**Death, Sex, and the Body: Phenomenology and Foucault**

**Handout/worksheet on *Being and Time*, Chapter Four:**

**Being-in-the-world as co-being and being-oneself. The ‘one’ (§§25-27)**

This important reading assignment isn’t terribly long, and you needn’t spend all that much time on §25. So if you’d like to write on this Chapter, please do your best to complete all six exercises given here.

It’s possible to think of Chapter Four of Division I of *Being and Time* as doing something like providing a philosophical foundation for psychology, social psychology, sociology, and anthropology. One thing that Heidegger makes quite clear is that we are just as fundamentally being-with-others as we are being-in-the-world. As we revolve around our being in an everyday way, we by and large understand *ourselves* in terms of the public possibilities given in the various communities that we belong to. We don’t simply make up who we are or will become, but rather appropriate possible ways of living our lives from these public possibilities. I didn’t invent the possibility of being a professor, for example, but picked it up from professors I’ve observed, and then improvised on it.

*§25. Approaching the existential question of Dasein’s ‘who’:*

In this section, Heidegger reiterates something he’s already said repeatedly: our human existence isn’t best understood as a special kind of “present” substance: a mind divorced from the world and from others.

*§26. The co-Dasein of others and everyday co-being:*

As Heidegger will explicate in §40, Dasein’s being is *care*. As such, it takes different *perspectives* on entities, and does so in terms of a *horizon* of possibilities specific to the entities it encounters from a given perspective. Each such way of encountering entities is a kind of *care*. Being-in-the-world is the *perspective* from which Dasein *takes care* of the handy equipment and practical possibilities that it’s “at.” The “horizon” of being-in-the-world is the *world*: the complex web of practical implications and deployments that we have in virtue of the skills and habits we’ve acquired. When we take care of handy things, we’re guided by the kind of “sight” that he calls “circumspection,” which we could also think of as “looking around.” Just as basic to our being – and Heidegger calls such identical “basicness” *equioriginariness* – is the fact that we essentially stand in some relations to other Daseins, which he calls “co-Dasein” (p. 118). Heidegger calls the “perspective” that we take on other persons, naturally enough, “being-with-others” (e.g., p. 120). The kind of care we employ when we deal with other people is *caring for* them (p. 121), and the kind of “sight” that we use to figure out what they’re like and how to treat them is “respect,” or “looking-after” (p. 123). All this takes place within the complex network of possible ways to be a person that Heidegger calls “the ‘one.’” Here, we should think of how “one” properly is a good child, parent, employee, boss, teacher, student, or simply someone who eats with a knife and fork. Note that different communities involve somewhat different understandings of what “one” ought to do. In the U.S., for example, ‘one’ both cuts food and places it into one’s mouth using one’s right hand, whereas in Europe ‘one’ cuts food with one’s right hand but places it into one’s mouth using one’s left hand. We can never avoid the fact that the ‘one’ is one of the horizons of our being. For this reason, Heidegger insists that the ‘one’ is an “existential,” i.e., an *essential* feature of our being (first full paragraph on p. 129).

*Exercise 1:* If Heidegger is right that being-with-others is an essential, unavoidable aspect of who we are, what should we make of someone, like a hermit or recluse, who shuns other people? Is there a sense in which someone like this still counts as being-with-others? What could he mean when he writes: “Absence and ‘being away’ are modes of co-Dasein, and are possible only because Dasein as co-being lets the Dasein of others be encountered in its world” (p. 121); and: “Even if one’s respective factical Dasein does *not* turn to others, believes itself not to be in need of them, or else does without them, it *is* in the manner of co-being” (p. 123)?

*Exercise 2:* Explain the two extreme ways in which someone can be with other people: jumping in for, and jumping ahead of (p. 122). Give an example of both.

*§27. Everyday being-oneself and the ‘one’:*

Unfortunately, this important section of *Being and Time* has been frequently misinterpreted. Part of this is due to unfortunate translations. I’ve tried to correct some of these misinterpretations with my choice of English terms to translate Heidegger’s German ones.

Here’s how *not* to understand §27, but is more or less how both English translations would suggest. Being with other people is basically a “drag,” and when we’re with others, we tend to be “inauthentic” in several ways, where “inauthenticity” is something negative that we shouldn’t be. Instead of really treating other people as people, we just treat them as “they” do. Some negative things about being-with others (wrongly) appear to be the following. (1) We tend to avoid intimacy with them, instead remaining “distant” from them. (2) We tend to be conformist, in the sense of striving to be humdrum and “average.” (3) When we do this, we tend never to excel at anything, but instead “level ourselves down” to the “least common denominator.” (4) We tend never to have any private lives, but instead strive to make everything about ourselves “public.” As such, we tend to look for excuses for not being authentic, such that we “disburden” a supposedly quasi-moral obligation to be authentic. According to this common misinterpretation, we *should* act quite differently than we do in society: finally casting aside the burden of being members of society, and becoming heroically “authentic” people: expressing our “true selves,” and hence being extraordinary, non-conformist “individuals.” Again, please note that this is *not* the best way to understand this Chapter.

A much more accurate, and interesting, way to understand §27 is as describing how being-with-others in the various communities we belong to with them is not just unavoidable, but also *makes it possible* for us to take ownership of ourselves. I hence translate Heidegger’s term *Eigentlichkeit* not as “authenticity,” but as “self-ownership.” We do this when we confront the fact that we’re going to die; the mood we’re in when we do this is *anxiety* (the now-famous *Angst*). Only then can we radically choose who we will become – but when we do this we *must* choose to become some possible way(s) of being a self that we appropriate from the horizon of the ‘one.’ Heidegger will describe this in detail in Chapters One and Two of Division II.

For now, here’s some more important terminology:

everyday Dasein = the ‘one’-self = how Dasein is “by and large” = non-selfownership

*Exercise 3:* One way in which my translation departs from others is in using the term “having-a-standing-with-respect-to-others” (second paragraph on p. 126). (Another option would have been “having-a-*status*-with-respect-to-others.”) I find this much better than the standard “distantiality.” How do you understand the phenomenon of having-a-standing-with-respect-to-others, and how is this different from being “distant” from others?

*Exercise 4*: Another way in which my translation departs from others is in using the term “normal” and “normality” (first full paragraph on p. 127). I find this much better than the standard “average” and “averageness,” which suggest that the horizon of the ‘one’ somehow exerts a fundamental pull on us to conform to what most people (are expected to) do. By “normal,” on the other hand, I mean “*intelligible* with respect to the ***norms*** that help define the communities to which we belong.” So here’s a question: can what someone does be completely non-average (say, by doing things exceedingly well or exceedingly sloppily), but nevertheless *intelligible* by the “norm-ality” of our communities?

As a matter of terminology, *the ‘one’* is the “horizon” of communal norms according to which what we do makes sense to ourselves and to each other. The *‘one’-self*, on the other hand, is the mode of being oneself in which one hasn’t taken ownership of oneself by having confronted their mortality. Heidegger explains this fairly clearly in the second full paragraph on p. 129).

*Exercise 5*: Try to make sense of the important, italicized sentence toward the very end of this Chapter: “*Being oneself self-owningly doesn’t rest upon an exceptional state in which the subject is detached from the ‘one,’ but is an existentiell modification of the ‘one’ as an essential existential*” (p. 130).

Here’s a very important point about the text of *Being and Time*. In the 14th edition (published right around Heidegger’s death), he corrected an error that had appeared in previous editions *and in both English translations!* Where he originally, and mistakenly, had “The ‘one’ itself,” he corrected this to “The ‘one-self’…” I discuss this crucial correction in the last endnote of this Chapter. It occurs in the 5th sentence in the 2nd full paragraph on p. 129.

*Exercise 6:* Explain why the above-mentioned correction is important. (Hint: it has to do with whether we could ever shed the existential horizon of the ‘one.’)