

Review Discussion

Heidegger and Ethics*

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I. Introduction

Martin Heidegger never produced a substantial theory of ethics. In his masterpiece *Sein und Zeit* (1927) (*Being and Time*) he advocated a variety of moral decisionism, or voluntarism, according to which free and resolute choices of authentic individuals constitute their highest moral authority. To the astonishment of a present-day reader, Heidegger coupled this radical individualism to a collectivist view of authentic life with one another (*Mitsein*) in section 74 of *Sein und Zeit*. Allegedly, the course of social life is not produced by the sum of individual decisions or 'fates'. Rather it is a destiny (*Geschick*) of a people (*Volk*), and Heidegger adds ominously that the power of destiny is set free by communication (*Mitteilung*) and fight (*Kampf*).¹

In *Sein und Zeit*, then, there is a tension between a decisionist notion of individual authenticity and a collectivist conception of interpersonal authenticity. This issue was resolved by the National Socialist revolution. In 1933 Heidegger replaced his individualistic decisionism with an authoritarian variety, asserting that one decisive individual decides on behalf of the German people as a whole. In an appeal to German students on 3 November 1933, Heidegger invested Hitler with supreme moral authority, urging that one should not guide one's life by moral maxims, because 'the *Führer* himself and alone is present and future Germany and its law'.² Radically abandoning the individualism of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger now agreed with Hitler that 'the individual, wherever he stands, does not count'. What counted only is 'the destiny [*Schicksal*] of our people [*unseres Volkes*] in their state'.³ Even if one manages to exorcise these and other texts produced by Heidegger in 1933, by arguing that they

*Frederick A. Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: A Study of Mitsein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), x + 108 pp., ISBN 0-521-63094-0, pb. 0-521-63879-8, £30.00, \$49.95, pb. £10.95, \$14.95.

do not belong to his philosophical works proper, one will have to admit that up to 1933 Heidegger's career as a moral philosopher was not very promising.

In the writings Heidegger published during the second half of his life, between 1934 and his death in 1976, we find two new themes related to ethics, but these will not invite us to qualify this negative verdict. First, there is the neo-Hegelian idea that each historical epoch is based upon a fundamental metaphysical stance that determines how things show up for human beings in that epoch. Allegedly, the present epoch of technology is based upon a Nietzschean metaphysics, according to which each and every human action is motivated by a will to power and everything shows up for us as materials to be exploited or as objects of domination. This despondent diagnosis of our times frustrates ethical discourse: moral arguments are reduced to instruments of power, and different ethical positions are levelled: they are all perceived as mere expressions of power politics. For example, Heidegger held in 1945 that democracy is not essentially different from fascism or communism: each of these doctrines belongs to the metaphysical reign of the will to power.⁴

The second theme related to ethics is expressed in Heidegger's 'Letter on "Humanism"', published in 1947, and it is equally destructive with regard to moral theory. Heidegger now says that moral precepts cannot be binding for human beings unless they are issued by Being itself (*das Sein*), that is, by a transcendent non-entity or agent that is both concealed in human history and sends (*schickt*) to us humans the historical epochs that are our destiny (*Geschick*) and constitute history (*Geschichte*).⁵ This doctrine resembles traditional religious views on ethics, according to which moral rules cannot carry authority unless they are God's commands. Yet there is a crucial difference between Heidegger's heteronomous doctrine and religious conceptions. Whereas religions provide ethical content to their doctrines of God's command by spelling out divine commandments, Heideggerian Being never issues moral precepts. As a consequence, Heidegger's heteronomous doctrine exterminates ethics by investing a transcendent non-entity (Being) with a moral monopoly, but without specifying moral rules so authorized.

We may conclude that in each phase of his philosophical career, Heidegger endorsed an authoritarian view of ethics: only decisions carry authority and ethical discussion is held in disrepute. With regard to moral theory the phases are differentiated merely by *what* is invested with ultimate ethical authority: authentic individuals or the *Volk* in 1927, Hitler in 1933, and transcendent Being in *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (1936–1938) and after the Second World War.

In view of Heidegger's unattractive observations on ethics it will come as a surprise that several philosophers have tried to develop a substantial

ethical theory starting from Heideggerian conceptions. Let me single out for discussion here an excellent little book by Frederick A. Olafson, who is an experienced interpreter of Heidegger and the existentialist tradition in continental philosophy.⁶ As the title of Olafson's book, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*, indicates, his view is a variety of foundationalism, and it belongs to the tradition of liberal humanist moral theory, which Heidegger rejected in all phases of his career. Olafson's book merits serious discussion, not only because of its intrinsic qualities, but also because it raises important questions with regard to Heidegger's views on ethics. For instance, how are Heidegger's decisionist views in *Sein und Zeit* related to ethical foundationalism? Why does his ontological analysis of human existence lack a substantial moral dimension? And how could Heidegger couple individual decisionism to a collectivist view of interpersonal authenticity in section 74 of that book? Having discussed in section II the place of ethics in *Sein und Zeit*, I argue in sections III–VI that Heidegger's decisionism must be seen as a sceptical position within a foundationalist framework in meta-ethics. Special attention is paid to the debate between Olafson, Carman, and Dreyfus regarding Heidegger's notion of *das Man* (Everyman) in *Inquiry* 1994.

In section VII, I discuss Olafson's own ethical argument. Starting with the notion of being-with-one-another (*Mitsein*) that Heidegger put forward in *Sein und Zeit*, Olafson develops a justification for moral commitments *vis-à-vis* our fellow human beings that transcends the traditional dilemma of moral heteronomy versus moral autonomy. Olafson admits that his ethical argument was never even sketched by Heidegger himself; hence his relation to the Heideggerian *corpus* is complex. Indeed, as Olafson says, 'a certain tension in my relation to his [Heidegger's] thought may result that could prove rather confusing'.⁷

We will have occasion to wonder why Olafson linked his ethical views to Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein* at all. Why did he not take Aristotle's notion of *suzen* as a starting-point, a notion that originally inspired Heidegger in developing the concept of *Mitsein*?⁸ Or, if a source of inspiration had to be found in the existentialist and phenomenological tradition, why does Emmanuel Levinas not figure in Olafson's book, a philosopher who had been convinced by the Second World War that Heidegger's philosophy has deeply immoral implications, and who, like Olafson, uses Heideggerian conceptions in developing a foundationalist theory of ethics that stands in sharp opposition to Heidegger's own views? By juxtaposing Olafson's ethical theory and the doctrine of *Sein und Zeit*, I try to show how completely foreign these two conceptions are to each other. Moreover, by analysing to what extent the 'grounds' of ethics that Heidegger and Olafson claim to have discovered are able to support the moral edifice, I will call into question the foundationalist tradition in ethical theory.

II. The Place of Ethics in *Sein und Zeit*: the Ontical and the Ontological

In order to determine the place ethics occupies in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, we have to say first something on the general objectives and the set-up of this book. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger wanted to raise the 'question of (the meaning of) Being'. Unfortunately he never succeeds in explaining clearly what he means by this question. Is the question of being concerned with the meanings of the verb 'to be' and with the ontological constitution of various types of entities, or rather with *la condition humaine* in general, or is it a transcendental question regarding a priori conditions under which something may show up for us as something, or, finally, does it aim at explicating the traditional conception of a possible transcendence of man to God? There are passages that support each of these interpretations, but it seems difficult to accept them all at once.⁹

In sections 2 and 4 of the book, Heidegger argues that if we want to raise the question of Being (*Sein*), we have to start by giving an ontological analysis of a specific entity (*Seiendes*) called Dasein (human being), because Dasein is the one who understands Being (who has *Seinsverständnis*). This argument explains why Heidegger provides an analysis of Dasein in the published part of *Sein und Zeit*, an analysis of which he claims in section 83 that it is 'merely a way' towards working out the question of Being in general.¹⁰ However, the argument is formally invalid as it stands. If we want to raise a question concerning *Y*, and *X* is the one who 'understands' *Y*, it is usually not necessary to analyse *X* first. For instance, if we raise questions concerning black holes, no anthropological research is needed for answering these questions, even though only some humans have any understanding of black holes.

As a consequence, it is not sufficiently clear how the analysis of Dasein is related to the question of Being (*Sein*), and this is a central *crux interpretum* of *Sein und Zeit*. The unclarity spills over to another pair of concepts central to the book: the notions of the ontical (what is concerned with entities) and the ontological (what is concerned with Being). In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger urges again and again that his analysis of Dasein is an ontological analysis, and that it is more fundamental than the special sciences of man, such as anthropology, biology, medicine, psychology, and theology, which move on the ontical level. As the analysis is concerned with the special mode of being of humans, which Heidegger calls 'existence', the ontological level is also called the *existenzial* level and the ontical level is called *existenziell*. At least two interpretations of this distinction seem plausible. The ontical/ontological or *existenziell/existenzial* distinction might resemble the Kantian distinction between the empirical and the transcendental, or it might rather resemble the Husserlian distinction between facts and essences.

For the purposes of this article, I adopt the latter view. Heidegger claims that his ontological analysis of Dasein or human existence reveals 'essential structures which, in every kind of Being that factual Dasein may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its Being'.¹¹ Interpreted in this sense, Heidegger's ontology of Dasein is what Husserl would have called a regional ontology of human existence. Like Husserl, Heidegger claims – in section 3 of *Sein und Zeit* – that such a regional ontology has the task of developing a set of categories specific to a particular region of entities. As examples of regions he mentions: history, nature, space, life, Dasein, and language, and the categories for Dasein are called *existentialia*.¹² Furthermore, the ontology of a region of entities is claimed to be more fundamental than, and a priori in relation to, the empirical or positive sciences of this region.¹³ Allegedly, the method of the ontology of Dasein is independent of empirical research concerning humans. As we will see, this methodological claim, which reminds us of the Husserlian *Wesensschau*, has disastrous effects on Heidegger's analysis of ethics, for it implies that empirical and factual investigations of human morality are irrelevant to the ontology of Dasein.

If the distinction between ontology and the ontical level, as applied to Dasein, is the distinction between, on the one hand, what is essential to human existence whenever and wherever it is found, and, on the other, factual possibilities of existing that may be different at different times and places, Heidegger has to decide with regard to each human phenomenon where it belongs: at the ontical or at the ontological level. What is Heidegger's view on ethics in this respect? Is it conceivable that specific moral norms or inclinations belong to the ontological level? In that case, Olafson's attempt to derive substantial moral insights from Heidegger's analysis of Dasein might be a fruitful one. Or is it rather that Heidegger relegates all substantial moral norms to the ontical level, admitting at the ontological level only general structures of human existence that allow for the possibility of both moral and immoral (or amoral) behaviour? In this latter case, Olafson's philosophical strategy may seem to be doomed.

One might think that findings of anthropological research are relevant here, because one possible argument for considering something as 'essential' for humans is that it is found in all human cultures. Although many moral norms turn out to be specific to particular societies, anthropologists have discovered so-called ethical universals, norms endorsed by all human communities, such as prohibitions of murder, lying, incest, and rape, and obligations of mutual help and sympathy. What is more, ethologists have observed moral patterns of reciprocal altruism within groups of mammals such as dolphins, wolves, capuchins, and chimpanzees. These and other studies lend considerable support to the hypothesis that there is a common genetic basis to universal moral feelings and behaviour of social animals, and this hypothesis might in

turn be accounted for by the theory of evolution. Should we conclude from these empirical investigations that at least some fundamental moral norms or inclinations belong to the ontological level?

It is clear from the set-up of *Sein und Zeit* that Heidegger would resist such an empirical argument. His methodological claim that the ontology of Dasein is a priori with regard to the empirical sciences of man implies a distinction between empirical generalizations and essential or 'a priori-ontological' generalizations.¹⁴ From the fact that specific moral norms occur in all human cultures, Heidegger would not infer that they belong to the ontological constitution of Dasein. But if this type of argument is unacceptable to Heidegger, what criteria does he use in deciding whether specific structures in human existence are of ontological import? Why does he not analyse phenomena such as gender, ageing, love, or procreation in his book? Heidegger never discusses criteria for determining what belongs to the ontical level and what is properly ontological.¹⁵ Indeed, it may be argued that the notion of essences as Heidegger uses it is spurious, and that the method of eidetic phenomenology, which he inherited from his teacher Husserl, is incompatible with 'hermeneutics' as conceived of by Dilthey and the early Heidegger.¹⁶

If this is so, Heidegger's notion of ontology in itself does not enable us to validate his view on the place of ethics in *Sein und Zeit*, and we will not endorse his distinction between the ontical and the ontological.¹⁷ Yet we may note that, in fact, Heidegger locates all moral norms on the ontical level. His ontology of human existence cannot contain a substantial ethical theory because, he says, it merely investigates the 'existential condition for the possibility of the "morally" good and for that of the "morally" evil – that is, for morality in general and for the possible forms which this may take factually'.¹⁸ As we will see, Heidegger's view on this existential condition implies that what moral norms we in fact endorse in moments of authenticity is a matter of choice. As a consequence, Heidegger would regard Olafson's attempt to derive substantial moral norms from the ontology of Dasein as a philosophical mistake.

In *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*, Olafson uses the Heideggerian distinction between the ontological and the ontical level rather naively, without probing deeply into the crucial issue of what this distinction means in *Sein und Zeit*.¹⁹ What he wants to show in his book is 'that an ontology of human nature is of fundamental importance to any effort to get at the ground of ethics'.²⁰ Yet, he notes also that according to 'existentialist' philosophers such as Heidegger and Sartre the ontology of human existence implies that 'every aspect of human life was to be understood in terms of the concept of choice; and choice was held to be in every case the choice of an individual human being'. Moreover, 'such choices were declared to be ultimately arbitrary and unjustifiable by the procedures of reason'.²¹ Clearly, Olafson

accepts the traditional interpretation – defended below – that in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger advocated a variety of moral decisionism, a doctrine that Olafson himself rejects. Even though Heidegger stressed that being-with-other-human-beings (*Mitsein, Mitdasein*) is a fundamental characteristic of human life, he never showed what Olafson intends to demonstrate, namely that ‘our relation to one another can by itself yield standards of right and wrong’.²² In other words, Heidegger never answered positively the question that ‘inevitably arises’ according to Olafson: the question ‘as to whether this choice that we are called to make is itself subject to any standard of judgment’.²³

In trying to explain Heidegger’s failure to answer this question, Olafson refers to the ontical/ontological distinction. Indeed, this is the only passage in which Olafson tries to elucidate what the distinction means, and it is worth quoting in full:

One explanation of Heidegger’s failure to formulate or answer these questions may be that he regarded choices between moral alternatives as an ontic matter and not properly an ontological one at all and that a discussion of such ontic matters would have been out of place in a book devoted to ontological questions. This distinction appears to be mainly a contrast between the business of life that we discharge without any explicit appeal to the distinctive character of our own being and the kind that is informed by just such an understanding. The difficulty about this is that Heidegger says that we have a pre-ontological understanding of just the matters that are expressly formulated in the language of ontology. It cannot be the case, therefore, that the ontic elements in human life are to be flatly contrasted with everything ontological.²⁴

Olafson’s argument in this passage is unconvincing for two reasons. First, what he calls ‘the contrast between the business of life that we discharge without any explicit appeal to the distinctive character of our own being and the kind that is informed by just such an understanding’ is not a plausible candidate for interpreting the ontical/ontological distinction. The distinction captured by this contrast is at best Heidegger’s distinction between inauthenticity and authenticity. Second, Olafson’s argument begs the question. Even if there are interesting links and transitions between the ontical and the ontological level, something that Heidegger also stresses, one might argue that the ontology of human existence cannot contain moral norms and cannot yield standards of right and wrong. In other words, although Olafson correctly claims that the ontical/ontological distinction *by itself* cannot explain why Heidegger does not incorporate substantial moral norms in his ontology of human beings, Heidegger might have more specific reasons for arguing that the ontology of Dasein cannot contain or imply substantial moral rules, ideas, or ideals. This is indeed what Heidegger argues and this is what Olafson denies. The real dispute between Heidegger and Olafson, then, is a dispute situated on the ontological level itself. However, if Olafson

disagrees crucially with Heidegger about the ontology of human existence, why does he try to develop his views on the ground of ethics on the basis of Heidegger's ontology?

The rationale for this strategy is a fundamental one and it is related to an important philosophical thesis in *Sein und Zeit*. Like Husserl, Heidegger held that regional ontologies must be developed by creating fundamental concepts that are specific to the relevant region of entities. The underlying (Aristotelian) idea is that reality is carved up into regions of entities that are essentially different from entities of other regions. As the fundamental concepts of a regional ontology must express such a regional essence, they cannot be identical to the concepts of a different regional ontology. Heidegger discovered during his early research on Aristotle that the traditional concepts of Western ontology, such as matter and form, or substance and accident, had been derived from, or inspired by, specific regions, such as the region of artefacts. During the scientific revolution other concepts were added, which were taken from the study of inanimate matter, and these concepts were then used in attempting to understand the nature of human beings.

It is Heidegger's radical and innovative thesis in the published part of *Sein und Zeit* that the traditional concepts of philosophical ontology are inadequate for understanding human existence, because they were originally derived from other ontological regions. If we try to understand our lives in terms of these concepts, we will fall prey to an alienation. Accordingly, Heidegger set himself a double task: a 'destruction' or critique of the traditional categories by means of which philosophers try to grasp the ontological constitution of humans, and a construction of new ontological concepts more adequate for understanding human existence, the so-called *existentialia*. To this Husserlian programme, Heidegger added an insight that is lacking in Husserl and that explains the appeal of *Sein und Zeit* to followers of Heidegger such as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and Levinas. If human beings are essentially self-interpretative beings, as the hermeneutic tradition to which Dilthey belongs had claimed, the *existentialia* must be developed primarily by studying the manner in which human beings interpret themselves in daily life (*Alltäglichkeit*).²⁵ This is why many of the *existentialia* are derived from idiomatic expressions used in ordinary language.²⁶ One might say that Heidegger aimed at raising to a level of ontological explicitness the implicit grasp of human existence we all possess to some degree in day-to-day life.

In this respect there is a striking similarity between Heidegger's philosophical programme in *Sein und Zeit* and the agenda of ordinary-language philosophers such as Ryle in *The Concept of Mind*.²⁷ These philosophers also claimed that traditional attempts to make sense of human life by using the conceptual resources of science and adding some 'extras' such as a mind to a scientific conceptualization of the human body, created insoluble philosophical problems and distorted the 'logical grammar' of the

concepts we use in ordinary life for expressing and describing ourselves and our fellow humans. But the respective programmes are not identical: whereas Heidegger wanted to create new philosophical categories for understanding human existence – the existentialia – Ryle and Wittgenstein merely aimed at surveying the logical grammar of the ordinary-language concepts we already use.

The fundamental reason, then, why Olafson is inspired by Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* in trying to uncover 'the ground of ethics' is that Heidegger disregards scientific images of man and tries to develop a manifest image, that is, an image of man that we are all manifesting in our daily life and in our ordinary discourse about life, but which we tend to overlook because it is so familiar to us.²⁸ Might we not discover that 'the resources for an authentication of our principles of conduct are already available to us' if only we seek them where they properly belong, that is, in our common and daily life?²⁹ This is the research programme of Olafson's book. He wants to show that Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein* (being-with-one-another) indicates the 'ground' of ethics, because our relation to one another can by itself yield standards of right and wrong.³⁰

As we saw, Olafson admits that Heidegger never developed this line of thought. What he fails to note, however, is how surprising Heidegger's omission at this point really is. For Heidegger was deeply inspired by Aristotle, and it is Aristotle's conviction, expressed in *Ethica Nicomachea*, that the ontology of human beings cannot be understood without grasping the ethical *telos* or perfection of human existence, which consists in practising virtues such as righteousness. Furthermore, the virtue of righteousness is essentially a social or political virtue, and Aristotle calls it 'the perfect virtue'; hence we might say that Aristotle already realized Olafson's research programme.³¹ Why does Heidegger depart from Aristotle at this crucial point? Why does he eliminate the ethical dimension from the ontology of *Dasein*?³² I will now review briefly those of Heidegger's existentialia that, at first sight, may seem to have relevance to ethics: *Mitsein*, *Fürsorge* (caring-for-others), *das Man* (Everyman), *Eigentlichkeit* (authenticity), *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness), *Gewissen* (conscience), and *Schuld* (guilt). Taken together, these notions constitute a starkly decisionist theory, which explains why according to Heidegger the ontology of *Dasein* cannot contain substantial moral norms or a substantial moral *telos*.

III. *Mitsein* and *das Man*: Olafson versus Dreyfus

What Heidegger calls *Mitsein* is a structural aspect of our being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*), which is the fundamental and comprehensive existentialia that governs the first division of *Sein und Zeit*. Hence, in order to understand

the existentials of *Mitsein*, we have to grasp the existentials of *In-der-Welt-sein*. Like Carnap, Heidegger was convinced that the traditional philosophical problem of the external world is a pseudo-problem, but Heidegger and Carnap differed in their diagnosis of why this problem should be repudiated instead of solved. Whereas Carnap rejected the problem because it does not admit of an empirical and scientific solution, Heidegger claimed that the problem is due to the fact that philosophers from the scientific revolution onwards tried to analyse the relation between man and world in scientific terms, thereby overlooking the real phenomena of Dasein and World. The problem arises only if one wants to understand our relation to the world in terms of representations in minds caused by external physical stimuli, but it disappears as soon as one applies more adequate categories to man and world, that is, Heidegger's existentials.

In general, Heidegger seems to hold the view that insoluble philosophical problems are engendered by using inadequate conceptual frameworks. Hence, they will disappear if one adopts a conceptual framework that is more suitable to the subject-matter one is studying. For instance, the traditional notion of the world as the totality of entities, or of facts, is inadequate for understanding the world we humans are living in, and we have to redefine the term as an existential. 'World' in Heidegger's sense designates the common and daily world in which we are living, a referential structure of houses, schools, roads, work, equipment, institutions, and so on. Since my personal identity – for instance the fact that I am a university teacher – is inconceivable without the world in this sense, that is, without institutions such as universities, man and world are internally related, and one cannot meaningfully raise the problem of whether man might exist without the world. As Heidegger says, *Being-in-the-world* is an existential of Dasein.

Similarly, Heidegger introduces the concept of *Mitsein* (being-with-one-another) in order to dispel the problem of other minds. If we see that we cannot understand who we are and what we do in daily life except in terms of our relations to others, it does not make sense to wonder whether I might exist essentially without the others. For instance, I am the son of so-and-so, married to so-and-so, a colleague and friend of many people, the owner of a house, a buyer of books, I pursue a specific career, and so on, and each of these relations or features partly defines who I am. However, if we assume with Descartes and Husserl that each of us is primarily an individual consciousness or a transcendental ego that might exist separately without the material world and without other human beings, we will never grasp who we really are, that is, who we are both in daily life and in our most authentic moments.³³

Heidegger defines human existence in the world as *Sorge* (care, concern), an existential expressing the fact that we are always ahead of ourselves, living into the future, organizing our life and acting in a cultural world into which we happen to have been born. Accordingly, the structure of *Mitsein*

might be characterized as *Fürsorge*, a term that in ordinary German denotes welfare services and social security, but which Heidegger uses as an existentialia for all possible relations to other human beings, both negative ones such as indifference and positive ones such as helping someone to become responsible for him- or herself. Heidegger does not derive ethical implications from these existentialia, but there is nothing in the notions of *Mitsein* and *Fürsorge* that excludes the possibility of deriving such implications. This situation changes, however, when Heidegger introduces the notions of *das Man* (the They, the One, Everyman, the everyday Self) and *Eigentlichkeit* (authenticity). Therefore, I discuss these notions in some detail, paying special attention to the debate between Olafson and Dreyfus.

Heidegger introduces the concepts of *das Man* in order to answer the question 'who it is that Dasein is in its everyday life'.³⁴ At first sight, the point of this question may escape us, and we will be tempted to retort: well, each of us, Frederick, Hubert, Martin, and Herman, is his own Dasein in his everyday life. But this answer would be an ontical one. Heidegger intends the question as an ontological query, and he argues that it should be answered by analysing the mode of being in which each Dasein maintains itself proximally and most of the time.³⁵ Heidegger characterizes this daily mode of being with the thesis that when Dasein is absorbed in the world of its concern and its being-with others, it is not itself.³⁶ This surprising claim triggers a question that is equally surprising: 'Who is it, then, who has taken over Being as everyday Being-with-one-another?'³⁷ Heidegger replies, notoriously, that Everyman or the One (*das Man*) has usurped our daily existence. Mostly and proximally, each of us is not him- or herself, but just everyman, because we typically think and act as One thinks and acts.

Heidegger scholars have been puzzled by this astounding claim and have tried to find rational reconstructions of Heidegger's text that make it acceptable.³⁸ The best known interpretation today is Hubert Dreyfus's Wittgensteinian account in his commentary on the first division of *Sein und Zeit*.³⁹ According to Dreyfus, Heidegger's notion of *das Man* draws attention to the fact that the public and significant world of everyday life is constituted, at least in part, by social roles and rules of usage; for instance rules for using equipment or the rules of language. Since, allegedly, human beings are to a large extent what they do, and because what they do is structured by rules and social roles, Heidegger is saying that our daily identity is not primarily an individualized 'self' but rather an anonymous self. As Wittgenstein argued, rules are essentially public. They cannot be understood, in the manner of Descartes and Husserl, as products of a separate individual consciousness, because rules cannot exist without the conformity in behaviour of public practices. According to Dreyfus, Heidegger's concept of *das Man* was coined in order to refer to ourselves and others as *normal users* of equipment and followers of rules. This is why Dreyfus prefers the translation of 'the One' to

the traditional rendering by 'the They'. This latter expression would be misleading 'since it suggests that *I* am distinguished from *them*, whereas Heidegger's whole point is that the equipment and roles of a society are defined by norms that apply to *anyone*'.⁴⁰

Dreyfus is not blind to the fact that his interpretation is in conflict with many of the things Heidegger says of *das Man*. Heidegger's description of our daily mode of existence called *das Man* is punctuated with negative connotations. He says, for example, that in its daily life *Dasein* is *submissive* in relation to the others, and that it is not, since its Being has been *taken away by the others*.⁴¹ In view of these passages, Dreyfus's protests against translating *das Man* by 'the They' seem to be unjustified. Furthermore, Heidegger claims that the being-with-one-another of *das Man* 'dissolves one's own *Dasein* completely into the kind of Being of "the Others"', so that 'the real dictatorship of *das Man* is unfolded' and 'deprives the particular *Dasein* of its responsibility'.⁴² However, if Dreyfus is correct in interpreting the existentials of *das Man* as expressing the rule- and role-governed nature of daily life, Heidegger should have said that *das Man* enables us to be responsible human beings, for responsibility is typically role- and rule-structured: we learn to behave responsibly when we grow up in the public practices constitutive of a specific cultural world. Finally, and for similar reasons, Dreyfus's interpretation cannot explain smoothly why Heidegger claims in sections 35–38 of *Sein und Zeit* that our daily existence is characterized by *Verfallen* (falling), as exemplified in *Gerede* (idle talk), *Neugier* (curiosity), and *Zweideutigkeit* (ambiguity).

Dreyfus does not consider such conflicts with the texts as refutations of his Wittgensteinian interpretation. He rather attributes the clash between the interpretation and the text to a 'confusion' on Heidegger's side. Heidegger would not have distinguished the *conformity* in behaviour that is constitutive of rules and social roles, without which the public meaningful world cannot exist, from the evils of *conformism*. As Dreyfus says, 'Heidegger, influenced by Kierkegaard's attack on the public in *The Present Age*, does everything he can to blur this important distinction'.⁴³ Dreyfus also accuses Heidegger of a related confusion between an ontical or psychological sense of falling and an ontological, structural sense.⁴⁴ However, is not Dreyfus's claim that the textual inadequacy of his interpretation should not be considered as a refutation, but rather be attributed to confusions on the part of Heidegger, a dubious one, given the methodology of historical exegesis? In a discussion of Dreyfus's book, published in *Inquiry* of 1994, Olafson developed a different and more traditional interpretation of Heidegger's notion of *das Man*, but unfortunately his exegesis is also incompatible with a number of texts.⁴⁵

According to Olafson, Heidegger's negative characterization of *das Man* is to be explained by supposing that '*das Man* is a deformation of our social being [*Mitsein*], not its highest achievement as Dreyfus apparently supposed

it to be'.⁴⁶ Although Olafson accuses Heidegger of a confusion very similar to the one Dreyfus attributed to Heidegger, a confusion between innocuous and objectionable forms of social anonymity, Olafson claims that the objectionable form of social anonymity is the true referent of *das Man*. Heidegger would use the expression *das Man* primarily for 'a mode of public-ness that has got altogether out of hand and leaves no room at all for individuality', for 'a distorted modality of *Mitsein*'.⁴⁷

However, as a critique of Dreyfus this interpretation is unconvincing for several reasons. First, whereas Olafson's main objection to Dreyfus is that the latter confuses the ontical and the ontological level, Olafson is guilty of the same confusion. Clearly, a 'distorted modality of *Mitsein*' or 'an objectionable form of social anonymity' would qualify as a contingent ontical possibility, whereas Heidegger stresses that *das Man* is an ontological and essential structure, an *existentiale*.⁴⁸ Second, an 'objectionable' form of social anonymity is morally reprehensible, but Heidegger urges that his negative characterization of *das Man* is 'purely ontological in its aims and . . . far removed from any moralizing critique of everyday *Dasein*'.⁴⁹ Third, Heidegger himself stresses the basic nature of *das Man* that Dreyfus also ascribes to it. He says, for example, of the indifference and averageness of daily existence that 'out of this kind of Being – and back into it again – is all existing, such as it is'.⁵⁰ This accords with Heidegger's further claim that the ontical possibility of authenticity, which seems to be a radical alternative to the inauthenticity of *das Man*, is in reality an ontical modification of *das Man*: 'it is rather an *existentiell* modification of the *They* – of the *They* as an *essential existentiale*'.⁵¹ If this is the case, it is unfair to accuse Dreyfus of having 'paradoxically magnified' the role of *das Man* in *Sein und Zeit*.⁵² Dreyfus's interpretation of *das Man* attributes to it precisely the constitutive role that it has for Heidegger, who claims, as Olafson admits, that '*das Man selbst* . . . articulates the referential context of significance', that is, our daily world.⁵³

It seems, then, that Heidegger's *existentiale* of *das Man* in *Sein und Zeit* has two aspects that cannot easily be reconciled. On the one hand it is a fundamental structure of everyday life that is constitutive of the cultural public world; it is the mode of Being in which we live 'proximally and most of the time'. On the other hand, Heidegger's description of *das Man* is loaded with negative connotations. He identifies *das Man* with inauthenticity and holds that in its daily life, *Dasein* is dispersed (*zerstreut*) and not itself.⁵⁴ Apparently, Heidegger claims that our habitual and social self, which is structured by public rules, norms, and roles, has to be described in negative terms because, ontologically speaking, it is not our real or authentic self.⁵⁵ However, this gloomy thesis is unacceptable to contemporary Western common sense and it conflicts with the logical grammar of the expression 'being (not) myself'. When we say things such as 'I am not myself today',

what we mean is that we feel or behave differently from the way we habitually feel or behave. Heidegger inverts common parlance if he claims that in our habitual way of living we are *not* ourselves.

This is why, I suppose, both Olafson and Dreyfus rule out from the very start that the gloomy thesis is the correct interpretation of the sections of *Sein und Zeit* on *das Man*. As a consequence, neither of them is able to provide an interpretation that coheres with all texts. Dreyfus concentrates on the fundamental role of *das Man* as constitutive of the daily public world, and concludes that Heidegger's negative pronouncements are due to a confusion of conformity with conformism. Olafson focuses on the negative aspects of *das Man*, holding that it characterizes an ontical deformation of our *Mitsein*, and concludes that it cannot play the fundamental role Dreyfus and Heidegger attribute to it. Reviewing the discussion between Olafson and Taylor Carman, a 'Dreyfusard', published in *Inquiry* of 1994, Dreyfus concludes that if no interpretation is able to accommodate all texts on *das Man* because 'Heidegger's various characterizations of *das Man* are inconsistent', we have a choice, and that, depending on our goals, we might prefer one of these two interpretations to the other. If we want to understand 'perennial human pathologies, the initial reception of *Being and Time*, and Heidegger's failure to finish it', we will prefer Olafson's ontical interpretation. If, however, we want 'to focus on a phenomenon that brings out an essential structure of human being as well as showing the depth and consistency of Heidegger's ontological project', we must opt for Carman's and Dreyfus's ontological approach.⁵⁶

I assume that both Olafson and Dreyfus intend to provide an optimally adequate historical interpretation of *Sein und Zeit*. If this is their aim, however, Dreyfus's conclusion is unjustified unless Heidegger's various characterizations of *das Man* are *mutually* inconsistent. But that is not the case; mostly the inconsistencies arise between Heideggerian texts and the one-sided interpretations of Dreyfus and Olafson.⁵⁷ The conflicts with the text are brought about because both Olafson and Dreyfus tacitly assume that according to Heidegger, *das Man* cannot be *both* a fundamental structure of our daily life in the world *and* a structure that has to be evaluated negatively from an ontological point of view. This tacit assumption fits in with present-day American ideology, according to which our daily life in the world is fundamentally all right. However, someone like Heidegger, who was imbued with a traditional and mystical Catholic mentality of world-abnegation and was writing *Sein und Zeit* during the cheerless German interbellum period, may have disagreed with us on this point. In order to be textually adequate, an historical interpretation of *Sein und Zeit* should explain why Heidegger stresses both the fundamental and the negative nature of *das Man*.⁵⁸

This dual nature of *das Man*, which I cannot fully elucidate here, is decisive for the place assigned to ethics in *Sein und Zeit*. Dreyfus is right in stressing

that Heidegger uses the expression 'das Man' as a collective noun for all human behaviour that is standardized by roles and rules. The term covers not only normal use of equipment, which is Dreyfus's paradigm case, but also conformity to the moral norms of society. Moral norms typically have the form 'One ought (not) to do such and such'; they are binding for us even when we choose not to act in accordance with them. However, if Heidegger is right in claiming that while we live in the daily mode of existence of *das Man*, we are not authentically our Selves, it follows that our real or authentic Selves are not bound by common morality. This is precisely what Heidegger argues when he develops the existential concepts of *Eigentlichkeit*, *Entschlossenheit*, *Gewissen*, and *Schuld*.

IV. Authenticity as Choosing to Choose

The notion of *Eigentlichkeit* (authenticity) contrasts with *das Man* and it has many dimensions, such as *Angst*, *Vorlaufen zum Tode* (fore-running into death), *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness), *Gewissen-haben-wollen* (wanting-to-have-a-conscience), *Schuldigsein* (Being-guilty), *Ganzsein* (Being-a-whole), and *Verschwiegenheit* (reticence). In elaborating these different aspects of authenticity, Heidegger is always stressing one and the same central idea. Whereas living as *das Man* we are dispersed (*zerstreut*) and lost (*verloren*), we become authentic if we take hold of our radically individualized (*vereinzelt*) Self, and opt for the freedom of making our own individual decisions.⁵⁹ This radical individuality is revealed to us in *Angst*, and, fleeing from *Angst*, we are dispersed in *das Man*. Facing *Angst*, however, our radical freedom and individuality are revealed: 'Anxiety individualizes Dasein and thus discloses it as "solus ipse".'⁶⁰

That the authentic individual is not conceived of as bound by common morality is clear from Heidegger's notions of *Gewissen* (conscience), *Schuld* (guilt), and *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness). According to Heidegger's idiosyncratic interpretation of conscience, the voice of conscience calls each individual Dasein to its ownmost potentiality of being-its-Self by summoning it to its ownmost Being-guilty.⁶¹ The message of the voice of conscience is formal: it calls each Dasein back from being lost in *das Man* and summons it to become its individual Self. As this individual Self is completely undetermined, because it is the mode of existence in which each of us opts for a pure freedom to choose, the call of conscience is empty; it says *nothing*.⁶² In particular, it does not contain moral norms, of which Heidegger explicitly affirms that they belong to *das Man*.⁶³ The more each Dasein disregards what 'One' says and what is fitting and accepted, the better it hears the call of its conscience.⁶⁴

Contrary to most traditional interpretations of conscience, Heidegger's ontological interpretation links conscience uniquely to guilt.⁶⁵ But the existentials of guilt is also formalized. Ontological guilt is not related to particular actions that are morally wrong, and in interpreting guilt Heidegger abstracts from the relations between an individual Dasein and other human beings. In other words, he abstracts from the dimension of *Mitsein* that is regarded by most philosophers as the proper domain of morality and guilt.⁶⁶ What, then, is ontological guilt for Heidegger, and what sense should we attach to his claim that Dasein is essentially guilty?

Heidegger's general definition of ontological guilt is 'being the basis of a nothing'.⁶⁷ Allegedly, Dasein is the basis of a 'not' in two respects: being thrown into existence (*Geworfenheit*) and having created neither itself nor its possibilities, it is *not* in its own power, and having to choose one of its possibilities (*Entwurf*), it is at each moment *not* choosing alternative courses of action.⁶⁸ Heidegger argues that 'guilt' in this dual sense is the existential condition for the possibility of ethical good and evil.⁶⁹ Of course, things would have been much clearer if, instead of using the word *Schuld* in this radically novel way (as a term for the condition of the possibility of guilt in the ordinary sense), and instead of playing his pet games with the words *nicht* and *Nichts*, Heidegger had simply told us that Dasein is essentially free, although the range of its freedom is limited by its contingent situation, and that this freedom is a condition for the possibility of ethics. This is what Heidegger's quite traditional argument amounts to, but it is obscured by his idiosyncratic ontological terminology.⁷⁰ Heidegger concludes that Dasein is authentic if it 'wants to be guilty' or 'wants to have a conscience', that is, if it acknowledges its own freedom (*Schuld*), choosing its ownmost (*eigensten*) course in life.⁷¹

The authentic mode of existence, then, consists in deciding to be free and in 'choosing to choose'. The Self that the call of conscience summons us to be is precisely the freedom of this choice. Authentic Dasein does not flee from freedom and responsibility into the inauthenticity of *das Man*, but actualizes freedom, projecting its individual course of life by resolute decisions. In the section on resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*), Heidegger stresses again that authentic Dasein in its resolute choices is not bound by values or norms: 'Resoluteness "exists" only as a resolution [*Entschluß*]. . . . But . . . on what is it to resolve? *Only* the resolution itself can give the answer.'⁷² By italicizing the word 'only', Heidegger underscores that authentic decisions are not bound by any given standard of judgment, even though the possible course of life that Dasein chooses in a given situation will be prestructured by a specific cultural tradition.

We may conclude that Olafson's question 'whether this choice that we are called to make is itself subject to any standard of judgment' is indeed answered by Heidegger, but that the answer is emphatically negative.⁷³ If

authentic Dasein considers itself to be bound by moral rules, this is because it has *chosen* to be so bound. According to Heidegger, the normative force of moral rules does not restrict the possible contents of an authentic choice. Rather, if moral rules have normative force at all for a given individual, this force is produced by authentic choices of that individual. Furthermore, each new decision may destroy the normative import produced by earlier ones, for 'the certainty of the resolution signifies that one *holds oneself free for the possibility of taking it back* – a possibility which is factually necessary'.⁷⁴

V. Decisionism and the Foundationalist Tradition

Heidegger's decisionist ontology of authentic Dasein as freedom to choose explains why his ontology of Dasein cannot contain, even implicitly, moral norms or values. If authentic Dasein accepts moral norms, allegedly it accepts them because it freely decides to do so, and not because its ontological constitution somehow contains or implies them. But what explains Heidegger's individualist decisionism itself?

The doctrine of decisionism cannot be the result of a phenomenology of daily life. Although in daily life the phenomenon of moral choice is not absent, it typically arises in exceptional cases of conflict, either between different norms or between norms and strong interests. We rarely choose to accept moral norms themselves, and we certainly never *decide* to endorse fundamental norms such as 'thou shalt not kill'. Moral debates in modern society are not concerned with the validity of this norm, but only with boundary cases such as euthanasia and abortion. If each authentic human being were freely to choose which moral norms to accept, as Heidegger and Sartre claim, it would be a miracle that all human beings accept the same moral universals. How can Heidegger think, then, that there are no substantial moral norms or inclinations to be found on the ontological level? Why does he pretend that our individual Self as it really is is pure freedom to choose? He might respond that these objections are inspired by *das Man*. But this response neither explains nor justifies his concept of authentic Dasein as resolute free choice.

According to one interpretation of Heideggerian authenticity, we are authentic if we see ourselves as we are ontologically, and we are inauthentic if we misinterpret or cover up our ontological constitution. This is the interpretation Dreyfus accepts: 'authenticity is, precisely, owning up to what Dasein essentially is'.⁷⁵ It explains the 'existentiell' relevance of *Sein und Zeit*: by reading the book, we may become authentic, because allegedly Heidegger's ontological analysis of Dasein tells us what we are essentially. But Dreyfus runs into difficulties where he wants to fit Heidegger's

opposition between authenticity and inauthenticity into his interpretation of *das Man*. The subject of our daily mode of existence may be called *das Man* because, as Dreyfus holds, the everyday intelligibility of life is rooted in shared normative practices that constitute the daily world. Allegedly, whenever we act, we are acting according to social rules and roles. Why, then, did Heidegger argue that living as *das Man* we are not our real Self, that is, inauthentic?

Dreyfus's answer to this question is inventive. He claims that, typically, there is something that Dasein is covering up in its daily life: to wit that the everyday intelligibility of life is *merely* an everyday intelligibility, rooted in contingent cultural practices. Inauthentic Dasein pretends that this everyday intelligibility is not contingent, because it is 'based upon God's goodness, human nature, or at least solid good sense'.⁷⁶ Becoming authentic then means that Dasein grasps the fact that the cultural practices into which it is thrown are groundless. Dasein now sees that 'the only deep interpretation left is that there is no deep interpretation'. The authentic individual behaves according to the very same rules and roles and aspires to the same aims as Dasein living inauthentically in *das Man*, but it 'just takes them over differently', that is, with resoluteness and accepting their contingency.⁷⁷ However, this ingenious interpretation, which fits in well with Californian multiculturalism, does not explain why Heidegger attributes to the authentic individual a measure of freedom that we obviously lack in daily life, even if we realize that our cultural practices are contingent. In other words, Dreyfus's interpretation cannot explain Heidegger's decisionism. Why does Heidegger claim that the authentic individual is not answerable to pre-existing moral rules in its resolute choices? And how is Heidegger's individualistic decisionism connected to the collectivist or *völkisch* conception of the 'full authentic happening' of Dasein stated in section 74 of *Sein und Zeit*? My tentative answer to these questions will also explain Heidegger's submission to Hitler in 1933.

If Heidegger's notion of individual authenticity as a resolute and free decision unrestricted by moral guidelines cannot be a legitimate result of a hermeneutic phenomenology of daily life, we have to suppose that probably it is inspired by the religious or philosophical tradition.⁷⁸ I propose to interpret the notion of authenticity in *Sein und Zeit* as the last and sceptical stage in the historical development of ethical foundationalism. Like the epistemological foundationalist, the foundationalist in meta-ethics holds that moral propositions are justified only if they can be derived from more fundamental propositions that are also justified. This notion of justification as derivation threatens to lead to an infinite regress unless there are first principles of ethics that are so secure that further justification is not needed. One might reconstruct the history of ethical theory in philosophy partly as an attempt to discover secure first principles of ethics.

Initially, philosophers tried to find first principles of ethics in a source wholly distinct from human life, such as God, Plato's Ideas, or objective Values. This is what Olafson calls 'an external view of ethical authority' or 'objectivism'; in Kant's jargon it is an 'heteronomous' view of the principles of ethics.⁷⁹ Kant, Heidegger, and Olafson reject ethical objectivism or heteronomy. Kant's argument for rejecting it may be found in Plato, and it has been repeated by many authors since: moral principles cannot be grounded in an external authority, because we are free to obey or not to obey authorities. Why, then, should we obey the authority of God or of the Ideas? The traditional answer – because God is morally good – leads to a dilemma. Either we know by our own lights that God is good, but in that case God cannot be our ultimate moral authority. Or God is good because He himself says so, but this entails an infinite regress or a circle in the chain of justifications. Hence we have to reject heteronomy and to endorse autonomy, that is, the view that the ultimate authentication of moral principles is to be found in ourselves.

According to Kant, our natural inclinations and needs are as heteronomous as Plato's Ideas or God, because they are not produced by autonomous choices and because we may choose to disregard them. For this reason, Kant rules out all teleological systems of ethics, which assume that the ultimate moral goal of life is naturally given, such as eudaimonism and hedonism. But if only free choice is autonomous, how can this choice be a moral one? According to Kant, choices are moral choices if they have a specific form that a priori limits their possible contents, the form of the 'categorical imperative'. A choice is a morally legitimate choice if its subjective maxim can be universalized into a general law holding for all human beings. For instance, the choice to lie is not morally legitimate because the subjective maxim 'I must lie' cannot be universalized into the general law 'everyone must lie', since if everyone lies the general trust that people tell the truth is undermined, and this general trust is a condition for the possibility of my lying successfully. If we choose morally, however, we make choices the maxims of which can be universalized, and in so choosing we freely impose on ourselves moral laws out of respect for these laws.

We may now interpret Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* as a philosopher who endorses the Kantian idea of moral autonomy but also grasps the fact that there can be no autonomous restriction on the possible contents of moral choices. Nietzsche had argued, for instance, that the requirement of universalizability is a heteronomous requirement. According to Nietzsche, this requirement is a product of the power tactics of the weak against the strong: if the strong accept the requirement of universalizability, their possibilities of dominating and exploiting the weak are severely restricted. Heidegger concluded, I am suggesting, that moral autonomy must be completely free, and this explains his claim that the question on what authentic Dasein is to resolve can be answered *only* by the resolute decision

itself.⁸⁰ With Heidegger's moral decisionism, the historical development of ethical foundationalism has reached its final stage. The attempt to ground ethics on secure first principles first shifted from heteronomy to autonomy, and then from Kantian universalizability to unrestricted freedom.

This development may be seen as a *reductio ad absurdum* of ethical foundationalism. If the ultimate ground of moral norms is individual free choice, foundationalism mutates into moral scepticism, since my free choices cannot be used to justify moral norms to you. The foundationalist model in ethics implies that moral norms are justified only if they can be derived from self-evidently valid first principles of ethics. Heidegger's idea that, ultimately, our acceptance of moral norms is based on free choice is equivalent to admitting that no secure first principles of ethics can be found. We may conclude that Olafson's book on *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics* is imperilled by two dangers. First, the search for a 'ground' of ethics seems to be the search for self-evidently valid first principles of ethics, principles that are so secure that no further justification is needed. But such principles cannot be discovered, as the history of philosophy shows. Second, it is risky to employ Heidegger as a guide for finding the ground of ethics. Heidegger's moral decisionism is equivalent to claiming that there is no ground of ethics at all, or, to use Heidegger's later jargon, that the ground (*Grund*) of ethics is an abyss (*Abgrund*). Olafson is aware of these dangers, and in section VII I investigate whether he succeeds in avoiding them.

VI. The Problem of *Gleichschaltung*

Before I discuss Olafson's view on the ground of ethics, however, I attempt to answer one last interpretative question: how is Heidegger's individualistic decisionism related to his collectivist view of the 'full authentic historizing of *Dasein*' as explained in section 74 of *Sein und Zeit*?⁸¹ Olafson does not mention section 74 in his book *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*. This omission may be significant for the following reason. Olafson's book is based on the assumption that Heidegger never 'made clear how we can be authentic together'.⁸² In developing his notion of authentic *Mitsein*, Olafson takes himself to be doing something that Heidegger could have done but did not do: filling in a lacuna in *Sein und Zeit*.

In fact, however, there is no such lacuna. Heidegger developed a notion of authentic being together or 'co-historizing' in section 74. What is more, Heidegger's notion is very different from the idea of authentic *Mitsein* that Olafson advocates, and Heidegger derives his concept of authentic *Mitsein* directly from his notion of individual authenticity. Yet Heidegger's idea of collective authenticity is at first sight incompatible with his decisionist notion

of individual authenticity. What, then, is Heidegger's argument in section 74, and how should we explain it?

Heidegger starts the argument by stating again his decisionist conception of individual authenticity as having chosen to make a choice:

(1) 'Dasein understands itself in its own superior power' if it asserts 'the power of its finite freedom . . . which "is" only in its having chosen to make a choice.'

He adds that this supreme power is also a form of powerlessness, because, as he explained earlier in the book, individual authentic Dasein cannot rely on the support of *das Man*. Then he continues the argument as follows:

(2) 'Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, exists essentially in Being-with-Others [*Mitsein*];

(3) Hence, 'Dasein's historizing [*Geschehen*] is a co-historizing [*Mitgeschehen*] and is determinative for it as destiny [*Geschick*]; it is the historising of the community, of a people [*Volk*];

(4) 'Destiny [*Das Geschick*] is not something that puts itself together out of individual fates [*Schicksale*], any more than Being-with-one-another can be conceived as the occurring together of several subjects';

(5) Hence, our individual 'fates [*Schicksale*] have already been guided in advance in our Being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities. Only in communication and in struggling does the power of destiny [*die Macht des Geschickes*] become free. Dasein's fateful destiny in and with its "generation" goes to make up the full authentic historizing of Dasein'.⁸³

In view of Heidegger's individualistic decisionism, two features of this argument are surprising. First, we may concede to Heidegger that the cultural 'world' structures the courses of action that are open to us. It is only within the matrix of a specific cultural tradition that specific roles and models are available, between which we may choose. But if Heidegger's decisionism is correct, this cultural 'situatedness' of our freedom does not 'guide in advance our resolute choices'. On the contrary, *only* the decision itself can determine what we choose, as Heidegger said in section 60. What is more, the German words *Schicksal* and *Geschick* seem to cancel the notion of human freedom altogether. For to speak of an individual fate (*Schicksal*) and of the destiny (*Geschick*) of a people is to suggest that individual decisions do not make any difference whatsoever to what happens to us. How are we to square this with Heidegger's decisionism?

Second, if individual decisionism is true, we would expect that within a given cultural matrix the historical vicissitudes that befall a community are produced, at least in part, by the individual decisions of its members. It may be that we experience these vicissitudes as something unpredictable and foreign to our individual intentions, but this is to be expected because there are many individuals, and different individual decisions combined will always produce unintended results and may cancel each other out. Yet

Heidegger rejects this pluralistic conception of the 'destiny' of a people in statement (4), thereby condemning the underlying assumptions of the Weimar republic. Indeed, the very use of the word 'destiny' (*Geschick*) is incompatible with this conception. Why did he reject it?

The answer to this question must be found, I suggest, in a specific dialectics implied by individualistic decisionism, a dialectics that is triggered as soon as one adopts individualistic decisionism as a basis of political philosophy.⁸⁴ It is an axiom of political philosophy that no state can be effective unless there is a robust global consensus on many norms and values. However, assuming that individualistic decisionism is true, it is a serious problem how such a consensus may be obtained. Indeed, if the authentic acceptance of moral and political norms is produced by free decisions of each and every individual citizen, global consensus would be a miracle. Let me call this problem, which is implied by individualistic decisionism, the problem of *Gleichschaltung*. The problem of *Gleichschaltung* cannot be resolved by a democratic system, for if we leave autonomous *Daseins* to their own devices it is improbable that a consensus will arise. Many Germans during the interbellum subscribed to this decisionist diagnosis of democracy, which seemed to be illustrated by political events.

In order to solve the problem of *Gleichschaltung*, we must assume that our free authentic decisions are somehow 'guided in advance', as Heidegger says in statement (5), so that they are in harmony with each other. They may be guided by some law of historical development, as German Marxists claimed, or by a mythical entity such as the people (*Volk*) and its historical destiny, a view derived from theories of the general will (Hobbes, Rousseau) and from the German romantics, or they may be guided in advance by a powerful dictator who allegedly expresses the will of the people and imposes this will by force upon dissidents. As an interpretation of *Sein und Zeit*, I submit that Heidegger endorses the mythical solution to the problem of *Gleichschaltung* in section 74, while he endorsed the authoritarian solution in 1933, when he claimed that one should not guide one's life by moral maxims and ideas because 'the *Führer* himself is present and future Germany and its law'.⁸⁵ The two solutions reinforce each other, for Hitler claimed that he was expressing the resolute decisions of authentic Germans and that he was guided by a German *Geschick*.

Summarizing my interpretation, we may say that ethical foundationalism collapses into individualistic decisionism because no secure first principles of ethics can be found. Individualistic decisionism paves the way to a totalitarian state, and it does so for two reasons. First, by relegating common morality to the sphere of inauthenticity and *das Man*, it shoves aside the moral scruples that might stand in the way of a dictatorial regime. Second, individualistic decisionism transmutes dialectically (by a Hegelian *Aufhebung*) into a totalitarian political ideology. If *Dasein* in its authentic *Entschlossenheit*

chooses to make a choice, it will discover that this choice has already been determined in advance by the authentic Destiny of its *Volk*, to which it has to surrender (*überliefern*) itself.⁸⁶ If this is what *Sein und Zeit* shows about ethics, the result is instructive enough. We will seek an alternative to ethical foundationalism, and we will not try to find it in Heidegger. Yet, Olafson claims that Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* helped him in discovering the ground of ethics.⁸⁷ What is Olafson's argument? Does he succeed in avoiding the fatal implications of Heidegger's position?

VII. Olafson's Foundationalism

I have argued that Heidegger's moral decisionism explains why the ontological analysis of Dasein in *Sein und Zeit* lacks a substantial ethical theory. Decisionism also partly accounts for Heidegger's negative ontological evaluation of *das Man*.⁸⁸ If one is convinced that the true ground of ethics consists in radically free individual choices, one will condemn as inauthentic the common-sense idea that moral norms are binding for us irrespective of our subjective decisions. In other words, one will regard the entire structure of common norms and rules that constitute the cultural world as being external to our real 'Self'. Someone who applies common morality without an explicit choice in favour of it will be perceived as having yielded to the 'domination of others' (*Herrschaft der Anderen*), who 'deprive each Dasein of its responsibility'.⁸⁹

However, decisionism is not a defensible position in meta-ethics. It is a variety of moral scepticism, which dialectically implies a totalitarian ideology. If we want to build philosophical ethics upon Heidegger's analysis of Dasein, we should disregard his dichotomy between authenticity and *das Man*. The Heideggerian dilemma that the authority of ethical precepts resides either in indefinite others, who are external to us (*das Man*), or in our isolated (*vereinzelt*) real Selves (authenticity), should be rejected in favour of the view that the notion of a real Self remains an abstraction as long as we do not take into account moral relations to other human beings. Accordingly, ethics must somehow be located in the interpersonal realm. This is precisely Olafson's strategy. He plays down the importance of Heidegger's dichotomy of authenticity versus *das Man* and takes the notion of *Mitsein* as a lead, thus avoiding the second danger mentioned above (section V, *in finem*).⁹⁰

We may wonder whether Olafson is able to avoid the first danger as well. I argued that decisionism is the last and sceptical stage in the historical development of meta-ethical foundationalism. Foundationalism in ethics states that moral decisions and norms are justified only if we can derive them, ultimately, from secure first principles of ethics. Decisionism claims that such first principles do not exist, but, instead of abandoning foundationalism, it

concludes that free decisions are the ultimate foundations of ethics. If it is true that no secure principles of ethics can be found, and if the decisionist conclusion is unacceptable, how can we still defend foundationalism in meta-ethics?

Olafson repudiates the idea that there is a 'supreme moral truth from which rules of conduct could be deduced'.⁹¹ Yet he refuses to abandon foundationalism: 'My view is that, in spite of the spotty record philosophers have made in seeking a ground of ethics, the search should not be simply given up, and that there are still alternatives to the classic rationales that have not been adequately evaluated.'⁹² According to the alternative that Olafson defends, 'there is a relationship in which we stand to one another that is in some sense prior to all the substantive ethical rules under which we live and ... it is this relation that constitutes the ground of ethical authority'.⁹³ Clearly, the word 'ground' in this quote cannot mean ultimate premise or principle, for a relation between human beings is not a proposition. It is less clear in what positive sense Olafson is using the word 'ground'. What is the content of Olafson's foundationalism?

Varieties of foundationalism in ethics may be specified by defining three elements that each foundationalist theory posits: (1) the 'foundations' or the ultimate ground of ethics; (2) what is grounded by these foundations; and (3) the *grounding relationship* between (1) and (2). If (1) is an interpersonal relation, as Olafson claims, (3) cannot be a logical derivation, for relations of logical derivation hold between propositions only. Furthermore, Olafson is not altogether clear about (2), what is grounded or validated by his foundationalism. In some passages he suggests that 'standards of right and wrong' are grounded, although he does not want 'to pull a list of specific "dos and don'ts" out of the argument of his book'.⁹⁴ According to another passage, he wants to show that 'every human being has, simply as such, a claim on us to be included in the class of those to whom whatever ethical principles we acknowledge are applied'.⁹⁵ But, obviously, the question of which standards of right and wrong may be 'grounded' is *toto caelo* different from the question concerning the class or set of moral partners.

As the history of ethics shows, different communities in which one and the same norm was accepted, such as 'thou shalt not kill', differed greatly on the set of partners to whom it applied, either as subjects or as objects of the rule. People belonging to other villages, clans, cultures, classes, or races have been excluded from the set of moral partners, and the idea that all human beings must be included into this class is a relatively recent notion in the history of mankind. Hence, to 'ground' the formal idea that all human beings must be included in the class of moral partners is an undertaking very different from the attempt to validate material standards of right and wrong. What, then, is grounded by the ground of ethics that Olafson discerns? What is this ground itself? And what is the *grounding relation*? I will now summarize Olafson's

argument in *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*, and try to determine the key elements (1), (2), and (3) that specify his variety of foundationalism.

Traditional foundationalism tried to find first principles of ethics and studied the logical structure of the arguments by which we justify moral decisions and derive ethical rules. According to Olafson, this logical approach conceives of ethical rationality in a 'peculiarly disincarnate and contextless way', for it operates upon the methodological principle 'that substitutes the "logic" of ethical discourse and the logical relations among . . . ethical statements for any characterization of the relations between people who make them'.⁹⁶ Olafson's foundationalism aims rather at a characterization of these interpersonal relations, a characterization that 'goes deeper than our ordinary common-sense observations'.⁹⁷ His characterization purports to show that interpersonal relations themselves have a normative character, which finds expression in the 'ought' of ethics. For this reason, they are the resources for an authentication of our principles of conduct.⁹⁸ Starting from Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*, according to which interpersonal relations are constitutive for our personal identity, Olafson develops his argument in three chapters.

According to the first chapter, 'Truth as Partnership', we necessarily rely on others in acquiring knowledge of the world, hence the 'monological' conception of knowledge that we find in the philosophical tradition must be mistaken and *Mitsein* is a condition for the possibility of science. Most of our knowledge is based upon testimony accepted on trust. It is typically expressed in language and language is a social institution. Furthermore, developmental psychology shows that our personal identity develops by differentiating our own needs and interactions with things from those of others, such as the mother. If this is correct, the philosophical problem of other minds must be misconceived: 'when in adulthood we pretend to wonder whether there are any minds other than our own, we are in effect trying to call into question something that has enabled us to reach the point at which we can pose this question'.⁹⁹ Knowledge of the world would be impossible if we did not acknowledge other human beings as possible sources of truth, who are co-present with us in the world. Accordingly, epistemic partnership is an important dimension of our interpersonal relations.

In the second chapter, on 'Truth, Responsibility, and Trust', Olafson explores 'how an ethical relationship comes into being'. Following Heidegger, he argues that the world in which we are conducting our lives is not the world as science sees it, but rather a world in which things have meaning for us in function of our aims and actions, a meaning that is prefigured by the cultural matrix in which we grew up. As in the epistemic domain, in that of action we are dependent upon others, and the two domains are fused, for mostly action is needed for acquiring knowledge, whereas active undertakings depend for their success on correct information. Because many actions significantly affect other human beings and their interests,

clashes of interest arise, and according to Olafson 'the datum for ethical reflection' is the possibility of conflicting 'claims . . . to something like the priority of certain interests over others'.¹⁰⁰ As we saw, Heidegger's notions of conscience, guilt, and resoluteness cannot help us in developing the ethical aspect of *Mitsein*. This is why Olafson tries to amplify Heidegger's account by showing 'how the choices human beings make can be subject to an ethical constraint from which we cannot release ourselves simply by choosing to do so'.¹⁰¹

Applying to ethics Heidegger's notion of pre-propositional 'truth' as disclosure, Olafson says that 'anything that deserves to be called an ethical truth must itself be a form of disclosure in which something that is not simply *vorhanden* shows itself to be such that it constitutes a limit on the choices we can make'.¹⁰² He then claims without further argument that 'the only case in which this seems possible is one in which the entity that is disclosed is of the same kind as the entity that discloses it – that is, something whose mode of being is *ek-sistence* – and this means another human being'.¹⁰³ Here, Olafson restricts by fiat the class of moral partners to humans, excluding the possibility that *I have a moral relationship to a cat. He justifies this restriction by saying that 'what emerges in the disclosure of such an agent by his fellow human beings is . . . a fact of the same order as their own actions', that is, someone else's action, which might frustrate our own actions.*¹⁰⁴ Such conflicts of interest will be settled by force unless there is something 'in this situation with its dual reciprocating disclosure of two like entities that establishes a responsibility for them to resolve the issue between them in some other way'.¹⁰⁵ According to Olafson, this 'something' is the very fact of *Mitsein*, the fact that my own personal identity as a knower and actor is impossible without the co-presence of other human beings in the world, and that my choices affect the interests of others and vice versa. Either we disregard others and their needs in the choices we make. *That would require a pretense that we are not effectively making a choice for them as well as for ourselves, and we would deny our Mitsein.* Or we have to 'justify the different weight that is given to one's own preferences over theirs by showing that the action in question serves their interest as well as ours'. This latter alternative 'represents the only way people can live together otherwise than by coercion'. Olafson concludes that 'if there is any truth claim that is implicit in social and thus in moral life, this is it'.¹⁰⁶

Accordingly, ethical responsibility consists in taking the interests of others into account, both in what we say (misinformation might harm others) and in what we do. Applying Hegel's dialectics of master and slave, Olafson states that we will not be recognized by others as individual agents and sources of truth to the extent that we withhold such recognition from them, so that withholding recognition is an incoherent strategy.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the people to whom we are responsible will place trust in us, and trust is indispensable in

co-operative action and in the search for knowledge. The authority of the ethical limits within which we live, Olafson argues, 'is owed to the fact that a failure to respect them would be a violation of the trust placed in us by the people to whom we are responsible'.¹⁰⁸ For example, the communicative uses of language depend upon 'a massive prior trust' that people generally speak the truth. This trust creates opportunities for abuse that would not otherwise exist, so that lying is parasitic on trust.

This idea, familiar from Kant and Wittgenstein, is generalized by Olafson into a theory of vice and evil, which is the topic of his third chapter, called 'Evil and Good'. If *Mitsein* as a structure of human relations of mutual responsibility and trust is fundamental to human life, it must also be fundamental to vice and evil. Indeed, the pervasiveness of mutual trust in organized society makes us more vulnerable than we would have been in more chaotic conditions where vigilance prevails. An individual might exploit for selfish ends the very relationship of trust that was to ensure peaceful co-operation, and this is what Olafson calls 'vice'. Vice or wrongdoing is parasitic upon virtue if the latter is taken to include a willingness to rely on the undertakings of others. Vice violates the norms of expectation inherent in the framework of mutual recognition that is typical for human society. Because there will always be individuals who exploit the relationships of trust for their own selfish ends, the human world in which we live is characterized by ambiguity. It is neither a Hobbesian state of nature nor a true moral community, and 'quite inconsistent life policies may alternate within a single life with bewildering frequency'.¹⁰⁹

Reacting to this situation of ambiguity, we might decide to limit the relations of trust to the private sphere of family and friends. But such restricted moral economies, typical of clans and Mafias, readily reinforce and reproduce themselves, thereby causing a moral degeneration of society. They may lead to a negative spiral of distrust, in which everyone may think of himself both as being willing to enter into fair co-operation and as being prevented from doing so by the absence of a comparable willingness at the other side; in such a situation, a moral stance will be perceived as mere window-dressing. The final perversion of *Mitsein* may be called 'evil': it is the intentional perversion of 'a system of human cooperation based on mutual recognition by making it an instrument of private and intrinsically unshareable purposes'.¹¹⁰ The evil person thus exploits *Mitsein* as an instrument, inconsistently expecting trust from others and refusing to be trustworthy himself.

The main problem that Olafson wants to solve in his third chapter is whether we can find a source of motivation in human nature for 'going first' (acting morally without expecting others to do so) in a situation of perverted *Mitsein*, where reciprocity of trust is not to be expected. This source is the fact that 'the happiness of each one of us stands in a relation

of interdependence to that of others, so that the well-being of Alter cannot in principle be indifferent to that of Ego, even if there is no sign of a reciprocating interest on Alter's part'.¹¹¹ Moral philosophers such as Kant distinguish happiness as the satisfaction of our subjective desires from a principle of right that imposes moral restrictions upon our pursuit of happiness. According to this dualist conception, other people are envisaged as limits on what we may do, and ethical conduct will not bring happiness. Olafson rejects this individualistic conception of happiness in favour of a more inclusive conception, which comes near to Aristotle's notion: happiness as 'the fulfilment of a lifelong purpose that expresses the character of the individual in question'.¹¹²

Since such fulfilment is impossible without recognition by other human beings and without loving relationships, ethical rules are internal constituents of happiness rather than external constraints put on its pursuit. According to Olafson, 'anyone who has any experience of a life in which people are drawn together by bonds of esteem and affection has a stake in the strengthening of the system of mutuality that makes such relationships possible', that is, he has a motive to 'go first'.¹¹³ Because ethical life is never secure and may continually be exploited by vice and evil, 'there is always a pressing need to strengthen it in any way we can, even when our own interests may suffer'.¹¹⁴ There is always a need for moral courage, motivated by a conception of happiness that acknowledges the essential role of *Mitsein* in a successful human life.

My summary cannot do justice to the subtle and discerning argument of Olafson's book. Yet it will enable us to determine the precise nature of his ethical foundationalism. We may distinguish two patterns in Olafson's argument: one Kantian the other Aristotelian. According to the Kantian pattern, immoral behaviour is essentially parasitic, as lying is parasitic upon the general trust that people speak the truth. If Olafson claims that immoral behaviour is 'incoherent', he must mean that it cannot be universalized without contradiction into a general law, for in that case the trust upon which immoral behaviour is parasitic would be destroyed. But a criminal need not be impressed by this Kantian argument. He might respond that as long as his immoral behaviour remains an exception, and goes unnoticed, the trust upon which it is parasitic will continue to exist. If so, his strategy is not incoherent, although it may be immoral, and the Kantian strategy of explicating immorality as incoherence fails.

It is at this point that the Aristotelian argument takes over. The criminal, Olafson now says, has a too limited 'consumer' conception of human happiness. He does not realize that happiness requires mutual recognition and respect, and that the happy life is the truly virtuous life into which are incorporated affectionate relations with others. Whereas the Kantian argument is 'logical' (vice and evil are incoherent), the Aristotelian argument

is teleological: it aims at motivating moral behaviour by sketching an ideal of human perfection, a *telos* of human life.

Accordingly, two very different foundationalist stratagems are used in Olafson's book, one of push and one of pull. According to the stratagem of push, mutual recognition is essential to the constitution of human persons as such. Since we contribute to the constitution of others, 'we cannot very well repudiate them . . . without serious incoherence'.¹¹⁵ Here, the ground of ethics is the human person as it is in fact constituted by *Mitsein*. What is grounded is the basic ethical truth that we should take into account the interest of others, and the grounding relation is logical. However, this stratagem is unconvincing, because we are neither logically nor psychologically compelled to contribute to the constitution of all other human beings. According to the stratagem of pull, ethical *Mitsein* is inherent in a fulfilling life. Here, the ground of ethics is not the human person as it is in fact constituted, but rather as it should be, as a *telos*. The grounding relation is one of part and whole: ethical behaviour is an essential part of a fulfilled happy life. And what is grounded is again the ethical truth that we should take into account the interest of others. The stratagem of pull is not universally convincing either, as is shown by those Serbs and those Kosovars who think that their happiness requires the exclusion of people who do not belong to their own kind.

Neither of these two stratagems can be found in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Indeed, one may wonder whether Olafson should not have taken Aristotle as a starting-point of his argument rather than Heidegger. Moreover, neither of them is sufficient for showing what Olafson wants to show: 'that . . . every human being has, simply as such, a claim on us to be included in the class of those to whom whatever ethical principles we acknowledge are applied'.¹¹⁶ As we saw, Olafson by fiat limits the class of possible ethical partners to humans. But limiting the class of moral partners to humans and including all human beings in this class are two different things. Olafson admits at the end of chapter II that among the issues that 'cannot be dealt with here' is 'the question whether the notion of trust itself is not tied to personal relationships and whether it can really be transferred intact to the sphere of the public and collective business of mankind'.¹¹⁷ As a consequence, it may be doubted whether an ethical foundationalism that finds the ground of ethics in relations of mutual trust and responsibility is able to justify the moral universalism that characterizes present-day Western ideology.

VIII. Conclusion

Foundationalism in ethics, broadly conceived, is the view that without an ultimate 'ground' of ethics our moral convictions would be unjustified.

Philosophers have proposed different types of 'grounds', such as divine authority, transcendent values or Ideas, human nature, synthetic a priori first principles, or an ultimate *telos* of human life. In this paper, I interpret both Heidegger and Olafson as degenerate foundationalists.

Heidegger's foundationalism is degenerate because Heidegger draws a sceptical conclusion from Kant's notion of moral autonomy. Whereas, according to Kant, moral autonomy consists in accepting freely the moral first principle of the categorical imperative, which a priori limits the possible contents of moral decisions, Heidegger, I suggest, learned from Nietzsche that Kant's requirement of universalizability is a heteronomous requirement. As a consequence, Heidegger radicalized Kant's notion of moral autonomy. Rejecting the Kantian idea that there is a supreme moral truth, Heidegger proclaimed free individual decisions as the ultimate ground of ethics. He is a moral sceptic within the foundationalist tradition, because free decisions cannot justify moral rules.

Heidegger's individualistic decisionism explains the dilemma of autonomy and heteronomy that we find in *Sein und Zeit*. Either the individual decides in radical autonomy what moral guidelines to accept. But this 'superior power' is a form of powerlessness because in fact no human being is sufficiently powerful to be authentic in this sense. Or the individual hands over its responsibility to *das Man*, endorsing common morality without individual decisions, thereby falling away into inauthenticity. Heidegger's solution to the dilemma in section 74 of *Sein und Zeit* consists in shifting moral autonomy from the individual to the *Volk* or to *Destiny*, a move which prefigures Heidegger's conversion to Nazism in 1932–33. Allegedly, the authentic individual knows that its 'free' decisions are 'guided in advance' by a German Destiny (1927), by Hitler (1933), or, ultimately, by *das Seyn* (1935 and later). But clearly, this *völkisch* ideology is one of the worst forms of heteronomy, and Heidegger was never able to surmount the dilemma of autonomy and heteronomy.

It is the great strength of Olafson's book that it transcends the dilemma of moral heteronomy versus moral autonomy by locating the ground of ethics in the interpersonal realm of *Mitsein*. Like Heidegger, Olafson rejects the idea that there is a supreme moral truth from which rules of conduct could be deduced. Discarding both the logical approach of traditional foundationalists and Heidegger's decisionism, Olafson holds that there is 'a relationship in which we stand to one another . . . that constitutes the ground of ethical authority'. Yet Olafson's foundationalism is a degenerate variety, because, in spite of the rich and subtle argument of his book, he does not show how *Mitsein* as a ground of ethics is able to support the moral universalism that he adheres to. If even Olafson's attempt to rescue foundationalism in ethics fails, should we not abandon the search for 'grounds' of ethics altogether and develop a very different conception of justification in ethics?^{118,119}

NOTES

- 1 SZ, p. 384: 'In der Mitteilung und im Kampf wird die Macht des Geschickes erst frei'.
- 2 'Aufruf an die Deutschen Studenten' of 3 November 1933, *Freiburger Studentenzeitung*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1933), p. 1. Reprinted in Schneeberger (1962), pp. 135ff. and in Martin (1989), p. 177.
- 3 Letter of 20 December 1933 to the staff and faculties of Freiburg University, quoted by Ott (1988), p. 229: 'Der Einzelne, wo er auch stehe, gilt nichts. Das Schicksal unseres Volkes in seinem Staat gilt alles.' As Hitler boasted during one of his table conversations, Nazism supplanted the Christian teaching of the infinite value of individual human beings by the 'liberating doctrine of the nullity and insignificance of the individual and his life in contrast to the visible immortality of the Nation', and the dogma of the 'life and actions of the law-giving *Führer*, which releases the faithful masses from the burden of taking decisions' was substituted for the Christian's creed of Christ's suffering and death for humanity (see Rauschnig [1940], p. 212).
- 4 'Das Rektorat 1933/34', SdU, p. 25: 'die universale Herrschaft des Willens zur Macht innerhalb der planetarisch geschehenen Geschichte. In dieser Wirklichkeit steht heute Alles, mag es Kommunismus heißen oder Faschismus oder Weltdemokratie.'
- 5 'Brief über den "Humanismus"', W, p. 191: 'Nur sofern der Mensch, in die Wahrheit des Seins ek-sistierend, diesem gehört, kann aus dem Sein selbst die Zuweisung derjenigen Weisungen kommen, die für den Menschen Gesetz und Regel werden müssen . . . Nur diese vermag es, den Menschen in das Sein zu verfügen. Nur solche Fügung vermag zu tragen und zu binden. Anders bleibt alles Gesetz nur das Gemächtige menschlicher Vernunft.' Cf. my (1998) for an interpretation of Heidegger's notions of Being.
- 6 Cf. Olafson (1967, 1973, 1979, 1987, 1995).
- 7 Olafson (1998), p. 6.
- 8 Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* IV.6, 1126b 11. According to Olafson (1998), Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* contains a 'profoundly original constellation of ideas'. This is true, but it does not exclude that many of Heidegger's specific notions were inspired by authors he studied, such as Aristotle, St Paul, St Augustine, Eckhart, Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Dilthey, Scheler, and Husserl.
- 9 Cf. for all questions of interpretation raised but not answered here: my book *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being. A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- 10 SZ, §83, p. 436: 'Die Herausstellung der Seinsverfassung des Daseins bleibt aber gleichwohl nur *ein Weg*. Das *Ziel* ist die Ausarbeitung der Seinsfrage überhaupt' (Heidegger's italics). Macquarrie and Robinson mistakenly translate '*ein Weg*' by '*one way*' instead of '*a way*': BT, p. 487.
- 11 SZ, §5, p. 17: '... wesenhafte Strukturen herausgestellt werden, die in jeder Seinsart des faktischen Daseins sich als seinsbestimmende durchhalten.'
- 12 SZ, §3, p. 9: 'Das All des Seienden kann nach seinen verschiedenen Bezirken zum Feld einer Freilegung und Umgrenzung bestimmter Sachgebiete werden. Diese ihrerseits, z. B. Geschichte, Natur, Raum, Leben, Dasein, Sprache und dgl. lassen sich in entsprechenden wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen zu Gegenständen thematisieren.'
- 13 SZ, §3, p. 10: 'Solche Forschung muß den positiven Wissenschaften vorauslaufen; und sie kann es. . . Solche Grundlegung der Wissenschaften. . .' (Heidegger's italics). Cf. SZ, §54, p. 269: 'Die so angesetzte ontologische analyse . . . liegt vor einer psychologischen Deskription . . . ebenso außerhalb einer biologischen "Erklärung", das heißt Auflösung des Phänomens. Aber nicht geringer ist ihr Abstand von einer theologischen Ausdeutung. . .'
- 14 SZ, §42, p. 199: 'Die existenzial-ontologische Interpretation ist der ontischen Auslegung gegenüber nicht etwa nur eine theoretisch-ontische Verallgemeinerung. Das würde lediglich besagen: ontisch sind alle Verhaltungen des Menschen "sorgenvoll" und geführt durch eine "Hingabe" an etwas. Die "Verallgemeinerung" ist eine *apriorisch-ontologische*. Sie meint nicht ständig auftretende ontische Eigenschaften, sondern eine je zugrunde liegende Seinsverfassung' (Heidegger's italics).

- 15 Furthermore, one cannot suppose that Heidegger defined what belongs to the ontological level by enumeration, so that what is not included in *Sein und Zeit* is ontic by definition, because he stressed that his ontology of Dasein is not meant to be complete. Cf. SZ, §5, p. 17: 'Die so gefaßte Analytik des Daseins bleibt ganz auf die leitende Aufgabe der Ausarbeitung der Seinsfrage orientiert. Dadurch bestimmen sich ihre Grenzen. Sie kann nicht eine vollständige Ontologie des Daseins geben wollen. . . .'
- 16 Cf. my (1998), pp. 115–21 and 335–46.
- 17 In the transcendental interpretation, this distinction is not acceptable either, as I argued in my (1998), pp. 322–30.
- 18 SZ, §58, p. 286: ' . . . die Existenziale Bedingung der Möglichkeit für das "moralisch" Gute und Böse, das heißt für die Moralität überhaupt und deren faktisch mögliche Ausformungen.' To modern readers, this formula may suggest the transcendental interpretation of the ontic/ontological distinction. But it might also refer to Husserl's notion of essences, for Husserl conceived of essences as 'conditions of the possibility of their instances.
- 19 Olafson (1994) seems to endorse the interpretation that ontology is concerned with what is essential to a specific type of entity (pp. 53–54).
- 20 Olafson (1998), p. 8; cf. pp. 29, 36 (note 22), 46, 69.
- 21 Olafson (1998), p. 1.
- 22 Olafson (1998), p. 3.
- 23 Olafson (1998), p. 47.
- 24 Olafson (1998), p. 48.
- 25 It is at this point that there is a clash between hermeneutics and Husserlian *Wesensschau*. For how is Heidegger able to know that the interpretation of human existence typical for the German interbellum also reveals universal and essential structures of human existence?
- 26 For instance, from the German idiomatic expressions 'wie befinden Sie sich heute?' ('how are you doing today?') or 'wo befinden wir uns jetzt?' ('where are we now?'), Heidegger coined the existentiale of *Befindlichkeit*, a term that connotes the structural feature of human existence that we always find ourselves in situations that we did not create and which we do not fully master, but to which we are somehow attuned (*gestimmt*).
- 27 As is well known, Ryle wrote a review of *Sein und Zeit* (see Ryle [1929]).
- 28 Cf. Olafson (1998), pp. 17, 22–23, 28, 35, 99–101.
- 29 Olafson (1998), p. 97.
- 30 Olafson (1998), p. 3.
- 31 Cf. *Ethica Nicomachea*, bk. V. i. 15 (1129 b, 25–30).
- 32 Olafson calls this the 'large hermeneutical question . . . as to why a philosopher who had achieved the kind of insight into the character of the relations of human beings to one another that I impute to Heidegger never developed it beyond the brief formulation offered to us in *Being and Time*'. In his (1998), Olafson does not answer this hermeneutical question, both because he is not sure that he can, and because to do so would take him too far from his real theme (p. 6). Yet to answer the question is crucial for Olafson's project of deriving ethical implications from Heidegger's ontology of Dasein.
- 33 SZ, §§ 25–26.
- 34 SZ, Division I, ch. 4, p. 114: 'wer ist es, der in der Alltäglichkeit das Dasein ist?' Cf. §25, p. 114.
- 35 SZ, §26, p. 117: 'Die Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Wer des alltäglichen Daseins soll in der Analyse der Seinsart gewonnen werden, darin das Dasein zunächst und zumeist sich hält' (Heidegger's italics).
- 36 SZ, §26, p. 125: 'Das Dasein ist im Aufgehen in der besorgten Welt, das heißt zugleich im Miteinander zu den Anderen, nicht es selbst.' Cf. §25, pp. 115–16: 'Wenn die Verfassung des Daseins, daß es je meines ist, der Grund dafür wäre, daß das Dasein zunächst und zumeist nicht es selbst ist?' (Heidegger's italics); and §27.
- 37 SZ, §26, p. 125, in finem: 'Wer ist es denn, der das Sein als alltägliches Miteinandersein übernommen hat?' (Heidegger's italics).

- 38 If taken literally, Heidegger's argument is a fallacy of ambiguity. From the fact that 'I am not myself' in a specific situation, it does not follow that someone else must have taken over my life.
- 39 Dreyfus (1991), ch. 8.
- 40 Dreyfus (1991), pp. 151–2.
- 41 SZ, §27, p. 126: 'das Dasein steht als alltägliches Miteinandersein in der *Botmäßigkeit* der Anderen. Nicht es selbst ist, die Anderen haben ihm das Sein abgenommen' (Heidegger's italics).
- 42 SZ, §27, pp. 126 and 127.
- 43 Dreyfus (1991), p. 154.
- 44 Dreyfus (1991), pp. 227ff.
- 45 Olafson (1994), pp. 54–63.
- 46 Olafson (1994), pp. 45, 59.
- 47 Olafson (1994), p. 57: 'Heidegger . . . can hardly be said to have done a good job of distinguishing between the innocuous and the objectionable forms of social anonymity', etc., and p. 59.
- 48 SZ, §27, p. 129: '*Das Man ist ein Existenzial und gehört als ursprüngliches Phänomen zur positiven Verfassung des Daseins*' (Heidegger's italics). In his (1998), Olafson criticizes Heidegger for assigning an ontological status to *das Man* (p. 36, footnote 22).
- 49 SZ, §34, p. 167: 'Mit Bezug auf diese mag die Bemerkung nicht überflüssig sein, daß die Interpretation eine rein ontologische Absicht hat und von einer moralisierenden Kritik des alltäglichen Daseins . . . weit entfernt ist.' (Cf. SZ, §38, pp. 175, 179–80).
- 50 SZ, §9, p. 43: 'Aus dieser Seinsart heraus und in sie zurück ist alles Existierens, wie es ist.' As is clear from §27, the characteristics of *Indifferenz* and *Durchschnittlichkeit* belong to *das Man* (SZ, p. 128).
- 51 SZ, §27, p. 130: 'Das *eigentliche Selbstsein* beruht nicht auf einem vom Man abgelösten Ausnahmezustand des Subjekts, sondern ist eine *existenzielle Modifikation des Man als eines wesenhaften Existenzials*' (Heidegger's italics). Cf. §54, p. 267: 'Das *eigentliche Selbstsein* bestimmt sich als eine existenzielle Modifikation des Man, die existenzial zu umgrenzen ist.'
- 52 Olafson (1994), pp. 45 and 59ff.
- 53 SZ, §27, p. 129: 'Das Man selbst, worum-willen das Dasein alltäglich ist, artikuliert den Verweisungszusammenhang der Bedeutsamkeit', etc. Cf. Olafson (1994), p. 60.
- 54 SZ, §27, p. 129: 'Das Selbst des alltäglichen Daseins ist das *Man-selbst*, das wir von dem *eigentlichen*, das heißt eigens ergriffenen Selbst unterscheiden. Als *Man-selbst* ist das jeweilige Dasein in das Man *zerstreut* und muß sich erst finden' (Heidegger's italics). Cf. §26, p. 125: 'Das Dasein ist im Aufgehen in der besorgten Welt, das heißt zugleich im Mitsein zu den Anderen, nicht es selbst.'
- 55 Although Heidegger stresses that his negative characterization of *das Man* is not an ontical, that is, a moralizing critique of *das Man* (SZ, pp. 167, 175, 179–80), it is important to see that his characterization is both a negative ontological description of our daily mode of existence (we are *not* really our Selves) and a negative ontological evaluation.
- 56 Dreyfus (1995), pp. 428–9.
- 57 With one apparent exception: whereas Heidegger says in §27 that authenticity is an existentiell modification of the existentiale *das Man* (SZ, p. 130), he claims in §64 that the *Man-selbst* is an existentiell modification of the authentic Self (p. 317). But this apparent contradiction may be explained as due to a shift in standpoint.
- 58 Cf. my (1998), §18, where I develop such an interpretation.
- 59 Cf. SZ, §54, p. 268: 'Nachholen der Wahl bedeutet aber *Wählen dieser Wahl*, Sichentscheiden für ein Seinkönnen aus dem eigenen Selbst.'
- 60 SZ, §40, p. 188: 'Die Angst vereinzelt und erschließt so das Dasein als "solus ipse".' Of course, Heidegger does not use this latter expression in the sense of traditional solipsism, for authentic Dasein is a possible mode of Being-in-the-world.
- 61 SZ, §54, p. 269.

- 62 SZ, §56, p. 273: 'Was ruft das Gewissen dem Angerufenen zu? Streng genommen - nichts' (Heidegger's italics). Cf. §57, p. 274: 'Das angerufene Selbst bleibt in seinem Was unbestimmt.'
- 63 SZ, §59, p. 294: 'Denn in der Tat läßt sich im Rufgehalt nichts aufweisen, was die Stimme "positiv" empfiehlt und gebietet'; 'Dergleichen "praktische" Anweisungen gibt der Gewissensruf nicht, *einzig deshalb*, weil er das Dasein zur Existenz, zum eigensten Selbstseinkönnen, *aufruft*' (Heidegger's italics); §57, p. 278: 'Aber dieses "öffentliche Gewissen" – was ist es anders als die Stimme des Man?'
- 64 SZ, §58, p. 280: 'Das existenziell-hörende Verstehen des Rufes ist um so eigentlicher, je unbeeinträchtigt das Dasein *sein* Angerufensein hört und versteht, je weniger das, was man sagt, was sich gehört und gilt, den Rufsinn verkehrt' (Heidegger's italics).
- 65 Traditionally, conscience is defined as an inner sense that provides knowledge of right and wrong. Only because we have such a sense, we may feel guilty if our actions violate moral standards.
- 66 SZ, §58, p. 283: 'Zu diesem Zwecke muß die Idee von "schuldig" soweit *formalisiert* werden, daß die auf das besorgende Mitsein mit Anderen bezogenen vulgären Schuldphänomene *ausfallen*' (Heidegger's italics).
- 67 SZ, §58, p. 283: '*Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit*'. In ordinary German, *Nichtigkeit* means nullity, triviality, or invalidity. But Heidegger links the term to *nicht* (not).
- 68 SZ, §58, pp. 284–5.
- 69 SZ, §58, p. 286: 'Dieses wesenhafte Schuldigsein ist gleichursprünglich die existenziale Bedingung der Möglichkeit für das "moralisch" Gute und Böse, das heißt für die Moralität überhaupt und deren faktisch mögliche Ausformungen.'
- 70 Heidegger's argument is traditional in that he stresses the finite and situated nature of human freedom, which used to be contrasted with the infinite freedom of God.
- 71 SZ, §58, p. 287: 'Das Dasein ist rufverstehend *hörig seiner eigensten Existenzmöglichkeit*. Es hat sich selbst gewählt' (Heidegger's italics).
- 72 SZ, §60, p. 298: 'Entschlossenheit "existiert" nur als verstehend-sich-entwerfender Entschluß. Aber woraufhin erschließt sich das Dasein in der Entschlossenheit? Wozu soll es sich entschließen? Die Antwort vermag *nur* der Entschluß selbst zu geben' (Heidegger's italics).
- 73 Olafson (1998), p. 47.
- 74 SZ, §62, pp. 307–8: 'Die Gewißheit des Entschlusses bedeutet: *Sichfrehalten für* seine mögliche und je faktisch notwendige *Zurücknahme*' (Heidegger's italics. In the text I am quoting the BT translation.)
- 75 Dreyfus (1991), p. 194.
- 76 Dreyfus (1991), p. 156.
- 77 Dreyfus (1991), p. 157.
- 78 Of course Heidegger's idiosyncratic psychological makeup may also have been responsible for peculiarities in the analysis of Dasein in *Sein und Zeit*. But from a methodological point of view, explanations of this type must be considered as being of *secondary importance*.
- 79 Cf. Olafson (1998), p. 96; cf. pp. 11 and 99.
- 80 SZ, §60, p. 298.
- 81 SZ, §74, pp. 384–5; BT, p. 436. In my (1998) I proposed a psychological solution to this problem in discussion with Farias and Rockmore (pp. 255–66), which is compatible with, and completed by, the political solution endorsed here.
- 82 Olafson (1998), p. 3.
- 83 SZ, §74, p. 384. I am partly quoting the BT translation, with some modifications.
- 84 The question as to why Heidegger linked a collectivist view of authentic *Mitsein* to his decisionist conception of individual authenticity might be answered by pointing to features of the cultural background of *Sein und Zeit*, such as the *Kriegsideologie* that many German philosophers adhered to during, and sometimes after, the Great War (cf. Domenico Losurdo [1998]). But such a genetic account will not provide a rational reconstruction of the inner logic of Heidegger's position. Yet, decisionism was in the air, and apart from Carl Schmitt, who coined the term, many other thinkers endorsed it, among whom Jaspers, Reichenbach, Neurath, Ernst Jünger, and Max Weber.

- 85 See note 2.
- 86 See for Heidegger's wordplay with the words 'Ueberlieferung' and 'überliefern', SZ §74, pp. 383–4. According to these pages, the authentic tradition (*Ueberlieferung*) is something to which one should surrender (*überliefern*) oneself. There are many interpretations of SZ §74, and I cannot defend my interpretation here against those of Charles Guignon (1992) and Peg Birmingham (1991). Concerning the meaning of Heidegger's German terminology, one should consult Fritsche (1999).
- 87 Olafson admits that there is a 'special difficulty' for someone who 'seeks to demonstrate the ethical relevance of Heidegger's thought', a difficulty which consists in Heidegger's adherence to Nazism and in his refusal to dissociate himself publicly from Nazism after the Second World War. Olafson tries to solve this difficulty by arguing that 'there is no defensible answer' to the question what the political implications are of specific doctrines of *Being and Time* (1998, pp. 13–14). This *argumentum ad ignorantiam* is hardly convincing. Cf. for further discussion my (1998), section 14; Guignon (1992), and Fritsche (1999).
- 88 Cf. my (1998), pp. 346–52 for further elucidations.
- 89 SZ, §27, pp. 126–7.
- 90 As in his (1994), Olafson interprets *das Man* in his (1998) as 'secondary and derivative', repeating his earlier polemics with Dreyfus without mentioning the latter by name (pp. 35–39).
- 91 Olafson (1998), p. 7. Cf. p. 96.
- 92 Olafson (1998), p. 12.
- 93 Olafson (1998), p. 11.
- 94 Olafson (1998), p. 3: '[T]he question of whether our relation to one another can by itself yield standards of right and wrong' (cf. p. 10).
- 95 Olafson (1998), p. 11.
- 96 Olafson (1998), p. 10.
- 97 Olafson (1998), p. 10.
- 98 Olafson (1998), p. 97.
- 99 Olafson (1998), p. 25.
- 100 Olafson (1998), p. 44.
- 101 Olafson (1998), p. 49; cf. p. 51.
- 102 Olafson (1998), p. 51.
- 103 Olafson (1998), p. 51.
- 104 Olafson (1998), p. 51.
- 105 Olafson (1998), p. 51.
- 106 Olafson (1998), p. 52.
- 107 Olafson (1998), p. 59.
- 108 Olafson (1998), p. 61.
- 109 Olafson (1998), p. 73.
- 110 Olafson (1998), p. 78.
- 111 Olafson (1998), p. 82.
- 112 Olafson (1998), p. 86.
- 113 Olafson (1998), p. 92.
- 114 Olafson (1998), p. 94.
- 115 Olafson (1998), p. 13.
- 116 Olafson (1998), p. 11.
- 117 Olafson (1998), p. 68.
- 118 I sketched such an alternative conception in a Dutch book, *Atheïstisch manifest* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1995, 1998), ch. 3.
- 119 I am grateful to Wybo Houkes (University of Leiden), Tom Rockmore (Duquesne University), Ad Verbrugge (University of Leiden), and Hans Sluga (University of California at Berkeley) for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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