-sein projects its being upon possibilities" (139). Heidegger is contending that Da-sein's understanding is concerned with various future possibilities and thus is always understanding innerworldly beings within a temporal framework.¹¹

Since these characteristics are the fundamental ontology of innerworldly beings, Heidegger's insistence on the phenomenon of world seems both appropriate and necessary. Da-sein fundamentally understands innerworldly beings as spatial, temporal and handy. These are worldly characteristics understood by Da-sein, as being-in-the-world. This fundamental understanding constitutes the fundamental ontology of innerworldly beings. The three characteristics may be said to compose a unity. They cannot be fully understood when separated from one another. The handiness, spatiality and temporality of innerworldly beings must be understood as a whole and these characteristics must also be related to Da-sein's worldliness.

Heidegger's methodology leads him to disagree with the Cartesian metaphysical picture. Descartes does not investigate the fundamental ontology of Da-sein and consequently, overlooks the "phenomenon of world," Da-sein as being-in-

understanding. One may acquire an explicit understanding of things that are not already implicitly understood. This new knowledge is still understood through this fore-structure and is based upon Da-sein's fundamental understanding.

To summarize the main points thus far of Heidegger's description of Da-sein's understanding, Da-sein is said to have a fore-structure of understanding. This fore-structure allows for Da-sein to interpret the world and innerworldly beings. This interpretation involves making explicit the understanding already present implicitly. The most fundamental component of this whole description is the concept of attunement. Da-sein is provided with an implicit knowledge of the world and innerworldly beings, through its interactions with these things. Both Da-sein and innerworldly beings disclose characteristics of themselves and Da-sein's attunement appropriates these disclosed concepts implicitly. When taken together, these thoughts provide the framework of the "hermeneutical circle."

In Heidegger's opinion, inquiry is possible only because we already have an implicit fundamental understanding. Heidegger writes, "Every interpretation which is to contribute some understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (142). Da-sein always already understands the world and innerworldly beings in a specific way, which arises from these beings disclosing themselves to Da-sein through Da-sein's actions, interactions, and participations in the world, as being-in-the-world. Consequently, this knowledge simply needs to be made explicit through interpretation. Da-sein's fundamental understanding is made explicit through the hermeneutical circle. The methodology of inquiry is a process of revolutions. Each time we proceed around the circle of investigation and reexamine some subject, we achieve a more explicit understanding of the subject of our inquiry. Through this circular methodology, Da-sein continues to appropriate that implicit understanding in an understanding way.

The hermeneutical circle is Heidegger's methodology and the actual way in which being-in-the-world gains an explicit understanding of "something 'as' something." This is radically different from the Cartesian foundationalist methodology. Descartes abandons all uncertain beliefs and then reconstructs his metaphysic from the singular certain fact, *ego sum*. The larger metaphysical picture is developed from this foundation through modes of inference, whose validity is also absolutely certain. Heidegger rejects the Cartesian methodology. According to Heidegger, it is ridiculous to attempt to abandon all beliefs and then begin the metaphysical project. Da-sein already possesses an implicit understanding of the world and innerworldly beings, based upon its interactions. A proper methodology should begin with an analysis of this fundamental understanding, rather than attempting to achieve the impossible task of abandoning the fundamental understanding, which necessarily accompanies all thought. As the Heideggerian and Cartesian methodologies are quite different from one another, so are their metaphysical or 'ontological' descriptions of the world and the beings within this world.¹⁰

to be emanating from Steve's office ranging from "booze" to "farts." His bartender, who usually noted him as "boring but affable," became concerned and described his new behavior as "obnoxious, lachrymose, and irritating." She referred Steve to a psychiatrist friend of hers, threatened to call in his tab, and within a few months Steve was seeing a weekly therapist, receiving appropriate medication, and had enrolled in a Pilates program at his local gym. He is now dating a secretary from another office in his building and describes his life as "still a struggle, but not without hope for a better fall lineup or a decent tax return."

Steve Sevcik was a mediocre student and a bad dancer with a moderate dandruff problem in high school. He was a talented shortstop and could throw an adequate curve. After two years of semi-pro ball, he matriculated in the physical education program at the community college near his grandmother's house before dropping out to join the army. He experienced satisfaction from this task and reported some exasperation with life in the work force upon returning home from the service. After meeting a girl at his job in the paper mill, they dated for several months before getting married. It was immediately after their honeymoon that Mrs. Sevcik began noticing symptoms of STEVENESS in her husband, including depression, impotence, lethargy, sullenness, and the growing tendency to watch Remo Williams and Running Man over and over and over again. After consulting with her doctor, she put Steve on a strict dietary regiment, and at her insistence he has taken up the hobby of building a slide and sandbox in the backyard for their future children. Steve is also working with a therapist to find a medication that suits his particular needs and is trying daily not to despair. While he is currently unemployed and is finding the task of therapy "a chore," he is confident that it is only a matter of time before he "gets his shit together." In the meantime, he is looking for an employer that recognizes STEVE SURPLUS DISORDER and provides STEVE-friendly accommodations, like a nap-inclusive work schedule, an optional-shoe-policy, and an in-office Little Debbie rack.

Stephanie Schramm was the salutatorian of her high school class and completed her BA in English and classics at Swarthmore College. After teaching Latin at a parochial high school and traveling abroad into her late twenties, Stephanie began to experience what many experts refer to as 'late-onset STEVE syndrome.' She couldn't maintain interest in any of her employment opportunities, she couldn't convince herself why it was important to brush her teeth any more frequently than on a weekly basis, and she was surprised to find most of her undergraduate poetry "a lot shittier than I remembered it." Concerned with her eroding self-image and steadily decreasing interpersonal faculties, she began to try to regiment her diet and exercise but found that too many fruits and vegetables gave her gas and attempts at daily sit-ups only made her back hurt. She tried to rekindle her love of poetry by buying a volume of Anne Sexton, but

soon ended up bingeing on an old collection of The Babysitter's Club books, a series of Danielle Steel books-on-tape she found at her aunt's house, and a box of her brother's novelizations of Star Trek films. Stephanie found it hard to find dating prospects who didn't balk at her growing tendency to chain-smoke, cry at mealtimes, and fall asleep on the floor of the tub when taking a shower. In November of her thirtieth year, a friend confronted her with the possibility that she was experiencing sympathetic symptoms with her brother, a long sufferer of STEVENess. Steve Corey Schramm, who then lived with Stephanie's mother, worked in retail, and ran a cable access television show, met with Stephanie in December and gave her the name of his doctor. Within months Stephanie was receiving regular doses of experimental STEVE medication, seeing a weekly therapist and using a regular poetry journal. She is currently teaching 4th grade history at St. Jude's School for Boys and is entertaining romantic advances by the gym teacher. She describes her poetry as "not worth talking about here."

Part Four: Looking Forward

While understanding and discussion of STEVENess is gaining new currency in America, many scholars suspect that STEVENess has been around as long as the human condition, and that great minds from Homer and the Biblical authors to Nietzsche have unknowingly commented on its nuances. What's important to remember is that we know more about STEVENess today than ever before, and that there are still a number of wonderful and life-enriching things for STEVEs to do under the sun. Right now, you can send cash or money order to The STEVE Coalition, a web-based organization built to spread awareness of STEVE SURPLUS DISORDER and its variant disorders, like GENERALIZED MIKE DISORDER, OBSESSIVELY SUSAN SYNDROME, and the rare but devastating TEENAGE JARED DISEASE. By 2010, we hope to have staged a worldwide campaign, complete with weekend retreats, home videos, and even humanitarian aid to many STEVE-ravaged countries in the developing world. Above all, you should not despair. If you're STEVE, you should know things are getting better for you every day.

concept of "thrownness." The basic idea is that we are already part of the world initially and always, and, in a sense, already thrown into the world.⁸ As thrown being-in-the-world, we attune ourselves to our various surroundings in accordance with "how one is and is coming along." In other words, our environment affects us and we react to it. Attunement is important as it relates to the disclosure of Da-sein. Disclosure is a characteristic of Da-sein, when considered as being-in-the-world. Through the actions and interactions of Da-sein, Da-sein discloses characteristics of itself and also of the world. Da-sein always grasps these characteristics in an implicit form of understanding, but they may also be grasped in an explicit form.⁹ This explicit understanding is gained through "interpretation."

Da-sein's understanding contains its own possibilities of development. This development of understanding is referred to as "interpretation." The author writes, "In interpretation understanding appropriates what it has understood in an understanding way" (139). Clearly interpretation is based upon and only possible as a result of understanding. More specifically, interpretation involves making explicit in the understanding that which was previously only present implicitly in the understanding. Heidegger writes, "what is disclosed in understanding, what is understood is always already accessible in such a way that in it its 'as what' can be explicitly delineated. The 'as' constitutes the structure of the explicitness of what is being understood" (140). Therefore, this making explicit has the structure of recognizing "something 'as' something."

This process of interpretation is only possible, as the result of the fore-structure of understanding, which itself contains the concepts of fore-having, fore-conception and fore-sight. Fore-having represents the totality of relevance which has always already been understood. Da-sein already and always has an implicit understanding of a totality of meaning. While at times, this understanding is veiled, one remains able to approach what is understood in fore-having through fore-sight which provides guidance and a specific perspective. Fore-sight supplies direction in the movement from implicit to explicit knowledge. When Da-sein approaches, with fore-sight, that which is already present through fore-having, it becomes comprehensible with fore-conception. Fore-conception provides the interpretation with a definite conceptuality, which is always already decided. As a whole, the fore-structure of understanding is composed by fore-having, which represents a totality of relevance implicitly understood in understanding; by fore-sight, which provides guidance to the interpretation through a specific perspective; and by fore-conception, the specific conceptuality through which the implicit understanding is made explicit. This fore-structure of understanding, in turn, provides the foundation of interpretation. Heidegger is not advocating a Platonic theory of reminiscence. Through the discussion of the fore-structure of understanding, he is not asserting that we already have an implicit knowledge of all facts. Rather, Da-sein has a fundamental understanding, which forms the foundation for Da-sein's explicit

Yet, humans possess the mental capacities to grasp the actual and essential reality of the things in themselves. It should also be noted that the above metaphysical conclusions, concerning both the nature of substance and the capacity of the human mind to discover 'truth,' are results that Descartes reaches through the application of this methodology and standard of knowledge.

Heidegger:

In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger criticizes the Cartesian epistemology and metaphysical account of the world. Descartes begins his philosophy with *ego sum*. *Ego* is essentially a thinking thing, a mind, and is considered to be an incorporeal substance. The existence of this mind and its capacity to think forms the foundation for Cartesian metaphysics. Heidegger argues that this foundation is mistaken. He contends that before we can begin talking about the nature and characteristics of external things, one needs to investigate the fundamental ontology of Da-sein, thereby investigating the nature of Da-sein's understanding and the fundamental way that the world and external things appear to Da-sein. Heidegger writes, "In our exposition of the problem of worldliness (section 14) we referred to the importance of gaining proper access to this phenomenon. [...] we must ask which kind of being of Da-sein we should fix upon as the appropriate kind of access to *that* being" (88). The author's point is that we must consider the proper means for Da-sein to investigate external things, before we begin analyzing the essential nature of external things with mathematics. In order to understand the "proper access" to external things, one needs to consider the fundamental ontology of Da-sein.

Heidegger begins this analysis with the assertion that Da-sein exists as "being-in-the-world."⁷ The basic idea is that we are fundamentally within a world and a part of a world. This characteristic of Da-sein constitutes the concept of "worldliness." Heidegger writes,

'Worldliness' is an ontological concept and designates the structure of the constitutive factor of being-in-the-world. But we have come to know being-in-the-world as an existential determination of Da-sein. Accordingly, worldliness is itself an existential. [...] World is ontologically not a determination of those beings which Da-sein essentially is not, but rather a characteristic of Da-sein itself. (60)

'The World' is a way in which Da-sein understands its environment. "Worldliness" is a characteristic of Da-sein and affects how we understand external things. Fundamentally, Da-sein understands, in an implicit sense, external things to be both constituents of the world and also to exist within the world as "innerworldly beings." Da-sein also implicitly understands itself as existing within a world as being-in-the-world.

This understanding of external things as "innerworldly" is only possible because Da-sein is connected to the world and fundamentally understands the world through its "attunement." The concept of attunement is best understood through the

A DUALISM CAN ONLY BE HALF WRONG by Elizabeth Russell James

I think when I leave,
I do it just to come back,

like turning home into the subject of a pattern
in binary code;

travel being 0, and home being 1.

This way, the contrast between them
makes it all new again,
and always gives home the advantage,

like the soil's only sacred after you've been missing it.
And I have now,

more than was ever possible,
by taking the same route, always,

up and down the Jersey Turnpike, always,

excited only by the four times a year,
that exit 8A shows its latest Jack Daniels campaign.

Christmas '03 it was "Tennessee Mistletoe."

Funny first, even a little sly,
but then sad,
with consequent trips past it,

because I am the demographic.

And it began to feel like a given, like
home was following me.

So I drank Jim Beam instead,
to throw it off my trail,

and by mistake, stranded myself in it,
and I felt like an old joke that had never been funny;

a blank paper, signed in the lower,
right hand corner, a flawless depiction of nothing,
titled: Snow White in a Blizzard.

And who would ever know by looking,
but I swear I was in it.

Then I sobered and moved again,
to a place where I had no language to offer,

except to myself, like hopefully the isolation
would force something out of me,

and it did,
and even more, I became statistic distributions,

aware of "I" as a foreigner,
which is surprisingly hard to accept,

aware of the necessity to be,
(because what is the alternative)
of the act of always becoming something,
(because that's what time is)

and becoming home,
instead of trying to hide myself from it.

And then came my return,
like it has each time so far,

and the ground was there, like I'd never seen it,
and I had seen it every day,

and the souls buried in it whispered to me,
the history of home, as if to say:

contemporary philosophy and constitutes the central concern of this essay. The problem is, assuming that we can acknowledge the existence of the *ego*, are we able to know that anything external to the mind actually exists.⁴ Martin Heidegger discusses this Cartesian question in *Sein und Zeit*. He criticizes Descartes' epistemology and metaphysics on a number of different points and he even rejects the skeptical question introduced by Descartes. Heidegger argues that "Da-sein" is fundamentally connected to the world and "innerworldly beings."⁵ The focus of this essay is an exegesis and analysis of Heidegger's criticism of the Cartesian methodology and metaphysics. It begins with a brief description of the Cartesian metaphysic which Heidegger criticizes. The essay then develops into an explication of Heidegger's methodology and positive 'ontological' account. This discussion sets the stage for Heidegger's criticism. After noting the Heideggerian objections, the essay concludes with an analysis of Heidegger's claims and criticism. Specifically, I investigate whether the Heideggerian methodology and ontological account allow the rejection of the Cartesian question that frustrates both epistemology and metaphysics. In other words, does Heidegger's 'ontology' justify the belief that we exist within a world and interact with innerworldly objects? Through the consideration of this question, I hope to elucidate both Heidegger's methodology and some fundamental concerns, which must be taken into account, when attempting to explain our supposed connection with the world.

Descartes maintains that there are certain things which exist in themselves and by themselves. Descartes refers to these things as 'substances' and they form the foundation of the Cartesian metaphysic. According to Descartes, God is a substance, since God is not dependent on any other thing for existence. The concepts "thought" and "extension" are also considered to be substance. The reader should note that the term substance is used in two different ways. The substances of thought and extension are described as parasitic upon the former substance, God, since they are dependent on God for their existence.⁶ Both God and Thought are incorporeal substance. *Ego*, which provides Descartes' metaphysical foundation, is constituted by the substance Thought and is also said to be incorporeal. One can understand certain characteristics of the mind, apart from its incorporeal nature. Descartes maintains that *ego* is essentially a thinking thing, a mind, and he delineates various types of ideas, which are present in this mind.

Extension is described as corporeal substance and it constitutes the essence of all the external things observed through the senses. All extended corporeal things are composed of matter. Matter is considered to be dead, namely without a final cause or an internal principle that allows matter to move itself. Descartes asserts that one may gain an understanding of matter through an analysis of extended corporeal substance with mathematics. Throughout both the *Meditations* and the *Principles*, Descartes argues that the reality of things in themselves is radically different than the understanding one develops of these things based upon normal everyday experience.

perception that is present and accessible to the attentive mind. In a similar fashion, he defines a perception as distinct when it is clear, in the previously delimited sense, and “so sharply separated from all other perceptions that it contains within itself only what is clear” (Principles of Philosophy, Section 45). Therefore, when taken as a whole, the Cartesian methodology for the acquisition of knowledge demands absolute certainty which centrally involves both clear and distinct perception.

Descartes’ method continues to develop along a foundational model. I characterize Descartes method as foundationalist, since he seeks to begin his metaphysics with a singular fact that is certain, which he may treat as a foundation for all knowledge. From this singular starting point, his methodology allows one to proceed to further knowledge solely through inferences whose validity is also certain. For Descartes, this foundation is provided by *ego sum*.¹ Through various thought experiments, Descartes is able to question nearly all beliefs that one typically accepts as true, indicating the uncertainty of these beliefs.² He even rejects highly probable beliefs and constructs the evil demon thought experiment simply to facilitate their abandonment. Yet, he remains unable to question the existence of his self as a thinking thing. In the *Meditations*, he writes,

I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it now follow that I too do not exist? No: if I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. (17)

Ego sum supplies the certain foundation necessary for the Cartesian metaphysic.³ According to the Cartesian method, one may proceed from this foundation to a more general discussion of metaphysics, as long as the principles of inference are known with certainty to be valid. Descartes methodology begins with a standard of certainty for knowledge and proceeds to a proper foundation provided by a singular fact. Once such a foundation is established, one may infer other metaphysical truths through valid modes of inference.

Problematic:

Many thinkers have questioned Descartes’ ability to arrive at a larger metaphysical picture than that of solipsism. Descartes may be able to conclude the existence of the self, but how can he possibly move to consider anything external to our minds? One is able to create thought experiments which suggest that the only certainty is the existence of the *ego*. Descartes attempts to develop an ontological argument for the existence of God, through which he plans to make many conclusions concerning the existence of things outside his mind, based upon the idea of infinity. This argument, however, is often criticized for including a vicious circle and also for making certain assumptions that are not absolutely certain. In the *Meditations*, Descartes introduces this epistemic question concerning our ability to grasp the existence of anything outside our minds. The question continues to be discussed in

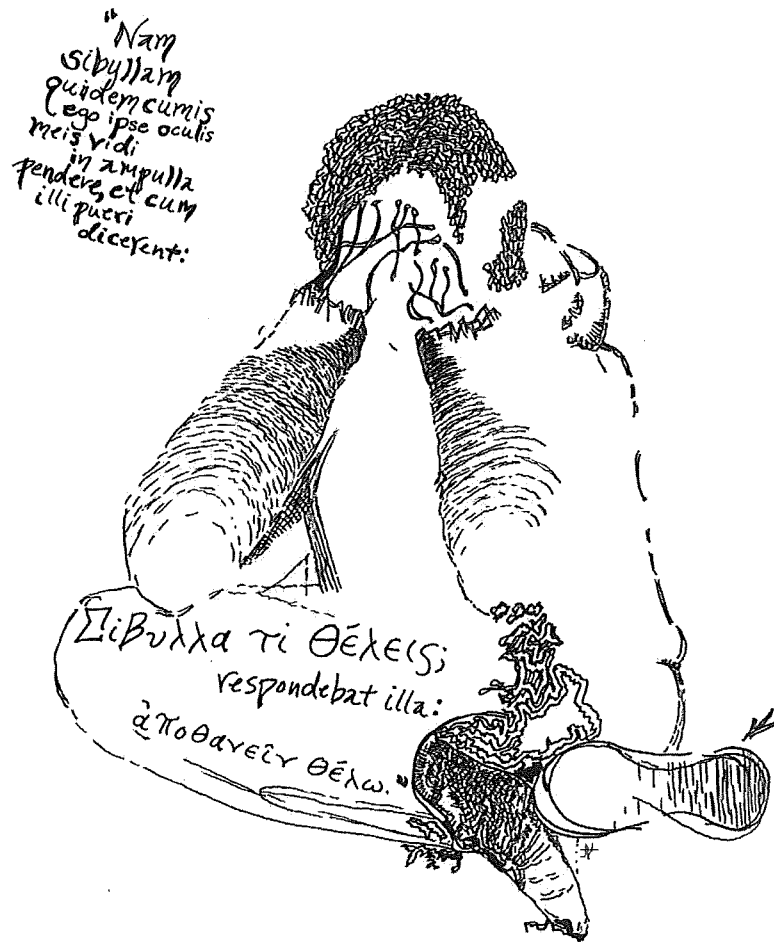
Someday, neutrality will take over,
and it will be unanimous,

abolishing the 0’s and 1’s,

relieving anxiety from its duty,

and, worry if you want, but you can’t know
how things will happen,

until they do.



by Amanda Visconti

HEIDEGGER'S ONTOLOGY: AN ANSWER TO CARTESIAN SKEPTICISM by Erik Christopherson

The question of this essay is whether Heidegger's ontology provides an adequate answer to the problems of Cartesian skepticism. I contend that Heidegger's description of Da-sein, as being-in-the-world, provides a resolution of several skeptical questions that Descartes raises in the *Meditations*. The natural beginning point for such an investigation is an explication of the Cartesian methodology and metaphysics. The essay then considers the Heideggerian ontology and his criticism of Descartes. After explaining how Heidegger responds to several Cartesian questions, the investigation analyzes what the Heideggerian ontology implies about the existence of the external world. This line of thought culminates in a discussion of truth, which is a fundamental point of disagreement between the Cartesian and Heideggerian philosophies.

Descartes:

In *Meditations on First Philosophy*, René Descartes begins his examination of metaphysics with a discussion of method. After he has established what he believes is the proper method, his conversation develops into a discussion concerning substance and existence. I plan to begin by looking at both the Cartesian methodology and metaphysics, as Descartes introduces the problematic of this essay and the following discussion largely involves Heidegger's criticism of the Cartesian foundationalist project. Descartes' methodology centrally involves a standard of knowledge. This standard is best characterized with the concept of 'certainty.' The standard of certainty maintains that one cannot accept any propositions as true, unless they are certain in an absolute sense. In other words, the propositions must be such that it is impossible to be wrong regarding their truth-value. Descartes writes,

Anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, or if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty. (16)

The necessity of certainty regarding both the foundational beliefs and the beliefs that develop from this foundation, is the first component of Descartes method. The concept of certainty is further developed by the concepts 'clear and distinct perception.' Descartes believes that only perception containing both these characteristics can be esteemed a certain judgment. In *Principles of Philosophy*, he characterizes a clear perception as a