

BEING AND TIME AND THE CULTIVATION OF THE SELF¹

SER Y TIEMPO Y EL CULTIVO DEL SÍ

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Abstract: The secret of *Being and Time* and of its constant cultural and philosophical presence lies in its unusual hermeneutical richness. *Being and Time* becomes, so to speak, a precise seismometer capable of detecting the slips and falls of the contemporary era with surprising accuracy. It offers us an exact scan of the ethical and moral conscience of our time. *Being and Time* does not develop a philosophical theory among others, rather it faces the challenge of thoroughly reflecting upon the dilemma that is constantly present in philosophy, namely the question of human being and its relation to being in general. From this point of view, I would like to consider the possibility of reading this fundamental work of Heidegger as an ethics of existence, that is, as a book that promotes a cultivation of the self.

Key words: authenticity, care, constancy, falling prey, self.

Resumen: El secreto de *Ser y tiempo* y de su constante presencia cultural y filosófica descansa en su particular riqueza hermenéutica. *Ser y tiempo* es un sismógrafo capaz de detectar con una asombrosa precisión los corrimientos y las fallas de la era contemporánea, ofreciéndonos a la par una radiografía exacta de nuestra situación moral y ética. Este libro no desarrolla una teoría filosófica más, sino que se embarca en la aventura de pensar a fondo el problema central de la filosofía, a saber, la cuestión de la existencia humana y de su relación con el ser. Desde este punto de vista se plantea la posibilidad de leer la obra magna de Heidegger en términos de una ética del cuidado, es decir, como obra que promueve un cultivo de sí.

Palabras clave: autenticidad, cuidado, constancia, caída, sí mismo.

Being and Time and the spirit of its era

Still today, *Being and Time* remains a magical work, a title composed of two intriguing words that, in its complex simplicity, attempts to reconsider the fundamental question in the history of philosophy: the question of being. The

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secret of *Being and Time* and of its constant cultural and philosophical presence lies in its unusual law. *Being and Time* does not develop a philosophical theory among others, but rather it faces the challenge of thoroughly reflecting upon the dilemma that is present in traditional philosophy. How does Heidegger face this challenge? Mainly by reexamining the fundamental problem that has pervaded Western thought: the problem of being. However, he does this in a peculiar way, by bringing together the basic concerns of the contemporary time period: the disillusionment of the modern world, the conflict of traditional values, the decline of metaphysics, the fleeing of the gods, the realms of technology, the hegemony of instrumental rationality and the search for new symbolic resources for mankind. In this sense, *Being and Time* becomes a precise seismometer capable of detecting with surprising accuracy the slips and falls of the contemporary era, offering us an exact scan of the ethical and moral conscience of our time. Hence its enduring relevancy, even well into the 21st century. From this point of view, I would like to consider the possibility of reading *Being and Time* as aesthetics of existence, that is, a book that promotes a cultivation of the self.

Being and Time has the ability, as Susan Sontag comments regarding photography, of sloughing off the flakes that obscure our everyday vision, and, in so doing, of creating a new way of viewing reality.² In a strong and passionate tone, solicitous and at the same time distant, attentive to detail but without losing sight of the main focus, *Being and Time* allows us to grasp the social world just as it is, including its misfortunes. Philosophy can be benign, but it is also an expert in cruelty when it comes to portraying the symptoms of a society that is sick, idle and decadent. A harsh diagnosis of reality that, in his own way, Nietzsche had already put forward in his *Untimely Meditations* which depicted German cultural society as a time period dominated by professors and technocrats, and by military and government officials. From this point of view, *Being and Time* has its full share in the climate of intellectual unrest, of existential inhospitality and of spiritual uneasiness of an era dominated by the decadence of heroes. One finds multiple portrayals of a fragmented society and of a lack of idols in works of the time period such as Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and, in a very visual way, Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, and in Robert Wiene's film *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*.³

² SONTAG, Susan: *Sobre la fotografía*, Edhasa, Barcelona, 1981, pp. 109ss.

³ More details about the intellectual atmosphere in which this productive stage in Heidegger's life took place can be found in: NOLTE, Ernst: *Heidegger. Política e historia en su vida y pensamiento*, Tecnos, Madrid, 1998, pp. 67-102; OTT, Hugo: *Martin Heidegger. En camino de su biografía*, Alianza, Madrid, 1992, pp. 117-132; SAFRANSKI, Rüdiger: *Un maestro de Alemania. Heidegger y*

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that from this bleak landscape of German society there spontaneously emerge questions that are in some way or another related to the sense of human existence. What is there to do with a civilization that is drifting without direction? How can one escape a technical rationality that calculates all the variables of human existence, that eliminates all trace of human individuality and that subjects personal will to the causal order of science? The spirit feels trapped and distrusts a positivist discourse that aims to construct an ideal society and to rationally govern the course of history. Life needs to make a way for itself and to break away from false conceptions of the world. One must look back upon reality and face the complex question of how to recapture the immediacy of life experience. This means we must launch an enormous effort towards destruction and creation of a new philosophical language that overcomes the conceptual constraints of science and metaphysics. Heidegger accepts the concepts of philosophy as an attack on every type of certainty and trust in the world. Sometimes one cannot ignore in the young Heidegger the voice of the “lawbreaker self” of the protagonist of Dostoyevsky’s novel, *Notes from Underground*, which calls back to an independent and autonomous self. That underground self, like the pretheoretical life which Heidegger speaks of in his first lecture courses at Freiburg, rejects the Euclidian world of positive rationalism that seeks to resolve the complexity of human problems with the precise procedures of logic and arithmetic. It is simply a matter of preserving the uniqueness of each individual without resigning oneself to being another face in the crowd. In short, one must constantly practice a hermeneutic of suspicion in order to return to the individual the capacity of thought and action.

Therefore, we need men with charisma who are capable of updating the old structures of thought and behaviour. Philosophy should respond to the fundamental questions of human existence, even though this may mean going against the established order. Living philosophically is equivalent to living precariously and thinking against preconceived norms. The young Heidegger becomes an echo of this call, already taking on the challenge of developing a new idea of philosophy in his first lectures of 1919. We find ourselves, as

su tiempo, Tusquets, Barcelona, 1997, pp. 101-137. For the political, social, and economic context of the era, see: FERGUSSON, Alan: *Cuando muere el dinero. El derrumbamiento de la República de Weimar*, Alianza, Madrid, 1984; GAY, Peter: *La cultura de Weimar*, Argos, Barcelona, 1984; WATSON, Peter: *Historia intelectual del siglo XX*, Crítica, Barcelona, 2002. And specifically regarding the philosophical framework of the time period, consult: BAMBACH, Charles: *Heidegger, Dilthey and the Crisis of Historicism*, Cornell University Press, London, 1995, pp. 21-56; BARASH, Jeffrey: *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*, Martinus Nijhoff, Den Hague, 1988, pp. 17-89; GADAMER, Hans-Georg: “Sobre la filosofía alemana en el siglo XX”, en *ER. Revista de Filosofía*, número 26, Sevilla, 2000, pp.189-217.

Heidegger comments with a certain tone of drama, at the crossroads that decides upon “the very life or death of philosophy. We stand at an abyss: either into the nothingness, or we somehow leap into *another world*.”⁴ We are at one of the most philosophically and personally decisive moments in Heidegger’s life. On the one hand, we observe his break with the system of Catholicism and his Protestant marriage to Elfriede Petri and, on the other hand, there are clear signs of estrangement with respect to his solid theological and Neo-Kantian training which points towards the development of a hermeneutics of factual life. In this sense, Karl Löwith shrewdly portrays the peculiar personality of the young Heidegger: “A *Jesuit* by education, he became a Protestant through indignation; a dogmatic through education; an existential *pragmatist* through experience; a *theologian* by tradition, and an atheist as researcher.”⁵ Different aspects of a person who attempts to grasp a phenomenon as mysterious, as slippery and as foggy as that of human existence in its utter facticity. Life presents itself to the young Heidegger as an enigma waiting to be understood. The decipherment of that enigma sets the course for an early philosophical itinerary that will gloriously culminate in his great book, *Being and Time* (1927).

In this sense, this magnum opus can be read as a philosophical novel which, like other novels of the time period, reflects upon the significance of being human in an era dominated by science, highlighting the subjection of the individual to more powerful forces that crush him, belittle him, and manipulate him to the point that he loses sight of the sense of his own existence. In *Being and Time* we discover *Dasein* as a protagonist in a plot that is structured in three acts: in the first act, we find a *Dasein* that is comfortably installed in the certainties of daily life, that knows how to cope with the collectively recognized standards of behaviour in a practical and efficient manner, that shares a similar set of values and expectations with the surrounding people, that feels protected by the society to which it belongs; in the second act, this familiar world in which *Dasein* feels at home enters into sudden and unexpected crisis, causing the disorientation and bewilderment of a *Dasein* that, for the first time in its life, finds itself placed before the world and not able to respond, that has nothing to hold on to, that floats aimlessly in an unknown ocean, that hangs in an utter abyss, and that is held captive by anguish; and in the third act, this *Dasein* becomes aware of its unpredictable situation, bravely accepts its condition and decides to regain control of its existence, designing its own life model which struggles against the fatal inertia that causes it to fall captive back into the

⁴ HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (1919), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1987, GA 56/57, p. 63.

⁵ LÖWITH, Karl: *Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933*, Metzner, Stuttgart, 1986, p. 45.

anonymous grasp of everyday reality. Heidegger wants his readers to throw themselves into the great void, to hear the fundamental whisper of life, and combat the existential boredom of the era.

Heidegger responds to this problem from a totally new perspective: an analysis of human life and its peculiar ability to face its inherent tendency to fall. The analysis of human existence that is carried out in *Being and Time*, and therefore in previous lectures, is really an analysis that turns against the tendency that life shows towards repeatedly falling prey to the clutches of public opinion with the aim of giving it successful form, as if life were a work of art to which *Being and Time* intends to impart a beautiful appearance.

***Being and Time* as an ethics of the care?**

Heidegger, as we know, avoids the classical definition of man understood as a rational animal. Human existence basically consists of care (*Sorge*). This conception of human nature may perhaps surprise the reader of *Being and Time*, but it is not new by any means, but rather dates back to the ancient tradition of the care of the self and of the care of the soul. Heidegger himself admits having found the concept of “care” in the ancients and points out its importance for Greco-Roman philosophy and Christian spirituality. Thus, for example, regarding a comment on the last letter of Seneca, specifically epistle CXXIV, he writes:

The *perfectio* of human being –becoming what one can be in being free for one’s ownmost possibilities (project)– is accomplishment of care⁶

From this perspective, *Being and Time* can be read within the framework of a long tradition of the care of the self, initiated by Plato, practiced by the different Hellenistic schools, later forgotten by the philosophy of the scholastic era and, finally, taken back up by authors such as Michel de Montaigne, Blaise Pascal, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, which reaches its greatest contemporary expression in the ethics of care of Michel Foucault.⁷

⁶ HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, p. 199.

⁷ See, for example, the course of the Collège de France *L’herméneutique du sujet* (1982). For a systematic approach to the basic contribution of Hellenistic Schools and their presence in contemporary ethical discourse, see NUSSBAUM, Martha: *The Therapy of Desire. Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NY, 1994.

Here is not the proper place to exhibit the concrete decisions and the flourishing stages of this tradition.⁸ It is sufficient to remember its central idea, simplified in Plato's simple assertion that the human soul is in movement.⁹ In the majority of cases, mankind lives absorbed in its daily worries, victim to its desires and passions, chained to its professional ambitions and dependent upon economic and material factors. The movement of the soul, nevertheless, allows one to look back upon oneself, that is to say, it provokes a conversion of the gaze, and it makes an internal change possible. However, this self-cultivation is not motivated by narcissistic interests and aestheticizing criteria (a charge which, on the other hand, is frequently brought against Foucault). Focusing on the interior world does not exclude but, in fact, directly draws our attention to the evils of society. In this sense, self-escalation comes accompanied by a movement of the liberation of the ego's always limited perspectives and demands. The young Heidegger was already very conscious of this potential confusion when he points out in his 1921 course about Augustine that

The self-concern appears easy and convenient, interesting and superior as "egoism". (...) Really: self-concern is precisely the most difficult, taking oneself to be less and less important by engaging oneself all the more; positing to oneself precisely an "objectivity" in the face of which that of the generality is mere playfulness, a convenient getting-done of the things themselves and of the beings and their connections.¹⁰

The call for *Dasein* to take care of itself, to pay attention to its own being, even the later idea of letting itself experience a calming of the spirit like serenity (certainly, very close to Epicurean *ataraxia*), invites one to read *Being and Time* from the stimulating perspective of the care of the self. Does Heidegger's suggested similarity between *Dasein* and the soul perhaps not authorize such a reading?¹¹

⁸ Among other interesting works, one should take in consideration: HADOT, Pierre: *Exercices spirituels et philosophie Antique*, Agustiniennes, Paris, 1981; DOMANSKI, Juliusz : *La philosophie, théorie o manière de vivre? Les controverses de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, Éditions Universitaires, Éditions du Cerf, Fribourg and Paris, 1996; VOELKEE, André-Jean: *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme*, Paris, 1993.

⁹ Cf. PLATO: *Laws*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1956, Book X, 896a.

¹⁰ HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* (1920/21), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1995, GA 60, p. 241.

¹¹ See, for example, HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, p. 14; HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Platon: Sophistes* (1924/25), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, GA 19, pp. 23, 57; HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (1926, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1993, GA 22, p. 107; Heidegger, Martin: *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (1927), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, GA 24, pp. 155, 171, 318.

It is at first glance, then, that one can observe a considerable amount of relatedness between *Being and Time* and the ancient tradition of the care of the self (in both its Greek and Latin equivalents of *epimeleia heauton* and *cura sui*, respectively). In both cases, it is a question of opening up the possibility of a self that is more intense, more fundamental and appropriate, and one that realizes the human tendency to get lost in things, to get caught in the whirlwind of daily tasks, and to be influenced by public opinion. It is exactly this dual possibility of leading a life that is in between authenticity and inauthenticity, perdition and salvation, ignorance and wisdom that is a constituent part of the care's fundamental ambivalence. Echoing another basic dimension of the tradition of the care of the self, Heidegger speaks of a "conversion," of an "about-face," of a "turning back" (*Hinkehr*) of *Dasein* from its starting position of fleeing (*Abkehr*) from itself to describe this possibility of care's changing direction.¹² As it is known, Heidegger insists upon the idea that *Dasein* regularly becomes distanced from itself. To use one of his preferred expressions, man is more frequently far away from himself (*weg-sein*) than he is there (*da-sein*). This is why he speaks of a "being alert," of a "being awake" (*Wachsein*) to describe the secret (and, in the end, ethical) purpose of the analysis of human life that is programmatically developed for the first time in the well-known 1923 course *Ontology. The Hermeneutics of facticity*.¹³ *Wegsein* is a form, albeit deficient, of *Dasein*. It is

See further LARIVÉE, Alain and LEDUC, A.: "Le souci de soi dans "Être et temps". L'accentuation radicale d'une tradition antique?", en *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, número 100(4), 2002, pp.723-741.

On the other hand, Krämer points out that the concept of "care", easily to be associated to the ancient moral paradigm, suffers an ontological transformation in Heidegger (cf. KRÄMER, Hans: *Integrative Ethik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, p. 192). Finally, one cannot forget Franco Volpi's suggestive thesis that it is possible to read *Being and Time* as a treatise of practical philosophy (cf. VOLPI, Franco: "Dasein como praxis. L'assimilation et la radicalisation heideggerienne de la philosophie pratique d'Aristotele", en VOLPI, Franco et al. (eds): *Heidegger et l'idée de la phenomenology*, Kluwer Academic Publisher, Dordrecht, 1998, pp. 1-44; VOLPI, Franco: *Being and Time: A Translation of the Nichomachean Ethics?*", en KISIEL Theodore and BUREN, John (eds.): *Reading Heidegger from the Start. Essays in His Earliest Thought*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, pp. 195-212; VOLPI, Franco: VOLPI, Franco: "Ser y tiempo: ¿una versión modernizada de la Ética a Nicómaco?", en ROCHA, Alfredo (ed.): *Martin Heidegger. La experiencia del camino*, Uninorte, Barranquilla, 2009, pp. 3-31.

¹² Cf. HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, pp. 184-185.

¹³ Cf. HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Ontologie. Hermeneutik der Faktizität* (1923), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, GA 63, p. 10. For more information about the phenomenon of *Wegsein* and the ethical dimension of the hermeneutics of facticity, see GRONDIN, Jean: "Das junghegelianische und ethische Motiv in Heideggers Hermeneutik der Faktizität", en *Der Sinn für Hermeneutik*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994, pp. 89-102; GRONDIN, Jean: "L'herméneutique dans *Sein und Zeit*", en COURTINE, Jean-Francois (ed.): *Heidegger 1919-1929. De l'herméneutique de la facticité à la métaphysique du Dasein*, Paris, Jean Vrin, 1996,

this self-neglect, this estrangement that is attacked by Heidegger, who –as a good phenomenologist– wants, on the one hand, to stimulate the ability to be open to oneself and, therefore, to being, and, on the other hand, to fight the obstruction that idle talk (*Gerede*) exerts on this openness.

In a similar way to the majority of ancient philosophers, Heidegger not only shows an occasional interest in the tendency of individuals to become estranged from themselves, but rather he interprets this movement as them truly fleeing from themselves. In this context, Heidegger uses the expression “plunge” (*Absturz*) and “eddying” (*Wirbel*) to respectively describe the “groundlessness and nothingness of inauthentic everydayness” and the “movement of falling prey”.¹⁴ Starting with Pascal’s harsh comments about fleeing from oneself, Heidegger traces back the root of this phenomenon to the movement of falling (*Verfallen*) in the world of things.¹⁵ This is a leitmotiv as much as in Heidegger’s early work as in *Being and Time*, which is conveyed in the well-known difference between authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) and inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*). Indeed, authenticity and inauthenticity denote nothing more than the two possible paths that *Dasein* can take in carrying out its existence: either flee from itself and from its more appropriate choices, or embrace these choices as a manifestation of responsibility in the form of a wanting-having-conscience. In sum, the presence of the topic of self-knowledge, which Heidegger rechristens transparency¹⁶, places us before one of the most important tasks of *epimileia heaoun*, of understanding the possibility of being-self as “constancy of the self” (*Ständigkeit des Selbst*).¹⁷

pp. 188-189.

¹⁴ HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, p. 178.

¹⁵ In the lectures of 1921/22 *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, Heidegger already had analyzed and described the consequences of this movement of falling prey (*Verfallenstendenz*) such as *Ruinanz*, *Abstand*, *Abriegelung*, *Praestruktion*, and *Reluzenz* (cf. HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (1921/22), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, GA 61, pp. 100-106, 117-123, 131-147). These modes of being can be related to the phenomenon of temptation (*Versuchung*) analyzed in the context of a deeper discussion of the phenomena *dispersio* and *tentatio* described by Augustine in Book X of *Confessions* (cf. HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* (1920/21), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt del Main 1995, GA 60, pp. 210-238).

¹⁶ Cf. HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, p. 146. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger consciously avoids the concept of “self-knowledge” or “self-acquaintance” (*Selbsterkenntnis*). He prefers to speak of transparency (*Durchsichtigkeit*) in order to avoid any kind of solipsism.

¹⁷ As Greisch has noticed, this evokes the stoic echo of care of the self (GREISCH, Jean: *Ontologie et temporalité. Esquisse d'une interprétation intégrale de Sein und Zeit*, Paris, PUF, 2003, p. 310).

The *constancy of the self* in the double sense of constancy and steadfastness is the authentic counter-possibility to the lack of constancy (*Unselbstständigkeit*) or irresolute falling prey. Existentially, the *constancy of the self* (*Selbstständigkeit*) means nothing other than anticipatory resoluteness.¹⁸

Obviously, there are more than a few critics who reject this approach to reading *Being and Time*, even Heidegger's text itself offers a certain amount of resistance. The first and clearest objection is that Heidegger, in contrast to the ancient thinkers, does not analyze life's concrete characteristics, he does not establish anything prescriptive, does not formulate anything imperative. His analysis is purely formal. One cannot forget that "in the existential analytic we cannot, on principle, discuss what *Da-sein* *factically* resolves upon".¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that the ancient authors who defended a *epimileia heauton* are not noted for subjecting themselves to a series of prescriptive behaviors through which their self-care becomes universally defined. Rather than prescribe universal rules of behavior, they offer instructions on how to lead, carry out, and complete a full life. The tradition of the care of the soul returns the individual to his/her particular situation; it awakens the feeling of responsibility toward oneself. In short, the practices of self refer to a choice of life, that is to say, they do not present themselves as an obligatory category that is imposed universally, but rather, in Heideggerian terms, they possess an indicative-formal character that establishes *Dasein's* way's of being. When it comes down to it, can it not be said that "universal phenomenological ontology, which taking its departure from the hermeneutics of *Da-sein*",²⁰ tries to establish the conditions of possibility of authentic life? It is true that the ontological analysis of *Being and Time* is not guided by a particular ideal of life, that is, it does not offer "a definite ontic interpretation of authentic existence".²¹ However, paradoxically, is *Being and Time* not the incarnation of a concrete task such as the questioning of being and the establishment of its conditions of what is possible?

Therefore, we could say that *Dasein* is still an undetermined entity, always open to new and changing possibilities, which, on the one hand, tends to lose itself, but, on the other hand, holds the possibility of recovering from its dispersion. In this sense, philosophy is transformed into an efficient instrument for the self-realization of human life. Philosophy not only builds enormous

¹⁸ HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, p. 382 (italics in the original).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

theoretical frameworks and emphasizes the aspect of knowledge, but also contributes a set of teachings about life in the form of a knowledgeable knowledge that encourages a life transformation: the transition from ignorance to wisdom, from sin to salvation, from opinion to truth, from impropriety to propriety. In this case, philosophy goes hand in hand with a way of life, that is to say, with a practical understanding of human reality which implies a certain vital knowledge and a certain amount of caring for oneself. Philosophical insight not only provides a pure theoretical knowledge, but also fulfils a consoling, guiding, and advisory function. Hence philosophy might also be considered therapeutic, an antidote to a decadent culture such as that of the Germans, brilliantly depicted by Nietzsche, Spengler, Weber, Mann and Heidegger among others. In all their depictions we find the program of *Humanitätsbildung* (human educational training) which, with distinct emphases and from different perspectives, supports an aesthetic, literary and philosophical instruction for mankind. Genuine philosophizing makes it possible to give existence a life-like form, in the same way that an artist imparts a beautiful form to his work of art. This search for a comprehensive human training is magnificently reflected in the maxim that Nietzsche uses as a subtitle to his autobiography *Ecce homo: Become what you are! (Werde, der Du bist!)*. This maxim, which traces back to Pindar²², is a very common feature in Greco-Roman culture. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the Hellenistic schools also universalized this Pindaric maxim, which not only applies to the athlete and the soldier, to the merchant and the navigator, to the politician and the landowner, but rather to any person whose life can be interpreted in agonistic terms, that is to say, like *agon*, as a constant struggle to achieve a successful life in accordance with the nature that is characteristic of all individuals. Man's self-realization consists of daring himself to follow his own nature. The stoics, for example, utilize the theory of *oikesis*, the tendency that all individuals show to remain in their house (*oikós*) and if not in their house, the tendency to return to it. In the end, the task of being yourself is equivalent to a life choice, to a way of accomplishment that involves fulfilling a full existence within the framework of a natural habit to fall captive to excess, to indulgence, to social habits, to daily routine and rumors. Really it comes down to struggling with oneself. And, without a doubt, out of all the possible victories, the most glorious is that which is achieved over oneself.

The solution that Heidegger will later refer to in *Being and Time* registers, ultimately, in the sphere of the practical question about the meaning that we want to give to our existence, which finds itself always destined to shift between one of two possibilities: now an improper existence now a proper existence. Here

²² Cf. PINDAR, *Pythian*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, II, 73.

again it is highlighted that the practical question obligates one to confront oneself. Evading freedom is as significant as fleeing from oneself. The available time to make a choice which is opened by the practical question has the nature of a “self-choosing” which offers the possibility of a self-determination of our being, free from prescribed norms; an assessment that is in accordance with the phenomenon of differentiation that *Dasein* undergoes because of the anxiety that “reveals to it authenticity and inauthenticity as possibilities of its being”.²³ Therefore, there exists a scope of decision in which one considers how to carry out one’s existence.

The same structuring of the work in two large sections aims to conceptually express the existential hiatus in which contemporary man lives: the first section develops a complex hermeneutics of everyday life that analyzes the different forms of estrangement and fleeing from oneself, while the second section proposes a hermeneutics of responsibility through which the individual becomes critical of his real state of disorientation. In both cases, Heidegger advances a genuine hermeneutics of the self. Just like what happens with Hellenistic philosophies and with late Foucault that develop a hermeneutics of the practices of the self that is parallel to biblical hermeneutics, Heidegger first offers a complete diagnosis of the evils of the time period in order to later recommend an appropriate remedy. It is a matter of carrying out self-reflection in order to get to know yourself regarding your own limits, your relationships with others, your contact with the world and, in conclusion, your choices in designing your own life according to freely and independently chosen criteria. Life, in short, is subjected to a constant test. There is no situation that always returns unchanged, that is, every life situation must be weighed calmly and analyzed for itself in order to offer an answer that is appropriate to the circumstances of the moment. This is undoubtedly the ideal of the sensible and wise man depicted by Aristotle. And this explains, in part, the fascination that the young Heidegger experienced from reading *Nicomachean Ethics*, to which he dedicated a commendable exegetic effort (as is shown by his substantial and brilliant interpretations of the sixth book in the course of his first lectures of the winter semester of 1924/25).²⁴ The tests to which we are daily subjected are not a part of our determined period of instruction, but rather they integrate with a general attitude toward life, they turn into a lifestyle, so to speak. A lifestyle that corresponds very well to the

²³ HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, p. 191.

²⁴ See, for example, Heidegger’s splendid lectures on Plato’s *Sophistes* (HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Plato: Sophistes* (1924/25), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, GA 19, pp. 21-187, as well as the famous Natorp Bericht from 1922, and the interesting pages of his course from 1924 on Aristotle’s rhetoric (HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (1924), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, GA 18, pp. 113-160, 191-207).

classic metaphor of sailing, which contributes a series of factors that affect the control and steering of an existence that endlessly floats on an ocean of desire and temptation. Life never stops being a journey, that is, a genuine movement from one point to another. This movement, in turn, implies having a clear idea of the port of arrival and, therefore, requires a set of knowledge and skills associated with steering that can be easily obtained for the destination of our own existence. This model of steering –very similar to the control of illness by medicine, to the military skills of the warrior and to the political government of a city– is intimately linked to the activity of governing oneself. From this point of view, one can enjoy reading *Being and Time* as an invitation to embark on an internal journey, a journey that always has features of an odyssey that is plagued with obstacles and danger, some known and others unknown, which we must successfully overcome in order to steer our life to a safe harbor.

What about the other? The possibility of the ethical encounter of the other in friendship

Heidegger's relation to the ethical is a difficult and controversial matter. It is known that the philosopher has never dedicated any special work to that topic, and this very absence is many times understood as the symptom of a deep ethical failure at the heart of his ontological thinking. Many critics affirm that the excessively solipsistic character of the existential analytic developed in *Being and Time* blocked Heidegger's path to understand the primarily intersubjective character of everyday human interactions in the common world.²⁵ The assumption that Dasein's existence lacks any ultimate moral or rational ground does not imply its un-ethical character. Of course, such a post-metaphysical ethics should not be framed as a systematic undertaking.

I think that these critical assessments suffer from an insufficient analysis of Heidegger's notion of the self. His ethics of the care is not a kind of individualistic journey of self-discovering still tainted by Husserlian solipsism. It is a journey that cannot ignore the other. *Being and Time* insists in the idea that we are also responsible to recognize the other's potentiality-for-Being-its-Self, without reducing its possibilities to our own or those of they-self.²⁶ But following Heidegger's analysis of the public sphere the other does normally not

²⁵ Among others, see HABERMAS, Jürgen: *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 145ff; WOLIN, Richard: *The Politics of Being: The political Thought of Martin Heidegger*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990, pp. 65, 149.150.

²⁶ Cf. HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Sein und Zeit*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, p. 264.

show itself. How can we let it be itself? In a way, Heidegger suggests the *moral* obligation of letting speak the other, letting it interpret itself, allowing it to discover its own possibilities. The other can only truly be allowed to speak if we allow ourselves to hear. However, as a part belonging to the publicity, the other –like any Dasein or entity– is primordially exposed to the normativity of the ‘they’ (*Man*).

The other can only be incorporated into the ‘they,’ qua itself, by a change in the ‘they.’ The existential determination of decadency is not contradictory to the possibility of a modification in Dasein’s behavior that discloses the possibility of authentically being one’s own self. In order for the other to be received in our world, we must make space for its otherness. One might view it in terms of the reception of a guest in one’s home. We make room for our guest. We give her our guest its own space. But simultaneously one’s own dwelling place must be altered to accommodate the guest. Part of one’s home is ‘destroyed’ by emptying a place for the potential reception of persons external to one’s home. Even more, if the other is someone with whom we will dwell, then the entire home must be made compatible with the other’s possibilities and concerns.

It is important to stress that Heidegger is concerned with the other and with question of otherness as such. Dasein’s selfhood (*Selbstheit*) and singularity (*Vereinzelung*) does not imply irresponsibility toward others in the common world, does not cut off its worldly relation with others, since there is a fundamental difference between a singularized and a solipsistic self. The resolute Dasein opens up the possibility of letting the other be itself, thus ensuring the possibility of an ethical encounter of itself and of the other in a particular mode of being that we shall call genuine friendship. Heidegger emphasizes that “resoluteness does not detach Dasein, as authentically being itself, from its world, it does not isolate it in a free-floating I”.²⁷ In other words, resoluteness also “modifies, in an equally ordinary way, the discovery of the ‘world’, as well as the openness of the co-existence of others”.²⁸ This means that Dasein is not fully oblivious of the other. Resolute Dasein is not only concerned about itself but is also solicitous to the other with whom it coexists in the world. The ethical traces of Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein become more evident in the rich and complex of resoluteness (*Erschlossenheit*), where Dasein is “impelled into a solicitous being-with with others. (...) It is only in resoluteness to one’s own self that Dasein is brought into the possibility of letting the co-existing others ‘be’ in

²⁷ Ibid, p. 298.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 297.

their ownmost possibility of being”.²⁹

How do we access to the other? How does the other come to manifestation? First and foremost in the mode of being of hearing. Hearing constitutes Dasein’s most authentic openness to its ownmost possibility of being, as in hearing the voice of the friend whom every Dasein carries by itself. By hearing the voice of the other, which is deeply rooted in its own self, Dasein becomes open to the being of others in the peculiar modality of solicitude (*Fürsorge*). This allows the establishment of an authentic bond in which the other is liberated to its own freedom.³⁰ The possibility of the ethical encounter of the other as irreducible otherness is the positive counterpart of the mode of being solicitous to the other. In authentically hearing the voice of the friend that each Dasein carries by itself, Dasein does not merely listen to the impersonal voice of the public ‘they’ but also becomes opened to the recognition of the otherness as such. Ontically speaking, as Duarte points out, “it means that Dasein has become genuinely friends with the other”,³¹ without leveling the other to the dominating values of the public sphere. Resolute Dasein has, thus, acquired the possibility of an authentic, responsible and respectful encounter with the other. In an ontological sense, friendship is the possibility of caring for the other respecting its own space of freedom and self-determination. A further analysis of friendship and the constitution of the self should allow us to trace a path in *Being and Time* that connects the ontological to the ethical.

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²⁹ Ibid , p. 298.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 122.

³¹ DUARTE, André: “Becoming Other: Heidegger and the Trace of a Post-metaphysical Ethics”, in DUARTE, André: *Selected Works*, 2005, p.27. Retrieved from http://works.bepress.com/andre_duarte/4.

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