Accommodating thrown-being in the world

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Abstract

In *Accommodating thrown-being in the world*, I bring the facticity of an unchosen existence into focus for philosophical investigation. I place this feature of the human condition centrally within a conceptual framework from which I analyse it from an ontological and then a concrete perspective. It is the method I adopt to understand firstly what it means to be such a being and, secondly, to take this understanding into the context of the lived problems that surface on account of our initial unchosen lives. This juxtaposition uses the structure of the underlying ways we have our being to elucidate a possible approach, or *ethos*, to the seemingly intractable problems of difference, inequalities and contingent ways of being a human. My guiding objective in this thesis is to validate the rationale for proposing this *ethos*, which is to embrace the fact of our initial unchosen being as a way of nurturing receptivity to the equivalent fact of this unchosen aspect in other lives. The central question is that if I did not choose my life and you did not choose yours, how are we to accommodate this fact within philosophical thought? Is there something purposeful to be said of thrown-being that can illuminate my unchosen start in life, and can this explanatory light be extended to my relationship with others?

I am not content to leave the idea of thrown-being in the background of philosophical thought as something ‘given’, instead in this thesis I treat it as a problem that must be approached in a positive way because we must all persist with an unchosen existence. I take the term ‘thrown-being’ from Heidegger’s ontology, which has been seminal for the ideas in this thesis. It has allowed me to look at the human condition from within its ways of being, which is to understand it at the deepest level of how we navigate the fact of our existence. We are thrown-beings into a projective way of being. Therefore, any thinking we do about this being is always after the fact. I can only reflect on the fact of my unchosen initial life. It is this characteristic that justifies the use of ontology as part of my methodology in this thesis.

After explaining Heidegger’s existential analytic, I engage with Jean-Luc Nancy’s development of the existential of being-with. This is provided as part of Nancy’s thesis of being singular plural, which is a way of understanding that sense and meaning, as the foci of being, are made through the interplay between subjects who are themselves objects in a never-ending sequence of exchange and repetition. Meaning is made at the limit of sense and can identify a singular experience of being. This idea of thinking at the limit is useful to my argument that thrown-being gives us a meaning of homelessness, which because of our essential ontological nature is at the same time a shared meaning. However, it is only through authentic being that we can actually face this particular
meaning of our facticity. It is also authenticity that affords the opportunity for responsibility. This proto-ethical position is important to validate the necessity of an ethos.

My final chapters provide additional justificatory ground for this ethos. They highlight my concern with the ways in which inequalities and luck can be linked back to the situation of our unchosen start in life. I employ the perspectives of a number of philosophers from the analytic, European and feminist traditions. Inequalities arise in the conditions of one’s birth, which give us an unchosen physicality as well as unchosen environmental and social contexts. In the mêlée of competition for limited resources and concomitant recriminations of injustice in a society, it is easy to forget the ‘originary injustice’ of thrown-being. The effect of luck, which to some extent starts at birth, adds to the burden of taking up an unchosen life. A person is therefore owed respect in view of this burden. Another way of understanding what is required of the individual is by looking at risk as the way of describing how humans have projective beings. It can be seen as a way of living creatively into an unknowable future. But if such a thought of creativity can be held authentically, we can also see that it encompasses a fundamental responsibility that falls exclusively to the individual. By remembering that each person is tasked in this way we might be willing to be more open in our relationships to each other.
Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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None.

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No publications included.

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No contributions by others.

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None.
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Introduction

“Here as elsewhere thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against Being. To think against values therefore does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and nullity of beings. It means rather to bring the clearing of the truth of Being before thinking, as against subjectivizing beings into mere objects.” Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*1

1. A personal perspective

From the time I was young enough to understand the difference between individuals, I have been bothered in a particular way by this difference. Perhaps it started with my brother who was just a year older than me. I remember as a four year old stroking his hand, trying to straighten it. It was bent over and consequently he couldn’t participate in many of my games, which I found frustrating. I was also confused as to why, even though he belonged to the same family as me, he wasn’t like me. I was happy throwing balls, catching them and generally tumbling around the place. I was very sad that my brother could not do any of these things. I was also certain that he would not have chosen this condition for himself.

As an adult, the articulation of my childhood concern with difference became: why is it forgotten between individuals that we do not choose to come into the world as the persons we are? Difference is such a potent cause of segregation, conflict and recrimination. But no one chooses the initial conditions of their difference to one another. My brother’s partial paralysis of the left side of his body from birth was not chosen by him. The stark difference in our abilities brought with it a sense of injustice and angst in the child that I was. It could just as easily have been me who was born disabled. I have never forgotten the thought that it could have been me.

In this thesis I want to return to a remembering that we did not choose our beings. I want to remember this in the context of our relationships with others and particularly because we judge others on their lives. I cannot respond to my original question as to why the fact of unchosen difference is forgotten since that type of question probably requires a complex psychological analysis. However, I can ask other philosophically relevant questions, such as *what does it mean to be in an unchosen existence?* How are we to think of being such an unchosen existence and how are we to think of others who are similarly having to be theirs? By examining these questions

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ontologically and concretely, I can show that there is an originary sense of this unchosen being that all existents share. I also show that the ontological way we share meaning and understanding offers a foundation for ethical consideration of each other as ‘thrown-being’ existents.

I choose ontology to found my arguments because it describes pragmatically how humans in fact are and so avoids appeal to ideologies, theologies and other social constructions that concern themselves with how humans should be. The ideas presented in this thesis are intended to be applicable to any individual irrespective of the socio-political regime she finds herself subject to. Consequently, I will not be arguing towards changes in an ideology or advocating some new ethical system, instead I will be applying the discussions in this thesis to the way humans are capable of being and therefore thinking. As a result of this approach, my ontologically founded arguments should be a useful lens with which to examine some of the recurrent effects of an unchosen existence. I appeal to the most common concrete effects of this existence in the final two chapters in order to demonstrate as clearly as possible the need to think in a more universal way about one’s own life and those of others whom we engage with. I am committed to a universal outcome that is uninfluenced by religious thinking, cultural conventions, or any other segregating way of being in the world. As a consequence of the ontological approach, I also hope to find a deeper understanding for how we relate to each other at the level of being human and so sharing the same ontological system of being.

The last part of the thesis examines how unchosen lives within a collective raises the problem of inequality where some people have more of society’s goods than others. Another phenomenon that is strongly tied in with the issue of inequality is the problem of luck and how it contributes positively and negatively to an individual’s unchosen existence. Our initial starts in life accommodate favourably or adversely the incidental circumstances that crop up throughout our lives. In spite of these effects, however, we are required to integrate the challenge of luck with our future selves and resultant moral identity. The resolute conduct of a life in the face of such challenges is the task that an unchosen existence demands from us. It presents an opportunity to express new ways to be as well as a challenge effected by the differences which manifest between selves. I will be proposing that an ethos of remembering our unchosen origins, which I am examining in this thesis, will give a sharpened perspective on these constant challenges of individual and communal life.

2. The concept and the problem of unchosen being
The concept of an unchosen existence, on the one hand, is easily understood; a given life is so obviously unchosen when we see a child afflicted from birth with a disability. On the other hand, the abstraction of the idea and the consequences of such an existence are as difficult to bring into focus as is comprehending existence itself. I will be taking ‘unchosen existence’ to mean that nothing about one’s initial existential being is chosen by the self who must thereafter identify with that specific existence. I also use the term ‘unchosen being’ to talk about ‘being in’ such an unchosen initial existence, especially when I am trying to emphasise that such an initial existence must be endured and continued as a thrown-being who has no choice but to do so. The absence of choice for one’s originary being encompasses the ontic fact that one is thrown into a life and therefore thrown into the relationships and concrete environmental conditions of that life. As I have already stated, I will not be appealing to any metaphysical schematic for this being. I approach the problem of unchosen being in the purest tradition of existentialism; from the fact one exists.

This thesis takes up the challenge of understanding an existence in these terms and proposing arguments for why it is important that we should be more cognisant of this forgotten ‘unchosen’ nature of our existence, both despite and because it is a ubiquitous characteristic of it. What challenges me is the fact we do not seem to dwell on it as a problem which needs to be thought about. Instead, real situations of obviously unchosen disadvantage, such as a disabled child, are treated as instances of ‘bad luck’. It may evoke sympathy as an immediate reaction, but as a problem it is most likely to be dismissed as a genetic abnormality, or as a malfunction of the gestational process. In other words, the problem is consigned to a technical fault.

There are of course many examples other than one’s physicality that are construed as instances of unchosen good and bad luck. Some of these other examples are one’s ethnicity, culture, one’s immediate family and the wider community into which one is born, plus the socio-economic strata of this community into which one falls. An aspect of unchosen being, which I exemplify in my thesis, is country of birth. I use this specific example to demonstrate, by the broadest brushstroke of luck, how the grave divide between ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ countries of birth, in terms of being able to exercise one’s potentialities, can make such a significant difference to how a life comes to be lived. For example, our media and technological interfaces effectively serve to insulate us from the real tragedy and horrors that unfold in countries afflicted by war and famine. One can easily pretend they are not part of our world, or there was never a possibility that we could have been born in a place which facilitated an early demise or, at best, a difficult life. I am fully cognisant that tragedy of different types than war and displacement occurs in what one might consider ‘safe’ countries that are not exposed to these conditions. Children are constantly born into situations that challenge and
misdirect any positive potentialities their lives might otherwise have had. These problematic facts of existence add to my motivation for opening up an unchosen life, wherever it is lived, as a real existential problem deserving of close scrutiny.

To treat the problem in the abstract, however, requires that one foregrounds the thought that one could have been other than one is. This thought opens up questions of what it means ‘to be’ at all for a human being and how we are to integrate an unchosen existence with this understanding. Another question that follows is whether there is some useful understanding to be grasped from the facticity of unchosen existence? Can this understanding be extended to our relationships with others? Finally, what can we do with this knowledge if we were able to consciously integrate it with the way we are in our concrete existence? I intend these questions to bring directly into focus the problems of unchosen being. As an initial step, I will offer a possible reason why this issue of unchosen being does not receive earnest consideration. It relates to the anthropology of human beings and anticipates the existential analytic of Martin Heidegger.

For as long as there have been human communities, we have been producers of our sustenance and fabricators of our environments. The creation and manipulation of technologies is a defining characteristic of the existent human being. However, the one thing we have not made is ourselves. This is the prevailing enigma of human existence; the fact that one is. A reason for being cannot be known, at least not in the practice of enquiry I am adopting in this thesis, however, how one has being can be investigated and on this basis explanations for why one has being in particular ways may be drawn. Heidegger’s model for investigating being from the human perspective is Dasein. He says it ‘is not a free-floating self-projection; but its character is determined by thrownness as a Fact of the entity which it is; and, as so determined, it has in each case already been delivered over to existence, and it constantly so remains’ (BT p. 276). Thus ‘thrownness’ is the sort of being a human has; it is predetermined in its composition and circumstances and it is always ahead of itself. The difference between Heidegger’s ‘thrown-being’ and my rendition of ‘unchosen being’ is that mine harks back to the original situation of ‘thrown-being’ as I defined it earlier. Thrown-being on the other hand is Heidegger’s on-going functional characterisation of being that is always existing (being) in the world ahead of itself. Thus thrown-being incorporates my understanding of unchosen being as a reflection on its originary condition.

2 Heidegger refers to this sense of enigma several times in Being and Time. Simon Critchley (2008) comments that at the heart of Being and Time there is an ‘enigmatic a priori’, which is a ‘fundamental opacity’ that ‘both seems to resist phenomenological description and is that in relation to which the phenomenologist describes’ (Critchley 2008, p. 138). I read Critchley as saying the human’s being is what concerns the phenomenologist who describes this being, for example, Heidegger, however, the fact that is inaccessible to Heidegger, and to anyone else for that matter, is why particular human beings exist in the first place.

3 Please note that BT refers to Being and Time throughout the thesis. The reference for this text is given on page 164.
The peculiarity of not being the ground of one’s own existence provides the particular distinction to an ontological understanding of how our being works. How can you describe, let alone accept, the physicality and ways of being the entity that is yourself, one which already exists before you can cognitively accommodate it? Taking up this challenge is the task of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. This is the primary text for my thesis along with Jean-Luc Nancy’s texts which describe the ontology of inter-relationality and how sense is made in being.

The question that follows on from the ontological explication of thrown-being, is how do we think about our inter-relations when none of us chose our original beings in their physicality or environmental situation? On what basis should we understand each other given that the superficial manifestations of our identity most concretely represents the unchosen aspects of our beings, for example, skin colour, mode of dress and language (understood as our inherited genetic and cultural characteristics), by which we generally recognise and relate to each other? In fact, it is usually on the basis of this superficial appearance that we form opinions, endorsements or rejections of each other. This is the primary motivation for this study; to provide a rationale for understanding that the other person did not choose to have particular physical attributes, or to be brought up to hold certain cultural and religious views, just as I did not choose these things for myself.

In the context of relationships to others, it is necessary to see how the problem of unchosen being evolves directly into the issue of inequality in the collective of human society. Few of us can exist in isolation; none of us come into being in isolation. The most obvious instance of this is that we each need two others in order to come into being and then become totally dependent on one of them for nine months. After birth, our dependency on others marks the on-going condition of our beings; we need others to help us create the sense of our world. Consequently, we come to see our beings in relation to others. Heidegger’s and Nancy’s conception of philosophies of inter-relationality are critical to my choice of primary texts. In both views, being and, importantly, its meaning requires other beings.

For the purpose of this thesis’ objective, I draw attention to the fact that each ‘other’ has a different existence to mine because of his or her starting context in life. Some of these beginnings were more propitious than mine for the available goods of my society. Meanwhile, other starts have set up other individuals for difficulties and failure in securing for themselves the basic requirements of a viable existence. Of course, inequalities can grow or diminish throughout one’s life, and at any given point in life there are factors external to one’s initial unchosen life that affect one’s
potentialities. For example, I could win the lottery and start to enjoy a very nice lifestyle that I
didn’t have before. Equally possible, I might have a bad accident which disables me and curtails
any good quality of life I had been enjoying. Despite these external effects of luck, in this thesis I
maintain that the seeds of inequality are largely sewn from our circumstances at birth, and life
events germinate these for better or worse. Therefore, apart from the good and bad incidental luck,
such as winning the lottery or having a bad accident, there is much that is already \textit{latent} in our
physical facticity of genetics and social context, for example, which may manifest later in life. This
is the point I stress and is contained in the notion of ‘unchosen being’.

How society deals with the inequality between its citizens is a matter for the particular politics and
ideologies that prevail in that society. In an egalitarian, democratic society, however, the usual way
of attempting to equalize inequalities is by some sort of justified redistribution of goods. The
justifications can be problematic since claims to goods have to be weighed against what is
(questionably) deemed necessary for a certain standard of living in that society. (In a non-
egalitarian society the disparity in access to the goods of that society can be enormous.) It is not the
objective of this thesis to engage with the political issues surrounding the question of inequality.
Instead, this topic is discussed to demonstrate the serious social implications of an unchosen
existence and why exemplification of this aspect of our being is warranted.

The final comments I want to make about the problem of unchosen being concerns how we choose
to live with it. As already stated, the ontological construct of thrownness means we are always
already existing into the future and into new experiences. This forward oriented mode of existence
brings along with it its legacy of initial thrown-being, and ontic forms of constitutive and
circumstantial luck, also the consequential luck that accompanies a life. Good and bad things
happen; opportunities and challenges must be met. How we integrate these opportunities and
challenges into our existence is a mark of how willing we are to accept our unchosen being and its
consequences, and whether we are capable of taking these up responsibly. Unchosen being requires
that we become responsible for the choices we make and for the persons we hope to be. This has to
be done in the context of not knowing how things will turn out. Nevertheless, we are fated to move
inexorably forward, taking up our being. We can do this authentically and thereby understand that it
is a challenge shared with everyone else, or we can do this inauthentically and deflect responsibility
while treating our own lives and that of others instrumentally. In an ontological sense we may have
been abandoned to an unchosen life, but as concrete beings if we can remember that everyone else
is equally abandoned to their lives, then this may be a stronger basis on which to approach a life.
The methods and rationale I employ for studying unchosen being, the relationships between such beings, and an explanation of the interpretations to be drawn from analyses of these relationships, both ontologically and ontically, are explained next.

3. Methodology

My investigation of thrown-being follows two parallel and contiguous paths. One path is concerned with the phenomena associated with thrown-being analysed ontologically, the other path is concerned with the effects of thrown-being manifest as an originally unchosen life.

I use the ontological theory to illuminate the ontic problems of thrown-being, which in turn validates employing the ontological account of how and why humans ‘are’. I make this claim because ontology attempts to be a universal and pragmatic way of describing how a human has its being and looking at lived problems through this lens avoids the obscuring influence of prescriptive socio-political viewpoints. It serves my purpose because I am seeking such a system to respond to the problems of the universally superficial distinctions on which relationships are made and on which socio-political systems organised in the first place. I believe that without an ontological basis from which to understand the human being as a result of the facticity of her thrown-being type of existence, a purely ontic approach would become bogged down in an instrumentalised solution to the problems of an unchosen life, one which does not take into consideration the deep, underlying reasons for them. Therefore, my approach grounds itself in the fact that all humans have such a being. Consequently, it is from this fact that an ethos for thinking about such a shared fate of unchosen being might be interpreted as a concrete approach to the problem.

I adopt a pluralistic approach to the materials for study in this thesis in order to give myself a wide context for examining the thesis questions before I allow myself to settle on possible responses. Initially, I draw on ontology, phenomenology and existentialism in the European philosophical tradition. This groundwork is followed by certain feminist perspectives on birth and oppression which advance the concerns I have for an unchosen being. I also employ selected analytic commentaries on the issues of inequality and moral luck, which are effects of an unchosen existence which are just as concerning. The theoretical discussions in Chapters One, Two and Three are grounded in the hermeneutic ontologies of two continental philosophers, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Luc Nancy, and serve to unfold the ontological understanding that will help with thinking through the challenges of an unchosen life (BT p.276; Nancy 1997, pp. 56-57).
What Heidegger and Nancy offer are hermeneutic ontologies as a way of explaining the phenomenon of being from the perspective of a being-in-the-world. To become clear about what an unchosen existence is, it is necessary to first describe what it means to be such an existence. I find Heidegger’s ontology appealing for many reasons. Firstly, his account of being is given from a human perspective with no allusion to knowledge of anything outside this existence. Secondly, he takes as the starting point of human existence, thrown-being, which is his term for the being that is ‘delivered over’ into a set of unchosen circumstances which constitutes its ‘world’. Thrown-being is critical to the ontology of how a being who arrives involuntarily into existence has being thereafter. All Dasein understand their world in the mode of being-with each other. Other (non-human) beings and things are encountered environmentally. All knowledge of the world is from the perspective of the existent, Dasein and its being-with feature. This approach suits my objective for investigating human being-in-the-world and with each other.

In discussing Heidegger’s analyses taken from Being and Time (1962), as well as a number of his other texts, I refer to commentary given by some of his interlocutors on certain aspects of his thinking. The following are some of the commentaries referred to and their usefulness to the thesis: John Richardson (2012) speculates on how the existential of care could be understood as a form of non-cognitive intentionality if taken as internal to Heidegger’s being-towards structures. I provisionally accept this interpretation because I find in my study of Being and Time that attunement, for example, appears to act as a motivational force originating from, and directing, Dasein’s ways of being, most obviously seen in Heidegger’s analyses of anxiety. As another commentator, I reference Simon Critchley’s (1999) essay on Heidegger’s ‘enigma’ to reinforce my argument for the possibility of ‘homelessness’ as a source of ontologically shared meaning and a necessary feature of Dasein’s being. The inescapable fact of existence resists phenomenological analysis since there is no point outside of an existence from which to describe the phenomenon. Critchley’s observation of ‘originary inauthenticity’ is similarly an illuminating discussion of das Man’s impact on Dasein. His argument is that the centrality of the socially formed ‘inauthentic’ self and its influence on futural Dasein should have at least as much cogency as authentic Dasein’s relationship to its heritage. The ontic corollary of this argument is that one’s futural self is as indebted to one’s situational past as anything we might will for ourselves. Raffoul’s (2002; 2010; 2012) commentaries on responsibility, and facticity as abandonment to sense, help me to argue for the respect owed a life by virtue of it having to be taken up in its unchosen condition. Both these latter commentators are also important reviewers of Nancy’s work.
Even though Heidegger’s analyses are so important to the groundwork for my thesis, there is one context of explanation that is brief and expediently treated in *Being and Time*. It is the analysis of being with others; in other words what the presence of others (humans and non-humans) means for the ways of being (a human). Therefore, to fill in Heidegger’s lack of elaboration with respect to being as ‘relating’, I turn to Jean-Luc Nancy for whom the idea of being-with and sense-making is of fundamental importance to his ontological and political thinking. Nancy is an important critical commentator of Heidegger and provides a vital extrapolation of how being-with occasions sense and meaning. Nancy is also able to elucidate how the ontological human being understands itself in relation to others, in relation to its temporality, and in relation to its abandoned state as thrown-being.

In Nancy’s version of a first philosophy, ‘to be’ is to make sense and sense-making requires another existent. The sharing of being with another existent is the locus of understanding for our being. Ontological understanding is an understanding that has nothing to do with mental states and cognition. Instead, it describes the way in which the sense of something is taken up as being. Moreover, this sense can only arise through Dasein’s being-with existential. Nancy’s perspective on ontological understanding demonstrates a dynamic, active responsibility for sense in existence. As Nancy (2000) puts it, ‘Our understanding (of the meaning of Being) is an understanding that we share understanding between us and, at the same time, because we share understanding between us’ (Nancy 2000, p. 99). Nancy’s use of sharing in this context is also different to the usual concept of ‘joint ownership’, or the division of something to leave no remainder. Sharing for Nancy rests on his thinking of the ‘singular plural’ in which being is not separable from its own possibility, which is being, but rather sharing is a ‘partaking’ (*partage*) of Being without assuming ownership of it. Being, as the overall concept, cannot be owned or ‘extracted from’, it can only be partaken of. Nancy extends this paradigm of thinking about how sense is happens to the ontic realm to show that singular physical instances of sense come about because a human being exists in a plural world of shared meaning.

As I stress, it is in recognising the other person to be as challenged by unchosen being as I am, that I argue the basis for enhanced interpersonal understanding and respect. The main commentators who help with my discussions of Nancy’s ontology are the following: Fredrick Olafson (1998) makes strong arguments for the proto-ethical nature of Mitsein, one of which is the complementary nature of our being in relation to others. Because of thrown-being, the ethical self is *a priori* a relational self. The static prescriptions of ethics cannot accommodate the ontological facticity of the way a human has its being, which is always ahead of any prescription there might be for it. Olafson (1998)
also comments on how truth can be understood pragmatically as whatever is manifest through one’s Mitsein relationships. One’s interests, whether authentically or inauthentically conceived, always stands in relation to others. Francois Raffoul (2002) emphasises that Dasein represents the coessentiality of self and other and it is only through the disruption of this structure that the ‘other’ is signified. He asserts that it is this foundational relationship that is the ground for ethics. Raffoul (2012) also discusses the absence of essence for existence because existence is abandonment. Therefore, in its abandonment existence must appropriate meaning, which can only derive from being-in-a world and with others. Walter Brogan (2002) identifies a community that is ‘fundamentally mortal’ (Brogan 2002, p. 241), meaning all who have a being-towards-death. This community is an example of an authentic human community because the individuals in it cannot be interchanged. I replay this final perspective with my own analogy of being-towards an unchosen existence. We are all individualised by an unchosen life that is unique, but we are all united in the unchosen nature of it.

I examine the call of conscience and existential ‘guilt’ in terms of Dasein ‘coming back to itself’. Dasein can do this by coming back to itself as the ground of its being, i.e. thrown-being, or it can come back to itself as Dasein in its sole preoccupation with things of the world. The former mode is that of authenticity and the latter, inauthenticity. Authenticity is also relevant to my argument because it produces a genuine relationship to one’s thrown-being. It demands facing the facticity of one’s own being without covering it up by the roles which disguise it through our ways of being in the world. With an understanding of the limitations and potentials for one’s being, one’s own thrown-being takes on a personal meaning, but at the same time, because of our ontological nature of being-with, it is a shared meaning. Therefore, Nancy’s being-with ontology, which redefines the meaning of being as inter-relationality, and Heidegger’s authentic relationship to thrown-being, are coupled to provide the basis for my claim that inequality and moral luck, which are contingent features of thrown-being, can be ameliorated by an ethos of consciously remembering that one’s life is fundamentally unchosen. Further, it is an understanding (in the deep ontological sense) which is shared with others.

In the final two chapters I go on to provide the evidence for why such an ethos is necessary. After the onto-existential chapters of the thesis, I switch focus to a parallel ontic discussion for thrown-being as represented by a lived life. In presenting the phenomena of inequality and moral luck, I am demonstrating the most concrete effects of thrown-being on the self which comes to pass. Chapters Four and Five vindicate my concern with ‘unchosen being’ as they make a case for how the facticity of a life in the communal context affects the equality of individuals in that community, and
how, at the personal level, our relationships to ourselves and to others who judge us are affected by the contingent manifestations of moral luck. Birth is where we are introduced into the communal context; consequently, it has a place in my thesis. I argue that pregnancy and birth are often not adequately supported by the parents or their living situation, or even worse, the pregnancy is unintended and the birth is unwanted. In these circumstances, birth places an originary challenge on the new thrown-being’s potentialities for a fruitful life. I use the work of Caroline Lundquist (2008) and Luce Irigaray (2008) to support my view that birth is very much a challenging, physical manifestation of thrown-being, not just for the new person, but also for all who participate in that life. Birth provides the first evidence for the relational and contingent situations that may lie in the future.

Bernard Williams’ and Thomas Nagel’s essays on moral luck, and Williams’ essay on equality, are important texts for my demonstration of the basic problems constitutive of each of these phenomena. These authors come from a different (analytic) tradition of philosophy to that of Heidegger and Nancy. Nevertheless, as I am now writing from the perspective of lived problems, I believe it is appropriate to reference this type of applied thinking. What Williams’ commentary on equality highlights is that the personal situation of what is needed for a rewarding life, versus the public context of who deserves assistance in achieving such a life, is a very complex problem. The public template for servicing need on the basis of merit is necessarily utilitarian and rigid for the sake of its administration and control. By contrast, the situation at the personal level obtains through interpersonal and contextual relationships and therefore does not always match the solution that is available.

In addition to the inequalities that come into effect on one’s birth, there arise the incidental situations that affect one’s potential future selves. One’s experience of one’s life, and consequently one’s view of the self, is shaped by the contingency of luck. In sum, individual exposure to these effects lie beyond the capabilities of total governmental redress. Richard Sennet (2004) and Iris Marion Young (1997) acknowledge the impossibility of real equality, but believe that there may be equality in terms of the respect we afford each other. Young advocates an attitude of asymmetrical reciprocity. This is a communicative ethic which acknowledges difference, but endorses a preparedness to listen to the other with the understanding that one can never get hold of the whole sense of the other’s being. This remainder represents the concrete dignity and identity of the incommensurability of the other. Marguerite La Caze (2008) adds her note of caution for being mindful of this remainder because it often represents the consequences of oppression that mar the other’s ability for self-representation. One should not be mislead into thinking that another’s self
can be fully grasped and differences in life perspectives annulled through attempting respectful communication alone. Nevertheless, I endorse this asymmetrical approach since I believe it is in respectful but incommensurable relationships across differences, entered into with a conscious awareness of the shared nature of our originary unchosen lives, that we can begin to understand each other.

As a final discussion, I return to a consideration of the individual condition, more particularly the individual self. In moral luck we have the situation where the original circumstances of thrown-being, together with incident luck, can give rise to conditions that affect one’s relationship to the self and which includes one’s moral self-image. Though I do not pursue any particular ethic in this thesis, it is critical to appreciate how certain unchosen life conditions, as well as incidental circumstances, can come to create a human being with a certain ethical disposition. The task of securing a moral self is not just dependent on good intentions. Because of luck, a lived life is something that is hard-won and, therefore, deserving of respect for others’ and our own efforts. For this discussion I revisit Heidegger (2008) in one of his later texts, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’. I argue by analogy that living a thrown-being existence we did not choose is a risk-taking venture and also a creative one. It is by thinking of the lived life in terms of assuming one’s potential that we can gain a measure of control over our lives, which thrown-being seemed to have removed.

My overall argument is that though my existence is originally unchosen, I need to treat it as an opportunity to explore possibilities without making any claims about what sort of life this should be. In doing so, I should also remember that other lives are equally grounded in an unchosen being and these other lives are similarly challenged to be meaningful. My objective is to deepen the perspective we have on a life, mine and the other person’s. Rather than looking at a life as a presented facticity and judging it on that basis, we should also see it as an unchosen project delivered over to a self. We need an approach to difference that goes deeper than the superficiality of emotive judgements that are generally engaged with.

I will end this section with a note on the presentation of the word ‘being’ in the text of this thesis. The capitalised ‘Being’ will be used to mean the ontology of existence that is the subject of Heidegger’s investigation. This is how he uses it when he talks about the question of Being (Chapter One). The lower case ‘being’ could be an entity; it could also refer to specific ways of being, such as Dasein’s projective being. I will use ‘ways of being’ to differentiate from the entity. I will also point out that where necessary I illustrate my discussions with imaginary examples as well as personal ones.
4. Thesis outline

Each chapter has an introductory section to act as a brief road map of the chapter’s contents. I start my discussions in Chapter One by providing the rationale for Heidegger’s objective in *Being and Time*. This objective is to answer the question of the meaning of Being. The principal vehicle for the investigation of what this meaning might be is taken from the perspective of the entity asking the question. Heidegger calls ‘Dasein’ the way of being of this entity. Understanding the phenomena of how Dasein has its being is an essential starting point for Heidegger’s ontology. Dasein finds itself an existing thing that is always projecting a being-towards the future. It is its arrival in a particular facticity that Heidegger describes as thrown-being. Thrown-being is the aspect of the ontological human that is the object of study for my thesis. Dasein’s primary concern is about its being and Heidegger calls this ‘care’ (BT p. 231). Care serves to unite Dasein temporally as a self. Much of the first chapter describes the everyday being of the human ontologically. This way of being is known as being-in-the-world. Dasein forms and interacts with its world through three interdependent modes: disclosedness, understanding and discourse. Underlying being-in-the-world is the attunement of anxiety generated through the essential care Dasein has for its existence, which it finds uncanny. The notion of uncanniness comes to be an important part of my overall objective that I solidify in Chapter Three after I explain the important role of being-with in its development of this goal.

In Chapter Two I introduce Jean-Luc Nancy’s philosophy of ‘being-with’, which is the existential that explains how one’s being-in-the-world comes to have sense and meaning. It is through the interaction of one event of being with another that the ways of being for the human being come to be defined. This is the basis of Nancy’s philosophy: meaning is shared being. Nancy provides an interesting explanation for why Heidegger did not elaborate on the ontology of Mitsein in his existential analytic. Nancy believes that Heidegger’s ancillary objective of valorising a particular destiny for authentic Dasein prevented him from then fully explaining Mitsein in its inclusive sense. From his analysis on this point, Nancy concludes that Heidegger’s ontology cannot be an authentic living with others as well as an inauthentic living amongst others in the everyday, even though Heidegger declares that this is the case. Instead, Nancy explains that the being-with conforms to multiple positions of ‘being-there-with’ (Nancy 2008, p.4). What this amounts to is that Dasein’s being must be definable from within many relationships to others. In Nancy’s (2000) elaboration of ‘singular plurality’, a singularity is the locus of a particular meaning of being, but each singularity
is also capable of being a summation of a plurality of sense-making positions. Opening onto a world and other existents is how sense happens and it is at the limit of possible sense that meaning occurs. Nancy employs the notion of difference in his ontology in a positive way because ontological difference is essential for meaning to happen between one limit of sense (one opening onto the world) and another. This idea of the limit of sense is also important to the development of my thesis of thrown-being as ‘homelessness’. Heidegger’s observation is that when Dasein faces its groundlessness, the sense that arises is that of not being home (BT p.188). I argue that this does not resolve itself into a meaning that can be taken as an answer to a question, but remains a question of ‘who am I and where do I belong’. This is not just an individual questioning, but because Dasein is essentially a being-with mode of being, this is necessarily a shared search for sense.

The overall objective of Chapter Three is to provide an ontological basis for thinking about responsibility for one’s own life and how one relates to other lives as originally unchosen. I embark on this project by explicating Heidegger’s analysis of authenticity. The explanation brings back into play the affectivity of anxiety. Heidegger tells us that death is individuating, meaning that when one accepts that one will die, one becomes exposed to the uncanny facticity of one’s existence. In this way I find I have a unique life that is unchosen and it is my sole responsibility. In order to be authentic I must be resolute in taking up my life and its possibilities. I discuss how authenticity indicates an originary ethics that arises from the alterity signified between Dasein and its facticity. However, such an originary ethics is existentially understood and not available to any ontic prescriptivity. It is because of this that I argue for an ethos for thinking about thrown-being rather than an ethic. My final section explains how and why I have made use of Heidegger and Nancy’s ontologies. The two chapters that follow articulate the features related to an unchosen start of life. Their purpose is evidentiary because they demonstrate the need to approach the problem, not with a solution that is tuned to one single paradigm for a lived life, but instead tuned to the ontological contingency of being, and in particular, to the motivational element of being-with that allows us to see an unchosen existence as a shared one.

In the fourth chapter I discuss the facticity of inequality and its attendant challenges. I make a case for birth as the onset of an unequal being-in-the-world. A birth is the signal of the start of another journey of opportunity and challenge, and as such it introduces the inequalities that dog every life, a life which must be lived in some manner of association with others. Differential evaluations of difference generate the problem while the difficulty of its solution lies in the opposition of available communal goods to the needs of individuals in the community. I go on to discuss the derived inequalities that originate through oppression in respect of difference and which consequently
damage the self-perception of the person so disadvantaged. One of the most widely favoured solutions to inequality is some form of distributive justice. Unfortunately, it is only a partial solution because the needs versus the merits of individuals are too complex a relationship for distributive justice to facilitate a comprehensive solution. I discuss a number of different views on how to solve the problem of inequality. My own approach is not a solution to this effect of unchosen being, instead it is more of an amelioration of how we navigate the judgements that arise from the brutally instrumental way we organise our world and ourselves within it. We already know that persons are deserving of respect qua being ends in themselves, however, this takes on an additional imperative if we remember that each of these persons did not choose their existence, but in living it are due recognition on this account. There is a foundational dignity in this task.

In the final chapter I return to the self that has thrown-being and the potentiality embedded in this ‘unchosen being’ which predisposes that self to certain types of ‘luck’ in the future. This predisposition is also ameliorated or accentuated by incident luck which occurs throughout one’s existence. Luck is another way that inequality is engendered in a life. I highlight the concept of luck because it has the effect of colouring one’s moral identity for better or worse through its effects. Since the effects of luck cannot be anticipated, I argue that we should bear two things in mind. Ontologically our thrown-being means that we live in a futurally oriented manner into the unknown. This being the case, risk-taking is inherent in that system of projection. Secondly, living this way is necessarily a creative enterprise. However, it can only be argued thus if we live in this way authentically, that is, if we live our own lives responsibly rather than as roles given us by society. I compare this activity to the creativity involved in a ‘work of art’. This is not a new analogy, but in the context of an unchosen life it is an apt one.

I conclude that what I have been leading to is an ethos for other and self regard in respect of these lives being originally unchosen. We need each other; we are also communal and compassionate beings, often without knowing the foundational basis for it. My arguments in this thesis are contributing to a theoretical ground for why we possess these features and how a conscious conceptualisation of the reasons for it might consolidate and advance this ethos.
Chapter 1 - Being there: Dasein and world

1. Introduction

Heidegger’s ontology of being-in-the-world was the first ontology that attempted to describe the human being existentially in terms of the practical situatedness of its being. His phenomenological treatment of everyday being, without any abstraction, delivers the basic elements from which he developed his fundamental ontology. Many of these phenomena provide the foundational concepts for this thesis and therefore will be discussed in this chapter. Most of the concepts I will be discussing were introduced in Division One of Being and Time, but some, such as the existentials of care, anxiety and authenticity, Heidegger developed further in Division Two\(^1\) to create his hermeneutic ontology of the temporal nature of Dasein and the mechanism of authentic being. I will be discussing Heidegger’s analysis of authenticity\(^2\) in Chapter Three because it is pertinent to the ontological status of the resolute self that becomes an important focus in that chapter.

In this chapter, I will limit the ontological analysis to that of everyday Dasein as it offers critical aspects of the phenomenology of the human being that helps explain the facticity of Dasein, how this facticity represents the unchosen nature of being for the human being, and the way this existential facticity may be used in an ontic analysis. Therefore, this chapter will establish the ordinary ground of everyday existence as the context of thrown-being because, as Heidegger tells us, the complexly involved character of the everyday human being is the “‘Realest subject’ of everydayness” (BT p. 128). It will be from this context that I will discuss concepts such as ‘being-in-the-world’ and ‘disclosure’, for example, so that the phenomenology of thrown-being can be developed further in later chapters. I have largely employed my own interpretation of Being and Time and used comments from some of the more important of Heidegger’s commentators to develop the discussion further. A detailed rationale for my choice of commentators is given in the main Introduction.

\(^1\) Michael Zimmerman (1986) comments in his work Eclipse of the Self that most of the published portion of Being and Time, that is Divisions One and Two, are an account of what it means to be a self: ‘to be a self is to be the temporal openness or truth in which beings can be revealed’ (Zimmerman 1986, p. 31). It is only through this self that Being can be understood, which is Heidegger’s objective. Hence the title of Zimmerman’s work – Being eclipses the Self.

\(^2\) Authenticity, according to Being and Time, is a voluntaristic effort by Dasein to be resolute in the face of its death. By ‘resolute’ Heidegger means Dasein standing firm within its finitude; the more resolute and aware Dasein is of its mortality the more committed it becomes to being who it already is.
I will begin the analysis in the second section of this chapter by introducing the problem Heidegger identifies as the principal objective for his existential analytic. This problem is the question of the meaning of Being, itself. I will be discussing what this question is, why it is important, and the methodology Heidegger employs to answer it. For Heidegger, this question can only properly be answered from the unique perspective of the being that is asking the question, the human being. The existential for this being is Dasein⁴ and its formulation is the subject of the third section of the chapter. This section discusses in some detail Dasein’s phenomenology and its facticity. The analysis lays the groundwork for the ontological being that is going to be the focus of this and the following two chapters. A critical requirement for understanding Dasein’s being is to understand it in its temporality, which is facilitated through the existential of ‘care’. The existential of care is central to Heidegger’s analysis and he spent much of Being and Time elaborating on aspects of it.

The fourth section entitled ‘Being-in-the-world’ helps to delineate how Dasein’s existence discloses world, things, other Dasein and how these relationships are to be understood ontologically. This grounding existential for Heidegger’s analytic, and for my thesis, is important for showing how the meaning of the modes of our existence is completely tied up with how we find ourselves in relation to the elements of ‘world’. How we find ourselves is given through ‘moods’, or ‘attunements’, which have a primordial determining force for Dasein’s being-towards. They determine the type of understanding that Dasein brings to bear on its projective being, an understanding that has nothing to do with cognition.

The fifth section discusses everyday, inauthentic Dasein and the important characteristics of this mode of Dasein. This section concludes with a description of ‘falling’ Dasein. It describes how Dasein is ‘seduced’ by das Man, or the they, and ends with the question of how this might be possible at all. The answer to this question is given in section six as the ‘angst’ of thrown-being. It will be shown that the attunement of anxiety is a fundamental, pre-ontological mood of Dasein and is instrumental in making Dasein aware of the groundlessness of its existence. For Heidegger, this move is crucial in enabling him to talk about authentic Dasein in Division Two of Being and Time. For my purposes, its significance is that anxiety has the effect of modifying the existential of being-in-the-world to that of ‘not-at-home’. In this modification das Man shows up as not being a home for Dasein and, consequently, the ways of das Man are no longer sufficient for Dasein to sustain its being. It becomes thrown-back onto itself. For Heidegger, this is an essential step towards

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³ ‘Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it… there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly’ (BT p. 12). William Richardson (2003) also names this term the ‘There-being’. It is the ontological element that reveals most clearly the human being’s (Dasein’s) understanding and relationship to Being (Richardson 2003, p. 35).
authenticity for the self; for my thesis it is a step towards authentic being with others in the world and a shared understanding of thrown-being, which will be a focus of the next chapter.

**2. The question of the meaning of Being**

Heidegger’s goal in *Being and Time* derives from his concern that since the time of the ancient Greeks no one had seriously addressed the question of Being. Instead, it was the products of Being, such as ‘man’ and his works, or the elements of nature, which became the focus rather than Being as the phenomenon in itself. John Richardson explains that previous philosophers had privileged the content of knowledge but had critically missed the way in which we come by this knowledge (Richardson 2012 p. 62). In particular, Heidegger’s critique of Descartes, and thus Kant and Husserl who adopted Descartes’ theme of making knowledge and ‘knowing’ subjective was that the interrogation stopped with the subject as the thinking thing and did not question how this subject came to think (itself). If one is proposing an ontology, this ontology has to extend all the way to include the self that thinks and questions. The point that is missed is that thinking itself is a type of ‘being-towards’, thus making being the critical underlying characteristic. Therefore, the analytic approach that includes the engaged human’s way of being towards its world and consequently its own self is the essential step in an ontology and one that Heidegger proceeds to take.

The question that remains is with what element of study should ontology commence? It is only when you examine Heidegger’s own meaning behind the questions he asks about Being that the depth of his intent starts to reveal itself. He is not merely seeking a consensus of opinion on what Being might be as some designation that is outside the phenomena of Being, but instead Heidegger’s requirement of the term ‘meaning’ is for it to tell us what Being is, *from itself*. Thus, Being must reveal what it is from the processes and beings that it brings forth. This going-behind the physical (real) manifestation of something in order to explain the nature of its being is the fundamental task of ontology. But in order to get at the essence of Being in the questioning of what it is, we must not forget who is asking the question. It is this detail that enables this questioning to

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4 Heidegger comments on the understanding of Being assumed by modern philosophers: ‘In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method’ (BT p. 2). By this he means modern philosophers were not acknowledging the deep problems inherent in Being’s investigation.

5 Richardson argues that Heidegger wants to reject the dualist perspective held by Descartes and this is the reason why he avoids the term ‘intentionality’. Intentionality implies the Cartesian ‘thinking thing’ who intends something. However, Heidegger does not criticize Husserl directly, but instead implies this criticism through his dismissal of Descartes’ view of the human being (Richardson 2012, p. 68).
move past the point where the Greeks left it. When understood in its contextual mode the question of Being can only be put by one being; the human being. Heidegger tells us,

Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are (BT p. 6).

This comment explicitly demonstrates how being is so essentially what we humans are and concern ourselves with. Behind the substantiality of the world, it is being that matters to us and is evidenced in the way we comport ourselves and interact with others. Temporally we have a being-towards ourselves (I am), others (she is), our past (I was), and our future (I will be). Understanding being existentially is our whole way of existing. Thus, the human being qualifies as the object of interrogation for the existential analytic because with being as the determinate character of its existence (BT p. 13), it understands primordially the necessity of being, for itself and for other entities dissimilar in character to it. From the basis of this unique ontico-ontological position, being in the world of the human is able to be studied. Heidegger gives the human being so defined ontologically, the label ‘Dasein’.

Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, or got itself into them, or grown up in them already. Only the particular Dasein decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting. The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself (BT p. 12).

Therefore, because of this unique position of the human being, it was clear to Heidegger that the investigation should proceed from this entity: ‘This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term “Dasein”’ (BT p. 27). In my discussions I will occasionally refer to Dasein as ‘an entity’. When I do this I mean specifically, as Heidegger does, an ontologically situated entity and not a worldly subject or object.

Dasein, therefore, is Heidegger’s ontological entity, or the articulation of the primary object of interrogation for the analytic that will explain how the human understands being through Dasein’s modes of existence. The previous quote demonstrates how Dasein is qualified to lead us to a

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6 A broad definition of ontology is the study of what is. In this sense it includes the problems concerning understanding what there is and the relationships of what is to each other. Ontological study for Heidegger is specifically to take what is to its ultimate sense, which is the meaning of Being. In turn he hopes that this will clarify all other ontology that is derivative on this. Ontic study on the other hand is committed to the manifest characteristics of existence as understood through the senses and positive sciences. A manifest characteristic of Dasein in its ontic existence is that it is ontological, that is, concerned with being and engaged with being’s meaning, thus its designation as ontico-ontological.
meaning of Being since its existence, which comprises its many ways of being, is so fundamental to its own meaning.

Heidegger also tells us that ‘The essence of Dasein lies in its existence’ and consequently ‘those characteristics which can be exhibited in this entity... are in each case possible ways for it to be, and no more than that’, therefore... ‘when we designate this entity with the term ‘Dasein’, we are not expressing its “what” (as if it were a table, house or tree) but its Being’ (BT p. 42). By analysing Dasein in its existential being, we are now able to move away from the problem of substantial reality that has distracted earlier inquirers⁷ and move closer to the meaning of Being itself, or at least to formulating more authentic queries of it.

Therefore the methodology Heidegger employs for his study is a hermeneutic phenomenology. By this method, Being is investigated through the phenomena of Dasein’s ontico-ontological self. A phenomenon of this self is Dasein’s own interpretation (hermeneutic) of its everyday (ontic) self in its being-towards (an ontological disposition for) other beings and itself. The main concern with this method is to obtain understandings for Being as it shows itself from within the everyday behaviour (phenomena) of the existing human being.

In particular, Heidegger alerts us to the difference between the phenomena that shows itself and what ‘appears’:

“Phenomenon”, the showing-itself-in-itself, signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered. “Appearance”, on the other hand, means a reference-relationship which is in an entity itself, and which is such that what does the referring (or the announcing) can fulfil its possible function only if it shows itself in itself and is thus a ‘phenomenon’ (BT p. 31).

The phenomenon is what becomes outwardly manifest through an appearance of something that is intelligible to an entity capable of naming this appearance. However, the appearance could also mislead one as to the true meaning of the phenomenon. Heidegger’s example is that the appearance of a flushed face in a certain light may seem to announce a fever. But it may be the case that there is no fever and the lighting has caused this misleading conclusion. Thus, one must be careful how one interprets the appearance before we diagnose a cause. Heidegger’s example cautions us that the

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⁷ ‘Substantial reality’ is a term used by Magda King (2001, p. 12) in her commentary on how it was this preoccupation with ‘real’ things that misdirected previous ontologies. It is the tendency to identify and classify entities on the basis of their ‘real’ appearance; for example, the tendency to say that something is, such as the table is. However, I cannot refer to myself in the same way because I am and cannot be outside of myself in order to classify myself in any way; that means I cannot say ‘is’ about myself. Thus, one effect of investing in an ontology based on substantial reality is to miss out on understanding the being of the self.
interpretation of the phenomenon may arise from the cognitive reference-relationship one already has to the possible explanations.

As a further, more pertinent example for this chapter, let us look at the occurrence of fear: Fear may be evidenced by the human being as a fear of death, but as we will see later in the discussions this fear of death is really how the human being’s relationship to an underlying attunement of anxiety ‘announces’ itself. The phenomenon is fear, but it arises on the basis of an aspect of Dasein’s being. Therefore, the objective of the analytic is to pursue certain phenomena of the existing human being and to unpick each phenomenon so that through ‘discourse’ and interpretation, we might uncover, in each particular case, how Being is showing itself.

Heidegger tells us that discourse is an original signification of the Greek ‘logos’ and in that sense means letting something be seen; ‘that is, it lets us see something from the very thing which the discourse is about’ (BT p. 32). In the translators’ footnote (BT page 47, footnote 3), Macquarrie and Robinson mention other alternate understandings that Heidegger takes up, such as: talk; to hold discourse; to cognise; to be aware; to know and the dialectical. My interpretation of the above quote is to say that ‘letting something be seen’ is to engage in an activity with another such that both parties understand the meaning of a thing. Therefore ‘discourse’ actively brings forth and offers meaning as a way to share a being-towards this thing. Without this faculty of generating an accessible, shareable identity or meaning for something, Dasein’s world would not exist. Dasein’s world is the commonality of meaning it shares with other entities. The identification of this fundamental way of ‘sharing’ what is revealed through the being of an entity will have particular significance when I talk about being with others in the next chapter.

In the next section I will explain how Dasein understands and relates to its own being and discuss Heidegger’s methodology in articulating its analysis.

3. Dasein’s existence and facticity

Dasein’s own being is not a characteristic that is shared, or shareable, such as characteristics that are shared between the same species of a given genus. For each Dasein its being and the possible ways for its being are unique, therefore, each Dasein as exemplified by you, or I, are intimately concerned with its particular being – I care about my being from the moment I have being. It is because of the fundamental nature of Dasein’s being, which is care that Dasein is always concerned with its possibilities. Moreover, it is because of this nature that Dasein projects ‘something like existence and Being’ (BT p. 315).
John Richardson (2012) commentary on Heidegger’s methodology is that his ‘innovation lies in his analysis of the logic of the attitude in which we reach our ends’ (Richardson 2012, p. 88). I agree with Richardson’s view since it seems intuitively sound that the way we achieve our ends should have, in ontic terms, something like a motivational basis. It is an interesting question whether Heidegger’s care may be read as intentionality. Heidegger’s own objection to the stamp of ‘intentionality’ is that his ontology does not support the notion of a ‘subject’ that intends an ‘object’. Dasein is not Heidegger’s subject but the way being is understood, which has as its ontic counterpart the human being. In reading his analysis we must not think of Dasein as a being, but rather of Dasein as its being. The further difficulty Heidegger means to avoid is that of cognition. Dasein is not a ‘thinking thing’ so we cannot describe Dasein by how it thinks about things (including intending) but by how it conducts a being towards them. In describing how being manifests in the existing entity, we cannot talk about intentionality as such because there is no legitimate ‘outside’ from which to talk about being intending one thing or another. Intending something is only the superficial manifestation of our underlying condition of being-towards. What Heidegger is attempting to get to is the sort of intending that resists conscious exploration.

Richardson, however, argues that the existential of ‘care’ serves to replace this traditional understanding of intentionality (Richardson 2012 pp. 88-90). He says that being-in-the-world is Heidegger’s pragmatic reconceptualization of this Husserlian intentionality: “‘The world’ is just that content (or the structure of that content), and our ‘being-in’ is the way we mean that content’ (Richardson 2012 p. 88). Richardson is claiming that Heidegger has substituted a mind thinking about things for a being that cares about being. Consequently, Richardson supports the use of the term ‘intentionality’, but without its cognitive bias, when he discusses Heidegger’s ‘care’. I support Richardson’s reasoning cautiously because Heidegger rejects the usual externalised view taken in intentionality (as already outlined above). He says that if care is understood in his phenomenological rendition of intentionality (see footnote 8) it must still be incorporated into the internal ‘unified basic structure of being-ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-involved-in’ (Heidegger 1992, p. 304). If viewed on Heidegger’s terms it seems acceptable to think of care as intentional in

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8 In the Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time, Heidegger deconstructs the traditional notion of intentionality in order to reconstruct what this concept would look like in a more foundational, ontological sense. His argument is that we do not first have the ‘psychic process’ of perception and then identify something to which it corresponds (Heidegger 1992, p. 31). Instead, it is the lived experience which is intentional. This intentional relationship he names the intentio and the intentum where the former is the directing-itself-towards an entity and the latter is how the entity comes to be perceived – ‘how intended’ (p. 45).

9 This harks back to Cartesian dualism, which Husserl does not quite dispense with. Richardson says that Heidegger’s critique of Descartes in the second Introduction (BT pp. 22-27) is indirectly a criticism of Husserl who does not quite rid his ontology of this Cartesian idea of consciousness (Richardson 2012 pp. 67-68). Husserl’s consciousness is transcendental and is determined by the phenomenon. That is, consciousness is the reciprocal of the phenomenon that is an object of it. Heidegger interprets this fundamental relationship in terms of the ‘disclosure of being’ where, rather than consciousness, it is being which has phenomena as its reciprocal object. In this way Heidegger obviates the mental element from his ontology (King 2000 pp. 114-115).
the ontological sense of being-towards something that has important relationality within one’s other being-towards phenomena. As an example of ‘directedness’, we only need to recall some of Heidegger’s analyses, such as the explanation for being-towards death, or his discussion of concern for others. These explanations imply that care has ‘chosen objects’ of concern. We will see later that Heidegger tries to get around this problem of what looks like choice by making it non-volitional through the use of pre-ontological ‘moods’ that guide care.

Heidegger contrasts the intimate care for the existing self with the attention we pay to things that are present-at-hand such as tables. For such things themselves, being cannot even be relevant. (With respect to animals and living nature in general, Heidegger does not engage with them directly. His preoccupation is solely with the human being.) The sense of existence that Heidegger identifies for Dasein shows up the unique way in which this entity understands itself in its being. Thus, he claims that understanding itself in its being is the “essence” of the human Dasein.

A human being is an uncoverer, or disconnector in the Heideggerian sense, of the being of itself and of other entities. It is in such disclosing that Dasein comes to have an understanding of itself and this understanding and meaning is unique to each Dasein. Self-understanding is possible because Dasein is an entity that transcends its present circumstances in imagining its possibilities, which it represents to itself. Zimmerman tells us:

Although the body is always located in a particular time and place, human Dasein is not identical with its body considered as a physical object. Our openness to things is not restricted to the present moment. We can transcend the given understanding of what it means to be and gain a new understanding. Human freedom is the temporal transcendence which allows us to be open to our own possibilities for growth and development (Zimmerman 1986, p. 28).

Transcendent Dasein is futural in the sense that its ‘understanding’ is ahead of itself, pressing into future possibilities. This disclosure of possible being is a characteristic of Dasein’s unique type of existence that I shall be returning to in the next section. Dasein lives in the present primarily on the

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10 The present-at-hand are things and beings that are encountered ‘environmentally’. They are ‘there’ in Dasein’s world. This is to be contrasted with equipment that are also there, but are ready-to-hand, meaning that they are for Dasein’s use. In this modified sense, Dasein may not register their existence at all because they are there to facilitate Dasein’s existence.

11 Heidegger tells us that ‘possibility’ is an existentiale and ‘is the most originary and last, positive, ontological determination of Dasein’ (BT pp. 143-144). He means that possibility is exactly what Dasein is being-towards, what it is pressing ahead into. Contrast this with the traditional sense of this word which is taken to mean those things that could happen, or could be the case. As Dasein is always a being ahead of itself, this being, this ‘pressing ahead into possibilities’, becomes an apt description.

12 This type of understanding is not cognitive, but is existential-ontological, that is, a way of being. It will be described in greater detail in the next section.
basis of its future possibilities while its past is manifest in its thrown-being. The thrown-being of Dasein brings forward in each moment the possible horizon of being for Dasein that presents itself from past being and futural possibilities. This is Dasein’s facticity\(^\text{13}\) (BT p. 135).

To highlight how important this account of Dasein’s existence is, let us try to understand the possibilities of beings that are not. To explain this, let’s create a scenario; a woman imagines herself as being a mother and able to give birth to a child. She also imagines the possibility that she could not conceive a child. She holds these thoughts in mind as she goes to the clinic to have this possibility confirmed or denied. As an important facet of this woman’s current being (and, therefore, existence), she is able to incorporate (understand) two futural beings, one where she is a mother, and another where she is unable to be one, into a existing self. This example highlights how we exist, as being outwards into possibilities then back into facticity, and then on to further possibilities; we are even capable of holding conflicting possibilities of being as we exist. King tells us that ‘This harsh and forbidding not is far from being a mere negative, an “empty nothing.” It is in the highest sense positive. It enables Da-sein to understand the possibilities of his own being and those of other beings’ (King 2001, p. 35). The possibility of something happening must, of necessity, encompass the possibility of it not happening. This possibility of something not happening and why it represents such a positive potential will be explained in terms of Dasein’s own potentialities. Since not being threatens Dasein, it also provides the ground for anxiety. There will be more said on this point in section six of this chapter.

What the preceding practical example has shown is that our existence is about concern and also about uncertainty for our being. It is about being committed to one’s on-going existence while contending with the uncertainty of one’s future being. It is about creating in the future and moving towards these futural beings, which may be what we imagine in the context of what we want, or what we don’t want, or something in-between.

Dasein’s way of existing is as a ‘being-in-the-world’. To contrast how this ontological being compares to a human being, Heidegger tells us, ‘the ‘factuality’ of the fact of one’s own Dasein is at bottom quite different ontologically from the factual occurrence of some kind of mineral, for example’ (BT p. 56). He defines the ‘factuality of the fact’ as facticity. In this way, ontologically the facticity of a ‘real’ object is quite different to that of Dasein; the being of a stone lying at our

\(^{13}\) In contrast to Dasein’s facticity, which represents Dasein’s situation as internal to Dasein’s being (a ‘that it is and has to be’), Heidegger calls the fact of existence of things present-at-hand their factuality. This factuality is external to the things themselves and exists for Dasein (BT p. 135). In his paper on Nancy’s theme of ‘abandonment’ in his philosophical thought, François Raffoul names ‘facticity’ as representative of responsibility because Dasein’s existence may also be thought of as a sort of ‘abandonment to an obligation’ (Raffoul 2012, p. 73). If thought from the perspective of Being, Dasein is thrown into being in each instance and has to take up the responsibility for a being that becomes uniquely its own. See also my commentary on this paper in Chapter 3
feet does not encompass its future possibilities in the way that Dasein’s being does. I have already tried to explain this structure with the previous example in which the woman’s current existence is a fact but where the possibility of her being a mother is also part of her current being. From the existential perspective, Heidegger would say that our understanding of our possibilities is also an understanding of our abilities. Existentially, what Dasein is able to be is also what it understands and may be referred to as the possibilities that futurally oriented Dasein is pressing into.

The concept of “facticity” implies that an entity ‘within-the-world’ has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its ‘destiny’ with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its world (BT p. 56).

This comment can be illustrated by the woman who understands that whether or not she can have a child is determined not just by her own physical body, but by the testing procedures being conducted by laboratory technicians, by her partner and also by the genetic make-up of her forebears. Therefore, her being-towards her possible being-a-mother is bound from other human beings in the past as well as those in her present. The idea of destiny is an important one for Heidegger and will be discussed in the next chapter, firstly in terms of our relations with other Dasein, and then as the destiny of Being. The sense in which destiny is being used in the above quotation is foreshadowing the ‘fallen’ aspect of Dasein whose being is influenced by the average, everyday being of others. Wherever the source of a future being lies, whether it lies with others, or with our desires and fears, King says that ‘existence is that way of being which is capable of going out beyond what is to what is not, and so discloses not actual things or beings, but the possibility of beings, the being of beings in the mode of possibility’ (King 2001, p. 34).

From the preceding discussion we now know that when Heidegger tells us that the essence of Dasein is in its existence (BT p. 42), he means something quite different to that of a thing like a stone, or a table. It is not existence in the sense of being present (present-at-hand), but rather an existence that is made up of potentialities. Dasein understands its being in terms of its future possibilities.

Earlier, I mentioned that Dasein’s possibilities for being belong to a particular Dasein because it cares about its being. Heidegger also tells us that being-in-the-world itself has many aspects of ‘being-in’ that Dasein concerns itself with. He says that ‘Dasein’s facticity is such that its Being-in-the-world has always dispersed itself, or even split itself up into definite ways of Being-in’ (BT p. 14

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14 After Being and Time, Heidegger’s pursuit of the meaning of Being deposes Dasein as the subject matter of his analysis and attempts to theorize human destiny from the perspective of Being. The thinking behind this move cannot be elaborated on in such a context as this, but William Richardson provides a very detailed, structured account of the progression of Heidegger’s thought from Being and Time onwards in Heidegger, through phenomenology to thought. See reference at end of thesis.
56). Being-in is a way of being-in-the-world and each being-in has concern as its type of being. Examples of the being-in ways listed by Heidegger are: ‘having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it’ (BT p. 56). The dimension of care as concern also points to how Dasein is able to assimilate the possibility of a ‘being that is not’; for example, not being a mother. How does Dasein assimilate being and not being and how would it come to an awareness of this? The answers to these questions are to be unravelled from the complexity of Heidegger’s analysis for Dasein’s way of being.

King articulates Dasein’s being through three main structures. These are: ‘existence (self), thrownness (facticity), and fallenness\footnote{Heidegger calls losing oneself in the crowd, which is the world of others and things, ‘fallenness’. This means Dasein falls away from its own being and into the being of others. ‘Falling prey’ and ‘entanglement’ both describe the type of relation that Dasein has with the they as fascination and involvement respectively (BT p. 134, 178). See section 5.4 for more detail.} (or falling prey or entanglement)’ (King 2001, p. 36).

Dasein’s existence and its facticity has been the main object of the preceding discussion. The disclosure of futural beings returns to Dasein that is already ‘there’ in its facticity. In being amongst others and the things of the world, Dasein is ‘in-understanding’ of its relationships with them. Conversely, projection onto future possibilities is only possible on the basis of Dasein’s facticity, the existing conditions of its being. I will discuss the fallenness of Dasein shortly, but it is important to complete the entity called Dasein with a further development of the concept of care. This existential will show how the whole of Dasein is temporal in its essence.

3.1. The temporality of Dasein’s being as care

Heidegger tells us that ‘This characteristic of Dasein’s Being – this ‘that it is’ – is veiled in its “whence” and “whither”, yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the “thrownness” of this entity into its “there”; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the “there”’ (BT p. 135). Dasein does not know where it comes from or where it is going, but this very fact makes its factual presence more curiously apparent to itself. When we talk of Dasein it is as always already ‘there’ in the world.

The question of time is integral to the understanding of Dasein’s being as a whole and is provided by the existential of care, which has already been introduced. In terms of time, the present nature of Dasein’s being is revealed as being-in-the-world. The past of Dasein’s being contributes to its facticity, which includes its thrownness from a past ‘having-to-exist’ that it had no choice in. Dasein arrived into its being without volition, but can be towards a future in which it may have some choice. Dasein’s own death is ontologically the only element of its future being which is certain and Dasein must own this in order to complete its horizon of time (BT p. 256). Heidegger uses the certainty of death in order to explain how Dasein might come to have an authentic
encounter with its facticity. In this thesis it is not necessary for me to engage with the extensive analysis for the existential of care given by Heidegger in Division Two, but it is sufficient for my purposes to say that care is integral to connecting up the temporal ecstases of Dasein in the attempt to conceive of Dasein as a whole. It is from its nature as care that Dasein understands its being temporally. First, as thrown-being, that is, as being that comes from nothing, then as the being that ends in the future, beyond which there is nothing. Strung out between the nothing and the nothing there is the being of Dasein. Dasein as the enquirer understands Being from its own being and within a fixed time frame, from its arrival into existence to its own death as departure from existence.

To illustrate the claim that Dasein exists as time concretely, let us return to the woman who hopes to be a mother. Her existing being holds from the past her physical, cultural and environmental inheritance, including the physiological potential for her being a mother. She imagines a future being for herself as a mother. Included in this, of course, is the future being of a child and her relationship with it. She is imagining this future and holding in her mental and physical being past legacies, while being a partner to someone, while being a patient to a doctor, while being a woman presently and existingly. She lives a time that is uniquely her own, the time span given her human body within which is embedded the time span given to her ‘procreative body’. In all, she has a unique horizon of time that is different to the next woman or man. In real terms it is not a time span that she can view objectively and say, ‘right, I will marry at age 30 and have a baby at 32, go back to work at 35 and die at age 90’. People do ‘plan’ their lives in this way, but they never plan to die at a certain age. In particular, it is the unpredictability of death that is so critical to Heidegger’s ontological description of Dasein’s horizon of possibilities and its individuation. Having been born already, Dasein is living existingly into the fore-throw of its future beings, which makes death the ultimate delimiter of Dasein’s potentialities since death’s time cannot be foreseen. Nevertheless, one’s temporal horizon may be infinite while one is lost in everyday being, or it may shrink back towards the currently existing self if one is diagnosed with some serious health issue, for example. The reason that Dasein’s temporal horizon exists at all, or why it can change, is because Dasein cares about its being. Thus, caring about itself as being the possibilities of beings, oversees the expansion and contraction of Dasein’s temporal horizon. The totality of Dasein’s being is described by Heidegger as care because its being, in every temporal aspect, matters to it.

The temporal present condition of Dasein’s being-in-the-world is a critical existential forum in which the pragmatics of Dasein’s everyday being can be explained. In the next section, I will elaborate on how everyday Dasein comes to have a world.
4. Being-in-the-world

The world is the context in which Dasein has being in both its directedness to objects of concern as well as in how it has its understanding. It is the ground for Heidegger’s counter argument to Cartesian doubt and makes the following point: If Dasein’s being can have meaning only as an object of Dasein’s understanding – including the self – then the self that is part of a world makes world an integral component of Dasein’s being. Consequently there is nothing external to the being of a thinking self to doubt.

One may talk about ‘world’ in many ways, some as background consciousness, and other ways that are purely existential. To facilitate our understanding, Heidegger lists these senses of world as follows:

1. The world can be understood in the ontic sense as something comprising the sum of present-at-hand entities. This is evidenced in the many ways we fantasise about the ‘end of the world’ where the drama really lies with how all forms of life perish.

2. A world can also be given in the ontological sense of the ‘being’ activities of a certain group of entities. Heidegger gives the example of the ‘world’ of a mathematician (BT p. 65). The mathematician’s world is defined through the understanding and communications of the entities that inhabit it. Thus, when speaking the language of mathematics (expressions and symbols etc.) mathematicians could close this world off from people who are not themselves mathematicians.

3. World is most often expressed in another ontic sense of meaning, it is the place ‘‘wherein’ a factical Dasein as such can be said to ‘live’’ (BT p. 65). This is a pre-ontological existentiell meaning, or how human beings tend to ordinarily relate to the world as a place of abode and involvements with other entities.

4. The final understanding of world is as the ontologico-existential\textsuperscript{16} concept of ‘worldhood’. For Heidegger this understanding indicates ‘Neither the common world not the subjective world, but the worldhood of the world’ (BT p. 64).

‘Worldhood’ refers to a very particular sense of world, one that is generated existentially through Dasein’s character as being-in-the-world. It may therefore be seen as a product, or \textit{existentiale}, of the type of existence Dasein has. It represents the significance that accrues as the result of Dasein’s activities and represents the totality of Dasein’s meaningful relations. Entities acquire a ‘for-the-sake-of-which’ that gives the idea of worldhood an instrumental sense (BT p. 123). Therefore, the

\textsuperscript{16} A construct that is about being or ways of being and which arises through the activities of existents.
sense of worldhood can only come about *through* the ‘usual’ understandings of Dasein’s world as listed above in 1,2 and 3.

In terms of the significance which is disclosed in understanding the world, concernful Being-alongside the ready-to-hand gives itself to understand whatever involvement that which is encountered can have (BT p. 148)

The world comes to be interpreted circumspectly by Dasein. Anything Dasein encounters already receives a degree of functional understanding and thereby integrates with Dasein’s understanding of world. ‘[W]hen something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation’ (BT p. 150). The reason why something new might come to have significance is on the basis of Dasein’s ‘fore-structure’. Heidegger tells us that Dasein has a ‘fore-having’ of understanding, a ‘fore-sight’ of things already seen and a fore-conception of concepts already in place. The import of the ‘fore’ in these existentials is that it represents the context of signification in which Dasein already exists. When Dasein encounters anything it is always encountered with understanding because of this fore-structure. Consequently, this structure provides the context for the possibility of meaning. However, as Heidegger states, it is not ‘meaning’ that is understood existentially, but the *being* of the entity in question: ‘Meaning is that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself’ (BT p. 151). So, the being of the something maintains itself within the intelligibility framework of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. The term ‘meaning’ may then be a designation for this relation to what already is. Thus, meaning is what is attributed to a certain ‘framework of disclosedness which belongs to understanding’ for Dasein (BT p. 151). Only Dasein can acquire meaning through its disclosing activities within its fore-structure of understanding.

The question that Heidegger then asks is how we are to understand ‘new’ interpretation if it is always based in a fore-structure of understanding? He reassures us that new interpretation is still within the remit of a being-in-the-world for whom its being is an issue. This is because existentially new understanding is always to be integrated with Dasein’s world. Meaning is a phenomenon that is ‘rooted in the existential constitution of Dasein – that is, in the understanding which interprets’ (BT p. 153). Dasein’s interpretation and understanding is circular, but as Heidegger tells us this is a virtuous circle, which means it is open to expansion and development for the sake of Dasein’s own being.
In Heidegger’s opinion it is the neglect of previous ontologies’ acknowledgement that Dasein is a being-in-the-world that has allowed the world to be abstracted from the entities that inhabit it.\(^1\) But as Heidegger’s analysis shows, there is no separation between Dasein’s being and the ‘world’; the two are conjoined through Dasein’s ‘existential spatiality’ as Dasein’s ‘there’. ‘Here’ and ‘yonder’ are possible only in a ‘there’—that is to say, only if there is an entity which has made a disclosure of spatiality as the Being of the ‘there’\(^2\) (BT p. 132). The world, therefore, is not an independent thing, but is Dasein’s disclosure\(^1\). It is the most intimate exposition of how individual Dasein goes about its task of existing in an everyday manner. ‘By reason of this disclosedness, this entity (Dasein), together with the Being-there of the world, is ‘there’ for itself’ (BT p.132).

How is it possible for Dasein to understand the ‘relation-whole’ as represented by being-in-the-world prior to specific experience of beings in themselves? How does Dasein understand its own being as a coherent whole? These questions are prompted from the fact that we seem to know in advance that things of the world belong together without actually having to test this for ourselves.

4.1. Dasein’s ‘there’ as attunement and facticity.

To start with, Dasein understands its dependency from the beginning of its existence. If Dasein had no beginning and no end there would be no impetus for it to engage its context, which would in a fundamental sense become detached from its being. Context which is time dependent, and thus changing, would not be relevant as we understand the phenomenon to an eternal being. A human’s ontic dependency is clearly demonstrated by the fact of our coming into existence. A baby’s understanding of its physical, emotional and environmental needs expands outwards as it matures, from its initial physical dependence on the mother to encompass other entities and aspects of its environment. Ontologically, Dasein is dependent on the beings of the world to form a context for, and to make sense of, its ahead-of-itself way of existing. To explain this idea, Heidegger proposes existential characteristics of Dasein’s being-in-the-world that must allow Dasein to integrate the world in its very being ‘there’. The existentials that support the task of disclosure of the world are those of attunement, understanding and discourse. These are Heidegger’s functional constructs that help explain being-in-the-world. I will first talk about attunement.

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\(^1\) Heidegger’s fundamental ontology demonstrates clearly that knowledge is founded ontically on being-in-the-world (BT p. 61). This means that there cannot be objects of knowledge that are disconnected ontologically from the knowing entity. Thus the pursuit of skepticism, or ‘The question of whether there is a world at all and whether its Being can be proved, makes no sense if it is to be raised by Dasein as Being-in-the-world; and who else would raise it?’ (BT p.202).

\(^2\) Heidegger defines ‘disclosure’ as ‘laying open’. He says that “‘Disclose” and “disclosedness” … shall signify “to lay open” and “the character of having been laid open” (BT p. 75). It does not mean a revealing for objective consumption, nor does it mean a coming upon something through inference. The footnote on the same page warns, ‘To say that something has been ‘disclosed’ or ‘laid open’ in Heidegger’s sense, does not mean that one has any detailed awareness of the contents which are thus ‘disclosed’, but rather that they have been ‘laid open’ to us as implicit in what is given, so that they may be made explicit to our awareness by further analysis or discrimination of the given, rather than by an inference from it’ (BT fn. P. 75).
Heidegger uses the German term *Befindlichkeit*, which has been interpreted as the ‘mood’, or ‘attunement’, in which *one finds oneself* in relation to one’s environment. ‘State-of-mind’ is also used as one of the English translations of *Befindlichkeit*, but the Macquarie and Robinson translators remind readers that ‘mind’ is not what Heidegger intends and ‘finding oneself’ comes closest to the mark (BT fn.2, p. 134). To avoid muddying the waters of a clear account of Being by bringing misleading connotations of mental states into the discussions, I will try to avoid this phrase in my own statements. Mood or attunement, then, is a prevailing existential condition of the human being-in-the-world. In fact it is the modifier of reason since being is *always* in a state of attunement to its world, which is prior to rational processing. Primordial attunement is direct experience of one’s environment and inflects reason:

> the possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods, in which Dasein is brought before its Being as “there” (BT p. 134).

By this comment Heidegger infers that Dasein firstly discloses to itself its own being ‘there’ through a mood. It is then on the ground of this affective disclosure that cognition is able to shape itself. The fact of a ‘mood’ demonstrates to Dasein, if Dasein were able to pay attention to the mood, that it ‘is’ as a spatio-temporal occurrent being. Ontologically this ‘that it is’ shows up Dasein’s ‘throwness’. Thus, the ontological phenomenon experienced by Dasein is that of ‘throwness’ – an enigmatic arrival: ‘The expression “throwness” is meant to suggest the facticity of its being delivered over’ (BT p. 135). Attunement and throwness, therefore, are characteristics of Dasein’s being and bring to light Dasein’s ‘there’ for Dasein itself. This ‘there’ is Dasein ‘in flight’, that is Dasein finds itself either turning away (from its death) or turning away from its thrown-being. Both stand for Dasein’s finitude and groundlessness.

The important feature of the ontological attunement or mood is it evokes a reaction in Dasein. Heidegger tells us that for the most part this attunement causes Dasein to react against its facticity. Dasein turns away from it; ‘for the mood brings Dasein before the “that-it-is” of its “there”, which, as such, stares it in the face with the inexorability of an enigma’ (BT p. 136). This explanation of Dasein’s rejection of its facticity, the enigma of its unchosen being, presages Heidegger’s account

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19 This term is not a ‘knowing’ but an affective awareness of one’s relationship to one’s ‘there’. William Richardson describes this ontological disposition, which is ‘completely spontaneous and unreflective, that renders apparent to There-being not so much what it is but how it is, and thus brings There-being before its own Being as a There’ (Richardson 2003, p. 65). The ontic equivalent of this idea is ‘mood’ that Heidegger refers to as *Stimmung* (BT fn. p. 134).
of Dasein’s fall into the they. Consequently, it also provides a ground for Dasein’s inauthentic and authentic modes.

Attunement demonstrates the temporal nature of Dasein’s care: ‘Bringing Dasein face to face with the “that-it-is” of its own thrownness – whether authentically revealing it or inauthentically covering it up – becomes existentially possible only if Dasein’s Being, by its very meaning, constantly is as having been… Understanding is grounded primarily in the future; one’s state-of-mind, however, temporalizes itself primarily in having been’ (BT p. 340). Future and present ecstases are modified by ‘having been’. The overriding mood on account of the enigma of unchosen being is anxiety. It is on the basis of this anxiety that Dasein is moved to flee itself. There is only one way of being that causes Dasein to face its thrown-being and that is when it has a being-towards its death. This view will be explained in Chapter Three under the discussion of authenticity.

Dasein’s attunement (or mood) is the basis for things in the world mattering to Dasein and for Dasein being able to respond in a certain way. Therefore, the preontological mood provides the circumspective substrate of concern on which all other moods may be inscribed. I have already supported Richardson’s suggestion that there may be some justification for thinking of care in terms of a type of intentionality. However, since there cannot be any mental directive involved because Heidegger is describing just how being is for a human, I might suggest that mood is Heidegger’s deus ex machina, responsible for prompting Dasein to be in one way rather than another; for example, to flee as a basic movement rather than to stay and face itself. Positioning attunement as the mechanism which initiates a being-towards may be a substitute for the willing, or conscious intentionality, which the analyses of a human’s ways of being are meant to avoid. Even in the absence of willing there still needs to be some way of explaining why we have being as, or towards, one thing rather than another.

I draw attention to this characteristic of the analytic because my arguments in this thesis rely on this ‘directedness’ just as much as Heidegger’s analytic does. Preontological attunement, or mood, opens the possibility of receptivity to the world – of evaluating things in Dasein’s world in terms of their emotional affectiveness on Dasein.

Existentially, a state-of-mind implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us (BT p. 137).

Intelligibility is tied up with our ontological attunement and our being-in-the-world. Attunement is the basis on which things in the world may be encountered and have an impact on Dasein. Heidegger adds that what has been described as disclosure is such that it is open to delusion (BT p. 138). But, he tells us it is this capacity for delusion that allows the world to be open to
interpretation. There is not just one way of understanding what attunement makes available for disclosure. The relationship between disclosure and truth will be discussed next.

4.2. Disclosedness, understanding and discourse

Disclosedness is the way in which Dasein understands being and thus being-in-the-world. The openness of beings (to each other) in their disclosedness allows Dasein access to existential truth. Heidegger is clear that ‘Dasein is its disclosedness’: ‘“there is” truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is’ (BT p. 226). Moreover, what is true happens through Dasein’s openness, or disclosing, as a result of being-with. The truth of innerworldly beings, grounded in the disclosedness of the world, is the basic characteristic of Dasein.

But disclosedness is that basic character of Dasein according to which it is its “there.” Disclosedness is constituted by state-of-mind, understanding, and discourse, and pertains equiprimordially to the world, to Being-in, and to the Self…hence only with Dasein’s disclosedness is the most primordial phenomenon of truth attained (BT p. 220-221).

I have already introduced understanding in terms of being-in-the-world and also state-of-mind. Understanding is a feature of projective being which is anticipatory and so ontological understanding is recursively interpretive. Heidegger tells us that understanding as an existential is not about ‘what’, but of ‘Being as existing’ (BT p. 143). Therefore, understanding at the level of the analytic is not about our mental abilities but about the way Being accommodates a ‘knowing’ about existence. Hubert Dreyfus calls understanding, our ‘holistic background coping’ (Dreyfus 1991, p. 104), by which he means Dasein understands its world in terms of its abilities ‘to be’ in it. Existentially, it is important not to think of the world as external to us because whatever we understand represents our opening to our world.

Understanding is appropriated between beings-in-the-world through discourse. In order for intelligibility to be possible there has to be some sort of articulation of it: ‘The intelligibility of Being-in-the-world – an intelligibility which goes with a state-of-mind – expresses itself as discourse’ (BT p. 161). ‘Rede’, which is only approximately interpreted as ‘discourse’ in the text, is the means by which meaning becomes available. ‘That which can be Articulated in interpretation, and thus even more primordially in discourse is what we have called “meaning”. That which gets articulated as such in discursive Articulation, we call the “totality-of-significations”… To significations words accrue’ (BT p. 161). Language becomes attached to significations and as the meaning of significations change, so do the meanings of words within the language.

Taylor Carman has a view that language is only one of the ways in which Heidegger intends the sense of discourse in the analytic. Of greater interest, in his view, is the role that discourse plays in
establishing a ‘public space’ of expressive possibilities for Dasein: ‘For just as our pragmatic ends are sketched out in advance in the projection of our understanding, so too our expressive possibilities are articulated in advance by the discursive intelligibility of the social world in which we live’ (Carman 2003, p. 205). Heidegger says that discourse is equiprimordial with understanding and attunement. As such it is the existential, which together with our attunement to the world and our understanding of the world informs how we can have being-with, or in other words, how we can maintain a public being. As such, it is critical to the being of public Dasein and Mitsein, or being-with. Discourse is prior to and a condition for interpretation and therefore contributes to the foundation from which meaning can be made. Carman uses the phrase ‘hermeneutic salience’ to describe how a particular cultural world (similar in sense to Heidegger’s interpretations 2 and 3 of world) is intelligible, that is, allows assertions to be either true or false (Carman 2003, p. 5).

Heidegger declares that communication understood broadly encompasses the ‘Articulation of Being with one another understandingly’ (BT p. 162). Dasein already has being-with as an implicit characteristic of its being. However, discourse enables this being-with to be made explicit through communication. Communication is not just about speaking; it is also about hearing and listening. In fact hearing is further evidence for the way being-with is such an integral part of Dasein’s being. Heidegger describes the hearing of motorcycles and wagons as phenomenal evidence ‘that in every case Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world’ (BT p. 164). He means that because these vehicles are part of our being-in-the-world ‘landscape’ of familiarity (in Heidegger’s time) and understanding, we are able to ‘hear’ them as the things they are. The faculties of speech and hearing are predicated on the existential intelligibility of being-in-the-world and being-with.

Attunement, understanding and discourse work together to give us the ground of our intentionality upon which intelligibility is constructed. This intelligibility is the ‘clearing’ of truth, which is described by Heidegger as Alētheia20 — ‘taking entities out of their hiddenness and letting them be seen in their unhiddenness (their uncoveredness)’ (BT p. 219). Truth, according to Heidegger’s ontology, is not something that is generated by Dasein, instead it is revealed by Dasein as something that was already there, but hidden.

John Caputo (1988) explains Alētheia as the space in which epochal revelations of Being occur. Heidegger hoped to retrieve a way of thinking about ‘truth’ as the essential opening onto this space

20 Alētheia is the oldest name for truth in Greek-Western philosophy and is the privative form of lēthē meaning hiddleness or concealment (King 2001, p. 101). Therefore, truth is ‘the uncovered’ of what was once hidden. Caputo, on the other hand, tells us that ‘A-lētheia is not the Greek or any other historical master-name of Being but rather the inconspicuous open space within which the history of the names of Being unfolds’ (Caputo 1988, p. 520). See my comments above.
against the tradition introduced by Aristotle and Plato, which equated truth with ‘correctness’ (Caputo 1988, p. 523). The questioning of Being is something to which we have to turn back to and, further, it was not something the ancient Greeks did since for them it was sufficient to enjoy the phenomenon only. The extra step Heidegger wants to take is to work his way to the openness of Being and then to Being as the open (Caputo 1988, p. 527). It is in his later works that he focuses on these final steps. Here, he also abandons the notion of truth since it always has the connotation of correctness. Therefore, for Heidegger, truth becomes the relation between thought and presence that opens up ‘a particular historical age, an epoch of presence’ (Caputo 1988, p. 531). The relevance of this thought for this thesis is that behind the ontic world of ‘correctness’ and differential evaluations of the elements of a life, Heidegger’s thinking shows that ontologically these evaluations are inconstant parameters for existence. Ways of thinking and the uncovering of ways of being change, when the changes are large enough these can signal a new epoch of understanding.

What follows in the next section is an explanation of Heidegger’s account of inauthentic Dasein, das Man and the existentials that characterise inauthenticity. Its relevance to this thesis is that it explains how thrown-being, for the most part, is absorbed in everydayness.

5. Inauthentic Dasein

Inauthentic Dasein exists within das Man, which represents the collective of everyday ways of being. Das Man encompasses Dasein’s relationships, projects, and the Mitsein which constitutes its mode of being-with others (Dasein and non-Dasein). All of these elements of Dasein’s world make up the referential whole (being-for-the-sake-of) of Dasein’s existence and every element is understood from within this whole. This is the worldhood of Dasein.

In the everyday sense of being within the they, Dasein’s relationships with (non-human) things can be defined as impersonally utilitarian. They facilitate Dasein in moving around its world without having to cognitively process every entity it encounters and every act it needs to perform. Dasein engages with things based on the ‘given’ understanding of their utility. Dasein sees a hammer and understands that hammer as the tool used for hammering nails into something to be constructed. The constructed things are for the further utility of Dasein, and so on.

It is within this framework of utility that the world is disclosed to Dasein. As I have described in the previous section, being-in-the-world and the primordial characteristics of this ontological state establish the possibility of Dasein’s ‘truth’, what Dasein understands to be true or real. Through
being-in-the-world Dasein is open to other inner-worldly beings. This ‘openness’ is manifested through our ‘assertions’, which are a being towards other beings and results in an uncovering of what is true for the beings involved.

Being-true as Being-uncovering, is in turn ontologically possible only on the basis of Being-in-the-world. This latter phenomenon, which we have known as a basic state of Dasein, is the foundation of the primordial phenomenon of truth (BT p. 219).

In this statement, Heidegger tells us that primordial truth is only present where and when Dasein has being. Phenomenologically, reality is a feature of Dasein’s activities only and has no bearing on what might exist independently of Dasein. This point was made in Section 4 where I explained how Dasein’s disclosedness is its ‘there’, that is its reality.

Despite his disparaging remarks on its inauthentic way of being, Heidegger insists that inauthentic Dasein is not a deficient form of being, but rather a being that neglects the understanding of its being-itself in favour of being ‘completely fascinated by the ‘world’ and by the Dasein-with of Others in the “they”’(BT p. 176). Inauthentic Dasein21 is immersed in das Man and lives as though, like das Man, it will continue forever. Dasein regards itself as ‘one of them’ and does not contemplate its existential finitude. If it does think of its death, it will ‘flee’ this thought and attend to its immediate projects, or manufacture further distractions. The abiding characteristic of Dasein is ‘entanglement’ in the world to the extent that opportunities to examine the scope of one’s life in the face of death become limited.

In all this busyness, Dasein is seduced by the dependable structure of its world. Heidegger goes on to claim that whilst inauthentic being-in-the-world is ‘tranquilising’ for Dasein and causes it to believe that it is ‘leading and sustaining a full and genuine ‘life’’, ‘tempting tranquillization aggravates the falling22’:

When Dasein, tranquillized, and ‘understanding’ everything, thus compares itself with everything, it drifts along towards an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is hidden from it. Falling Being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquillizing; it is at the same time alienating (BT p. 178).

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21 Zimmerman holds that the everyday Dasein is the basic egoistical self. When Dasein becomes more egoistical it becomes more inauthentic, while being less egoistical makes it more authentic. Therefore egoism is something that both modes of Dasein have to contend with (Zimmerman 1986, p. 43). I believe that Zimmerman is correct in this analysis. Even though Heidegger explains at great length why Dasein cannot have an objective being, Dasein’s being is nevertheless essentially involved with its own being in its ‘caring’ aspect. In the inauthentic mode, this caring would be directed to an objectified ego self. In the authentic mode, this objectification of the self would be greatly reduced.

22 Dasein, as a self-interpreting being, has to deal with the impossibility of grasping in any objective manner what the ground of its being is. Heidegger claims that this inability to access its ground is a source of great anxiety to Dasein and results in Dasein ‘fleeing’ from itself and ‘falling’ into, and becoming absorbed in, the public sphere of das Man.
Other Dasein in the world become the standard against which Dasein measures itself. Such a
generalised, ambiguous standard draws Dasein away from the possibility of having its own measure
as its standard23. In this mode of ‘alienating’ being, Dasein becomes obsessed with ‘self-
dissection’, tempting itself with all possibilities of explanation, so that the very ‘characterologies’
and ‘typologies’ which it has brought about are themselves already becoming something that cannot
be surveyed at a glance’ (BT p. 178). Dreyfus believes this is a reference to the popularist, self-help
psychology that encourages ‘going-within’ and ‘finding inner-meaning’ for the troubled individual.
Dreyfus may be correct since the two eminent psychologists who had enormous public influence at
the time of Heidegger’s writing, Freud and Jung, could have been the stimulus for Heidegger’s
criticism.

The result of such self-obsession means that ‘Dasein’ itself becomes a public project in which
members of the they can become immersed. Unfortunately, this mode of self-investigation does not
lead Dasein to authenticity because such a search is carried out within the given parameters and
value sets popularised by das Man. Often these are in conflict and change according to the
prevailing ‘research’ interests. As an ontic analogy we could take the ever-changing advice on what
to eat and not to eat for good health, which over time often shows up as being contradictory.
Consequently, if Dasein is to arrive at an authentic conception of its own self it must be able to
circumvent the prescriptiveness of das Man since they represent what is inconstant and faddish in
society.

In the normal course of being-in-the-world, however, it is extraordinarily difficult to disassociate
oneself entirely from the influence of the they in order to grasp the primordial conditions of one’s
being. This is because Dasein has been socialised into its environment of accepted practices,
language and being-with others, so any results it obtains from its self-reflection will be in terms of
the way things are already.

“Fallenness” into the “world” means an absorption in Being-with-one-another, in so far as
the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. Through the Interpretation of
falling, what we have called the “inauthenticity” of Dasein may now be defined more
precisely (BT p. 175).

23 Mahon O’Brien says that ‘Heidegger is criticizing an inescapable tendency of contemporary publicness toward what
is described above as levelling down, the eradication of difference and the ubiquity of homogeneity’ (O’Brien 2011, p.
25). Interestingly, what O’Brien has picked up on is the sort of Aristotelian elitism that Heidegger is demonstrating.
We see here Heidegger’s thinly disguised support for difference and for the allowance of some people to be better than
others. Of course, this is ensured by the unequal situation of thrown-being in the first place, and this inequality is the
topic of Chapter Four.
I will briefly summarise what Heidegger means by idle talk, curiosity, ambiguity and fallenness. These portrayals of inauthentic being help to show up Heidegger’s background of everyday being-in-the-they. My purpose in describing these phenomena is to demonstrate how being as an everyday self is also a being-towards others (persons and non-persons) and that inauthentic phenomena are central to making sense of our world.

5.1. A summary of idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity

Heidegger characterises ‘idle talk’ as the communication that has been initiated on the ground of shared average understanding of entities spoken about: ‘We have the same thing in view, because it is in the same averageness that we have a common understanding of what is said’ (BT p. 168). Therefore, in idle talk there is nothing that is said that has not already been part of the they, moreover, the groundlessness of what is said is exacerbated through the spreading of such talk. The characteristic that goes hand-in-hand with idle talk is ‘curiosity’. For Heidegger, curiosity is not a genuine, interested engagement with something because Dasein ‘comes into a Being towards it’, but rather it is because Dasein is curious just in order to ‘see’ something novel (BT p. 172). Curiosity moves Dasein onwards towards new stimuli. It does not allow Dasein to ‘root’ itself in any constant way of being-towards. Each of the two modes of inauthentic being, idle talk and curiosity, ‘drags the other one with it’ and together serve to accentuate the groundlessness of Dasein (BT p. 173).

Ambiguity is the product of the activities of idle talk and curiosity, both of which Heidegger sees as superficial and misguiding. By ambiguity Heidegger means that there is no certainty that what is understood is a genuine understanding of any given thing or person.

This ambiguity extends not only to the world, but just as much to Being-with-one-another as such, and even to Dasein’s Being towards itself (BT p. 173).

The effect of ambiguity on Dasein is to mislead it into thinking that it really understands what is happening and that everything is moving along as it should. In fact, the superficiality of engagement wrought by idle talk and febrile curiosity creates this insecure condition of ambiguity that is deeply destabilising for Dasein. Ambiguity affects our relationships with others in an adverse way because meaning is not clear or consistent and consequently the relationship is diminished by distrust and misunderstanding. Heidegger says that this ambiguity ‘is already implied in Being with one another, as thrown Being-with-one-another in a world’ (BT p. 175). So, Heidegger is attributing this detrimental effect of ambiguity to thrown-being, by which he means that as little as we know the

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24 John Haugeland (1982) makes a case for das Man being an emergent set of norms that derive from the conformist and censorious behaviour of the individuals in it. These norms then determine the ‘behavioural dispositions of each non-deviant member’ (Haugeland 1982, p. 17). Perhaps this is what Heidegger has in mind by ambiguity – that there is no obvious reason why we are one way towards each other and not another.
ground of our own being, even less do we know that of the other. Their cause of existence and how it relates to our own existence is of concern to us. In the next chapter I will be arguing that far from being ambiguous, for the authentic Dasein it is the shared primordial meaning of thrown-being that is the only clear ground individuals share. It is only on this basis of accepting a shared limit of sense as our thrown-being that we do understand each other primordially.

In conclusion, the existential phenomena of idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity belong to the everyday being of Dasein. The reason for their description in this thesis is to highlight the ontological basis of superficiality in our relationships with others. Such superficiality, and worse, instrumentality corresponds ontically to thoughtless judgement, which I will be arguing ignores the common facticity of unchosen being. Nevertheless, these existentials constitute Dasein’s ‘there’ or the ‘disclosedness of Being-in-the-world’. The sort of being that they disclose, however, is Dasein’s falling, or the drawing away of Dasein from its ownmost potential for being.

5.2. Falling-away
The three characteristics of inauthentic being just described are constitutive of Dasein’s movement away from its thrown-being which Heidegger calls ‘falling’. In its projective fore-throw of understanding, Dasein is taken in and becomes ‘fascinated’ by all the potential for being and understanding which there is in the world. Consequently, ‘Dasein itself as factual Being-in-the-world, is something from which it has already fallen away… it has fallen into the world, which itself belongs to its Being’ (BT p. 176). This ‘seduction’ of world is at the same time ‘tranquilizing’ in the sense that other ways to be become obscured for Dasein.

A further consequence of this falling-away is that Dasein becomes alienated from itself. Such alienation leads Dasein to treat itself as a worldly object with which it becomes further preoccupied. ‘The alienation of falling – at once tempting and tranquillizing – leads by its own movement to Dasein’s getting entangled in itself’ (BT p. 178). Here Heidegger means that Dasein extends its curiosity to itself and becomes wrapped up in self-analysis and self-interpretations. The effect of this is not to bring Dasein any closer to knowledge of itself, but instead to vigorously exaggerate the mode of falling away from its authentic possibilities. ‘Since the understanding is thus constantly torn away from authenticity and into the “they” (though always with a sham of authenticity), the movement of falling is characterised by turbulence’ (BT p. 178). The ‘sham’ of authenticity is the apparent engagement with the ownmost ‘self’ through Dasein’s inauthentic entanglement.

Heidegger uses the term ‘turbulence’ to emphasise the way the they is capable of ‘sucking in’ Dasein. An important consideration in the analysis of falling-away is the facticity of thrown-being.
Thrownness is neither a “fact that is finished” nor a Fact that is settled. Dasein’s facticity is such that as long as it is what it is, Dasein remains in the throw, and is sucked into the turbulence of the “they’s” inauthenticity. Thrownness, in which facticity lets itself be seen phenomenally, belongs to Dasein, for which, in its Being, that very Being is an issue. Dasein exists factically (BT p. 179).

In every moment of its existence Dasein finds itself ‘thrown’ into a present by virtue of an unchosen beginning coupled with its past beings and the consequent possibility for future beings. In this way, thrown-being represents Dasein’s facticity. The physical phenomenon of Dasein’s existence is a constant reminder to itself that its being is one of unchosen and contingent facticity. What is the ontological consequence of this? This question will be more fully addressed in the next section.

6. The angst of thrown-being

Dasein’s being-in-the-world is always accompanied by an attunement of anxiety (the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of angst). Its ontological function is to facilitate the disclosure of the structural totality of Being in an elemental way (BT p. 182). This means that the meaning of Being, at its most basic level, will reveal itself if anxiety acts as the ‘state-of-mind’ underlying disclosure. In what follows, the terms ‘angst’, ‘anxiety’ and ‘dread’ will be used interchangeably to mean the same thing.

Anxiety is a very important idea for Heidegger’s existential analytic as it is the feature of Dasein’s being-in-the-world that affords and explains the fall into inauthenticity as well as Dasein’s potential for return to authenticity. I will begin with the what of anxiety before going on to explain why it exists.

Heidegger’s definition of anxiety is that ‘understanding state-of-mind in which Dasein is disclosed to itself’ (BT p. 182). This definition signals a very particular type of understanding because unlike the fore-throw of being where Dasein understands futural beings from the basis of its relationships in the they, that is from the they-self, this sort of understanding is of a disclosedness of Dasein as thrown even when this understanding is closed-off from Dasein in an existentiell way.

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25 This footnote in Being and Time is useful as background information for ‘angst’: ‘While this word has generally been translated as ‘anxiety’ in the post-Freudian psychological literature, it appears as ‘dread’ in the translations of Kierkegaard and in a number of discussions of Heidegger. In some ways ‘unesaisness’ or ‘malaise’ would be more appropriate still’ (BT fn.1, p. 182).
From the preceding accounts of inauthenticity it has been seen that falling-in with the available relationships in the they and falling-away from the ownmost ‘self’ is the prevailing tendency for Dasein. Relating to the self genuinely is not the norm for a being-in-the-world type existence. Heidegger claims the state-of-mind of anxiety is that which will ‘simplify’ the disclosure of being for Dasein’s own self and will phenomenologically contribute towards grasping Dasein’s primordial totality of being (BT p. 182).

Heidegger’s account of anxiety itself will be through a circuitous route that serves to draw in the ordinary everyday being of Dasein and express it in its totality. My interpretation of Heidegger’s account will start with thrown-being. This, as we have seen previously, is the factual condition of Dasein who finds itself in a particular existence before it is able to comprehend this existence. Dasein arrives from nowhere into a world in which its being is always in the fore-throw of future possibilities of being. Dasein’s being-in-the-world has been described as ‘falling’, the state in which Dasein exhibits all the existentialia of inauthenticity. These have been described in the previous section. In order to be falling into the world, Dasein turns away from itself and flees ‘in the face of itself’ (BT p. 184). This ‘in the face of itself’ is of course its thrown-being.

We have seen that Dasein’s world is comprised of different ways of ‘being-in’, meaning that Dasein’s world is a construct of its being-towards entities in the world and being-in situations of the world. Whatever it is not interested in (or does not have a being-in or being-towards) does not exist for Dasein. The relevance of this note will be clear soon. With regard to anxiety, Heidegger wants us to understand that it is a deep and all pervading state-of-mind, but in contrast to the emotion of fear does not have an identifiable object within the world. Dasein is not anxious about anything in the world, but this, rather than diminishing the mood, serves to accentuate it. In a sense, the rather foreboding term of ‘dread’ is more effective in illustrating the phenomenology at play. Dasein’s underlying attunement is one of dread. This is largely masked in its inauthentic being-in-the-world, but is never absent. Instead, the more involved Dasein is in the world the more intransigent this mood becomes. But, as already stated, this dread is not dread of anything in the world, in fact the surfacing of dread causes the world to become insignificant to Dasein. Heidegger tells us, ‘Nothing which is ready-to-hand or present-at-hand within the world functions as that in the face of which anxiety is anxious’ (BT p. 186). Whatever it is that is making us anxious comes from nowhere identifiable by being-in-the-world. This nowhere means ‘that which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction within what is close by; it is already ‘there’, and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one’s breath, and yet it is nowhere’ (BT p. 186). In the face of this persistent anxiety, the things of the world show up as being insignificant to the extent that the
world ‘collapses into itself’ (BT p. 186). Eventually this state-of-mind completely overtakes Dasein’s fascination for the world.

The world represents ‘place’ for Dasein. It is where it finds its ‘there’. Yet anxiety rips this ground away and leaves Dasein with the sensation of ‘uncanniness’. Heidegger says anxiety, as a ‘state-of-mind’, shows up how one is and this is as ‘uncanny’ (BT p. 188). This is the accessible English translation of the German word ‘unheimlich’, but this word literally means ‘unhomelike’ (BT fn. p. 188). How this term fits in with the idea of place and anxiety needs more explanation. King tells us that ‘The dreadsome is nowhere and nothing. But, as Heidegger goes on to claim, the nowhere and nothing are not mere nothings: in them lies the disclosure of place itself, of world itself’ (King 2001, p. 93). A ‘place’ is a definite here or a there, locations to which we orientate ourselves in relation to other beings and things. For everyday Dasein, this place is the ‘there’ of its being-in-the-world.

In anxiety Dasein is brought back from its absorption in the world, because as we have said, ‘everyday familiarity collapses’ (BT p. 189). Dasein comes back to itself, it faces itself, but as Being-in-the-world collapses (BT p. 188). Heidegger claims it is this being of Dasein that is the source of dread, that Dasein is in the world and that the world is meaningless. As a consequence, Dasein’s place in the world as ‘there’ cannot be the answer to the question ‘where?’ There is no longer a meaningful ‘there’ for Dasein. Heidegger says, That about which anxiety is anxious reveals itself as that in the face of which it is anxious – namely, Being-in-the-world (BT p. 188). Anxiety is a component of being-in-the-world, but the collapsing significance of the world shows up being-in as ‘individualized, pure, and thrown’ (BT p. 188). Thus, what anxiety succeeds in doing is to show existing Dasein that it is a lone entity and groundless, or as Heidegger puts it ‘uncanny’; ‘Being-in enters the existential ‘mode’ of the ‘not-at-home”’ (BT p. 189).

For Heidegger’s analysis, however, the positive note in all of this is that anxiety throws Dasein back towards ‘its ownmost potentiality-for-Being’; it offers Dasein ‘the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself’ (BT p. 189). Anxiety successfully releases Dasein from the grip of das Man, so that Dasein looks to its own self for meaning. This mode of reflection in which anxiety returns Dasein to itself, but within the mode of being-in-the-world, lies within the larger hermeneutic circle of Dasein’s totality of being.

In concluding his description of anxiety and its role in the existential analytic of Dasein, Heidegger tells us that it is now obvious what Dasein ‘flees’ from and why it ‘falls’ into the they.

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26 Alphonso Lingis (1995) observes that Heidegger sustains a certain ‘double vision’ of the world. On the one hand it is functional, teleological and absorbing; on the other hand it can be a thing of moods and alienating as we comprehend its non-potential as an abyss of nothingness into which we pass in death (Lingis 1995, p. 142).
It does not flee in the face of entities within-the-world; these are precisely what it flee

towards – as entities alongside which our concern, lost in the “they”, can dwell in
tranquillized familiarity. When in falling we flee into the “at-home” of publicness, we flee
in the face of the “not-at-home”; that is, we flee in the face of the uncanniness which lies in
Dasein – in Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-world, which has been delivered over to itself in
its Being (BT p. 189).

The answer for the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of fleeing and falling, respectively, is the same; the
groundlessness of Dasein, or its being ‘not-at-home’. It is the reason we seek the comfort of the
public world, and it is the reason we abandon the attempt to understand our own being which, in its
ungroundedness, is alienating and repelling. However, the constant attunement of anxiety means
that we are never free from this knowledge of our groundlessness coming to the fore at any time.
What I want to emphasise as my conclusion to this analysis is that anxiety carries with it the
understanding of our uncanniness. How this understanding plays out eventually is through
authenticity, which is a topic for Chapter Three.

King summarises Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein’s ‘not-at-home’ in the context of its being as
follows:

The not, it now appears, is not originally disclosed by understanding as Da-sein’s ultimate
possibility: it is revealed from the beginning by dread which already tunes all fore-throw of
the possibilities of a finite being. Dasein is not finite because he does not “in fact” last
forever... Dasein exists finitely because dread in advance reveals to him a not in his
impotent and uncanny not-at-homeness. This not is said to each Da-sein alone, and only in
hearing it can he understand “that I already am” (King 2001, p. 96-97).

It is not Dasein’s death that alerts it to its limited span of time in existence and individuates it, but
rather the not as the basis of Dasein’s groundlessness. It is loss of ‘support’ that abandons Dasein to
itself; firstly, through a loss of explanation for itself from the they, and secondly through the
absence of a home for its being. It is, therefore, condemned to making itself, as it finds itself, the
ground. Anxiety (dread) reveals that Dasein’s thrown-being is always ‘in the throw’, always
arriving from nothing, as the condition of being groundless.

The discussion of anxiety in Division One gives us Heidegger’s description of the consequences of
Dasein’s understanding of its thrown-being and helps to lay the basis for Heidegger’s portrayal of
authentic being and consequently Dasein’s potential return to its ownmost ‘self’ from das Man in
Division Two. In the next chapter I will be claiming that there is an alternative consequence of a
shared understanding of thrown-being, one that helps us to ground our relationships to each other.
For Heidegger, Dasein’s salvation is in its authenticity, which I will discuss in Chapter Three. As a final reflection, I will briefly review another important implication of anxiety.

6.1. Existential fear

Being-in-the-world is a mode of Dasein’s uncanniness, which means that uncanniness is the primordial phenomenon upon which Dasein’s basic everyday being is founded. It was this understanding which informed my direction for developing a thesis for thrown-being based on Heidegger’s analysis. Firstly, I could see that the condition of thrown-being had to be an integral characteristic of any other sort of being that we could assume throughout our existence. Thrownness as facticity does not ‘go away’ or dissipate with any other existential-ontological condition, though it may become hidden. Secondly, if the ontological analysis is correct, it must afford us a deeply explanatory rationale for our ontic existence, one that can light up seemingly intransigent facts such as an unchosen life. My hopeful reasoning is supported by this comment Heidegger makes in the conclusion to his analysis of anxiety and uncanniness:

And only because anxiety is always latent in Being-in-the-world, can such Being-in-the-world, as Being which is alongside the ‘world’ and which is concernful in its state-of-mind, ever be afraid. Fear is anxiety, fallen into the ‘world’, inauthentic, and, as such, hidden from itself (BT p. 189)

Heidegger is claiming that his explication of anxiety helps to highlight why there can be ontic fear in the first place. He wants us to realise that because of our essential fallen being, ‘real’ existential anxiety is rarely felt, but is instead wrapped up with the facticity of our inauthentic beings. However, the mood of uncanniness is always there: ‘Only because Dasein is anxious in the very depths of its Being, does it become possible for anxiety to be elicited physiologically’ (BT p. 190). We constantly fear this or that in the world only because the prevailing anxiety on which fear is founded is always there, hidden from us. However, analysis of anxiety and its attendant state-of-mind has been neglected as an existential-ontological phenomenon. In fallen, factual Dasein, anxiety is ascribed to physiological factors, but this does not give us the ontological basis for our fears.

27 From Being and Time: ‘This uncanniness pursues Dasein constantly, and is a threat to its everyday lostness in the “they”, though not explicitly. This threat can go together factically with complete assurance and self-sufficiency in one’s everyday concern’ (BT p. 189).

28 Heidegger’s in-text footnote tells us that ‘It is no accident that the phenomena of anxiety and fear, which have never been distinguished in a thoroughgoing manner, have come within the purview of Christian theology ontically and even (though within very narrow limits) ontologically. This has happened whenever the anthropological problem of man’s Being towards God has won priority and when questions have been formulated under the guidance of phenomena like faith, sin, love and repentance’ (BT Author’s Notes, page 492). Heidegger is saying that it has been religion that has made use of the ontological basis of anxiety and fear while providing a solution for the fear, which could be thought of as self-serving.
The import of what Heidegger is claiming is particularly important for my purposes. If I reinterpret the last indented quote, he is saying that if we had grounded being, if such a thing were possible, we would not have fears – as we know them. Since we have groundless being, it is possible to account for all of our fears from the basis of this groundlessness. Fear arises on the basis of the prevailing state-of-mind, which tells us we are not-at-home. It is this existential-ontological absence of a home, and concomitant sense of ‘loss of security’, which is responsible for our fears. This in itself is a reason to explore thrown-being further.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the question of the meaning of Being that motivated Heidegger’s work in *Being and Time* and how this question is broached in the context of human existence. Next, I presented this existence as Heidegger discusses it through the existential way of being that he calls Dasein. Another essential element for his analysis is the existential of care. Dasein cares about its existence, which has a past, present and future component. Its past is revealed as a thrown-being, its present existence is always falling into the ways of das Man, and its futural existence is actually very much a part of its present as a consequence of its being existent ahead of itself. Dasein’s existence is futural in respect of it always projecting its understanding of being into the future. On account of the unknown, potential not-being, Dasein’s existence is about uncertainty.

Dasein’s world, meanwhile, has been shown to consist of things and other Dasein. How Dasein understands its world and progresses its projective being is through the existentials of attunement, understanding and discourse. These are ways of being that are not volitional for Dasein. Similarly, being-with others is also a part of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. Dasein’s thrown-being is dependent on the beings of the world to form a context for, and to make sense of, its ahead-of-itslf way of existing. Some aspects of Dasein’s falling into the world are described by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. These descriptions serve to demonstrate how our relationships in the everyday, inauthentic mode can be superficial and alienating for the ownmost ‘self’ of Dasein. It is the inauthentic aspects of being-in-the-world that describes how human persons might come to treat each other instrumentally, much as they do ‘things-ready-to-hand’.

An important aspect of being-in-the-world is that the understanding of anything requires the attunement of Dasein’s being, that is, understanding comes about from a certain involuntary mood accompanying being. There is one mood (or attunement), which always accompanies Dasein’s being-in-the-world and this is anxiety. This mood is not passing, but goes deeply into the being of
Dasein. It is the mood in which the feeling of the ‘nothing’ and ‘nowhere’ is manifest. The world becomes insignificant to the point of nothingness and the individual Dasein feels as though it is ‘nowhere’. The overwhelming ontological feeling, therefore, is of not-being-at-home.

It is this very groundlessness of Dasein that is the ground of my thesis. It is from this null, unchosen, ontological basis for a human’s being that my main arguments in this thesis arise. The first of these will be covered in the next chapter. There, I will be expanding on Heidegger’s analysis that anxiety drives Dasein back to itself in seeking a ground. I will do this by claiming it is the quest for meaning of its inexplicable facticity, which can only obtain in relationships with others, that motivates Dasein to find meaning in being-with. As Heidegger indicates, it is rare that anyone feels real existential anxiety (BT p. 184-285); however, trying to achieve a relationship with one’s existence in the face of such angst may be productive in bringing more authentic meaning to one’s being-in-the-world relationships. The meaning for our existence can be derived from a mutual understanding of the struggle we must engage in to ground meaning in a ‘homeless’ being. Though Heidegger, himself, acknowledges this motivation, his further analysis of being-in-the-world finds that the ‘at-home’ of publicness is not enough to hold Dasein there. Dasein must embrace its groundlessness in order to find redemption. In the next chapter I will begin to make a case that an understanding of shared homelessness may be redemption enough. This will develop from my analysis of being-with as sense-making between selves who collectively create a meaningful world.
Chapter 2 - Being-relational: The sense of Being.

1. Introduction

The previous chapter delivered an outline of the aspects of Heidegger’s existential analytic in *Being and Time* that are relevant to this thesis. These aspects are the existential, ontological properties of everyday Dasein and their associations, which explain Dasein as the ontological complement of the existent human being. I discussed the facticity of Dasein as being-in-the-world and as thrown-being. I also talked about the relevance of attunement, understanding and discourse to the ‘mechanics’ of being as disclosing. I also introduced Heidegger’s care structure, which reveals the temporal unity of Dasein’s being. I ended with the role that anxiety plays in the movement of Dasein’s being away from its thrown-being and its ontological role as the basis of fear. I described these concepts in order to lay out the ontological ‘scene’ for my discussions of thrown-being in this thesis by showing how a human has being that is at the same time ontologically non-volitional and ontically vulnerable. Heidegger’s substantially pragmatic analysis of a human’s being helps me to think through from the ontological to this ontic dimension of vulnerability. However, for my thesis, I am also interested in how an ontological treatment of relating to others through the fundamental schematic of meaning creation can help advance the answers to my questions for thrown-being.

In this chapter I will be moving onto more detailed analyses of everyday Dasein’s ontological relationships. The principal topic is the existential of Mitsein and its specific expression of Mitdasein. These are the modes of Dasein’s being-with and Dasein’s being-with-others, respectively. Heidegger insisted that being-with (things and other Dasein) was co-essential with Dasein; meaning Dasein’s being was essentially a being-with. However, his explanation of this co-essentiality is perfunctory. In the first chapter I discussed how the nullity of Dasein’s origins precipitated its falling into the they such that Dasein’s they-self is easily understood as a dispersed being-with-others. Heidegger, however, talks rather negatively about this mode of being. For Dasein whose everyday being is defined world-disclosing, I do not think Heidegger’s rather superficial treatment of those existentials of interaction in *Being and Time* do justice to the analytic since such interaction must be formative in an important way to how Dasein discloses a world consisting of other Dasein. He states that Dasein’s existence must be understood from within its world and this is a world that includes others (BT p. 62). Therefore, the meaning of Being must, in a more detailed ontological manner, be able to say something about the essentiality of Dasein’s dependency on others.
I believe that developing the features of the ontology of Mitsein and Mit-dasein will lead me to a positive account of the situation of thrown-being, both ontologically and on-tically. I expect being-with-others to involve a mutual understanding in which ‘thrown’ existence itself becomes a type of being to be shared. I regard Mit-dasein as an important existential for my thesis, hence its focus in this second chapter. If our thrown-being comes into a world that requires coexistence with others, then it is essential to understand the ontology of this coexistence. Unfortunately, the chapter that Heidegger devotes to Mitsein and Mit-dasein is the briefest in the whole work of Being and Time (BT Division One, IV).

To help voice what Heidegger does not say, I turn to another Heideggerian scholar, Jean-Luc Nancy. His contribution to my thinking is his offering of a functional ontological account for Mit-dasein that allows me to examine how being with others might help me to respond to some of my questions about thrown-being. Nancy also provides an explanation for Heidegger’s lack of development of Mit-dasein in Being and Time as a dislocation of his overall analysis into two; one that describes being-with in exteriority (the they) and the other as being-with in interiority (union through destiny), which makes it impossible for a consistency in the understanding of Mit-dasein (Nancy 2008, p. 1). Instead, even though Dasein is claimed to be coexistent with other Dasein in the world, this coexistence becomes tenuous and even abandoned in several places in Heidegger’s account. For example, the whole development of authentic Dasein, as the mode of existence that embraces elements of Dasein’s ‘destiny’, is not adequately explained in terms of the co-essentiality of Dasein and Mit-dasein. Instead of the common and everyday aspects of existence being integrated, Dasein’s existence becomes split into two modes, the improper being-with others and the proper being-with the People. Nancy’s analysis of this split, discussed in the second section of this chapter, concludes that there is no way for Dasein to cross from one mode to the other, meaning that authentic Dasein’s everyday being-with is unable to become heroic, historicised Dasein.

Rather than Heidegger’s Dasein and Mit-dasein being a consistent relationship throughout the analytic, it appears to veer from a dysfunctional being-with the they, to a highly unworldly being-with an ideology. This is why, even while I owe much to Heidegger’s analytic for setting out the

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1 I will be explaining Heidegger’s analysis of authenticity in the next chapter.
2 ‘The People’ are those with whom authentic Dasein shares the responsibility of co-historicizing and thus maintaining the tradition (Nancy 2008, p. 1).
3 Having anticipatory resoluteness towards one’s mortality means ‘one first chooses the choice which makes one free for the struggle of loyally following in the footsteps of that which can be repeated’ (BT p. 385). Choosing the choice means authentic Dasein must uncover the original possibilities in the choices that became concealed as tradition and take them over (repeat them). In doing so, authentic Dasein is able to ‘take over’ its thrownness and make it its own from the genuine possibilities of the past.
4 By ideology, I mean that authentic Dasein is fated to embrace possibilities of being as evidenced in its community’s ‘tradition’, which have been handed down and which Dasein will extend into the future. Thus, authentic Dasein
ontological conditions for thrown-being, I must now turn to other thinkers to develop a more robust understanding of ordinary, everyday relationships and analyse what they mean for Dasein’s being.

In the third section, after commenting on Heidegger’s description of Dasein-with others, I discuss in detail Nancy’s critique of this account because it serves to articulate a reason why Heidegger’s analytic does not give me the everyday being-with analysis that I am looking for. Nancy shows us how it is seductive to speak from the position of a singular ‘subject’, for example, Dasein, or the they, or the People. But the everyday dynamic of interpreting meaning is not amenable to such a stable, unitary perspective. Therefore, in the methodology that Heidegger adopts, something fundamental is neglected and these are the parts that make up the whole, the sense formation of the everyday coming together of entities.

In the fourth section I describe how Nancy places the emphasis on existential meaning as deriving not from singular entities, but rather from their interrelations. This analysis forms the ground for his important thesis of ‘being singular plural’, which describes beings in terms of their necessary plural, meaning-forming relationships. In Being Singular Plural, Nancy demonstrates that by focussing on the phenomenology of what it is like to be for an entity involved in the world Heidegger has described the associated existentialia from the perspective of an isolated entity. This Heideggerian approach has the effect of producing a phenomenology that portrays the structure of unitary being. Nancy, instead, wants to pursue a phenomenology of meaning; i.e. how to account for a structure of being which also accommodates co-dependency. This gives rise to an altogether different phenomenological ontology.

For Nancy, it is being-with that is the source of this meaning. His claim in support of this point is that meaning is made between entities and thus the source of meaning originates in Mitsein. This provides the content of the fifth section of this chapter in which I discuss Nancy’s concepts for the creation of meaning between entities who are themselves origins of meaning onto a world. I will be using my readings of these concepts to argue that thrown-being confers a particular meaning that can be seen as integrated with the being-with ontology of existence.

In Chapter One, I discussed Heidegger’s explanation of how the facticity of thrown-being provides the basis for the feeling of ‘not-being-at-home’. The prevailing attunement of anxiety brings on this feeling the more involved (fallen) Dasein becomes with das Man. Heidegger’s analysis in Part One assumes the heroic role of carrying the ‘tradition’ forward against the pull of the technologically faddish distractions of those fallen Dasein.
of Being and Time focuses on the facticity of thrown-being opening onto a world. In the final section of this chapter, I will be contending that ‘not-being-at-home’, or ‘homelessness’, is actually a primordial signification and understanding held in common by all Dasein. By primordial I mean an original unchanging understanding that is essential to the ontological interpretation of Dasein. The ground of meaning consequently exposed is the meaning of being homeless. This conception is important for my thesis because I want to be able to say something about how we are to ontologically understand the state of thrown-being rather than simply be affected by it through anxiety. I go on to argue that this shared understanding unites existents and it is the uniting which could be thought of as the destiny of Dasein; it is not just self-ownership in terms of authenticity that is at stake, but the search for belonging. Moreover, such thinking requires us to renegotiate the whole motivation for Mit-dasein, not as a falling, but rather as a seeking. We are at a fundamental level united in a shared meaning for our thrown-beings through our ontological relationships with each other. I will start the discussion by reviewing Heidegger’s account of being-with others.

2. Heidegger’s Mitsein

Heidegger promises that an understanding of Mitsein, together with Mit-dasein (Dasein-with), will enable us to ‘see what we may call the ‘subject’ of everydayness – the ‘they’’ (BT p. 114). These existential do not describe a physical encounter with isolated entities over and against an isolated self, but an encounter that is ‘environmental’. This means that being-with and Dasein-with are equiprimordial modes of being-in-the-world. Dasein is always already with others in the way that it has its everyday being.

In Being and Time, this is how Heidegger describes and situates the others within Dasein’s world:

> These entities are neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand; on the contrary, they are like the very Dasein which frees them, in that they are there too, and there with it. So if one should want to identify the world in general with entities within-the-world, one would have to say that Dasein too is ‘world’ (BT p. 118).

The phrase, Dasein ‘frees’ the others means that Dasein’s existence does not ‘use’ the others in the same way that Dasein might use things and equipment (the present-at-hand and the ready-to-hand) existentially. Since they are not for Dasein as a tool might be, they are for themselves and thus free ‘to be’ as Dasein. They exist through Dasein’s disclosing activities in the world. The next part of the above quote shows Heidegger’s logical follow-through with his statement that Dasein’s disclosing structure includes the presence of others. ‘World’ represents the way of being of all
Dasein and is a product of the being of Dasein. It is something like the sense of ‘worldhood’ as described in section 4, Chapter One.

Heidegger emphasises that when he talks about Dasein he is not talking about an isolated being that is separated from others; instead, he insists that Dasein and others must be understood existentially, rather than categorically (factually), as co-existants:

This Being-there-too with them does not have the ontological character of a Being-present-at-hand-along-‘with’ them within a world... the ‘too’ means a sameness of Being as circumspectively concernful Being-in-the-world. ‘With’ and ‘too’ are to be understood existentially, not categorically. The world of Dasein is a with-world (BT p. 118).

All Dasein share the same type of being as world-discoerling and ‘each-other’ disclosing. Therefore, it is not necessary to wonder how Dasein ‘gets across’ to the others in Heidegger’s analytic, being-in-the-world is a being-with-others-in-the-world and requires the presence of others. However, as already pointed out in Chapter One, this mode of being-with that Heidegger gives us is an environmental being-with\(^5\). This means that beings are encountered ‘proximally’ in that whilst being, Dasein encounters others’ beings and even its own being in the process. The ‘environmental’ is like peripheral vision; there is always something else alongside one’s focus that adds to the understanding. Such environmental being-with is always understood in the sense of ‘world’, which is Dasein with others. Because of this context of Dasein-with others (Mit-dasein), Dasein, or others, can never be spoken of in isolation from a world. Heidegger insists that being-with is not dependent on the actual presence of others, but instead it is an existential feature of Dasein’s disclosing:

Being-with is an existential characteristic of Dasein even when factically no other is present-at-hand or perceived. Even Dasein’s Being-alone is Being-with in the world. The other can be missing only in and for a Being-with. Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with; its very possibility is the proof of this (BT p. 120).

It is the existential characteristic of being-with that allows knowledge about others to be possible, even though Heidegger admits that ontically it is usually the case that we ignore others and exist alongside them without ‘care’ for them. This, however, should not lead one to think of others as being-present-at-hand the way things are. Instead, in the mode of Mit-dasein, Dasein’s care takes on

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\(^5\) Heidegger tells us that ‘Others are encountered environmentally. This elemental worldly kind of encountering, which belongs to Dasein and is closest to it, goes so far that even one’s own Dasein becomes something that it can itself proximally ‘come across’ only when it looks away…’ (BT p. 119). There is no more meaning to this than mere encountering.
the characteristic of ontological solicitude. This is the norm, so when we ignore others, or they do not matter to us, this is a deficient form of solicitude (BT p. 121).

In its positive mode, there are two forms of solicitude evidenced in the existential of being-with others. The first is where Dasein assumes the care for another – it leaps in for the other effectively depriving the other of his or her ontological autonomy. The other has the opportunity for understanding its own self taken away because this understanding is taken/adopted from another. Heidegger says that ‘[t]his kind of solicitude, which leaps in and takes away ‘care’, is to a large extent determinative for Being with one another, and pertains for the most part to our concern with the ready-to-hand’ (BT p. 122). This speaks to the sort of domination that is displayed in the they where Dasein is largely not self-directed or ‘free’, but instead is dependent on and guided by others. Others become the ‘ready-to-hand’, or ‘means-to-an-end’, a situation that is often ontically exhibited between individuals in society. Ontologically, this points to a relationship where Dasein ‘belongs to the Others’ (BT p. 126) and loses ownership of its potentialities for owning its being. Note that ontologically this is still a positive mode of solicitude since there is a type of relating of one to another.

Another positive mode of solicitude is that of ‘authentic care’. This is the sort of care that comes from the existence of one being ‘allowing’ the existence of another:

This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care – that is, to the existence of the Other, not to a “what” with which he is concerned; it helps the Other to become transparent to himself in his care and to become free for it (BT p. 122).

When Dasein concerns itself with its own being, it frees itself environmentally from the constraints of worldly involvements. Consequently, the other is free to be for herself because Dasein is also being-with. So when Dasein is not in the mode of instrumental (or inauthentic) care it and other Dasein become free for their own beings. ‘Leaping ahead’, which is how Heidegger describes this variety of solicitude, brings an existential freedom to entities in their being. Despite this potentiality, Heidegger says that in the ordinary way of being-in-the-world, solicitude can move constantly between these two positive modes as well as exhibiting its negative mode of indifference. Heidegger does not develop this analysis of the positive forms of solicitude further except to say that between them they bring ‘numerous forms to maturity’ (BT p. 122). These forms are not elaborated on in the text. Lawrence Vogel (1994) says that ‘There are ways of treating another that are not only inauthentic, but also incompatible with the other’s being one who is
capable of authenticity’ (Vogel 1994, p. 91). The very understanding of authenticity requiring freedom to own one’s being suggests that the experience of authenticity has the Kantian imperative at its heart viz. ‘never to treat another person solely as a means’ (Vogel 1994, p. 91).

In the next sub-section I will be discussing how Nancy accounts for Heidegger’s treatment of Mitdasein and why this potentially contributes to the difficulties of comprehending the transition to authenticity given in Being and Time. On the basis of these difficulties, Nancy proposes another way of understanding being, one that supports my thesis of the centrality of relationship in an ontological explanation of how we are.

2.1. Nancy’s critique of Heidegger’s Mit-dasein

In a paper titled ‘The being-with of being-there’6, Nancy (2008) credits Heidegger as being the first philosopher to identify the necessity and primordiality of the ‘with’. However, a problematic trajectory in the existential analytic, one which Nancy argues has persisted as a ‘shortfall in thinking’ throughout the Western tradition, drew Heidegger away from what he intended (Nancy 2008, p. 1). Given that Heidegger was committed to the coessentiality of Mitsein and Dasein, his objective should have been to offer a thinking of the ‘with’ that dealt with the common, everyday being-with in existence. Nancy says that the objective of thinking the ‘with’ should have been ‘neither in exteriority, nor in interiority. Neither a herd, nor a subject. Neither anonymous, nor “mine.” Neither improper, nor proper’ (Nancy 2008, p. 11). Such a path would have produced an ontology of the ‘with’ given from any place, any situation and any existential in the analytic. However, Nancy identifies in Being and Time a trajectory that invested Heidegger’s analysis in the destiny of ‘a people’ and so narrowed the analytic’s initial universal promise (Nancy 2008, p. 1). Nancy says such a ‘heroic’ goal that Heidegger sets for his work was likely to have been an effect of the era and the culture. Nancy goes further and claims that it is this inclination for a ‘higher’ destination that has shadowed all of Western thinking. He states, ‘Individual fate never suffices to build a destination’ (Nancy 2008, p. 12). By this he means that any commentary on the ‘human condition’ inflates itself from the individual case to an encompassing statement on humanity.

Simon Critchley’s comment on Heidegger’s investment in ‘the People’ is more pointed. In his view, ‘the authentic, communal mode of Mitsein that masters the inauthenticity of das Man is das Volk’ and it is in this mode that Heidegger is able to forge the link between his philosophy and his politics. In particular, it is the destiny of das Volk that ‘leads from the front’ and calls to the People (Critchley 2008, p. 140). On Critchley’s account the only way that Heidegger’s authentic Dasein

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6 This paper has been translated from the original French by Marie-Eve Morin, University of Alberta. Her other writings on Jean-Luc Nancy feature in this chapter.
can be with others is through a struggle to identify with a particular people. Thus, the common plurality of being-with others, that is das Man, is dismissed by Heidegger. Nancy’s independent analysis, which follows below, bears out this conclusion. Nancy goes back to the very structure of Dasein to show that the problem originates in the question of what a shared da (there) would look like. This is the first move by Nancy to explain the neglect of Mitsein’s development in the context of Heidegger’s analytic.

In taking the construction of Dasein to task in its co-essentiality of Mitsein, Nancy asks what kind of ‘there’ exists for Dasein-with; a common there, or the there of each (Nancy 2008, p. 4)? In Chapter One, section four, I explained that ‘being the there’ is about how Dasein discloses. The ‘there’ is Dasein’s own opening; it is its ownmost possibilities for sense. The important point that Nancy makes is that this opening is about singular possibilities and produces the sense of a Dasein’s singular being-in-the-world. Nancy says that ‘[t]his sense has an essential property; its sense in its own suppression’ (Nancy 2008, p. 3). It must be singular, because it alone can end its own sense through its singular death. The anticipation of a lone death of Dasein in Heidegger’s analysis was the stimulus for Dasein’s owning its self as flagged in the previous chapter and to be expanded on in the next.

However, if Dasein is intimately with others, that is, the being-with which Heidegger says is part of Dasein’s being, what would this ‘there’ of many Dasein look like? Nancy says that there are three possible modes of envisioning this being-with in order to account for how these multiple openings onto a ‘there’ might work:

1. the banal being-alongside ['The Being-with of several Dasein, where each opens its own da for itself']

2. the common as the sharing of properties (relations, intersections, mixtures) ['Being-the-there-with, which would require that the openings intersect each other in some way, that they cross, mix or let their properties interfere with one another, but without merging into a unique Dasein'],

3. the common as ownmost structure in itself, and thus as ‘communional’ or collective ['A common relation to the there that would be beyond the singulars'] (Nancy 2008, p. 4).

Nancy explains that modes (1) and (3) are a priori pure exteriority and pure interiority respectively. He means that Mit-dasein in the first mode are outside Heidegger’s existential construct and, therefore, Daseins merely co-exist consequently invalidating the intent of the with as co-essential.

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7 This is a Nancian term that I take to mean a sharing of understanding between entities.
(Mit-dasein cannot be part of Dasein’s essence.) The third mode can only mean a communal Dasein that exists before the existential analysis of Dasein and Mitsein; therefore, it cannot be a part of Dasein’s functional analysis and so also invalidates the intent of the with. Nancy says that throughout Being and Time it is the ‘double potentiality’ of Dasein-with-others in the mode of alongside, as in the Anyone⁸ (the they), and Dasein in the a priori communal mode of the People, which is in evidence (Nancy 2008, p. 4). This duality in the analytic happens because the possibility of the second mode is never explored. Nancy goes even further to claim:

[T]his shortfall betrays without a doubt a fundamental disposition of our whole tradition: between two subjects, the first being “the person” and the second “the community,” there is no place left for the “with,” nor in a more general way for that which would neither be a “subject” (in the sense of a self-constitution) nor a simple thing (in the sense of the things put simply beside one another, as sense of the with which Heidegger precisely wants to dismiss) (Nancy 2008, p. 5).

Even though Heidegger did not intend the ‘environmental’ side-by-side sense of Mit-dasein (as described in structure (1)), this is in fact what he achieved. I read Nancy’s quote ontically as a critique of the way we tend not to look at the way we relate to each other in the common everyday as a valid perspective for analysing the human condition. Instead, the perspective we take is either from the individual or from a collective – cause, group or idea. But how does each of these subject perspectives come to constitute themselves; how does the individual constitute herself and how does the community constitute itself? In particular, Nancy’s analysis is a critique of how the everyday being-with, as subject matter, is dismissed.

In Nancy’s view, politics arises because of the tendency to think in one or other of the three ways of being-with. The first mode gives rise to the liberal individualism of Western democracies where nothing is intrinsically shared by individuals and being-with is purely an ontic occurrence in which the other is identified through her difference to myself. While Nancy acknowledges the freedom of choice inherent in the cult of the individual, something that has helped free nations from totalitarianism, he also says that such individualism is the result of the ‘decomposition’ of community (Nancy 1991, p. 3). By ‘decomposition’ he means that a higher, more complex structure, even a ‘natural’ state, has come undone. Such complexity he envisages as the bedrock of the possibility for meaningful relationships between entities (all entities, not just humans). The individual comes the represent the break-down product of a natural ‘inclination’ to community (p. 3). As Nancy has explained, there is no place for meaningful relationship in the banal version of

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⁸ This is another term used by Heidegger’s translators and other commentators to describe ‘the they’ or das Man.
being-with. In the case of the third mode of being-with as an internalisation of a relationship that is pre-ordained, Nancy cites this organisation as the basis for totalitarian regimes. For Nancy, a community, or the ability to talk about ‘we’ is a basic ontological state and requirement (Nancy 2000, p. 42), but it is not to be defined by any fixed identifiers, whether its source is a natural occurrence like skin colour or an artificial construct like religion: ‘A community is not a project of fusion, or in some general way a productive or operative project – nor is it a project at all’ (Nancy 1991, p. 15). In fact, if the ‘with’ is taken as the basis on which to understand being (anything), then community is the a priori source for understanding individuals as such. In his restating of Heidegger’s Mitdasein ontology, Nancy is looking to explain the ontological community he envisions in the second mode of being-with.

Nancy names the everyday Dasein, or the Anyone, as the improper mode of being-with in the analytic while he claims the proper mode of being-with is given by Heidegger as the historicity of a People, or tradition. Nancy points to a resistance to the serious treatment of the everyday as ‘a thread’ that can easily be followed through the whole of the Western tradition. He asks, ‘How could the ordinary elevate itself to sense, to value or to truth? But on the other hand, how is it possible to receive a sense, a value or a truth that would not accommodate the ordinary’ (Nancy 2008, p. 6). In other words, how can we not take into account what happens at the common levels of being-in-the-world with others when we make summative statements about the truth of a situation? In particular, Nancy O’Byrne (2011) criticises the lack of analysis with how a People comes about, or even how a People become my People (O’Byrne 2011, p. 35). These comments are being made in the context of her text Natality and Finitude, which addresses the issues of integrating birth as the introduction of newness into an ontology. I engage with this latter commentator in Chapter Four when I discuss just this issue of newness as well as difference that is occasioned through birth.

The second move that Nancy makes is to show how Heidegger’s analysis of solicitude lends itself to separating the People from the Anyone so that the with becomes selective for a particular cause. I explained in the previous section how ‘authentic care’ works. To remind ourselves, Heidegger says authentic care ‘makes possible the right kind of objectivity’ so that they can ‘devote themselves to the same affair in common’ (BT p. 122). The criticism that Nancy makes of this version of authentic care for the other is that its accomplishment is difficult to envisage existentially: How is it possible for an ownmost (the other’s Dasein realised in contemplation of her own death) to be given back to the ownmost (since it already is hers) from my ‘leaping ahead’ of her? Our own death isolates us by throwing us back on ourselves. Remember, anxiety and uncanniness causes us to try to reject our being-in-the-world. Nancy proposes that there is something else at stake here; for instance, an internal commonality to start with – ‘the community of a relationship to a unique thing
or cause’ (Nancy 2008, p. 7) – to which we were both connected a priori and to which we attempt to return upon becoming free to own ourselves and our historicity. In the analytic itself, the mechanism of this transfer is unclear.

The historicity being discussed is, of course, the common destiny of a People. Nancy points out that though it is the proper mode of being-with it always becomes a futile exercise because of our mortality, which makes the proper something that is striven for, but never reached; a destiny that always remains ‘out there’. The problem is that this proper being-there-with, which unites a People, is played out against a background of an improper being-with. Nancy’s comment is that, ‘Anyone dies commonly, while I die alone’ (Nancy 2008, p. 8). This means that the external juxtaposition of being in the they results in a common death, one that many share in since no ‘fallen’ Dasein has come to be uniquely owned. On the other hand, my reaching for authenticity and consequently owning my destiny, or the commonality of a cause, must mean that I die alone, because even though there is a destiny that I recognise in my coming to myself, I am still condemned to die alone, never able to reach that destiny. However, if we consider the co-essential of being-with others and the way the construct of leaping-ahead works, a communal destiny is still achievable. If I am being-with others, in the sense of leaping-ahead of other Dasein, I am freeing ‘us’ to repeat a common destiny. Nancy refers to this quote:

But if fateful Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, exists essentially in Being-with-Others, its historizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as destiny. This is how we designate the historizing of the community, of a people. Destiny is not something that puts itself together out of individual fates, any more than Being-with-one-another can be conceived as the occurring together of several Subjects... Only in communicating and in struggling does the power of destiny become free (BT p. 384).

In this passage, Heidegger is claiming that destiny is only available to that mode of being-with that is co-historizing; to those Dasein who are fateful – who share an a priori commonality and identify as the People. In order to do this, however, authentic Dasein must be prepared for sacrifice and suffering. The heroic, authentic individual does not shirk his responsibilities to his community (Zimmerman 1986, p. 132).

In both modes of (1) and (3) being-there-with, the Anyone and the People, Nancy finds an isolation with no possibility of crossing-over from one to the other. In the first, the essentiality of the with is dissolved, that is, it has no modifying influence on what will amount to a collection of individuals

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9 See also Chapter Three Section 5.2: Here I discuss Walter Brogan’s (2002) concept of the community of beings who share a being-towards-death. Even though death individualizes as Heidegger insists, the being towards this possibility is a uniting being.
in the they. In the third case, the essentiality of the with is a hyper-possible one where the with is active a priori, that is ‘the essentiality of the with determines and potentializes itself’ (Nancy 2008, p. 10). Nancy means that Dasein already has, as its essence of the ‘there’, the drive, or the ‘potential’, for being-with the People. Being, for Dasein in this mode, is to open onto the communal; this is not the case for the first mode, which is being-with alongside others. To move from one mode to the other would contravene the integrity of the existential of Dasein itself. While Heidegger says that Dasein moves between the Anyone and the People, Nancy is demonstrating that this is impossible since it would require two versions of the essence of Dasein to be available simultaneously. Thus, Nancy concludes it is impossible to move from the Anyone to the People. In practice, therefore, Heidegger’s existential analytic is appealing to some pre-ontological commonality that is never declared, but as Nancy’s critique demonstrates, is only possible if in coming to itself authentic Dasein also embraces this commonality in the shape of an ideology that has been handed down to it.

Since he rejects modes (1) and (3) as being insufficient to explain how Heidegger’s being-with could work, Nancy settles on the second mode which he calls the mode of ‘Being-the-there-with’. This phrase incorporates the being of others with Dasein’s ‘being-the-there’. It is where ‘the Mitdasein must determine the with as the proximity (contiguity and distinction) of multiple theres, and so gives us the following to consider: multiplicity is not an attribute extrinsic to Dasein, since the concept of the there implies the impossibility of a unique and exclusive there’ (Nancy 2008, p. 10). In this comment, Nancy is saying that multiple theres must be intrinsic to the existential construct of Dasein since this concept is about the disclosing activities of Dasein, which do not become focussed exclusively in one time or place. Thus, all theres must be understood to be connected and composed into a certain sort of unity. How does this sit with the idea of a there being a unique opening onto the world? Nancy says that it must be the case that these openings are not rigid but intersect, their edges are blurred – one does not always know where one entity’s ‘opening’ ends and another’s begins. ‘I can only open myself there by opening at the same time onto other theres... The with must constitute the nature of the “on,” of the “against,” (as in “plywood”), and of the “trans” (as in “transsexual”)’ (Nancy 2008, p. 10). Nancy’s examples may seem a bit odd, but he intends to show that, for example, my openings onto the world confer layers to my being, much like plywood, or my preferences for something may merge, such as my sexual choices. Such a being-with, Nancy argues, would not be a secondary constitution of existence, such as modes (1) and (3) were, instead it would be ‘truly and essentially equiprimordial in the existent’ (Nancy 2008, p. 11). There is no rigidity, no fixed structure to a there. I will be consolidating this idea in terms of origins of meaning in the next section.
Nancy concludes his arguments with the statement,

the ahead-of-itself of the existent remains to be thought otherwise than as destination (that is, very precisely as ex-position) and that the ex-position itself must be thought as co-exposition, as exposition of and to the essential with of its co-constitution. Indeed, this remains a task to which neither sacrifice, nor community, nor tragedy, nor salvation, can provide an answer (Nancy 2008, p. 13).

In this comment, Nancy is referring to Dasein’s being-ahead-of-itself, which in its existing, or within the understanding of solicitude as leaping-ahead, we must understand that wherever Dasein is it has to be with others in order for its existence to be comprehensible in a basic way. This will not be aided by any heroic destination for this existence, as Heidegger advocated in *Being and Time*. Existence simply requires the presentation of self from the position of being (ex-position) to others. It is only thus that the essence of something can be said to obtain. The ‘simple’ presentation of being is not actually simple to analyse and explain existentially. In the next section I will investigate how Nancy attempts to do so. As something of an introduction to Nancy, Ian James (2006) tells us that,

Nancy’s philosophy, most evidently his thinking of the “singular plural,” turns persistently and insistently around the demand imposed by a thinking of being in which any possibility of unity and identity has withdrawn, and where the multiple demands to be thought without reference to any overarching unity or totality (James 2006, p. 3).

There is no isolation of being so there is no ‘one’ of anything and therefore no possibility of an identity for ‘a one’. Above all, Nancy wants us to accept that being, or at least the only way we should conceive of it through our everyday existence, is necessarily dynamically engaged and resists an imposed order for the sake of an objective-laden, or even universal, narrative. The extensive analysis just undertaken was preparatory for Nancy’s re-interpretation of Mitsein, which follows.

3. Nancy’s version of a first philosophy

As Nancy sees it, saying that Mitsein (being-with) is coessential with Dasein (being-there), which is what Heidegger does, is not saying enough because, as we have just seen, Heidegger’s explanation for the existential mechanism of such a system is incomplete (Nancy 2008, p. 2) (Nancy 2000, p. 27). In fact, Nancy claims, the lack of development of Mitsein’s co-essentiality leaves Mitsein in a
subordinate position to Dasein because Heidegger gives the analysis of the meaning of Being from the perspective of Dasein as a singular example of existential being before he claims Mitsein as a co-essential of Dasein in the ‘environmental’ sense, as explained in the last section.

In Being Singular Plural, Nancy (2000) produces a detailed analysis of how and why the co-essential of Mitsein should have a central place in a human ontology. In this work, Nancy says the overall effect of Heidegger’s limited explanation of Dasein with others shows that ‘the whole existential analytic still harbours some principle by which what it opens up is immediately closed off’ (Nancy 2000, p. 93). The principle glimpsed and closed off is that of inter-subjectivity’s role in elucidating the meaning of Being. Nancy argues that in order to uncover this obscured principle, an analysis of the ‘meaning of Being’ must start from Mitsein. Nancy’s approach ushers in a significant change from the individualist tradition of metaphysics in which the perspective is usually from that of a singular subject. The question then is what would we find if we tried to account for Being from the thinking of a being that is at the same time co-existent with other beings? What are the possibilities for analysis when being-with is the subject, a perspective taken from a dynamic relationship rather than a fixed entity?

Nancy’s project in Being Singular Plural is a rethinking of Heidegger’s ‘first philosophy’, this time giving a true coessentiality to Mitsein such that this existential can be returned to where Heidegger said it belonged, as part of Dasein’s ‘being-there’. Heidegger insists that Dasein’s ‘there’ is always inclusive of the possibility of others: ‘‘The Others’ whom one thus designates in order to cover up the fact of one’s belonging to them essentially oneself, are those who proximally and for the most part are there in everyday Being-with-one-another’ (BT p. 126). We may call them the ‘Others’, but their being, as ontically manifested through their roles and relationships which impact and interact with our own to the extent of taking away our own ontological potentiality for being, render them as much a part of our world, or our ‘there’, as the being of any of the equipmental and environmental entities Heidegger has described.

Such a pervasive involvement with others has significance for the meaning of being and leads Nancy to declare that ‘nothing less than a matter of the co-originarity of meaning – and the “meaning of Being” is only what it is (either “meaning” or, primarily, its own “precomprehension” as the constitution of existence) when it is given as with’ (Nancy 2000, p. 94). In this work, Nancy shows how the proper understanding of co-existence obviates the need for the transcendental or the pre-ontological as exemplified by the pre-ontological commonality of the People discussed earlier. The whole of the meaning of being is given unequivocally by the event of sense in the ‘between’ of human beings. For Nancy, it is the ‘with’ of being-with that is the locus of meaning. Put another way, being-together with others is all the meaning there is for our being-in-the-world. In what
follows I will be explaining, through Nancy’s analysis, how sense is central to the concept of Being and why. This narrative is very different to the preceding Heideggerian one and emphasises the unique perspective of Nancy’s being-with.

3.1. Being as Singular Plural

Nancy uses the phrase ‘being singular plural’ to signify the way meaning occurs. What he has to say in this regard is critical to my thesis as it supports my arguments towards a basis for shared understanding between thrown-beings.

Firstly, a singularity is a ‘coming to presence’ through the ‘disposition’ of something that stands in relation to another such disposition. ‘Exposition’, as the relation between dispositions of singularities, is a similar idea as the da of Dasein explained earlier, except that the presence of other beings is implicit. It means a presentation of an event of being to another such event of being. This idea is to be applied to everything that presents as an entity, for example, rocks, dogs, towns, a sunrise, or even a thesis. These things are singularities by virtue of their being-with. Thus, the meaning and identification of a singularity is only possible when there is more than one of these events of ex-position and the difference (différance) between the two constitutes the advent of sense. This is the core of Nancy’s philosophy of the Singular Plural. The ex-position of being is nothing until it can be shared with another ex-position of being so that meaning as identification has passage from one to the other. Nancy uses the term ‘sharing’ in a distinctive way to mean not anything constant or underlying that can then be shared, but rather sharing is the occasion of something becoming revealed as distinct but also held in common. The singular is always also a plural.

Being cannot be in isolation, that is, there must already be a being in order for another to be. The essence of being is co-essence (Nancy 2000, p. 30). This in turn means that co-essence is the basis of essence, but the operative idea is the co – ‘with’. Without the ‘with’ there would be no being. Therefore, it is the ‘with’ that constitutes being. Nancy says ‘the with is not simply an addition’ but it is what evidences being as such (Nancy 2000, p. 30). The analogy Nancy draws with this claim is to state it operates in the same way as ‘power’ – ‘power is neither exterior to the members of the collective nor interior to each one of them, but rather consists in the collectivity as such.’ (Nancy 2000, p. 30). Thus being is neither in the singular entity nor external to the being-with of entities, rather it is the being-with. ‘Being cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the with and as the with of this singularly plural coexistence’ (Nancy 2000, p. 3). When Nancy talks about a singularity being another access to the world, he is saying that we see the outward disposition of an instance of the reticulated plurality of the world. We never have complete access to a presencing because its origin is embedded in plurality. ‘In the singularity that he exposes, each
child that is born has already concealed the access that he is “for himself” and in which he will conceal himself “within himself” (Nancy 2000, p. 14).

Singularization is a movement into and out of entanglement with other singularities. Being is never ‘known’ singularly, but always as a consequence of this movement of entanglement. Marie-eve Morin (2012) uses the term ‘entanglement’ to indicate a merging of singular sense-events such that a plurality of meaning ensues. For example, I am a singular plurality where the meaning of my being (ex-position as) a woman is entangled with the meaning of my activities (ex-positions as) a mother, a daughter, a sister and a wife. Therefore, no singular facet of being has meaning in isolation, but only when it is communicated, passed on and given as meaning (Nancy 2000, p. 2).

As an expansion on how singularities may be identified, Morin says ‘A singularity (a human being, a city, a language, a culture) is always a melee of traits and not a definable unity. At the same time, it possess its own recognisable tone and lets itself be identified in the process (or as the process) of disentanglement from other singularities’ (Morin 2012, p. 37). This statement is claiming what we already know, that I (for example) am a complex of relationships and roles which interact with the world in the mode of a singular plurality, but by virtue of my identifying traits and characteristics, i.e. ‘my tone’, there may be rare times when I am only identifiable by these. More usually my identifiers will become entangled in someone else’s story. Perhaps someone meeting me for the first time might think of me as the woman who is ‘x’ and ‘y’, but these would be qualitative terms measured against this person’s own standards and she would not be describing something uniquely mine. In fact, she would be starting to entangle me in her own singular plurality!

Nancy goes on to talk about simultaneity, saying that it opens up space as the spacing of time itself. ‘Starting from the simultaneity of “subjects,” time is possible, but above all, it is necessary. For in order to be together and to communicate, a correlation of places and a transition of passages from one place to another is necessary. Sharing [partage] and passage control each other reciprocally’ (Nancy 2000, p. 61). The communication/sharing marks the presencing of co-existents as time, and time requires the space that divides one event of sharing from another. A strong example of this is the mother and child sharing that results in birth as an originary encounter in time.

The foregoing definitions set up the elements for Nancy’s account of how meaning is generated through the way beings are ex-posed to each other. Sense and meaning are the reasons why the individual may not be treated in isolation from others. This is what will be discussed next.

4. Meaning as shared being
If identity of a singularity occurs in the ‘movement of disentanglement’, what is it that is lost or gained to enable this? What is ‘moved’ between singularities? Nancy categorically states that it is not Being that moves because: ‘Being does not pre-exist its singular plural. To be more precise, Being absolutely does not pre-exist; nothing pre-exists; only what exists exists... That which exists, whatever this might be, coexists because it exists’ (Nancy 2000, p. 29). Therefore, it is with existence itself, and so Being, that the meaning of the ‘between’ has to be worked out.

Morin explains that the *usual* understanding of ‘meaning’ is as a signifying event that requires the relation of a signifier to the signified (Morin 2012, p. 40). That is, a signifier (communicated through language, for example) points to an object (the signified). Signification (meaning) lies in the signifier’s ability to lead away from itself to something else, which could be a material or an immaterial entity like an idea. The illustration Morin gives is that ‘smoke signifies fire’ to show the inherent relationship between one idea and another, the one leading to the other. She says that ‘we can think of the meaning of Being, of existence, or of the world on the same model’ (Morin 2012, p. 40). On this relational model one might say that existence is signified by something outside of it. However, Nancy has a modified interpretation on how meaning comes about.

Nancy follows Heidegger in insisting on the condition of the *non-signification* of existence; that is, existence has no meaning outside of itself. ‘Sense belongs to the structure of the world, hollows out therein what it would be necessary to name better than by calling it the “transcendence” of its “immanence” – its *transimmanence*, or more simply and strongly, its existence and exposition’ (Nancy 1997b, p. 55). Sense occurs in the bare fact of the world; the two are co-constitutive as existence. In fact, Nancy makes the point that it is not just through Dasein that sense exists, rather sense exists as world as in animal, plants, stones and so on. Dasein has its being-there (its exposition) where ‘there’ is the ‘here’ of the world (Nancy 1997b, p. 55). Therefore, sense as world is always in excess of our being-there. In particular, ‘Every form of thought measures itself against the incommensurable term of sense’ (Nancy 1997b, p. 77).

Sense is given as the movement of being-toward from one ex-position of signification to another *that is not the same*. And without this movement there would be no sense. ‘Sense, for its part, is the movement of being-toward, or being as *coming* into presence or again as transitivity, as passage to presence – and therewith as passage of presence (Nancy 1997b, p. 12). It is the *difference* in the presentation of significations that is important to the transmission of sense and meaning. As the facticity of my existence is uniquely *different* to yours, I have a place from which I speak to you that could never be the same as yours. Because of my thrown-being, I have a being, an existence...
and even a world that differs from yours. The ‘incommensurable speaking position’\(^\text{10}\) (Morin 2012, p. 40) is, of course a singularity, ‘a position of existence’. Nancy says, ‘From one singularity to another, there is contiguity but not continuity’ (Nancy 2000, p. 5; Morin 2012, pp 40-41).

In contrast to Heidegger’s ontology of being-with, which submerges the question of how this existential can accommodate the individual situation given as ‘the ownmost’ at the same time as sharing in a ‘destiny’ obtained through being-with as the People (see section 2.1 for Nancy’s critique), Nancy chooses the mode of being-with that can accommodate a passage of meaning which is never fixed. In addition, Nancy’s being singular plural formulation also makes room for extending the understanding of how meaning is shared as the singular expression of a plural whole into the realm of the ontic. He acknowledges that human traits such as ethnicity, culture, social norms etc. generate the sense of the singular plural because the meaning of each instance of a trait only has meaning on the basis of the shared, plural world. A trait does not define a singularity on its own but acquires meaning through its sharing in the plural sense of world. Unlike Heidegger, Nancy does think that ontic characteristics are relevant to his concept of singularity. He says ‘From faces to voices, gestures, attitudes, dress and conduct, whatever the “typical” traits are, everyone distinguishes himself by a sort of sudden and headlong precipitation where the strangeness of a singularity is concentrated’ (Nancy 2000, p. 8). The sense of a person varies on the basis of the agglomeration of such traits. In our everyday experiences ‘what we receive (rather than what we perceive) with singularities is the discreet passage of other origins of the world’ (Nancy 2000, p. 9). Thus, what we receive in our being-toward another person is an origin as an affirmation of the world. In this regard, Nancy criticises Heidegger’s conception of the undifferentiated ‘one’ or the ‘they’ as being insufficient to describe how a unique experience of existence can come about.

There must first be a world of other beings, animate and inanimate, to provide the context for the idea of position and presence to be possible. When described in this way, all presence must be co-presence. Walter Brogan (2010) summarises Nancy’s thought thus: ‘The circulation of being is such that any presencing of being always already belongs to the gathering of an understanding and reception that is attentive to being-in-common; presencing is always a co-presencing’ (Brogan 2010, p. 298). That is, because we are contemporary co-existents we always already know something about the meaning of a presence that is re-presenting itself. Brogan is reiterating Nancy and Heidegger’s view that being already occurs in the context of meaning. However, through his elaboration of being singular plural Nancy is explaining in greater depth why it is only the characterisation of being-with as Dasein existing in terms of multiple theres, or origins of meaning

\(^{10}\) This point is reiterated in Chapter Four in relation to communication across difference. See Iris Marion Young’s thesis of asymmetrical reciprocity in Section 5.2.
(as in mode 2), that can describe the mechanism of how sense and being occur at the level of individual events of being as well as at the level of the world. The Heideggerian objective of authentic Dasein’s ‘ownmost’ is shown by Nancy’s formulation to be misleading in terms of how others feature in Dasein’s understanding of itself. If meaning is only available through expositions to other events of being and is dependent on the plurality of meaning, then authentic Dasein’s understanding of itself is always informed by its world. Further, every origin of meaning is itself unique. Aside from this difference of ontologies, liberal individualism itself completely misses the point of co-constitution that Nancy’s philosophy of the singular plural highlights. Liberalism holds that the individual gets to create meaning for their lives and moreover, the individual has the right to choose this meaning (within certain social constraints). However, it is never the case that meaning arises solely from the individual, just as much as it is never the case that one’s choice of meaning has no impact on others. Our choices are always informed by others in our world and our actions (that confer meaning to being) always affect others in some way.

4.1. Sense and World

Sense-making places/positions/singularities occur against the absolute value of ‘world’, which is what ‘we’ are: ‘We make sense, not by setting a price or value, but by exposing the absolute value that the world is by itself’ (Nancy 2000, p. 4). The ‘world’ becomes the product of such expositions. Each singularity is an origin of the world, remembering that there is no actual world as such, just a collection of presencings. About ‘world’, Nancy has this to say,

> What occurs there, what bends, leans, twists, addresses, denies – from the newborn to the corpse – is neither primarily “someone close,” nor an “other,” nor a “stranger,” nor “someone similar.” It is an origin; it is an affirmation of the world, and we know that the world has no other origin than this singular multiplicity of origins. The world always appears each time according to a decidedly local turn [of events] (Nancy 2000, p. 9).

These statements demonstrate Nancy’s understanding that the concept of ‘the world’ is really the nexus of sense made through beings (humans) collectively and this sense of the world is not fixed but entirely dependent on the origins of its meaning – us. ‘For it is a question of understanding the world not as man’s object or field of action, but as the spatial totality of the sense of existence, a totality that is itself existent’ (Nancy 1997b, p. 56). We often talk about ‘the world’ in this manner of networked sense. For example, when I say that ‘the world no longer makes sense to me’, I really mean that my whole schema of understanding is coming undone such that I am unable to derive meaning from what is happening around me.
Morin tells us that when talking about how we relate to others through our sense-making, Nancy prefers to use the word ‘rapport’ rather than ‘relation’. Its meaning is about movement of one to another without there being a fixed entity such as ‘relationship’ that is extra to the movement: ‘That existence is a sharing out or partitioning also means that between singularities there exists a rapport’ (Morin 2012, p. 39). This ‘partitioning’ or partage as Nancy uses the term (Raffoul in Nancy1997a, p. xxiii) is meant to demonstrate that entities can only ever be thought of as partition-able from a dynamic whole, never removable from it. Morin quotes Nancy’s definition of rapport as “nothing that is, it exists between what is... The relation makes sense: directional sense (relation of movement), then sensible sense (relation of one skin to another skin that touches it...) ... and then the relation of signification” (Morin 2012, p. 39). Meaning as signification is therefore a final derivative of a primary movement to sense followed by the ontic level of sense (seeing, touching and so on).

Rapport is nothing less than the sharing of being that at the same time establishes a distinction between events of being. We share in Being, yet in the sharing our particular beings acquire distinction. This is why ‘rapport’ is preferred by Nancy because it implies a positive moment of connection from one event of being to another, without remainder. That is, sense does not come from something external to us, it comes from the ‘the very level of our existence, in the movement of a presentation to’ (Morin 2012, p. 41). The other that sense is presented to is not a Levinasian Other11, but another origin (of being, of sense) that is always moving and changing. The world is made up of origins together with other origins, ‘originally divided’ (Nancy 2000, p. 13). This world of origins together is in the mode of ‘touching’. Nancy tells us;

the origin is neither “missable” nor appropriable (penetrable, absorbable). It does not obey this logic. It is the plural singularity of the Being of beings. We reach it to the extent that we are in touch with ourselves and with the rest of beings. We are in touch with ourselves insofar as we exist. Being in touch with ourselves is what makes us “us,” and there is no secret to discover buried behind this very touching, behind the “with” of coexistence (Nancy 2000, p. 13).

At the most unchanging level, our ontic reality obtains meaning against the absolute value of a shared world, the plural singularity of the Being of beings. In describing how such meaning occurs,

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11 Christopher Watkin (2007) says that ‘It is not the question of alterity that preoccupies Nancy, but the question of plurality’ (Watkin 2007, p. 53). The ‘Levinasian Other’ is a thinking which evidences the absolute alterity of the other which is, therefore, not to be reduced to an ‘other of the same’, that is, it is not to be spoken of from the alien perspective of the self.
Nancy refers to the Nietzschean ‘eternal return’ where meaning is given to a presence that does not return even though its meaning does so through repeated affirmation: ‘A thinking of meaning right at meaning, where its eternity occurs as the truth of its passing’ (Nancy 2000, p. 4). Meaning is what is left behind by the passing of presence. In each instance, presence is released never to return, but the same meaning is affirmed the next time, for a similar presence. Brogan explains Nancy’s analogy of the eternal return as ‘[B]eing in its deployment... the spacing that allows what is to be and to be continuously is also discrete, disconnected, the repetition of one moment alongside another’ (Brogan 2010, p. 301). Meaning has to be relatively stable from one moment to another for it to be comprehensible from one person to another. Therefore, what Brogan and Nancy are saying is that this stability in repeated meaning is evidence for its propagation.

Meaning happens through interpretation and communication. Language establishes meaning and we take on this meaning through affirmation. ‘We must reappropriate what already made us who “we” are today, here and now, the “we” of a world who no longer struggle to have meaning, but to be meaning itself. This is we as the beginning and end of the world, inexhaustible in the circumscription that nothing circumscribes, that “the” nothing circumscribes’ (Nancy 2000, p. 4). Here Nancy is saying that the only meaning for our beings is that which accrues through our being since nothing outside of the way we ‘are’ is capable of grounding meaning. The challenge must be to acknowledge this and the responsibility that comes with it.

The notion of us as ‘being meaning’ is the most powerfully incipient idea in Nancy’s re-visitation of Heidegger’s ‘first philosophy’ in that it promises a new way of looking at ethical relationships. Whereas Heidegger’s thrown Dasein is initially ‘lost’ in a world of others’ meaning and where its redemption lies in self-repossession through owning its own meaning, Nancy is saying that Dasein contributes to this meaning of the world by virtue of being-with others. Heidegger does not dispute this claim, but argues that inauthentic being-with others confers a qualitatively different type of meaning to that of authentic being-with others (BT p. 264). I have already discussed the problems inherent in this Heideggerian view in subsection 2.1 of this chapter.

In Nancy’s ontology of being-with lies the next critical principle for my thesis: meaning is the product of sharing in existence. The value of Nancy’s ontological analysis for my thesis is that it

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12 Zimmerman explains this Nietzschean concept as follows: ‘In the brightness of the Augenblick, the authentic individual resolves to affirm life in the face of the necessary end of life. Even more, he must will that this life returns again and again just as it is. Only then does he overcome the meaninglessness of empty serial time, since only then has he willed to align himself with cosmic destiny’ (Zimmerman 1986, p. 162). By this, Zimmerman means that ‘willing’ is the commitment to live one’s life from an inherited past into a risky future. It is facing this risk that is also the core of Heidegger’s conception of the “Augenblick”: what one creates in the past is what one must, in ‘the authentic moment of vision’, embrace into the future (BT p. 328). I agree with this view of the need to redefine and re-establish meaning in one’s life in the face of its unchosen nature and also its finitude. To incorporate the thread of the past into one’s present is essential to the maintenance of a self.
helps me to underline the centrality of relationship with others to establishing an understanding for a thrown-being type of existence.

In the next section I want to expand on the previous discussion with my own argument on the place for the facticity of thrown-being in an ontology of the every-day. I will be arguing that thrown-being is not only an unchosen being-not-at-home, but this understanding of ‘homelessness’ is an ontologically shared one.

5. The meaning of thrown-being

Towards the end of the second section I referred to Nancy’s comment that ‘the ahead-of-itself of the existent remains to be thought otherwise than as destination’. Authenticity is the destination that Heidegger would like to advocate for Dasein. However, by his comment and the preceding analysis, Nancy is claiming that there is no telos for the existent, but simply the sense that arises through the sharing of being in everyday existence. This is what is being argued by Nancy against the grain of Being and Time. This ‘being as sense’ was the focus of the analysis in the fourth section of this chapter, which concluded that the ‘meaning of Being’ was to be found in the with of being-with of others: ‘The whole of the meaning of being is given unequivocally by the grounding of meaning in the ‘between’ of entities’ (p. 61). There is another ground of meaning and it occurs in the originary thrown-being.

It is my claim that each living entity ‘arrives’ into existence as a state of homelessness. This may be just another way of saying ‘groundless’ being as Heidegger implies, but I believe my choice of term, derived as it is from the German word unheimlich, brings a focus to the limit of signification with respect to the question of ‘why we are?’ I want to be able to say something about how Dasein is to ontologically understand the state of thrown-being in addition to being affected by it through anxiety. As we will see in the next chapter, there is a point at which we must engage with our thrown-being when being resolute. Even though I do not talk about authenticity in this chapter, I still want to develop what ‘facing’ thrown-being might mean for Dasein besides its stimulus for anxiety.

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13 Heidegger has a very different understanding of this term. For him home lies in language and history, the vehicle through which Being is expressed and can said to have belonging. Thus ‘homelessness’ for Heidegger is the loss of this identification with language, history and tradition (Heidegger 2008, pp. 241-242).

14 The definition of unheimlich as meaning ‘not at home’ was given in the previous chapter. The interpreters (Macquarrie and Robinson) call this sense of not-at-home ‘uncanniness’. Heidegger specifies that this ‘uncanniness pursues Dasein and is a threat to the lostness in which it has forgotten itself’. By this he means Dasein is never free from this sense of, what I am calling, homelessness.
In *Being and Time*, Heidegger talks about Dasein fleeing from its not-being-at-home; however, he does not say anything about what this ‘home’ might be. Heidegger’s explanation of attunement acts as his pre-ontological ‘driver’ for Dasein, which enables it to move forwards into its potentialities and away from its groundlessness. He also refers to this groundlessness as the ‘enigma’ of Dasein finding itself an existing self. He identifies thrown-being as this enigma, but does not investigate it further than making the following comment:

> Even if Dasein is ‘assured’ in its belief about its ‘whither’, or if, in rational enlightenment, it supposes itself to know about its “whence”, all this counts for nothing as against the phenomenal facts of the case: for the mood brings Dasein before the “that-it-is” of its “there”, which, as such, stares it in the face with the inexorability of an enigma (BT p. 136).

The enigma that Heidegger is here referring to is Dasein’s inexplicable existence. Simon Critchley (2008) calls the bare fact of one’s existence – that I exist, or that the phenomenologist exists – the ‘enigmatic a priori’, by which he means the essential fact that is missed because it is so obvious, but occurs before any kind of investigation. This, he says, is what shadows Heidegger’s analysis in *Being and Time*; it is the opaqueness at the ‘base of the constitution of Dasein’s being-in-the-world which both resists phenomenological description and which is that in relation to which the phenomenologist describes’ (Critchley 2008, p. 132). Importantly, what Critchley points out is that this fact is not just transcendentally constitutive for phenomenological description; it is also regulative, meaning that there is an inescapable normative foundation for being-in-the-world, one that phenomenology can not get ‘outside’ of in order to describe it (Critchley 2008, p. 138). This observation reinforces my justification for grounding this thesis in ontology, which then proceeds later on to discuss the ontic issues of an unchosen existence. The bare fact of our existence allows recourse to a phenomenological description of our ontology, but it insists that we do not lose sight of the fact that we are discussing an existing being with a factual life.

‘Enlightenment’ that is offered through secular, religious, or other metaphysical persuasions can convince us of explanations for the unknowable, but mood, or attunement, brings home affectively the fact of the unknowable in the form of an enigma. Attunement is pre-ontological and brings one into awareness of one’s facticity, but because of the ‘uncanniness’ of this facticity, as we have seen in Chapter One, attunement causes the anxiety that *informs* all other moods Dasein experiences and motivates its being-towards. But, when Dasein ‘turns back’ to face its groundlessness in its authentic mode, in accepting this groundlessness it also accepts that it is without a source. I take ground, or source, for Dasein as being an ontological ‘home’ in the sense of belonging somewhere. I use this sense of belonging to contrast with the forever forward-projective nature of Dasein’s being that is destined never to fall back to any basis. Heidegger’s term ‘not-being-at-home’,
therefore, clearly implies a possibility of its positive sense, even if it is ontologically impossible to experience such a sense of being-at-home. It is not the idea of some ‘original home’ that interests me, but instead the grounding universality of the condition of not-being-at-home, or homelessness, and how this can be a fruitful shared ontological understanding. I also take Dasein’s homelessness to occur for it in the sense of a question about thrown-being. Homelessness is never accepted; it is always in question. I believe that the enigma just discussed, which Heidegger repeatedly refers to, is just this question. Questioning is another way of describing an opening to sense at the limit of some pre-existing meaning.

Nancy insists on the non-significance of existence since there can be nothing outside of existence to act as a signifier for the creation of meaning (Nancy 2000, p. 29). In ‘The Forgetting of Philosophy’, Nancy tells us that, generally, the fading of an epoch seems to incite a quest to ‘return’ to meaning, but a pre-established one (Nancy 1997a, pp. 9-11). The core of his argument in this work is that meaning cannot be willed; it happens at the limit of sense and as such is always open to something new and potentially unexpected. Nancy’s explanation for the fading epoch, therefore, is that it has reached a limit of sense. Such a decline in sense is a strong indicator that the subject (Nancy’s example is humanism as an epochal focus) has closed in on itself: ‘Signification becomes empty precisely because it completes its subjective process’ (Nancy 1997a, p.44). This happens because meaning does not belong to a subject. How do we know this? We know this because the demand for meaning recurs for the same sort of question. This demand opens up the space (or limit) for new meaning to happen: ‘The other thought presents itself in the very present of the exhaustion’ (Nancy 1997a, p. 52). If this demand is not met authentically, that is if the limit is not understood as a signal that a new sense is required and instead a recycled sense is wilfully imposed, then the demand will not go away. The demand will be the question that repeats itself.

When something cannot be thought further, this limit of sense exposes itself as its meaning (Nancy 1997a, p. 70). And this exposure becomes the ground or opening for new sense to happen. Francois Raffoul tells us in his preface to The Gravity of Thought that understanding is predicated on the anticipation for meaning and consequently requires the absence of meaning. In fact, meaning is a ‘finite sending’ that is able to send us to our “shared condition”; ‘Meaning is not projected or thrown by a subject; rather, it throws or destines us’ (Nancy 1997a, p. xiii). It itself is an event, or movement, that is capable of exhausting itself and becoming insignificant. However, built into this exhaustion is the potentiality for new signification and new meaning.

When authentic Dasein returns to its not-at-home condition and faces the enigma of its facticity, Dasein has reached a limit of signification. There is nothing beyond its facticity to explain its thrown-being. At this limit, therefore, the meaning opened to it is that it has unchosen being, or has
a being that is ‘homeless’. This signification is internal to existence. Dasein comes from the significations of a being-in-the-world to a limit represented by its own thrown-being. So, from within its existence it attributes a meaning of not-being-at-home or homeless. Therefore, between my inauthentic being who derives meaning from its being-in-the-world activities and my authentic being confronting her ‘situation’, I must face myself as a homeless being. Specifically, in relation to my particular circumstances of my start in life, context of dependencies, culture and so on, I find my thrown-being at a limit of signification on all fronts. This is also not a meaning that can close in on itself because my homelessness as a subject will never exhaust itself. It will remain open as an enigma, as a question, or as a signification opening to possible explanations.

5.1. The originary limit.

Nancy’s argument that it is only in the absence of signification that existence and sense are possible implies that there is no external signification for existence to confer meaning to thrown being in and of itself. Meaning derives only after the movement of sense (rapport) between events of being. It is a derived condition of existence after the directional movement of sense and sensual sense. At the limit of sense, for instance in the face of our originary thrown-being, Dasein is exposed to an absence of meaning. But Dasein has to have meaning for its being. This it can find in others, hence the fleeing back into the they. However, thrown-being knows itself as groundless, homeless under the condition of authentic being which returns to the thrown self. This meaning, and the only likely meaning for this condition, accrues from being-in-the-world, where for a while Dasein is ‘at home’. According to Heidegger, anxiety prevents das Man becoming a permanent home. On return to the ungrounded self, the authentic version of being-with shows that the groundlessness is a shared groundlessness because, as already explained, thrown-being as an originary limit is a limit of sense for all Dasein. It is a there that is shared by all openings onto it. I mean sharing as used by Nancy to convey nothing persistent that is then ‘shared’, but instead the sense of thrown-being which on each occasion of its understanding is individual and also common. Authentic Dasein exists as an existential community of the groundless, or homeless, in more than just affective terms of attunement.

However, this meaning of thrown-being does not have to be one of despair; it could be one of wonder when it is shared as a condition of all Dasein. Facing one’s groundlessness is a pre-requisite to this ‘wonder’, but once the meaning of shared thrown-being is known, it cannot be un-known. It is a limiting signification that does not exhaust itself because the subject of thrown-being is always freshly open at its limit. In ‘The Forgetting of Philosophy’, Nancy’s commentary on wonder seems to complement the way in which Heidegger uses the notion of engima. For Heidegger, enigma is the inexplicable facticity of being for Dasein and is responsible for generating the phenomenon of
attunement. This attunement is a motivator for Dasein to be open in its thrown-projective being. For Nancy, wonder represents the way in which signification is able to exhaust itself as a limit on sense, but in that very exhaustion it allows sense to open up to new meaning.

When the metaphysics of signification comes to know itself as its own limit, it exposes itself… This amounts to saying that we are exposed to the risk of no longer being able to understand or interpret ourselves – but also, that we are thereby exposed once again to ourselves, and once again to one another…our existence demands its meaning and its rights (Nancy 1997a, p. 65).

Nancy is arguing that we must stop living on the basis of manufactured meanings that are repeatedly peddled to us from sources that have vested interests in histories, theologies or ideologies. Instead, ‘We must exist in the meaning that we are’ (Nancy 1997a, p. 65). We must live as ‘the open’ that translates as ‘meaning’s thing’ (Nancy 1997a, p. 66). What Nancy is underlining is that the responsibility for the meaning we are rests with each of us individually and it is in our openness to meaning that we have our Being-in-common. Our openness to being, which is our very ontological nature, is what gives us our commonality and forms the basis of our being-with. The wonder arises from maintaining this openness even when it is difficult, even when it is anxiety-ridden such as facing our thrown-being. Raffoul says that wonder happens at the limit where the task of thought becomes simply receptivity, a welcoming and exposure to the event of meaning (Nancy 1997a, p. xvii). This receptivity can be difficult as it is opening to the meaning of homelessness, but it is a burden¹⁵ that must be borne.

In this way homelessness, as an underlying understanding of our condition in existence, could potentially have some bearing on how we make and interpret sense between each other. At the simplest level of understanding there is recognition of this shared meaning. The interpretation we then proceed to overlay on our dis-position and ex-position to the other replaces this originary meaning. What I am arguing for is an ontological basis for a commonality of awareness of the originary shared state.

Heidegger claims that this sense of not-being-at-home is assuaged through attempting to make historic Dasein, founded in the People, this home (or destiny as he calls it). In my interpretation, however, ‘home’ is found in the relationships made as a being-in-the-world. For a being that understands itself to be homeless, its obvious ‘destiny’ is to find/make itself a ‘home’. This search could potentially be grounded in the shared understanding of homelessness between existents. Its

¹⁵Although Dasein has not created the basis for this homelessness, Heidegger tells us that ‘it reposes in the weight of it, which is made manifest to it as a burden by Dasein’s mood’ (BT, p. 284).
form is an unvoiced foundation for how we understand ourselves and each other. This understanding paints the background against which we act. It could also explain why we would ever act compassionate. Why is the world not simply a universally selfish world? Why do we make attempts to allow for others’ opportunities to get on in life? Why do we feel bad for those who endure bad moral luck in life? I pose these questions in the operational sense of ‘doing’ rather than the moralistic ‘should do’ because we are compassionate and we are egalitarian. We are all of this and more, not because of religious or social rules, but because we are attuned to an originary homelessness that each of us shares. We already have a being-towards others based in the shared understanding of thrown-being. This thought in turn opens the space for an ethos of actively recalling this ontological condition. In his book *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics*, Frederick Olafson (1998) pursues a belief in the proto-ethical element that is present in the ontological condition of Mitsein. He declares as his thesis statement that the ground of ethics is to be found in a certain sort of relation between human beings rather than in a metaphysical moral truth that then dictates rules of conduct (Olafson 1998, p. 7). This thinking mirrors my own belief in what the ontology of Mitsein can provide for a positive and constructive amendment to how we think about ourselves and ourselves in relation to others, and is the reason for the analysis in this chapter. Olafson’s thoughts will be incorporated into the next subsection.

5.2. Mitsein and the everyday world

One of the consequences of my claim that Dasein’s solution for making sense of its thrown existence is to be with others who also share the underlying meaning of homelessness, is that this would require a re-valorisation of das Man—the world of ordinary people doing ordinary things. Far from signifying the greyness and insignificance of das Man, as contrasted with an historic lost grandeur that Heidegger seeks to repossess, Nancy says the world is the truth of the totality of being where meaning is ‘right at existence and nowhere else’ (Nancy 2000, p. 10). We make meaning as we exist now through the differences in origins of individuals and their shared world of meaning. Nancy goes on to say that this richer, more nuanced description of the world shows up Heidegger’s das Man as insufficient in its scope. For Heidegger, das Man was the world of averageness and banality into which Dasein ‘falls’. Nancy’s move in his being-with analyses is to show that the everyday world is not grey and average, instead it consists of ‘constantly renewed rupture, discord, polymorphy and polyphony, its relief and its variety’ (Nancy 2000, p. 10). Each day itself is a singularity, an origin of meaning that represents the turning of the world. One day is just a contribution to the sense of the whole as one person is to the sense of the community. Das Man is a

16 Simon Critchley (2008) in an essay titled ‘Originary Inauthenticity’ argues that contra Heidegger’s objective for Dasein, it is rather the inauthentic self who acquires definition through its sociality and relational experiences of finitude and conscience (Critchley 2008, p. 149). This is a view that is deserving of a more in-depth treatment that cannot be given it in this thesis, particularly as it is such a pragmatic one.
dynamic, ever-changing plurality of meaning. It is so because of the sense-making, meaning-seeking activity of the individuals who constitute it.

The idea of das Man as a milieu of new meaning and intentionality is reinforced if my argument for Dasein’s understanding of itself as homeless is sound. If Dasein is looking to find its home in das Man, it will not be passively accepting of what is offered, but instead actively engaged in interpreting sense at the limits of signification and between the entities of its world. Dasein’s falling response to anxiety is also supporting an understanding of homeless groundlessness. This would make das Man a source for restorative meaning rather than only a place for passive acceptance of the ways of the they. If das Man were only a source of being for the they-self, then the they-self and the world would never change. In being towards interpreting one’s being-with others in a world, a home, Dasein is potentially participative in das Man rather than merely engaged in idle curiosity, talk and ambiguity.

Olafson (1998) takes truth to be a highly relevant element in human relationships that has little bearing on its theoretical treatments. In his view truth in pragmatic terms cannot be written off as relativistic because it is critical to how we relate to each other and to the world. When the consequences of an action ‘can be shown to be preferable to any other in terms of the way it affects people’s lives, then there is a sense in which these consequences will be the same for all; and in that respect it will be like truth’ (Olafson 1998, p. 55). There are certain commonalities due the human condition that have to be maintained and respected by all individuals. These commonalities might as well be called the truth conditions for our existence, and ‘Mitsein as a whole becomes the matrix of a relation of these human beings to one another that centres on truth’ (Olafson 1998, p. 62). Olafson sees this truth as a partnership that supports our ability to be in the world. The whole structure of das Man, Dasein’s way of being-in-the-world is predicated on this ‘truth structure’. Heidegger describes this in detail in Part One of the analytic; however, it is not described in terms of the sustenance of human relationships, which is what Olafson would have preferred. Even authentic choice must also have an impact on others. If it expresses the interests of the individual who makes it, these interests necessarily will ‘stand in some relation to the interests of others’ (Olafson 1998, p. 53).

Simon Critchley’s (2008) thesis of ‘Originary Inauthenticity’ argues for a relational reading of Heidegger’s analysis of finitude and conscience. Part of his reasoning is that ‘human existence is fundamentally shaped in relation to a brute facticity or thrownness that cannot be mastered through any existential projection’ (Critchley 2008, p. 142). This statement on the impact of thrownness emphasises the role of the past over projected ways of being and therefore re-evaluates the role of the ‘inauthentic’, socially formed self as a potential source of ‘destiny’. Critchley’s point is that
Dasein is thrown into das Man type relationships that have an immensely powerful role to play in how Dasein carries through its projective being from its facticity. The freedom from facticity that Heidegger valorises in his analysis of authenticity may not be so viable when the human condition in its relationships to others and the world is taken as a serious factor in the analysis. Perhaps it is the very plausibility of this alternative perspective that invigorates Heidegger’s often-negative characterisation of das Man and the theyself?

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained Nancy’s reworking of parts of Heidegger’s first philosophy. The reason for my focus on the Nancian perspective of being-in-the-world is that it helps me to understand how ontology can give a productive account for relationship in the everyday. We have heard how Nancy concludes that it is this lack of address of the everyday’s role in the elucidation of the meaning of Being which leads to a certain ‘closed-off’ principle in the existential analytic. The effect of neglecting this intermediary ‘voice’ leads to a double potentiality of perspective of two other singular voices. The improper is the Anyone, and the proper is the People. Heidegger’s existential analytic struggles to move between the two; meanwhile, everyday existence ‘falls’ between them.

In Being Singular Plural, Nancy explains how a singularity becomes identified through its exposition or presentation as an event of being to another such event. Sense is what happens in the exposition and difference between two events of being. Sense is the preliminary form of meaning that is available to existents who are themselves without signification (meaning). Something existing cannot give itself meaning since it cannot remove itself from out of its existence in order to do so. Opening on to the world and other existents is how sense happens, and it is at the limits of signification that meaning becomes possible. This occurrence of meaning is not a transmission but a characteristic of the structure of the limit of sense between one singularity and another. Sense and meaning delineate the distinction, or difference, between individual events that form pluralities and can themselves be pluralities.

My principal argument for this thesis has been introduced in this chapter. The argument builds from the sense of homelessness that results from authentic Dasein’s understanding of itself as thrown-being. This represents the enigma of our existence that pursues Heidegger’s thought in Being and Time. This enigma manifests as the perpetual questions of why I exist and why this particular existence. These questions become existence’s unchanging meaning at the limit of signification.
Thrown-being is a signifier that always remains open for meaning because our groundlessness resists closure. The result is that each Dasein, as a being singular plural, is always open at this particular limit. As a limit that is ‘there’ for all Dasein, it represents a shared opening to the facticity of our homelessness. It also includes the understanding that the limitations and possibilities for future being are also contained in this thrown being. Ontically, each human that is born arrives into unchosen and unequal relationships with others. Against this factuality that will be concerning me in this thesis, Nancy’s ontology argues that in our singular plural beings we are interdependent entities who can only understand each other and our world because of being-with. Thus at a fundamental level of being, one which also explains how meaning arises, there is no such thing as a solipsistic individual.

The primordial understanding of the shared meaning of our thrown-being means that we are ontologically predisposed towards ‘acceptance’ and allowance. I say ‘predisposed’ because with the proper thinking we should see that the important start of life, in which we are all equally homeless and all unequally destined from our thrown-basis, can be a source of unification and mitigation of difference in our everyday understanding of each other. We find our way to a home, or meaning for our lives, through our relationships with others.

I accept that another way of thinking about thrown-being is as ‘abandonment’ to responsibility for our being and our meaning-making activities. This claim of ontological responsibility is something I will be taking up more thoroughly in the next chapter. Chapter Three builds on the answers, already indicated, to my questions for this thesis about how we should think of our own lives and those of others given that they were originally unchosen.
Chapter 3 - Being responsible: An ontological basis for responsibility, respect and community in thrown-being.

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained Jean-Luc Nancy’s refocusing of Heidegger’s ontology from Dasein to Dasein’s relationships in the world, that is, to Mitsein. Heidegger did not satisfactorily explain Mitsein’s role in elucidating the meaning of Being even though he claimed repeatedly that Mitsein was co-essential with Dasein. Nancy explains that the shortfall in Heidegger’s explanation arises from the fact that the they-self and the authentic self, which has a being-towards a common destiny of the People, becomes disjunctive in the analytic with no hope of cross-over (Nancy 2008, p. 9). Nancy’s solution is to propose a ‘being-the-there-with’ for Dasein that allows for Dasein’s ‘there’ to be genuinely one that encompasses the being of others also. Dasein as being-the-there-with is able to open onto multiple disclosing events and other beings; Dasein does not represent one particular view or opening onto the world, but a multiplicity of them. I then went on to explain how Nancy’s singular plurality of being works. This term describes the combination of movement to openings, or openings onto openings, that vary and change, but in doing so come to be understood as sense and meaning.

My objective in selecting this particular analysis of Nancy’s for my thesis is that it helps me to lay a basis for my argument that the acceptance of the ontological character of thrown-being can be assisted by viewing it as a common place for openings of many Dasein. Ontologically, therefore, the fact that each of us is able to disclose the same meaning of ‘homelessness’ when assimilating our unchosen being means that this understanding is capable of being a shared one. It points to the shared ‘homelessness’ of the human being. Moreover, Nancy’s analysis of being-with as meaning offers an ontic guide for thinking about responsibility and expanding this into an ethos of relating to others as a community of individuals sharing in the facticity of unchosen initial being.

In this chapter I want to develop this thinking of responsibility by looking at the phenomenon in which this possibility first arises in Heidegger’s existential analytic. Thus, section two provides an abbreviated account of Heidegger’s analysis of authenticity that I have selected for its contribution to the objectives of this chapter. In the existential analytic itself, the authentic dimension of Dasein completes Heidegger’s ontological analysis of the existing human being. The Heideggerian human being is a thrown-being that understands itself in terms of being-in-the-world, but it is possible for its complacency to destabilise and consequently throw it back onto its groundless, homeless being.
This analysis is important as it demonstrates the temporal unification of Dasein’s being as a unique entity. I discussed this aspect of Dasein in the context of care in Chapter One. In Chapter Two I introduced death as Heidegger’s primary stimulus for the individuation of Dasein. In this chapter I continue that analysis with the role of the call of conscience and Dasein’s existential guilt. These elements help to identify the nuance of ontological responsibility inherent in Heidegger’s analysis.

In the third section of this chapter I will be analysing what it is to be authentic and attempting to show how this conception of being can illuminate the inherent capacity for ontology to ground an ethos. Firstly, facing the facticity of our thrown-being is individualising and silencing, but at the limit of signification of what it means to be groundless, or homeless, it is a meaning that can be shared with others who are like us faced with the same signification. Resoluteness is to be understood as Dasein taking responsibility for the conditioned facticity of its ownmost ‘self’.

In the fourth section, I investigate what an authentic self might potentially offer an ontic existence. I start by looking at some psychology-based critiques of authenticity, which are intended to alert the reader to discussions forthcoming in the next chapter. A central question is whether Heidegger’s authentic being-towards can contribute some additional dimension of understanding to Nancy’s more complete explanation of being-with. It is a question I must ask since my goal is to test ontology’s capacity to explain and support the ethos I pursue in the following chapters. Heidegger was clear that the existence of something like Dasein must take the phenomena of this existence as ‘the point where it arises and to which it returns’ (BT p. 38 and 436). Consequently, I expect my investigations of the existential analytic to help identify guides to reflective thinking concerning the problems and peculiarities of a lived existence. After an extensive discussion on responsibility, I end this section with an exploration of the question of originary ethics. These two facets of ontological determinations identify the original condition of our being as a ground for discussing ethics.

Finally, I reiterate my quest for clarifying how we can come to understand our unchosen existence through the use of ontology. In this examination, I identify dignity, and the respect of this feature in others that this affords, as the main way we can reconcile ourselves with living uncanny lives and allowing for others to do the same. I also demonstrate how we can take a thinking of the ontology of thrown-being and the community of homeless, groundless beings that we in fact are into the ontic realm. The question of the place of ethics is also laid out. I will start the chapter with my explanation of authentic being.

2. Heidegger’s basis for authenticity

2.1. Dasein’s death
So far the discussions in this thesis have focussed on everyday Dasein. I have identified this being as a thrown-projective being, but one that is fundamentally ‘homeless’. As the they-self however, Dasein is ‘lost’ to the thrown aspect of its being. I have also explored what being-with others could bring to the ontological story of Dasein and the relevance of this being to ‘homeless’ Dasein.

In the second part of *Being and Time*, Heidegger seeks to complete the explanation of Dasein’s ontology by investigating the relationship Dasein has with its ‘ownmost’ potentiality. His way of achieving this aim is through an ontological analysis of how Dasein can be understood to relate to its death. This understanding cannot be achieved by considering how Dasein feels about another’s death, that is, about death as a detached concept\(^1\). If we are to get to Dasein’s ownmost potential, the relationship to death has to be explained from within Dasein’s existence itself: ‘Dying is not an event; it is a phenomenon to be understood existentially’ (BT p. 240).

In beginning to understand Dasein’s existential relationship to its own death, we once again have recourse to the attunement of anxiety. With the introduction of the notion of Dasein’s death to the existential analytic we can now see that anxiety is the anxiety of Dasein’s *ownmost* potentiality-for-being, which is specifically distinguished by being-towards-the-end. It is at this point that the ‘fleeing from uncanniness’ identified in Chapter One, can now be recognised as ‘a fleeing in the face of one’s ownmost Being-towards-death’ (BT p. 252).

All Heidegger’s being-towards existentials are always already part of Dasein’s being. No existential of Dasein’s being occurs *de novo* during the course of its existence even though they may come to expression in different contexts and circumstances. Thus, Heidegger tells us being-towards-death is also there in Dasein’s they-self, but suppressed. The tranquilisation, which the they brings to bear on Dasein, immures it from recognition of this being-towards-death. However, the more the they ‘cultivates’ an indifference to death, the more alienated Dasein becomes from its ‘ownmost non-relational potentiality-for-Being’ (BT p. 254). Why should this matter to Dasein who is ‘safely at home’ in the they? Heidegger makes a crucial comment that identifies why such fleeing/hiding is ultimately unstable. He says that inauthenticity is a *diversion* and that it ‘is based on the possibility of authenticity’ (BT p. 259). Dasein already has its ‘whole’ built into its structure of care. Care already cares about death and Dasein ‘has in every case already been delivered over to its death’ (BT p. 259), thus Dasein is never really free from this uttermost possibility of its being. In the next sub-section I will look at how this aspect of Dasein’s being gains precedence in authentic being.

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\(^1\) One’s own death is a difficult concept to engage with authentically. At best it is an abstract event that will always be far enough away in the future. A good example of this denial of death can be found in Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilych* in which the protagonist refuses the idea of his own death and carries on as though the stability of routine and status would keep death from his door. On his deathbed he accepts the possibility of his death but only to prevent the suffering of his wife and son (Tolstoy 188, p. 66).
2.2. The call of conscience and existential guilt

Prompted by the ever-present primordial anxiety, Dasein is urged towards anticipating its death. Heidegger tells us that Dasein has another existential called ‘bringing-back’ (from the they.) It is through the neglect of this existential that Dasein loses itself in the they in the first place. Heidegger is suggesting that the being of Dasein already has this ‘bringing-back’ available (BT p. 268). So the structure for becoming authentic is pre-existing. Responding to the ‘bringing-back’ is the positive mode of being which leads to authenticity. However, Dasein must choose to make this choice, but lost Dasein must first be shown itself. Heidegger says this ‘potentiality-for-being-one’s-Self’ is available, but needs to be attested (BT p. 267). Which means that this potentiality is there in Dasein’s being, but remains to be demonstrated. That which does the attesting is the ‘call of conscience’.

The ontological conscience Heidegger discusses is prior to any possibility of an ontic experience of conscience. Ontological conscience ‘gives us ‘something’ to understand; it discloses’ (BT p. 269). But we know that disclosedness is a basic state of Dasein and is constituted by state-of-mind, understanding, falling, and discourse². Heidegger says that conscience should be understood as a ‘call’, which in itself is a mode of discourse. What is communicated in this particular discourse is Dasein’s ‘ownmost Being-guilty’. The fact that we understand this communication reveals that Dasein has in it the desire to have a conscience. Once again we see that all the elements to explain Dasein’s holistic structure of being are pre-existing. This desire to have a conscience, Heidegger calls ‘resoluteness’. Meanwhile, the call is silent, ever present in the background though seldom heeded: ‘The call reaches Dasein in this understanding of itself which it always has, and which is concernful in an everyday, average manner’ (BT p. 272). Dasein is as much available to be disclosed to itself as is its world, but the world more often than not displaces this understanding.

The call reaches the they-self, which is called to the ownmost ‘Self.’ Heidegger reminds us that the they-self is in the ownmost ‘Self’ and there is no ‘conversion’ of one type of entity into another happening here (BT p. 274). Since it is the ‘Self’ that is appealed to, the ‘They’ collapses and recedes in significance. What is the content of this call of conscience identified as ‘discourse’? The content is nothing: ‘Conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent’ (BT p. 273). What is of note in the silence is the ‘direction’ that the call takes: ‘The call comes from me and yet from beyond me’ (BT p.275). Everyday Dasein in its form of the they-self experiences a silence that directs Dasein to a source, which is ‘uncanny’. Heidegger reminds us that Dasein does not have its thrownness like a characteristic of itself. Rather, Dasein is thrown into an existence and knows itself existingly within it and from it. Existing into a future is Dasein’s constant

² This is explained in Chapter One, Section 4.1.
preoccupation. In this manner, everyday Dasein is a they-self and knows itself in this ontological persona. For Dasein to think of its existence in another way is to feel uncanny. The call of conscience that is silent alerts Dasein to this other ‘persona’ that has been hidden.

Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety; and, as the most elemental way in which thrown Dasein is disclosed, it puts Dasein’s Being-in-the-world face-to-face with the “nothing” of the world; in the face of this “nothing”, Dasein is anxious with anxiety about its ownmost potentiality-for-Being’ (BT p. 276).

The caller therefore is Dasein in its uncanniness; in other words, the caller is the homeless manifestation of Dasein in its thrown-being. It is the fact of the ‘cold assurance which is uncanny’ that assures Dasein it is itself in its ‘abandoned’ being that calls (BT p. 277). This ‘coldness’ is to be contrasted with the tranquilising familiarity of the they that reassures Dasein that all is as it should be. Heidegger further dramatizes this confrontation by asking,

What is it that so radically deprives Dasein of the possibility of misunderstanding itself by any sort of alibi and failing to recognize itself, if not the forsakenness with which it has been abandoned to itself? (BT p. 277).

The they would not so abandon Dasein, thus it must be Dasein itself, in an unfamiliar and anxiety-raising form that is calling to itself. This anxiety-raising form is Dasein alone in its thrown-being itself. This is a characterisation that I have developed in discussions on homelessness in the previous chapters. However, Heidegger is using these dire-sounding descriptions for a reason and this reason is that such a forsaken being as thrown-being may be redeemed by a stoic resoluteness to own one’s self and one’s heritage.

François Raffoul (2002) warns against making a misrepresentative equation between Dasein and the source of the call; instead he seeks to clarify that though there is an origin to the call of conscience, there is no author. Rather, it is in responding to the call that Dasein makes the caller its own. Raffoul refers us to this passage ‘The call comes from me and yet from beyond me’ (BT p. 275), to which he adds ‘falling on me’ (Raffoul 2002, p. 214). Thus, what is uncanny is that Dasein is not the author of the call but comes to be the caller by the very fact of responding to it. The call and its response is part of the same existential.

Dasein understands the call as itself being summoned as guilty. This is another pre-existing being at play in Dasein in the form of the primordial being-guilty. Heidegger tells us that being-guilty

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3 I deliberately use biblical terminology to complement the similar dramatic devices utilized by Heidegger by words, such as ‘forsaken’.
cannot arise from something that is missing (a lack) in one’s existence, because existence is all we have to explain ourselves and, therefore, must form the context within which we formulate our explanations. Instead, he says that being-guilty is primordial, it is always present, but is not at all like ontic guilt, though he claims that primordial guilt is the basis for such guilt and morality in general (BT p. 286). So, how are we to understand ontological guilt? The essence of being-guilty derives from the groundless being of Dasein. This is how Heidegger describes existential guilt formally, as: “Being-the-basis for a Being which has been defined by a ‘not’” – that is to say, as “Being-the-basis of a nullity” (BT p. 283). In other words, guilt is the guilt for not being the cause of oneself. This derives from Heidegger’s explanation for Dasein’s being as care. Dasein cares about where it comes from and where it is going and how it is. It is also the characteristic of care that is responsible for the fleeing response to anxiety. Therefore, the sort of care Dasein experiences for not being its own basis is guilt: ‘The Self, which has to lay the basis for itself, can never get that basis into its power; and yet, as existing, it must take over Being-a-basis. To be its own thrown basis is that potentiality-for-Being which is the issue for care’ (BT p. 284). Dasein is guilty of being-the-basis of a nullity, that is, itself.

Moreover, as a thrown-projective being, Dasein is condemned to be existentially towards some possibilities and not others. The ‘thrown’ element of its being comes through temporally to determine what futural beings Dasein can have. ‘Not only is the projection, as one that has been thrown, determined by the nullity of Being-a-basis; as projection it is itself essentially null’ (BT p. 285). Heidegger tells us that this nullity relates to Dasein’s freedom because the conditions of thrown-being will determine what Dasein can and cannot be and will mostly be outside the ability of Dasein to choose. Thus Dasein’s freedom lies in choosing one possibility while having to tolerate ‘one’s not having chosen the others and one’s not being able to choose them’ (BT p. 285). This analysis represents the ontological basis for my thesis: that thrown-being presents us with limitations on what we might be. The ontic, physical consequences of this condition of our being will be described in the following two chapters. In the next subsection I clarify what thrown-being signifies for a potentially authentic being-towards it.

### 2.3. On being a null basis

On what grounds might Heidegger be describing thrown-being as generating a null basis for Dasein’s understanding of itself and its freedom to choose? My own response to these questions is formulated on the outcomes of, firstly Heidegger’s analysis of everyday Dasein, and secondly on the ontological understanding of our being-with relationships with others.
Everyday Dasein is concerned with choice within a world that is largely at its disposal. Things that are ready-to-hand are equipment for Dasein’s usage and navigation through its world, while things that are present-at-hand are there for Dasein’s discourse, curiosity and consumption. The equipment and things for observation and comment are all available for Dasein’s manipulation, creation and usage. We use tools to build things. We follow templates for construction. We use, make and manipulate, from the ground up, all elements of our environment. The only thing we cannot grasp from the ground up is our being. For all the freedom we might have with how we use and relate to our world, we do not have a similar freedom with our own beings. Our individual thrown existence constrains us to live a certain life with specific possibilities for being. Heidegger’s use of null is to signify absence. So, whereas in the larger sphere of our existence we have control to varying degrees over our world, when it comes to our individual being, there never was such an originary control for our initial thrown-being.

From the previous chapter we have established that our existence is essentially a being-with existence. Our way of being would not ‘make sense’ – explicitly and figuratively – if there were not other beings in our world. Consequently, it is meaningless to think of our existence solipsistically. Because our world and our own being-in-the-world are brought about through our interactions with others, the others are as important to us as our own being is to us. Both Heidegger and Nancy make this clear. However, what we find when we interact with others in the manner of being-with, or even as entities present-at-hand, is the differences in potentiality-for-being to my own Dasein. It is the differences in potentiality-for-being that is such a crucial factor in Dasein’s existential freedom of choice and it is also out of Dasein’s control. As a real phenomenological factor of a lived existence it deserves consideration in an ontology. Chapter Four covers some of the most critical conditions for differing thrown-being potentialities impacting a being-in-the-world. For a thrown-projective type of existence, the limitation of potential beings that thrown-being imposes on Dasein is an issue. Despite this consideration, all Dasein are potentially answerable to the call of conscience.

The call of conscience calls Dasein ‘forth’ to the possibility of taking over, in existing, even that thrown entity which it is’, at the same time the call calls Dasein back to its thrownness ‘so as to understand this thrownness as the null basis which it has to take up into existence’ (BT p. 287). Dasein must know itself as thrown so that it can genuinely be its own groundless ground. However, Dasein must be receptive in order to hear the call in the first place. Its receptivity is part of its being-guilty existential already described. In being-guilty primordially there is also an understanding of ‘one’s ownmost potentiality-for-being’. It is this understanding that is activated when Dasein becomes ‘free for the call’ (BT p. 287). ‘In understanding the call, Dasein is in thrall
to its ownmost possibility of existence. It has chosen itself” (BT p. 287). Dasein exchanges fascination for the they with a fascination for itself, although it might be taken as a preoccupation rather than in the sense of ‘admiration’.

In concluding this section, I would like to point to a comment that Heidegger makes, ‘the fact of the anxiety of conscience, gives us phenomenal confirmation that in understanding the call Dasein is brought face to face with its own uncanniness’ (BT p. 296). Coupled with the original German meaning for the interpretation used as uncanniness, this comment comes closest to my argument that in the process of becoming authentic, Dasein must also become aware of its ‘homelessness’. For Heidegger this coming ‘face to face’ with uncanniness means nothing more than a stimulus for the possibility of acceptance, for the possibility of becoming authentic. This encounter is just one move towards his intended goal of describing Dasein’s being as time. I will not be focusing on Heidegger’s explanation of being as time as it is not central to my thesis. What is necessary is for my investigation to remain with uncanniness as ‘homelessness’. I want to know specifically how Dasein might integrate the understanding of ‘homelessness’ for its being-in-the-world and for its being-with others. This process begins with Dasein becoming resolute.

3. Becoming authentic

3.1. Resoluteness

This distinctive and authentic disclosedness, which is attested in Dasein by its conscience – this reticent self-projection upon one’s ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety – we call “resoluteness” (BT p. 296-297).

Resolute Dasein is not afraid of anxiety and the uncanniness of its being. It is ready to face itself in its ‘homelessness’ and accept its possibilities with all the constraints imposed on it through being, at the same time, a worldly being. What is changed in resolute Dasein is the type of understanding employed in navigating the world and the others in it. Heidegger tells us that Dasein becoming aware of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-itself now understands others as having an ownmost potentiality-for-Being-their-Selves. Said in another way, resoluteness ‘pushes it [Dasein] into solicitous Being with Others’ (BT p. 298).

Resolute Dasein is manifest through its resolutions – and this means ‘the disclosive projection and determination of what is factically possible at the time’ (BT p. 298). What becomes active in resolute Dasein is the ‘indefiniteness’ of its potentiality-for-Being. So, resolute Dasein recognises that there are possibilities that it cannot attain to and also that its potentiality-for-being is also just a
potentiality, not an assurance. Resolute Dasein is able to be aware of this contingency of its existence because it maintains itself in truth and untruth equiprimordially. It does not surrender itself to the they: ‘The irresoluteness of the “they” remains dominant notwithstanding, but it cannot impugn resolute existence’ (BT p. 299). This means that though the they-self might imagine all manner of possibilities for itself, it cannot also cast doubt on the ability of the authentic self to be ‘realistic’ about its potential.

In fact resolute Dasein clearly understands that the world of the they is necessary. ‘Resolution does not withdraw itself from ‘actuality’ but discovers first what is factically possible; and it does so by seizing upon it in whatever way is possible for it as its ownmost potentiality-for-Being in the “they”’ (BT p. 299). Heidegger explains that resoluteness manifests as Dasein’s resolutions for what it can ‘factically’ be at the time. Therefore, resoluteness is uncertain about possibilities until Dasein makes a resolution in which it becomes decided about an existential direction for being. Charles Guignon (2011) in discussing Dasein’s freedom, points to it lying in a second-order stance after resoluteness. It follows Heidegger’s pronouncement that in choosing one possibility, Dasein ‘is tolerating one’s not having chosen the others and one’s not being able to choose them’ (BT p. 285). Dasein’s existential freedom is about standing behind its choosing to choose. In such a conception of freedom is outlined a self that is open to the situation that enables choice, but is a situation that is always contingent. It shows up a self that is constantly free to be, choose and become (Guignon 2011, p. 90). The self is not separate from its choices, but becomes its choices.

Heidegger chooses a different term for existential disclosure that is resolute. As opposed to everyday Dasein’s ‘there’ being the place where Dasein is disclosing, Heidegger calls the Situation the “‘there” which is disclosed in resoluteness’ (BT p. 299). As I indicated earlier, resolute Dasein understands the world and its possibilities in this world in a different way. The space in which such ‘resolutions’ play out is called the Situation. The Situation is not like the ‘there’ because it does not represent the usual ad-hoc disclosures of a reactive they-self. ‘Far removed from any present-at-hand mixture of circumstances and accidents which we encounter, the Situation is only through resoluteness and in it’ (BT p. 300). Heidegger is not implying that resolute Dasein is not subject to contingency and accident; rather its resolutions mean that there is a particular way in which we should understand its being-in-the-world. Resolute Dasein in the Situation is not randomly being-towards worldly goals, but instead possesses being and revelatory distinction that derives from its ownmost possibilities. More than anything else, resoluteness is to be understood as Dasein taking responsibility for the conditioned facticity of its ownmost possibilities.

3.2. Comment on the privileging of theory
With respect to the ontic experience versus the ontological theory of authenticity, King raises an important point. She says that a resolute hearing of the call requires only the existentiell-ontic experience since this always includes the existential-ontological understanding of it (King 2001, p. 196). That means that the way a factual individual understands her ways of being does not necessitate that she also understand a particular theoretical framework, which would have used the existential-ontic properties from which to construct itself in the first place. What is King’s point here? She is levelling her criticism at those thinkers who propose that on the basis of a (their) particular existential-ontological formulation, a specific existential philosophy is touted as being the way of knowing yourself as an authentic self (King 2001, p. 196). It is understandable that the primary challenge for anyone thinking about the meaning of being in the context of a lived human life will want to generalise about what the best form of this might look like. There have been many such thinkers who write on the authentic way to be. For Aristotle this was living virtuously; for Kierkegaard it was to surrender to an absolute faith in something (a Christian god) greater than one can understand; for Nietzsche it was the model of the Übermenschen and for Sartre it was having the courage to live in the face of one’s infinite, existential freedom. Being true to oneself is also a central theme of the self-help and New Age industries that devise different ways to conduct one’s living and thinking to achieve unity with the self. In the next section I will be examining how one philosopher, Charles Guignon, reports the psychological interpretations of authenticity, to which I draw comparisons with the ontological accounts we have covered so far.

The existential analytic does not prescribe authenticity as a prerogative of the elite few who imagine that being able to conceptualise a mode of existence in an exclusive way is all that is required to make one authentic. By contrast, King says that Heidegger’s ‘elucidation of owned existence is sober and bare in the extreme, and almost inevitably, something of an anticlimax’ (King 2001, p. 196). She is referring to the background context of lived existence, which Heidegger never loses touch with. Instead, Resoluteness, as authentic Being-one’s-Self, does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free-floating “I”. And how should it, when resoluteness as authentic disclosedness, is authentically nothing else than Being-in-the-world? Resoluteness brings the Self right into its current concernful Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into sollicitous Being with Others (BT p. 298).

Heidegger is telling us that one can only be resolute against the distractions offered by being in a world, therefore, even an owning self cannot detach from the world. What changes for Dasein when it is being resolute is that its horizon of understanding is extended beyond the theyself to its ownmost possibilities for being-in-the-world.
4. The Authentic Potential

4.1. The authentic self

Charles Guignon (2004) writes from a psychological standpoint on the question of authenticity. I include a summary of what he has to say on the subject at this point as my preparation for relating the ontological discussions thus far to the lived issues of an unchosen existence that individuals deal with. We have seen in Chapter Two that Nancy has concerns about how the existential analytic purports to explain the passage of inauthentic Dasein to authentic Dasein within the context of Dasein’s essential being-with character. Thinking about authenticity in terms of either its ontological or ontic expression in the context of a being-with others appears, on the face of it, to be paradoxical since authenticity focus is on one’s ‘true’ self. In what follows I will examine some ontic questions that arise from a thinking that privileges authenticity.

In his work *On Being Authentic*, Charles Guignon questions the merit of the traditional ontic understandings of the inner and outer spheres of influence and value in a human life. In Guignon’s schematic, the inner sphere is the inner self and the outer is the sphere of influence by others, society, government, media etc. This traditional binary distinction confers descriptions of the inner, ‘natural’ self and the outer, public self, as labels that favour the former over the latter. ‘The binary oppositions governing our thought lead us to see the natural side of life as pure, spontaneous, and innocent, whereas the social or public side of life is seen as calculating, contrived, tainted, and so deformed and fallen’ (Guignon 2004, p. 81). Guignon questions whether such valorisation of the inner psychic life is justified.

One conclusion Guignon draws from his review of contemporary psychoanalytic studies is that the inner self can be anything but pure and innocent. Even if it is the place where one readily finds one’s truest potentiality for being, this truest potentiality may not lead to something clear-cut and motivational, instead it may be a source of confusion and existential anxiety. Guignon observes that in opposition to this tendency to valorise the inner self as good and pure, contemporary postmodernist movements have deliberately nurtured a counter-culture that seeks to express all the rage and darkness that psychologists such as Alice Miller⁴ and Freud declare reside within the self (Guignon 2004, p. 105). This perspective of self-relationship is interesting in the context of Heidegger’s attunement of anxiety and the structure of the call of conscience. Anxiety drives Dasein back to itself, but the call to do so comes from Dasein. What interests me is how this

⁴ Guignon refers to Alice Miller’s 1979, *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self* in which she reveals the problem with such children as located in a ‘deficit in parenting’, or as Guignon states it, a lack of essential guidance and support which the developing child needs (Guignon 2004, p. 87).
existential task of facing Dasein’s facticity may be analogous to the psychological angst an individual has to contend with in relation to a self one does not want to own. If there is a valid correspondence, then how is Dasein’s relationality to the other affected by being authentic? Critchley argues that the call of conscience, which goes from the self to the self reflects a sort of Freudian notion of the ego/super ego relationship (Critchley 2008, p. 146). He contends that Heidegger’s call of conscience seems to split the identity of Dasein on account of the enigma of its facticity and in doing so exposes a self that is a failure at self-mastery. Moreover, in Critchley’s view, it is this failure of self-mastery that makes the self relational. Because the other voice that calls me is myself, it emphasises the fact of my inability to complete myself – meaning there is an aspect of myself forever out of my reach, or ‘apart from me’ – and instils an indebted being-towards this other thus creating a ground for ethical responsibility. The consequence of this split is that there is ontologically an ‘other’ that always accompanies the self. Thus, ‘the relational experience of conscience calls me to a responsibility for the other that one might consider ethical’ (Critchley 2008, p. 146). It is a call that may be ignored, but it is always there.

As a reaction to the traditional norm of self-absorption that cultures have promoted, Guignon tells us that post-modernism has favoured “de-centering the subject,” which involves rethinking humans as polycentric, fluid, contextual subjectivities, selves with limited powers of autonomous choice and multiple centers with diverse perspectives’ (Guignon 2004, p. 109). He means that there is not just one identity per physical being, but a multiplicity of intentional selves that come and go out of play in the world as the situation demands. This counter view, despite its psycho-social basis, echoes Nancy’s explanation for his singular plural ontology given in Chapter Two where each individual, in each occasion of being, forms an origin of the world. As a result, the world ‘always appears each time according to a decidedly local turn [of events]’ (Nancy 2000, p. 9). A ‘singular-plural’ being is not about physicality, but rather the projects with which it concerns itself. Such a being, therefore, is able to manifest a variety of personae that result from its being-with activities. In fact, the whole of Guignon’s discussions in his chapter called ‘De-centering the Subject’ corresponds closely to Nancy’s analysis of the centrality of others and, therefore relationships, to any sort of definition of the self. Guignon says, ‘The dialogical conception of the self has the advantage of making social interactions absolutely fundamental to our identity. It lets us see that being human is inextricably being part of a “We”’ (Guignon 2004, p. 121). By not losing sight of the embeddedness of the self, we must take responsibility for the sense that arises in our worldly conduct. The meaning of one’s own self is indebted to these relationships.

4.2. Responsibility
In Guignon’s opinion there appears to be two ways to view the self who is responsible. One way is as a self who integrates all aspects of itself and takes a stand on its responsibility to this self, but this returns us to the understanding of an enduring ‘inner’ self and an accompanied privileging of this self (Guignon 2004, p. 123). The second way is that the self is transient and takes a stand in the present moment – one stand among many – giving us a dispersed source of responsibility. But does this latter, transient form provide an effective and reliable agent; one who will always choose in the same way? How are we meant to think about a dispersed self in the face of decision-making? Will it always be the same self that will make the decision and does this matter?

If I follow Nancy’s interpretation of how sense comes about, these decisions are not emerging from a constant self, nor do they have to. If we are constantly exposed to changing conditions of sense that are dependent on our interactions with others then, at the point of decision-making, the decision is not coming from an atomistic individual, but from a temporally situated being-in-the-world and being-with others. In other words, the decision each time reflects that self which is expressed through her relations to what is other than her self. As Nancy would insist, meaning is made in the ‘with’. This is my existential interpretation of the situation; that it is never the case where an individual is responsible for some meaning, or some decision, in an isolated way, instead it is always a joint product of one singularity, or origin, ‘touching’ another. An event of sense is always a co-creation. As a physical example of this phenomenon, I can choose to go and see a movie, but this is not an intention that was generated ‘fully sprung’ from my mind alone. I make this decision on the basis of conversations with other people who also want to see the movie, or I read about it from reviews written by others. The action of buying the ticket is only the end process of many other sense-making interactions that brought me to that point. Obviously, it is judicially expedient to identify an action with a physical entity such as a person. Of course, it is necessary in a rational and civic world to hold persons as causally accountable for actions and effects. However, the existentiell interpretation for responsibility should be that as origins of the world we can be, each of us, responsible in a ‘dynamic’ rather than a ‘static’ accountable way for the sense made through our interactions with others. By this I mean that our selves are also reflective of the roles we have in our projects, therefore decisions in each project and each encounter will not be reflective of a constant self.

In acknowledging the socially constituted nature of the self, Guignon tells us that theorists propose what he calls ‘story-shaped’ selves. This view complies with what was said in the previous paragraph and points to there not being any underlying constant subject, but a subject that ‘comes to pass’ on the basis of the narrative of our lives. Thus, there is a subject that evolves along with the
narrative and ‘passes’ in a changing manner through her life. As such, we are not only ‘tellers’ or a ‘told’, we are also the process of ‘telling’ (Guignon 2004, p. 127). The important outcome of the narrator explanation for the self is that we are actively involved in our self-conception and not just at the mercy of an originary state, or reactive to our environment. How do these discussions of the self bear on the description of Dasein’s responsibility?

Raffoul in ‘Heidegger and the Origins of Responsibility’ explores the source of the meaning of being responsible through Heidegger’s ontology. He says that although Heidegger’s ontological equivalent of the human (Dasein) cannot properly be claimed to represent any of the ontic descriptors of the human, such as person, or a consciousness (the self), it is best described as relationship to Being and, therefore, most meaningfully represents responsibility ‘of and for oneself’ (Raffoul 2002, p. 207). In his paper, Raffoul argues that this responsibility arises out of the facticity of existence. He says ‘facticity is perhaps the secret resource of responsibility’, by which he means it provides the very material for the processes involved in taking responsibility such as facing unpalatable truths and making choices on that basis (Raffoul 2002, p. 211). In taking responsibility for its being, Dasein is forced to face alterity in the form of itself as groundless and respond to it: ‘to be responsible means, before anything else, to respond, respondere’ (Raffoul 2002, p. 208). The source of this alterity is the unknown caller, to whom, by responding, Dasein claims as its ownmost ‘self’. This analysis reflects the earlier one given by Critchley in section 4.1 that it is the failure of self-mastery revealed in the call of conscience which makes the self relational and gives the innateness of responsibility at the ontological level.

The moment of alterity is critical to understanding that Dasein has an ethical element built into its being since in the caller is the announcement of the absolute otherness at the heart of Dasein’s being. Such alterity, Raffoul explains, is characterised in Dasein’s ‘transcendental dispersion’, which is simply how being-in-the-world is ontologically constituted to always be-with others: ‘Dasein can consequently never get hold of itself outside of this primordial dispersion in some simple unity or identity’ (Raffoul 2002, p. 214). We have already established this view in our discussions of Mitsein in Chapter Two. To emphasise the essentiality of Mitsein as a characteristic of Dasein, Raffoul reminds us that Heidegger rejected the possibility of an ontological consideration of empathy on the grounds of this essentiality. Empathy already belongs to Dasein’s being-with essence. ‘The question of knowing how the ego could come out of itself in order to then “enter” into the other is an absurd one, for Dasein is always already “in” others, that is, open to them’ (Raffoul 2002, p. 216). This understanding of the others (or at least the coessentiality of them) is the positive mode upon which all other relations with others, whether positive or negative,
(for example, loneliness, love, hate etc.) become possible. In conclusion, Raffoul says that by virtue of our being-with essentiality we are always already with others, accompanying them while they accompany us. An important comment he makes is that ‘In fact, everything takes place as if it was precisely the disruption of this commonality between the I and others, … which provided the basis for the very emergence of the other as other and therefore for the very possibility of an ethics of responsibility’ (Raffoul 2002, p. 217). The fact that ontic relationships with others can come to be described as good or bad is evidence for the fact of the necessity of commonality between the self and the other. If this commonality were never disrupted, though it is very difficult to think this thought, there would never be such an idea as ‘the others’.

The previous discussions, which subtend the ontological in practical analyses of relationality and responsibility, are supporting my thesis that some understandings may be shared in an indisputable manner amongst human beings. In the following subsection, I will look at further evidence for an originary ethic in Heidegger’s ontology.

4.3. Originary ethics

The purpose of looking for an ethical dimension in Heidegger’s work is to help underline my argument in this thesis that human beings have an ontological basis for caring about the other, which may become subsumed in the technicalities of the phenomenological study. I understand that this dimension of care may manifest for good or ill, but my objective is to uncover ontological ground which may aid our thinking about our thrown-beings rather than dismissing this ground in a manner that might also justify us in not accounting for ‘unchosen being’ in our dealings with others. So far, my ontological study of thrown-being has uncovered a rich explanation for the existential angst that underlies much of our factual behaviour and I want to investigate how this explanation might be augmented by ethical insight. We have already heard Raffoul’s argument for an ethics of responsibility that arises from Dasein’s necessary alterity in its thrown facticity. In what follows, I will discuss what Nancy, Hodge, Olafson and O’Brien have argued concerning the possibility of an ethical dimension to Heidegger’s thought.

The following writers find the ethical in Heidegger, except that in their view it is a fascist ethics: Pierre Bourdieu (1988) in the Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger, finds and highlights elements of anti-Semitism and condemnation of the welfare state as examples of the ethical elements buried in Heidegger’s existential analytic. In The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader, Richard Wolin (1992) edits and contributes to an anthology of writers who critique Heidegger’s commitment to the ‘truth and greatness’ of the National Socialist movement. Likewise, Tom Rockmore (1992) in On Heidegger’s Nazism and Philosophy disputes the ethical status of Heidegger given his ongoing political support of the Nazi ideology. His evidence is publications and documents that have come to light since the 1980s. His concern is not so much Heidegger’s traffic with National Socialism as with how this held ideology must impact on the philosopher’s thinking, no matter how submerged its influence might be. My view is that it is important to be aware of the possibility of this underlying ideology, but to recognize that it is further evidence of the embeddedness of personal choice and value in any interpretive account.

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Nancy, for his part, firmly believed that Heidegger was concerned with the ethical: ‘Only those who have read Heidegger blindly, or not at all, have been able to think of him as a stranger to ethical preoccupations’ (Nancy 2002, p. 65). Nancy draws attention to Heidegger’s ‘Letter on Humanism’, a later essay that confirms this preoccupation. In the ‘Letter’, Heidegger affirms that what underlay his thinking in his analyses of the human being in terms of his or her opening to the truth of Being, was an ‘original ethics’:

If the name “ethics,” in keeping with the basic meaning of the word ἔθος, should now say that “ethics” ponders the abode of man, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who ek-sists, is in itself the original ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance, because it is ontology... Therefore the thinking that in Being and Time tries to advance thought in a preliminary way into the truth of Being characterizes itself as “fundamental ontology” (Heidegger 2008, p. 258).

The ‘abode of man’, as the sphere of dwelling and influence, is brought about through the presence of the human being who enables a thinking of ethics through its thrown-projective being. Joanna Hodge argues that ‘Being at home for human beings is to be situated in an unsayable divide between what there is and how it comes to be like that’, which in Being and Time is to be found between entities and being (Hodge 1995, p. 133). In this divide, the ‘how what is comes to be like that’ can only be discovered by an entity that ek-sists, that is by an entity capable of transcending itself into what it can be (Hodge 1995, p. 202). Ethics, and the moral concern that is derivative of this ethos, is possible only because of the presence of an entity whose existence is an issue for it. On this account, Hodge also holds that ethics was a concern for Heidegger and that his analysis lays the ground for its possibility.

As an argument to support his claim that the ethical was always in the background of Heidegger’s work, Nancy argues that the ‘turn’ (or Kehre) in Heidegger’s philosophy was a result of

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6 The various terms, such as ethos and ek-sistance, will be more fully explained by Nancy’s elaboration of Heidegger’s originary ethics in the next section.

7 Hodge (1995) writes about Heidegger’s relationship to metaphysics and ethics in his thinking. She argues that ethical conditions are concealed or removed by metaphysical constructions, but are revealed when these constructions become unstable. Ethics has revealed itself in the disengagement of metaphysics from the modern world, in such a world it has become all the more important to recognize that ethics is futural and therefore cannot provide universal truths, but instead must be lived. I agree with Hodge’s conclusion. In a world where external forces no longer provide a constant guide for how we should live, this guidance must arise internally in each lived existence. It must come from within a life that is challenged to choose its thrown-being in a tension-filled context of opposing and changing ontic norms for living.

8 Heidegger’s ontological analyses after Being and Time left Dasein as its subject matter and instead turned to Being itself as the point from which his thinking proceeds.
Heidegger’s failed engagement with National Socialist ideology, which motivated the turn of his study of being from the perspective of Dasein to a focus on Being itself. Therefore, after *Being and Time*, Heidegger moves from a subject matter that is an historical Dasein who is able to choose its redemption in ‘the people’, to one that would allow for a purer, idealised exposition of the ethical, that is, as Being itself. A reason for this change may be that analysing Dasein’s destiny as furthering the culture of a particular group is a political position too easily interpreted as advocacy of the culture of the National Socialist party itself. Whether this is the case or not, one characteristic of the *Kehre* is that Heidegger no longer talks about Dasein’s destiny, but instead the destiny of Being.

Heidegger has argued that his objection to the imposition of ‘values’ in his analysis is on account of them making ‘being’ an object by evaluating the *act* of being. That is, to place a value on a way of being turns that ‘way of being’, Dasein, into the object of being. For example, Heidegger would say that it is incorrect to call Dasein’s falling into the they a ‘failure’ of Dasein’s way of being because the term ‘falling’ is merely reporting the phenomenology of what happens when Dasein is attuned in a certain way. Heidegger is adamant that his ontology has no subject and object but is solely descriptive of how the human has her being. Nevertheless, such avoidance misses the factual phenomenology of the active life and requires entities to manifest as ‘passive… satellites of being’ (Olafson 1998, p. 4). A human life is an active life that is engaged with others at many levels, the rational, the contractual and especially the emotional, which can manifest in a multitude of layers even from the depths of existential anxiety. Of these dimensions of engagement, rationality is perhaps the most straightforward and therefore expedient way of assessing relationships. Olafson’s thesis in his work on *Heidegger and the ground of ethics* is to recognise the other human being ‘as complementing one’s own being’ in a manner that is prior to ethical principles (Olafson 1998, p. 10). Here we see a return to the thesis of the incompleteness of Dasein making essential the necessity of relationality to Dasein’s being. My argument that our ‘homeless’ state mandates a need to recognise this complementarity in other lives is founded in this analysis.

The condition of ontological ethical relationship precedes rationality, consequently Olafson reflects on his reasons for distrusting ethics purely on the basis of rationality. The logical discourse and relations that govern the rational approach are ‘peculiarly discarnate and contextless’ and, instead of

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9 In the Der Spiegel interview of September 1966, Heidegger explains his support for the Nationalist Socialist Party as a way of protecting the self-management and integrity of the University of Freiburg. He does not offer any statement on the conduct of the Party as a whole, but then again this was not specifically asked of him in the interview (Wolin 1993, pp. 24-48). He does comment on his endorsement of the *Führer* that he gave to the student newspaper (1933) by saying that a year later he would no longer have done so (Wolin 1993, p. 96). The Der Spiegel interview is reproduced in this volume, pp. 91-116.

10 See BT, p. 286. Also, such evaluation of ways to be is what das Man gives it. Thus a valuing of a way of being is arbitrarily and ambiguously decided for inauthentic Dasein (see Chapter One).

11 See BT, p. 167.
engaging with the primordial basis of ethical relations, can bring on a sense that one’s existential freedom is being countermanded (Olafson 1998, p. 10). The source of this conflictual paradigm is often to be found in the strictures of religion, community, family and state. This idiom of representationality in which responsibility is simplified to a function of the consciousness misses the deeper truth that ontologically our beings are interdependent and that responsibility lies in the very fact of our to having to be. In addition, Olafson makes an important point that because the human being ‘is grounded in possibility and transcendence’, ontologically a human Dasein is always beyond the ethical prescriptivity of the world, that is, its being is always ahead of any possible directive for it. Thus, it may be said that prescriptive ethics fails to take into account the contingency of factual life. Conversely, it may be the case that an innate ethical life is prior to all prescriptivity. As Olafson points out, prescriptive ethics’ only use is to guide action within prescribed circumstances (Olafson 1998, p. 49). Unfortunately, everyday life contingencies invariably do not always provide ‘repeat performances’ to meet the prescription. This challenge of not being able to predict the multitudinous variability in a factual existence is a problem for social governance. Olafson’s observation underlines my own objective for this thesis, that a change in ethos or way of thinking is better able to address the factuality of an unchosen existence. In Chapter Five I discuss ‘moral luck’ and how this luck affects how we come to see ourselves as a result of the vagaries of life circumstances, which are often primed from our original thrown-being.

As a final response to the question of the ethical in the existential analytic, I will conclude with a comment from Mahon O’Brien (2011) who summarises Heidegger’s position eloquently as that of an embedded human being doing ontology:

[T]he balance between thrownness and our simultaneous projections, the dynamic at the heart of what it means for anything to be, as mediated through human beings, goes to the kernel of the account of authenticity itself and remains a structural and thematic mooring for much of Heidegger’s thought. In a way then, it would be equally incredible for Heidegger’s own thought to have remained immune to the cultural and political influences of the environment he was ‘thrown’ into, it would be equally incredible that his own thought should be nothing more than a reproduction of those same influences, albeit disguised in an abstruse idiolect (O’Brien 2011, p. 175).

My own view about the place of the ethical in Heidegger’s thought is reflected in O’Brien’s statement, which is that Heidegger is influenced as a result of embedded being, just as his own ontological methodology demands. Therefore, even if his intent was to demonstrate an unbiased explanation in the analytic, a bias may nevertheless be active. Thus, it is possible that the political
Heidegger lived in were reflected in his work, but as O’Brien attests, Heidegger’s thinking was clearly capable of growing beyond such influences.

In this section I have examined the ontic realities of being an authentic self and the responsibilities inherent in being this self. I finished the section with a review of some reasons for accepting that there is useful ethical understanding to be gleaned from the analytic. However, what does one eventually do with an ontological analysis that has an ethical perspective? It cannot directly guide practical lived matters since ontology is meant to be descriptive. However, Heidegger tells us that the ontic informs the ontological (BT §4; *The Ontical Priority of the Question of Being*). An ontology should be informed by the ontic and examining an ontology should always happen with an eye to the real that it purports to explain. Consequently, the chapters which follow demonstrate the the ‘real’ problems of inequality and moral luck that justify the claims I have made for an ethos of remembering that we share at a fundamental level a common condition of an unchosen existence.

5. The role of ontology in understanding a contingent life

My purpose in carrying out these discussions of Heidegger’s ontology, and this latter investigation of the possibility for an ethical dimension in it, is not to then declare that this will give us a definitive ethical direction for thinking about a lived life. As I explained in the Introduction, I am not looking to formulate an ethic, a system for decision-making in a human life. Instead I want to use ontology to help guide the thinking of ontic life, particularly where that life derives from the condition of being thrown into an unchosen existence that gives rise to inequalities in a lived life, amongst other challenges. Therefore, I am looking for guides as an ethos, or a disposition for thinking, for real people living unequal lives that are also open to contingent life challenges, firstly because of their unchosen existence and secondly because this is just what happens to anyone no matter how advantageous their original starting point is. By finding that I (and others) read an ethical moment into Heidegger’s existential analytic, I use that as evidence to support my arguments in Chapters One and Two that there already is a concern in one’s own factual existence for that of the other’s existence to which we are inextricably connected, and that this concern can be explained through the ontological processes studied. Heidegger has shown possibilities for this relationship and Nancy has built on its ontology. In what follows I will be highlighting other significant perspectives that we can take with us from this study when we examine the ontic situation in the next two chapters.

5.1. For understanding the place of an originary ethic
As discussed in section 4.3, Heidegger believed ontology was ethics, not a prescriptive ethics, but an ‘original ethics’ (Heidegger 2008, p. 258). Just to remind ourselves, being is the activity which Dasein is, therefore, the conduct of being (i.e. Dasein) is the process of ‘making sense’. This is not the ‘production’ of sense but the effect of letting Being be. Dasein is ‘let be’ and therefore takes on the responsibility for this being. Nancy reminds us that letting Being be is not a passivity, but how being happens through Dasein as exposition, ‘a setting-outside-itself’ (Nancy 2002, pp. 71-72). Moreover, it is this exposition which makes ‘something like a “self”’ possible, because it is opening to something ‘other’ than itself; one origin amongst other origins. Such an exposition and opening to sense becomes a site for an originary ethic, that is, it provides the original ground for any ontic evaluation of the sense made through action and conduct.

One problem with an originary ethic that grounds value solely on the fact of existence is that it could lead to indifferentism as evidenced, for example, in moral relativism. Nancy says that this is the case even if the indifferentism itself shows up as a sort of ‘morality of action’ (Nancy 2002, p. 72). By ‘morality of action’ Nancy means that just doing (or being) might be taken to warrant a claim to morality. For example, I may claim a moral high ground just on the basis of being a philosopher and claiming my thinking represents opening to the possibilities of new sense, perhaps trying to justify a normative claim that this is how we should all carry on. Unfortunately, a terrorist with a strong belief in their own thinking as opening to new possibilities for being and fundamentally true to some ideology, may similarly be entitled to such a claim.

Nancy’s response to this problem of moral relativism is intended to reorient one’s expectations of an originary ethics. He tells us ‘the determination of Being as the desire/ability of making sense is ontologically and logically prior to any evaluation of a determinate sense’ (Nancy 2002 p. 73). This is simply reiterating the point that originary ethics is not prescriptive, but when taking it into account one should prepare for how that prescriptivity is brought to bear on a subject. Nancy’s analyses to this point have shown how one is ontologically already an ethical subject by virtue of the ‘conduct of sense’ as existence. Thus, this ethical subject is prior to, and the basis of, any normative judgements or moral expectations that can be made of it. Nancy states that what he is arguing for is mirrored in the Kantian condition for respect12 in which there must be an ethical self before the condition for respect can be applied. He also reminds us that there is no subjectivism13 in Heidegger, or in Kant, consequently the ethical self is an end in itself and on this basis deserving of respect. Nancy explains this self in terms of Dasein: ‘the dignity of Dasein consists in needing, in

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12 This ethical self is found in Kant’s universal humanity formulation: ‘Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only’ (Kant 1997, IV, 429). This is based on his principle that ‘rational nature exists as an end in itself” (ibid).

13 Subjectivism is the view from the subjective self and a subjective ethics is where the subject’s ‘freedom to choose’ and be its own standard of morality is regarded as a good in itself.
each choice, to engage what can be called, for want of a better term, the objectivity of Being (and, consequently, humanity and the world)’ (Nancy 2002, p. 73). Therefore, in contrast to subjectivism where the ethical demand is chosen by and comes from the subject, one must understand that it is being which imposes sense via our conduct (existence), and because sense and conduct as being-in-the-world-with-others cannot be isolated from the world and humanity, conduct must engage in each choice with the ‘objectivity’ of Being and thus humanity and world. The demand for sense comes from Dasein’s activities for which, at the same time, it is solely responsible.

One might be tempted to say that respect for existence, such is the imperative. But this imperative precisely does not provide sense or value. What it enjoins is to have to make the sense of existence as existence (Nancy 2002 p. 74).

There is no explanation for existence outside of existence, thus there is equally no place from which respect for existence can arise outside existence. Respect is due the sense of each moment of conduct because it is potentially an ethical moment. Nancy points out that behind debates on the non-foundation of morality, as in subjectivism and relativism, there is this lack of articulation of being as the making of sense, as the ground of ethics. The understanding missing is that the need to be/act/conduct oneself is itself a foundation for morality. This original responsibility may be thought of as a call to the sense of existence. However, Nancy says it is very rare that such a call is responded to responsibly ‘without being deceived by a “sense” supposedly given to existence, as if from within or beyond it, instead of confining oneself to the making sense of ek-sisting’ (Nancy 2002, pp. 76-77). (This principle of appealing to something ‘already given’ reflects the ontology of the inauthentic which Heidegger describes.) Instead what is required is that the sense derived from ek-sisting be understood as the transient thing it is. It occurs in the moment of ek-sisting. It is this ability to not appropriate or fix sense that offers us the possibility of ethics. It is the ‘exercising of the relation (of the “touching”) with what is nearest but cannot be appropriated as being’ which is ethics (Nancy 2002, p. 77). This touch of what is nearest is also language: ‘Language is not a superior kind of conduct. It is the element in which conduct confirms itself as conduct-of-sense’ (Nancy 2002, p. 77). In its nearness to being, conduct experiences Being as the transcendent, which means it comes to symbolically signify Being as sense in the form of language. Language experiences sense as ‘what is to be asked or questioned’ where questioning points to the original conduct-of-sense. Heidegger says the essence of language in the history of Being makes ‘language the house of Being’ (Heidegger 2008, p. 236). As the house of Being, language is pervaded by being, which is also the essence of the human being, therefore language is the home of the human being’s essence. Language is thinking’s way of bringing Being close – ‘touching’ it. Thinking therefore tries to appropriate the dimensions of Being through language: ‘it tries to find the right
word for these relationships with Being (Heidegger 2008, p. 237). In this way ‘thinking does not
guide conduct; it itself conducts toward the thinking of conduct in general – not as that which is to be
*normed* or finalised, but as that which constitutes dignity itself: having in one’s Being, to make
sense of Being’ (Nancy 2002, p. 79). Therefore, Dasein is the task of making sense as being and
this is its inherent dignity.

At the end of this short summary of what an originary ethics entails, I need to revisit its role in this
chapter that has argued for the sharing of a common understanding of our thrown-beings. Returning
to Nancy’s definition of how sense is made in the exposition of singularities to each other, one
origin touches another, sense is made in the touch, in the between. Therefore, the other (Dasein) is
absolutely necessary for the sharing of sense expressed as thinking and language. This link to
language allows me to talk about the shared understanding of thrown-being that opens up the
possibility of an *ethos* for thinking and communicating this understanding. Heidegger explains what
he means by *ethos* in the ‘Letter on Humanism’. He translates a phrase by Heraclitus to say, “A
man’s character is his daimon” (Heidegger 2008, p. 256). The notion of *daimon* is equivalent to the
thinking of the truth of being. That is, a person’s character is how they understand the truth of their
being. One truth that I am attempting to introduce in this thesis is the shared condition of being-
there as originally unchosen.

5.2. For understanding the condition of thrownness

In the review of authenticity, we have seen the place of responsibility in respect of Dasein having to
choose itself. Ordinarily, however, as Nancy has demonstrated, responsibility derives in the making
of sense: ‘[i]f action is an “accomplishing,” it is because Being itself accomplishes itself in it as the
sense that it is. But Being is itself nothing other than the gift of the desire of/for sense’ (Nancy
2002, p. 69). Put more simply, sense is how Being manifests itself; it is letting Being be, which is
exemplified in our type of being that desires and needs sense. ‘Letting Being be’ is a less
ambiguous way of interpreting the notion of ‘gift’ since Being ‘gives’ being, that is, itself.14 Nancy
says, ‘Letting be is not a passivity: it is precisely action itself’ and if ‘the essence of Being’ is
action, then letting be is ‘allowing Being to act the sense that it is’ (Nancy 2002, p. 69). Being
engages itself through bringing forth sense. There is no subject doing something to an object. As its
own engagement, Being is its own subject, object and verb. What we get in ontic terms is sense.

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14 In the next chapter I discuss the possibility of thinking of birth in the sense of a gift of being.
This idea of ‘letting be’ is central to Heidegger’s and Nancy’s commentaries on human dignity. The human being is not to be assigned some external value, but in allowing his or her being be, the individual acquires their own sense of themselves, their own value, and thus their dignity. Using a quote from the ‘Letter on Humanism’, Nancy says:

The conduct of sense is thus indissociable from a “liberation of man for the dignity of his humanitas” (Heidegger 2008, p. 225). Dignity is that which is to be found beyond any assignable value, that which measures up to an action that is not regulated by any given (Nancy 2002, p. 69).

Humanitas refers to humanity in its breadth of expression through culture, creativity, and so on. Therefore, the dignity of the human being lies in allowing the full expression of this humanitas through the conduct of sense. At the same time as the human being experiences this expression as their freedom to be. One can see immediately that the ‘dignity of his humanitas’ Heidegger is referring to is the authentic mode of Dasein. In this mode, unique Dasein in its ownmost being allows Being to be expressed through itself as the making of sense that is consequently ‘not regulated by any given’. Dignity is available for the human being who expresses his or her own unique humanity.

In a short essay called ‘Abandoned Being’, Nancy has the following as his first sentence: “We do not know it, we cannot really know it, but abandoned being has already begun to constitute an inevitable condition for our thought, perhaps its only condition” (Nancy 1993, p. 36). The comment demonstrates Nancy’s interest in the meaning of being for the human who is facing her own being as thrown and consequently being as a response to the demand for engagement without recourse to any transcendent principle. In order to move into this mode of understanding, we must be prepared to incorporate the idea of ‘abandonment’ into our thinking to truly experience existential freedom along with its responsibility. To highlight this, Nancy says, ‘From now on, the ontology that summons us will be an ontology in which abandonment remains the sole predicament of being’ (Nancy 1993, p. 36). What does he mean by this statement? He is not referring to being as either the subject or object of abandonment. He means that being comes about in its abandonment (Nancy 1993, p. 43). Beings are abandoned in respect of the events that happen, end, change, are done over. There is no ‘remainder’ in an event of being and this is where the thinking of abandonment comes to the fore.

Charles Guignon in his chapter on Heidegger’s concept of freedom, says that ‘letting beings be’ is instrumental in making it possible for the tradition and prevailing notion of truth ‘as correspondence’ (Guignon 2011, p. 95). Letting beings be what they are is to be understood as allowing beings to show themselves in their essence. This essence of beings thus comes to be known as ‘the truth’ of them, that which is accepted or corresponds to an understanding of them, when in fact it is the freedom that they are allowed to be themselves that is the underpinning of this truth.
Thinking abandonment in relation to being is another way of thinking about openness, which we already have from Heidegger. Opening to being means opening to possibilities, and the ‘abundance’ or the multitude of ways of understanding being. What Nancy wants to do with this thinking is to recover the original ‘position’ of being, the original ‘becoming’ – an understanding of being that is untainted by repeated ‘discourses, categorizations, challenges and invocations’ (Nancy 1993, p. 37). He wants to think of being as the openness that does not defer to the authority of prior motifs, especially where these speak with one voice, the voice of the prevailing logos, the singular historical understanding that imposes an interpretation. Instead, Nancy would like to think of abandonment as focussing attention on the multitudinous understandings available through the difference between what is ‘given’ in being and the absence, or nullity, of this possibility. Thus abandonment, given in its starkness, is ‘the being-there of man’ that has the force of a ‘categorical imperative’, an order ‘to see man here, there where he is abandoned’ (Nancy 1993, p. 46-47). Each event of being is an imperative to see oneself in a way that can never be repeated or recalled. This condition of the human being is to be taken up as a responsibility.

Raffoul’s interpretation of Nancy’s claim for this categorical imperative of being is that Nancy sees it as an obligation: ‘obligation frees being for itself, opens it to a relationality, so that being can then be as the event and the openness that it is’ (Raffoul 2012, p. 66). If we deny any metaphysical purpose to our existence, we are then solely responsible for making sense of this existence. In other words, ‘Abandonment is the sole condition for our thought’ (Raffoul 2012, p. 67). We are obliged to think our abandonment into sense. In this way we find ourselves under an imperative and obligation to make sense of existence, which in itself has no essence or meaning.

Both Raffoul (2012) and Morin (2015, p. 23) explain that existence and essence for Nancy is not the same as it is for Heidegger, for whom Dasein’s essence is to be found in its existence. For Nancy, however, existence is essenceless and is ‘abandoned by the withdrawal of essence’ (Raffoul 2012, p. 70). Therefore, the essence of existence is abandonment. Moreover, in this abandonment lies the possibility for ownership of one’s life. One’s life is the remittance to being through being. Thrownness, therefore ‘reveals the opacity and inappropriability of our origins; that is abandonment’, but this is precisely what existence has to appropriate – ‘it has to appropriate the inappropriability of the meaning that it is’ (Raffoul 2012, p. 73). Our being-there is open to

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16 Heidegger uses the term abandon and abandonment extensively in Being and Time. Here are two examples: where fear abandons the entity to itself (BT p. 141), and the state-of-mind that reveals Dasein as ‘thrown’ is also understood as Dasein’s abandonment (BT p. 365).

17 Morin (2015) discusses the development of Nancy’s ontology as an ethos and a praxis through his thinking of being as abandonment to a ‘place’ where the existent can be engaged with its being. Because there is no longer an ontological difference in Nancy’s ontology between Being that gives, and being, self-engagement by an entity with its being gives us the ethos and praxis Nancy has in mind.
meaning, but this meaning is not dependent on ourselves alone since it happens in the context of a world and between others. A life’s meaning is not generated by the self alone.

5.3. For understanding the place of community of groundless beings

In my discussion of the meaning of thrown-being in Chapter Two, I explained the universality of unheimlich, which is often interpreted as ‘uncanny’ and shows up as the inexplicability of Dasein’s existence. Dasein’s questioning of this inexplicability of its existence is made at the limit of the sense of this phenomenon and the shared meaning that results is that of homelessness. I explained that the limit of sense exposes itself as meaning. No other interpretation can obtain from the uncanniness of our thrown-being existence than that of abandonment, understood by Dasein as homelessness. With this interpretation that offers no ‘script’ for existing we become existentially free for exploring the shared sense of this condition. In this sharing, I intend that Dasein in its ontological nature of being-with also understands that all Dasein are homeless. This common understanding, as well as being the place from which existential anxiety shadows Dasein, provides a community of the existentially homeless.

Walter Brogan (2002) in his essay ‘The Community of Those Who Are Going to Die’ similarly argues for an existential community formed by Dasein’s essential being-towards-death. He says that this existential has the ability to explain how there can be a plurality of singular individuals (Brogan 2002, p. 237). As the lead-up to this conclusion, Brogan argues that there is no separation between Dasein’s fallenness (facticity) and Dasein’s existence, as some authors¹⁸ have misread the matter, but instead there is always a transitional link between the two. To support this claim, he cites the Heideggerian position that existence is ‘a counter-movement against the tendency toward falling’, meaning that facticity and existence are essentially connected (Brogan 2002, p. 241). This connection is achieved in the existential ‘moment’, or space, that is repeated through the idea of ‘mineness’¹⁹ and in which ‘can be found an argument for plurality in human community, a plurality of utterly singular individuals defined by their relationships to death. This “between” opens up the space of community, a community of differing beings’ (Brogan 2002, p. 241). My anxiety, which moves me towards ownership of my death, does not somehow shut the world off from me. I am still existentially a being-in-the-world while gazing upon my individualising death. Thus, Heidegger’s claim that death individualises Dasein does not also mean that Dasein becomes solipsistic. Rather, what it does show is that individuals are irrevocably bound through their shared being-towards-

¹⁸ Brogan (2002) finds that both Richard Dreyfus and Jacques Thaminoux fail to note that there is movement in the existential analytic between the facticity of thrown-being and the forward-projective existence of Dasein which allows room for being-in-the-world relations with others (Brogan 2002, p. 238).

¹⁹ Lawrence Hatab (2000) agrees that ‘mineness’ can relate to the individual as well as the involved aspects of a being-in-the-world, Dasein’s interests as well as Dasein’s disclosive relations with its ‘there’ (Hatab 2000, p. 63).
death as a community. Contrary to the usual reading of Heidegger’s account of being-towards-death, Brogan wants us to see that the essentially situated Dasein, who has being-in-the-world along with being-with others, is, at the point of its authentic being-towards-death, to be recognised as an individual within an existential community of similarly destined ontological beings.

Brogan’s core argument is based in the fact that Dasein can never get absolute ownership of itself, so it can never be a subject to something else which then becomes its object that it ‘enowns’ (Brogan 2002, p. 241). Because this is the case, authentic Dasein’s relationship to others allows the others to remain others. In terms of a community, it would be a community of singular beings who cannot be appropriated as ‘the same’. It would, therefore, be a community of singular and different individuals and as such, ‘the foundation for any truly human being together’ (Brogan 2002, p. 242). I find Brogan’s essay rich and insightful and feel that there is much to be developed still from his thinking. However, one such development suggests itself, which is that death can only individualise on the basis that each of us have an individual life because of our unique thrown-being and all the singular potentialities that come with it. Death individualises, but it can only individualise on the basis of my unique life. My death means the expiration of my thrown-being self and all the potentialities that come with that particular life, which are different to the next person’s. Brogan’s view from death shows us that the meaning of each life is different and individual while also united in the inevitability of death. It is a view that generates a community of individuals who hold their unique deaths in common. However, my view from uncanniness, or homelessness, shows that individuals share in common the effect of being thrown into an unchosen existence. All Dasein have the same meaning for the circumstances of their existences, individual though they are, which is that they are each unchosen. This perspective provides a second commonality, one that holds all human beings in a community on the basis of unchosen existence, in addition to the commonality of death.

I believe that the sort of community Heidegger foresees in his later writing, which Brogan bases his essay on, is to be founded on the dignity and respect for the ‘having to be’ which each individual faces. The focus is on ‘the leaving open of a space for what is other’ (Brogan 2002, p. 245). This questing is open and known and unlike the tranquilisation offered by the they: ‘At the heart of this community is a strife and an experience of lack and negation’, which is not a negativity but instead belongs ‘to the full possibility of this coming community’ (Brogan 2002, p. 245). If we could think ontologically about the unchosen nature of our beings and that we have this condition in common with each other, this would be enough of a basis for respect.
6. **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed authenticity and the opening to responsible existence that this mode of being requires. Authenticity, for the purposes of my thesis, demonstrates the role existential anxiety and guilt plays in the relationship Dasein has to its groundlessness. I have already explained in Chapter Two my argument for how thrown-being might signify ‘homelessness’ and why this would be a shared signification. In this chapter the emphasis is on the theme of responsibility and how Heidegger’s treatment of authentic being brings responsibility into the picture of how we take hold of a thrown-being type existence. I make the point that our futural potentiality for being is partially decided for us through our thrown-being facticity. This lack of total control of futural beings is an important consideration for ontic being and is the basis for the next chapter on inequality. Authenticity requires a certain resourcefulness of the self in taking up one’s thrown-being resolutely. I discuss the real ability of being such a self and what the potential limitations on such a self might be through the lens of some psychoanalytically based commentary. I argue that there are certain analogies between the psychological self and the existential self as it is expressed through Heidegger’s terminology.

The analysis of authenticity shows us ontologically why there might be a ground for ethical relations with others. This ground as ‘originary’ signifies that the origin of the thought of ethics lies in the very way we have our being as the conduct of sense. The futural nature of being human requires this entity to be essentially engaging in ethical conduct ahead of any possible prescriptivity imposed on it. Because of its ahead of itself way of being, the human being is susceptible to judgement *a posteriori*. This thought necessarily extends to relations with others through whom the human being gains meaning for itself and its world. Unfortunately, as we saw in Chapter One, the prevailing inauthentic nature of Dasein means that Dasein is mostly impersonally utilitarian in its way of being and being with others. As I explained in Section 5 of that chapter, ‘Other Dasein in the world become the standard against which Dasein measures itself. Such a generalised, ambiguous standard draws Dasein away from the possibility of having its own measure as its standard’. This comment is intended to demonstrate that Dasein compares itself with others selectively. In the ontic analogy, differences become the rationale for affiliation as well as segregation. The implication of this is that my objective for an ethos of thinking of a life as equally unchosen for everyone I interact with, might be a difficult one to effect.

The last section of this chapter has focussed on what I hope to take with me into the next chapters, which will address issues of inequality and luck from these ontological studies. By way of an initial explanation, I expanded on Heidegger’s idea of ‘original ethics’. His discussion of his ontology as original ethics justifies my use of it for the difficult ethical challenges I see overlaid on the facticity
of thrown-being, an ontological feature of the human condition. With this original ethics given as the place where Being expresses itself and so dignifying Dasein as an ethical subject, I went on to explain how this view incorporates thinking and language. These elements of ontological conduct (thinking and language) are virtually parallel and ‘touching’ with the ontological. It therefore validates expressing my concerns for the ontic conditions of thrown-being in the coming chapters and the argument for an ethos of compassion to be derived from the ontology.

In the same section I examine Nancy’s conception of the abandonment of being in which he proposes that being abandons itself in the sense it produces with no remainder. This thesis of abandonment sounds fatalistic because it moves away from Heidegger’s poetic idea of the destiny of Being. However, what it does achieve is to give responsibility a sharper edge in our understanding of it because there is no recourse but to take up one’s life; we are obliged to think through this abandonment to responsible existence as an imperative. My final justificatory statement utilises Brogan’s construction of a community of ‘those who are going to die’. Death provokes anxiety and an inward turning (or self seeking) because what ends is a life. The common aspect of this life, of course, is the unchosen nature of it and I have argued, in correspondence with Brogan’s formulation, that because of this shared understanding, the human community (the community of those who are going to die) is also the community of those who are condemned to an unchosen existence. Thus, on the basis of an ethical foundation given to us through the conduct of sense, our abandonment to making sense in the first place and also the shared understanding of an unchosen existence that unites us, all these arguments in combination justify an ethos of compassion towards those who are similarly disposed, which is everyone.

None of what has been discussed with respect to an original situation for the ontological entity is able to explain or help overcome the differences that occur in the ontic state. The physical world is focussed on the senses and the thinking that results in deciding on the basis of difference. So, what I am arguing for from these past three chapters is that this sensory-based thinking and deciding should be overlaid with mere existence’s undeniable truth of its unchosen basis and understood as a shared truth. There is a lot more that Nancy and Heidegger have given us to think about with regard to mere existence, but I believe knowing that at the most fundamental level we are all alike and all similarly destined provides a vital learning to take with us into the sort of problem-solving mentality required by the situations of inequality and moral challenge I shall be discussing next.
Chapter 4: Being-unequal: The inequality of thrown-being

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the role of ontological responsibility in the coming to be of a self. The possibility for ethics is laid in this coming to responsibility. Underlying this understanding of responsibility and deriving from our fundamental being-with nature, there is shared understanding of our finitude and of unchosen being. The reason that it has been important to bring out these ontological precepts is to argue for the substantial basis that there is for an ethos of thinking existentially our inescapable inter-relationality. This is to counteract the preponderance of thinking and deciding that relies on ontic difference. The following two chapters will be reflect on some aspects of why this focus on difference does not solve problems that are essentially existentially grounded.

In this chapter I will look at how differences translate into the problem of inequality. Overcoming these difficulties are to be found in how we maintain our openness to the differences of the other. I am not seeking to provide an alternative solution to inequality from what is already being undertaken in Western, socially focussed governments, but to add the awareness of our unchosen being as a baseline foundation to support all such other efforts. The questions I will be asking are, firstly, how does inequality develop? Secondly, what are its conceptual challenges? Thirdly, how effective are the solutions? My objective is to present the problem as it manifests in order to demonstrate how our existential responsibilities to each other are grounded in the facticity of the human condition.

I start the discussions with a critical investigation of the event of birth as a response to my first question. Birth is the commencement of a particular human life and when these particularities have to be accommodated in a society that is competitive and judgemental on the basis of differences, future inequitable outcomes are inevitable for this life. Existentially one does not just ‘exist’, one exists a unique and different life. Perhaps it can be argued that this nuance is built into Heidegger’s idea of the enigma, that facing the facticity of my existence is ‘unacanny’, but the explanation for it
is not explicit enough for me. I would like to have seen the sense of a particular life being *unchosen* treated more explicitly.¹

The particularities and, therefore, the differences of a human life bring to the fore the question of inequalities of such a life lived in the context of others. In the second section I investigate perspectives on what it means to arrive as this unique being through birth. The circumstances of birth, particularly in the context of the ethical precepts of giving life to the child by the parents, are of immediate concern because whether or not the giving is a voluntary and supportive giving of life confers one set of circumstantial luck for the thrown-being of the baby. The other set of circumstantial luck is derived from the cultural and environmental settings into which the baby is born. Inequalities between individuals arise all the way through a human life; nevertheless, these usually build on the originary inequalities at birth.

In the third section of this chapter I will move on to the conceptual challenges of inequality and the problems these pose to any society that cares to redress the imbalance of unequal starting positions. Bernard Williams’ (1962) essay ‘The idea of equality’ will be central to my analysis. I will investigate how the notion of imposed value can distort the facts of an unequal situation that can then interfere with finding, and formulating, solutions to inequality. In examining Lisa Tessman’s work I discuss how moral luck can exacerbate the inherent inequality in a situation and cause the very character of the person to change and work against their authentic selves. In section four I investigate one possible solution: Distributive justice² is a common approach taken by democratic social administrations to try to redress imbalance. In Williams’ terms, there are two aspects for this justice to service: need and merit. The objective is to minimise the need of the individual that society has to service by encouraging merit as a means to self-advancement. However, merit is also a competitive basis for the distribution of society’s goods and some people have more competence in meeting the conditions for merit than others.

¹ The following explication by O’Byrne of her view of birth is worth noting: ‘We finite beings come into being, each of us making a new start in an old world that will eventually become our own. Yet finite beings are never quite at home in the world, since the state of having-been-thrown makes itself known as anxiety that, at its deepest, is anxiety in the face of the groundlessness of our existence’ (O’Byrne 2010, p. 44). This view identifies the underlying motivation of my thesis.

² Distributive Justice is an extensive area of social theory. Briefly, it is a set of principles which may be informed by one or more perspectives on how society’s economic benefits and burdens should be distributed across its members. I will mention two versions of the theory here: Strict Egalitarianism (advocates that goods and services should be distributed equally to everyone); John Rawls’ Difference Principle (where, in addition to the principle of Equality of Opportunity, Rawls claims that the position of the least well off in society should be maximized in any scheme of redress) (Lamont & Favor 2013).
The final section covers arguments for how difference and inequality might be approached at the level of individuals and their attitudes. Respect for the other is central and so is communication. There are many challenges to keeping the channels for respectful communication open. These approaches are examined through the work of Richard Sennett, Iris Marion Young and Marguerite La Caze. It has to be remembered that an individual condition and how one’s relationships manifest with an individual should not be extrapolated to that of a group.

My conclusion is that one has dignity by virtue of being thrown into an unchosen existence and is deserving of respect for having to take up this challenge. It is a respect not based on merit, but due each person in equal measure. To consolidate this foundation of respect because of difference is what I bring forward from the previous chapters and it requires that we maintain a deep and constant awareness that no one chooses their thrown-being selves. In the end the only equality we all share is homelessness and the goal to make a home in each life.

2. The birth of thrown-being

An important lack in Heidegger’s analysis is to account for the birth of Dasein ontologically. What limited reference to birth he does have is concerned with what birth represents in terms of the heritage of possibilities. Dasein’s possibilities are not so much what is peculiarly Dasein’s from its past, but the possibilities raised from Dasein’s generation: ‘But when its heritage is thus handed down to itself, its “birth” is caught up into its existence in coming back from the possibility of death (the possibility which is not to be outstripped), if only so that this existence may accept the thrownness of its own “there” in a way which is more free from Illusion’ (BT p. 391). In this statement we see that Dasein cannot have a direct relationship to being born since it is something that has happened to Dasein in its past, but Dasein does have commonality with its generation. It is from this generation that Dasein obtains its ‘real’ possibilities that will guide it to its future being.

One of the arguments Anne O’Byrne (2010) makes in Natality and Finitude is that the notion of thrownness is too abstract to account for the newness of Dasein’s birth and how this fits with the facticity of Dasein’s heritage. Authentic Dasein would have to choose between its ownmost possibilities from out of this pre-existing heritage, however, Dasein’s newness and disruptive intrusion into this history is not accounted for in Heidegger’s model for Dasein’s temporality: ‘Our

3 O’Byrne talks about the syncopated time that birth represents where we only grasp the fact of our birth some time after it has happened (O’Byrne 2010, p. 41). I am ‘being born’ for others, in the presence of others (mother, father, hospital staff), but birth is an event that has happened to me. Thus birth is never a verb that I use in relation to myself.
arrival and our actions disrupt not just conceptions of temporality but the world, and this is where thrownness and the apparent paradox it generates must return’ (O’Byrne 2010, p. 34). Thus, newness’s disruption is that it contributes to our historicality. Heidegger was not concerned with ‘becoming Dasein’ in the sense of the maturation of the condition of ‘being-the-there’, but with the already mature Dasein.

François Raffoul (2002) defends the absence of birth as a consideration in the analytic by claiming that Heidegger intends birth to be one of the two ends of Dasein’s existence that encompasses its being-towards-the-end (BT p. 374) (Raffoul 2002, p. 210). I, like O’Byrne, do not have a problem with birth and death being phenomenologically the termini of Dasein’s existence, represented by a being-towards-the-end. However, I disagree with Raffoul’s suggestion that ‘Heidegger shows that in a sense birth and death should be thought of as part of the same phenomenon, or that at least they are not to be opposed’ (Raffoul 2002, p. 210). The phenomenon of coming into being encompasses other phenomena such as physicality and relationality to the past and to each other, which impact the existent in a way that the phenomenon of death does not. Even if they are not to be opposed, the phenomenon of birth has an important and different ontic legacy that death does not for the existing individual. Consequently, there should be a particular ontological meaning for the arrival of new being as an addition to the world, not just a re-organising of historical meaning.

In Heidegger’s ontology, the important focus of Dasein’s life is its end-point as the ultimate delimiter of the horizon of Dasein’s possibilities for meaning. In fact, Being-towards-death is what arouses Dasein to its unique and solo existence. What this focus misses is that Dasein’s coming into the world shows the vital inter-relationality of Dasein. If one were to consider birth ontologically at all, one might see that this expansion to incorporate the start of life provides a basis for developing the analysis of Mitdasein more robustly.⁴ Even though the idea of ‘thrown’, as in having an unchosen being, is a valid one, Dasein does not come into the world as an independent being. The very first understanding for our entity’s being – the ‘why’ – is given through the relationship with another, or through two Others. O’Byrne concurs when she says that in avoiding a description of birth while focussing on Dasein’s death in the early part of Being and Time, Heidegger misses an opportunity to explain the co-historizing he later brings into the discussion in relation to those with whom Dasein is destined to make history; its ‘generation’. This generation marks Dasein as ‘natal, historical, and essentially with others’ (O’Byrne 2010, pp. 34-35). The particularity of birth in relation to ontological meaning that I have in mind is that it represents a ‘birth to presence’ as the arrival of something brand new into something pre-existing. Nancy says ‘The child is born, not: the

⁴ See my analysis of Nancy’s critique of Heidegger’s treatment of Mitsein in Chapter Two.
child is born’ (Nancy 1993, p. 13). His emphasis shows that one should also think the new origin of sense/meaning into the world and not just as the event.

In maturing, the young human being learns to think for itself; however, this ‘learning’ comes through another. How is it possible to categorise the ontic meaning we are trained to make for ourselves versus that which we derive from others through our dependency on them, for example infant and mother? Are they both forms of absorption of values? How do we come to the point where we choose values without the influence of another? The relevance of the question of inheritance versus choice of meaning and thus self-identity is important for the second half of this chapter.

The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that thrown-being in its ontic personification as a new entity with an unchosen existence has an impact not only on its adult version, but its effects are being worked out at the time of conception, gestation and birth. The question of whether a birth is a gift can be posed as an analogy of Heidegger’s ontology of the gift of Being.\(^5\) In being ecstatically open to Being, Dasein is taking up the meaning offered by Being in the form of a gift (Heidegger 2008, p. 238). In the ontic context of birth, it is the parents who are opening to a new expression of being in the form of a child. But, can this opening to the ontic potential for a new life be considered a gift? The views I developed in the previous chapters were those of responsibility for taking up an unchosen existence, the inherent dignity owed such an existence and, if we choose to think it in our lived selves, the universal understanding that we all share the fate homeless being.

### 2.1. Birth as gift

There is a two-fold understanding of birth as a gift. The first is that one’s emergence from another is a gift. The second is that a child is given to the world as a gift. However, a gift only succeeds in being a gift if it is accepted.\(^6\) This point is poignantly made in the context of the birth of a child that is rejected by his or her parents, or where, through some awful disability, is a burden on the community. Sadly for this child, she is not considered a gift by those she is given to, nor does she see her own life as a gift. It is difficult for parents themselves to think of birth in this manner of a gift, particularly for the woman who has to endure pregnancy, childbirth and the unknown role of

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5 Heidegger’s later ontology has Being as the focus and the giver of meaning. See Chapter Three section 4.
6 Caroline Lundquist (2008) in her paper titled ‘Being Torn: Toward a Phenomenology of Unwanted Pregnancy’, tells us that most women do not choose their pregnancy, but ‘fall’ pregnant and then either have a positive or negative experience of this after the fact. She writes about ‘rejected’ and ‘denied’ pregnancies; these being pregnancies which are rejected by women as a consequence of rape (for example), or the psychologically ambiguous condition where the woman ‘blocks’ (denies) the pregnancy even to the extent that the usual symptoms of pregnancy do not manifest. The purpose of Lundquist’s paper is to respond to the predominantly positive narratives of birth by raising awareness of the huge range of different experiences of pregnancy there is for women. She advocates more commentary on the range of this phenomenology so that pregnant women, who do not experience the positive, ‘conditioned’ phenomenon of pregnancy and birth, may be given a voice.
'mother' that awaits her. Caroline Lundquist’s (2008) account of unwanted pregnancy brings up the error of assuming that all pregnant women have qualitatively similar experiences of pregnancy since this is not the case. For those who have to go through with unwanted pregnancies, these women’s bodies become an object that is painfully dissociated from the self, an object that is ‘occupied’ (Lundquist 2008, p. 142).

Even in its positive sense, creating a human being is as risky as it is momentous ontologically in terms of opening to Being. As Irigaray tells us of the procreative encounter between the parents, ‘How can we want that of which we have not the slightest idea?’ (Irigaray 2008, p. 32). The risk and responsibility derives from the necessary intersection with, and merging with, another life for which there is no prior experience (in the sense that every human being is different and, therefore, unexpected). Irigaray tells us with typical irony, there are ‘Three newborns who must be cared for, without knowing how’ (Irigaray 2008, p. 33). This comment points to the fact that new parents, who find themselves in the role of mother and father, are very often little prepared for it and are as though newborns themselves.

Lisa Guenther’s account of birth as a gift employs Heidegger’s, Arendt’s and Levinas’ phenomenological notion of the ‘gift’. This is very different to the factical sense in which I have used the term in this section and I will not engage with Guenther’s sense of ‘gift’ in this thesis for the sake of maintaining the pragmatic focus of this chapter. However, there is one comment she makes that I can take up in this discussion and it is her observation that the child opens up a new time, a future, but one in which its parents potentially will not share eventually: ‘Birth marks the beginning of my own existence in time, but the givenness of birth suggests that my existence is not quite my own, that my time is already bound up with the time of the Other’ (Guenther 2006, p. 2).

In Nancian terms, the mother and father are sharing a new being-with the world, with others, the future possibilities embodied in the child, and the future time that the child brings. These parents have acquired a new voice to speak with in their relationships to the world. They have opened up a new world of relationships through the creation of the child. This is a world that finds the child initially at the centre. But this centre evolves to become dominated by the child and becomes its own world, gradually developing and expanding its horizons all the time pushing the parents to its periphery.

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7 The Birth to Presence (1993) is a collection of essays by Nancy that attempt to think ‘presence’. This includes the presence of new being, to world, to presence itself. It is a thought that struggles for articulation: ‘Thus, presence is not “for” a subject, and is not “for” itself. Presence itself is birth, the coming that effaces itself and brings itself back’ (Nancy 1993, p. 5). By this he means, presence is the result of something outside of expression and the birth of ‘X’ is merely the remainder of this movement to presence.
I agree further that there is an *implicit* notion of gratitude resultant from the gift of life irrespective of whether it turns out to be a good one or a bad one, but I do not think that this is a strong enough basis for an ethic that mandates generosity. I would argue that a stronger basis for why one would give anything in generosity to another is because each one of us understands ontologically the need to be allowed to make sense of our thrown-being, and for many this is a huge struggle. In saying this I am definitely not claiming that one should not be generous on account of the gift of being born. In my view it is only a very unfortunate individual, despite what I have said about the risk of giving and accepting new life, who is not grateful for the opportunity to be alive. But, I would argue further that any being-with others as a potential gift of meaning has value in itself. I will be returning to this idea in the context of communication as gift-giving in the final section.

In relation to this gift of meaning, Irigaray highlights an important concern about the *legacy* of meaning that is often missed. She tells us that ‘The objectivity of the world that is mediated by the mother has been neglected, indeed forgotten, in what we consider to be our way of being in the world’ (Irigaray 2008, p. 106). I strongly agree with this comment that the mother, as principal mediator of meaning for the child’s world, has a special responsibility and, politically, a powerful influence on the sense the child makes of its being-with and being-towards. We come into adulthood already biased by what we have shared through our mother. In the usual case, the mother is the person the child spends most time with; she may also be the nurturer, the provider, the one in whom the child places unconditional trust. As the basis of this trust, she becomes the teacher and the role model. If this is where the child forms its learning and habits, then the cognitive link that the child develops to its environment, forged in the trust for the mother, is strong indeed.

Following on from her observation on the asymmetric importance for sense-making that the mother has on the child, Irigaray criticises the ubiquitous ‘equality’ inherent in Heidegger’s structuring of Dasein:

> To assert that we are with one another in the same way and that the world is common to us amounts to cancelling this first existence that we have lived and that makes up part of our manner of perceiving the world and of situating ourselves in it (Irigaray 2008, p. 106).

She means that to not account for the important influence of our care-givers is not to explain why we see the world as we do. We do not all grow up to see the world in the same way. The first teachers of infantile Dasein are the source for a das Man; the norms we all fall into as a retreat from

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8 Of course, this claim could be made about the father, or both parents if the caring is equally shared. This does not lessen the responsibility that the carer(s) has as the basis for the child’s learned responses to others and its environment. But, it is still important to account for the mother’s influence, particularly for male children in paternalistic societies that institutionalize female subjugation.
an unchosen existence. The connection to our first teachers links back through the generations and accounts for culture and tradition. We are not virginal Dasein, but already captured and biased beings in the world by virtue of emulating those we have trusted. We are, therefore, captured within their conceptual framework and biased along their biases. This might be how Heidegger would explain the existence of das Man in the first place – as the accumulation of biases. Notwithstanding this already ‘contained’ perspective of the world, physically we are contained and constrained in other ways. Here, I am specifically referring to physical incapacities, gender and place of birth. This will be the topic of discussion for the next sub-section.

2.2. Birth as ontic thrown-being

We are born to parents from whom we inherit our genetic makeup, which as science tells us is responsible for so much of what we are with respect to our physical makeup, including our mental abilities, health capacities as well as our predisposition to changes in these capacities into the future. We also inherit, once again via our birth families, the culture and environment we are destined to grow up in. It may seem a trite observation, but these are huge factors which feed into what our future lives might be.

As the child develops within a particular culture and environment, their thinking – so essential in the making of sense as I have discussed in the previous chapters – becomes conditioned by their culture and environment. I think the way I do, partly because my formative years, when patterns and norms became established, were guided by family and teachers instructing me from within the culture. It was also formed by the environment in which I had to learn how to get my needs met, and by the learned responses to everything else which was ‘outside’ my norms.

Having been born, the most positive outcome is that the child ‘fits in’ with the capacities available to family and the local society to sustain it. Fortunately, the norm\(^9\) is that nothing untoward occurs since the family and its immediate environment are ready to receive the child in all the ways that the developing human being needs. The child, in return, responds positively and all is well. This is the ideal situation where the child’s future possibilities are clearly delimited right from the start and, provided there are no changes to its situation, it can go on to become a happy adult. One could imagine a fairly self-sustaining community living such a life in which the child, in adulthood, inherits and continues the lifestyle of its forebears. Such an adult would be an ideal candidate for Heidegger’s inauthentic Dasein, since fitting in so well means there is little danger of this happy

\(^9\) This norm could also be construed as good moral luck. This is another way of analyzing the inequalities of thrown-being, that is, some circumstances of thrown being are fortuitously conducive to a good/easy life, whilst others are most certainly indicative of a difficult one. I will be discussing this perspective in the next chapter.
person being jolted out of its everydayness through a change that might challenge its immersion in the they.

However, a human existence is rarely so idyllic. Not only is there the problem of a baby that is not accepted and where family and society are not able to cope, but there is also the issue of movement and change to one’s environment and subsequent challenges to one’s culture, which are so common nowadays. Firstly, on the subject of non-acceptance, I am of course referring to a child that is unwanted by the mother and/or father (I indicated aspects of this in the footnote to Lundquist’s paper ‘Being Torn’), or is ill, disabled or, in certain communities, simply being born a girl. The latter, fortunately, is not a real issue for Western society, but enduring illness and disability will continue to affect the life and future possibilities for the adult the child becomes. Secondly, more and more people are globally mobile, the fortunate ones through choice, but the unfortunate ones are forced to uproot themselves through persecution, or simply through desperation over the poverty of their lives. I am arguing that the ensuing changes to one’s birth culture and environment are enough to induce existential changes to the meaning and possibilities for one’s life. In the previous three chapters I have spoken of the ontological meaning of thrown-being as ‘homelessness’, that is, every thrown-being when facing itself in its throwness knows itself to be groundless. I have also argued that ontologically the motivating force for our being is to find a home, a place of belonging and hence meaning. This is part of my ontological thesis. How does this translate to the ontic condition of lived existence?

As I have argued in the previous chapter, being challenged by the meaning of one’s existence can evoke ontological angst. Ontically, it is enough to force one to reassess one’s own life and its potential. Once again, there are levels of (sub)conscious anxiety involved in moving away from one’s birth environment and culture that are determined by whether the move was motivated by desperation or by choice alone. In the current political world scheme, where there is so much violence and strife in some parts of the world, the world seems to have become divided into two: the relatively safe parts and the very unsafe parts. There seems to be little intermediate, stable ground. The overall effect of this is that there is a constant stream of people who try to move from the latter to the former. I am not about to launch into a commentary on the refugee crisis, but the debate surrounding it is a daily, poignant reminder of the inequity of thrown-being. It is tempting to say that one of the most serious sources of existential luck for a thrown-being these days is the country one is born into.

For what follows in the next section as well as in the next chapter, I want to take these unchosen circumstances of birth and look at their real world consequences. From this perspective, each person presents to the world a unique and consequently different set of facts about themselves. I
have presented the ontology of thrown-being and Nancy’s ontology of how being-with others is the way sense comes about as an existing being. For Nancy, ‘difference’ is essential to the communication of this sense and represents the incomparability of entities/singularities: ‘It is the difference in the presentation of significations that is important to the transmission of sense and meaning’ (see p. 63). However, the liberal empiricist tradition assumes that individuals are available for comparison, therefore, this sense of difference is invested in stopping sense, inhibiting communication and is the antithesis of Nancean ontology. Rather than being open to the possibility of new meaning across difference, there is dismay on account of real diversity and demonstrable opposition to opportunities for understanding each other and the world we make in novel ways. Because of these inhibitions we rely on the recycling of prejudices and prior thinking.

To reiterate, I am juxtaposing two dissimilar views of the world – the ontological and the ontic – in the hope that one, the existential ontological can reconstruct the ontic view to some small extent. Why is this important? It is important, firstly, because we are born into a pre-constructed world, one which we have an opportunity to change during the course of our life through the way we think of our being in it. Secondly, what one values is critical to how one succeeds or fails in making a place for oneself. If what one values can come to include an appreciation for a shared understanding that we did not choose our initial starting positions in this existence, this may ameliorate barriers of difference, or even help us see difference as an opportunity to understand existence existentially. In the next section I will be discussing the most common challenges and solutions engaged by a liberal democracy to deal with the problem of individuals’ unchosen life situations. I will start with the question of value taken from the group perspective.

3. Understanding the problem of inequality

The problem of inequality is an ethical question located squarely in the human context of society and its governance. In most Western societies the spectre of this problem hovers behind questions such as ‘what do you do?’ or ‘where do you live?’ directed at an individual. As participants in these societies, there is the tendency for us to pigeonhole people on the basis of the answers they give to these questions. Yet, it is precisely in a Western society that we care about undoing the unequal positions of our citizens as much as possible. Therefore, in this section I will have in mind my second question about the conceptual challenges of inequality.

The way I understand inequality is as a difference from one person to another in their ability to acquire things of value or to achieve states that are valued. Some of these goods and states are
socially constructed while some are not. The process of valuing is a social and political construction that I am not going to explore here. What is of concern for me is that one’s inherited facts come to acquire a value. However, it is necessary to define the terms of equality in the context of society before proceeding.

The conceptual issues of equality are well laid out in Bernard Williams’ 1973 essay ‘The idea of equality’. In this essay, Williams claims that the idea of equality arises from two ideas that are frequently linked to consolidate an argument for equality, but which themselves lead to quite different concepts. The first of these ideas is that ‘men are equal’, the second is that ‘men should be equal’ (Williams 1973, p. 230). Williams says the first idea is often used as a political statement of fact, the second as a statement of political principles or aims. By ‘political’ he means that these statements are assertions intended to mobilize public opinion, which as a consequence could lead to significant moral claims, hence his concern with them.

According to Williams, the first idea of ‘men are equal’ is too weak because we might simply be saying that taxonomically one human being is equal to the next human being. If this is the case then the statement is ambiguous. Specifically, we do not know in what sense human beings may be regarded as being equal. If the intention is not a taxonomic observation then, as Williams says, the statement is patently false since human beings are not equal in any specific circumstantial sense.

Williams says that if on the back of the weak claim, one then goes on to insist that ‘men should be equal’, this renders the combined statements too strong because we can then ask on what basis should human beings be equal?

There are many facts about any given human life, but on what basis should one fact be supported over another? For example, the individual and society desire both education and employment. Given these two facts about desire, if there had to be a choice between them by the individual, or by government in terms of financial sponsorship, which is to be valued more?

Williams’ problematic idea consists in the descriptive (factual) statement ‘all men are equal’ being followed by the prescriptive (value) statement that ‘all men should be equal’. The logical disjunction in this transition is that the value contained in the idea of equality, which might give legitimacy in the second statement, is not revealed. How is equality to be evaluated so that we can determine if all men have it, or should have it? Kant nominated the transcendental characteristic of

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10 Note that the sexist language used by Williams was acceptable at the time he was writing, in which ‘man’ was an accepted abbreviation of the word ‘human’. In responding to his comments I endeavor to use general pronouns, but only where this does not interfere with the sense of what is being discussed.
ability to reason,\textsuperscript{11} but as we have already argued, this ability is empirically variable and life circumstances do not always provide the opportunity for obviously rational choices that one might expect from a ‘reasonable’ individual. As we have seen from the preceding three chapters, we are already in the world acting, being, before we rationalise this being. In particular, the making of sense as an alternative understanding of being is a way of adding on to and connecting singularities to form a functioning plurality of meaning. Therefore, sense-making precedes meaning and hence rationality. We are being (making sense) before we can rationally objectify our actions. Thus, the ontology we have so far examined reflects this problem of applying reason to the dynamism of needing to make sense of moment by moment living.

To circumvent any arbitrariness about how human beings are to be judged equal, Williams wants to nominate ‘humanity’ as the value to be put forward as the basis of judgement. Unfortunately, ‘humanity’ shares the same problem as ‘equality’ in that it is difficult to define these terms as values objectively. What constitutes humanity? What constitutes equality? What we cannot acquire from non-factual, value-based propositions is the evidence in respect of which human beings might summarily be shown to be equal. If, as Williams intends, the equality that we are looking for is based in humanity, then we must break this down with some description of what is meant by humanity. Therefore, we need to ask which of a person’s characteristics, extrinsic or intrinsic (i.e. manifest or inherent) should we value as evidence of humanity and would this serve as a measure of equality?

In addition, this idea of equality demands that the chosen quality(s) should be universally applicable to all human beings. One would imagine that this should make the task of identifying these qualities easier; however, this is not the case. The problem could be demonstrated in the following way: If I have a red pen, a blue pen, and a broken pen, it is true that they are all categorically equal as pens, but in what other sense might I talk about them such that their value in virtue of them being pens is validated? As the person who is deciding on the value of pens, if I happen to value blue pens, then I am bound to argue in favour of that value over the others. Thus, in this instance, I am discriminating for colour over functionality. If there is such arbitrariness for choosing a characteristic of something where there are so few characteristics available for evaluation, how much more difficult is it to evaluate those of a human being?

William’s approach is analytical and he wants to be able to objectively analyse the problems in the fact-value debate. His concern lies with the qualifiers that are used when it comes to arguing for

\textsuperscript{11} Kant’s objective in the \textit{Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals} (1996) was to circumvent the contingency of arbitrary differences between individuals when it comes to the question of the moral life. In his view, irrational human nature does not describe the highest potential in human beings. The highest potential arises from the ability to reason.
equality on the basis of some traits over others, particularly in circumstances where some traits are selectively overlooked. Ideologies that seek to rationalise their treatment of one group of people with respect to another could systematically overlook facts common to all groups, such as all individuals have needs, fears, and the potential for self-realisation. The problem is that our capacity to rationalise away some facts at the expense of others is often governed by our preferences and not for reasons that are disengaged from our preferences. Similarly, in the case of the blue pen, my rationalisations for using the blue pen reflect my values (for example, I think blue ink looks better on white paper) and not anything that is inherently more valuable in the pen itself. Williams says that having such a predisposition to evaluate characteristics in one way rather than in another is the basis of a moral outlook in itself (Williams 1973, p. 232). By this he means that if a person is predisposed towards a certain evaluation of something, for example, a preference for blue, this in itself might skew their evaluation of other things in the world. Perhaps, that person might be positively influenced to vote for a political party whose colours are blue ahead of any understanding of their policies, or attempt to do so. Even worse, it might also be that we recommend that others should do likewise. In these ways, the many inequalities inherent in the phenomenon of thrown-being abundantly avail themselves for people to selectively form moral outlooks on each other.

The purpose of the foregoing discussion has been to highlight the problems of representing the human being as an entity that deserves to be treated equally, despite his or her differing origins. In the next subsection I will briefly describe the way inequalities can proliferate as the result of incidental and circumstantial luck affecting thrown-being that, in combination with an individual’s differing origins, feed into her eventual evaluation by others. This will provide an additional perspective to the problem of the ethical challenges of inequality.

**3.1. Derived inequalities**

I have consistently argued that the conditions we are ‘thrown’ into by birth are fundamentally determinative of our later inequalities in life. However, I must now qualify that position by pointing out that there is a lot that comes about in a lifetime which, even though these events may derive from our initial being, can also depend to a great extent on luck. (I have already indicated that this is an important concept for this thesis.) Thus, initial conditions that are exposed to external influences can develop in beneficial or harmful ways. For example, being born a female is not in itself an inequality since half the population is. However, if this female was then taken into a situation where women are devalued, she will become exposed to social and economic disadvantages with accompanying psychological and moral burdens.
The effect of moral luck, which is the consequences of random occurrence of events that may be beneficial, or not, to one’s being, is the subject of the next chapter. I will be treating moral luck as an important concern because it can impact on how we prepare for life’s contingencies and how we respond to the results of luck. The effects of luck are as much self-defining as are our initial ‘thrown’ characteristics. Even though luck is the focus of the next chapter, I am taking the opportunity here to explain how some of the inequalities that come about in life are due to luck and, in particular, bad moral luck in the form of oppression. Lisa Tessman (2005) is a writer who describes the burdens of character that persist as the result of oppression. These burdens can be a moral taint to one’s character and pose a barrier to the flourishing of the individual. Of further concern is that the oppressed individual is forced to nurture ‘virtues’ which under beneficent circumstances would be considered harms. As an example, a woman who battles female oppression may find herself having to deny her femininity in an attempt to prove her equal worth on a man’s terms. Therefore, through mode of dress and behaviour she is forced to be, as a result of her struggle against female oppression, other than she is. Tessman says that suppression of one’s defining characteristics can create internal conflict and ‘psychic pain’ (Tessman 2004, p. 22). The woman’s burdened virtue is this suppression of her feminine identity, which under non-oppressed conditions would clearly be a harm.

Another phenomenon that arises in a world that harbours much oppression is dispassion (my term to mean the absence of an emotional stance towards something). In a sense, this is a burdened virtue that many of us inadvertently develop. As a scholar of Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, Tessman describes a burdened virtue as something that cannot be found as an Aristotelian mean. Thus, between extreme sensitivity at others’ suffering and extreme indifference to it, there is no ‘mean state anywhere between these two extremes that is morally praiseworthy in any simple way’ (Tessman 2004, p. 83). For example, when one is bombarded daily by tales of war, suffering and destitution, it may become necessary to switch-off one’s emotional response to these events because it becomes psychologically unsustainable. In respect of those who come door-knocking, or more commonly now, phone-calling, for donations to various charities, it becomes financially unsustainable. Consequently, we become ‘dispassionate’ about wars, massacres and charities trying to raise money for the disadvantaged. The objective of Tessman’s thesis is the effect of oppression on the moral self. However, from her account it is easy to see how attitudes towards oppression can

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12 Aristotle says that it is eudaemonia to which we are directed (Aristotle 1955, p. 1097a15-b2). Eudaemonia is best described as ‘flourishing’ – or the increase – of what best defines us. The path to this flourishing is to fulfil the function that we have as human beings. That function is to excel in the faculties that are unique to humans, the most prized of these being the power to reason.

13 For Aristotle, the most appropriate behaviour is found as the mean between two other behaviours which represent excess or deficit. So, for example, courage is to be found as the mean between foolhardiness and cowardice.
become internalised as dispassion towards the oppressed, or in the case of the oppressed themselves, as internalised anger and resentment.

Taking this discussion back to the topic of inequality, we can now see how disadvantaged and oppressed individuals might actually further their disadvantage by sustaining a negative, even morally burdened, attitude towards those who do not share their situation. An example of such an attitude could be one of distrust and sustained animosity. On the other hand, it is possible to see how desensitised to inequality the potential benefactors may become. Despite these effects, it is the mandate of egalitarian governments to address inequality. Without expanding the discussion too far from the scope of an ethical discourse, I do want to highlight the challenges posed for the administration of an unequal society. The following analysis will also begin to respond to my final question of how one is meant to address inequality and I will be adding to these thoughts what I have brought through from my ontological discussions.

4. Addressing inequality

As I have argued thus far, people do not inherit their starting positions in life because of merit. Rather, need and merit are arbitrarily served up at birth and subsequently develop in positive and negative ways. Inherited situations make life easy for some and extraordinarily difficult for others. It is critical to pay attention to this fact when we are about to judge those who struggle to overcome inherited adverse conditions. Richard Sennet (2004)\textsuperscript{14} thinks that it is society’s fear of dependency, which is at the bottom of the easy judgement by those who have an easier time of things of those who do not (Sennet 2004, p. 103). Pojman and Fieser’s critique of Kant’s condition for equality says that the unstated premise in Kant’s argument is that all mature adults are equally rational and therefore autonomously self-supporting and self-determining\textsuperscript{15}. To fail this premise of rationality, therefore, is to replace it with dependent beings who do not contribute to the structure of society and worse, are a drag on its resources.

There are two factors operating in thrown-being. The first is the inherited factual conditions of one’s being, the second is the ability of the person to change it. In what follows, I will be discussing

\textsuperscript{14} Sennett is a sociologist who teaches at the London School of Economics and the University of New York. He is best known for his studies of urban living in the modern world and the effect this has on relationships and people.

\textsuperscript{15} As Pojman and Fieser point out, beings which are not rational (or which we decide are not rational), such as most animals, would be excluded from the Kingdom of Ends and thus not protected by the Principle of Ends. Also, given that rational ability, like all other human abilities, is evidenced in individuals to varying degrees, should we respect and value individuals in direct proportion to their capacity for reason? (Pojman & Fieser 2009, p. 136).
Williams’ analysis of a common solution to inequality implemented in a welfare state, but with varying results.

4.1. Distributive justice

Williams discusses Aristotle’s notion of ‘distributive justice’ as a way of addressing two inequalities: the inequality of need and the inequality of merit, with the distribution of goods satisfying either need or merit. However, it was not Aristotle’s objective to equalise inequalities, but simply to recognize them through a system of proportional distribution of goods. His objective for this distribution was the achievement of the perfect city-state, and hence the reward and support of those who were best placed to produce this. Aristotle’s distributive justice was therefore aristocratic because it supported the ‘best’ people (Aristotle 1955, p. 1130b8-1133a13). This view, of course, is alien to an egalitarian democratic society that is meant to be supportive of all its citizens. So, what would an egalitarian version of distributive justice look like?

Returning to distribution on the basis of need and merit, need refers to the basic requirements for sustaining human life such as food, shelter and good health, while merit is what one deserves on the basis of personal achievement. Goods distributed on the basis of merit have a competitive aspect that is absent in distribution on the basis of need (Williams 1973, p. 240). Merit confers advantage to those who have it for access to a greater proportion of the available goods in a society, for example advanced education, or high income jobs. Merit continues to advantage by improving access to the subsidiary goods that go with this: becoming a person with specific expertise and status, or acquiring more of the material benefits of society. The more ‘merit’, the more access. However, not everyone has the opportunity to qualify for a similar level of merit. It is in an attempt to equalise this that the notion of ‘equality of opportunity’ arose.

The equal distribution of opportunity is a concept to help equalise the ground for acquisition of more merit. Education is a key contributor to a person improving their opportunity for merit. If governments provide the same opportunity for all children to have an education then at least one basis for the opportunity for equal access to societal goods has been offered. However, there is a limit to the amount of paternalistic state intervention that can occur for the improvement of an individual’s opportunity for greater merit. For example, unemployed people have to utilise government incentives for retraining if they are to increase their chances of finding a job that pays more than the unemployment benefit\(^\text{16}\). Therefore, much remains the responsibility of the individual in the quest for increasing merited access to public goods. If the individual cannot, or has not, taken advantage of opportunities, because of intrinsic reasons of character or extrinsic life circumstances,\(^\text{16}\) Here, I am specifically referring to the social support offered in Australia. It is understood that this is not so for many other countries in the world.
then the demand that ‘all men should be equal’ can never be satisfied. An institutional level of redistributive effort cannot address the minutiae of effects that contribute to an individual’s unequal status. Therefore, I contend that there is an ethical standoff between the dignity and responsibility of the moral self and the ethical mandate of an egalitarian society. Each must respect the other, but it is difficult to know where the moral boundaries lie. This a complex issue involving on the administration side conditions of ideology and economics.

Continuing with this thought of boundaries, Williams questions the extent to which we are expected to abstract the individual from their environment, which can be a vast source of unfavourable incident luck\textsuperscript{17}. In fact, are we even beholden to protect an individual from his own nature, i.e. his constitutive luck? He asks ‘Where should this stop? Should it even stop at the boundaries of heredity?’ (Williams 1973, p. 246) Prophetically, in his footnote to this passage he mentioned the likelihood of genetic manipulation in the future and said that he did not want to explore the ‘dizzying’ consequences of such a possibility! Williams wrote this paper in 1962 and there is no doubt that he would be dizzy, and dazed even, by the ethical implications of what we genetically manipulate now, or how the limitations of heredity have ceased to be a boundary in some affluent societies in the twenty-first century. Families are now able to check the genotype of their unborn child in order to prepare for, or more questionably abort, the foetus, should there be anything unfavourable. I will not venture into the ethics of this practice; suffice to say that there are valid arguments for not bringing a child into the world who will suffer due to some awful disease or other physiological malfunction, however, wherever the technology\textsuperscript{18} exists, in this instance genetic profiling, there is the opportunity for its exploitation.

In his conclusion, Williams says that

a highly rational and efficient application of the ideas of equal opportunity, unmitigated by the other considerations, could lead to a quite inhuman society.... On the other hand, an ideal of equality of respect that made no contact with such things as the economic needs of society for certain skills, and human desire for some sorts of prestige, would be condemned

\textsuperscript{17} In his work ‘Moral Luck’, Bernard Williams explains that incident luck is the result of choices one makes in life. In his example a person can be good and do good things because he or she has chosen to become a sage. The other sort of luck called constitutive luck is the luck brought about through the type of person you are and over which you might have negligible control. Thus the individuals who do not have the character traits to become sages stand less of a chance of being good (Williams 1981, Nagel 1979).

\textsuperscript{18} Juan Enriquez, author of \textit{Homo Evolutis} (2011, TEDBooks), talks of a future in about two generations time where humans will be using their technologies (genetic engineering, nanotechnology and quantum mechanics) to transform themselves into a new species of hominid, which he has chosen to call ‘Homo Evolutis’. My personal view is that this scenario is highly likely, but in its train we will have created a new inequality; those who can afford technological enhancements, which give them a new form of ‘merit’, versus those who cannot afford such treatments.
to a futile Utopianism, and to having no rational effect on the distribution of goods, position, and power that would inevitably proceed (Williams 1973, p. 248).

Here, Williams is saying that a completely equal society would not be a human society as we traditionally understand it since characteristically individuals of this society differ and the way we value these differences are unequal (recall my example with the pens). On this point at least, Williams and Nancy might be in accord. That is, difference of characteristics is intrinsic to how we value ‘humanity’ and it is consequentially essential that these differences persist to maintain this value. Unfortunately, humanity is only a concept rather than a real object. At a functional societal level certain sets of differences are accepted while other characteristics come to be rejected. From Nancy’s point of view (as previously discussed) difference in ontic characteristics is necessary for sense to become possible. There would be no promulgation of sense/meaning in a collection of identical individuals. Consequently, human societies have never been so that every individual in it has been equal to each other – as far as we know. Concomitant with this embedded inequality is the inevitable unequal distribution of goods, position and power. As a consequence of this entrenched inequality born of difference there is a need for a solution beyond pure equality of treatment and opportunity. Nevertheless, distributive justice as an immediate solution is the best ameliorative measure to the problem of inequality for the time being.

My argument is that an unequal society to some extent arises from unequal thrown-being. Society did not originally create unequal beings, unequal beings created, in part at least, unequal society. These inequalities are further amplified by oppression and good as well as bad luck during the course of a life. This rather negative conclusion to society’s ability to equalise inequality lends more force to my thesis argument: that we should respect each other, not merely on the condition of our shared humanity, but on the condition of our shared homelessness as the only basis on which we are equal in our facticity. In the next section I will be furthering the argument that each person is accorded respect as the dignified centre of their own struggle to find meaning and a place for their thrown-being. That is, on the basis of understanding the shared nature of our thrown-being status, respect because of our inequality not despite it.

5. Respect and communication

Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s description of the first man who stakes a claim to a piece of land and has ‘people simple enough to believe him’ (Rousseau 1761, p. 97) is repeating my claim. When I talk about unequal beings I mean (and I have reiterated this understanding in the preceding paragraph) these are beings who have been judged unequal on the basis of their inherent differences. Therefore, Rousseau’s first man is exhibiting a difference in intelligence, or cunning, to his other ‘simple’ cousins. In accepting his actions they are judging him to be unequal to them, that is, superior in his cunning, which subsequently represents something for them to aspire to.
Respect cannot be given on the basis of understanding the material ground for a person’s situation because no one can know the complete story behind everyone’s situation, often not even the person themself. As we have just discussed, efforts to improve a person’s standing in society and hence their own self-respect along with the respect of others that this would consequently draw, are beset by obstacles. Ultimately, we must judge on the basis of a balanced view between the respect a person deserves qua being an autonomous human-being with some choice in their actions, and the constraints of their life circumstances that they must negotiate daily. In order to do this we must also be prepared to consciously think the unchosen nature of one’s existence. What follows is a concrete account of how the starting position of one’s life might be improved, but because one’s situation is so deeply embedded in an interrelated world, change comes with challenges for the self and its relationships.

5.1. Barriers to respect

Sennett acknowledges many of the difficulties we have already covered. He places his faith in the autonomy of the individual and their potential to overcome their own inequitable starting positions as a solution to inequality. Those who develop a talent, for instance, (Sennet himself became an accomplished musician despite early disadvantages) are nurturing some potential within themselves; ‘It’s not so much a matter of getting ahead as of becoming inside’ (Sennet 2004, p. 13). ‘Becoming inside’ resonates with the self’s authentic potentiality – to adopt a being-towards something that is genuinely my own possibility. As Heidegger has shown us, authenticity and inauthenticity pull in different directions. Whilst some aspects of one’s being may be attempting to express unique potentialities, one’s being-in-the-world is also embedded in norms that facilitate a practical existence. The difficulty in ontic terms is to express an authentic relationship to one’s factical potential whilst maintaining one’s functional relationships. In Sennet’s case, his autonomy and self-respect had to be grown against the prevailing forces of societal prejudice. This is often the case if there is a lot of fear and oppression within that social group. Often this is too great a challenge and presents the danger of losing your place/home. In real terms it is often easier to maintain one’s ‘social home’ than to risk autonomy and possibly lose it.

In discussing respect and the associated concept of dignity, Sennet says that dignity is manifest in two modes; corporeal dignity, that is the dignity of one’s body, and the dignity of labour (Sennet 2004, p. 58). (This also follows Williams’ view discussed in the previous section.) Minimally, corporeal dignity means that one is meant to respect the person of the self and that of the other. This concept is taken to its ultimate expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations Organisation, n.d.), which prohibits torture, and any cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
or punishment of another’s body. The dignity of labour, meanwhile, is about an individual’s functional place in society. Labour provides a social identity to the individual and thus justifies their worth as a member of that society. As a consequence ‘Any adult not perceived as a worker shoulders a heavier burden of self-justification’ (Sennett 2004, p. 58). The economic structure of society requires the financial contribution to it by all able workers. It is on this understanding that those who cannot find a job, for example through disability or illness, risk the undermining of their self-respect. This problem viewed from society’s perspective was mentioned by Sennet in the section 4 as society’s fear of dependency.

Social inequality also manifests social barriers, which to all intents and purposes may as well be physical. Most frequently this is evidenced in the places where people choose to live, or where they have to live, for example ghettos and welfare housing. More problematically, however, these social barriers exist in the communication that is possible between social classes. Sennet says,

> It takes a long time and a great deal of trust, for highly educated professionals and unskilled labourers to speak freely to one another... people whose lives are full of adventure have trouble “relating” to the experience of people constrained within narrow routines (Sennet 2004, p. 22).

As a result, silence, caution and the fear of offending are the dregs of communication left between social classes. Moreover, movement from one class to another, for example by improving one’s living conditions as Sennet did when he and his mother left their housing project home to move to a better location, involves risk – the risk of showing up the inadequacy of those whom you have left behind. Communication with people from the old place thereafter becomes fraught with the danger of giving offence or incurring resentment.

In order to have sense, Nancy tells us ‘one must have the tact not to touch it too much’ (Nancy 1997b, p. 63). What does this abstruse comment mean? In his usual manner of playing with etymology, his words ‘tact’ and ‘touch’ share the same origins: in Latin *tactus* means ‘sense of touch’ (OED). As we have seen in Chapter Three, sense is made through the touch of singularities. One singularity or origin of the world touches another to make sense. A human being is an origin of the world and human beings ‘touch’ the sense of each other to make new sense. As a source of sense a human can be touched for the sense of their being, but this being (whether expressed in movement or speech) will only be understood if the touch is respectful of the separation, the

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20 The American Housing Act of 1949 was a federal intervention, which included the provision of public housing. Slums were cleared and replaced with urban renewal ‘projects’ in American cities. The resulting subsidized housing was offered for rental by the state and/or non-profit organizations to those who could not otherwise afford normal rental accommodation (US Department of Housing and Urban Development 2007).
distance between one body and another must be maintained for the touch to be productive of new sense. This means that the distance between the self and the other is to be respected; i.e. ‘one must have the tact not to touch too much’ because the product will not be new sense, new understanding. How does the touch accomplish itself? Through language. Words touch the body through the sense they make in it. Thus it is necessary to have tact in one’s language to maintain that respectful distance so that communication can occur. Therefore, for Nancy, tact in touching ontologically is the same thing as respecting the other (Nancy 1993, p. 190).

Communication is extremely difficult, however, if a substantial amount of mutual social ground, which you must take for granted in conversation, is missing for the communicators. (This mutual ground also demonstrates respect as an acceptance/allowance of the other’s being.) If some basis for making sense is not there, then communication becomes a problem. Often the result of the lack of this ability to relate simply manifests as non-communication and isolation. How can people who do not have a common basis of understanding communicate? My argument is that the communicative act should be the basis for generating this new ground, and that is how communication should be approached – as an opportunity for new sense. Heidegger inspires this argument of communication as creation, while Nancy inspires from his discussion of the origins of meaning being neither ‘appropriable’ nor ‘absorbable’ (Nancy 2000, p. 13). Each person as their own origin is able to touch another origin and in this touch make sense, or a new singularity of being, which each origin now shares. Meaning is the product of the sharing of existence. In such an understanding, the origins themselves do not need to change and remain autonomous. Iris Marion Young (1997), my final interlocutor, writes of the asymmetry of standpoints and how it is important for a person’s self-respect that this is maintained. I will be investigating her views next as a response to the problem of addressing inequality that Williams set up.

5.2. Asymmetrical reciprocity

Young’s (1997) essay on asymmetrical reciprocity is in response to Seyla Benhabib’s conceptualisation of moral respect as a symmetrical relationship between the self and the other.21 Young disputes the idea that moral respect may be achieved through a symmetry of perspectives and further claims that it is not even desirable that one should try to achieve this (Young 1997, p. 38). The reasons she gives are threefold. Firstly, she says that symmetry of relationship obscures the important difference there is which makes people who they are (Young 1997, p. 44)22. This echoes

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21 Seyla Benhabib in *Situating the Self* ‘conceptualises moral respect as a relation of symmetry between self and other; and she thinks of moral reciprocity as entailing that the perspectives of self and other are reversible’ (Young 1997, p. 38).

22 In referring to Irigaray’s *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Young tells us that the danger of trying to have a symmetrical relationship is the obscuring of the other’s difference, for example, ‘The gender system structuring Western culture and philosophy presents the feminine others as complementing the masculine subject position, creating
Nancy’s position on dignity; that it is imperative a person is allowed to be *his or her own source* of sense and value without adoption of this from another. Secondly, it is ontologically impossible to adopt the social position of others. Nancy’s condition of singular plurality shows that singularity is a unique origin of sense and contributes to the plurality of meaning of the whole. This system of ontology is too complex to successfully ‘imagine’ oneself into, and so adopt, the other’s plurality of meaning. Young says that ontologically your ‘position’ is constrained by its internal relations to other standpoints such that a reversibility of standpoint is not possible (Young 1997, p. 46).

The difficulty imposed on understanding by asymmetrical standpoints is also a subject Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman (1983) describe. They write of the privileging of the first-world, white, middle-class voice in the discourses on female oppression and feminism, particularly when these discourses also presume to speak for women who do not fit this social type. In reality this privileged voice is not burdened by those constraints of women whose femaleness is also overlaid by the disadvantage of poverty, colour and non-dominant cultural background. Often these are women who are economically or politically obliged to live in a subordinate position within that dominant culture. Consequently, the non-privileged, non-dominant female subject knows about the situation of her own culturally embedded female oppression as well as the issues faced by the privileged white woman because ‘we have had to be in your world and learn its ways… But there is nothing that necessitates that you understand our world’ (Lugones & Spelman 1983). There is no onus on the privileged ones to try to understand those who are dependent on them.

According to Young, the assumption that moral respect requires taking the other person’s point of view can have undesirable political consequences. Before elaborating on her reasons for not supporting the ‘symmetry of perspective’ thesis, I will briefly relate two of the examples she offers to illustrate her concerns with such a proposition. Her first example concerns a phone survey of able-bodied persons conducted in an American State. These people were told to imagine themselves as disabled and to explain their reactions. Many of the respondents apparently claimed that they would rather be dead than disabled. As Young tells us, the reality is that this is not the case for actual disabled people who, in fact, want to make the most of life that they can and simply ask for assistance in doing so (Young 1997, p. 42). A second example she gives is the romanticisation of for it a wholeness, completeness, and return to origins… In the specular relation of phallocentric logic the self puts himself in the place of the other in order to return reflectively to himself. But this circular relation displaces and silences the other as she might speak in a different, incommensurate register’ (Young 1997, p. 44). The woman ends up serving as a mirror in order to complete the man.

Gayatri Spivak (1988) in ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’ writes of postcolonial critique as being complicit in endorsing the imperialist project. It positions the imperialist subject as the ‘good’ subject while the ‘subaltern’ colonised subject is redefined as the shadow of the good. However, the subaltern subject is not a singular voice, it belongs to a heterogenous people who cannot be simply ‘mapped’ onto a Western collective understanding of them. In this context the West speaks for the subaltern and in so doing mythologises the colonised people and further entrenches their mute position.
indigenous people to the extent that certain others try to mimic their customs and practices. This has the effect of making the mimics ridiculous and the indigenes upset, because on the one hand the mimic does not have the history and ‘thrown-being’ basis for an authentic claim to this perspective, and on the other hand, this is seen by the indigenous people as intrusion on something that they legitimately own (Young 1997, p. 42-43). As Young argues, this is going beyond ‘sharing’ and into the realm of disrespect.

A thrown-being is owed respect on account of it being an unchosen existence that must be taken up and lived. Each person is burdened with this. To try to remove this burden is to rob the person of their identity; to try to emulate this burden, which is not yours, is to deny your own identity whilst belittling another’s. Catriona Mackenzie (2010) supports Young’s thesis of asymmetrical reciprocity having a ‘remainder’ that is unknowable in our relationship to another. However, she says that a ‘sympathetic imagining’ of the position of the other person, as a method of responding, should be cautious and humble with regard to what we cannot know about that person, but at the same time respecting of the other’s moral self (Mackenzie 2010, p. 321).

Young goes on to say that where one person stands in a relation of privilege to oppressed others, it is even more difficult to see how this person’s reversal of perspective could possibly be authentic to the other’s perspective. This is demonstrated by her examples of the disabled people and the indigenous people having their perspectives taken up by more privileged people. What can result politically, as a consequence, is a misrepresentation of the situation. For example, the results of the phone interview were used as grounds for the State to deny certain health support to disabled people on the basis that their lives were less valuable and less deserving of this support (Young 1997, p. 41). A further critique Young makes is this: ‘When members of privileged groups imaginatively try to represent to themselves the perspective of members of oppressed groups, too often those representations carry projections and fantasies through which the privileged reinforce a complementary image of themselves’ (Young 1997, p. 48). By this she means it is seducing to imagine oneself as a saviour and champion of the underprivileged, frequently without actually benefiting these people in the ways that they need. Moreover, habitual projection in a certain way

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24 Mackenzie says ‘In sympathetic imagining one recognizes the other as a person with a point of view, capable of thought, feeling and emotion, and vulnerable to pain and suffering. This recognition in turn prompts an emotional response to the other, which involves a motivation to alleviate the other’s distress or suffering’ (Mackenzie 2010, p. 323). Recognition of the other’s point of view requires a response of some kind.

25 She advises caution, because one should be critical of the reliability of the testimony of others. This is particularly understandable if one is in the position of being the disadvantaged, or oppressed, party (Mackenzie 2010, p. 322).
onto a less privileged life position can result in entrenched stereotypes, particularly at the group level\(^{26}\).

I agree with Young’s analysis of the failure of disparate centres of ‘merit’ to successfully understand each other’s need (to borrow Williams’ terms). Such different conglomerations of relative privilege and disadvantage represent worlds in which even the discourse starts to belong to each world almost exclusively. Her analysis underlines the conclusion raised in the discussion of Williams’ last quoted comment that the solution has to go beyond the efforts to establish equality of treatment and opportunity. Consequently, my argument is that we have to become aware of what lies beyond the material conditions of our existence, for ourselves and for the others that we judge. We have to remember we did not choose our initial existences and recalling this existential fact might help us see past the materiality of ours and others’ life situations in our efforts to relate. In the event of not having material common ground to initiate communication across difference, we can resort to the common ground of unchosen thrown-being.

Young says that while some standard of equality is necessary for justice, it is important that in coming to this position ‘there is a moment of respect for the particular embodied sensitivity of the person. In this moment of recognition other people’s concrete positions are asymmetrical’ (Young 1997, p. 50). She is acknowledging that the administration of justice requires some basis for equitable judgement, for example, by assuming that each person has a basic rationality. But underlying this should be the constant awareness that each person in their embodiment represents an incommensurability that should challenge each judgement. As far as personal communication which can accommodate this awareness goes, Young proposes a particular mode of communicative ethics, one that is asymmetrical: ‘A communicative ethics should develop an account of the nonsubstitutable relation of moral subjects’ (Young 1997, p. 39). She says that communication across asymmetrical positions leads to an expansion of perspective which becomes larger than one’s own subjective one\(^{27}\). The result of the communication is the production of a public sense/meaning that becomes greater than the individual participants.

Communication that aims at arriving at a moral or political judgement should start from a position of moral humility:

\(^{26}\) Richard Sennet (2004) comments on how when groups of ‘like’ individuals are interviewed, the individuals in these groups were more inclined to racial slurs and ‘spurring one another on’. On the other hand, sole individuals are much more inclined to be generous in their views of others (Sennet 2004, p. 45-46).

\(^{27}\) Young refers to Hannah Arendt’s plurality of perspectives which Arendt describes as ‘enlarged thought’ when discussing ‘publicity’ in The Human Condition. ‘The people who appear to one another in a public situation of communication each have a perspective on the world that lies between them, as well as on one another. The public world that lies between us is a creative product of the dialogue among our multiple perspectives, but distinct from them because it is an objective relation between us’ (Young 1997, p. 58).
In moral humility one starts with the assumption that one cannot see things from the other person’s perspective and waits to learn by listening to the other person to what extent they have had similar experiences’ (Young 1997, p. 49).

Being prepared to listen authentically to another means to not impose your own sense on what is being said, but to allow this sense to be given to you. To the extent that you are able to adopt this sense is the extent to which you already understand and respect difference.

In fact, it would be more productive to reaching/touching another’s standpoint by assuming that you cannot know it without communication with the other. Young says ‘we can interpret understanding others as sometimes getting out of ourselves and learning something new’ (Young 1997, p. 53). By this she means we can make communication a creative process through listening to the other. What is communicated to me combines with my own understanding to move forward into a new space of ‘wonder’ in which two perspectives (Nancy’s origins) touch and create something new, or increases what there is already. ‘Understanding the other person’s perspective as a result of her expression to me and my inferences from that expression thus continue to carry my humble recognition that I cannot put myself in her position’ (Young 1997, p. 53).

Marguerite La Caze (2008) poses an important caveat to Young’s account; that one should not forget self-respect is a required constituent to having a ground from which to have clear and open communication with another. In referring to Tessman, La Caze points out that an oppressed self is likely to have damaged self-respect and, consequently, a damaged basis from which to communicate her case. La Caze says ‘we need to acknowledge how damaged self-respect can affect political engagement. Self-respect involves being able to criticise one’s own perspective as well as not allowing others to determine one’s views’ (La Caze 2008, p. 131). Therefore, while she accepts Young’s arguments, she points to the need to understand that we all have biased interpretations of our own positions, and in the case of the oppressed, this position of damaged self-respect may not lend itself to clear self-representation.

La Caze’s warning note is justified since communication between centres of relative privilege and disadvantage can be based on different understandings for what is said. In particular, La Caze is saying that oppression could mean the oppressed person is unable to justly represent herself at all. Nevertheless, Young’s advocacy of communication from a position of moral humility could be bolstered by my thesis of understanding the basis of a life as unchosen. This gives the effort of humility a concrete grounding.

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28 Being Singular Plural, Nancy (2000, p. 9). See also ‘The Forgetting of Philosophy’ (Nancy 1997) in which Nancy sees wonder at the limit of understanding our thrown-being. I discuss this wonder in relation to Heidegger’s enigma in Chapter Two, Section 5.
Young goes on to talk about this communication in terms of gift-giving (and this is a gift-giving in a similar sense to that of Guenther’s\(^{29}\), both adopting the concept from Levinas’ ontology). If one takes an ontological view of the phenomenology of communication it is immediately clear how this can be related to Nancy’s analysis and also how it is creative in the spirit of that analysis. Firstly, the gifts are not equivalent since giving the same thing does not advance the relationship to new ground (Young 1997, p. 54). The correlation of this to sense is that difference is required in order for sense/being to happen/move from one to another. Secondly, there is a time interval between episodes of gift giving, that is, I give to you and then at another time you give to me. The relevance of the time interval to communication is that it initiates a process which causes a relationship to endure (Young 1997, p. 57). It is asymmetrically an offering and an acceptance and is the establishment of a new being-with that has the potential to endure in time.

One reason that asymmetric communication endures is that there are remainders on each side representing excesses and resistances: ‘Questions can express a distinctive form of respect for the other, that of showing an interest in their expression and acknowledging that the questioner does not know what the issue looks like for them’ (Young 1997, p. 55). It is this remainder which raises questions that can cause ‘wonder’: ‘without also a moment of wonder, of openness to the newness and mystery of the other person, the creative energy of desire dissolves into indifference’ (Young 1997, p. 56). The resistance is the point of acknowledging the incommensurability of the other’s position and the remainder represents the unassailable identity of the other. In Nancy’s terms, when thinking is proper (authentic), it is unable to merge because of its difference, it touches what is available without merging. What marks such thinking as conduct is that it shatters against the hardness of its matter (Nancy 2002, p. 80). This metaphorically indicates that thinking as an authentic self must be hard to do because it does not absorb other significations, but instead has to touch, shatter, against pre-conceptions. ‘We can no longer refer to available senses; we must take absolute responsibility for the making sense of the world’ (Nancy 2002, p. 82). In this way then, if we approach communication in the spirit of authentic reciprocity, we do not attempt to impose our sense, or absorb the other’s; instead, in trying to understand them our being as making sense must be prepared to shatter against theirs until there is a new singularity of meaning that joins the two in plurality. Young cautions that the sort of wonder which should be aimed for is of respectful distance. Anything else can lead to a desire for domination of, or subservience to the other. This distance on the other hand allows one ‘to see one’s own position, assumptions, or perspective as strange, because it has been put in relation to others’ (Young 1997, p. 56). I argue that this is aided

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\(^{29}\) Young tells us that gift-giving in terms of communication ‘sets up a chain where the reciprocal bond endures precisely because of the asymmetry of time between gifts’ (Young 1997, p. 54). Therefore, in a similar manner to Guenther, Young quotes Irigaray as saying that what gifts give is time (Young 1997, p. 54). In Guenther’s case it is time as a ‘life’, and in Young’s context it is time as in the opening up of a communicative relationship.
In this section, I have settled on a respect between individuals as a ground-level solution where the institutional-level solution to addressing social inequalities seems inadequate. I have shown how respect for others also requires respect for the self. I have also shown that communication is a necessary medium for the demonstration of this respect. However, when common ground is missing, communication is difficult because it is not so much the case that new understandings are sought by individuals in social interactions, but rather that pre-existing understandings/meanings can be shared. The authors in this section have in mind the necessity for some common ground that can be used as a base for building new understanding. I have argued that communication without common ground can be approached in the spirit of creating new sense as per the notion of Nancean ‘rapport’. For my part, I am offering the common ground of unchosen initial being that I have been arguing for in this thesis. If nothing else this is a basis on which to open to an understanding of, and possibly communication with, the other. I also discussed Young and her thesis of asymmetrical reciprocity which she offers as a way of relating to different others who are centres of unique identity and meaning. I support her claim that one should foster humility in the face of the incommensurability of speaking positions. This incommensurability should be a source of ‘wonder’ that retains interest but maintains respectful distance.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed inequality in three distinct phases. The first was the onset of the possibility for inequality that is indicated by our birth into an unchosen physicality and set of life circumstances. I then discussed how the differences in these circumstances came to be evaluated by society differentially thus giving rise to inequality between individuals in this society. Finally, I reviewed some selected solutions and arguments for and against them that have been raised to address the problem of inequality.

I have argued that birth is the locus at which we inherit the characteristics of our thrown being-in-the-world and consequently the inequalities that mature into our future beings. Birth, moreover, demonstrates the ultimate dependency of Dasein. With respect to this dependency, I question whether Heidegger has avoided an issue in Being and Time with the conflict such dependency poses for authentic Dasein. Birth has an important consequence for relationality that death does not; we are not born alone though we die this way.
The differences in a person’s physical, environmental and cultural context become the means by which that person’s worth and status is differentially valued giving rise to the problem of inequality in a society. In addition to this, there are derivative factors that further affect one’s conditions for equality. Here I am talking about external incident forces, or what Williams calls moral luck that come to affect a person’s standing in a community. I then set out to look in a concise manner at the most common solution to inequality in a Western democratic society by explaining distributive justice. Unfortunately, no system can be completely effective since some of the problem is to be found in the unthinking approaches individuals have to each other, often effected by stereotypes carried forward to groups from hearsay or limited interactions. I examined some of these barriers to openness to the other through the work of Young, Tessman and others. The solution to inequality is a very complex one and must navigate a proliferation of concrete as well as attitudinal obstacles, some of the latter are exhibited in communication barriers between socio-economic classes, lack of respect and, of course, diminishment of self-respect. I have discussed these problems to deliver a sketch of the ontic problems of Heidegger’s thrown-being.

Young’s thesis of asymmetrical reciprocity understands that individuals have to approach each other from sometimes vastly different standpoints. There is no expectation of overcoming differences in this approach, or merging identities, but there is the hope of opening channels of communication that form the neutral ground where trust can build. I have maintained throughout this chapter that a base awareness of our thrown-being existence is conducive to being open to difference. The thought, of course, is that no one gets to choose the initial circumstances of their lives. This claim does not then provide a way of supporting certain moral positions; an awareness of the contingent fact of an individual’s life is not intended to provide a basis for a moral evaluation of that person. It is intended to provide a moderator for judgements of the other on the basis of their difference, not on their acts. The person who does an evil act because they have been abused as a child, disadvantaged throughout life and so on, is still culpable for that act. Nevertheless, we may yet look on at their life circumstances with compassion knowing that they did not choose to be born into a situation where they would be abused. My thesis for thinking of the unchosen nature of a person’s initial conditions such as physical appearance and culture, for example, is principally directed at everyday interactions between individuals. In this context it is also intended we remember that an unchosen existence applies to individual lives and not groups; therefore, my hope is that if we learn to think the individual’s existence as unchosen, this will be a deterrent to stereotyping groups of superficially like individuals.

Unfortunately, of course, this hopeful outlook is strained by the circumstance of moral luck, which is the topic of the next chapter. It is very difficult to continue to think openly about a different other
when incidental luck comes along to taint the other’s moral character. People are constantly subject to bad luck that may cause them to do bad or, at the very least, questionable things. It is even worse when these acts by some members come to taint an entire group of people. There are very few ways of maintaining respect for the individuals of such a group. The most uncontroversial way we can respect them is on the Kantian basis of rational human beings being ends in themselves. On this basis, such individuals do not consequently provide a means for us to vaunt our own situations as superior to theirs. They have dignity in being their own ends and they are to be respected in their efforts to live their lives such as they are. My hope is that the thought that we share with each other an ontological homelessness through our unchosen being will provide a deeper, more poignant significance to this duty. At least on this basis, at the very least, we can all be equal.
Chapter 5 - Being-thrown: Luck, Risk and Creativity

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed inequality from the event of birth into an unchosen existence and the ensuing issues of inequality. Inequality is a problem in the context of society since its members are unequal to each other in terms of access to resources and opportunities. Many of these inequalities persist as the heritage of each person born. I described the role that difference plays in the manifestation of inequality through the values that individuals and society place on certain characteristics and facts about a person. I then described some solutions to the problem. However, difference when it encounters public evaluations is always going to be a difficult problem to eradicate. At best solutions can be ameliorative and partial. Therefore, of special interest to me is interpersonal respect and reciprocal communications as a way to alleviate the problem. I pointed out that it is not enough that differential evaluations of personal attributions are at the core of societal inequality, but there is a further problem. It is the issue of luck, in particular the sort that affects one’s view of oneself. This is known as moral luck and is an important factor in shaping our lives. It is equally contributory to the inequalities that emerge in a life and which may be carried forward to new generations. In this chapter I will be discussing moral luck and risk-taking in the context of accessing opportunity and exploring one’s potential. The responsibility to bear one’s own life is a moral one; therefore, thrown-being produces a potentially burdened moral self.¹

As a note for what is forthcoming in this chapter, I would like to remind the reader that Chapter Three contained a discussion of how ontological resoluteness discovers and stays with what is factically possible from one’s thrown-being: ‘Authenticity requires a certain resourcefulness of the self in taking up one’s thrown-being resolutely’. In this chapter, I seek resolution for the tropes of homelessness and abandonment that I have employed previously in the discussion of risk-taking. The place of morality under the condition of luck relates back to my discussions of the thrown-being needing to find an ‘ontological home’, and how the plurality of meaning obtained in such a place comes to define the moral self. I have contended that the sense we make confers dignity for

¹ Lisa Tessman discusses moral trouble as a version of the problem posed by moral luck. She analyses the moral self experiencing this trouble in the context of Aristotelian virtue ethics and its goal of eudaimonism, or ‘flourishing’ of the human life. Her concern is for a person’s sensitivity and attention to another’s suffering which has resulted from injustice and oppression (Tessman 2005, p. 84). Therefore, certain characteristics are forced to develop to serve the agent in her struggles against oppression. However, these characteristics fail to enhance her well-being ‘because they are self-sacrificial or corrosive or crowd out other valuable traits’ (Tessman 2005, p. 5). I referred to these ‘virtues’ in the previous chapter in connection with their ability to increase inequalities in one’s being-towards life events.
the self who makes it, as well as responsibility for standing by the meaning that is chosen. Feeling good or bad about our life and its meaning affects our moral view of ourselves.

In this chapter I will start my analysis by exploring the idea of moral luck and the ensuing phenomenon of agent regret. This latter is a serious effect since it has a disruptive result on the agent’s view of her self and her place in the world. I then go on to analyse how moral luck might be accommodated in our everyday existence. I argue that one has to acknowledge its existence and determine to live with its effects anyway because it is its very presence that makes one’s life poignantly human. In the third section I discuss risk and why risk is ontologically a part of existence. Ontologically, risk is the basis of our being-toward\(^2\) type of existence. As a product of thrown-being, we are existing beings first, constantly moving forward into new possibilities. Finally, I explain how Heidegger describes a work of art coming into being. I contend that this ontological description can provide an analogy for a human life and I use other commentators to help me develop this theme further. This is not a new analogy, but it is an apt one for which the alternative is to be stripped of agency in one’s own life. Even the agency of an artist who stands by while she and her life unfold is more hopeful than despairing. This claim is made in the context of my previous conclusion that thinking actively about our own and others’ initial unchosen lives is conducive to an open attitude towards difference. In this chapter, I want to focus on concern for the self and the difficult elements of luck and risk that affect this concern. The question, given the conclusions in the preceding chapters, is how are we to care for our own unchosen lives?

The task of making a life meaningful is a burdensome one given the attendant risks; however, if we look at this life as a ‘work’ then we can also view it as the opportunity for satisfaction in the life we are participating in. To illustrate my discussions, I would like to start this chapter with a fictional tale of immigration, opportunity and challenge. It will provide an exemplary context for the afflictions of moral luck, the risk that being-towards new possibilities demands, and the bearing of responsibilities that is consequently required.

Samina migrated from Pakistan with her daughters to live and work in Australia. After a lot of difficulties negotiating visas, she was able to migrate to Australia as a skilled migrant. She had worked in her local hospital in Pakistan, but though she was highly respected and valued for what she did, she was not happy with her family’s life in that country. Her concern was for a safer life with more opportunities for herself and her two young daughters. In certain parts of Pakistan it is

\(^2\) ‘Being-towards’ is a Heideggerian existential that describes Dasein’s futural way of existing. This was explained in detail in the first chapter.
difficult to ensure one’s safety, or access to life’s necessities in a timely fashion. Also, Samina feared putting her two daughters into school as they lived in a fairly remote area with frequent insurgencies by fundamentalist groups. Samina’s own ambitions were to learn English and improve on her particular skill set in an Australian hospital. Samina, as a devout Muslim, chooses to wear a *hijab* (a head covering) as a sign of commitment to her religion. She knows about the pre-judgements of Westerners towards this mode of dress, and more generally, the antipathy towards her religion as a result of its perceived association with terrorism. Therefore, in the initial bid to ease the transition to the new country, Samina and her family chose to live amongst familiar others, intending to only use this as a basis from which to get to know Australia and Australians better. Consequently, the family moved to a suburb that has many refugees who are Muslim, with some from Pakistan who speak their language. However, as time goes on, Samina realises that her own hopes for integrating with ‘mainstream’ Australians is slim since there seems to be an innate resistance to her on the basis of how she looks. With great reluctance, since she sees it as a betrayal of her faith and her culture, she decides against making her daughters dress in a similar way since she wants to save them from the prevailing prejudice against this appearance.

As an overall result, despite what she thought was a move towards greater freedom, in some respects Samina finds her personal situation more oppressive than before. For a start, she has limited acceptance outside her job and local Muslim community. Further, her English speaking skills are not improving and this is causing problems at work. As a consequence, her hopes of receiving more training remains unfulfilled. Her self-respect is concomitantly diminished. Samina’s only consolation is that her daughters are doing well at school and making friends. A few years on, however, her daughters refuse to accept their religion, rebel against their mother’s wishes for them to comply with Muslim rules and they take up more and more with Western culture. The specifically moral issues here concern how Samina feels about herself as a result of her initial decision to immigrate, her reaction to others’ reception of herself at work and in the street, and the compromises she has to make with respect to her religion and cultural beliefs. All of these factors affect the dignity and self-respect of Samina as a centre of sense and meaning and whether she sees herself as a good person, or a person who has failed to be good, or without redemption into the future.

I’ve created this scenario in order to provide some strong examples for moral luck and agent regret. It also accommodates the elements of risk-taking and the opportunities for new expressions of being, both of which I will be discussing in the next section. But first, I will analyse what moral luck and agent regret are and why Samina, as a moral agent, comes to experience them.
2. Moral Luck and Agent Regret

Moral luck\(^3\) is a term coined by Bernard Williams (1981) and Thomas Nagel (1979) and was intended to show the role that luck plays in how an agent’s life-projects, subject to intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors, affects the moral standing of the agent, subjectively and objectively, after the results of their actions are in. This moral standing emerges from a confluence of circumstances that are not necessarily under the control of the agent who acts; however, the reality of limited control does not stop the agent, and others, from developing a view of the morality of the agent. The acting, the situation, and the self that eventuates, brings a moral judgment to bear upon that self. The term ‘moral luck’ pertains to how this view of the moral self can be tainted, or enhanced, by how the agent’s ‘project’ turns out.

In my example of Samina, I have given her two projects as part of her decision to migrate to Australia. The first project concerns herself and the improvement of her life through integrating with an Australian community. She also looks forward to being able to improve her qualifications and the greater community standing she feels this would bring. Contained within this is the care for her self-respect and her moral self-regard. As I described in Chapter One, the reason for ontology commencing with the human being is because we care about our existence, which motivates our associations and the sense which results. In Chapter Three, I explained Nancy’s claim of being as ‘its own engagement’ and letting this occur is what confers the dignity of being. Allowing one’s being to be manifests dignity and self-respect in that dignity. Samina’s choice of moving to Australia, which ontologically involves being in a different way, enhanced this dignity and self-respect. She authentically faced the limitations of her being ‘safe’ in Pakistan. This concern for safety and the danger of loss of sense in one’s singular plural relationships also helps illustrate my argument in Chapter Three that there can be other stimuli than one’s death for making one ‘face’ one’s thrown-being.

The second project was Samina’s intention that her daughters have an education and following on from this, good career opportunities. I will allow that Samina would have been cognisant of the fact that much of how these two projects played out was not entirely up to her. As I also argued in Chapter Three, authentically taking up the potentiality for being-towards does not guarantee that this particular being will come about.

\(^3\) Williams and Nagel wrote about this aspect of consequential luck in papers identically titled ‘Moral Luck’, which they produced for a symposium in 1976.
Both Nagel and Williams agree that luck has an important and troubling influence on the moral evaluations people have of themselves and their projects. Both authors question the extent to which a person can be held responsible for their actions given their intrinsic and extrinsic compounding circumstances. (An intrinsic factor is packaged within the project, for example, Samina’s initial lack of fluency with English. An extrinsic factor to Samina’s project is the volition of her daughters.) Williams’ concern focuses on how we end up thinking of ourselves, particularly when our projects have a high risk factor, for example, immigration to a foreign country. The consequence for failure to bring about a good result, from the agent’s perspective, produces something he calls ‘agent regret’. This is the result of a voluntary action that has a bad outcome, but one that leaves the residue of regret.

Agent-regret requires not merely a first-personal subject-matter, nor yet merely a particular kind of psychological content, but also a particular kind of expression. The sentiment of agent-regret is by no means restricted to voluntary agency. It can extend far beyond what one intentionally did to almost anything for which one was causally responsible in virtue of something one intentionally did (Williams 1981, p. 27-28).

Williams means that this particular form of regret for an action one took is not merely because of its bad outcome, or solely focussed on it; it is possible that the regret could spread and colour one’s view of many other causally related consequences of, or reasons for, the act. Let us look at Samina’s agent regret in light of her project for herself. The failure of her project to integrate into an Australian community, coupled with her difficulties with communication at work, lack of recognition and advancement for her skills, causes Samina to suffer agent regret. What does this actually mean for her? Samina regrets losing the prestige she enjoyed in her old hospital in Pakistan. This is the direct regret as a consequence of her present difficulties, but this condition of regret has the effect of spreading to encompass other things that are causally related; such as the regret of leaving behind friends and family and the regret that she has had to compromise her religion by allowing her daughters to dress like Westerners. She may even regret the country she had to leave behind, that it did not afford her the protection or opportunities she felt she deserved, or which her family and friends who remain behind deserve. She will regret the daily difficulties she faces at work and in the street due to the clash of foreign expectations and stereotypes of her. Consequently, her outlook on her future may be despairing.

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1 Williams’ position is that moral luck requires we rethink our moral agency to accommodate it, though he himself does not offer a new description for this agency (Williams 1981, p. 39). Nagel’s position is that the logical conclusion as a result of moral luck requires that we throw out moral agency altogether. He says that even though we try to accord others ‘selves like our own’, this comes up against ‘the brutal inclusion of humans and everything about them in a world from which they cannot be separated and of which they are nothing but contents’ (Nagel 1979, p. 37). Despite this difficulty, both authors also accept the human intuition that we all have moral agency – the will to choose right from wrong.
We can break down the potential sources of moral luck further by analysing it in its two categories. The first is the sort we cannot do anything about because it comes with the territory of thrown-being; that we are born with innate characteristics and capacities which we do not choose, and into situations, also, not of our choosing. Nagel (1979) calls this category of influence ‘constitutive’ and ‘circumstantial’ luck, respectively. An example of Samina’s constitutive luck is to be found in her original capacity for intelligence and courage, which empowered her to leave her birth place and to move to a foreign country. An example of her circumstantial luck is that she was born in a country that is not safe enough for women or girls, or affords them much in the way of freedom to ‘flourish’. Such constitutive and circumstantial luck are the conditions which Heidegger would call Dasein’s facticity. (I will note here that Nagel does not only mean our initial thrown-being circumstances, but includes any consequent circumstances in one’s life; in this way, even intelligence and courage can be developed.) Constitutive and circumstantial luck, from the point of view of our moral lives, means we have a predisposition to react to situations in specific ways and to formulate rules for our behaviour that are also conditioned by our characteristics and temperament. In the case of circumstantial luck, the situations themselves may demand more, or less, from us than from the next person in a different situation. This has a concomitant impact on our moral selves. I’ve already discussed constitutive and circumstantial luck in terms of birth and derived inequalities in the previous chapter. We do not choose to be born courageous or timid as constitutive elements of the self, but it is quite obvious that in certain circumstances, for instance being born into a country which is hostile to women’s freedom, courage for women could be a virtue whereas timidity would, at best, limit one’s freedom further.

The second category of moral luck is contained in the concept of ‘consequential’ luck and concerns the causes and effect of actions. It is also the direct source of agent regret. This is the luck attendant on how one’s projects turn out and also on the luck of the antecedent circumstances for the actions one takes. Nagel tells us that intuitively, one’s moral responsibility should be able to be guaranteed based on one’s intentions at the time such that no reproach would be possible, no matter how things turned out (Nagel 1979, p. 25). Here Nagel has in mind Kant’s precept that everyone has the potential for a good will and it does not matter about the constitutional luck of their temperament or character; if they tried hard enough they could develop a good moral self by following the appropriate maxims. Kant (1996) does acknowledge, but only in a footnote in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, that maxims for moral acting must sometimes be admixed with prudence such that the

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5 These maxims are based on formulations of the Categorical Imperative. The first is more specific: ‘Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law’ (Kant 1990, p. 421/38). There follows two further formulations: ‘Act so that you treat humanity, in your own person or that of another, always as an end and never as a means only’ (Kant 1990, p. 429/46); and the resultant: ‘The idea of the will of every rational being as making universal law’ (Kant 1990, p. 431/48).
relevant maxim takes on a ‘wide’ prescription that allows for more possibilities (Kant 1996, p. 185). Nevertheless, good intentions alone are not enough to guarantee a good moral standing on the consequences of one’s actions. As Nagel points out, ‘there is a morally significant difference between rescuing someone from a burning building and dropping him from a twelfth-storey window while trying to rescue him’ (Nagel 1979, p. 25). For Samina’s life in Australia, there emerges a morally significant difference in her view of herself on leaving Pakistan, to her view of herself as she is forced to compromise her values and her dignity as an Australian immigrant. The intention as jewel-like in clarity at its inception becomes tarnished by what actually eventuates.

It seems unjust that good intentions can turn to regrets, or more worryingly, that a person’s moral standing is contingent on the results of her actions rather than her intentions for them. Nagel puts it thus: ‘when someone acts in such ways he takes his life, or his moral position, into his hands, because how things turn out determines what he has done’ (Nagel 1979, p. 29). I like Nagel’s turn of phrase because it demonstrates that often the moral dimension of an act can only be properly declared by the results of the act. This means that an agent’s moral standing can only be retrospectively gauged – by herself and by others. There may be some differences as to how others judge the agent compared to how she judges herself; the point is that this reaches its full expression after the action. Thus, moral luck offers judgements that may counter the authentic intention of taking up one’s potentialities for being.

Margaret Coyne (1985) summarises the problem of agent-regret by saying that if it becomes a matter of luck that someone was justified in doing what they did, ‘then the successful moral life is no longer a career open to a talent possessed equally by all actors’ (Coyne 1984, p. 320). Coyne is saying that moral life is just as susceptible to inequalities as is the functional life. Contrary to Kant, therefore, it seems that the good will is not enough to confer good moral standing. Samina’s good intentions for migration are not enough to guarantee that she comes to see herself (or to be seen by others) as a good person.

I have pursued the analysis of moral luck in this section to demonstrate how thrown-being, as the founding source of one’s constitutive and circumstantial luck, is part of the ‘luck’ which feeds into future events of being and its consequent potential for regret, and also to show the damage that can result for a person’s perception of their moral self. In the next sub-section I am going to review arguments for ways to address the issue of moral luck.

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6 This is taken from the following quotation in the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals: ‘The good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes… it is good only because of its willing, i.e., it is good in itself… and if there remained only the good will (not as a mere wish but as the summoning of all the means in our power), it would sparkle like a jewel in its own right, as something that had its full worth in itself’ (Kant 1990, p. 394/10). Kant means that the rational will is good in itself, but moral luck demonstrates that the will can be judged as poor, weak and misguided after it has been exercised.
2.1. Accommodating moral luck

As a solution to the *a posteriori* nature of moral luck judgements, Nagel suggests that we should take the compatibilist view in which ‘One is responsible for what one actually does, even if that is dependent in important ways on what is not within one’s control’ (Nagel 1979, p. 35). He says that it is this internal view of agency that we extend to others in our moral judgements of them. We have a strong belief in our own agency and because we know we cannot anticipate all circumstantial or consequential luck, we do not tend to dwell too much on all the things which could go wrong. Therefore, we should accord others this basic condition for their actions and allow for luck that is necessarily out of their control. Before we judge someone poorly, we should stop and consider that perhaps they did not actually choose this lack, behaviour, or situation (for example). In the case of Samina, how can we justify blaming her for not being able to speak fluent English? We may not know how long she has been in Australia, we probably do not know what her exposure to English speakers has been. In fact, we will probably know very little about her circumstances when we meet her for the first time.

Coyne approaches the problem of luck pragmatically by declaring that luck is perfectly understandable in the context of an ‘agency-matrix’, which consists of a cluster of mutually sustaining concepts, for example: ‘agency, action, purpose, responsibility, choice, intention, success, and, of course, acting well or badly...’ as members of this group (Coyne 1985, p. 322). Not only is luck completely compatible with this concept of agency, Coyne insists that agency could not exist without it because it is only by *acting* that we run the risk of good or bad moral luck. Luck demonstrates the effects that could result because of any number of the myriad possibilities of connections between agents coming into being, which we cannot always control or predict. I could be the best driver in the world and still be injured in an accident with another vehicle because not only am I subject to the options for all the possible events that could happen while I am driving, I also do not know and cannot control the events which are in play with the other driver of the other vehicle. In Chapter 2 (section 4.1) I explained Nancy’s idea of *rapport* and *partage* as entities/events of being that are to be thought of as partitionable (*partage*) from a dynamic whole. Episodes of sense (the singular) are dependent on the relation (*rapport*) of singularities to the whole of available sense (the plural). Overlaying this concept on Coyne’s discussions, we get a Nancean view of what an agency-matrix is. If the plural is the set of all possible manifestations of sense from a given action (being-towards), then the singularity of sense that obtains is necessarily dependent on there being this plurality of possibilities in the first place. Thus an event of sense exists in rapport to all the possibilities of sense that could have manifested. Therefore, this original plurality is like the agency-matrix Coyne has in mind.
This thought of agency-matrix that cannot be fully known is part of my risk thesis which I shall be explaining in the next section. As existing ‘being-towards’ entities, opening to chance/luck/being is what we do. At the same time, our essence as rationalising entities is able to integrate the sense thus acquired into a meaningful world (or agency-matrix). Therefore, we can integrate ‘luck’ and use it to inform what we do next as choosing agents, even though the next choice is as susceptible to luck as our prior choices. As Coyne says, ‘We ought not be surprised that our lives, or large segments of them, and those pivotal episodes which give sense to large segments are adequately judgeable only in retrospect’ (Coyne 1985, p. 323). If we think of our lives as entangled with worldly events, that is, local and more widely ranging effects, then it becomes easier to see how results of actions can only be understood when viewed retrospectively.

Coyne’s solution is that ‘we have to learn to be moral without hoping, or worse pretending to be noumenal’ (Coyne 1985, p. 324). By ‘noumenal’, Coyne refers to the Kantian construct of the noumenal self, that is, the self who is not determined through physical laws (Kant 2007, p. 267). Her comment refers to having to live with the consequences of an existence which can only have meaning – moral or otherwise – within a context of world, i.e., being-in-the-world: ‘Courage, integrity, compassion, humility, dignity, and grace could not mean all that they do for us in a morally hazard-free world’ (Coyne 1985, p. 324). These are the traits by which we qualify ‘humanity’ and which can only be described thus because of adversity, because of the risk which attains to a moral self through existing.

Those who share with Williams and Nagel a belief in the real challenge of moral luck are David Statman (2005) and Mark Silcox (2006)⁷. David Statman follows the arguments of Coyne while rebutting the position of a particular detractor, Darren Domsky (2004). Domsky, together with David Enoch and Andrei Marmor (2006), Edward Royzman and Rahul Kumar (2004), reject the idea of moral luck on the basis of its paradoxical challenge and the unfairness inherent in judging a person morally responsible for more than what they are able to control. These writers’ projects are technical ones that attempt to explain away the problem of moral luck. However, I contend that these projects are problematic because they do not take seriously the complexity of the agency-matrix – the way causes and effects are resistant to dis-entanglement. Nevertheless, I wish to show that there are other perspectives on the problem of moral luck.

Domsky claims it is because of psychological biases that we find negligent agents to be more blameworthy for a negative result because of their negligence than equally negligent agents who get away with their negligence. Examples of these psychological biases is the selfish bias to favour

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⁷ Silcox (2006) argues that agents of moral luck are subject to a specific type of epistemic obligation: some amount of awareness of the possible consequences of one’s actions. In this regard, then, agents have a degree of responsibility.
facts that benefit us; this is often paired with the optimistic bias where we make unrealistically low estimates of our likelihood of being unlucky – especially in relation to our peers. Domsky’s solution, which is rejected by Statman, is that we should actively drop these biases (Domsky 2004, p. 464). Statman argues that Domsky does not really remove the occurrence of moral luck with his solution, and in addition, Domsky’s call to universalise feelings of shame and remorse for our psychological biases simply adds more of a psychological burden (Statman 2005, p. 436). I would concur with Statman that this solution of demonising the psychological bias neither accommodates the complex basis of human nature, nor does it solve the universal fact of moral luck.

Staying with the psychological approach, Royzman and Kumar (2004) appear to confuse ‘intent’ with ‘control’ in their argument that it is an ‘outcome’ bias which leads us to attribute more control to an agent than they actually have when the results come in (Royzman & Kumar 2004, p. 343). Meanwhile, Enoch and Marmor (2006) argue that the focus should be on the reaction to the outcome of the act rather than the moral status of the agent, meaning that blaming should be uncoupled from moral status.

I do not hold with these ‘solutions’ to the problem of moral luck since I believe that it is a real ethical dilemma which cannot be reduced to a psychological issue and solved through some cognitive modification. I am arguing that moral luck arises from the initial circumstances of thrown-being plus the vicissitudes of our consequent situations and that this has serious implications for how we think of each other and our own self. The challenge is to acknowledge such psychological biases while maintaining the view that luck is necessarily contingent. My thesis objective of a conscious remembering of the unchosen nature of our initial life circumstances and the possible contingencies these open up down the line, irrespective of the unpredictable nature of future events, may have an ameliorating effect on the way we think of our own selves (and others). This thinking is not intended to obscure what one is responsible for because of one’s actions, rather it is meant to expand one’s awareness of the person from his or her actions to their intimate challenge of responsibility for an initially unchosen life.

A commentator who is of special interest is Matthew King (2008). He claims that Sartrian ‘bad faith’ and moral luck suffer from the same problem – confusion as to what we can legitimately control. He says that we are free and we are factual, but we can only exist as one or the other at any given time (King 2008, p. 583). Very briefly, bad faith describes a form of self-deception between the factual self and the transcendent self that are co-existent aspects of the human being8. The

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8 ‘Bad faith’ is the denial of, or failure to coordinate, our freedom (transcendence; consciousness) and our facticity (the body and its history). If we reject either of these aspects of ourselves, we are in bad faith because we are refusing to recognize what it is to be human’ (Reynolds 2006, p. 73).
transcendent self as consciousness is essentially free. It embodies the idea of projective being. King tells us that ‘Every person is, in fact, an uneasy amalgam of for-itself and in-itself; consciousness and “facticity”’ (King 2008, p. 587). By this he means we are aware of our facticity, but our being is such that we are always ahead of this facticity. Our consciousness is ‘out there’ being. He says that in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre’s descriptions of bad faith are often concerned with flight from freedom (consciousness to facticity), but King wants to stress a more expansive interpretation of it. He argues that bad faith is also evidenced by flight from facticity to freedom, for example, ‘whenever I deny that my past has anything to do with who I am’ (King 2008, p. 588). In either case King says, we are acting in bad faith. What is at issue is the belief that we can control this slippage from one state to another and fix ourselves as one or the other, or fully both. At this point I will note that Heidegger’s and Nancy’s ontologies rejects the dualistic subject/object, transcendence/facticity structures which characterise Sartre’s philosophy. I am using King’s account here because it presents a ‘psychological’ perspective on the problem of control.

On King’s analysis the question of control is about whether we only view ourselves in our facticity or whether we only flee by our consciousness to a transcendent self. In every situation we exist either in the mode of freedom or that of facticity, but each state is on the verge of conversion to its opposite (King 2008, p. 589). The example King gives is of him hitting a ball against a window as a child. As he was doing so, he firmly believed that he had control of the situation and that the window would not break, but every so often there would be the flicker of doubt that the window could in fact break. The fact that he did not have control solidified when the window broke.

Returning to my own example, Samina’s daughters could imagine that they are like their peers, that is, until they return home from school and are reminded by their mother that their language and culture is quite different to that of their friends. Nevertheless, as young people do, they easily slide from facticity into illusion and back again. Thus, we are almost always in bad faith because we either claim we are tied to our thrown-being self (the identity Samina’s daughters may not desire to have), or we imagine that we can choose regardless of the thrown-being self (the identity the girls assume). It is the flicker of doubt, which is the realisation that there is no control over the movement that occurs between one way of being and the other that is the crux of the matter.

I will interrupt this train of thought with a question; if we do not have full control and understand that imagining we have it is illusory, how am I to ever act with conviction? How am I ever to cross the road again unless I can convince myself I will not be run over? On King’s account, and all the other acceptors of the problem of luck, I am destined never to be persuaded that I have control. All I

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9 *Being and Nothingness*, written by Sartre in 1943, is a thesis on existentialism and a defence of human freedom.
10 Sartre’s example for this effect is the homosexual who ‘refuses with all his strength to consider himself “a pederast”’ (Sartre 1957a, p. 63). The homosexual flees his facticity by claiming his freedom to not be what he has been.
can hope for is reliance on the evidence born of successful episodes of crossing the road that, if I am careful, I will get across this road again in one piece. Acting *with reservation* on our ability to control situations is to act on the basis of ‘good faith’, which is to be accepting of our epistemological limitations and the fact that we can never know everything. The challenge is always to keep this in mind while being open to new sense, new information. The danger, as Coyne puts it, is to slip into thinking that we are noumenal, that what we are now is how we will always be, or that we are in full control of the future. The argument I am therefore making is that we need to have at the forefront an acknowledgement of the danger of self-delusion as bad faith, together with an acknowledgement of the intractable complexity of agency whenever we decide or make a judgement.

I said King’s paper was of special interest; this is because in his description of the relationship of control and lack of control, facticity and freedom, I am reminded of authentic being and inauthentic being and their relationship to each other. Heidegger tells us ‘that authentic disclosedness is authentically nothing else than Being-in-the-world’, meaning that being authentic does not remove one from the contingencies of worldly being (BT p. 298). It is resoluteness which maintains the authentic self in its facticity despite the seductions of worldly being, that is, authentic being-towards one’s potentialities becomes possible as a resolution towards this facticity. The case I want to make from this premise is that the more committedly we engage with our potentialities, the less of the prescriptive ways of being we are likely to adopt. In particular, I am interested in the possibility of developing a disposition to think and form intentions more authentically without falling back on accepted norms. In this manner, thinking ‘creatively’ is a way of removing ourselves from being helpless when something unexpected comes along. I am interested in the possibility of cultivating the habit of being open to new sense, therefore, I am proposing that forming a habit of remembering the fact of our unchosen existences sets in place the understanding of being originally homeless. This very thought is conducive to an opening and receptivity to new sense. In this way ‘authentic disclosedness’ is resolute in one’s facticity while continuing as being-in-the-world. In terms of moral luck discussed so far, my conclusion, which takes into consideration the ontologies of Heidegger and Nancy, is that we are looking at an originary instance of moral luck when faced with the facticity of one’s own unchosen being, which if it is understood in this manner would make all other incidences of moral luck pale in comparison. At the very least it provides a precedent for framing the complex contingency and inter-relatedness that govern a life.

So far I’ve allowed Samina a rather gloomy view of her situation, however, if she is a creative thinker (as we know she is) and embraces risk and opportunity as part of life’s progress, I believe she would be heartened by the feedback she receives from her colleagues and daughters rather than
be downcast. If her colleagues have problems understanding her, she will strive to improve her English by engaging with them and her daughters more in speaking this language. If she wants her daughters to maintain some aspects of their culture, she might be more receptive to their situations and points of view as an initial step in mutual understanding.

Nagel endorses the view of acceptance of moral luck and the extension of this acceptance to others because we know that, ‘the things we are called upon to do, the moral tests we face, are importantly determined by factors beyond our control’ (Nagel 1979, p. 356). If we are never called upon to be brave or do heroic things our moral deficiencies or strengths would never be exposed. Our moral record would be different. Thus our moral record is dependent on the circumstances that influence us to act in some way or the other. Coyne’s view is that moral luck endorses the cultivation of the virtues on the basis that it supports an agent-centred defence from assault by a hazardous world. Writing as Margaret Walker (1991), she says that if there is no impurity to the moral self then there would be no need for integrity. Imagining a human being without integrity would lead to a very strange view of humanity indeed (Walker 1991, p. 21). Walker tells us that integrity protects and sustains the moral self. Without the vicissitudes of moral luck, that is if we were ‘pure’ agents, we would be responsible for much less, and the needs, vulnerabilities and sufferings of others would not be our problem (Walker 1991, p. 23).

Therefore, when we are judging others we must grant that they cannot always follow a maxim for their actions because we recognise that the complexity of agency, luck and risk-taking is part of being a free moral agent. On an individual basis, each person is called to surmount their challenges in ways that suit their unique circumstances. Their solutions often involve taking risks since each situation might call for unique responses which may not be comparable to either one’s own, or others’, past responses. Risk-taking, therefore, must be an admissible aspect of the moral self, which at the same time does not mitigate against moral responsibility for those actions that are taken. In the next section I will discuss the necessity of risk-taking in a life that is circumscribed by the effects of unchosen being and the contingencies of moral luck.

3. Risk and Creativity

The sort of risk-taking I want to discuss here is what one would regard as normal, course-of-life type risks. For example, the risks of leaving one country and moving to another, the risk involved in starting a romantic relationship, the risk of changing jobs, schools, courses... etc. Any of these events are opportunities for a positive outcome; however, risk also implies the possibility of failure,
particularly for courses of action undertaken for the first time without any reserve of knowledge for
guidance. Voluntary risk-taking is an everyday conscious choice between potential loss and
anticipated gain. The cause of all the angst, however, is that usually the anticipated gain is far more
firmly fixed in our sights than the potential loss for which we are usually unprepared. Thus, in
Saminas case migration to Australia was a conscious risk taken in anticipation of all the
improvements to their lives she thought they would experience. Undoubtedly there would have
been apprehension for the unknown, but this would have been precisely that, unknown. Looked at
in a wholly positive light one might say that even losses offer the potential for new expressions of
being. Therefore, the loss of her daughters as important familial participants in Samina’s religion
and culture could potentially broaden Samina’s outlook on other ways to be, other ideologies,
which while she does not have to convert to, may allow her greater connection with others who are
not like her.

This being the case, most people if questioned would say they don’t like taking risks. Yet how can
we reconcile this attitude with what is a fact of being? Heidegger tells us that ‘As understanding,
Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities... The projecting of the understanding has its own
possibility – that of developing itself” (BT p. 148). Therefore, our understanding develops itself by
projection onto further possibilities. Some of the big steps in life are self-defining and the self
changes as a result. Perhaps it is not the results of the new course of action that we fear the most,
but the new self that results. How do we extend ourselves in this way without losing our selves?

An epistemological reason for risk-taking is that it is a necessary process of learning. In discussing
why people take risks, Eric Von Magnus (1984) concludes that the concept of rationality cannot
provide a direct answer to a person’s preferences or willingness to take risks. Nevertheless, he says,
‘... preference systems can be viewed as modified over time, with feedback from one's own actions
and with information obtained in other ways. The general direction of change should be toward
preferences that generate actions [which] are increasingly effective in promoting the welfare of the
agent’ (Von Magnus 1984, p. 640). Thus, an initial risky action, if the outcome proves beneficial,
will become habituated and predictable over time. For example, the first time you drive a car in a
foreign country constitutes a risky situation if you are not familiar with the terrain or the road rules
of the place, but as you repeat the ‘risky’ endeavour it ceases to be risky, partly because previous
unknowns, those being the road rules and terrain, have been learned.

This epistemological view argues for the individual and the group drive to accumulate experience.
Von Magnus says there is a ‘large social element in the learning or feedback process that leads to
changes in unstable risk/benefit preferences’ where the society is encultured by a new process (Von
Magnus 1984, p. 643). By this he means that group experience with risk accumulates and evolves
over time in a utilitarian manner. At each stage of evolution the accepted norm for conduct is that action which produces a sort of ‘golden mean between perceived excesses of caution and recklessness’ (Von Magnus 1984, p. 643). An example he gives is the adoption of goggle-wearing in a metal-working shop. Before it became compulsory, not everyone would have taken up the practice and consequently the incidence of eye injury to those who did not wear them would have been high. But over time the benefit of wearing the goggles would gradually have come to be seen as the rational choice with a concomitant change in the practices of the group consisting of metal-workers.

I fully endorse Von Magnus’s view that there is a necessary epistemological component to risk-taking. This is a view that can be extended to education and the risks young minds need to take in order to form an authentic relationship to the information they are exposed to. Marianna Papastephanou (2006) is critical of Western society’s obsession with risk management in the educational process. She says education requires risk-taking, it needs the ‘creative jeopardy’ and response to the ‘learner’s longing for the risks that make life meaningful’ (Papastephanou 2006, p. 48). When schools act like organisations rather than like communities, academic results become the all important metric. Consequently, this may also be the mentality inculcated in the young learning community; that of risk management and avoidance at the expense of learning in a risky manner. Papastephanou endorses what educational philosophy says about the need for risk as an unpredictable and non-calculable force for teaching and learning, but she says what is also missing is an awareness of the ethical significance of risk as a topic in moral education. Sven Hansson (2003) observes that ‘Risks are inextricably connected with interpersonal relationships. They do not just “exist” as free-floating entities; they are taken, run or imposed’ (Hansson 2003, p. 302). By this he means that risk-taking requires the changing of relationships, either to oneself alone, but more usually with the self as well as with others. For anyone who lives in any sort of community, changes to one’s self will affect others. Places of education are inevitably places where there are changes to the self as a result of adopting new perspectives and new ideas. Papastephanou says that students should be prepared for the ethical complexities that will eventuate. Some disciplines, for example philosophy, force a re-examination of one’s position on certain ethical questions. If you are going to be an authentic participant in such study, you have to be prepared for a re-evaluation of your previously held beliefs. By way of an ontological analogy, the central implication of an authentic opening to Being is the ‘releasement’ that must be involved. This is the ‘giving way’ to Being\(^\text{11}\).

\(^\text{11}\) It is a view commonly held in the literature that ‘Releasement’ or \textit{Gelassenheit} represents Heidegger’s point of ambivalence towards the will of the individual as portrayed in resoluteness versus his ‘turn’ towards the destiny of
I will end this sub-section with another quote from Papastephanou’s paper. She says, ‘[a] critical ontology of risk involves recognition of the inherent contingency and finitude in human affairs, manifested in the inconclusiveness and revisability of knowledge, the exposure and vulnerability of the self and the incalculability of the effects of one’s life choices’ (Papastephanou 2006, p. 57). By this she means that through the contingency of life circumstances and events, the inter-relations of human beings, and concomitant limitations wrought by all of these, a human life emerges ontologically as something susceptible to damage. In the next sub-section I take the ontology of a human life a step further by comparing it to a work of art. My intention is to demonstrate that risk-taking, as living in all its positive and negative potential, is a vulnerable act of creation. As Margaret Walker contended, we are not pure agents, and our impurity of agency, which demands a response to and involvement with the products of our creativity, make us vulnerable and moral.

3.1. An ontology of risk-taking

In ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ (OWA) Heidegger talks about the ‘essence of creation’, of which the craftsmanship of the artist is only a part. The essence of creation is the ancient Greek *physis*\(^{12}\), which relates to nature’s tendency to grow and expand. Or, for our purposes, a risky action that initiates creativity (in the sense of new relationships to people, situations, ideas and so on), sometimes *beyond* what was intended.

Heidegger characterises creativity as follows: ‘to create is to let something emerge as a thing that has been brought forth’ (OWA p. 185). The important part of this definition is the ‘letting’. This essay is an example of Heidegger’s later work in which Dasein’s is seen as the revealer\(^{13}\), or the releaser, of Being. He also tells us in this essay that art as work (work-being) is the origin not only of the artwork but also of the artist (OWA p. 182). Heidegger thinks of creativity and the preservation of the artwork as the same process. Creativity generates the work and creates the artist as well. It is a dynamic of being involved with the work that brings forth what becomes the artist involved in its production and the preserver involved in its being seen as a work. There is necessarily a three-part involvement for a work-being to emerge. In bringing forth the strife between world and earth, the artist and her audience are obliged to ‘stay within the truth that is

\(^{12}\) Walter Brogan’s (2005) study of Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics* shows that these works thought Being as the source of being and non-being. Further, Aristotle’s focus for how beings were brought forth was on ‘phusis’ (also *physis*) rather than ‘techné’, which means production. As to the meaning of *physis*, Brogan tells us that Heidegger takes Aristotle to mean it to be ‘the name for the twofoldness of being’, that is the double movement of concealment and unconcealment (Brogan 2005, p. 23).

\(^{13}\) The human being in later Heidegger is shown as appropriated by Being for the play of manifestation and concealment. This play, otherwise known as ‘the event’, is described as *Ereignis*, ‘a concept which describes the relations among truth (unconcealment), Being (presencing), and Dasein’ (Heidegger 1999, pp. 22-23; see also Zimmerman 1986, p. 229).
happening in the work… This letting the work be a work we call preserving the work’ (OWA p. 191). The function of the preserver is to allow the artwork to be what it is, to become part of what is revealed. Heidegger’s argument encapsulates the experience of preserving as a knowing and willing which is not only about knowledge and not about deciding something beforehand, but rather the inherently ecstatic way the human being opens to Being. This approach of preserving he compares with resoluteness, which he emphasises, is not a deliberate action, ‘but the opening up of human being, out of its captivity in beings, to the openness of Being’ (OWA p. 192).

In the act of standing resolutely in the face of one’s facticity and away from the facility of the theyself with its familiarity of being-with other beings, Dasein must open to potential beings that are specifically its own. Such a stand phenomenologically delimits a Self. Heidegger says, ‘[t]he Self which the reticence of resolute existence unveils is the primordial phenomenal basis for the question as to the Being of the “I”’ (BT p. 323). The ‘I’ is whatever the self accepts of its facticity. This means that even though authentic Dasein will not know itself entirely, it must find relative meaning for itself in its thrown context. It takes ownership for not knowing while staying open to the possibilities for knowing.

The preceding discussion has been a further ontological analogy for ontic risk-taking. OWA has been useful to demonstrate graphically how the productive process of uncovering the truth of beings involves strife between the creative forces of concealment and revelation that are barely controllable. The artist, in working with his materials provides the intention to delimit a thing, but what eventuates is a being that has a revealing force, or truth, of its own. In making the artwork the artist himself becomes changed, remade. In the analogy of a life, a human being can only take up a potentiality for being something, but this being like the artist’s creativity acquires a truth of its own. This is where authenticity is relevant. It is one’s relationship with one’s life as uniquely one’s own that is important. It is within such an authentic relationship that one finds meaning and purpose – a place to call one’s own.

Sartre makes a similar ‘life as artwork’ analogy with reference to the life of Picasso: ‘When we speak of a canvas of Picasso, we never say that it is arbitrary; we understand quite well that he was making himself what he is at the very time he was painting, that the ensemble of his work is embodied in his life’ (Sart, p. 43).

Nietzsche, in the Gay Science meanwhile, declares that striving to love something rewards the individual eventually by becoming that without which we cannot make do and that which we are compelled to seek out. He says, ‘Even those who love themselves will have learned it this way; for there is no other way’ (Nietzsche 1974, IV, p. 334). In this way we may come to love our lives and
the selves it brings forth despite its unchosen nature and, using Nietzsche’s comments in the context of music, ‘it requires some exertion and good will to tolerate it in spite of its strangeness, to be patient with its appearance and expression’ (Nietzsche 1974, IV, p. 334). I fully acknowledge that appreciating a piece of music does not have the same imperative as appreciating a life over which one never had an original choice, but Nietzsche offers a hopeful message nevertheless.

Finally, I turn to Heidegger’s discussion of technology and his alternate view of poeisis that is also relevant to what I am claiming for living a life as a creative enterprise. In the ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ Heidegger describes what has happened to our relationship with the world since industrialisation as ‘enframing’. Enframing is how we come to view and relate to the world as instrumentally available to us. Everything is available, as a ‘standing reserve’ – a resource and way of understanding our world (Heidegger 2008, p. 324). The ‘destining of revealing’, that is, what is given by Being, is now attended by the instrumental intentions of the human being mediated by technology. The danger with this sort of revealing is that humans become so caught up in the process of ‘challenging’, or bringing forth beings, that they fall into themes of disclosure with which they do not have a directly responsible relationship. In what humans come to see as cause and effect, their own involvement becomes obscured. However, if human involvement is acknowledged, it will be seen that enframing is also a way of destining of Being that uses man as its means of revealing. What is revealed still bears the form of strife between revealing and concealment that I described in the work of art; however, we must understand that as purveyors of technology we are responsible for this technologically assisted revealing. The way to do this is through poeisis, which is the occasion for reflecting in the manner of the artist on how and what we produce, even though what is produced is not specifically art as we think of it today. In terms of the discussion of risk just undertaken, the approach of poeisis would give our relationship with the facticity of our lives a less instrumental tone and a more loving aspect (to bring in Nietzsche’s message) and one that is hope-filled for what may be accomplished rather than despairing or disengaged.

In the OWA, Heidegger is telling us that when we search for being there is only partial revelation; it is necessary to follow the path opened up by our clearing of the truth from concealing earth in order to stay with the being thus revealed. In shepherding this unfolding we must be responsible curators of our lives. In ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, art offers a way of putting us back into relationship with the world and seeing its resources as a gift of Being. Therefore, in the context of this latter essay, I could treat my life instrumentally in the sense that all the gifts I have been granted are for some further goal, some ordering of my life in the manner of enframing, or I could treat my life as an unfolding of potentiality that involves risk-taking which develops an intimate,
moral growth from an authentic relationship to the self. Also in relation to technological civilisation, Derrida (2008) writes that it “‘levels’ or neutralizes the mysterious or irreplaceable uniqueness of the responsible self” (Derrida 2008, p. 37). Objectively, however, what we often mean by an ‘individual’ in our current civilisation is not a person, at least not in terms of her relationship to her life, but rather the ‘role’ that individual has for us in our context. We make no effort to understand the other’s uniqueness since we can barely appreciate our own.

In the next sub-section, I develop the theme of authentic engagement with one’s own life by explaining how creativity and curating this life may be thought a moral function of the human being.

3.2. The necessity of risk and creation in a moral life

We now come to the question of how to integrate the fact of a being that as thrown is risk-taking with the further fact of our inevitable regret for failed or unwanted outcomes. Does the necessity of risk-taking and moral luck make it any easier to reconcile with our moral selves when bad outcomes happen? My response is that, yes, it should do – if we can accommodate the following ideas. These claims I am making take into account the human condition and are not deluded by inauthentic presumptions of control.

The first idea is basically a summation of my account for risk-taking. If I live my life creatively I will always be taking risks. If, as I have shown ontologically, an action is an uncovering and what is uncovered is only a partial revealing because of the strife between concealing ‘earth’ and our understanding, then ontically we will never uncover the full impact of what we are doing at the time of our doing it. The best we can hope for is that our actions reveal understandings that will help us to predict where we are being drawn, show us what further truth is attached to what we have already understood14. This is, of course, not to say that regrets do not arise from authentic commitments to act, but when they do happen at least one has something that was a desired creation to show for it – at the time.

A second idea, or way to think about risk-taking and loss attendant on bad outcomes, is that change is a necessary consequence of becoming. As we experience the clearing of a world another one may diminish or become closed off. Samina is actually happy that one of her two projects has been a success. She is relieved that her daughters have adapted to their new environment and taken up a culture that promises them greater freedoms and opportunities than they might otherwise have had. However, at the same time, she can see how her daughters have closed the door on Samina’s culture

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14 Brogan speaks of erōs as the motivation to know being. It is what enables one to bridge the gap between observer and the observed. Restraint and reserve is necessary in order to maintain this distance: ‘Because beauty is granted to the one who wins the struggle, he is drawn beyond himself to being by this divine erōs’ (Brogan 1984, p. 355).
and religion, which she herself still holds onto. By Nancy’s being-with ontology, singularization, or making sense, is a movement into and out of entanglement with other singularities. Samina’s daughters, as origins of sense, have moved onto other associations that make new sense. Their worlds have touched and engaged with other worlds signifying new meanings.

The final claim I want to make is the need to stay with the responsibility of one’s creativity. This is another conclusion deriving from ontological premises. From early Heidegger, responsibility entails the call for authenticity and for Dasein to take ownership of its own unique being. Nancy’s self, as a centre for making sense, also demands the dignity of this responsibility for the sense that is made. Sartre states ‘Man makes himself. He isn’t ready made at the start. In choosing his ethics, he makes himself, and force of circumstances is such that he cannot abstain from choosing one’ (Sartre 1957b, p. 43). Since human beings exist before they can consolidate their existences, this process of consolidation must necessarily be value laden. This means that the process of making ourselves, and consequently our lives, is a highly ethical enterprise. Most importantly, in making ourselves we must also understand that others are compelled to do likewise but in contingently different ways.

Of all the arguments I have made in this thesis the most grounding one is for the importance of relationship as the source of meaning in our lives. In the context of this discussion on luck I have made the case that the nature of a relationship is to some extent susceptible to moral luck.

Relationships can be risky events of being that can impact on each other and the resultant self. Some examples of this may be my boss who does not like the way I dress; or the way I have to conceal something of my background in order to be acceptable to my friends. Therefore, on both counts, I have to compromise the ‘purity’ of my moral self by being other than I would have chosen to be. Nonetheless, as thrown-projective beings, we have little choice but to be open to the possibilities for being/sense. As thrown-projective, existing beings we are being before we are consolidated selves accommodating the results of what we have been. Our knowledge of ourselves is always ‘catching up’ with our ‘being’. Accommodation of these two aspects of existence means having to take responsibility for the results of being while understanding that we have limited control. It is not easy to know what you could have controlled and what you could not have. Thus, I would conclude that there is no definitive moral self to be had, only a contingent one. Our moral selves are qualitatively proportional to the integrity with which we take up the responsibility for our actions, resolutely combined with the humility with which we acknowledge our limitations.

In all that we do, we must remember that each of us is playing the game of survival with a hand we did not choose. But with the strengths and weaknesses we have been allocated, we are nevertheless trying to find a place for ourselves in this complex relational world where our lives can be of value to ourselves and others.
4. Conclusion

Moral luck is an important ethical problem and in my thesis for thrown-being it has also been useful to show up some of the ways in which inequitable starts in life can also affect one’s moral self. To take one example, different people with identical projects (for instance, raising healthy and well educated children) can succeed or fail depending on the country the child was born in. I have claimed that individuals’ projects are differently influenced by inherited situations and characteristics. The discussions of moral luck in the literature normally use examples of circumstantial luck, which do not refer back to originary conditions. For example, in Williams’ famous example of the moral luck of Anna Karenina\textsuperscript{15}, we don’t know why she married someone she did not love in the first place. Was it possibly an arranged marriage and was this a norm of the culture she was brought up in? If this cultural norm was the original cause, then this would support my argument that much which influences the way we react to events, as well as the decisions we make in life, are contingently sourced to a thrown-being set of circumstances we did not choose.

I explained agent regret as the residual effect of this luck on the agent. The agent regrets what she did and wishes that she had not done it. However, this regret can colour her moral outlook on more than just the action itself; it can also reach deep into her moral self-perception. One source of luck is constitutive and circumstantial. I have argued that constitutional characteristics of the person and some of the derived circumstances of thrown-being are responsible for the way we act and how we react to the results of these actions. Another source of luck is consequential and is wholly the result of our actions.

I then went on to analyse some possible ways of reconciling with this luck. One way is to only take responsibility for what one is solely responsible for and accept that one’s control is limited. Accepting the fact of limited control is to also acknowledge that our agency is necessarily entangled with many aspects of being-in-the-world. To act is to expose oneself to the vicissitudes of luck. I also presented the views of some detractors of the idea of moral luck. These writers reject moral luck as a real problem and put the perception of the moral issues down to the way our psychological biases function. I do not accept their view as I contend regret for bad moral outcomes is a real deterrent to living one’s life authentically and meaningfully.

\textsuperscript{15} Anna Karenina is Leo Tolstoy’s tragic protagonist in his novel of the same name. She betrays her husband with another man and Russian society ostracizes her as a consequence. Her moral luck was to fall in love with Count Vronsky. It turns out to be bad moral luck since she loses access to her beloved son as well as her social standing. Her regret is for all of this and also with the decision she made to go off with Vronsky since, as it turns out, he was a poor choice of protector anyway. The depth of her regret and despair causes her to take her own life (Tolstoy 1961).
In a discussion of the preservation of authentic being in the midst of inauthentic world, I argued that forming a habit of thinking (and being) in an authentic way would have two benefits. The first is that it would be more expressive of our unique being. The second is that we learn to be more accommodating of moral luck and more resilient to its effects. The illusion of control is misleading and it is often better to admit to lack of control and act with reservation. We cannot know everything about a situation and it is beneficial to have a certain amount of humility in this regard.

I explained that the main way acceptors of the phenomenon of moral luck account for it is epistemologically; that it is necessary for creating the basis from which we act in new ways in the first place. Luck and the ways of being that accumulate as a consequence motivate many of the attitudes and sentiments we associate with being human. If there was no adversity in life, compassion and courage, for example, would not be part of the vocabulary for humanity.

I then went on to talk about risk specifically. We tend to avoid risk for fear of change. The consensus of the supportive literature is that we have to take risks in order to grow and learn. In this vein, I went on to draw an ontological analogy between a work of art and a human life. I argued that, like a work of art, a life is difficult to create. In art there is a struggle to bring forth something worthy of being called a work of art, a struggle that also ‘recreates’ the artist. In life it is a struggle to bring forth meaning and the defining structure of this life as my own. Like a work of art in the making, we have to take responsibility for the work of our lives and we have to tend the development of this life.

I summarise with three points. The first is that a lived life is a process of uncovering. Because of this there will always be hidden aspects to trip us up. The second point is that change is a requisite aspect of this uncovering. In the process we have to be prepared to lose – relationships, things of value, or aspects of the self, for example. But this is not a complete loss because in the space that is opened up some other being-toward becomes possible. The third point is that as makers of a life we are consequently responsible beings engaged in a moral enterprise.

In conclusion I reiterate my first argument: that we understand each other to be subject to the same originary luck, that of thrown-being. Since such understanding is only possible because being requires, in part, the sense made between selves, we have an additional onus. The other person’s life is just as relevant as ours in the sense we can make between each other. In taking care my life, I am beholden to take care for the life of the other. If I am despairing and so is everyone else around me, what hope is there for our shared sense to produce anything that could relieve this desperate situation? Van Gogh could not have created a thing of beauty with broken brushes.
Conclusion

1. Thesis summary

In this thesis I set out to focus on remembering that we did not choose our particular existence. I determined that this remembering required an examination of questions such as: what does it mean to be a human living an unchosen life? Can this meaning be extended to how we relate to others? How will remembering our unchosen existence help us reconcile with our circumstances, or help in our relationships?

In my Introduction I laid out some of the problems of an unchosen existence as I saw them. An obvious objection to my objective of remembering our unchosen being might be that if we all share the same fate, what is the benefit in thinking about it? We cannot very well rail against something that we are all subject to and which we cannot do anything about. However, my actual objective was not a call to protest, but rather to see if some guidance could be gleaned from an understanding of our shared situation of unchosen existence. In this thesis this understanding has been substantiated by an examination of the underlying facticity of a human being’s ways of being.

As I explained in the Introduction, it was in my relationship with my brother that the force of the arbitrariness, and the ‘built-in’ obstructions in an individual’s potential for a flourishing existence in communion with others, first arose in my awareness. Because I was in a familial relationship to my brother, it was plain to me that he would not have been as he was if he had a choice; consequently I also understood that I could not judge him either on his appearance, or his abilities. However, in our relationships to others we are not often enough aroused to such insightful conciliation. Hence, the case I have made in this thesis is that it is in our relationships to others where the remembering of unchosen existence must become explicit. My case is important because it is all too easy to judge someone on their superficial presentation to the world. It is equally too easy to feel sympathy for those less fortunate than ourselves, but dismiss the difference as a technical anomaly, or simply bad luck, and not think further on it.

I have argued for an approach to difference that goes deeper than an unjustified appeal to emotion. Instead my project addresses the logic contained in the facticity of abandonment to an existence we did not choose, but which must generate the searching/enquiring attitude we bring to that existence and our relationships with others. I am hoping that thinking of thrown-being as a familiar reflective habit might make us more open to our experiences of others’ lives as well as our own. We are all
equally affected by the uncanniness of our existence, which I have called our ontological homelessness and which follows us as a questioning of our origin.

In my first chapter I set the ontological scene for describing the condition of thrown-being. It begins to answer my first question of what it means to be in an unchosen existence. For this ontological grounding I referenced Heidegger’s existential analyses of what it means to be an existing being-in-the-world. Unchosen being is central in Heidegger’s ontology. A human’s way of being, as a consequence of it being unchosen, is to find itself thrown-forward into an existing ahead of itself. This thrown-being is quickly lost in everyday concerns. The everyday way of being-in-the-world is described as inauthentic when there is no engagement with one’s own facticity. Such a way of being helped me to explain how we can come to view our own lives instrumentally as a means to our projective ends. We also fall into judgement of others because of such an imagined shared ground of instrumentality. However, behind this ‘falling’ engagement with the world of others and equipment, there is an existential attunement of anxiety waiting to surface. Heidegger tells us that all fear of the unknown is based in this attunement. It arises from originary thrown-being and haunts forward-thrown being to the extent that we must face the lack of control we have over the source of our greatest concern, our existence. When thus faced with the uncanniness of our existence we may flee again into instrumentality, or embrace our homeless existence.

In Chapter Two I discussed how Jean-Luc Nancy defends an ontology of relationship, as he interprets the being-with existential, in order to explain how Dasein can be both authentic and inauthentic. His explanation shows that Dasein’s structure is multi-positional, that is, ontologically the human being has many sense-making positions, each known as Dasein-with, or being-there-with. Authentic being, while also being-in-the-world, has a functioning understanding of its own being-there position while being in relationship with others as being-there-with. Nancy’s reinterpretation of being-with others has helped me to underline the centrality of relationship to the meaning we take from our thrown-being circumstances. Nancy’s thesis of singular plurality helps to show how sense and meaning gives a multi-dimensional perspective to how singular beings can be seen in their plural openings to sense. Meaning is contingently made at each limit of sense. Specifically for my thesis, the limit of sense represented by the facticity of our thrown-being gives the meaning Heidegger calls ‘uncanniness’, or what I have explicitly called the meaning of homelessness. This meaning is really a question that travels alongside projective being-in-the-world. The analyses given in this chapter provide further development to the answer of what it means to have an unchosen existence, how to understand our relationships to others, and where unchosen being fits into this understanding.
The overall objective in Chapter Three was to think about the ontological basis for responsibility for one’s own existence, and consequently what this responsibility means for one’s relationship to others. The ground for thinking the question of responsibility is principally found in Heidegger’s analysis of authenticity. My discussion of authenticity renews the role of attunement in how we have our being. Anxiety once again shows itself as a fundamental motivator for being-towards; this time it is as concern with death and death’s uniquely individualising potential. Anxiety urges one towards authentic being and I describe certain characteristics of the authentic self that distinguish it. This self must stand resolute in acknowledgement of its facticity while maintaining its being-in-the-world. I discuss this requirement in terms of the real possibility for a self to be authentic and what this might look like. It leads to an explication of the possibility for responsibility and therefore ethical conduct. In order to consolidate these thoughts, I recall Nancy’s ontology and its singular plural role in making sense as being. Because of the ontological centrality of relationship in respect of the meaning of one’s being, I say that it is a question of one’s very self-understanding that one takes responsibility for the sense made between selves. A poignant point I bring out is the abandonment of being as homelessness that offers the ultimate basis for any experience of personal responsibility. If we are incapable of being responsible for an unfolding life, then we have little hope in taking up responsibility for the smaller things that feature in this life. In the final section I explain why I have been using ontological analyses to promote the answers to the questions being asked in this thesis. This explanation is necessary because the next two chapters relate to social issues that help demonstrate my motivation to ask these questions in the first place.

In Chapter Four, I explicitly detail ways in which a life can be undermined by an unchosen initial being. It brings into focus the question of how thinking ontologically about our thrown-being might fare in the real situation of inequality between individuals arising from their different starts in life. I discuss birth as the first graphic presentation of the inequality of thrown-being. Our very first dependencies involve people and circumstances that we do not choose. These dependencies in a developing self, plus its inherited characteristics and circumstances, contribute differentially to how we perceive ourselves, and are reciprocally perceived by others. Despite its unchosen condition I do not deny that being born into a life, however it may manifest, is worthy of gratitude for the opportunity it offers the existent to turn the sense-making of being into a life-story. There is also a foundational dignity in having to take up a life that one does not choose. I went on to discuss the social basis of inequality and the fact/value problem that this presents. A given society comes to value certain facts about an individual more highly than others, for example, having skills over a lack of skills and being able-bodied over disability. Those who do not meet such criteria, or standards, are differentially regarded and become more needy of supplementary support from the administration of such a society. For an egalitarian society that cares about the needs of
disadvantaged groups, this poses an administrative problem. Forms of distributive justice offer a partial solution to these groups. At the individual level, I discussed the merits of asymmetrical reciprocity where this must function across difference. Communication, as the ontic manifestation of how sense can be made as events of existence between selves, happens across difference as a matter of course. One speaking position cannot be the same as another. It is when these positions are tainted by social inequality that this communication becomes a challenge. It is the respect we bring to this communication that will determine how we shape our own selves as ethical beings. At the same time if we can also remember the initial unchosen nature of individual lives, this might deepen our respectful communication.

The topic of the final chapter is luck and the concept of risk as a way of being a futurally oriented entity. We are beings thrown from an unchosen beginning into a being-ahead of any understanding or choice of this mode of being. In concrete terms we are dogged by the luck of our birth circumstances and thereafter contingently exposed to wherever the complexly interconnected features of our lives take us. Viewed objectively, one might think of a lived life as an exercise in risk-taking and creativity. I engage with Thomas Nagel’s and Bernard Williams’ classic treatises on moral luck and agent regret, which describe how bad luck can come to shape the moral self as a result. It does not matter if the results of an action voluntarily taken were not within the person’s power to control; the effect of a bad result can taint that individual’s moral self-image as well as her relationships of sense to the world. In relation to the idea of control, if we are authentically disposed to think about our unchosen origins we will realise that we do not have full control over our potential beings either. This is understandably an undesirable prospect, one we are loath to acknowledge. Instead it is more likely we would approach it in the inauthentic mode, imagining that our futural being will be what we will it. However, if we are to genuinely embrace the reality of our unchosen existence, we must also be ready to embrace the contingent nature of the future. That is, we cannot know what result will come of our thrown-forward way of existing, but at the same time we must be ready to be open to taking the risk. Remembering that we did not originally choose these lives of ours is a start to embracing the contingency of one’s existence and extending this appreciation to others.

2. Synopsis and future work

In this thesis I have contended that there is a need for a foregrounding of our awareness of the originary unchosen nature of a human life. It is confronting in positive and negative ways to seriously engage with the thought that we could have been other than we are. It is even less easy to
extend this thought to other lives. The reason I have pursued the possibility of this ethos in this thesis can be summarised as the hope for better a relationship to other lives and that of our own.

If an individual were able to be more aware of the unchosen nature of their facticity, they might also be able to understand their particular paradigm of behaviour and reconsider any self-justificatory tendencies as a result. Reflecting on unchosen existence might have a levelling effect on a life we might take up as a right or reject as an injustice. What would the benefit of this thinking be for inter-personal relationships? If we ask ourselves why we live in a particular way, then we must also ask why we relate to others in a particular way. It may be that we cannot do anything about changing these relationships, but we can think critically about the possibilities of alternate ways of being until it actually becomes possible to be that way. When we change our relationships to someone, when we open in a new way to sense, there is always the danger that doors will close in our face, as Richard Sennett has argued. However, such a possibility is part of what it is to have a being-towards future possibilities. The main characteristic of such a being is risk-taking since the possibility of failure is interspersed with the opportunities for success. We are all finite beings and consequently can only have ‘being-towards’ in a finite number of ways; therefore, some potentialities must involve a closing-off while others initiate an opening onto new sense. What I have argued for in this thesis is a closing off of those relationships to others which are superficially derived from inauthentic sense, what the they have instituted, and replacing them with an understanding of living as a creativity which has to struggle against the grain of the material conditions of thrown-being.

The thinking in this thesis could be incorporated into the growing research field of ‘relational autonomy’. Lauren Freeman (2011) is an example of a writer who argues that selfhood is derived from relationship with others. She points to the elements of this understanding already present in early Heidegger: his emphasis on embodied perception and his privileging of mood and affectivity are some of the examples she gives (Freeman 2011, p. 362). Another writer, Annette Baier, (1985) has argued that persons are really ‘second persons’ and uses Descartes’ Meditations to explain her argument. She means that a person becomes a ‘second person’ by virtue of being an historically consolidated being, as well as through the connection we have to others by language (Baier 1985, p. 186). Therefore, following on from these two writers as exemplars of the work in this area, I would advocate a relational ethic that targets the parenting and caring of the young thrown-being. Why? Because if selfhood is derived from relationships to others, it is imperative that at the very outset it should be understood not as a ‘necessary evil’ where we should nurture certain relationships to the detriment of others, but that all relationships are already embedded in a common understanding. To bring this understanding to the fore in the young is to encourage the practice of moderating our
superficial judgement of others. It will also enhance the compassion and courage of the self that develops.

As a very final comment, I would like to refer back to the Heidegger quote at the beginning of the Introduction to this thesis. In it Heidegger declares that ‘thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against Being’. The blasphemy he is referring to lies in the closing off and subversion of the thinking that being demands, which is a fundamental openness to sense and meaning. We close off this opening because of our objectification of what constitutes an ‘ideal’ life, or way to be. Thus, unchosen being itself is not the problem; it is how we choose to think of a person’s unchosen being as a legitimate basis for judgement and dismissal of them that is the problem. If we could only think in terms of the challenge our lives demand of us, rather than what value they represent, we might moderate our blasphemous tendencies.
References

*Indicates abbreviations used in-text for Heideggerian works.


*BT in the reference; Page numbers refer to those of the original German text.*


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