

Being in Time
The Authentic and Inauthentic Moods of Time-Reckoning in Heidegger
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Introduction/Abstract:

The being of Dasein is care.¹ Care (*Sorge*) is the condition of our being-in-the-world: We care about entities at hand, the objects we use, the people we find, the people we are. Time, too, is something Dasein cares for. Ordinarily, we understand time within the Aristototelean tradition as a continuous flow of “now” moments. The past is composed of those “nows” which are counted for; the future, those we have yet to count. In his *Being and Time*, Heidegger challenges this ordinary understanding which, by taking time as a neutral feature of our world, fails to grasp the true nature of time and why it is important to us. We care about time because we are temporal beings; we are embodied time. My argument is that the mood of inauthentic time-reckoning is fear, while the mood of Dasein’s authentic time-reckoning is anxiety. In inauthentic reckoning, we take time as present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) or ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*) and so, our concern (*Besorgen*) for the volatile “now” is inextricable from our fear of losing it. I present this mood in its unique texture by referencing Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* and Hägglund’s concept of *chronophobia* in *Dying for Time*. To Heidegger though, fear is anxiety hidden from itself; when we fear time, as something external to ourselves, we deny what our fear really is: anxiety in the face of finitude.² Anxiety, the authentic mood of time-reckoning, discloses Dasein’s finitude and death, the possibility of impossibility. But while disclosing our death and finitude, anxiety also discloses our authentic possibilities in light of them.

Fearing Time:

The ordinary understanding of time clings in principle to the Aristotelian definition of time: time is “a number of motion with respect to the before and after.”³ We take this to mean that time is the countable series of “now” moments. These “nows” come into being and cease to be in perpetual succession. In counting, we can follow the analogy of the traveling pointer, moving along a line and leaving a trace of ink behind: “counting and making present in such a way that this making-present temporalizes itself in an ecstatic unity with retaining and awaiting which are horizontally open according to the ‘earlier’ and the ‘later.’”⁴ However, we do not recognize the “ecstatic unity,” the way in which these

¹ Heidegger, 465

² Heidegger, 234

³ Novy, Rich. “Aristotle: Time is the Measure of Change.”

⁴ Heidegger, 473

different aspects of temporality come together. Instead, we count the “now” points – what is made present – against the horizon of the earlier and the later. That “now” which is being counted is the present; the “nows” which have been counted become the past; the “nows” which have yet to be counted belong to the future. The grammatical tenses of past, present, and future are built into even our most trivial everyday expressions: “It is Sunday,” “I woke up,” “I will go for a walk.” The present, what *is*, has special ontological status, as it is the only moment which gives us sensory access to the world around us. It finds us always “Now! Now!” presenting us a moment on the sunset of dissolution.⁵ “Now here, now here, and so on,” we are endlessly counting new “nows” and watching them pass away into the irretrievable past.⁶

To count the “now” points we invent clocks. For ancient Dasein the first clock was the presence of sunlight. With this first natural clock, Dasein could reckon with countable time by measuring the days. Soon after, ancient Dasein then made their counting independent of the sky, by measuring shadows. Shadows have different lengths and directions depending on the position of the sun throughout the day. By marking the position of the shadow at different times of the day, ancient Dasein designated time publicly, “saying, ‘When the shadow is so many feet long, then we shall meet yonder.’”⁷ Advanced Dasein no longer uses these measures, but manufactures clocks specifically for the purpose of time reckoning.

Everyday Dasein carries the tradition of coming across time as present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) or ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*). The clock’s time is a tool to be managed; Everyday Dasein concerns itself with time, “reckoning, planning, preventing, or taking precaution.”⁸ We say, “time is money,” and speak of “using time wisely.” Time becomes an object to grasp, to take. When time’s practicality escapes us, we come across it as a natural phenomena like the electron or the ocean’s tides. The river of time metaphor expresses this present-at-hand nature and Dasein’s reckoning-with.⁹ Everyday Dasein, not “using” time, watches the “nows” float down a stream beneath us, receding further and further into the past. We wait for the time “then” and mourn “the former occasion” passively, as if waiting for the rain to fall and aching for its passing. Dasein’s care (*Sorge*) is related to the form of being of the object for which we care: concern (*Bersorgen*) involves caring about the things in the world; solicitude (*Fürsorge*) involves caring about other persons; care of self (*Selbstsorge*) involves caring about the kind of people we are in the world. When we take time as present-at-hand or ready-to-hand, our concern is *Bersorgen*.

Concerned for time as present-at-hand or ready-to-hand, we exist in a mood of fear – mood being Dasein’s mode of being-in that colors and discloses the world around us. The fear native to ordinary

⁵ Heidegger, 459

⁶ Heidegger, 474

⁷ Heidegger, 469

⁸ Heidegger, 458

⁹ Smart, River of Time

time-reckoning can be explained by the notion of *chronophobia*, fear of time, put forth in Hägglund's *Dying for Time*. Hägglund, like Heidegger, writes that care depends on a double bind: "On the one hand, care is necessarily *chronophilic*, since only something that is subject to the possibility of loss – and hence temporal – can give one reason to care. On the other hand, care is necessarily *chronophobic* since one cannot care about something without fearing what may happen to it."¹⁰ When we are concerned for time, its companion is fear. We care for the "now" and so too, we fear its passing. And because the "now" is always passing, each point negating itself just as it comes into being, our existence is bathed in the mood of fear. Later on, I will show that caring for time, as the temporality of temporality, necessitates a misreading of this double bind and orients towards something which is nothing in itself (time). I will show how *chronophilia* and *chronophobia* pertain to authentic-time reckoning. Nevertheless, as long as we understand time ordinarily, we feel *chronophobia* as the loss of time, deeply, painfully, violently.

Proust captures the mood of *chronophobia* in his seven-part novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu* ("In Search of Lost Time"). The narrator, Marcel, fears time, sensitive to the passing "nows," knowing that he will never be able to recapture his childhood. The sense of time as a volatile point, uncapturable, always slipping away, recurs throughout the novel:

"When I saw an external object, my awareness that I was seeing it would remain between me and it, lining it with a thin spiritual border, that prevented me from ever directly touching its substance; it would volatilize in some way before I could make contact with it, just as an incandescent body brought near a wet object never touches its moisture because it is always preceded by a zone of evaporation."¹¹

In Marcel's experience of time, we feel the sequence of "nows," constantly coming and then passing along. The fragility of the "now" is revealed as something unbearably painful, the passage of time as something wildly violent: "we know that the years pass, the youth gives way to old age, that fortunes and thrones crumble (even the most solid among them) and that fame is transitory, [is] the manner in which – by means of a sort of snapshot – we take cognisance of this moving universe whirled along by Time."¹² Reckoning inauthentically, Marcel, we, Dasein, is always losing time – hence, the name of the novel.

Dasein who clings to the ordinary understanding of time, is destined to fear it (*chronophobia*). Heidegger's fear structure is triadic: (1) that in the face of which we fear, (2) fearing, and (3) that about which we fear.¹³ The first describes the "fearsome," or the threatening. The threatening, whether drawing

¹⁰ Hägglund, 9-10

¹¹ Proust, *Swann's Way*, 85

¹² Proust, *Time Regained*, 402

¹³ Heidegger, 179

close or dwelling far, is intelligible as having some kind of detrimentality. The second, “fearing,” happens when we allow the threatening to matter to us. The third, “that about which we fear” – what *fear* fears about – is always Dasein.¹⁴ The three belong together: fear requires an intelligible threat that matters to us because we matter to us. Since equiprimordial, we see that a threat can be intelligible only because its intelligibility matters to us, and *mattering* matters too. So, when everyday Dasein fears the time, present-at-hand or ready-to-hand, time is intelligible as having a kind of detrimentality we care about *because* we care about our being. When we fear time, we fear its ability to wash away this world we love, these hours which hold the objects of our care. And these objects – dear windows, dear streets, dear friends – are only dear because we are.

Even as fear bears within it “the Dasein about which we fear,” the mood is never without the “threatening in the face of which we fear” and “fearing.” It is precisely this triple-bind of the fear structure which prevents authentic reckoning with being and time. Aristotle describes fear as “a kind of depression or bewilderment.”¹⁵ Heidegger agrees. As depression, fear narrows our sight towards the threatening and away from the world; as bewilderment, in fearing we lose all direction and understanding of how to engage in it. The inhabitants of a burning house are not asking each other, “What does it mean to *be* in the world?” Their eyes reflect only flames. Among their possibilities, they do not ask, “Of these, which reflects me most authentically?” They run, taking with them that surviving object which just so happened to be near, an object they were unaware of ever having.¹⁶ With narrowed sight, lost in the house which was a home, Dasein exists inauthentically.

When this world is cast in the mood of *chronophobia*, we too are unable to exist in it authentically. The “now” comes already-vanishing. We are overwhelmed by its fragility. We are threatened by how precious it is. In fear of time, Dasein orients itself towards what is already-vanishing, now already-gone, looking for something to hold on to. But even if it finds something to hold on to, the fear remains. It simply reorients towards the object, a surrogate for the lost time. In either case, oriented towards the already-vanishing “now” or that something which lets us hold on, Dasein forgets its potentiality-for-Being. Every possibility offers itself, but *chronophobia* prevents our approach: when concern is afraid, it leaps from next to next, because it forgets itself and does not *take hold of any definite* possibility.¹⁷ Dasein, in time, fearing time, no longer knows its way around it.

When we have an ordinary understanding of time as present-at-hand or ready-to-hand our care is concern (*Bersorgen*). If we are concerned for time, we also fear it (*chronophobia*). This fear of time, time passing, time lost, is common to this understanding. But fear is an inauthentic mood, which further

¹⁴ Heidegger, 180

¹⁵ Heidegger, 392

¹⁶ Heidegger, 392

¹⁷ Heidegger, 392

conceals the object for which we fear, Dasein, and prevents our authentic engagement in the world. My argument does not just unfold linearly. My argument is a recursive one and inauthentic engagement swells in every part. We care for the “now,” we fear its passing, and in fearing it, we get further and further from reckoning with what the “now” is and what it could possibly mean.

Being Time:

The ordinary understanding of time orients us towards a “now” that is always already-vanishing. But since Aristotle, this understanding has been logically vulnerable. Classically, Zeno’s Arrow Paradox places time and motion in contradiction:

- 1) An arrow moves.
- 2) At any one point in time the arrow occupies one position.
- 3) At any one point in time the arrow is at rest.
- 4) At every point in time the arrow is at rest.

Conclusion: The arrow cannot move.

From the arrow paradox, we see that the conclusion is in contradiction with premise one: the arrow cannot move, and yet, it moves. The conclusion of Zeno’s paradox can be interpreted as, “what is moving is always at rest,” or “motion is an illusion.” However, I argue that it is not motion we misunderstand, but rather time. Any apparent opposition between an arrow’s position at one point, and its overall movement, is internal to the premises themselves. We take for granted that there are “now” points, underlying the arrow’s motion. We imagine that for each, an utterly different reality corresponds. To resolve the paradox, we must return to our understanding of time.

The ordinary understanding of time, imposes a framework that causes not only paradox, but also time-fearing, time-taking, time-mourning, and other expressions. Ancient Dasein invented the clock to make sense of temporality, but now Dasein makes sense of temporality through the clock. Meaning, it mistakes the direction of the relationship between a clock and time: we do not experience time *because* of the clock; clocks exist *because* we are temporal beings. Still, everyday Dasein does not see this. Mistaking the direction, holding the clock absolute, Dasein struggles with time’s unforgiving linearity. Procrastination, distraction, nostalgia for the past and the desire to recreate it, are examples of this struggle. When reckoning with the clock, these haunt us everywhere.

The existential-ontological interpretation shows us that time is neither a present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand entity which we should care for in the vein of other present-at-hand and ready-to-hand entities. Dasein created the clock, the calendar, the ceremonious occasions of time passing – new year, solstice, graduation. These are ready-to-hand and apparently have as their basis a present-to-hand force of physics, active since a “time” far before Dasein. But both time *Zuhandenheit* (ready-to-hand), which I will call the clock, and time *Vorhandenheit* (present-at-hand), which I will call a physical law, are susceptible. If time is the clock and the clock is time, where does it rest? Neither the spatial relation between the hands of a clock, nor the powering mechanism is time itself. When the clock shatters, and becomes no longer time, we reckon with a scientific understanding. The metaphor of a shattering clock takes after Heidegger’s account of when ready-to-hand becomes un-ready-to-hand. When a tool cannot be used and its constitutive assignment has been disturbed, its assignment becomes explicit.¹⁸ The broken tool discloses what it was “ready-to-hand *with*, and *what* it was ready-to-hand *for*.”¹⁹ Similarly, when the clock breaks, we cling to its scientific basis. But modern physics too has failed to observe time *Vorhandenheit*, and its set of consistent laws. The theory of relativity and quantum mechanics prove time dilation, that time does not tick uniformly, and question that the future is strictly determined by the past. Classical physics tells a different story. My point here is this: neither time *Zuhandenheit* and time *Vorhandenheit* is absolute. We cannot understand it by dissecting the clock or by finding its physical laws. Instead, to understand, we should ask, “why is time important to us?”

Time is important to us because we are finite beings. We “take time,” we “lose time,” we “wait for time.” If we were infinite, these phrases would lose meaning. But we are finite, and so we say these things. In reckoning with finitude, we are necessarily reckoning with death. Everyday Dasein looks away from death.²⁰ Yet, when we understand that time matters to us because we are finite, we cannot look away from the ontological possibility of death. Heidegger defines death as the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there – the possibility of impossibility.²¹ For Heidegger, death is distinct from perishing, the end of “human life.” Perishing, the end of human life, is the moment of bodily decay. Death, however, is not a moment or an event, but an existential state. In this existential state of impossibility, the structures of meaning collapse into total insignificance. Dasein is no longer able to Be-in-the-world. Dasein is no longer Dasein.

Everyday Dasein looks away from death, the possibility of impossibility, and instead towards the already-vanishing “now.” We mourn for each “now” which dies an immediate death – “perishing alone,” to evoke Virginia Woolf. We cannot grasp that its dying really discloses our own:

¹⁸ Heidegger, 105

¹⁹ Heidegger, 105

²⁰ Heidegger, 477

²¹ Blattner, 145

“[The “now”] *glides by* as it passes away. *Dasein knows fugitive time in terms of its ‘fugitive’ knowledge about its death.* In the kind of talk which emphasizes time’s passing away, the *finite futurity* of Dasein’s temporality is publically reflected. And because even in talk about time’s passing away, death can remain covered up, time shows itself as a passing-away ‘in itself’.”²²

When we say publicly “time’s passing,” we are displacing our own temporality on an invention. We have “fugitive,” knowledge about our death. We walk within its shadow, vaguely knowing it, quietly whispering of it, though we do not grasp what it means for us. Proust captures this displacement in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, when Marcel mourns possibilities which cease to be possible:

“That way many years ago. The staircase wall on which I saw the rising glimmer of his candle has long since ceased to exist. In me, too, many things have been destroyed that I thought were bound to last forever and new things have formed that have given birth to new sorrows and joys which I could not have foreseen then, just as the old ones have become difficult for me to understand. It was a very long time ago, too, that my father ceased to be able to say to Mama: ‘Go with the boy.’ The possibility of such hours will never be reborn for me.”²³

Here, Marcel mourns, but the “possibility of such hours.” For Marcel, the possibility of hearing his mother’s footsteps on the stairwell has ceased to be possible. As has the possibility of hearing his father’s voice, along with so much of his childhood in Combray: such hours will never be reborn again. The loss of possibility, a forever gone potentiality-for-Being, is existentially significant. Nevertheless, for Heidegger, despite the loss Marcel feels, Dasein is a thrown being and since thrown, limited. Today’s Dasein exists without the possibility of riding a woolly mammoth, meeting John Lennon, or traveling to Czechoslovakia. Since birth, our possibilities have been limited by our particular context. And those possibilities we feel so painfully lost to us, some violently ripped from us, are much less constraining than those based on our thrownness. Marcel has lost these possibilities; but so long as living, our existence is open-ended. What makes lost possibilities so painful are that they disclose death, complete impossibility.

Only when Dasein understands its own end, can we exist authentically. Knowing death, the possibility of impossibility, we are not displacing our temporality, but reckoning with it. The “now” is not a home for us we show concern (*Bersorgen*) and fear (*chronophobia*); the meaning of “now” is our own finitude. Accordingly, the meaning of time is not present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) or ready-to-hand

²² Heidegger, 478

²³ Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 37

(*Zuhandenheit*), rather it is Dasein: we are time embodied. Our concern for the ticking clock and the laws of physics, corrects to the appropriate form of care: *Selbstorge*, caring about our way of Being-in-the-world. To care for time is to care about the kinds of people we are in this world.

Authentic time-reckoning treats past, present, and future, as one entity: Dasein. To say we are embodied time is to abandon the set of points in time, and its subsets of past, present, and future. There is no countable set, no one element which corresponds to our birth and another to our death. This set, the ordinary understanding of time, dissolves to become us. We can rethink our ordinary understanding of the past, the present, and the future, to explain what Heidegger names our thrown-projection. The past becomes our thrownness, the context in which we find ourselves. The future becomes projection, our ability to strive towards possibilities. The present is the temporal horizon where thrownness meets projection. Heidegger names the present, the situation.²⁴ Heidegger's notion of thrown-projection, shows everyday Dasein that what we call past, present, and future are equiprimordial to our Being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-library, I am thrown by my personal past to this particular seat, and in this concrete situation, I choose which of my unique possibilities to project myself into. This "ecstatic temporality," our experience with time, is characterized by constantly projecting ourselves into our future while being grounded in our past.

Ecstatic temporality is not *chronophobically* oriented towards passing time, but oriented towards the future, the realm of possibility and potentiality. Inauthentically reckoning with time, we do not grasp the ecstatic unity of our thrown-projection (past, present, and future). In this case, Dasein loses "*himself* in the object of his concern, he *loses his time* in it too. Hence his characteristic way of talking – 'I have no time.'" ²⁵ The closest events appear to define us since we do not grasp our finitude, our death. But, just as Dasein who exists inauthentically loses time, and is lost in time, unable to make sense of who he is within it, ecstatic temporality gives life to the authentic self: "One's existence in the moment of vision temporalizes itself as something that has been stretched along in a way which is fatefully whole in the sense of the authentic historical *constancy* of the self. This kind of temporal existence has its time for what the situation demands of it, and it has it 'constantly.'" ²⁶ Since ecstatic temporality understands for one, that past, present, and future are equiprimordial, and for another, that together they are Dasein, projection too, is something we are. In ecstatic temporality we project authentically the kinds of people we are in this world.

Anxiety is the mood of authentic time reckoning. While fear is a mood narrowed towards the threatening, which confuses us in "fearing," and conceals our being, anxiety is a revelatory mood which orients Dasein towards its possibilities in light of finitude. In anxiety, we understand our fundamental

²⁴ Heidegger, 346

²⁵ Heidegger, 463

²⁶ Heidegger, 463

existence as finite. So too, we understand death. Anxiety colors the everydayness of Dasein with the indefiniteness of its own existence. Anxiety is a mood of uncanniness; in the everyday, we no longer feel at home. Yet, this uncanniness, this existential homelessness, frees Dasein to project authentically. No longer at home within our numbing everyday routine, within restrictive society, our sense of home becomes attached to authentic involvement in the world:

“Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being—that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its *Being-free for (propensio in...)* the authenticity of its Being, and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always is. But at the same time, this is the Being to which Dasein as Being-in-the-world has been delivered over.”²⁷

For Heidegger, anxiety individualizes Dasein. But the mood of anxiety which individualizes Dasein is not solipsism, it does not cause Dasein to withdraw into themselves and away from an empty world. Instead, this kind of existential ‘solipsism’ brings “Dasein face to face with its world as world, and thus bring[s] it face to face with itself as Being-in-the-world.”²⁸ In anxiety, we look in the face of our own existence, our finitude, encouraging us to reflect on who we are, what matters to us, and project ourselves into those possibilities that reflect authentic meaning.

Anxiety discloses Dasein’s finite existence encouraging authentic projection. Fear, however, “is anxiety, fallen into the ‘world’, inauthentic, and, as such, hidden from itself.”²⁹ When we fear, we cannot see why we fear – because we are temporal – and thus, do not exist authentically. *Chronophobia*, the fear of time, was earlier significant to understanding the fear attached to our concern for time as present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. Because we are invested in time, *chronophilia*, we fear its passing, *chronophobia*. The relationship between care and fear feels natural. To be invested in something, is to worry about it; and to worry about something, we must be invested in it. But revisited through the lens of ecstatic temporality, our chronolibidinal condition tells us much more. *Chronophilia* and *chronophobia* are not simply the love and fear of time. If Dasein is embodied time, *chronophilia* and *chronophobia* are the simultaneous love and fear for Dasein. The chronolibidinal condition tells us that the investment we have in our existence, our Being-in-the-world, always co-implicates a vulnerability to ruin. This is the fundamental drama of Dasein: “The notion of chronolibido thereby seeks to capture both the terror and the beauty of being a *temporal* being, namely, a being who can suffer, can lose things, and can die, but for

²⁷ Heidegger, 232-233

²⁸ Heidegger, 233

²⁹ Heidegger, 234

that very reason also has a sense of what it means for something to be precious, to be valuable, to be worth caring for.”³⁰ It is, too, the very mood of anxiety.

Conclusion

Time-reckoning is our involvement with time and depends upon how we understand it. The ordinary understanding of time, reckons with time as present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) or ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*). Our mode of care is concern (*Bersorgen*), and that concern depends on a double-bind to fear. *Chronophobia* makes the fear of time salient: it inevitably passes and we struggle to make sense of its passing. Instead of engaging in the world authentically, our hands reach out to hold on to the “now,” but it has already evaporated, and we do not know where we are any longer. Yet, Heidegger tells us that time is nothing but disclosive of our own finitude. We care about time because it is us. In understanding this, we are able to engage in the world authentically. For one, our care is *Selbstsorge*: we care about the kinds of people we are in the world. For another, in grasping our own finitude and death, the possibility of impossibility, we project ourselves into the possibilities that reflect us. The mood of this authentic existence is anxiety.

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³⁰ Hägglund, 155

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