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Political Treatments of Heidegger: The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger in the Work of Four Recent Theorists

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by

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Introduction

Section 1) Background

In seeking to illuminate the state of political theory, the best approach is often to try and understand the divisions central within it at a given time. The topography of Ancient thought can be examined in the study of the differences between the Platonic Kallipolis and the Aristotelian polity; the Lockean focus on consent as opposed to the Hobbesian one on authority reflects similarly the thought of the seventeenth century. Likewise, much of the thought of this and the last century centred on whether the collective had needs and rights which should be allowed to subsume those of the individual.

A couple of things emerge from an examination of the political theories of these and other eras. Firstly, the differences in the institutions and policies advocated by the thinkers in a particular era usually stem from the different answers they give to what they consider more basic questions about reality. Thus, Plato and Aristotle focus on how politics can best reflect the truths of moral reality, the nature of which they debate. Hobbes and Locke circle around competing accounts of how the natural law should be understood. Much light is shed on the clash between Marxism and liberalism by Isaiah Berlin's distinction between the commitments involved in the notions of positive and negative liberty. A second realisation emerges on consideration of this point; political justification frequently rests on the identification of certain key features of a pre-political reality.

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Perhaps the defining expression of recent political theory, on these terms, is John Rawls's 1971 publication of *A Theory of Justice*. Rawls deduces the titular theory, with which to bound an accompanying political system, through the identification of what he takes to be the identification of the key ontological feature of modernity: the autonomous, volitional self. Whether this is a fair reading of what is a complex book is, in the context of this thesis, a peripheral question. What is of interest, however, is what emerged from the debate which sprung up between 'liberals' and 'communitarians' in the wake of *A Theory of Justice*. The focus of this debate—whether this reading of Rawls's image of identity could serve as the basis for a theory of political obligation—and its subsequent development marked the entrance into the mainstream of many of the issue and themes that are the concern of this thesis.

The debate that Rawls initiated focused mainstream critical attention on the predominant ontological *motif* which underlies the bulk of the political theory of modernity. In addition to the questions concerned with whether or not Rawls had correctly identified the requisite features of our identity upon which to ground his theory arose the further question of what was involved in the search in itself. This set of questions does not, of course, originate in this context nor is it limited to the Rawls debate in present theory. Rather, this aspect of the Rawls debate is emblematic of a wider, radical claim that it is not just the content of modern answers to questions of who we are that has been unsatisfactory, but the terms in which these questions of identity

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3 A debate too subtle and extensive to detail here. Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift's *Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) surveys the debate in which Michael Sandel is often seen as Rawls's pre-eminent, early antagonist.
have been phrased. It is the nature and ramifications of this claim that this thesis addresses.

In surveying the present state of political theory, it is increasingly apparent that what might be broadly termed the postmodern turn in intellectual life, coupled with the social and technological changes somewhat amorphously grouped together by theories of 'globalisation', have combined to undermine even the minimal consensus which used to characterise much of political theory. Specifically, the universalist and foundational aspirations of the conception of the self central to modern thought have come under attack.

This attack has come from several sources. The philosophical foundations of modernity have been attacked by thinkers including Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Habermas, Foucault, Rorty, Taylor and Derrida. Further, the social and political limitations of a modernity based on the notions of objectivity, neutrality and impartiality, which are frequently taken to accompany the conception of the detached self, have also come under scrutiny. The communitarian expression of this position has already been mentioned but the theme is continued in the writings of some of the philosophers I have just referred to, as well as those of Lyotard, Deleuze and Levinas and the school of what White calls "difference feminism". In the United States, Stephen K. White has

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6 For a discussion of these three see O'Sullivan and White as in footnote 4 above.

7 White Political Theory and Postmodernism, p. 95. Leading proponents might include Carole Gilligan, Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser, as cited therein.

8 Ibid.
undertaken a critique from a Habermasian perspective, whilst William E. Connolly has built on the work of Foucault in a similar manner.

All of these thinkers share a rejection of what they take to be the unacceptable pretensions associated with the modern emphasis on the Subject. Some of them seek to comment directly on the moral and political implications of those pretensions; others go further and seek to provide alternative moral and political theories themselves. This thesis offers an analysis of one particularly influential branch of the attack on the modern conception of the self— that related to the work of Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger is a natural starting point for several reasons. The more specific, thematic reasons are considered in the following section. Two more general reasons are worth noting here, however. Firstly, Heidegger is cited by many recent contemporary social and political theorists as a major influence. All of the theorists I focus on in this thesis acknowledge him as an important influence. Heidegger raises many of the key questions around which the debate between modernists and postmodernists centres. Secondly, Heidegger himself has become the focus of some recent studies about the nature of political theory and identity⁹. Their suggestion is that Heidegger's work contains the seeds for a critical rethinking of the way politics and political theory is conducted.

This thesis sets out to examine the value of the work of Heidegger and his successors in this regard. I am interested in

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each case in whether or not the theorists I am examining offer persuasive treatments of subjectivity, modernity and, where they attempt to do so, politics. I aim to determine what each thinker has to offer the political theorist; some thoughts about which I offer in the concluding section of this introduction. My aims determine that this thesis is not a specialist study of Heidegger’s work but a more general survey of the impact he has had, and may yet have, on contemporary political theory.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first focuses on providing my interpretation of those parts of Heidegger’s work which I consider relevant to the political theorist. This section culminates in a consideration of those features—emerging from Heidegger’s critiques of subjectivism and modernity—alongside what I take to be Heidegger’s political limitations. These limitations stem, I argue, from Heidegger’s failure to frame a theory of the relationships between subjects which adequately accounts for the differences that exist between them. Heidegger understands intersubjectivity in terms which largely ignore the negotiations and clashes in wills and desires that are the stuff of politics.

The second part of the thesis looks at the influence of Heidegger’s work on four recent theorists. The aim is to present an account of the success or otherwise they meet with in taking Heidegger’s philosophical insights, concerning the nature of agency and modernity, and developing them into theories of intersubjectivity. In each case, however, my guiding interest is in seeing what their thoughts on subjectivity, modernity and (where this is an explicit concern) politics have to offer the political theorist. The following section outlines the path of my reasoning
in the thesis and gives an account of some of the conclusions I draw. My third section gives a summary of how these themes and conclusions are structured within each chapter and in relation to each thinker.

Section 2) Themes and Conclusions

2.1 Thesis- Part 1

It is against this background that my thesis moves. The first part of it seeks to offer an account of Heidegger's philosophy as it relates to, in the first instance, understandings of subjectivity and modernity. The concluding chapter of the first part of the thesis draws these themes together and offers some considerations of their political implications.

Heidegger's work has been the focus of much recent interest for two reasons. Firstly, his thought provides an early and powerful statement of the philosophical objections to the traditional emphasis on the Subject. His work serves as both a motivating force and a resource for many of the most influential critics of modernity and its politics who have come after him. Heidegger is thus at the root of the thoroughgoing critiques of modernity which influence much of contemporary political thought.

Secondly, Heidegger's attempts to apply his philosophical insights to moral and political matters are truncated; from an abortive theory of the state to his own disastrous involvement in the Nazi party. The nature and implications of Heidegger's fascism have been the subject of numerous studies\(^\text{10}\) since the 1987

\(^{10}\) The key moments of the Heidegger Affair, and some of its implications for the man's philosophy are the focus of, amongst others, Richard Wolin (ed.) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge, Ma: MIT
publication of Victor Farias's *Heidegger and Nazism*. I argue in my third Chapter that Heidegger's philosophical challenge remains in place despite his political failings.

For all the strength of Heidegger's criticisms of the bases of modern moral and political theory, it is clear that he, for all his aspirations, does not develop a satisfactory alternative account of politics. There have been a number of explanations proffered as to why that should be so. In my first Chapter, I reject the arguments of those who seek to locate Heidegger's political failing in one aberrant aspect of his philosophy. Distinguishing between two moments in Heidegger's philosophy, the hermeneutics of everydayness and suspicion, I argue that the two cannot be separated off (and one removed) without losing the full meaning of Heidegger's work. Arguing instead that the two hermeneutical dynamics exist symbiotically, I trace how this reading of Heidegger offers an analysis of Subjectivity which is situated within the context of a criticism of the hegemony of technical or instrumental rationalism.

It is in this light that I consider Heidegger's treatment of modernity. I thus conclude that Heidegger's rejection of much of modernity cannot be characterised merely as a failure to expunge the last vestiges of objectivism from his thought or as a product of personal idiosyncrasy. The challenges Heidegger poses to the moral and political understandings of modernity are an integral part of his philosophy and persist even after his political failings.
affiliations are known. I give some consideration to Heidegger's Nazism, therefore, but the focus of my Chapter on his politics is on why his characterisations of agency and modernity do not translate into a satisfactory political theory.

Since the problem cannot be identified with some superfluous or revocable part of the ontology Heidegger offers, I attribute his political failure to what is omitted from his account. Specifically, what I argue he lacks is an account of the relationships between agents which utilises the language of intersubjective difference. This approach, which focuses on the actions and differences that exist between agents in considering social and political meanings, is, I argue, compatible with Heidegger's thought although he eschewed it in favour of a political understanding that privileged the disastrous moral and social understandings of his time.

I conclude that Heidegger's political failing emerges from his own overdetermined rejection of the politics of modernity as marked by an instrumental rationalism. Heidegger assumes that the dominant political understandings of modernity- the liberal 'I' and the collective 'We'- are immediate extrapolations from an instrumentalist understanding of agency to which he is opposed. For reasons I discuss in the second part of my thesis, I do not assume that this is true of all modernist understandings of the relationships between agents. I do not believe, however, that this means one can, as recent commentators have, simply distinguish between a paradigmatic and a practical understanding of politics in order to place Heidegger's thought wholly at one pole or the other.

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12 I consider the works of Stephen K. White and Fred Dallmayr, already cited, emblematic in this regard. Miguel de Beistegui, in *Heidegger & the political: dystopias*, is another recent theorist who has also argued for such a distinction.
Rather, Heidegger's work questions the universalist assumptions upon which this division is itself based.

Thus, my consideration of Heidegger's philosophy culminates in two conclusions. The first is that Heidegger's criticisms of Subjectivism do pose a challenge to the moral and political self-understandings of modernity which endure beyond the obvious shortcomings of his own alternatives. Heidegger's relevance to the political theorist is twofold. He undermines a key component in many modern theories of political justification- the belief in the epistemological centrality of the autonomous volitional individual- whilst offering an alternative method with which to develop an account of our agency. My second conclusion concerns those seeking to develop these Heideggerean insights concerning the nature of agency into accounts of intersubjectivity that, in turn, frame either moral or political understandings. If one wishes to avoid Heidegger's political limitations, one needs an account of agency that does not characterise intersubjective difference without reference to social or political action.

2.2 Thesis- Part 2

The second part of the thesis examines the efforts of four theorists- Sartre, Foucault, Connolly and Charles Taylor- to develop the themes of Heidegger's work. They are united in accepting Heidegger's argument that the epistemological Subject cannot deliver the certitude at which it aims. Each moves instead from a position that draws on or modifies Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology.
In looking at these thinkers I have three considerations, each of which emerges from my earlier treatment of Heidegger's thought. My first concern is the extent to which the thinker in question incorporates Heidegger's insights into their own understandings of agency. Secondly, I focus on how the thinkers I look at translate their theories of agency and identity into accounts of the nature of intersubjectivity. In the light of these concerns, thirdly, I ask how the answers given by each thinker contribute to an understanding of political theory. In the cases of Charles Taylor and William Connolly I do this by a direct consideration of their theories of politics; in Foucault's case, as with Heidegger, I look at his tentative treatment of political reason. Rather differently, I argue that Sartre's theory of intersubjectivity could not be developed politically because it is based on an account of identity that does not, in fact, meet the challenges Heidegger's philosophy poses.

Each thinker responds, in some way, to the concerns raised in the first part of my thesis. Sartre argues that Heidegger's political failing stems from his failure to provide an adequate account of intersubjectivity. I concur that this is indeed a crucial omission on Heidegger's part. In contrast to Heidegger, however, Sartre seeks to remedy this through the provision of an account of agency that remains within the philosophy of consciousness. I offer arguments, following Heidegger's criticisms of Sartre, that this perspective does not allow Sartre to address the full force of Heidegger's criticism of the instrumental rationality which characterises modernity. My interest in Foucault, Connolly and Taylor centres, therefore, on how they aim to provide a theory of intersubjectivity that responds to this aspect of Heidegger's understanding of identity.

Foucault's contribution is to apply Heideggerean suspicion to what can be seen as the more subtle operations of instrumental rationality in modernity. For Foucault, human agency is to be understood wholly in terms of power. This allows Foucault to uncover the constructed, and hence contestable, nature of many of the basic concepts of modernity—prime amongst them the notion of the autonomy of the individual. Hence, Foucault follows Heidegger in rejecting the notion of autonomy central to much modern thought. From this perspective, Foucault provides multiple histories which aim to show how moral and political justifications based on claims to universal or foundationalist truth invariably mask the workings of power.

William Connolly attempts to illustrate how a political theory based on these analyses might operate. My argument is that this politics could not support an account of political legitimacy but would, in fact, mirror the aesthetic adventurism which characterises Heidegger's approach to the state. This I attribute to the limits of the Foucauldian conception of power with which Connolly operates.

I do not, however, draw the conclusion that Connolly is simply a confused nihilist. Rather, I argue by way of a comparison with Heidegger's work, the Foucauldian understanding of power focuses on Heidegger's hermeneutics of suspicion whilst overlooking the hermeneutics of everydayness in a way that it need not. Foucault and Connolly offer a useful corrective to those who would seek to cast the products of this hermeneutical dynamic in ahistorical, universalist terms. Hence, they offer an useful critical perspective on some attempts to derive political identities from
'hidden' claims to moral or political privilege- a slippage to which Heidegger himself is susceptible. Despite this, I conclude, any moral or political theory that offers an understanding of either authority or legitimacy needs to draw on resources that Foucault and Connolly do not theorise.

This concern- that, as Mark Bevir puts it, Foucault "leaves himself no epistemological or normative grounds on which to build his own histories with their ethical connotations"\textsuperscript{14}- is shared by Charles Taylor. He seeks to temper the hermeneutical suspicion which underpins Foucault's accounts of moral and political action with the claim that the meanings of everyday life can be qualitatively distinguished. For Taylor, the language of undifferentiated power alone cannot account for the full range of phenomena central to our self-understandings. He argues instead that our need and capacity to make evaluations in the name of better or truer self-understandings betrays our need to both explain and orient ourselves to our moral realities.

Taylor argues that the instrumental conception of reason and the punctual self alone cannot account for these phenomena. Taylor is drawn to two phenomenological conclusions. The first is that the nature of agency is essentially dialogic; our meanings arise only within social contexts. For Taylor, therefore, both instrumental reason and the atomistic conception of agency can themselves only be understood against a background which surpasses those meanings. Taylor's second conclusion concerns the nature of that background; the best explanations of our moral identity lead, he claims, to moral objects outside of the merely human.

\textsuperscript{14} Mark Bevir, "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy", \textit{Political Theory}, vol. 27, no. 3 (Feb. 1999), p. 70.
Taylor thus argues that Heidegger's work is of value in demonstrating what he calls the "engaged" nature of agency, and that this will lead not to a rejection, as Taylor reads Heidegger here, but an awareness of the partiality of the self-understandings of modernity. A reconsidered understanding of the nature of agency will, claims Taylor, lead to a theory of intersubjectivity that, in turn, will lead us to reframe what we demand and expect from the political realm. For Taylor, politics can no longer be conceived of as the defence of pre-socially autonomous individuals. Rather, he argues, politics ought to be indexed to an account of agency that makes reference to the role of intersubjective action in the realisation of our moral identities.

My argument is that the strength of Taylor's work lies in his development of a theory of intersubjectivity which, by encompassing aspects of both the hermeneutics of suspicion and everydayness, develops Heidegger's insights about the limits of subjectivism and modernity. Further, and in contrast to Heidegger, Taylor develops this theory in a way that does not reject outright the products of modernity. This, I argue in the first part of the thesis, is in line with Heidegger's philosophy of agency but not his approaches to moral or political practice. Hence, Taylor's theory of intersubjectivity allows him to countenance the instrumental and technical aspects of ordering a society. This, in turn, means he is able to index moral and political understandings to the relationships and actions between individuals rather than the more amorphous 'sendings of Being' that mark Heidegger's later work.

Taylor's theory of intersubjectivity, from this perspective, promises to be a more satisfactory base to a political understanding that aims to mediate between the differences which emerge between subjects. I argue, however, that the second set of conclusions Taylor draws from his application of the Best Account principle undermines the development of a satisfactory theory of political identity. Taylor's belief that our moral and social identities are indexed to preterhuman moral objects is, I argue, not phenomenologically secure in the way Taylor claims.

My analysis suggests that this leads Taylor to demand more of the political realm than a less ambitious interpretation of our moral reality would support. As a result, I argue, Taylor premises political rights and obligations on a moral identity that is more demanding than the resources of modernity or his own subscription to phenomenal transparency as expressed in the Best Account principle, allow. Through an analysis of his treatment of some recent political theory I draw out some of the implications this has for Taylor's theory of political identity. I conclude that Taylor offers an important insight about the limited and situated nature of any account of political justification but that this is not carried through to his own political account. In the final analysis, therefore, I conclude that Taylor underplays the centrality of the negotiation of conflict as the basis of authority and legitimacy in both his own and liberal political theory.

2.3 Conclusions

The thesis ends by drawing together my analyses of the thinkers I have looked at with some conclusions about what they have to offer the political theorist. All the thinkers I look at in this thesis
are linked by their refusal of the primacy of the traditional epistemological conception of the self. Each is united in arguing that we cannot approach the understanding of our agency in the terms of the model of knowledge prevalent in modernity— which privileges universal and atemporal certitude.

One of Heidegger's strengths lies in his phenomenological demonstration of the limits of the image of the detached Subject seeking knowledge of an external, objective reality. What Heidegger and those who come after him establish is that this understanding of existence cannot account for the meanings central to the full range of phenomena we countenance.

This has an immediate implication for those interested in moral, social and political theory. Put simply, those positions that draw their power or legitimacy through an appeal to the fundamental nature of the Subject-object division require rethinking. The thinkers I have looked at all identify at least the moral understandings of modernity as premised on one of the products of this division; a theory of identity based on the epistemological conception of subjectivity. This conception is deemed, at best, partial by the theorists examined in this study; they are further united in their belief that this has had damaging implications for the moral and social practices of modernity.

It is in their responses to this problem that one can determine both the differences between each of the theorists I look at and a second phase of interest to the political theorist. Each seeks to establish a new understanding of agency which, in turn, leads them to frame alternative theories of intersubjectivity. Examining these theories allows one to see how various alternative
understandings of agency produce different accounts of politics. Looking at these theorists and their theories of identity, intersubjectivity and politics (where they develop them) thus allows the political theorist to consider and evaluate some of the options available in the wake of the criticisms of modernity offered in recent times.

Sartre's work offers a reminder of the depth of the problem facing the political theorist in modernity. Sartre reinforces Heidegger's message that there can be no external objects around which we can construct a theory of truth that will provide an absolute or universal grounds for justification. For Sartre, therefore, the conflicts between individuals and their values will remain a persistent feature of the relationships between individuals.

If the problem of political conflict cannot be eradicated by reference to an external certainty, the work of Foucault suggests, neither can that certainty be located within an account that takes conscious Subjectivity to be the irreducible starting point. Foucault's focus on the operations of power in some of the most basic institutions and understandings of modernity- most notably the autonomy of the wills, desires and choices of the Subject-offers a caveat against any attempt to produce a theory of justification or legitimacy that is phrased in absolute or universal terms.

Charles Taylor, however, argues that the language of power alone does not allow one to account for the moral dimensions of our agency that are central to our existence. Taylor's work goes on to demonstrate the need for some theory of justification and
legitimacy, whilst accepting that this will not be phrased in absolute terms.

Thus, although none of these theorists in themselves offer sufficient resources with which to construct a political theory, they are of interest to the political theorist. Each develops Heidegger's criticisms of modernity in ways that cast light on the scope and state of political theory after the collapse of confidence in traditional conceptions of the self.

At the same time, however, I reach a more negative conclusion concerning the political theories, actual and potential, offered by the theorists I look at. Having linked Heidegger's political errors (actual and theoretical) in part to his failure to separate his ontology of agency from his understanding of intersubjective action, I argue that a similar conflation occurs in the work of the other thinkers in this study. I trace how this leads to limitations in the explicit political theories offered by Connolly and Taylor and in the less developed political thoughts and proclamations of Foucault and the early Sartre.

Specifically, I argue that the revised ontologies of agency offered by the theorists in this thesis do not identify features of our existence which can, in themselves, ground an account of political legitimacy. Rather, these features must be located in a consideration of intersubjective action which allows for the differences between subjects. Thus, in the final instance, I argue that the study of Heidegger and his successors restates the need for a political identity that has a degree of autonomy from the identification of philosophical, moral or social truths.
Section 3) Chapter Summaries

What follows is a brief outline summary of each chapter of the thesis. The themes I treat, and the general conclusions I reach, have been considered above. These summaries, therefore, offer a brief statement of the content and structure of each Chapter.

3.1 Chapter 1: Heidegger and the Critique of Subjectivism

Heidegger's critique of the philosophy of the Subject is one of the major planks upon which the postmodern turn, outlined above, is built. Thus, if one wants to understand the philosophical pedigree of the recent challenges to political theory posed from this quarter, an examination of Heidegger's work is necessary. Hence, my first Chapter is concerned with showing how an understanding of Heidegger's work illuminates the contemporary emphasis on the difficulties of basing political justification on a model which draws on the universalist assumptions and aspirations of traditional epistemological theory.

As I argue throughout the first part of the thesis, looking at Heidegger's work in this regard is doubly revealing. In the first instance, this is because Heidegger's own account of the philosophy of subjectivism is located within a body of thought which includes a critique of the conception of reason that is an integral part of the self-understandings of modernity. Secondly, I claim in my first Chapter, there is a confusion amongst many recent thinkers as to the context in which Heidegger's critique of the philosophy of subjectivism occurs. This, I argue, means that some of the accounts which claim to develop Heideggerean insights on the philosophy of the subject do not, in fact, do so. Indeed, my
conclusion is that typically these thinkers actually offer a weaker critique of modernity and its politics than is to be found in Heidegger.

### 3.2 Chapter 2: Heidegger and Modernity

My second Chapter is therefore dedicated to developing an interpretation of Heidegger's philosophical nexus, particularly in the light of the two symbiotic hermeneutical dynamics (of everydayness and suspicion) I identify in my first Chapter. In doing so, I examine the links between Heidegger's critique of subjectivism and his rejection of the understandings and institutions of modernity. Pursuing this serves the second of my main interests in Heidegger's work; the identification of a particularly powerful link between the errors Heidegger associates with subjectivism and what he takes to be the dominant aspects of modernity—humanism and instrumental, technical reason. In the absence of any clearly humanist perspective (and therefore in contrast to some of the thinkers who lay claim to Heideggerean orthodoxy looked at in the previous Chapter), I argue that some of the immediate links made between Heidegger's comments on subjectivity and the self-understandings of modernity and his politics—by his supporters and detractors alike—are, at best, vitiated. The premature politicisation of Heidegger's philosophy, both by himself and later commentators, obscures, I argue, the nature of his philosophical insights.

### 3.3 Chapter 3: Heidegger and the Political

The concluding Chapter of the first part of the thesis thus aims to arrive at some conclusions about the value of Heidegger's work
to the political theorist, in the light of the attempt made in the previous Chapters to clarify the nature of his philosophical contribution. This covers my third, and crucial, interest in Heidegger; the ways in which his work might inform a political account.

To have that as an interest at all necessitates that one address Heidegger's involvement with the worst moments of twentieth century European politics. My claim is that his engagement with the Nazis, whilst not a necessary facet of the philosophical dynamics discussed in my first two Chapters, can be traced to an omission in his thought. Specifically, I argue that Heidegger's own conception of agency- Dasein- cannot be developed in ways that culminate in an account of intersubjectivity that allows for a political conception of the differences that exist between agents. If Heidegger's criticisms of what he takes to be the founding and justifying image of modern political practice are powerful, it is also clear that he offers no satisfactory alternative.

Recognising Heidegger's importance in much contemporary political theory is thus to recognise a source of ambiguity. The density of his thought coupled with the contextual and embedded complexity of his terminology allow for an array of often contradictory interpretations as to what Heidegger's philosophy offers the political theorist. Some point to his critique of the limits of traditional understandings of human being as revealing a basic receptivity to what one might term a politics of openness16, others associate that openness with a perspective which allowed Heidegger to make, for a while, a god out of Hitler17.

16 See, for example, Dallmayr, The Other Heidegger.
There are, then, diverse conclusions about Heidegger's political implications, extrapolated from a philosophical legacy itself bitterly contested. I argue, however, that Heidegger's value to the political theorist is not best assessed, however, by seeking, as he did, to translate his philosophical terminology directly into real political commitments. Heidegger's philosophy calls into question traditional understandings of agency but a revision of this account alone is not sufficient to provide either a moral or political theory.

I reach the conclusion that Heidegger's relevance, at least for the political theorist, is spread throughout his work. His insights are not situated exclusively in either the hermeneutics of everydayness or suspicion, nor, in parallel, in one or other of his treatments of subjectivism or modernity. Rather, his real challenge lies in a rejection of humanistic accounts of agency, that extends beyond a simple rejection of the subject, and is developed throughout all his critical and interpretative moments. If the politics of modernity are extrapolated from the instrumental account of agency, then Heidegger's criticisms are of political relevance. Heidegger's error, however, is to assume that a revised account of agency alone will serve as the basis from which a 'right' politics can be divined. My argument in the second part of the thesis is that this mistake is a motif which runs throughout the work of many of Heidegger's successors.

Having suggested that Heidegger's philosophy does not in itself have immediate political application, and having clarified what I take that philosophy to be, I then turn my attention to the reception of his work by recent theorists. All of the thinkers I

Wolin, The Heidegger Controversy, especially the latter's treatment of Heidegger's Beiträge zur Philosophie in section 2 of that essay.
look at- Sartre, Foucault, Connolly and Taylor- identify with Heidegger's suspicion of what they take to be the central tenets of modernity. Further, they share in his identification of the modern conception of agency as a central feature in the limitations of our self-understandings. Unlike Heidegger, however, these thinkers devote substantial effort to producing theories of the relationships between individuals. Hence, they offer Heideggerean inspired treatments of agency whilst maintaining a concern with intersubjective action that allows them to keep moral and political questions to the fore. The second part of this thesis examines the character of these various attempts.

3.4 Chapter 4: Sartre and the politics of existential freedom

The first of the approaches I look at is that of Jean-Paul Sartre, focusing on the phase of his work associated with Being and Nothingness\(^{18}\). There are a number of reasons for selecting Sartre. The first is historical. Tom Rockmore\(^{19}\) has documented Sartre's crucial role in keeping Heidegger's philosophy in the centre of the public consciousness after the latter's denazification. The French interpretation in general did more than simply lend the reception of Heidegger's work a distinctive flavour; it was largely the impact of his work on certain key thinkers that meant he continued to be read at all.

The second reason is more specific to the focus of the thesis. Sartre is emblematic, and instrumental in the development, of a particular and key misinterpretation of Heidegger, which understands him in humanist terms. For Sartre, Heidegger's


philosophy is a way of understanding reality which remains defined by the Cartesian distinction between a human subject and its world. In examining the limits of Sartre's work, my primary aim is to show that Heidegger's failing cannot be attributed to a failure to focus on individual consciousness. It follows that his errors cannot therefore be remedied by the provision of such an account. In the course of demonstrating this, I argue that Sartre's politics are hampered by the instrumentalist shortcomings a more incisive reading of Heidegger might lead one to expect.

Sartre attempts to render Heidegger's hermeneutics of everydayness into the language of the philosophy of consciousness. In doing so, however, he misses the intrinsic link this hermeneutic dynamic has to the hermeneutics of suspicion and, in missing the link, misses the fundamental incompatibility of his perspective with Heidegger's.

3.5 Chapter 5: The Politics of Difference: Foucault and Connolly

Having concluded that Sartre fails to take on Heidegger's criticism of the philosophy of consciousness, I turn to a thinker whose work is heavily marked by that suspicion. Michel Foucault is interesting because, as with Sartre, he admits to being deeply influenced by Heidegger whilst representing a second moment in his French reception.

The suspicion which Foucault shares with Heidegger is expressed in his refusal, in contrast with Sartre, to accept individual consciousness as an autonomous and absolute starting point. In treating the individual conscious subject not as the guarantor of certitude, but as itself one of the phenomena which
require explanation and interpretation, Foucault mirrors Heidegger's suspicion of the transparency of humanism.

This translates, in Foucault's account, into a treatment of matters of politics and the state solely in the terms of power. Thus, for Foucault as for Heidegger, politics in itself has no discrete or proper place. Hence, like Heidegger, Foucault does not expend effort on the provision of a distinctly political theory. Therefore, after a consideration of what Foucault does say about politics and the state, I turn to the account of politics offered by William E. Connolly. For my purposes, Connolly is interesting because he brings what he interprets as the Foucauldian perspective to bear in an extended consideration of politics.

Foucault and Connolly's focus on power ensures that their comments on the nature of human agency are more closely informed by the spirit of Heideggerean suspicion than Sartre's work. However, my argument is that Connolly and Foucault remain, for the political theorist at least, too close to Heidegger's work in other crucial respects. Both Foucault and Connolly offer political accounts which are, as they are for Heidegger, solely extensions of supposedly more fundamental understandings of human agency and/or Being. Examining the constitution of the basic vocabulary upon which Foucault and Connolly base their accounts of intersubjectivity, I conclude that their arguments mirror Heidegger's in failing to develop or sustain a political dimension. Hence, I argue, their political theories are equally marked by inability to provide an account of legitimacy which is separate from the truth claims of their ontological accounts. As with Heidegger, the provision of these accounts is thus not insulated against a one-dimensional focus on philosophical, moral or social
'truths'. The historical and social contexts which inform Foucault and Connolly's writings are less extreme than Heidegger's and are thus more constrained by liberal democratic sensibilities. As a result, they are more concerned than Heidegger to offer an account of the ways in which technical reason in moral and political life can impose itself on the individual. Despite this, their failure to consider intersubjective difference in terms which support languages of authority and legitimacy means their understandings of politics can no more be insulated from the charge of aesthetic adventurism than Heidegger's engagement.

3.6 Chapter 6: The Politics of Recognition: Charles Taylor

The final thinker I look at criticises Sartre, Foucault and Connolly for offering accounts of both morality and politics which draw on too narrow a notion of agency. For Charles Taylor, the problem with most previous moral and political accounts is that they are based on theories of agency that fail to reflect the intersubjective nature of human existence.

My sixth Chapter addresses the development of Taylor's politics of recognition. Thus, I trace Taylor's provision of an alternative, 'dialogic' account of agency, especially as it is presented in Sources of the Self. I focus on the Best Account Principle (the BA principle) which, I argue, fulfils a crucial role in Taylor's philosophy. The BA principle expresses Taylor's basic commitment to the phenomenological method, which is intended to establish his central thesis: our identities have inescapable real moral orientations which can be realised only through social action. For Taylor, the modern conception of agency and the politics which it

grounds (a nexus of atomism and liberalism in Taylor's terms) do not reflect the basic moral reality of human being. In *The Politics of Recognition*\(^{21}\), Taylor launches his argument that a new politics, which reflects the moral needs and discoveries of the community, in a way that what he calls atomistic moral procedural politics does not, is required.

The remainder of my Chapter assesses Taylor's account. I consider, in the first instance, whether Taylor's account of the modern identity is as secure as he believes. Arguing that it is not, I call into question both Taylor's own perspective on the foundations of 'liberal' politics and the persuasiveness of his own account of a politics based on recognition. My claim is that Taylor's politics are based on substantive moral claims that extend beyond the phenomenological basis which would render his account authoritative. Without such argument, Taylor misreads and underestimates the thrust of much liberal theory.

My conclusion is that Taylor's linking of moral to political identity does not contradict at least some contemporary understandings of political theory in the ways he suggests. Further, I argue, insofar as Taylor does reject what he deems 'liberalism' he mirrors Heidegger's own attempt to construct a political sphere from moral and cultural assumptions that outstrip those he can philosophically establish. In both cases, therefore, I assert that neither can lay claim to establishing a vocabulary of political legitimacy or authority in the ways both suggest.

The substance of my final Chapter is determined, in large part, by the thematic concerns which are outlined in the last part of the previous section of this introduction. My concluding Chapter consists of a review of my analyses of each of the thinkers I have looked at in the light of these concerns. Of particular interest in each instance is the way each theorist treats the 'traditional', predominant conceptions of agency, and the ways they seek to develop their critiques into moral and political accounts.

The first thing that emerges is that their treatments of the understanding of agency raise a question that remains at the centre of contemporary political theory; if our political understandings cannot be indexed to the universal or absolute truths of instrumental reason and autonomous Subjectivity, how can we frame an account of legitimacy? Moreover, the work of Heidegger and his successors extends beyond simply raising the question in two ways.

Firstly, they offer alternative accounts of the nature of agency and reason which can serve as the basis for new understandings of the relationships between agents. Secondly, these accounts of intersubjectivity can frame political understandings which need not make justification or legitimacy dependent upon the universal or absolute claims that Heidegger and his successors argue underpin so many of the basic institutions and conceptions of modernity.

Nonetheless, I argue, the thinkers I look at in this thesis largely fail to develop their insights on the understanding of agency into
satisfactory accounts of moral and political identity. In each case, I argue that this is because they incorporate assumptions within their theories of agency that lead them to either ignore or undertheorise the consideration of the differences that exist between agents. These assumptions, however, are not necessary ones in the operation of Heidegger's dual hermeneutic, phenomenological understanding of agency. From the political theorist's perspective, it is in the provision of this distinct articulation of an intersubjective dimension, free of arbitrary ontological assumptions imported from the understanding of agency, that Heidegger and his successors have been found wanting.
Chapter 1: Heidegger and the Critique of Subjectivism

Aims and Outlines

From *Being and Time* onwards, Heidegger offers a critique of what he takes to be the starting point of almost the entire tradition of Western philosophy: the separation between Subject and Object. In that text, and throughout his career, Heidegger states that his fundamental aim (and that of all perspicacious thinking) cannot be pursued until the keystone of this tradition, the subject, "has been phenomenologically destroyed"\(^1\).

This Chapter suggests that recent interpretations which conceive of Heidegger's work in terms of two separable dynamics— which Hubert Dreyfus has termed the "hermeneutics of everydayness" and the "hermeneutics of suspicion"\(^2\)— have misinterpreted him. I argue that treating these hermeneutical dynamics as separable misinterprets the conceptual framework motivating Heidegger's critique of subjectivity in ways which lead to an inappropriate politicisation, by both Heidegger and his commentators, of certain aspects of his thought.

To this end, this Chapter is divided into two sections. The first section expounds Heidegger's comments on subjectivity with a view to situating them in terms of his project in *Being and Time* and beyond. In the course of this, I consider the claims of those (particularly Rorty and Lacoue-Labarthe) who see Heidegger's work as bifurcated along metaphysical lines and thus view him as

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1 Martin Heidegger (tr. Macquarrie and Robinson), *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p.123. The quote is in reference to Descartes, but the *cogito sum* is taken as the archetypal statement of this subject. Hereafter, *Being and Time* is referenced as BT within the text- italics are as original unless otherwise indicated.

coming up with an ultimately philosophically illegitimate account of the world or the agent within it. This paves the way for my second, concluding, section which argues that the rejection of this interpretation of Heidegger's work also entails the rejection of the claim that his political engagement consists merely in his attempt to index the public realm to the truths of such accounts. I further suggest that this leaves the way open to interpret Heidegger's work as a challenge to precisely the claim that right political conclusions can simply be extrapolated from true philosophical beliefs.

Section 1) Heidegger's Critique of the Philosophy of the Subject

1.1 The Question of the Meaning of Being, Dasein and the Traditional Subject

Heidegger defines his work against what he deems to be the prevailing traditions of the Western world. The motivation behind Being and Time is Heidegger's claim that "the fundamental question" (BT, p.24)- "the question of the meaning of Being" (BT, p.19)- has been forgotten in our time. Heidegger's project is thus to render this question "transparent, and in an appropriate way" (BT, p.24).

Heidegger is clear about the reasons why this question has been (at best) wrongly formulated. The philosophical tradition has attempted to understand Being in the wrong terms, and has therefore not succeeded in putting the question at all. Heidegger believes that this can be understood through a focus on the properties of traditional philosophical inquiry.
Any inquiry whatsoever is "guided beforehand by what is sought" (BT, p.24). Heidegger follows this claim by identifying, through a modification of Husserlian intentionality, three essential moments of inquiry qua inquiry. Of necessity, any question involves three structural planks; "that which is asked about", "that which is interrogated", and "that which is to be found out by the asking" (BT, p.24). Philosophical inquiry which aims to ask about Being at the most fundamental level must be transparent [durchsichtig] in each of these three cases, understood in terms derived only from the existence of the question. Therefore, when asking the question 'What is Being?' the basic task of the philosopher is to become clear about the significance of the existence of the question in this form. Heidegger claims that, in inquiring into Being a perspicacious consideration of that inquiry will reveal that that which is asked about is Being, that which is to be found out by the asking is the meaning of Being, and that which is interrogated is what follows from the existence of the question: the implications which follow from the fact of the 'there-is' an inquiry into Being.

Heidegger's claim is that in considering Being in its most fundamental aspect the type of Being of the Inquiry itself needs to be taken into account. The first entity the Being of which one needs to become clear about is thus that which does the inquiring. This entity, by which the 'there-is' of the question of Being exists, is Dasein. Dasein is thus introduced as constituted of the formal fact of the existence of the question of Being. It is this, and thus Dasein, that needs to be interrogated in order to address the question of the meaning of Being.
Heidegger contends that the philosophical tradition has in each case failed to formulate perspicaciously, and understand, each of these three planks. In assuming that the 'is' of the question 'What is Being?' is self-evident, when in fact this 'is' simply restates the more fundamental question of Being, Heidegger finds that the tradition has failed to reach a transparent self-understanding, substituting instead answers conditioned by an unexamined assumption. This unexamined assumption is caused by an approach to Being which is partial and narrows the horizon of one's inquiry: Heidegger at one point calls it the tendency towards "Being-certain"(BT, p.46). The tradition has, in constructing each of the three planks upon which it is built along substantive lines, petitio principii, failed to consider the question of the meaning of Being: rather it has, guided by its own unexamined assumptions, considered only the question of the meaning of Being of substance.

Heidegger thus identifies the philosophical tradition with a misplaced certitude concerning the horizons of its inquiry, and a failure to examine its own basic assumptions. In failing to transparently consider itself on these lines, the tradition has not understood each of the three planks upon which, as an instance of inquiry, it is necessarily built. Hence a failure to lay "bare the grounds"(BT, p.28) for inquiry has led to philosophy looking in the wrong place- at an objective world- for the wrong thing-epistemological certitude of a world thus conceived. This lack of clarity has disguised the fact that subject-object epistemologies do not constitute an addressing- let alone an answering- of the question of Being they purport to be.

From this failure of formal transparency, Heidegger sees the tradition's error as taking as its guide the Subject, which operates
in a way that narrows the horizons of inquiry, and hence of one's access to the question of the meaning of Being, whilst simultaneously disguising that that is what is happening. Heidegger cites "the subject, the soul, the consciousness, the spirit, the person" (BT, p.72) as the means by which the question of the meaning of Being has become reified into the search for certitude. To ask about Being from the perspective of the philosophy of the Subject is to assume, unconsidered, a separation between the Subject seeking certitude about Being, and the objective world which one aims to know. This assumption embodies an error when considering the question of Being since it fails to take into account the type of Being which belongs to the Inquiry itself.

Heidegger's aim is to show that the tradition, as a result of its failure to understand its own essential form by scrutinising its reliance upon the Subject, must be superseded by an analysis of Dasein. Heidegger identifies the Cartesian \textit{ego cogito} as the purest representative of this tradition of metaphysical error and states that he will have not succeeded until "the 'cogito sum' has been phenomenologically destroyed" (BT, p.123).

\textit{1.2 Descartes and the Subject of the Western Tradition}

Having taken the Cartesian subject as representative of the essence of the tradition, Heidegger goes on to define his own position in contrast to it. This section examines how, given what appears the common starting point of reflexivity, Heidegger seeks to demonstrate the primacy of his account by showing how Dasein and the \textit{ego cogito} differ.
Descartes's aim, epistemological certitude, is determined, Heidegger believes, by the distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Heidegger maintains, however, that the only certitude pointed to by the claim that *cogito ergo sum* is Descartes's own inability to determine "the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*" (*BT*, p.46). Heidegger mounts two related arguments. The first seeks to show the internal consistency of Descartes's argument is suspect. The second seeks to show that Descartes's arguments fail because of the tacit assumption of the primacy of *substantia* implied by taking the Subject as one's guide in understanding Being. For Heidegger, Descartes's project must fail because the goal of epistemological certitude, which is the starting point, is a necessarily flawed way of conceiving of the appropriate stance towards Being.

Heidegger then is clear. He will not have succeeded until subjectivist epistemology has been overcome. This *Destruktion* entails a consideration of the "basically undiscussed ontological 'foundations' those Interpretations of the world which have come after Descartes- and still more those which have preceded him-have operated" (*BT*, p.122).

To make his point Heidegger selects the Cartesian understanding of 'hardness'. Heidegger argues that having divided Being, in the guise of *substantia*, into things intellectual and corporeal, Descartes is unable to adequately portray the phenomenon of hardness. Hence, although Descartes presents hardness as the resistance of two objects next to each other, in terms of "the different velocities of two corporeal Things" (*BT*, p.130), this definition cannot explain how hardness or resistance can "show themselves at all" (*BT*, p.130) without referring to the existence
of an entity for which hardness is an issue. At this point the familiar objection to the Cartesian system becomes crucial; Descartes cannot account for how res extensa can affect res cogitans, without reducing one to the other or avoiding the issue, and submerging both in the substantive ego cogito.

The Cartesian Subject is thus both cause and symptom for Heidegger. It is the culmination of an ontology of substance [substantia], but it is only because of the fundamentally incoherent formulation of the Subject that such an ontology can remain in place. It is in the assumptions of Cartesian ontology that Heidegger perceives the real problem. The emphasis Descartes puts on Being-certain, on epistemological knowledge, takes for granted the separation of Subject and Object, in this case the thinking man and his world. Heidegger believes this diremption to be far from transparent, and, worse, by asserting the fundamentality of the certitude of the Cartesian subject, the path to providing an ontology of Dasein, through which Being could be considered is specifically ruled out. A concern with substantia is quite acceptable to Heidegger, but not as ontology. The problem is not that the Subject has not been properly represented, but that the goal of Western thought- adequate representation- continues to be defined by the assumptions of which it is both a part and an expression.

One difference between Dasein and the Cartesian subject is now apparent. Heidegger’s objection to the Cartesian Subject is not based on the claim that it misrepresents a given entity or reality. Heidegger’s objection is formal; the accusation against Descartes, and the Western philosophical tradition, is a methodological one. Later in Being and Time, whilst considering Kant, Heidegger offers
a characterisation of this failing as the acceptance that the basic problematic of philosophy is motivated by the distinction between the "in me" and the "outside of me" (BT, p.249). The search for certitude on these terms is not wrong; rather, it lacks transparency and this is no way to conduct philosophical inquiry. Heidegger declares that the "'scandal' of philosophy' is not that the proof of the proper relation has yet to be given, but that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again" (BT, p.249).

Dasein, then, is not intended as a replacement, or refined, Cartesian subject. They are about different things. Joan Stambaugh has said of Heidegger that what he "is criticizing about the subject-object split is not its legitimacy on a certain level of thinking, but rather its ultimacy".

In addition to the internal inability to relate the mental representations of the subject to the objective world outside it, Heidegger criticizes Cartesian inspired philosophy especially for losing sight of any philosophical task beyond this (ultimately hopeless) one. To understand why it is not simply Descartes's failure to correctly represent the epistemic subject, but the project per se, that stands in the way of what he asserts to be the fundamental philosophical concern, one needs to look at the development of hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger develops this through his modification of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology.

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Dasein, as the 'there-is' of inquiry into Being, is preconceptual. In contrast to the epistemological subject, it is not an entity to be understood in terms of spatiality, substantiality or intellectual function. Dasein is better understood as a commitment to 'transparency' [Durchsichtigkeit] in the consideration of the meaning of Being.

Heidegger's position, as presented thus far, might seem prima facie very close to Husserl's doctrine of intentionality. For Husserl, all consciousness is consciousness of something. The subject is fundamentally construed as an Ego constituted in "the contents of phenomena and the place they appear". The existence of conscious thought cannot legitimately be taken as any sort of proof for my existence beyond that as a site of mental representations of a series of objects of such thoughts. Husserl thus radicalises the notion of what can be taken as 'admissible' evidence in investigations into what can be known by the subject of its world. It is only at the formal level that we can reach certainty in our claims, maintains Husserl. We cannot prove any deep 'I' by being aware of the existence of our thought processes-mental states are not indications of anything beyond an Ego as "transcendental 'field'"- the zone of the appearance of those mental states and the fact of content. Knowledge and certitude are only possible if one strips things down to the necessary- if one lays bare the essential dynamic of subject-object relationships. To this end, Husserl undertakes eidetic analyses of our perceptions of the world.

Husserlian intentionality is the notion of “meaning as constituted through a relation between thought as cognition and thought as that which thought is about, with a fulfilment of meaning in the actual existence of the object”\(^6\). From this position, explanatory schemes, such as that forwarded by Descartes, which move from the base assumption of a detached, discrete subject observing a separate world of objects are untenable. The Cartesian ‘I’ of ‘I think, therefore I am’ is one of Husserl’s targets. Husserl accepts as evidence only that which is logically necessary given the phenomenon of consciousness. It is therefore illegitimate to start with an entity or structure whose substantive existence or meaning one wishes to establish. The notion of transparency in Husserl’s work is present in his emphasis on the need for a rigorous removal of any initial conceptual ‘baggage’ that will obscure the provision of an account of representing, intentional, consciousness.

It might appear, then, that one is in a position to understand what Heidegger means by ‘transparency’, and to see why this belief demands the assuming of the phenomenological approach. If one was to make the mistake of assimilating Heideggerian and Husserlian phenomenology then \textit{Being and Time} would appear an extension of the Husserlian project. On this interpretation, Heidegger would be at heart concerned with providing an “edifying elaboration of Husserl”\(^7\) which supplements the Husserlian method with a focus on practical activity as a means by which one can enrich the account of intentionality and obtain knowledge about the subject as transcendental Ego.

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\(^6\) The formulation is Joanna Hodge’s, from \textit{Heidegger and Ethics}, p. 184. \(^7\) Hubert Dreyfus in \textit{Being-in-the-World}, argues that Dagfinn Fallesdal is one such interpreter of Heidegger. The quote is from p.13 and the topic receives further attention on p. 48.
It should be clear, however, that this is emphatically not Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* nor, indeed, his subsequent work. Heidegger, in fact, sees Husserl as making a mistake typical of the Western tradition of thought: trying to give a theory of the world, or our place in it, experienced through the model of conscious intentionality. Heidegger does not introduce Dasein in an attempt to redraft the conscious subject, whether as embodied in practice or constituted in more collective terms. Rather, Heidegger's point is that Husserl is still seeking to resolve a problem that only arises because one is looking in the wrong places for the wrong thing. To wit, Husserl uses conscious representation as a model for establishing epistemological certitude.\(^8\) Husserl continues to move within the horizons opened up by the subject/object distinction and, therefore, in the final analysis, remains implicated in the "scandal of philosophy" (*BT*, p.249) mentioned above.

The problem is not a poor execution of proper epistemological procedure, but the practice itself. It is against this background that one has to understand Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger claims to be returning to the "Greek conception of truth" (*BT*, p.57). What Husserl, Descartes, Kant, and just about all Western philosophers have in common, in Heidegger's view, is their governance by an alternative, less primordial, account of Being. All of them seek to frame theories which lay claim to truth, where 'truth' is held to be "something that 'really' pertains to judgement" (*BT*, p.57). This referring back- the 'truth of judgements'- is the root of the problem. The notion of an account through which the veracity of one's philosophical account can be

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\(^8\) On this see L. Kolakowski, *Husserl and the Search for Certitude*, passim.
compared, is, says Heidegger, only “a secondary phenomenon of truth, with more than one kind of foundation” (BT, p.57). He continues,

[both realism and idealism have- with equal thoroughness- missed the meaning of the Greek conception of truth, in terms of which only the possibility of something like a ‘doctrine of ideas’ can be understood as philosophical knowledge.]

In contrast to the ‘logos’ of epistemology, the ‘logos’ of phenomenology rests “in merely letting something be seen, in letting entities be perceived” (BT, p.58). Phenomenological perception requires the removal of any notion of truth as the appropriate binding of “psychical occurrences” with “something physical outside” (BT, p.56). The logos “is just not the kind of thing that can be considered as the primary ‘locus’ of truth.” (BT, p.57)

The logos of representational epistemology is seen by Heidegger as at best a subsidiary of the logos of phenomenology, of logos as a letting-be-seen. The truth of the former logos depends not on the presence or absence of an ‘agreement’ on its own terms, but in the sense of the logos of Being. The ‘truth’ associated with this second sense of logos is that of perception. This understanding of logos “can never cover up; it can never be false; it can at worst remain a non-perceiving... not sufficing for straightforward and appropriate access.” (BT, p.57)

If any doubt exists about whether Heidegger conceives of his project as fundamentally divergent from Husserl’s, it should be dispelled directly. Husserl’s phenomenological approach captures

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9 BT, p. 57-8. Italics in original.
an important part of the approach Heidegger is forwarding-summed up in the maxim ‘To the things themselves!’ which demands “the avoidance of characterizing anything without such demonstration” (BT, p.59). This in itself means nothing however: whilst the logos of the representing subject holds sway “any exhibiting of an entity as it shows itself in itself, may be called 'phenomenology' with formal justification” (BT, p.59). The discoveries of such ‘formal’ phenomenologies when seen as ontological claims are etiolated- a phenomenological concept thus presented is “understood in an empty way and is thus passed on, losing its indigenous character, and becoming a free-floating thesis” (BT, p.61). For Heidegger, Husserl is right to assume that Descartes’s mistake is to seek to establish the reality of the independent subject, but wrong to then move to provide a replacement account of a more formal subject in the guise of consciousness. It is not the content of Descartes’s theory that is its real error, nor indeed that of Husserl’s. It is rather that both fail to perspicaciously challenge their aim, to ground a formal theory, at all.

To be truly durchsichtig it is not just simply the content of one’s claims that must be free of undemonstrated, hidden prejudices but one’s methods as well. Thus, if one wishes to be ‘transparent’ here one cannot import an assumption of my status as representing subject, nor that of the content of my mental representations as of a discrete world of objects. What is to be explained is not my experience of my existence, but the meaning of Being itself (albeit an issue because of the formal fact of my existence). ‘Transparency’ is not a product of a purer ratiocinative process in one’s description of the relation between subject and object. Rather, it is the capacity to understand one’s inquiry into
Being in a way which allows phenomena to show themselves in a way which is not predetermined by an unexamined interpretative stance. In addition, the 'formality' aimed at by epistemological theory differs from that which Heidegger intends when he talks of the formal structure of the question of the meaning of Being. The 'science of Being', which Being and Time purports to be, is not the certitude driven epistemology of Husserl; the aim is neither a final nor a neutral representation of Being. Rather, the concern is an examination of all the means by, and through, which Being comes to be interpreted.

1.4 Dasein, Fundamental Ontology and the Hermeneutics of Everydayness

Three things remain to be understood. Firstly, why Heidegger considers the focus on the subject obscures the most 'fundamental' access to the meaning of Being. Secondly, one needs to understand what Heidegger believes it is about the way Dasein is constituted that avoids that obscuration. Thirdly, and in the light of these two considerations, there is the question of what it means to claim that a fundamental ontology of Dasein, conducted through hermeneutic phenomenology, better- or more transparently-provides access to the question of Being.

The first concern is fairly easily met. The assumption behind the Western tradition is that reflexivity is categorically separated from Being; the aim has therefore been to become clear about the nature or implications of this diremption, between reflecting subject and the object of this reflection. Heidegger, however, challenges the very notion of this separation, not just the adequacy of any particular formulation. It is through the ontological
difference that Heidegger expresses his attack. Whereas most philosophers have modelled their understanding of the reflexivity of Being in terms of actual entities, Heidegger attributes this to the impulse towards Being-certain. He seeks to present an account which is concerned with Being as a whole, not just with actual existential entities, but the openness of their manifestation. Dasein is a being amongst beings, but is also the manifestation of the link between beings and Being, the actual and the possible.

Thus far, Heidegger has defined Dasein in terms of a formal openness to Being. Heidegger, however, makes an early and dramatic move to equate Dasein with the “essential character” of “those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves” (BT, p.27,26). Essentially, then, human being is to be understood through the formal necessity of interpretative understandings of Being: philosophically, better understandings attempt to render this relationship transparent. Those positions which seek to explicate human existence through substantive metaphysical conceptions (the epistemological subject, the self, personality) miss its essential characteristic. Dasein is not human being, as it has previously been understood, but human being is essentially to be understood as Dasein.

At the end of the previous section, Heidegger's criticism of 'formal' philosophies- from Cartesian epistemology to Husserlian intentionality- was noted. Heidegger, however, uses the word 'formal' in a technical but important sense. Thus, the question of Being and Dasein are both first introduced in Heidegger's section on "The Formal Structure of the Question of Being" (BT, p.24). In this context, though, Heidegger contrasts his use of the notion of 'formal' structure with what he sees as the traditional notion of
formality as an abstraction from the entities, practices and processes of one's inquiry. Heidegger challenges both the maintenance and grounds of this separation. Hence, following the section on his conception of the formal structure of the question of Being, Heidegger asks the rhetorical question "[d]oes it simply remain- or is it at all- a mere matter for soaring speculation about the most general of generalities, or is it rather, of all questions, both the most basic and concrete?" (BT, p.29). Heidegger's intention is to challenge the separation between the formal and the concrete which he perceives as integral to subjectivist accounts of Being.

Secondly, then, in contrasting Dasein to the subject of previous philosophy, Heidegger points to the conception of human nature in terms of subjectivity as embodying the error of Western philosophy. In deeming this conception of our existence to be, in terms of the most fundamental concern with Being, obscuring, it is not the distance of the self from the objects of its perceptions and beliefs which most interests Heidegger. Rather, it is the subjectivist assumption that reflexivity should be considered apart from Being in the first place that Heidegger questions. Dasein is neither an individual nor a collective conscious subject which serves as a platform from which Being can be viewed or understood. Dasein is a facet of Being: "the question of Being is nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself- the pre-ontological understanding of Being" (BT, p.35).

The pre-ontological understanding of Being is not an inherent understanding, implicit or explicit, lodged in an existential

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10 The 'distanced self' is a phrase used by David Kolb in *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986).
subject. Rather, Dasein is simply the fact that it is true of Being that there is an aspect of it which is "ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it... this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being- a relationship which is itself one of Being" (BT, p.32). What is pre-ontological is not any actual understanding of Being, but the existence of possible understandings of Being.

Heidegger is thus concerned with the interpretation of Being, not with a direct account of Being itself. It is against this background that Heidegger's claim, to be attempting a fundamental ontology of Dasein must be understood. The aim is not to reveal or come to know Being, to render an account in a final or absolute way, but to understand the ways in which Being comes to be revealed. There is, Heidegger is clear, no one definite answer to be discovered: only the possibility of an increasing perspicacity about the ways in which particular understandings manifest themselves. It is this clarity of vision, of the processes of interpretation involved in thinking about Being, that constitutes 'transparency'- one of the key terms in Being and Time. Heidegger puts it thus:

The sight which is related primarily and on the whole to existence we call "transparency" [Durchsichtigkeit]. We choose this term to designate 'knowledge of the Self' in a sense which is well understood, so as to indicate that here it is not a matter of perceptually tracking down and inspecting a point called the "Self", but rather one of seizing upon the full disclosedness of Being-in-the-world throughout all the constitutive items which are essential to it, and doing so with understanding. (BT, p.186-7)

The constitution of Dasein must therefore be understood on different terms from those of the Subject. Whereas the
subjectivist tradition has sought to understand human existence as a special category (conscious) of thing, for Heidegger, the defining characteristic of human existence ought to be understood in terms of the means by which beings and practices -consciousness and thinghood included- can come to show up as meaningful at all.

Two crucial points follow from this. Firstly, as discussed above, the best understanding of Dasein will not aim at the adequate representation of an entity, but will instead focus on the ways in which meanings come to be disclosed. Disclosedness, the uncovering of the truth of beings, is not merely something Dasein does; it is closer to the nexus of conditions which make interpretation possible at all. Heidegger thus states that “Dasein is its disclosedness” (BT, p. 171). At the most fundamental level, then, Heidegger’s concern is with interpretation.

Secondly, Heidegger’s hermeneutic concern cannot be seen as the study of an activity or capacity of an entity whose constitution is framed in a way which has unexamined assumptions. Thus, in undertaking a fundamental ontology of Dasein one cannot simply seek the ‘truth’, as traditionally conceived, of a particular entity. The aim is not the accurate representation of an actual entity, but an examination of the way beings come to show themselves as having meaning in the first place. ‘Truth’ is one of the concepts which is under analysis, and Heidegger’s fundamental ontology of Dasein reflects this. Thus, after Heidegger claims that:

In so far as Dasein is its disclosedness essentially, and discloses and uncovers as something disclosed to this extent it is essentially ‘true’. Dasein is ‘in the truth’. This assertion has meaning ontologically. (BT, p.263)
he is at pains to point out that this does not mean that the disclosing of meaning can be understood as the activity of "consciousness in general" or an "idealized absolute subject" (BT, p.272). Transparency demands a barer account. Rather, for something to show up as true in the traditional (Heidegger calls it the 'second') sense, Being-uncovered, requires an activity; Being-uncovering. 'Truth' in the primordial sense rests in the "existential-ontological foundations of uncovering" (BT, p. 263). Thus, the phenomenon to which one must look cannot be the Subject or consciousness but the most primordial structure by which these, and all, entities show up; disclosedness. This cannot be understood by objective or distanced consideration, but, of necessity, "pertains equiprimordially to the world, to Being-in, and to the Self"; that nexus of relations and distinctions which are characterised by "Being already in a world" (BT, p.263).

Thus, truth, for Heidegger, is dependent on disclosedness; a state of Being of Dasein, where Dasein is necessarily already thrown into, and absorbed in the world. It is this relatedness of meaning and truth to those phenomena usually considered outside the Self- social practices, 'average understandings', equipmental-contexts- which Dreyfus calls the "hermeneutics of everydayness". The point, however, of Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology and fundamental ontology, is not to establish the truth, or what can be certainly known, of Dasein or Being. The 'problem of truth' is, in Heidegger's eyes, derivative to the question of the meaning of Being, and it is to this that Heidegger's thought is addressed.

11 BT, p. 263.
12 Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World, p. 34.
Heidegger's project finds its roots in the Kantian project of explaining how it is possible that things can come to show up as meaningful in the field of human understanding at all. Heidegger is careful, however, from the fourth page of *Sein und Zeit*, and throughout the rest of his career, to differentiate his work from the Kantian project. It is not his concern to move from or to "self-evidence" (*B capitalist T*, p.23). From the first, Heidegger defines himself against the task of establishing transcendental conditions for the possibility of interpretation at all, which he perceives to be the Kantian aim. Heidegger argues that the attempt to define the conditions of intelligibility in terms of a 'clearer' understanding of human understanding as it is "in-itself" is itself couched in metaphysical terms. This retains the segregation between subject and object, inner and outer, which characterises subjectivism. The conditions for the intelligibility of Being do not come to be known through a transcending of the phenomenon of a separated world, nor through introspective meditation aimed at knowledge of the substantive nature of a Subject.

Heidegger thus considers the investigation of the question of the meaning of Being to precede the concepts of subjectivism.. Dasein, as the occurrence of disclosedness of the meaning of Being, is not a reflection on Being from outwith it but is itself a mode of Being. The interpretation of Being thus understood, as an integral aspect of Being, cannot be understood in ways which ignore its own temporal and involved aspects; Heidegger thus asserts that "the proposition that 'Dasein is in the truth' states equiprimordially that 'Dasein is in untruth' "(*B capitalist T*, p.265). This is entirely consistent with the claim that truth and untruth are themselves phenomena secondary to what Heidegger calls the "existential-ontological
condition" of Dasein's "thrown projection"\textsuperscript{13}, or "the structure of care" (\textit{BT}, p.265). Therefore, insomuch as Heidegger seeks knowledge, it is knowledge of the understanding of the meaning of Being, not knowledge of Being itself\textsuperscript{14}. For Heidegger, conceiving of the meaning of Being in terms of the structures of a Subject, even the Kantian one, retains the flawed epistemological aim of defining reality in ahistorical terms which will ultimately be partial and dogmatic.

1.5 \textit{Dasein, Subjectivity and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion}

In assessing Heidegger's critique of subjectivism, one needs to examine two key moments. The first is Heidegger's internal critique of the epistemological tradition, the second, Heidegger's claim that only an overcoming of the tradition can address the problems he diagnoses. Heidegger then offers two basic families of objection to the philosophy of the Subject.

Firstly, it seeks to interpret existence in ways which he believes are internally incoherent. Thus the inability to theorise adequately the experience of 'hardness', temporality, personal identity and the relation between mind and body in the language of \textit{substantia} are, for Heidegger worse than temporary obstacles, because the assumption of the primacy of substance contravenes the aims of any truly transparent philosophy.

Secondly, then, Heidegger takes the difficulty encountered in rendering an account of how subject and world interact in the terms of \textit{substantia} (and thus, he argues on the ontic, the present-

\textsuperscript{13} Originally in italics.
at-hand, and the existential) as an example of an incoherence which acts as a clue to a deeper inconsistency. This inconsistency is the attempt to render as self-evident that which is necessarily in question throughout any inquiry: Being. The aim of subjectivist epistemology- final and definitive knowledge of Being- is only tenable if one assumes a separation between the knowing subject and the object of its knowledge. Heidegger claims, however, that the assumption of this separation, upon which the epistemological tradition is based, can never be self-evident; thus, the goal of traditional epistemology, the adequate representation of reality, must be equally lacking in transparency.

Heidegger accepts that this project is very ambitious. He does not want to correct or amend the observations of his predecessors but resituate their claims within a new conception of (hermeneutic phenomenological) truth. As Charles Guignon, amongst others, has observed, this entails that Heidegger does not wish to have “his work interpreted as a point of view or a standpoint which correctly represents the facts where others have been mistaken”15.

Two basic objections suggest themselves. Firstly, one might attack the characterisation of the tradition upon which Heidegger bases his attack. Heidegger asserts that the aim of the Western intellectual tradition has been to offer a single and defining account of Being. Heidegger, however, is selective in his examples, both of the thinkers and of the aspects of their work he uses to support his claim. So, in addition to querying the particular readings Heidegger gives of Descartes, Kant, Husserl, etc., one might ask whether, given the evidence he selects, he has done anything to show that subjectivist epistemology leads to an

assertion that what can be known is coextensive with the whole of reality. In addition to Heidegger's questionable reading of the intellectual achievements of the West, critics have pointed out that in excluding the practical and social achievements from his characterisation of the Western tradition, he runs the risk of falling prey to his own warning that any inquiry "gets guided beforehand by what is sought" (BT, p.24).

Heidegger explicitly considers the question of whether or not he is reductionist in his discussion of Descartes, asking "have we not fobbed off on Descartes a task altogether beyond his horizon, and then gone on to 'demonstrate' that he has failed to solve it?" (BT, p.131). Heidegger's answer to his own rhetorical question is telling; the problem is not that Descartes, and by extension all those in the epistemological tradition, sought to consider entities in terms of their physical presence ('presence-at-hand'), but that this one aspect of the intelligibility of Being has been extended to all of existence - an ontology of Thinghood. The problem is that "Descartes not only wants to formulate the problem of 'the "I" and the world'; he claims to have solved it" (BT, p.131). This solution is bought at the cost of ignoring those phenomena which do not fit into the terminology used (Heidegger cites the inappropriateness of conceiving of value-predicates in terms of a Thinghood ontology); a strategy which Heidegger claims reveals that such positions do not subject themselves to "positive criticism" (BT, p.131).

16 On this see David Kolb's Critique of Pure Modernity, p. 141.
18 A charge well laid by David Kolb, in respect to Descartes and in the course of pointing to Heidegger's over-intellectual characterisation of the tradition, in his Critique of Pure Modernity, p.141-4.
Thus, to the charge that he is a reductionist in his portrayal of the tradition, Heidegger counters that if one were not to be so the tradition’s own reductionism would be unchallenged. It is the over-ambition of representational epistemology that requires deflation. Heidegger, then, refuses to accept the outlooks which he believes condition the criticisms under consideration of his work; these objections result from the limited range and uncritical nature of the inquiry conducted by his critics (recall “[e]very inquiry gets guided beforehand by what is sought”). Thus, Heidegger rejects the accusation that his portrayal of the tradition is a caricature; suggesting instead that he will provide an account of truth which both reveals the expansionist tendencies of the subjectivist conception, and shows how its limitations can be better understood. The claim that accreted tradition masks a more fundamental or transparent approach to Being, supplied by hermeneutic phenomenology, Dreyfus terms (following Paul Ricoeur) the “hermeneutics of suspicion”¹⁹. In his critique of subjectivism, Heidegger thus identifies the conception of truth operated by both his targets and himself, as the crux.

It is to Heidegger’s claim that an alternative to the account of truth found in subjectivist metaphysics is required that one must turn. The crucial question here is whether Heidegger’s alternative, outlined in his description of Dasein and disclosedness, is free of the ‘dogmatism’, opacity and vitiating arbitrariness he attributes to the traditional conception of truth.

It is here, then, that the second, and more important, set of objections to Heidegger’s project is located; viz those positions that argue he replaces the essentialism he diagnoses in the

¹⁹ Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World, p.35.
subjectivist tradition with an isomeric equivalent. The criticism is that Heidegger’s alternative conception of truth repeats the metaphysical error of assuming that true knowledge is indexed to the adequate portrayal of an objective, ‘real’ state of affairs (in Heidegger’s case Being and the disclosedness of Dasein); and that the determination or testing of this reality is as arbitrary in Heidegger’s case as it is in the subjective epistemologies he criticizes. In other words, Heidegger’s critique of subjectivism is premised on the same unwarranted claims to privileged access to the ‘truth’ (framed in terms of the ‘objectivity’ one finds in metaphysics of presence) as the tradition.

Amongst the diverse perspectives from which this point has been put, opinion varies on whether Heidegger is right to declare the subjectivist paradigm dead. Where all agree, however, is that in seeking to go beyond the tradition, Heidegger erred at some point in a way that means “he propagates a mere inversion of the thought patterns of the philosophy of the subject... Heidegger remains caught up in the problematic of that kind of philosophy”. Many critics attribute Heidegger’s politics to his enmeshment in the subjectivist nexus; it is, therefore, important to be clear about why these thinkers maintain that Heidegger retains at key moments the uncritical essentialism he attributes to metaphysical thought.

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20 Some of the more prominent representatives being Ernst Tugendhat, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Richard Rorty, Richard Wolin and Jürgen Habermas; relevant articles from each are cited throughout this Chapter.

1.6 Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Objective Truth: Ernst Tugendhat

Ernst Tugendhat's treatment of Heidegger's "phenomenological theory of truth" is particularly instructive in this regard. Taking (as I have done above) ¶44 of Being and Time- 'Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth'- as central, Tugendhat argues that Heidegger's radicalisation of Husserlian phenomenology is philosophically speculative and results in Heidegger conceiving of 'truth' in ways that overlook the critical and regulative role the concept plays within the tradition. Further, Tugendhat asserts, this overgeneralisation about the concept of truth means that Heidegger loses the capacity to reflect on- or subject to 'positive criticism' - his own position.

This occurs, believes Tugendhat, because Heidegger seeks to radicalise Husserlian phenomenology- whereby an assertion is true if it uncovers "the entity 'just as it is in itself'" by removing the concept of intentionality. Thus, whereas Husserl operates with a notion of objectivity conditioned by his grounding of intentional consciousness in the transcendental ego, Heidegger questions the acceptance of entities as 'given in themselves'. Therefore, while Husserl (rightly or wrongly) retains a dimension of depth in the distinction between the pointing-out (apophainesthai) and the unconcealing (aletheia) of an assertion this, argues Tugendhat, is silently collapsed by Heidegger. Hence, Tugendhat continues, Heidegger, in dropping the references to entities as they are in themselves, can only talk of truth apophantically.

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23 Heidegger's own words, as cited earlier.
This has two consequences. Firstly, any notion of truth as "a superior form of givenness"\(^{25}\) is rejected. If truth is understood as apopthesis, or, as Heidegger puts it " 'Being-true' ("truth") means Being-uncovering" (\textit{BT}, p.262), then the problem of truth which motivates thinkers from Plato to Husserl is ignored. Truth is made to depend simply on the disclosure of Dasein, and since (as quoted earlier) Dasein is its disclosedness (\textit{BT}, p.263) truth seems ultimately to be a product of Dasein \textit{qua} Dasein. This reading is supported by Heidegger's assertion of the equiprimordiality of truth and untruth, the latter hence also seeming rendered as Dasein-dependent.

Insofar as Heidegger talks of \textit{aletheia} as truth he is being disingenuous, concludes Tugendhat. If Heidegger wishes to use the notion of truth in any way which suggests better or worse understandings- precisely the phenomenon of truth for Tugendhat- then he needs to retain a sense of truth as referring to entities as they are in themselves. Further, locating truth in relation to the \textit{apophantic} aspects of Dasein- in the very existence of horizons of understanding- makes it impossible to apply the concept of truth to reflect upon these horizons at all. Thus, Tugendhat takes Heidegger to have prematurely and summarily dismissed the Husserlian notions of critical consciousness and \textit{Evidenz} which, for Tugendhat, contribute to a genuine understanding of the \textit{aletheiac} dimension of the unconcealing of Being.

Secondly, however, Tugendhat asserts that Heidegger continues to operate the distinction between the uncovering involved in the apophantic dimension of any assertion, and the (now illegitimate) aletheiac sense by which the understanding of an assertion can be

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 254.
judged true or false in reference to a state of affairs external to the mere fact of that assertion.

Tugendhat's criticism of Heidegger is thus double-edged. Heidegger misunderstands Husserl's conception of certitude as seeking to make explicit a particular and absolute account of Being, when it is actually a "regulative ideal" which moves from, but does not claim to capture, the phenomenon of givenness. Further, Tugendhat argues, by failing to realise that Husserl's concern with truth does not aim at the "dogmatism of self certainty" by reflecting on an absolute conception of entities as they are in themselves, but instead is intended to reflect on the conditions which make possible "critical justification", Heidegger robs himself of the means to reflect upon his own position. In the final analysis, then, Tugendhat believes that the accusation Heidegger levels against Husserl - the desire for an immediacy with the transcendental - in fact rebounds, and Heidegger's own "metatranscendental position" lapses into the arbitrary quest for immediacy he (wrongly) attributes to Husserl.

I have dwelt on Tugendhat's philosophical analysis at some length because it brings to the fore the crux of almost all contemporary criticisms of Heidegger. Tugendhat reads Heidegger as bifurcated in terms of truth and illegitimate speculation. This he attributes to Heidegger's failure to separate the concern with truth as providing critical and objective standards for reflection from that of an attempt to provide a complete metaphysics arbitrarily grounded in an unitary and totalising philosophy of the

26 Ibid., p. 262.
27 Ibid., p. 263.
28 Ibid., p. 263.
29 Ibid., p. 262.
Subject. The result of failing to realise this separation, argues Tugendhat, is that Heidegger simply replaces one attempt to provide an immediate account of the Being of reality with another, the latter possessing the same uncritical claims to privileged access to the real as Heidegger himself perceives in the former. Hence, Heidegger remains implicated in the arrogances of the metaphysical project he claims to reject.

This charge is levelled at Heidegger from across the philosophical spectrum. Building on the beliefs expressed in Tugendhat's work, Habermas and Rorty both identify a rejection, amounting to an overdetermined and speculative 'suspicion', of, respectively, the 'lifeworld' and 'social practice pragmatism' as responsible for Heidegger's philosophical failure in this regard. Mirroring this, it is the overemphasis on the practices and constitution of Dasein- that is an overdetermined and speculative 'everydayness' - and precisely a failure of suspicion that is seen as Heidegger's failing by Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe.

At root, then, the claim is that in failing to separate the two hermeneutical dynamics referred to above ('suspicion' and 'everydayness'), Heidegger's project never extends beyond the attempt to provide, in Habermas's words, a "temporalized Ursprungsphilosophie", the truths of which are "in each case provincial and yet total". Although the above thinkers differ as to which of the two hermeneutical dynamics is to blame for Heidegger's failure to overcome the drive to metaphysical

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31 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger, Art and Politics.
32 Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 154.
certitude associated with subjectivism, they all assume Heidegger's ambition unravels as a result of his failure to isolate and eradicate one from the other. Examining this move in Rorty's work, and a similar move in the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, is instructive in this regard.

1.7 Heidegger and The Truth of Being: Metaphysical Interpretations of the Ontological Difference

Richard Rorty claims that Heidegger is best read as a pragmatist whose true message— the finality of exclusively human social practices in all questions of truth and meaning— is lost in a "nostalgia" for a deeper, Greek conception of truth in terms of an entity, Being, "which has meaning even though it has no place in social practice".

Rorty separates what I have termed Heidegger's hermeneutics of everydayness, which Rorty takes as the emphasis on the importance of public practice in grounding truth and meaning, from his nostalgic suspicion of those practices as embodied in modernity. Rorty views this suspicion as embodied in a theological conception of Being which seeks a God's-eye view of everyday practice "as a limited whole".

It is with the notion of a realm beyond that of the practices of human society that Rorty takes issue. Rorty does this by offering his own reading of the history of philosophy, in terms of a distinction between "type A" and "type B" entities. Rorty takes
type B entities to be those which are available through language. The tradition's mistake, as Rorty characterises it, is to move beyond the Wittgenstinian theory of the ineffability of language and seek to establish the conditions on which actual entities become possible from outwith that perspective. Hence, Rorty claims, type B entities are approached as those entities which "stand in need of being related in order to become available". Those who postulate type A entities do so to explain the conditions of such availability. Type A entities cited to by Rorty include Plato's Forms, Kant's categories, and Russell's logical objects. In the twentieth century, with the early Wittgenstein, late Heidegger and others, type A entities take the availability of linguistic accessibility itself as the 'stuff'- type B entities- of their analyses. Wittgenstein withdraws from the project of establishing a type-A-ology, a system for capturing the essence of language. Heidegger's mistake, claims Rorty, is to move in the opposite direction as his career progresses.

Guignon, who follows Rorty's reading here, puts it thus-

[...]he dream of achieving "transcendental knowledge" and "veritas transcendentalis" (SZ 38) concerning Being seems to dissolve when the situatedness and historicity of inquiry in general is brought to light. 37

Rorty suggests that in the account of the ready-to-hand and the identification of Dasein with its "projects and language", Division 1 of Being and Time provides a nascent pragmatist account of existence which accepts the relatedness to social practice of all meaning. Rorty claims, however, that this account

36 Ibid., p. 342.
37 Charles Guignon, Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge, p. 241. SZ 38 is a reference to Sein und Zeit, p. 62 in Being and Time.
is buried in Heidegger's talk of Being, an entity which delimits language in a search to identify the transcendental conditions of its possibility. Thus, argues Rorty, Heidegger resurrects the distinction between type A and type B entities and, in mistakenly attempting to "avoid relatedness, to think a single thought which is not simply in a web of other thoughts"\(^{39}\), attempts to remove his thought from the history of human social context and argument.

Rorty, therefore separates Heidegger's work according to a perceived adherence to metaphysical subjectivism. Whereas Rorty believes the writings on Dasein and everyday practice can be interpreted as a proto-pragmatist account of agency and meaning (an exclusively type B account), Rorty reads 'Being' as a type A entity. The result is that Rorty views the distinction Heidegger draws between the ontic and the ontological as a metaphysical distinction between those objects that are present, and the fundamental quality of Presence which they share\(^ {40}\). As with any position forwarding claims about an entity transcending historical and social context, Rorty declares Heidegger's thought here philosophically illegitimate; it is simply another speculative "language-game"\(^ {41}\). For Heidegger to claim that a Being, thus conceived, can lead to arguments or assertions the truth of which could be tested for it to be philosophically meaningful at all would require the impossible; for Heidegger to "break free of metaphysics, free of the world which metaphysics has made, would require that Heidegger himself be capable of rising above his time"\(^ {42}\).

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\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. 352.

\(^{40}\) For a treatment of this metaphysical conception of the ontological difference, in reference to Derrida's reading of Heidegger (which mirrors Rorty's in this regard), see Charles Spinosa, "Derrida and Heidegger: Iterability and Ereignis".


\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 353
Rorty's argument has a fundamental flaw, however. He misunderstands what Heidegger means by Being and the ontological difference, which leads to him fundamentally misconceiving Heidegger's project as a whole. Rorty's first and most basic error is to conceive of the ontological difference as encompassing a metaphysical division between Being and beings; the former taken to be a transcendental type A entity which grounds the Being of beings, conceived of in terms of those entities which are present. Rorty is simply wrong to conceive of Being as anything like an entity which grounds the existence or determines the possibility of beings. Once one has understood this, Rorty's criticisms of the legitimacy of Heidegger's supposed move to delimit the realm of 'human self-conceptions' in terms of a Being, the truths of which can only ever be understood on quasi-religious claims to privileged access, collapse43.

There is no doubt that Heidegger, right from the start of his career, is at pains to claim that Being is not to be understood as a metaphysical entity. Thus we find in Being and Time the claim that "'Being' cannot indeed be conceived as an entity; enti non additur aliqua natura: nor can it acquire such a character as to have the term "entity" applied to it" (BT, p.23). In the later On the Way to Language, as reported by Mark Okrent, this concern has deepened- Heidegger explicitly claims that he "knows with full clarity the difference between Being as the Being of beings and Being as 'Being' in respect of its proper sense, that is, in respect of its truth (the clearing)"44.

43 Mark B. Okrent, in "The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy" offers a particularly sharp rebuttal of Rorty's attempts to render Heidegger's work into metaphysical, and hence ultimately Rortian pragmatist, terms.
44 Okrent, "The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy", p. 145
In failing to take account of these claims, Rorty continues to miss what it is that Heidegger intends to examine with the ontological difference. Rorty assumes that the ontological difference names a distinction between two types of entities with the former, Being, seen as primordial. The motivating concern behind the ontological difference bypasses such metaphysical distinctions altogether, however, and Rorty is thus mistaken to suggest that Heidegger is seeking to privilege one metaphysical conceptual scheme over another. The distinction Heidegger draws between Being and beings does not seek to differentiate or prioritise one (speculative) hermeneutical dynamic over the other, but is concerned instead with "the truth of Being"\textsuperscript{45}. Okrent has observed that although this phrase comes from Heidegger's middle period, one could equally substitute the "question of the meaning of Being" or "place of Being" from the earlier or later works\textsuperscript{46}.

Because Heidegger's concern is not Being but the truth of Being, the criticisms of both Rorty and Tugendhat are blunted. When Heidegger talks of truth in terms of \textit{aletheia} he is not committed to the claim that what is unconcealed is Being as an entity. Rather, Heidegger is concerned with the clearing in which both beings and Being can show up; not the difference between beings and Being as entities. What is uncovered through the analysis of Dasein, and the sense in which \textit{aletheia} is unconcealment, is (to borrow an analogy) the "phenomenological horizon"\textsuperscript{47}. As has been seen throughout the course of this chapter, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology has different goals from those he identifies with the metaphysical tradition. Thus, just as 'Being' does not name an entity of which Heidegger seeks direct

\textsuperscript{45} This is a point Okrent makes at length. The quotation from Heidegger is to be found in Okrent's article, ibid., p. 145.
\textsuperscript{46} See ibid., p. 145.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 148.
knowledge, so ‘Dasein’ or the ‘history of beings’ does not refer to either a subject, or a set of practices, upon which more ‘modest’ truths could be based.

Heidegger’s concern is not then, as Rorty contends, to try and present Being in such a way that the history of human practices and self-conceptions - beings- are conceived on a conceptual scheme which reaches beyond those conceptions. Heidegger’s approach, hermeneutic phenomenology, is not intended to try and establish how things actually are: this applies as equally to an ontotheological Being as to a concept of a distinctly human practice or language. Heidegger’s primordial conception of the truth of Being does not find its completion in a particular account of an actual state of affairs, however conceived. Rather, a concern with the “truth of Being” does not aim to establish final or explicit truths at all, nor provide an account of how the world ‘really’ is, but focuses instead on what it is formally and necessarily involved in the provision of any interpretation at all. Thus, when Heidegger distinguishes between “explicit, deliberate Interpretation” [Interpretierung] and “interpretation of a practical sort” [Auslegung], his aim is not to ground the former in the latter, nor to move towards one authoritative interpretation of Being, but to bring into question the ‘formal’ requirements-encompassing both dynamics- which are involved for beings to show up as having meaning.

Thus Rorty is wrong to assume that Heidegger subordinates the human world to an ontotheological/metaphysical conception of Being. For Heidegger the two are not separate entities or planes which require relation; rather they are dedicated conceptual tools

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in a systemic philosophical inquiry into the field in which any instance of truth- or falsity- can be produced.

Heidegger's hermeneutical concern with everydayness should not be interpreted as a proto-pragmatist position. It is not, as Rorty assumes, the beginnings of an abortive attempt to render an account of human being from which the metaphysical and subjectivist baggage has been expunged. It is instead part of a career long focus on the assumptions behind any interpretation of Being, whether metaphysical or 'postmetaphysical'. Heidegger does not aim to replace one set of justificatory principles (those of subjectivist metaphysics) with an improved set (which Rorty identifies with Heidegger's speculative nostalgia for a Greek conception of Being). If this were the case Heidegger would not have claimed, in the Letter on Humanism, that metaphysical thought, like his own, "belongs to the history of the truth of Being... all refutation in the field of essential thinking is foolish". For Heidegger, the 'transparency' associated with hermeneutic phenomenology is not that of a direct view of a more 'real' or 'true' world, but an increased awareness and clarity about the implications involved in forwarding any interpretation of Being at all.

Thus, although Rorty is right in his claim that Heidegger's work amounts to "one more in a long series of self-conceptions", and that "Heideggerese is only Heidegger's gift to us, not Being's gift to Heidegger" he is wrong to assume that Heidegger's position is opposed to this characterisation. More importantly, however, he misunderstands the purpose of Heidegger's account of the truth of Being; an examination, but not a rejection, of the limits involved in

49 Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in Martin Heidegger (tr. Krell) Basic Writings, p. 239.
attempting to give any account whatsoever of the grounds of truth—
Heidegger's own work, and Rorty's humanist pragmatism included.

Rorty places a metaphysical divide between the hermeneutics of
everydayness and the hermeneutics of suspicion, viewing the latter
as injecting an illegitimate metaphysical dimension into
Heidegger's work. Equally, those in the French deconstructionist
movement have interpreted Heidegger as retaining an unacceptable
metaphysical dimension. As in Rorty's case, they perceive
Heidegger as having two distinct concerns; the first to do with the
grounding of meaning in practice (the hermeneutics of
everydayness as construed above), the second to do with the claim
that those meanings disguise the full horizon of Being (the
hermeneutics of suspicion). Unlike Rorty, both Derrida and Lacoue-
Labarthe place Heidegger's error in the former dynamic, and
defend, rather than attack, the hermeneutics of suspicion.

It is Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe who offers the most dramatic
formulation of this claim. Following Heidegger's own later claims,
that he was entrapped by the hidden metaphysics of Nietzsche51,
Lacoue-Labarthe identifies Heidegger's metaphysical error with
his failure to distance himself enough from the meanings and
practices of modernity, characterised as 'humanism'. It is, then, in
the hermeneutics of everydayness that Lacoue-Labarthe finds that
Heidegger's work retains a metaphysical dimension.

Whereas Rorty finds Heidegger's career to be a story of
increasing movement towards a metaphysical standpoint, Lacoue-
Labarthe takes the later work to be a move away from such a
position. Just as Rorty's interpretation fails to account for the

51 In *The Politics Of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*, Richard Wolin cites
Heidegger's 'oft-heard lamentation' that "Nietzsche did me in!", p. 141.
continuity of Heidegger’s work, so Lacoue-Labarthe is committed to the view that Heidegger’s corpus is marked by a passage between a metaphysical and a non-metaphysical position. However, as was argued in respect to Rorty above, this view (although not discouraged by Heidegger)\(^{52}\) runs counter to strong evidence in the writings themselves that there is a great degree of continuity in Heidegger’s thought\(^{53}\). Further, his ongoing focus on the truth of Being, does not, as both Rorty and Lacoue-Labarthe assert, aim at ‘direct access’ to Being, however construed.

As Rorty is wrong to assume that Heidegger reveals an illegitimate metaphysical intention in retaining a hermeneutics of suspicion, so Lacoue-Labarthe is mistaken to assume that Heidegger reveals a similar desire in retaining a hermeneutics of everydayness. In fact, neither hermeneutical dynamic aims at proffering such an account at all. Heidegger is not seeking to give a foundational account of the world and how man relates to it, but the preconditions for any such interpretation to become an issue in the first place.

The problem with Lacoue-Labarthe and Rorty’s metaphysical interpretations of Heidegger is that they fail to keep in sight the focus of Heidegger’s work. Dasein and the critique of subjectivist metaphysics are not intended to establish the framework within which all possible truths lie; this is true of positive claims such as Rorty’s assertion that contingency underlies all truth claims, and of the negative thesis that Lacoue-Labarthe wrongly imputes

\(^{52}\) Heidegger, after all, in encouraging the French reception of his thought may well have had the maintenance of his philosophical reputation, and his denazification, in mind. A point put at length in Tom Rockmore’s *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism and Being* and in Richard Wolin’s “French Heidegger Wars”.

\(^{53}\) Those who have realised, and argued this, include Frederick A. Olafson’s “The Unity of Heidegger’s Thought” and David Hoy’s “Heidegger and the hermeneutic turn”, both in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*. Another notable exception is Heidegger who, after all, claims to have been the thinker of one thought only!
to Heidegger, that metaphysical assumptions cannot ground truth claims. Heidegger's contribution is prior to such attempts to relate truth to reality, however ironically conceived, but is concerned instead with the relation between the conditions of possibility and actuality within which anything can show as meaningful at all. Heidegger's point is that the conditions of possibility cannot be seen as a distinct realm from which any particular set of manifest entities is drawn. Dasein as temporal care is not Heidegger's attempt to define human being, nor the universal principles about it which enables the world to be known. It is, instead, Heidegger's move to suggest what must be necessary for such relations to have meaning or make sense at all.

Thus, when Heidegger claims that "[h]igher than actuality stands possibility" (BT, p.63) he is not suggesting that the problem with the tradition has been that it has failed to find the true or right principles underpinning how we come to know actuality. As Carelton Christensen has argued this would remain within the epistemological tradition- a "mere question of truth".\textsuperscript{54} Heidegger's project is to redraft not the solution but the problem. Properly understood, the 'truth of Being' is concerned with the clearing within which questions of truth can make sense; with meaning rather than truth. The phenomenological approach does not seek to better relate the subjective experience of reality (actuality) to the objective conditions which must hold (reality); it seeks rather to suggest that reflection on this relationship- whether metaphysically or 'postmetaphysically' understood- fails to account for how such a relationship can come to have meaning at all. It is this field of meaning which constitutes possibility. The

problem is not how we come to know reality but why the issue is itself a problem.

In fact, as was suggested at the beginning of this Chapter, Heidegger's critique of subjectivity is not a refutation, but a recasting. It is not simply because he takes the Subject as his starting point that Heidegger takes Descartes as the prime representative of the Western tradition, nor because his work proves the spring of talk of representative intentionality. Heidegger does not claim such positions are false, but, rather, that it is mistaken to view such stances as generating principles through which what Carleton calls the "psycho-physical" transaction can be modelled. Heidegger's challenge is to the heart of the assumption of this division, regardless of whether it is 'addressed' through a distinction between a knowing Subject and an objective world, or between the cognitive and embodied dimensions of human practice.

I now consider some of the implications of Heidegger's critique of subjectivity that become apparent when one rejects the metaphysical readings of his work offered by Rorty, Lacoue-Labarthe and all those who interpret his work as an attempt to better present the truth of things.

Section 2) Conclusion: The Truth of Being, Metaphysical Subjectivism and Meaning

Dreyfus has compared Heidegger's insight to that of Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*: "Giving grounds [must] come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it

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55 Ibid., p. 102.
is an ungrounded way of acting"\textsuperscript{56}. What emerges from examining the work of Rorty and Lacoue-Labarthe is that Heidegger is not attempting to characterise this 'ungrounded way of acting' in metaphysical terms at all; regardless of whether or not one conceives of this metaphysics in terms of either the hermeneutics of everydayness or suspicion.

Heidegger's concern is rather with what is involved in the search for grounds \textit{per se}. He is not trying to render an account of what Being really \textit{is} but how such an inquiry into Being can come to be meaningful. This applies equally to all theories of meaning and it is a tenet of Heidegger's position that no particular answer is to be ruled out. Thus, the superiority, or otherwise, of Heidegger's position is not premised on any claim to privileged access of a substantial truth or set of truths, but relates to his claim that some theories of meaning are clearer with regards to the formal assumptions on which they are necessarily based than others. 'Transparency' is thus indexed to the relation between the form of an inquiry and its content, rather than any comparison of substantial claims with a pre-determinable or knowable (metaphysical) order. The problem with metaphysical accounts, for Heidegger, is not that they are wrong but that they claim an explicit completeness that, in the absence of a consideration of their own phenomenological foundations, is, at the very least, questionable.

Heidegger's critique of subjectivity and the interpretative position from which it is advanced cannot, therefore, be assimilated to an attempt to move beyond metaphysical accounts of existence to a more adequate account of how things come to be

\textsuperscript{56}Dreyfus, \textit{Being-in-the-World}, p. 155.
true in terms of either a "hermeneutics of everydayness" or a "hermeneutics of suspicion". Thus when Rorty portrays Heidegger's error as seeking to try and found truth on a "hermeneutics of suspicion", or when Lacoue-Labarthe reverses the claim and sees his error as trying to found truth on a "hermeneutics of everydayness", both miss the point. The two hermeneutical dynamics are not differing methodological approaches in a search for definitive knowledge, but symbiotic components in an investigation into the preconceptions involved in seeking to provide any account of the grounds of truth. Heidegger's concern is not with truth but meaning.

In separating the hermeneutics of everydayness from the hermeneutics of suspicion along metaphysical lines, both miss Heidegger's emphasis on the need to be clear about what must be involved in forming any account which tries to delimit the grounds upon which we produce the meanings we do. Alasdair MacIntyre, in a review of the work of Charles Larmore, has characterised "[k]nowledge [as], whatever else it may be, [a]s that which is able to withstand critical testing."\(^57\) Heidegger is not concerned, as metaphysical renderings of Being suggest, to provide the definitive grounds or rules governing such testing. Rather the aim of hermeneutic phenomenology, of which Dasein and 'transparency' are integral parts, is a philosophical inquiry which aims to determine what any "phenomenological horizon" must, of formal necessity, draw on. Heidegger's answers, from the ekstatic temporality of Dasein to Ereignis, prepare the ground for an addressing of the question that MacIntyre identifies as crucial: "How [...] do we test our beliefs about reasons?"\(^58\)

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\(^58\) Ibid., p. 489.
work on the truth of Being, as presented thus far, points to the importance of clarity about the form of such a question, irrespective of the substantive answers about reasons that one reaches.

Rorty and Lacoue-Labarthe thus misinterpret Heidegger when construing 'Being' or Dasein as a metaphysical entity, the knowledge of which reveals substantive truths. Two important implications follow from this mistake. Firstly, the belief that the fundamental ontology of Dasein or his references to Being (or the truth of Being) are intended to constitute a set of truths about the relationship between the world and our conception of it is a misinterpretation of Heidegger. Thus, Rorty is wrong to suggest that Heidegger's work contains a pragmatist thrust which seeks to ground human understanding in a distinct set of practices which found that understanding. Heidegger is not simply seeking to ground the cognitive dimension of human understanding in a fundamental set of non-cognitive practices in which humans participate (e.g. "embodied practical know-how"\(^\text{59}\)).

Heidegger's concerns with the distinctions between cognitive and non-cognitive, inner and outer, subject and object are not intended to constitute refutations or denials. Rather, he seeks to question the primacy of, and thus (more accurately) explore the conditions for, the truth of these distinctions. It is not, therefore, as Rorty and Lacoue-Labarthe assert, Heidegger's mistake to assert that a particular set of truths better 'capture' the reality of human being, the world or a metaphysical order or entity governing the two. Heidegger's political involvement cannot, therefore, be attributed to an unexamined desire for presence; whether of a

\(^{59}\) Carleton Christensen, "Heidegger's Representationalism", p. 97.
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theological conception of Being or an ontologised account of Dasein.

Secondly, this misinterpretation masks a particular set of claims that Heidegger makes concerning how it is that any claims about truth or reality come to have meaning. By overlooking this vital aspect of Heidegger's work, Rorty fails to take account of one of its implications; that Heidegger's critique is not simply of those who would seek to claim a preterhuman objectivity for their claims about reality. In fact, Heidegger is as concerned with those who assume that it is the language of knowability that is best applied to questions of how we come to experience truth.

Thus, although Rorty is quite right to point out that 'Heideggerese' is another language game, the assumption from which he makes this claim is precisely what Heidegger questions. Asserting the finality of human language and contingent practice in questions of truth does not run contrary to anything Heidegger claims. Assuming that these grounds of truth are identical to the grounds of meaning does.

That Rorty and Lacoue-Labarthe misinterpret Heidegger's conception of Being does not, of course, mean that they are wrong about the claim that Heidegger's approach to the thought and institutions of modernity might be shown to be erroneous. Heidegger, after all, famously found the political self-understandings of modernity inferior to Nazism. The question at hand is whether this rejection, indexed to Heidegger's perception that they are simply products of metaphysical subjectivism or "humanism", is based on any distinct argument about politics in his thought, or whether it is an arbitrary antipathy which points to
a lack in his thought. As Richard Polt puts it "one must ask whether Heidegger's hostility to liberalism points to a fatal flaw in his thought- or perhaps simply an absence"60.

In other words, if one accepts, contra the metaphysical reading of the ontological difference, that Heidegger's work does not relapse into a desire for presence which demands the obliteration of modern politics in terms of an illegitimate belief in the substantive truths of a Being conceived of as 'real', how does one explain Heidegger's rejection of the political constructs of the West? If Heidegger's critique of subjectivism is that it lacks 'transparency' concerning the phenomenological horizons on which it must of necessity be based, is there any reason to assume that this has ramifications for politics at all? Rorty and Lacoue-Labarthe are wrong to attribute Heidegger's suspicion of modernity to a straightforward subscription to a particular, speculative conception of the reality of human being or the world; it is the reason(s) which motivate such conceptions which are Heidegger's concern.

In the light of this, the next step is to determine what it is about modernity's conception of reason that Heidegger objects to, and to evaluate whether that explains his politics.

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**Chapter 2: Heidegger's Critique of Modernity**

**Introduction**

**Recap**

The previous Chapter examined the question of how Heidegger's critique of Subjectivism ought to be interpreted. In concluding that it is a misinterpretation to see Heidegger as simply seeking to adjudicate between various conceptions of how the world or the Subject 'really' are, and how the two might be related, I suggested that Heidegger's concern with the 'truth' of Being should be read as opening the way to an evaluation of what it means to claim that one can give reasons about how these things can be known to be true.

Heidegger's answer is not grounded in an attempt to uncover an authoritative set of principles, but in the examination of how the conception of 'grounds' can come to be meaningful at all. These grounds, he asserts, cannot be said to be 'true' in the traditional sense. 'Truth' in *Being and Time* is indexed to Dasein, but better understandings of Dasein do not yield a greater amount of truth, as opposed to 'untruth', but, in fact, demonstrate the equiprimordiality of both concepts in respect to the phenomenological concern with meaning.

In the light of this, I argued that both Rorty's pragmatist interpretation of Dasein as the 'right' understanding of the constitution of human beings, and those interpretations which assert that any talk of the truth of Being refers to a metaphysical conception of truth, miss the full force of the phenomenological
approach. To clarify, Heidegger's concern with 'possibility' is not a search for how best to represent or understand how the world or ourselves actually are, but how the issue of 'best' representation can come to be meaningful at all.

In talking of the relationship between 'possibility' and 'actuality' (BT., p. 63), Heidegger is specifically questioning those who would seek to model 'conditions of possibility' on terms which fail to take full account of the formal necessity of Being and time in questions of meaning. Heidegger's critique of subjectivism is not simply that it mis-identifies these conditions of possibility, but that, in failing to identify the phenomenological horizon with temporality, it misunderstands the character of its own inquiry. Further, this misconception, in failing to bring to the fore what is formally necessary (the temporality of Dasein, the question of the meaning of Being), leads to a mis-identification of what exactly is involved in talking of 'conditions of possibility'. The errors of metaphysics and subjectivity are thus not directly linked to their truth claims, but are a product of their self-understanding of those truth claims.

Thus, although Rorty is right to assert that Heidegger believes the metaphysical answers one finds in the philosophical tradition are wrongly modelled on those used in understanding the 'objective' world, he does not identify precisely why Heidegger thinks this is a mistake. The problem with the subjectivist and metaphysical tradition, for Heidegger, is not simply that those in it have overlooked certain entities or concepts in framing the conditions of possibility governing actuality, but that the phenomenon overlooked—most pertinently the historicity of Dasein-
qualitatively changes what one takes to be a condition of possibility.

It is the second moment in this criticism that is crucial in understanding Heidegger's point here. For Heidegger it is not whether one is a metaphysician, subjectivist, humanist, or a Rortian social practice pragmatist, that is directly of greatest importance. Rather, it is the view (hidden or otherwise) that these positions have of the 'conditions of possibility', and the nature of their constitution, which is crucial.

The problem Heidegger diagnoses with the philosophical tradition is that it has sought to understand Being in ways which privilege a notion of 'self-evidence' that has been dogmatically derived from the terms of presence. Thus, it has been assumed that the standards relating to the 'conditions of possibility' will be those of objective certitude, a tacit and continuing reliance upon the separations between Being and the experience of Being embodied within subjectivist epistemology.

As was argued in the previous Chapter, Heidegger characterises the philosophical tradition as having been in error about the (phenomenological) foundations upon which it is necessarily built. The desire to think Being objectively has led to a privileging of a reality considered "deeper"\(^1\) than that of its appearance. Heidegger's argument is not simply that such "depth" cannot be conceived of on metaphysical or subjectivist schemes, but that conceiving of the conditions of possibility thus is both dogmatic and untenable in the light of hermeneutic phenomenology.

\(^{1}\) *BT*, p. 193.
One implication of the assumption that the 'conditions of possibility' underlying the experience of Being are either beyond this world, or prior to it, is, Heidegger believes, a drive in thinking about these conditions to aim at the explicit naming, knowledge, or discovery of principles which order Being. This is the emphasis on "Being-certain" (BT, p.46) which was discussed in my previous Chapter.

Insofar as Heidegger can possibly be described as having principles underlying his discussions of Dasein, they rest in the emphasis on the temporality of concern, and the need to understand that 'transparency' is to be understood in the light of the type of inquiry which he is conducting. The aim in thinking about how things come to show up as they do is thus not to come to 'know' a set of principles by which things come to have meaning, but to become clear about what is involved formally, which for Heidegger entails historically, in such an inquiry. For Heidegger, this extends beyond a need to ground one's notion of truth in purely human practices and involves raising the question of what is entailed by the notion of an understanding of the grounds of truth in the first place. Thus, for Rorty to seek to ground his conception of truth in the claim of the contingency of meaning in relation to human social practices simply repeats the error made within the metaphysical tradition: that the perception of meaning in the world entails certain principles governing that appearance, and that knowledge of these principles is to be understood in terms, at least borrowed, from epistemology.

Heidegger's philosophical critique of subjectivity is thus based on a set of alternative philosophical premises, which is perhaps better termed an ethos rather than a position. In questioning the
tenability of a philosophical position which reflects upon Being in
terms of a fundamental separation between subject and object, or the paradigm of consciousness, Heidegger focuses on the need to understand the meaning of phenomena in terms of temporality. Heideggerian suspicion, and hermeneutic phenomenology, are thus philosophical claims which assert that the meaning of Being cannot be exhaustively understood in terms of the conception of explicitness that one finds within the tradition. Further, as was argued in the previous Chapter, Heidegger's own emphases are intended, right from the beginning of his career, to call the form of the epistemological project into question; not just its execution.

I argued at the end of the last Chapter that in the light of this it was a premature interpretation of Heidegger to suggest that either the "hermeneutics of everydayness" or the "hermeneutics of suspicion" - the mechanisms by which Heidegger presents his own position - are ways of grounding or privileging a new set of truth claims. In seeking to resituate the account of truth within the context of his phenomenological concern with meaning, Heidegger aims at different goals, not just better execution. Therefore, those who understand the ontological difference as intrinsically metaphysical, in the sense of laying claim to deeper or ahistorical truths, are wrong.

Just as Heidegger's hermeneutics of everydayness cannot be reduced to a pragmatist commitment, so his hermeneutics of suspicion cannot be seen as a straightforward rejection of the history of philosophy - it is, rather, a reinterpretation of its meaning. That Rorty, Lacoue-Labarthe, and those who conceive of the ontological difference in metaphysical terms misinterpret Heidegger does not, however, imply that they are necessarily wrong.
about Heidegger's rejection of the thought and institutions of what he deems 'modernity'.

This Chapter, therefore, seeks to provide an exposition and analysis of the critique of modernity in Heidegger's thought. Focusing on Heidegger's analyses of humanism and technology, the aim is to seek to understand how his critique of modernity is linked to what appears, prima facie, to be his purely philosophical critique of subjectivity.

To this end, the following Chapter is divided into four sections. The first section examines Heidegger's description of modernity and analyses his treatment of the themes he identifies as central. The following section looks at the reception of those themes amongst recent commentators on Heidegger, particularly Stephen K. White. My third section, in the light of the previous two, assesses the extent to which Heidegger's critique of modernity is based on what I have earlier called Heideggerian suspicion, rightly understood. This builds on my discussion of Heidegger's thoughts on subjectivity discussed in the previous Chapter. Having argued that the hermeneutics of suspicion does not constitute a separable dynamic, and that Heidegger's concern with meaning thus embodies distinct philosophical claims missed by Rortian-style pragmatist reductions of Heidegger, I am concerned with how Heidegger's 'suspicion' of modernity ought to be understood in relation to his hermeneutical suspicion. Once I establish the relationship between Heidegger's critique of philosophical objectivism and his related critique of instrumental reason in my fourth, concluding section, the way is clear for the following Chapter to examine and evaluate the social and political implications that can be drawn from his analyses.
Section 1) Heidegger's Conception of Modernity

1.1 Describing Modernity

The consideration of modernity as an explicit issue is most prevalent in Heidegger's middle and late writings, most notably in the 1946 *Letter on Humanism*, the 1954 *Question Concerning Technology* and, in the 1960s, with the publication of the *Nietzsche* lectures. The themes through which Heidegger approaches modernity are, however, largely prefigured within *Being and Time* and the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*. It is, then, especially hard to pin down a definite and decisive conception of modernity, an already deeply contested term, in Heidegger's work. Therefore, the best way to proceed is an identification of the main themes which persist when Heidegger considers modernity.

Talk of modernity is, as David Kolb\(^2\) has observed, marked by two meanings. Firstly, it refers to a period that is 'now'; the contemporary time. Secondly, it embodies the belief, and Heidegger is clearly no exception, that that period which we call modernity is distinguishable from those times which have preceded it in more than simply chronological terms. Thus, in understanding Heidegger's description and critique of modernity, one needs to examine the themes he takes, and the ways in which he differentiates them from what has gone before.

Throughout his career, Heidegger has one overriding concern: the field within which the meaning of Being comes to be understood. Although there is movement in the way Heidegger terms this—the ecstatic temporality of Dasein, the sendings of Being, or, ultimately, das Ereignis—there are good reasons, as seen previously, to understand this concern as continuous. In understanding modernity (as with anything else), therefore, Heidegger's primary objective is a consideration of the ways in which Being comes to show itself. Thus, Michael Zimmerman has identified Heidegger's concern with modernity as a concern with "the contemporary mode of understanding or disclosing things"; as long as one bears in mind that 'things' should not be understood as 'objective things', but Being, this is the peg on which the rest hangs.

Given this architectonic structure, it is not the foci of Heidegger's attacks that mark his critique of modernity out. Heidegger's treatment of industrialisation and machine technology, natural science, and the advent of mass culture are, as many thinkers have pointed out, far from original. What is original in Heidegger's analyses is what he takes to underpin these phenomena, and his reasons for treating them as ills; as Gail Soffer puts it—"What is peculiar to Heidegger... is his diagnosis of the cause of modernity's ills... the humanism of the Western philosophical

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tradition"\textsuperscript{5}. Thus, in understanding why it is that Heidegger feels the Rhine has been besmirched by hydroelectric power plants, or describes the understanding of natural resources as "standing-reserve" as a "threat"\textsuperscript{6}, it is to the account of humanism that one must turn.

In the \textit{Letter on Humanism} \textsuperscript{7}, Heidegger defines humanism as the "concern that man become free for his humanity and find his worth in it."\textsuperscript{8} Identifying this with the Roman Republic's appropriation of the Greek conception of man in the conception of \textit{homo humanus}, Heidegger portrays all the historical occurrences of humanism as essentially concerned with the attempt to 'educate' ourselves about the nature of our humanity. Heidegger argues, however, that in all cases "the humanitas of \textit{homo humanus} is determined with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole"\textsuperscript{9}.

The roots of Heidegger's attitude towards modernity can thus be traced back to \textit{Being and Time}, where Heidegger contrasts the modern understanding of the truth of Being with the pre-Platonic "Greek conception of truth"\textsuperscript{10}. As in \textit{Being and Time}, where he asserts that the modern conception of Being is determined by "the subject, the soul, the consciousness, the spirit, the person" (\textit{BT}, p.72), Heidegger names "man", as understood in humanism, as the key concept. For Heidegger, humanism, since its Roman beginnings, has been metaphysical. The aim of defining the "essence of man" against a backdrop of reified interpretations of nature, history,

\textsuperscript{5} Gail Soffer "Heidegger, humanism, and the destruction of history", p. 547.
\textsuperscript{7} In \textit{Basic Writings}, as above.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p. 225.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., p. 225.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Being and Time}, p.57. See also p. 63.
world or ground means that humanism retains the metaphysical assumption of a divide between subject and object. However expressed, this division ensures that humanism "presupposes an interpretation of beings without asking about the truth of Being".¹¹

To its very core, then, modernity is seen by Heidegger as lacking transparency about the form of its own inquiry into Being. It is important to note at this point that Heidegger sees "humanism" as more than just a philosophical tradition pursued at certain times within certain societies. Rather, for Heidegger "humanism" is both definitive of particular historical periods, and, at the same time, these periods are essentially to be understood in philosophical/metaphysical terms. Heidegger thus equates the understanding of the history of modernity with the understanding of metaphysics, and grounds both in the question of the meaning of Being.

Heidegger's critique of modernity is thus premised on his assumption that the full range of the phenomena of modernity is best analysed in relation to the metaphysical understanding of man. The metaphysical assumption that man stands apart from experience is, for Heidegger, the essence of modernity. Hence, in the Nietzsche lectures we find the claim that:

"That period we call modern... is defined by the fact that man becomes the center and measure of all beings. Man is the subjectum, that which lies at the bottom of all things, that is, in modern terms, at the bottom of all objectification and representation."¹²

¹² Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche (Pfullingen, 1961) Vol.2, as cited in Habermas's Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 133.
As was seen in the previous Chapter, and restated above, in *Being and Time* Heidegger cites the "subject, the soul, the consciousness, the spirit, the person" as at the heart of the problems of the philosophical tradition. By the time Heidegger comes to consider modernity in its own right in the *Letter and Beyond*, however, he has focused on the modern conception of the self as responsible for the problems he attributes to this period. In understanding modernity, therefore, the problem is not that of the subject-object divide, but the conception of man as ground upon which such a division is built. As Kolb puts it, when Heidegger considers modernity, the "self is not just one pole of the subject-object relation; it is the foundation of that relation"\(^{13}\).

The previous Chapter argued that it was not the subject-object divide, but the assumptions on which it is based that Heidegger objects to in *Being and Time*. Having explored the hermeneutical, and largely philosophical, implications of these assumptions in that book, Heidegger's turn to the 'essence of man', or the 'self' of humanism, carries the critique of subjectivism into realms more commonly considered sociological, cultural, or political. The next two steps to be taken are: firstly, to establish how Heidegger considers the 'self' to be constituted, especially in relation to the philosophical subject which was his previous concern, and secondly, to trace how persuasive Heidegger's arguments are that it is in the light of such an understanding that the analysis of modernity ought to be conducted.

1.3 Modernity and Humanism

If the problem with metaphysical subjectivism is that it obscures the full nature of one's inquiry into Being, the problem

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Heidegger perceives with the centrality of the self in modernity is that it both embodies and obscures the implications of this 'forgetting of Being'. Heidegger does not suggest that the former, metaphysical subjectivism, causes the latter, but that by conflating the history of 'modernity' with the history of metaphysics the two are taken as indicative of the same error.

In the *Letter on Humanism* Heidegger distinguishes between the philosophical subject, with which *Being and Time* is largely concerned, and the 'self' thought of as the "essence of man" in humanist times. The latter is essentially summed up, for Heidegger, in the picture of man as "animal rationale"\(^{14}\), which he sees as the underlying understanding of man's existence in modernity.

In taking "man", rather than the 'subject' modelled on his earlier reading of the Cartesian ego\(^{15}\), as the central concept of modernity, Heidegger moves the focus from the defensibility of a philosophical account, to the reasons and grounds for that account. Thus, in the later work, Heidegger develops the question, raised in the conclusion of the previous Chapter, of how one can evaluate modernity. In Heidegger's view, the distinctive and essential feature of modernity, encapsulated in the consideration of experience as the experience of an animal rationale, is the conception of, to borrow Habermas's phrase, "subject-centered reason"\(^{16}\) as ground. It was seen in the previous Chapter that this is philosophically suspect for Heidegger; reason can no more be grounded in the subject than it can in the Platonic Forms, the transcendentental Ego, or God.

\(^{14}\) *Letter on Humanism*, p. 226.

\(^{15}\) Bearing in mind that this reading is disputed by (amongst others) Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity*, p. 141, as discussed in the previous Chapter.

\(^{16}\) Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 133.
For Heidegger, "reasons" must essentially be understood apart from any notion of grounds thus understood. There is no privileged position from which man can survey and order experience in a definitive form. In his account of modernity Heidegger adumbrates the ways in which this error resonates across the political, social and cultural dimensions of our time; viz through the predominance of the conditions which lead to subjectivism being seen as the final and definitive understanding of Being, and how one might start to come to an understanding of how this happens.

The account of the 'grounds' of reason in modernity is developed in The Question Concerning Technology. Since Heidegger has already argued that the assumptions upon which philosophical subjectivism is based must transcend its own self-understanding, Heidegger's next move is to give an account of how that self-understanding might itself be understood more transparently.

1.4 Modernity and Technology

Heidegger declares at the beginning of The Question Concerning Technology that "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological"17. Heidegger's aim in considering technology is not to show how the 'grounds of reason' of modernity have become perverted in the concepts and institutions of modern industry and machine technology, but to illustrate in more detail how these grounds and reasons come to be manifest.

Technology is thus understood by Heidegger as the phenomenon which finds its philosophical expression in the modern treatment

17 Basic Writings, p. 311.
of the fourfold conception of causality: *causa materialis*, *causa formalis*, *causa finalis*, and *causa efficiens*. In modernity, Heidegger finds that all four causes have been taken to find their fulfilment in the final category. It is the placing of the "essence of man", as understood in humanism, as the guarantor of this move that Heidegger takes as the clue to his development of his account of technology.

Heidegger illustrates his point with a consideration of the way in which a silver chalice might be understood as coming into existence. He argues that the modern way of explaining how such a being is "brought-forth" subsumes the first three 'causes'- the type of material, the shape it takes, and the purpose for which it is created- into the fourth. This fourth cause, the *causa efficiens*, which is taken to indicate where final "responsibility" for the bringing-forth of the being, is located within a subject whose will it is to fashion it.

At this point, Heidegger makes the (for him) typical move of analysing "technology" etymologically. As it often does, this means that Heidegger believes that "technology" ought to be understood and contrasted with the Greek conception of the term -"*Technikon*- as "that which belongs to *techne*". On Heidegger's account, the Greeks saw each of the four types of causes as "co-responsible" for the manifestation of a being, and the whole lot are to be understood in terms of the ways that all beings pass "beyond the nonpresent and go[...] forward into presencing... [a]s *poiesis*". The craftsman is thus just one part of the bringing-

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18 Ibid., p. 316.
19 Ibid., p. 318.
20 Ibid., p. 315.
21 Ibid., p. 317.
forth of the chalice; a facilitator at most in the revealing of the chalice. Thus, Heidegger argues, in the pre-Socratic Greek context, *techne* was understood as an aspect of *aletheiac* revealing: it did not "at all lie in the making and manipulating, nor in the using of means, but rather in the revealing".23

By contrast the modern conception of technology, and the way in which beings are assumed to be brought-forth, is associated with the will and reasons of a subject, rather than the occasion of a coming into presence of a being, an event in which the craftsman is merely one aspect of Being.

In both cases, when Heidegger talks of technology he points out that it is,

[...] therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth. 24

Equally, the modern account of how things come into presence is an account of revealing; "modern technology... too is a revealing".25 Heidegger's account of the nature of this revealing is both familiar and unspectacular in itself: the objectification of Nature, the rise of industrial technique and rationalization, the bringing of all aspects of existence (particularly the work of art) under scientific laws. In terms of the human understanding of the situation, this culminates in the understandings of nature, artefacts and, ultimately, man himself26 as "standing-reserve".27 On Heidegger's

24 Ibid., p. 318.
25 Ibid., p. 320.
26 I keep Heidegger's own masculine form here.
27 *Letter on Humanism*, p. 322.
account, this understanding means even those objects not immediately being dealt with are brought under the sphere of influence of human will and purpose: thus, as in Heidegger's famous example, the Rhine (and all rivers) become "water-power supplier[s]"\textsuperscript{28}, or potential water-power suppliers. From this perspective, beings are brought-forth as means to subjective ends. Heidegger gives as examples of the way things are revealed under these conditions as "[u]nlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching"\textsuperscript{29}.

It is the next step in Heidegger's argument which is crucial. Heidegger considers the question: "Who accomplishes the challenging setting-upon through which what we call the actual is revealed as a standing-reserve?"\textsuperscript{30}. In Heidegger's view the 'obvious' answer will not do; it is not 'man' or 'human beings' that are responsible for such ordering. Taking as evidence the way in which human beings effortlessly fit into this order, themselves a resource within the productionist process, Heidegger states that "[m]odern technology, as a revealing that orders, is thus no mere human doing"\textsuperscript{31}.

Heidegger is clear; placing "man" as the entity responsible for the instrumental ordering of entities associated with the institutions and conceptions of modernity is an error. Instead it is in the Greek conception of technology, and ultimately in their conception of the truth of Being understood in terms of \textit{aletheia}, that a more appropriate understanding is expressed- one which understands that human beings are themselves gathered under the ordering of technology. In Heidegger's view the Greeks were right

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 321.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 322.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 323.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 324.
to look beyond any self-contained and definitive conception of man in order to understand how things come to be present.

Returning to his interpretation of the Greek conception of human existence, as simply one—albeit distinctive—entity amongst others, Heidegger asserts that 'Mankind' itself is an entity which is revealed; it is neither the source nor event of unconcealment itself. Rather, for Heidegger, this event must be understood as prior to the emergence of 'Man', however understood. The instrumentalist way in which Man and entities appear in modernity is thus attributed to a particular epoch in the way Being reveals itself. Modernity, for Heidegger, is marked by beings being revealed in relation to their use as indexed to a subjectivist understanding of human being; it is this nexus of beings and meanings which Heidegger terms das Gestell. The Gestell is the frame within which all questions of the truth of Being in modernity are situated.

1.5 Heidegger's Description of Modernity: Analysis and Summary

For Heidegger, then, modernity is marked by two distinctive features. Firstly, it is characterised by a placing of human being, in terms of the subjective certainty associated with 'self-consciousness', which finds its first clear expression with Descartes, at the centre of all things. To this first diagnosis, of subjectivist humanism, Heidegger adds his second— the primacy of instrumental ordering of both man and objects; the Gestell.

There is, however, a clear tension between Heidegger's two emphases. Humanism takes human understanding and experience as the starting point, and measure, for all inquiry. Heidegger,
however, clearly suggests that the centrality of man, as the provider of order, has been surpassed in a modernity characterised by the technological *Gestell*. The preliminary task, therefore, is to understand how the two, humanism and technology, fit into the description of modernity in Heidegger's account.

Kolb, who reads 'technology' as 'universal imposition', considers two possible responses; that "universal imposition was underneath subjectivity all along", or that "the modern age comes in two stages, the first characterized by the domination of subjectivity and the second by universal imposition"\(^{32}\). It is important to realise why the two themes are taken to be problematic; it is widely assumed that in talking of the technological ordering of the *Gestell*, Heidegger initiates a new phase within his thought, in which the 'sendings of Being' negate entirely any concern with human being at all. Thus in the *Letter on Humanism*, 'Man's' centrality is the dominant concern, but by the time of the *Question Concerning Technology* this is so "decisively in subservience to... the challenging-forth of enframing" that the *Gestell*, "[a]s a destining [...] banishes man"\(^{33}\). Habermas, who perceives and vehemently opposes this movement in Heidegger's thought, characterises the situation thus-

> [t]hat dimension of unconcealment prior to propositional truth passes over from the conscientious project of the individual concerned about his existence to an anonymous dispensation of Being that demands subjection.\(^{34}\)

Habermas's point is that, in passing from a concern with the individual person to a conception of Being which supersedes any

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\(^{33}\) *Question Concerning Technology*, p. 332.

\(^{34}\) Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 155.
notion of human control or responsibility, Heidegger treats Being as an entity conceived of on ontotheological terms. If this is right then Heidegger is indeed in trouble: since a conception of Being in these terms would be as indefensible as the pretensions to objectivist completeness of the humanism that precedes it.

Habermas's criticisms take two paths here. Firstly, there is the concern, discussed in the previous Chapter, that Heidegger's work arbitrarily claims privileged (literally superhuman) access to the ontological state of affairs as they really are. A second, but related point, is that within such a schema- which lacks any conception of human beings as responsible for their own actions- there are no checks on this ontologizing of the idiosyncratic. Applying Habermas's view to the Gestell, the point is that to talk of modernity in terms of the destining of Being entails a bypassing of the standards of empirical testability for any claims one makes.

Equally, however, something like an account of the Gestell is needed for Heidegger's account to retain both its continuity and originality. Heidegger's account of both subjectivism and humanism is distinctive precisely because it seeks to delineate the horizons within which such positions arise. Thus, Heidegger's account of Being cannot be couched in theological, social or psychological terms; Heidegger's treatment must go beyond the metaphysical anthropologism which he criticises.

The accounts of humanism and technology are neither opposed accounts of one particular period, nor stages in which the former leads to the latter. Rather, both are complementary parts of a criticisms of any attempt to find the position from which one can establish the definitive conditions for understanding Being-
project marked by the metaphysical desire for certainty which Heidegger's philosophical project declares itself against.

In fact, the confusion only arises if one conflates humanism with subjectivity. Heidegger does not, contrary to Habermas's suggestion in the above quote, move from treating the individual as the ground of propositional truth to a similar position in respect of Being, technological or otherwise. Heidegger is not asserting that the problem with humanism is that it deals with human being at all, or that the Gestell shows how futile and wrong such a belief is. Equally, in his account of the Gestell, Heidegger's claim that the instrumental ordering 'banishes man' does not entail that there is no legitimate room to talk of human being. Heidegger's point is that neither humanism nor technology can define the ways in which Being must always be understood, but both risk being understood thus.

If Heidegger neither starts enmeshed within the philosophy of the Subject, nor moves to escape through a recourse to the implausible objectivity of a mystico-theological Being, then 'humanism' and 'technology' are not contradictory accounts of the 'real world'. Rather, Heidegger's point is that they are in fact remarkably similar aspects of an underlying metaphysical subjectivism which defines modernity. For Heidegger, the proper understanding of this subjectivism will not seek to reassert the primacy of traditional human agency, nor seek an immediate encounter with Being; it will instead seek a "free relationship" which "opens our human existence to the essence of technology"35.

35 Question Concerning Technology, p. 311.
The following section is concerned with how one Heidegger's account of modernity ought to be interpreted in two respects. Firstly, if it is a critique, how ought that critique to be understood? Addressing this first issue raises the second- is Habermas right in his presumption that Heidegger has nothing constructive to say about human agency or action?

1.6 Heidegger and Modernity: Critique, Human Agency and Metaphysics

Over the course of his career, Heidegger's attitude towards modernity and its products is either ambivalent or deliberately ambiguous; depending on how far one imputes personal opportunism to Heidegger's reconsideration of his support for Hitler. For whatever reason, the question of what, if anything, one ought to do about the forgetting of the question of Being in the contemporary age remains a live one throughout Heidegger's corpus. One finds the claim that the modern understanding of science needs to be brought under the control of a spiritualised Volk\(^{36}\) in order that Germany may survive the collapse of the "moribund pseudocivilization"\(^{37}\) that is the West. Simultaneously, Heidegger is clear, however, that this very will to 'master' modern technology by bringing it under the control and will of human beings, or any fraction of them, is itself indicative of the forgetting of the age\(^{38}\).

*Prima facie*, Heidegger is not clear about how, if at all, his accounts of humanism and das Gestell should be taken. His


\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 38.

answers of the 'Political Texts'\textsuperscript{39} of the early 1930s— a subjugation to the will of the Führer—failed to deliver the hoped for revolution in thinking, and following this there is a clear move from a search for an active 'solution' to a more passive consideration as to whether there really is a 'problem'. In his 1959 work \textit{Gelassenheit}, Heidegger considers how to respond to a situation in which the defining relationship is that of "man as ego to the thing as object"\textsuperscript{40}; his answer is that the "historical character"\textsuperscript{41} of that relationship must be kept in view.

Throughout his work, there are clear indications that keeping the 'historical character' of subjectivity in focus does not necessarily entail a rejection of that relationship, nor the products of an era defined by it. As Heidegger makes clear from \textit{Being and Time} to the 1969 \textit{Zur Sache des Denkens} (published in English as \textit{On Time and Being}\textsuperscript{42}), and especially in the \textit{Letter on Humanism}, the critique of the subject is a critique of subjectivist metaphysics. The problem is not the existence of the subject, but that it and its products have become 'the only game in town', and that this monopoly is necessarily based on false promises of a future complete and correct representation of how things really are which, Heidegger argues, can never be kept. It is not subjectivity but subjectivism that is rejected by Heidegger.

Heidegger's aim in presenting his thoughts on humanism, technology and subjectivism is not to move beyond them in a way which leaves them behind as redundant errors, but to situate them in a history of Being informed by an understanding of the

\textsuperscript{39} The name given within \textit{The Heidegger Controversy} to the collection of Heidegger's political speeches and pamphlets issued whilst rector at Freiburg.
\textsuperscript{40} Heidegger, \textit{Discourse on Thinking}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 78.
phenomenological horizon within which such practices and entities make sense. This is a recurring characteristic of Heidegger's work; often seemingly pejorative terms such as the 'fallenness' of Dasein, the 'average' understandings of the One [das Man], the flight of the gods, the withdrawal of Being, and the 'threat' posed by technological enframing are utilised without the imperatives to act differently that one might expect. This is, of course, less surprising when one takes into account Heidegger's assertion that actions which aim at mastering or controlling these situations are marked by the will to mastery that they might be expected to counter.

On Habermas's view, the inability to offer any plan of action is a necessary consequence of Heidegger's distinction between the ontological (defined by the 'Being-question') and the ontical (everything else including, most importantly, the will of the subject). Placing truth as a function of Being means that Habermas sees no way for Heidegger to take the concerns of what he deems the ontical dimension seriously; they will always be important only as pointers to a Being defined in such a way as to make self-referential critique impossible.

Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut⁴³ have similarly identified Heidegger's ambivalence about modernity as embodying an inherent tension between criticism and phenomenology. Insofar as Heidegger wishes to criticize the forgetting of Being he associates with modernity and technology, Ferry and Renaut argue that Heidegger needs a conception of value which draws upon the voluntarist subjectivity he identifies with modernity. In common with Habermas, therefore, they conclude that Heidegger's critique

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of modernity can only be made by drawing upon the voluntarist assumptions whose limitations he is diagnosing.

For Ferry, Renaut, Habermas and many of those (looked at in the last Chapter) who perceive an ongoing metaphysical subjectivism in Heidegger's work, Heidegger's greatest error is to wish to combine a criticism of modernity with a phenomenological concern with Being that denies the possibility of such a criticism. Thus, as was seen above, Habermas believes that Heidegger is left with a philosophy of the subject that robs him of the possibility of critical reflection.

These criticisms are based on three assumptions, each of which is questionable. Firstly, they assume that 'Being' in Heidegger's work takes the place of the subject as the measure of objective truth. Secondly, they assert that Heidegger equates any conception of human being and action with a commitment to subjectivist metaphysics. The third claim, which conjoins the other two, is that Heidegger's rejection of modernity follows from his other two beliefs; viz that modernity's thinking of Being, by starting from a conception of man as subject, cannot help but end up with a subjectivist metaphysics which wrongly accounts for the history of Being.

Heidegger's work, however, is far from straightforward on any of these points. The need to understand Being in hermeneutic terms, and thus in terms distinct from subjectivist/objectivist epistemology has already been discussed. A simple assertion that Heidegger is seeking objective knowledge of Being as an entity overlooks Heidegger's specifically hermeneutical concerns.
The second claim, that Heidegger equates all instances of human action with the move towards the totalising conception of Being he associates with subjectivist metaphysics, is a strong one. The decisive move Heidegger makes in this respect is his placing of 'will' at the centre of modernity. In his treatment of modernity, technology and humanism, Heidegger takes the notion of will as definitive, not just of certain human practices, but of all ways of approaching Being post-Descartes. Indeed, since Being was first understood by the Greeks in terms of *substantia*, Heidegger finds there has been a move which necessarily culminates with the Nietzschean notion of the will to power. With the will to power, however, it is will alone that determines the truth of Being; without grounds in a subject or object, will becomes the "will to will". 'Will' is not here related to the wishes or desires of human beings;

[r]ather, it indicates the very reverse, that man first of all comes to know himself as a willing subject in an essential sense on the basis of a still unelucidated experience of beings as such in the sense of a willing that has yet to be thought.45

The will to will is, for Heidegger, nothing other than the inevitable move towards a totalized metaphysics within which human beings have no free relationship to Being. Thus, familiarly:

The basic form of appearance in which the will to will arranges and calculates itself in the unhistorical element of the world of completed metaphysics can stringently be called "technology".46

Gail Soffer in "Heidegger, Humanism, and the Destruction of History", has traced the implications of Heidegger's treatment of post-Socratic 'modernity' as a unified body of thought and practice- 'humanism' as Heidegger terms it. For either of these two terms to have the meanings they do, Soffer argues, Heidegger must be operating them with a double determination- "(1) as a set of familiar historical phenomena (for example, the Renaissance revival of the classical heritage) and (2) as the underlying philosophical essence of these phenomena."

I am not concerned here with the main thrust of the argument that Soffer goes on to develop, as to whether the rejection of orthodox historical inquiry means Heidegger's hermeneutics can have no practical implication. Her other thesis, however, is important in the present context; Heidegger's explicit move away from previous conceptions of 'objective' historical inquiry mean that he does load all the responsibility for his characterisation of modernity onto his own claim to have determined the 'essence' of that era through the hermeneutic phenomenological method. It is clear that Heidegger does indeed characterise human concerns in modernity as defined by a conception of will which ultimately is itself grounded in an understanding of das Gestell as 'completed metaphysics'. Soffer is right that this does indeed boil down to a rejection of "orthodox historical inquiry" in favour of what she deems "a reductive philosophical essentialism".

It is, however, to what might be involved in such reductive philosophical essentialism that I want to turn. This is raised in an examination of the third assumption made by Heidegger's critics-

47 Gail Soffer, "Heidegger, Humanism, and the Destruction of History".
48 Ibid., p. 549-550.
49 Ibid., p. 576.
the claim (which subsumes the first two assumptions) that Heidegger's antipathy towards modernity is based on a suspicion of all human action, itself premised on a rejection of all metaphysics as failing to provide an immediate confrontation with Being.

Stephen K. White, in his book *Political Theory and Postmodernism*\(^{50}\), has, from a Habermasian perspective, both made such an assumption and traced the implications he believes it has for political theory. Analyzing that text in the light of the questionability of its assumptions is revealing.

Section 2) Heidegger, Instrumental Reason and Modernity

2.1 Stephen K. White's Critique of Heidegger

Following Habermas, Stephen K. White seeks to explicate Heidegger's stance towards modernity in terms of his perceived rejection of all instrumental human reason, premised on an identification of all products of human will as metaphysical and therefore to be rejected.

For White, Heidegger's work can be analysed in terms of two senses of responsibility; the "responsibility to otherness" and the "responsibility to act"\(^{51}\). These two perspectives are "intimately related to how one thinks about language"\(^{52}\) and correspond to language used in its "world-disclosing" and "coordinat[ing] action-in-the-world"\(^{53}\) roles respectively.

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\(^{50}\) Stephen K. White, *Political Theory and Postmodernism*

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 20.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 22.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 25.
White interprets Heidegger's concern with Being as reflecting the responsibility to otherness; a concern with the possibilities of disclosure. In common with Habermas, White finds that this concern is an exclusive one; Heideggerian ontology is obsessed with possibility to the extent that actual states of affairs are ignored except insofar as they act as a clue to Being. Heidegger's work is so tied up in the event of disclosure (Ereignis) that he is completely unable to respond to the responsibility to act.

This results, White claims, in an "antipathy towards everydayness", a denigration of the ontic, which "condemns Heidegger to a lifelong misunderstanding of action"54. Heidegger, White argues, cannot fail to find modernity problematic because he analyses it from a perspective which focuses one-dimensionally on Being in such a way that any actual human construct can appear only as a closure to other potential configurations.

Secondly, this one-dimensional understanding of existence means that not only does Heidegger miss what it is that ethical and political actions aim at in modernity, but he associates all such action with the closure and alienation from Being that ultimately finds its expression in the notion of the Gestell. Heidegger, then, does not merely fail to comprehend the action co-ordinating aspects of human reason and will, but is actively hostile to them—a hostility rendered either impotent (a willing of non-willing) or unconstrainedly idiosyncratic (White is thinking of Heidegger's Nazism). In either case the problem is the same; Heidegger's critique of all actual human reason blinds him to the differences between the ontological, ethical and political dimensions of human

54 Ibid., p. 35.
being. All aspects of human society and action are analysed simply as a distancing from Being.

White finds that Heidegger's one dimensional approach to existence means that he misconceives modernity. Without an ability to comprehend the action co-ordinating aspect of human will and reason, Heidegger wrongly determines the ethical and political situation of modernity to be a crisis of alienation from Being, that, secondly, is without human solution.

I have dwelt on White's analysis at some length because he isolates several themes that are central to many commentaries on Heidegger, both critical and supportive. Firstly, it is assumed that Heidegger retains the desire for a direct encounter with Being, or at least a reversal of the forgetting of Being with which he associates both metaphysics and modernity. Secondly, Heidegger is seen as unable, because of his blanket association between the stuff of all social and political action- human will and technical reason- and metaphysics to countenance any way that modern society and politics can be reformed. The Gestell, as the completion of metaphysics, ensures that whatever actions human beings take amount to further metaphysical permutations within that nexus; Being cannot be brought closer by human action. The best that can be hoped for is the coming of a god: an extraordinary destiny in which Being is brought closer to us.

For White, Heidegger's inadequacy in conceptualising modernity and its problems arises from a philosophical suspicion of tradition which is maintained only by a wholly inadequate conception of existence. White views Being (a word which appears startlingly infrequently for a book largely about Heidegger) as an illegitimate
longing for presence motivated by the hole which Heidegger's one-sided understanding of human existence leaves.

White holds the belief, examined in the previous Chapter, that Heidegger's account of existence is dominated by an illegitimate and speculative deference to a conception of Being that retains the status of 'ground' previously associated with objectivity. White, however, is more expansive on why he thinks the resulting suspicion of the epistemological tradition feeds into a rejection of the institutions and conceptions of modernity.

Heidegger, White believes, has systematically missed a crucial dimension of all human experience - the constitutive role played by instrumental reason in human action. Therefore, White believes, Heidegger's aversion to modernity is not a result of any distinctive feature of that period, but is symptomatic of a general failure to adequately understand human agency.

White thus interprets Heideggerian suspicion as culminating in a refusal of action co-ordinating reason and its products. In attributing this to an inability to conceive of the action co-ordinating aspect of language, White situates this failing in Heidegger's hermeneutic method itself. Whether in reading philosophical texts, or surveying interpersonal relationships in modern societies, White's assertion is that Heidegger's wrong assumptions about the nature of human beings, expressed through the desire for an ontology/presencing of Being, mean that any conception of openness or otherness will be both partial and without practical application.
Therefore, White concludes, an openness to alternative meanings (whether textual or social) can only be meaningful in a context where one takes into account the constitutive role of reason in human agency. From White's perspective, Heidegger's critique of modernity can have no meaningful application as social or political critique. Similarly, the rejection of the action co-ordinating aspects of reason is simply at odds with the conditions for any addressing of what Heidegger takes to be the problems of modernity. White is in the company of (amongst others) Hans Sluga and Fritz Stern. Stern perceives the German critique of modernity to be a "wild leap from political reality", a largely impotent philosophical attempt to "condemn all existing institutions" which amounts simply to the "triumph of irresponsibility". Sluga argues Heidegger's approach to modernity fits easily into German concerns with crisis, nation and leadership, but, through a transportation of the categories of "common sense and practical experience" into abstract philosophical terms, overlooks the inherently social and political aspects of these problems.

The criticisms offered of Heidegger's thoughts on modernity can now be evaluated. The thinkers looked at above are united in their agreement that Heidegger's characterization of modernity is determined by a philosophical position that lacks any ethical or political dimension. Further, this absence is taken to reduce not just the breadth of applicability of Heidegger's account, but the quality of what he does say. This is because he is taken to have rejected the role of instrumental reason in the moral and political dimensions of life whilst retaining the desire to generate

55 Hans Sluga, *Heidegger' Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*
56 Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of German Ideology*
57 Ibid., p. 298.
prescriptive practical imperatives which require precisely these considerations.

In the view of these thinkers, for Heidegger to have anything to say of actual practical importance about modernity would require that he incorporate into his account precisely that aspect of human existence with which he identifies modernity and yet will have no truck—the technical use of reason in human action. Thus Heidegger's desire for openness in revealing Being can only make sense if the nexus with which one would replace modernity took account of the integral role of instrumental reason. These thinkers argue that the underlying objectivity Heidegger accords his conception of Being makes that an impossibility.

In short, Heidegger can either define Being neutrally in terms of any disclosure whatsoever or he must accept that any vision he offers of it will be nothing but another metaphysical conception. Neither case allows his characterization of modernity to make the evaluative and/or prescriptive claims that are taken to underlie his case; as such there can be no meaningful ethical, social or political imperatives generated from within his account. The claim is that without a return to some conception of reason (subjective or intersubjective) Heidegger's work cannot rightly be called critique at all; it can have no model of emancipation or perspective from which one could construct an account of what would constitute a better state.
Section 3) Heideggerian Suspicion and the Critique of Modernity

The thinkers examined in the previous section are united in the belief that Heidegger's critique of modernity is based upon a misunderstanding of the nature of human reason. Habermas identifies Heidegger's rejection of any conception of communicative reason with an arbitrary readiness to obey. White, in identifying the rejection of will with a refusal of all products of practical reason as metaphysical, claims simply that no "adequate approach to ethics or politics could come out of such a position"59. Heidegger's inability to conceive of these aspects of existence is attributed to a philosophical error; a failure to understand the dimension of propositional truth which is an intrinsic part of all human action. White crucially identifies this with an aspect of language itself- Heidegger's hermeneutic method from the first cannot be applied to those meanings of texts which aim at considering practical action and/or social meanings. That Heidegger further seeks to extend this partial theory of meaning to 'modernity', the constitution of which cannot be understood in ways analogous to those of the understanding of philosophical texts, compounds Heidegger's mistake for both White and Habermas.

It is not clear, however, that Heidegger fails to understand this. Although Heidegger does ally his philosophy to a particular political movement in the 1930s writings, this support is quickly, (although arguably not surprisingly or unambiguously) withdrawn. In addition to his continuous assertions that Being cannot be understood as an entity which grounds propositional, social or political truths, Heidegger is also clear that his concern with

59 White, Political Theory and Postmodernism, p. 41.
Being is not an attempt to ground final or definite truths in the traditional sense, nor is it an attempt to escape metaphysics. Rather, as was argued in the previous Chapter, Heidegger's concern with the 'truth of Being' does not aim at the refutation of the tradition, but at developing a new approach to understanding how the tradition ought to be understood.

Heidegger claims that he does not aim to provide solutions to the failings that he perceives in either the philosophical or the socio-political tradition. Thus, the claim in the Letter on Humanism that "[a]ll refutation in the field of essential thinking is foolish" links Heidegger's work with the metaphysical nexus within which he works. Equally in his interview with Der Spiegel, Heidegger states that a thinking more original than metaphysics does not aim at practical social or political answers: "A decisive question for me today is: how can a political system accommodate itself to the technological age, and which political system would this be? I have no answer to this question."61

Habermas and White, although acute about Heidegger's failings in understanding Nazism as a political movement, are wrong to attribute this to an underlying conception of Being as objective ground on Heidegger's behalf. Heidegger does not seek to purge the 'history of Being' from any metaphysical dimension. Rather, his aim is to challenge the claim that metaphysical understandings of existence can exhaust, or make fully explicit, the conditions for understanding existence.

In doing so Heidegger forwards a phenomenological conception of truth which he believes subsumes the traditional understanding.

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60 Heidegger, Letter on Humanism, p. 239.
61 Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us", p. 104.
As cited in the previous Chapter, Stambaugh finds that it is not the subject-object split that Heidegger is criticizing, but "its ultimacy". This ultimacy does not find its expression in the metaphysics of subjectivity, but in the epistemological claim that this is the only legitimate grounds for knowledge. For Heidegger, the error does not lie with subjectivist metaphysics per se, but with the absolute hegemony of self-certainty.

Thus, he does not try to establish that all metaphysical constructions are wrong, but, instead, that the meaning of existence cannot be exhausted by this outlook. Heidegger's concern with phenomenological horizons needs to be understood in the light of this; the aim is not the explicit knowledge of certainty of Being, nor the provision of a set of ontological principles governing the ways in which beings show up. To furnish such an account of phenomenological horizons would indeed be the simple inversion of the philosophy of the Subject that Habermas suggests.

I suggested at the end of the last section that the criticisms of Heidegger's conception of modernity are based on three assumptions: that Being takes the place of the subject as the measure for objective truth, that Heidegger sees all human action as instances of metaphysical subjectivism, and that Heidegger's rejection of modernity is premised on the refusal of the latter determined by the former.

If, however, Heidegger's singularity of concern with the truth of Being is taken not to run contrary to all subjective aspects of existence, or the use of instrumental reason, but is confined to the lesser thesis that the objectivism claimed by the related

epistemologies does not suffice to ground truth, things look different. The 'truth of Being' does not entail that a concern with 'phenomenological horizons' aims at a certainty of knowledge, nor that actions can never be understood as those of a subject or in metaphysical terms, but that the understanding of existence cannot be limited to these moments.

With the reconsideration of the first two assumptions comes the refutation of the latter. Heidegger does not conceive of Being as an alternative source of, or target for, self-certainty. Further, the history of metaphysics does not run counter to the history of Being, but is an integral part of it. Heidegger's claim, in the first instance, is that the paradigm of self-certainty found in the epistemological tradition cannot, as is believed, generate the conditions for a total and exhaustive understanding of existence. Heidegger does not ignore the ontic appearance of beings in the search for ontological certitude, but challenges the emphasis which underpins the division in the first place. It is not the content of the division (whether everyday practice, the subject-object division, or instrumental reason) that Heidegger rejects, but the assumption that the division is fundamental.

Equally, Heidegger's consideration of technology, humanism, and modernity aims at neither refutation nor replacement, but at establishing, as cited above, a "free" relationship of humanity to humanism and technology. White and Habermas see no way for Heidegger to determine which next move would be appropriate- but this is not the sense of freedom which Heidegger is attempting to invoke. Heidegger should not be read as concerned with what human beings should be doing, but with the way we should
understand how they are constituted: he is examining the conditions of human agency.

The critics looked at in this Chapter are right to point out the narrowness of the way in which Heidegger conceives of modernity, and the disastrous implications of attempting to transfer that vision into a programme of social and political action. If, however, one views Heidegger's project as oriented towards a different issue— the dangers of conceiving of human being exclusively on a model of subjectivity and the associated instrumentalism— then this objection in itself neither names nor addresses the reasons for Heidegger's political failings.

The last Chapter examined Heidegger's 'suspicion' of the philosophical tradition. Heideggerian suspicion, it was argued, was not the idiosyncratic rejection of anything to do with the subject, premised on an arbitrary ontotheological conception of Being, but a constitutive part of the idea that the traditional attempt to conceive of Being/existence objectively was, at best, partial. Thus, the metaphysical urge to completion, expressed in the drive to certitude within subjectivist epistemologies, is mistaken in taking the conception of objectivity derived from substantia as fundamental. Hence, Heidegger takes issue with the associated conception of human agency as fundamentally separated from the world and the resulting privileging of the 'external' or universal perspective in conceiving of existence.

Heidegger finds that the way human beings have understood their existence (and therefore that of the world) has increasingly been thought of in terms of the model of external objectivity, but that phenomenological analysis reveals that this can at most be an
abstraction from one aspect of reality. As was seen in the last Chapter, Heidegger extends this criticism to all positions which aim at a definitive or final account of the world or agency—whether through the 'revelations' of a God, the reification of the Subject or world as grounding object or Absolute, or the pragmatist attempt to provide the account of social practice upon which our truths are based.

Heidegger views all these positions as essentially homogeneous. In each case, reason is taken to aim at a truth, the existence of which is conceived of in the objectivist but partial terms considered above. This frequently tacit assumption stresses the role of reason in identifying why things are the way they are. In 1928 Heidegger sees this as best represented in Leibniz's treatment of the principle of sufficient reason; the belief that there is a reason behind everything (the positive statement of the principle *nihil est sine ratione*) means that 'reason' has been equated with "clarifying" the first or "basic principle" which orders Being. It is this aspect of the tradition which Heidegger defines himself against. In the same work he states that the striving of reason for an identity of truth and ground refer[s] back to something more primordial, something which does not have the character of a principle but belongs to the happening of transcendence as such, namely, temporality. 65

Heidegger is thus applying the notion of 'transparency' to the consideration of what might be called the modern understanding of reason. Heidegger states boldly that the modern conception of

64 Ibid., p. 127.
65 Ibid., p. 127.
reason is determined from the first by an unexamined assumption of what an essence or ground is—a conception based on presence. In contrast, Heidegger says the essence of reasons "fall back on freedom... Freedom is the reason for reasons... freedom is the 'abyss' of Dasein, its groundless or absent ground"66.

In arguing that Heidegger fails to consider one dimension of human agency, White misses the full force of Heidegger's argument. Heidegger's point is that by making the identification of an 'adequate' or 'complete' conception of human agency the starting point for finding truth or considering freedom, one is guaranteeing that one will never move beyond the dictates of the past and present. Through this partial understanding of our temporality, 'Man' becomes an object of study, and the goals of objective certitude and self-certainty are inappropriately applied. Similarly, Heidegger is clear that it is not simply that the means to achieving such knowledge have been mis-identified or have thus far been denied us; it is the very project of seeking certitude on these terms which Heidegger opposes.

Heidegger's work thus runs against any attempt to rethink the essence of human being in terms of new social or intersubjective practices, not because such redefinitions retain traces of the Subject, but because they are marked by the same partial and instrumentalist conception of Being. White is not wrong in identifying another dimension of human being, but Heidegger is questioning the framework within which another such identification is considered important. There is little to suggest that Heidegger would see White as having moved beyond what he

66 Ibid., p. 127, 129.
termed "anthropology", another attempt to see "that man will and ought to be the subject that in his modern essence he already is"\(^67\).

Heidegger's critique of modernity is not based on an absolute refusal of technical or instrumental rationality, but of the unchallenged hegemony of this attitude. Any position which makes the adequate conception of man or human reason its measure can never move beyond the tradition which precedes it. Thus Heidegger's criticism of Dilthey could have been applied equally to White-

[through anthropology the transition of metaphysics into the event of the simple stopping and setting aside of all philosophy is introduced. The fact that Dilthey disavowed metaphysics, that fundamentally he no longer even understood its question and stood helpless before metaphysical logic, is the inner consequence of his fundamental anthropological position... [O]ne thing, surely, anthropology cannot do. It cannot overcome Descartes, nor even rise up against him, for how shall the consequence ever attack the ground on which it stands? \(^68\)

**Section 4) Conclusions**

This Chapter has sought to show, against many recent commentators, that Heidegger's thoughts on modernity are not merely indicative of an underlying and fundamental objectivism revolving around the concept of Being. In the course of making this point the importance of realising that is not the division between subject and object that Heidegger objects to, but its exclusive centrality, was stressed.


\(^{68}\) Ibid., p. 140.
Applied to Heidegger's thoughts on modernity, I argued that Heidegger's comments on, what are for him the two key themes, humanism and technology, should not be construed as a rejection of any and all thought on human being or the present age. Rather, they serve as an extension of his thesis that without a recognition of the centrality of temporality in understanding Being, any understanding of human existence will be hypostatized in terms of the partial meanings of a tradition which has increasingly failed to understand the importance of time as the horizon of meaning. Thus, the danger Heidegger associates with the forgetting of the question of the meaning of Being is not that the final, immediate answer becomes yet more distant, but that a failure to attend to the structure (that of a question) by which Being comes to have meaning, means that the openness of future interpretations is lost to a self-sustaining functional instrumentality that disguises its own partiality.

Heidegger's critics are right that this approach is not fundamentally concerned with the prevailing social and economic aspects of modernity, but wrong to attribute this to a wholesale rejection of any instance of instrumental reason. Heidegger's interest lies elsewhere; in diagnosing and exposing the ongoing dominance of objective instrumentalism in the tradition, even by those positions that appear to have overcome it. As was argued in the previous Section- and similarly in the last Chapter in regard to his thoughts on subjectivity- Heidegger's comments on modernity ought to be interpreted in the first instance as an ongoing critique of the project of coming up with the grounding conception of agency or reason for knowing Being.
Having argued that Heidegger's thoughts on subjectivity do not constitute a refutation but must themselves be situated in the context of his wider concern with the partiality of the model of self-certitude, it should now be clear that a similar approach is appropriate when reading Heidegger on modernity. Heidegger's comments on modernity should not be read as blanket refutation or arbitrary antipathy, but as a continuing assault on the reasons for placing objective rationality, as it has been understood within the tradition, at the centre of thinking about existence.

Neither Heidegger's critiques of subjectivity, nor humanism and technology entail a rejection of all the institutions and conceptions of modernity - even if his 1932 political affiliation may have been with a movement that did. Outside of the rectoral missives published in the Freiburg Students Newspaper, which Heidegger deemed "compromises"69, there is little to suggest, on the reading I have offered, that Heidegger did make this link. Heidegger's hostility towards the modern age and its products is not premised on a belief that Being can be recalled, but on the conception of truth and reason which operates such a criterion of right representation.

To expand, the current of Heidegger's work which has been missed, and my reading of the aim of his 'suspicion', moves not to affirm or adjust our philosophical, cultural or political traditions but to suggest that without an understanding of the temporal and interrogative form of these understandings instrumental and technical reason will continue to dominate human existence. Attempting to refine our conceptions of human agency and reason,

69 See "Only A God Can Save Us", p. 96.
in common with Rorty and White, belongs, from this perspective, to the same style of thinking as the tradition Heidegger criticizes.

Heidegger's suspicion of modernity is not constituted by a gainsaying of the content of its particular claims about the nature of agency or the use of reason in matching means to ends, but an objection to the nature of the finality such conceptions are taken to embody. It is not, therefore, the appearance of the Subject or technical reason in the fabric of modernity which spurs Heidegger's criticisms, but the implicit omnipotence of the notion of a correct account in terms of objective self-certitude of which either can be an expression.

In the following Chapter I discuss the implications for politics of this account. It should be clear that this will not consist of an attempt to find a conception of agency which is indexed to an account of how Being really is, in terms of either an objective conception of Being or will alone, but of an analysis of how Heidegger's critique of objectivist rationality resonates with the prevalent understandings of the nature and proper place of politics. In doing so, Heidegger's comments on modernity will be interpreted as part of an attempt to render a philosophical account of how we come to have the "beliefs about reasons"\(^{70}\) that we do-not as part of a project of identifying new reasons from within the traditional nexus. Heidegger's critique of modernity does not constitute an attempt to divine the next appropriate political move, but to raise the question of our constitution.

Thus the question is not what Heidegger identifies, or misses, about our identity, and the ramifications of this for the conduct of

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politics, but how his work contributes towards an understanding of
the perspective which takes this question as central in
understanding Being. I have argued that Heidegger's comments on
modernity have, in themselves, no necessary connection with a
program of political action, and that those who take them thus
misinterpret the central thrust of his work. If the seemingly
political and social dimensions of Heidegger's comments on
modernity are not to be interpreted thus, I want now to turn to the
question of whether there is anything political at all to be
garnered from his work. The question at hand is whether there is
reason to believe that the politics of modernity are indeed best
interpreted as marked by the philosophical errors Heidegger
associates with metaphysical subjectivism, and what follows from
that.
Chapter 3: Heidegger and the Political

Introduction

Aims and Outlines

The previous two Chapters examined the question of how best to interpret Heidegger's work on subjectivity and modernity. The conclusion drawn was that the seemingly social and political imperatives of these aspects of Heidegger's thought (particularly the latter) should not be taken thus, but as part of a philosophical critique of the exclusivity of instrumental reason in questions of the meaning of Being. I also suggested that attempts to 'rehabilitate' Heidegger by situating his comments on, for example, humanism and technology within a 'new' conception of agency or reason misunderstand the nature of these comments, and thus the thrust of Heidegger's work as a whole.

This is not, of course, to say that Heidegger's work can be simply deemed philosophical not political; rather it is to deny that, on this interpretation, Heidegger's thoughts ought to be treated as aiming, at least in the first instance, at direct political application. Heidegger's point, after all, is that the traditional separations and distinctions with which we operate are accreted around a basic philosophical error.

The question that this Chapter addresses is whether Heidegger's diagnosis of this error has any ramifications for the way one approaches politics and notions of the political. In order to do so, this Chapter is divided into four sections. Firstly, I survey the comments Heidegger makes about politics as a phenomenological
regime. Secondly, I look at how Heidegger perceives and analyses liberal democracy, which he takes to be the dominant political practice of the time. The division of labour between these two sections thus broadly follows the distinction drawn between \textit{das Politische} ['the political'] and \textit{die Politik} ['politics']\textsuperscript{1}. My third section discusses both how far such a distinction illuminates Heidegger's work, and, in turn, how far his work sheds light on the grounds upon which that distinction is itself founded. I suggest, mirroring my discussion of the ontic/ontological difference and Heidegger's two hermeneutical dynamics, that his contribution is not at one or the other of these poles, as has been suggested, but at the level of the analysis of how such a distinction is to be understood and operated. This is followed by my fourth, and concluding, section in which I consider how Heidegger's critique of the traditional understanding and basis of politics allows for any conception of politics and the political as having a "\textit{proper place}\textsuperscript{2}" at all. Specifically, my interest here is how Heidegger's critique of the 'metaphysical' understanding of the self which he finds at the centre of modern ethical and political thought and practice impacts on the possibility of presenting any politics or political theory at all.

\textbf{Section 1) Heidegger and Being-Political}

\textit{1.1 Heidegger and Politics: Themes}

Heidegger offers two sorts of suggestion as to how his work might find political application, and it is around these that the

\textsuperscript{1} A distinction made in various ways by different thinkers. White's distinction between the politics of a responsibility to otherness, and that of a responsibility to act serves as an example. For a brief, lucid discussion of the distinction see Fred Dallmayr, \textit{The Other Heidegger}, p. 50, where following Vollrath's distinction between \textit{das Politische} and \textit{die Politik} he defines the former as the 'paradigmatic framework' of politics, and the latter as the practice of 'concrete decision making'.

\textsuperscript{2} Miguel de Beistegui, \textit{Heidegger & the Political}, p. 5. Italics in original.
subsequent debates have crystallised. Firstly, there is the move to link his philosophy to support what he saw in 1932 as the restorative project of Hitler. Hence the claim of the *Rektoratsrede*, that the only way to fulfill the demands of true knowledge and science is a spiritual rebirth "rooted in the soil and blood of a Volk". Secondly, there are, throughout his work, the references to the *polis*, nation, state and politics in general; moments in which Heidegger deliberately considers the ways in which he believes the key terms of political thought should be understood.

The inflammatory nature of the former, and the rarity of the latter have ensured that the debate about Heidegger's political application has remained open and hotly contested. This Section has two aims. Firstly, to explain why I believe that, in the context of my study, Heidegger's most blatant moments of Nazi affiliation can be divorced from the more general considerations about politics to be found in his work. Secondly, I offer a preliminary approach to interpreting these latter comments in Heidegger's work.

1.2 Heidegger, Nazism and Politics

Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis remains, for most, the dominant issue in addressing his work. This is in itself unsurprising, but more curious is the reach that this motif is taken to have in reading any aspects of his work. Thus one finds the claim that "it would be tantamount to an abdication of intellectual responsibility for an author not to address the issue". My intention here is to show that, at least in the context of my study,

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3 Martin Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University", p. 34.

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this overstates the case; a denial would be unforgivable, but if, as I argue below, Heidegger's Nazism is not a necessary consequence of his philosophy, his political engagement can be moved beyond. I am not suggesting that those who make this claim are wholly wrong, but that there has now been sufficient 'addressing [of] the issue' elsewhere to allow one to be confident that its importance will not be forgotten if not explicitly raised each time one comes to talk of Heidegger's work. I don't aim to exhaustively address the relationship between Heidegger's work and his Nazism here, but to delineate why I think other aspects of the man and his work can now be dealt with without such a prolonged account.

As was mentioned in the previous Chapter, it is commonly argued that Heidegger's Nazism is conditioned by a belief in an ultimately objectivist ontology of Being. The character of this belief in Being is taken to bypass any critical testing of the 'truths' Heidegger derives from it, and subsume any concern with politics as the mediation of conflict and power between subjects in favour of a search for an immediate contact with Being. Hans Sluga thus identifies a commonality between certain philosophical motifs which he sees emerging out of this conception of "absolute truth"^5- crisis, nation, leadership and order- and their political understandings. The common assumption, of which this is a particularly lucid example, is expressed by Ansell-Pearson:

To fulfil his essentially philosophical interests and aspirations for change, he was prepared to sell his soul to the devil and adopt the mantel of the philosopher-king to Hitler's *Führerstaat* (it is a familiar Faustian story in several respects). As Wolin rightly points out, Heidegger's support for national socialism was philosophically overdetermined. ^6

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These comments are right and useful when applied to those moments when Heidegger does place his philosophy explicitly behind the Nazi movement. It is true that Heidegger's error is to find an "inner truth" in National Socialism, and generally to believe that, in Ansell-Pearson's words, "the political is to be understood in terms of an experience of truth". I don't dispute that reading of Heidegger's support for the Nazis, but I have a different interpretation of the conclusions to be drawn from it. I do not think that the connection back to Heidegger's philosophical understanding is as strong as has been assumed. Specifically, I think it overplays the substantive conceptions of truth which Heidegger does at times present (particularly in his consideration of the Greeks), but which are at odds with the interpretation of his work, which I have forwarded, that reads the "truth of Being" as a formal concern with meaning opposed to such claims to objectivity.

Thus, whilst I agree that the former interpretation is of great value in understanding Heidegger's support for National Socialism, I do not think that it is of great value in understanding his philosophy. The conception of 'truth' which would ground the National Socialist revolution, or any political movement, cannot be that of the 'truth of Being' which I take to be the fundamental concern of Heidegger's philosophy. This is not to say that Heidegger's concern with the meaning of Being is incompatible with fascism, but it is to deny that there is either an intrinsic or a necessary connection. In claiming that there is no direct

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connection, however, it is clear that Heidegger perceived nothing in his views to stop him affiliating with the Nazis.

Although, then, the Germanocentrism present in Heidegger's philosophy is an important factor in understanding his political engagement, it should not be identified with an attempt to identify substantive truths of Being which demand that-or any particular-engagement. This mistakes the way in which Being operates as a founding conception with an associated ontology within Heidegger's work.

Instead I want to turn to the question of whether politics of any sort has any place in Heidegger's philosophy. Hence, I do not seek to identify what it is in Heidegger's philosophy that led him to Nazism, but what it is that is absent from his work which makes him unable to conceive of a role for politics that is distinct from its philosophical or cultural context. To pursue this I want now to turn to the way Heidegger does talk of the phenomenon of politics and the political.

1.3 Heidegger, the polis and the political

Outside of those texts declaring his allegiance to the Nazis, Heidegger's comments on the state and conceptions of the political are unstructured and sporadic. Many of them are also situated in the Beiträge zur Philosophie, yet to be translated. What is clear, however, is that he presents no explicit political philosophy.

What Heidegger does offer, however, is an account of how the Greek understanding of the polis captures an aspect of experience missed by the contemporary understanding of the state and
politics. Heidegger asserts that the meanings of the *polis* and politics are not founded in the "relation with a statesman and a general and the business of the state"\(^9\) but that:

*Polis* means, rather, the place, the there, wherein and as which historical being-there is. The *polis* is the historical place, the there *in* which, *out of* which and *for* which history happens.\(^{10}\)

Elaborating, Heidegger claims that the *polis* is the historical site in which the understandings of Being available at a time are enshrined. It is, therefore, not merely constituted by citizens but includes "the gods, the temples, the priests, the festivals, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, the council of elders, the assembly of the people, the army and the fleet"\(^{11}\). In his 1942 lecture on Hölderlin, Heidegger states clearly that the essence of the *Polis* exists before the conception of state or city:

Rather, it means that the essential in the historical abode of man lies in the pole-like [polhaften] relatedness of everything to the site of the abode, and this means of the being-at-home [of man] in the midst of beings as whole. From this place or site springs what is allowed and what is not, what is order [Fug] and what is disorder [Unfug], what is fitting and what is not... Thus the essence of the *polis* appears as the way in which beings as such and in general step into unconcealment.\(^{12}\)

Heidegger's claim is clear. The essence of the *polis* is not captured by modern conceptions of the state and politics framed in terms of power relations between individual subjects and states. The nature of the *polis* is, in this sense, pre-political; it is the

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\(^9\) Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 152.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 152.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 152.
\(^{12}\) Cited (and tr.) by Miguel de Beistegui in Heidegger & the Political, p. 136-7. Italics in original. Taken from Heidegger's lecture Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister" - Gesamtausgabe (53) (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann), p. 101-2.
historical expression of a particular set of understandings by which the community is itself defined. Thus, for Heidegger, the most fundamental understanding of the polis views it as the expression of a phenomenological regime.

At this point it might seem that the criticisms of White, discussed in the previous Chapter, were given short shrift. Can Heidegger’s description and approval of the Greek conception of the polis still allow for any dimension of human action, and the co-ordinating of power and capital relations between individuals?

Heidegger idealizes the Greek conception of the polis. It is clear that he believes that an examination of the Greek polis reveals an error in the equivalent understanding of the modern state and politics. What Heidegger thinks has been overlooked is the understanding of the polis and politics as a dimension of a phenomenological expression of Being; this is the dimension that White terms the world-disclosing aspect of experience. The danger associated by many of Heidegger’s commentators with this idealization of the Greek experience is the placing of politics in the hands of the poets: those who have an aesthetic conception of politics. The risk, in turn, is that identified by Habermas and White- political power is legitimised in terms of a conception of truth that is not, and cannot, be subjected to any critical testing. One is again left with a foundational account of Being which is both objectivist and personal in its formulation.

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14 In each case in the texts cited above. See especially Wolin, Lacoue-Labarthe and Ansell-Pearson.
These thinkers are right to assert that Heidegger's support for Hitler did, in the rectoral and political writings, proffer an ontological support for the Nazis, and that the "national aestheticism"\textsuperscript{15} that support expressed was frequently phrased in terms which idealized the Greek experience in general. However, there is good reason to believe that these connections are not necessary ones, and that Heidegger's philosophy does not in fact rule out the possibility of a distinctly political realm.

To see why this is so, one needs to identify what Heidegger's discussion of the \textit{polis} is intended to establish. The issue is whether Heidegger's focus on the \textit{polis} as the place where Being is disclosed (aletheia-cally), and his associated assertion that the \textit{polis} is as much the realm of the poet as the statesman, run contrary to the modern understanding of the state and politics.

I argue that it does not. Again, as was seen in considering Heidegger's comments on modernity, it is important to bear in mind that Heidegger is not analysing the institutions or practices of Ancient Greece (or else he would have more to say about its democracy for example), but the way in which those practices were understood. Heidegger's concern remains with meaning. In his analysis of the \textit{polis}, Heidegger does not suggest that the practices or institutions of Greece were substantively closer to objectifying Being, but that in considering how they understood this aspect of their existence it will become clear that they understood an aspect of their lives, through their conception of politics, in a way that we no longer do.

\textsuperscript{15} A particularly illuminating term utilised by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, \textit{Heidegger, Art and Politics}, p. 58. The original is hyphenated.
This aspect, central to the Greek conception of the *polis*, precedes any conception of a distinctly political realm. Heidegger is arguing that the *polis* was a pre-political (and pre-moral) site where Being and beings came to be revealed. It is, in fact, only when technological questions arise—at least from Plato onwards in Heidegger’s view—that politics and the state become themselves wholly an extension of the technical enterprise.

In suggesting that the *polis* is at least as much about the poet and *poiesis* as the statesman and statescraft, Heidegger is not arguing that the state should be put in the hands of those who write poetry, or be put towards poetical ends. Both moves would belong to the technical approach to both politics and Being which Heidegger is questioning. Heidegger is not distinguishing between statesmen and poets in order to adjudicate which of the two are best suited to rule. Heidegger’s attack is on the underlying conception of agency which separates and isolates the one from the other.

Heidegger is trading on a twofold conception of *poiesis*. As Zimmerman notes it means both "poetry" and "producing". Heidegger's injection of the poetical into the political does not aim to add an aesthetic dimension to politics— that conception of art remains embedded in the humanist conception of the subjective appreciation of a separated object. Rather, his claim is that an understanding of politics framed entirely in terms of its technical or productive aspects will overlook the ways in which political life resonates with, and itself uncovers, the understanding of Being.

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The distinction between the *polis* and *poiesis* does not embody a separation, but intertwined dimensions of Being. Heidegger's criticisms of the modern conceptions of the state and politics are not fuelled by the existence of technical ends and purposes in themselves. Rather, it is the monopoly of the conception of agency and reason which has led to these ends dominating the understanding of politics with which Heidegger takes issue. Heidegger's critique of modern politics is not that it is doing the wrong things- "[n]o mere action will change the world"\(^{17}\)- but that it is an expression and reflection of an understanding of Being which is partial. This partiality, focusing entirely on the humanist and therefore technological understanding of Man, bars us, Heidegger believes, from asking the decisive question of modernity: "how can a political system accommodate itself to the technological age, and which political system would this be?"\(^{18}\)

Heidegger's critique of the politics of the age thus mirrors his critiques of subjectivity and modernity. The practice and understanding of politics has been vitiated by an understanding of Being, and human agency, in technical terms. For Heidegger the distinction between the poetic, understood as the revealing of Being, and the political has come to be understood in terms of separable dynamics. In fact, he argues, one cannot exist without the other; the technical understanding of politics reveals a technical understanding of Being, grounded in the humanist outlook, which embodies a fundamental error about the nature of human Being.

To see how Heidegger applies this conception of the nature of politics and the political and the underlying error he believes it

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\(^{17}\) Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics", p. 89.
\(^{18}\) Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us", ibid., p. 104.
indicates, one can look to his analysis and critique of what he
takes to be the dominant political regime of the modern age;
liberal democracy.

Section 2) Heidegger's Analysis of Liberalism and
Liberal Democracy

2.1 Sources and Themes

If Heidegger's comments on the political are scarce, his analysis
of liberalism, liberal democracy and liberal humanism, which he
uses interchangeably to describe the political life of the modern
West, is sparser and more tentative still. In considering
Heidegger's thoughts on liberalism and liberal democracy¹⁹, an
examination of his explicit comments on liberalism (found in the
Beiträge zur Philosophie ²⁰) needs to be supplemented- in the light
of that work- with a reading of his comments on the relationship
between the self and community.

2.2 Heidegger and the Essence of Liberalism

As the preceding discussion suggests, Heidegger does not just
have a particular formulation of a political doctrine of rights in
mind when he refers to 'liberalism'. Rather, Heidegger claims,
'liberalism' as a political theory is to be analysed in terms of the
phenomenological assumptions upon which it is based. This relates
to Heidegger's claim, discussed in the previous section, that all
political doctrines and practices ought essentially to be

¹⁹ For the purposes of this Chapter I will, when talking of Heidegger's treatment, simply use 'liberalism'
to denote the range of uses indicated above, unless otherwise indicated.
²⁰ Sections of which are translated by Richard Polt in his article "Metaphysical Liberalism in Heidegger's
Beiträge zur Philosophie".
understood as the expression of a particular understanding of Being, as part of a phenomenological regime.

Heidegger sees liberalism as defined by an approach to Being governed by the "self-sureness" of the person thought of as the "I". In asking "who are we? 21", the "meditation on the self" found in liberalism refers to:

the most dangerous subjectivism that lurks in the cult of "personality". Wherever personality is posited... everything is moving along the track of the modern thought of the "I" and consciousness... all experiences and achievements are carried out merely as the expression of "life" which is sure of "itself", and are hence taken to be organizable. In principle there is no experience that could ever set man above himself into an untrodden realm, on the basis of which man up to now could become questionable. This self-sureness is the innermost essence of "liberalism", which for this very reason can apparently develop freely and devote itself to progress for all eternity. 22

Two related things are noteworthy here. Firstly, the simple equation Heidegger makes between 'liberalism' and a particular (individualistic) account of humanism. Secondly, the link between the humanism of liberalism, with its emphasis on the 'self-sureness' of the 'I', and the critique of the exclusive centrality of that concept developed in Being and Time and beyond is important. The terms Heidegger uses in defining liberalism recall those he names as the main obstacles to conceiving of human Being in the most full and coherent ways; "the ego cogito of Descartes, the subject, the 'I', reason, spirit, person" (BT, p.44). The essence of liberalism, in Heidegger's eyes, is thus reached by an understanding of its essentially subjectivist character- a point reiterated in the Nietzsche lectures:

21 Ibid., p. 662. From Beiträge p. 48. Italics in original.
22 Ibid., p. 662. From Beiträge p. 52-3. Italics in original.
"Liberalism," if with this word we think any sufficiently clear concept at all, is just a particular permutation [Abartung] of the *libertas* whose essence unfolds as the history of modernity ... The history of subjectivity is the history of liberation for the new essence of freedom, in the sense of humanity's unconditional self-legislation.23

If one relates this characterisation of liberalism to the critique of subjectivity as developed in Heidegger's account of modernity a number of implications for assessing Heidegger's potential for the political theorist become apparent.

Firstly, Heidegger's critique of liberalism does not constitute an outright rejection or refutation. Heidegger's assertion that liberalism takes the subjective "I" as central, does mean that he analyses liberalism as "metaphysical politics"24 as "a particular permutation of subjectivism"25. As my discussions on Heidegger's critique of subjectivity, as it is developed in his account of modernity, should suggest, neither such characterisation renders liberalism 'wrong' for Heidegger. 'Permutations of subjectivism' are, after all, 'permutations of Being', and metaphysics a part of the history of Being.

The problem of 'liberalism' is not that it is premised on a conception of agency that has subjective or metaphysical dimensions; a politics based on a conception of Dasein would, in this respect, be no different. Rather, the problem for Heidegger is that liberalism is an expression of a conception of human agency which allows for no other dimension. Liberalism, as an expression

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of humanism, shares the exclusive instrumentalism of that position. The problem, again, is not that liberalism makes use of a notion of the subject; rather, it is that this notion is framed in terms of the self-sureness of the "I", taken as the exclusive means to understanding Being. As was discussed in relation to Heidegger's conception of humanism and das Gestell, the problem is not that a concern with instrumental reason or human being on these terms is in itself wrong, but that it remains partial: crucially, it is oblivious to the temporality of Being associated with the analytic of Dasein.

Liberalism, therefore, is not viewed by Heidegger as merely the wrong set of political emphases. It is not wrongly or falsely premised in that sense. The problem which liberalism expresses—the domination of the instrumental in understanding Being—cannot simply be addressed by a changing of political focus. The reduction of the political to the technical is a symptom of a more fundamental misconception of the question of the meaning of Being. It is this misunderstanding—reflected, but not caused, by liberalism— which Heidegger is targeting.

Heidegger's criticism of liberalism is thus primarily an extension of his critique of the instrumental understanding of Being expressed in humanist positions. This should be unsurprising considering his attack on the modern separation of politics and poiesis, and his diagnosis of the domination of the modern understanding of the Subject in all aspects of considering the question of the meaning of Being.

Heidegger's point is that liberalism, in common with all humanist positions, draws exclusively on instrumental reason in
understanding Being, and thus has only a partial conception of human agency. The question at hand, therefore, is not whether an alternative conception of agency can be found which 'corrects' the errors of liberalism, but how a fuller conception of that agency would show the conception of politics which gives rise to liberalism to be vitiated.

In his interview with *Der Spiegel*, Heidegger lends support to this reading of his work. Talking of "democracy" and its associated concepts, as the catch-all term of the political expression of the Western world (i.e. a concept to which the term liberalism equally applies), Heidegger claims that

I would characterize them as half truths because I do not see in them a genuine confrontation with the technological world, because behind them there is in my view a notion that technology is in its essence something over which man has control. In my opinion, that is not possible.  

It is not simply liberal politics that Heidegger sees as a half truth, but the liberal conception of the political. The "I" which liberal politics seeks to defend is an expression of the technological humanism which Heidegger believes ought to be 'confronted'.

Heidegger analyses liberalism as an expression of the phenomenological regime dominated by technological reason. As was seen in his critique of subjectivity this does not in itself render it false or wrong, and as was discussed in relation to his thoughts on modernity Heidegger's conception of Being does not

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26 Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us", p. 105.
Heidegger's assertion is, at root, that modern understandings of politics are based upon conceptions of agency dominated by instrumental reason. It is the dominance of instrumental and technical reason in conceiving of agency that remains unconsidered and unquestioned. Heidegger's worry, at a political level, is that a framing of politics in relation to the constitution and problems of that notion of agency will perpetuate the obscuring of the partiality and limits of that conception. Heidegger's assertion is that the vitiated conception of agency one finds in modernity determines an equally vitiated conception of politics and the grounds of the political.

Heidegger's critique of modern politics is based on a diagnosis of an underlying fundamental malaise, the dominance of subjectivist reason for which he can see no immediate cure. The most obvious candidates, philosophical or political reform, are themselves based on conceptions of human action which are themselves symptomatic of the problem. It might appear *prima facie* that there can be little here apart from the fatalistic despair or destructive antipathy which Heidegger's critics, with occasional encouragement from Heidegger himself, identify. The dominance of technology is not something 'mere human action'- the domain of the modern conception of politics- can address.

Because he situates politics within the realm of subjective action, many thinkers have suggested that Heidegger's work offers nothing but a leap into a blanket refusal of politics and political theory- a nihilist destructionism. Certainly Heidegger's
association with Nazism does nothing to counter this claim. However, if one looks past the question of why Heidegger chose Nazism and asks instead why he came to reject liberal democracy\textsuperscript{27} (and in his later comments the course National Socialism took) one finds a different path open.

Heidegger, as was argued in the previous Chapter, does not simply reject the conception of the subject which underlies the liberal 'I', but its finality. Rather, it is the taking of this 'I' as exhaustive in conceiving of human agency to which Heidegger objects. The problem with liberal politics is not that it makes reference to the Subject at all, but that it belongs to an understanding of agency which takes the instrumental conception as paramount, which leads to a politics that misconceives the nature of the political in its fullest sense. Heidegger's claim is that whilst politics continues to be conducted on these terms it can never be anything more than an extension of an incomplete understanding of human being.

It might, of course, be thought that this is precisely what some liberal theorists claim as their central point. On this account, the willing and desiring liberal 'I' around which liberal politics is based does not need to encompass an exhaustive account of agency. Rather, it might be argued, the point is to leave room for the Subject to pursue his or her own will and desires.

Heidegger's suspicion of the politics of modernity is not indicative of an absolute refusal of the Subject \textit{per se}, but instead is a claim that so long as politics and the political is defined within the terms of that understanding it can embrace only that

\textsuperscript{27} This is the line taken by Richard Polt- see "Metaphysical Liberalism in Heidegger's Beiträge zur Philosophie", p. 655.
part of human Being. In itself, of course, this is not a problem for
the liberal, but Heidegger is suggesting that once one understands
the central role of politics in allowing man to develop a "free
relationship" both to our humanity and technology the liberal
conceptions of both the Subject and politics will be seen as
inadequate. The problem with liberal politics in Heidegger's eyes
is not that it is liberal, but that it operates with a conception of
the political that stops politics, in the sense of the *polis*, being a
conduit through which an understanding of true freedom might be
realised.

The problem is not that liberalism wrongly focuses on just one
aspect of agency but that that aspect generates a politics which
strives for an ideal of freedom it does not have the resources to
meet. A politics which focuses on the technical 'I' at the heart of
liberalism can only perceive technical problems and solutions in
terms of that conception. Therefore, Heidegger argues, it cannot
raise -the most fundamental problem facing human beings in the
modern age- that of the enmeshment of all human understanding in
technical/instrumental terms.

For Heidegger, therefore, liberal democratic politics cannot
deliver its goal- the freedom of the individual- until it reconsiders
what such freedom entails. The language of agency drawn upon by
the liberal democrat (and the communist and- later- the National
Socialist) does not allow for a political realisation of the real
problem. Considering one of Heidegger's liberal critics, Keith
Ansell-Pearson puts it thus;

the political question which continues to haunt us in these late-modern times is one
which Heidegger asked: is it possible to devise a political system which can 'control'
the reifying effects of global technology?... When Richard Wolin castigates Heidegger for devaluing the modern project of liberal autonomy, he fails to realise that for Heidegger it is not the philosopher who has rendered otiose individual freedom but rather the objectification processes of technological modernity. 28

A number of questions arise from this reading of Heidegger's work. Two sets of questions are particularly important. Firstly, there are questions about whether Heidegger is right to see liberal democratic politics as simply reflecting and repeating the philosophical error of an exclusively instrumental conception of the self. Secondly, if one finds that elements of the critique of liberal democracy as technological are illuminating, there are the questions of how (and whether) Heidegger's work can offer an alternative conception of the political which addresses these problems.

Section 3) Politics and the Political

Taking the first family of questions, concerning the metaphysical analysis Heidegger gives of liberalism, first, two things need to be established. Firstly, the precise nature of the problem of taking the 'I' as central needs to be understood and made explicit. Doing so requires that one considers the nature of politics and the political as they are found in the thinkers and tradition Heidegger is criticizing, allowing one to address the second set of questions; whether Heidegger's work can incorporate such concerns at all. This will pave the way for a consideration of how Heidegger's attempts to offer an alternative fail, and to see what of the original critique stands.

3.1 Heidegger and the Problem with the Metaphysical Tradition of Politics

Having given a definition of liberalism in the Beiträge which is not narrowed down beyond a politics based on the self-sureness of a 'I' based around the notions of will and opinion, Heidegger quickly blurs things yet further by including National Socialism and communism in the same style of politics. Thus, the important fact about liberalism is that it is the volitional subject that is central; a focus which is unchanged if that volitional subject is a Führer or a communal 'We'. Hence, just after the writing of the Beiträge one finds Heidegger pre-empting the communitarian critique of liberalism, and finding it to be equally shallow:

Only because and insofar as man actually and essentially has become subject is it necessary for him, as a consequence, to confront the explicit question: Is it as an "I" confined to its own preferences and freed into its own arbitrary choosing or as the "we" of society... that man will and ought to be the subject that in his modern essence he already is?29

The above passage is revealing. Although Heidegger goes on to conclude the above discussion with a poem from Hölderlin "[t]o the Germans"30 and a call to the community to struggle against individualism, the problem with modern politics is the assumption of a model of human autonomy and identity which is static and objectified. For Heidegger, human being is wrongly reified when conceived of in terms of instrumental technical reason- a position which can hold as true in liberal individualistic as social communitarian politics. Heidegger's argument is that shifting one's political focus from the individual to the collective does not

30 Ibid., p. 136.
in itself demonstrate that one has abandoned the instrumentalist approach to agency. The aim is a political self-understanding that reflects the non-instrumental nature of agency; not to find an alternative basis on which to inscribe, or respond to, the claims to certitude of instrumentalist accounts of agency.

Having examined Heidegger's account of what might be seen as the paradigmatic qualitative dimension of politics—found in his consideration of the Greek conception of the _polis_—and his criticisms of the liberal, democratic and humanist practices of modernity, I want now to turn to how Heidegger's critique actually engages the work of other thinkers.

3.2 Heidegger, _die Politik_ and _das Politische_

Heidegger's contrasting of the Greek _polis_ with the modern conception of politics and the state is usefully approached through a consideration of the distinction drawn by Ernst Vollrath between _die Politik_, decision making politics, and the qualitative dimension of the political, _das Politische_31. Heidegger's analysis suggests that he finds that modernity has conflated both dimensions of political life with the technical rationality intrinsic to the calculative element of _die Politik_.

As was discussed in the preceding Chapters, the novelty of Heidegger's concern with the processes of rationalisation is his identification of the source of the problem; the anthropological focus of humanism. It is this, rather than any particular set of political practices or focus, that has led to the understanding of _das Politische_ in terms of the technological paradigm.

31 As cited by Fred Dallmayr in his book _The Other Heidegger_, p. 50.
Fred Dallmayr has analysed Heidegger's contribution in the light of this distinction. Dallmayr concludes that Heidegger's analysis of all Western politics in terms of its technological metaphysical roots, and his antipathy to that base, means that Heidegger's "politics resists direct application- which means at least politically, there cannot be an 'applied Heidegger'". Heidegger's rejection of instrumental reason, Dallmayr believes, leads him to have no interest, actual or potential, in the decision making world of die Politik. In contrast, Dallmayr does believe that Heidegger can, and does, have a contribution to make at the level of das Politische—

Heideggerean thought is not simply nonpolitical or beyond politics (in a transcendental and hence metaphysical sense). Instead, paradigmatic reflection infiltrates and pervades politics on all sides, but in an oblique and noninstrumental way; to this degree, it injects into politics a playful and liberating dimension, one particularly crucial in our age wedded to planetary planning and control. 33

Dallmayr's conclusions are unsatisfactory for a number of reasons, however. Firstly, one cannot, as Dallmayr does, simply write Heidegger off as having an antipathy towards 'everyday' politics (die Politik) in a way which allows one to safely isolate the ramifications his thought would otherwise have in that realm from an 'acceptable' dimension of divorced paradigmatic reflection (das Politische). Heidegger does not make the simple refusal of metaphysics which would allow one to argue that his work resists direct application. Heideggerean suspicion does involve the everyday- however unpalatable the political regime he allied himself with. The history of Being cannot be considered without

32 Ibid., p. 76.
33 Ibid., p. 76.
the history of metaphysics, nor can Being be conceived of as a theoretical paradigm apart from a practical reality.

This leads to a second set of objections; what exactly does Dallmayr mean when he claims such reflection 'injects into politics a playful and liberating dimension'? One could be forgiven for wondering exactly what dimension of politics Dallmayr is referring to here (let alone what would and would not constitute acceptable 'play' from the institutions of the state). Clearly, a self-conscious effort to be 'playful' at the level of die Politik is unlikely to find much support here. This would be simply senseless in the terms of the phenomenological regime of which it is a part and/or a self-conscious, and thus self-defeating, attempt to avoid instrumentalism34.

Alternatively, if Dallmayr intends to inject 'play' into the consideration of the qualitative dimension of politics, das Politische, more needs to be said about what such play involves and how what appears to be a purely contemplative reflection can be considered, or effect the, political in any sense at all.

To explore this point it is salient to recall Stephen K. White's attempt to theorise the problem. White (in common with Heidegger) does not explicitly use Vollrath's distinction; it might appear, however, that in distinguishing between the world-disclosing and action co-ordinating aspects of language in the approach to ethical and political questions that he is operating a similar distinction in order to consider Heidegger's critique. This comparison is further encouraged by White's conclusion; that the responsibility to act, associated with action co-ordinating reason,

34 In Oakeshott's words 'A plan to avoid all planning may be better than its opposite, but it belongs to the same style of politics.'
ought to be tempered by the introduction of an awareness of a responsibility to otherness characterised by the world-disclosing aspects of language.

Dallmayr and White share a belief that Heidegger's contribution is to be made at the paradigmatic level of politics in terms of an openness to 'otherness'. Of the two, it is White who seeks to provide some account of the form this contribution might take. However, the distinction between die Politik and das Politische or that between the responsibility to act and the responsibility to otherness, and the placement of Heidegger's work in one pole or the other, in either case is questionable.

White is highly critical of those 'postmodern' thinkers (Dallmayr included\textsuperscript{35}) who seek to consider Heidegger's work as moral or political without considering the very stuff of politics-the relationships between subjects; intersubjectivity. For White, Heidegger's contribution serves to highlight the possible "conceptual blindness[es]\textsuperscript{36} that a (particularly Habermasian) consideration of the responsibility to act might have. What is of particular interest here, however, is what White takes that 'otherness' to involve and, crucially, deliver.

In fact, White does not digress from the Habermasian line. The 'otherness' which one needs to take account of is the otherness of other agents' narratives. These agents, however, are individuals who, ultimately, all can or ought to share in Habermas's Universalisierungsgrundsatz- 'All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of everyone's interests

\textsuperscript{35} See the footnote on p. 74 of Stephen K. White's Political Theory and Postmodernism.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 140.
(and those consequences are preferred to the known alternatives)\textsuperscript{37}.

What is established, therefore, belongs to the Habermasian project of seeking to legitimate constraints on plurality through a set of rules arrived at in a discourse that all can find authoritative. White sees Heidegger's value in terms of his capacity to better determine what sort of discourse can serve this purpose:

The attempt at justification has to move to the narrative dimension. If one is persistently pressed to say why the criteria of normative justification ought to be understood in a certain way, one is forced to contextualise that judgement progressively up to the most general and comprehensive level of narrative about one's culture. And at this level, what we have is not simply another, slightly bigger narrative... Rather we have a narrative that is recounted to those with whom we radically disagree, with the intention of showing them that they could freely recognize themselves as having a place within, could find some sense of affirmation within it. \textsuperscript{38}

How satisfactory this project of the search for an authoritative narrative (and the concept of the political which accompanies it) is, are questions I return to later. At present, two things are particularly worth noting.

Firstly, White rightly contends that Heidegger's work has nothing to say, directly at least, about the relationships between agents/subjects. For White, whatever positions Heidegger offers leave the political context at base untouched; the aim remains to find universal and general narratives. Any claims relating to the


\textsuperscript{38} White, \textit{Political Theory and Postmodernism}, p. 142.
social/public dimension which Heidegger makes must therefore be constrained by the procedural and communicative processes appropriate to an era defined by the 'facts' of pluralism and diversity. Without a greater deference to the responsibility to act—developed from Habermas's conception of critically testable propositional truth claims—Heidegger's work remains trapped within the monological discourse (that is, premised on the objectivist conceit) of the philosophy of subjective consciousness.

Secondly, therefore, White reads Heidegger from a position which views him as offering potential (and ultimately illegitimate) courses of action for agents whose basic natures are already known. In seeking to frame an account of political legitimacy in terms which reflect both the responsibility to act and the responsibility to otherness, both 'action' and 'otherness' are indexed to desiring, volitional agents whose beliefs and desires can ultimately be ordered only by the communicative process amongst agents whose valuing of such a community lends that process authority.

If, however, one reads Heidegger's work as calling into question precisely such a concept of agency and the associated conception of reason, rather than merely a selection of the actions or desires such an agent or agents might have, then things are less clear. For Heidegger, the hermeneutics of everydayness and suspicion are not various ways for human beings to understand either a separate world or each other, but part of an attempt to think about the conditions which make these experiences possible.

Two things emerge from examining White's treatment of Heidegger. Firstly, White is right to point out that in the absence
of an explicit consideration of the relationships between subjects, any political contribution, even at a philosophical or paradigmatic level, Heidegger could have made remains at most a potential one. Secondly, however, in attempting to pursue how that contribution might have developed within a nexus of responsibilities (to act and to otherness) grounded in a modern conception of moral agency White misses the dimension of Heidegger's thought which calls into question the uniformity of that conception of agency.

Approaching Heidegger as a thinker bound by the distinction between practical politics (die Politik) and the paradigmatic conception of the political (das Politische), or as a thinker concerned with how we should treat others will be to find him, at best, incomplete. Heidegger is not concerned with how appropriate our next political move is, but with the conditions that lead to our constitution making such moves possible. In contrast to White's distinction between the responsibilities to act and to otherness, Heidegger's distinction between the hermeneutics of everydayness and suspicion is not intended to reflect various different ways in which an agent can relate to others, but to examine how human being ought to be understood in the first place. Utilising Heidegger's work in order to identify reason and legitimate meaning with particular contingent social practices (as Rorty does39) or (as White does) in terms of a procedural narrative based round the ideal of normative discourse which has, at least potential, universal applicability in which all could find "some sense of affirmation"40 misses the challenge Heidegger lays down.

Heidegger's intertwined hermeneutics challenge the notion that human agency is to be understood in terms of an understanding of

39 See the discussion of Rorty in my Chapter 'Heidegger and Subjectivism'.
40 White, Political Theory and Postmodernism, p. 142.
either the practices of agents or a transcendental principle that they share in common, however conceived or wherever located. This claim belongs to the nexus of technological conceptions of Being which Heidegger's work questions. Hence, for Heidegger, a full understanding of moral or political human relationships has to realise that it is not founded in any grounding conception of human Being but in Dasein. Dasein is to be understood as the condition for any concern with Being; it is prior to any particular concern with human agency and reason. The freedom with which Heidegger is concerned is not the freedom of human agents thus conceived, but of ontological truth. The 'free relationships' to humanism and technology which Heidegger's analyses aim at do not aim to establish the principles which govern the relationships of subjects to the world they find themselves in, but of the conditions which much exist for such experience and meaning to be an issue in the first place.

In Heidegger's work this finds its clearest expression in his consideration of Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason, where Heidegger rejects the notion that any basic principle explaining human freedom can be made explicit. This is because what is taken to constitute a full explanation is based on an assumption of a model of self-certitude based on the assertions of a subject or the nature of an object which is subordinate to the conditions for either type of inquiry to be meaningful at all. Any attempt to 'solve' the diremption between subject and object thus will fail to deliver a basic principle which fully encompasses human being; the freedom of Dasein cannot be finally defined in such terms. Thus, whether one seeks to locate such a final vocabulary in the contingent history of a particular human society and set of practices or a set of transcendental universal principles of reason
governing individual human agents, the project of finding a definitive, knowable and authoritative conception of agency must remain open-ended. The otherness with which Heidegger is concerned is not the otherness of other agents, but of the conditions of human freedom in the first instance. Hence, in *The Essence of Reasons* (1929), Heidegger claims that:

> [F]reedom is the reason for reasons... however, freedom is the "abyss" of Dasein, its groundless or absent ground... We must clarify the essence of the finitude of Dasein in terms of the constitutive features of its Being before proceeding to any "self-evident" definition of the finite "nature" of man, any description of those characteristics which follow from finitude alone, and certainly any hasty "explanation" of the ontical heritage of finitude. 41

As Joanna Hodge42 has pointed out, this conception of Heidegger's project stresses the specificity of the Aristotelian concern with the situation (which she deems an ethical project) over any anthropological concerns with the relationships between agents whose nature is already assumed. Heidegger's concern with agency is how it can come to be meaningful at all, not the various ways (universal or particular) in which agents can come to relate to each other.

**Section 4) Conclusion: Heidegger and Politics?**

Hodge reads Heidegger's concern with human agency in a world in which technological reason has come to dominate as a suggestion that "it is necessary to return to the context in which political philosophy becomes distinct from moral philosophy and

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metaphysics"\textsuperscript{43}. This thought, that Heidegger's political contribution is not at the paradigmatic level of a thought on the ways relationships between agents are conceived, but predates such an understanding is echoed by Miguel de Beistegui who also looks to Heidegger's comments on the Greek polis, adumbrated above, as raising the question of what if anything grounds the notion that politics has a "proper place"\textsuperscript{44}.

To those, White amongst them, who maintain that no body of thought can have a political dimension until it considers the nature of relations between subjects, it may now be replied that Heidegger's work need not be understood as at odds with this claim. Instead, Heidegger's work challenges the attempt to justify the political claims one makes in such a mode through an appeal to the finality (transcendental or historico-contingent) of a particular conception of the nature of human being. Read this way, Heidegger demands that the question of how we ought to treat each other morally or politically should not be divorced from an open-ended inquiry into what or who it is 'we', as our inquiry, are. The lack of one definitive answer is not an indication of an insufficient capacity for reason, but of the subordination of that reason to the question of the meaning of Being. The finitude of Dasein refers to its essential temporality, not the finitude of limited or incomplete knowledge. The problem Heidegger diagnoses is not with an incompleteness of self-knowledge, but with the incompleteness of an outlook which conceives of knowledge in terms of a fundamental divide between the enquirer and that which is enquired about.

Thus, the attempt to delineate a 'proper place' for politics understood as the realm of relationships between subjects is not

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{44} de Beistegui, Heidegger & the Political, p. 5.
incompatible with Heidegger's work. What is questioned by Heidegger are the closures and incompletenesses that he identifies with positions which understand human being in ways that hold instrumental and technical reason paramount. The notion of politics having a 'proper place' is, as it stands, simply one aspect of modernity's anthropocentric self-understanding. That finality is as strong in Rorty's social ethnocentrism as it is in Habermas's appeal to the universality of an ideal speech situation. The implications of such a position are drawn out in a different context by Alasdair Maclntyre:

A hostile critique of... [our] self-image might understand it as disguising a situation whose moral eclecticism and incoherence are such that fundamental moral and political debate cannot provide its politics with a common mind, and that the outcomes of debate are often in fact determined not by how the arguments go- the incommensurability of standpoints sometimes ensures that they could not be so determined- but by the solicitations of power and interest. 45

In terms of Heidegger's work, the failure to reconcile 'incommensurable standpoints' within a paradigm of politics informed by 'a common mind' or unitary understanding of human agency is not surprising. Heidegger's political value is to suggest that the search for such a grounding in terms of the modern conception of (human) identity echoes and deepens "Nietzsche's rebuke that seeing things as similar is merely the sign of weak eyes"46.

The final question to be answered before looking at different attempts to try and develop a politics which responds to

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Heidegger's diagnosis of the limits of the modern conception of agency, is whether Heidegger's failure to develop a political thought is a necessary result of his own understanding of human being. Although Heidegger's critique of instrumental reason means that he has no immediate political application, is it also true that the nature of his critique rules out any rethinking of the political at all? Two reasons might be suggested for this being so; firstly, if Heidegger's conception of human agency necessarily ran contrary to any possible consideration of the intersubjective dimension and, secondly, if it were shown that this conception was completely irrelevant to any political consideration (whether of action or paradigm) at all.

Taking the second objection first, some contemporary theorists have sought to defend the modern liberal democratic project as, in Rawls's counter to his predominantly communitarian critics, 'political not metaphysical'. Whatever the concessions to social embeddedness in the construction of that self- from the Rawlsian/Habermasian appeals to a transcendental ideal to the emphasis on local and historically contingent practice of Rorty- the claim remains that it is more reason which holds the key to both the understanding and emancipation of human beings within society. The conceptions of reason deployed are diverse but these thinkers point, as examined in the previous Chapter, to one or other of Heidegger's hermeneutic dynamics as being unreasonable on their terms. For White, for example, Heidegger's failure rests in his inability to develop an universal account of political identity because of an overemphasis on the hermeneutics of suspicion. Rorty, by contrast, sees Heidegger's failing as seeking an universal account because of an underemphasis on suspicion. Both thinkers perceive Heidegger's talk of Being as masking an underlying
objectivism that draws on a subjective and arbitrary understanding of reason.

To both objections the defence of Heidegger's work as having relevance for the political theorist remains the same. Firstly, the claims that Heidegger's work retains an unexamined claim to objectivity should be rejected in light of his hermeneutic concern with the unsupportability of maintaining that the language of substantive objectivity (or the associated conception of subjectivity) is the basic or fundamental mode of human existence. Heidegger's work does not aim at providing a substantive conception of either human being or social practice, but argues instead that these understandings will always be temporal and limited in nature. Thus, for Heidegger, an authentic self-understanding simply reveals the temporal aspect of Being; it does not render an account of human being from which the principles required for the founding of a social order can be abstracted. From this follows, secondly, a questioning of the conception of politics which sees the defence of the 'fundamental' autonomy of agents (or the promotion of their values and wills) thus conceived as basic. This questioning does not equal a rejection but a diagnosis of partiality of that style of politics. For Heidegger, the attempt to ground a political understanding in any notion of an universal or unchanging understanding of human nature remains marked by the necessarily frustrated technological desire for certitude. Heidegger offers in his account of technology a twofold argument to those who might wonder what the problem of a partial account of human agency and politics might be; the inability of the traditional philosophical conception of existence (on which modern politics is based) to solve its own 'most basic' questions and the associated inability of modern societies and states to deliver the
goal of freedom which is generated from the philosophy of consciousness.

Hence, if, as I believe one should, one accepts that Heidegger's National Socialism does not necessarily follow from his basic philosophical position— that is, as argued previously, that his work does not demand that one rule out all possibility of talking about human agency in terms of subjectivity or metaphysics at all— then it is apparent that Heidegger's critique of technology, understood as an attack on the hegemony of instrumental reason in conceiving of human existence, does raise an important set of questions for the political theorist. Heidegger's own reaction to the threat of technological modernity does, as his critics suggest, show a 'crisis' response which renders his thought susceptible to the Messianic myths of German culture and the perverse extremes of the Nazis. As argued above, however, this is not necessarily entailed by the philosophical claims within Heidegger's work and reflects an absence of, rather than an opposition to, a consideration of the intersubjective in his work. Further, his 'solutions' aside, it is Heidegger's attempts to identify the limits of the conception of human being around which the intersubjective is based which even those critical of him have to address.

Reading Heidegger's considerations on the understanding of the political in technological modernity apart from his overtly Nazi moments what emerges is a critique of attempts to justify political power in terms of the defence of the autonomy of the individual (or community) where these are taken to be final or grounding terms constituted in relation to traditional, humanist reasons. Heidegger's legacy, therefore, is indeed to suggest that

47 See Hans Sluga, Heidegger's Crisis as discussed in the previous Chapter.
there is no 'proper' place for the political grounded in these terms; to quote Ansell-Pearson "the ethical project of autonomy... is being rendered more and more redundant"\textsuperscript{48}. Ansell-Pearson cites global capital as the cause of the problem, but Heidegger's work suggests that it is rather the instrumental understanding of human being (whether 'subjectivist' or 'objectivist') and the very conception of ethical autonomy as end which is the origin of human unfreedom.

Heidegger's own conception of a non-instrumentalist understanding of human being, Dasein, remains undeveloped in political terms. Heidegger's philosophical considerations are not separated from social, cultural and political concerns in a way which allows him to develop a clear conception of Dasein that is convincingly free of the fundamental instrumentalism of the tradition he is criticizing nor, therefore, does he provide any outline of how a non-instrumentalist conception of agency might inform an understanding of the political dimension.

4.1 Directions

The following Chapters examine recent and contemporary thinkers who have claimed to be developing a politics based on, or responding to, Heideggerian insights. Heidegger's work as looked at thus far provides three themes with which to approach the treatment of his work by those seeking to ally his work to political concerns.

Firstly, in each case the primary focus will be on the extent to which the conception of agency operated by each thinker actually reflects Heideggerian concerns. Of particular interest in this

\textsuperscript{48} Ansell-Pearson, "Heidegger's Decline: between Philosophy and Politics", p. 518.
regard is the assumption that there is an authoritative mode of understanding human being, characterised in terms of Heidegger's conception of technological reason, which will serve to deliver the base assumptions underpinning a 'right' politics. This theme has been touched on in my discussion of the attempts to render Dasein in anthropological, pragmatist terms and will be returned to in the discussion of Sartre's work which follows this Chapter.

Secondly, I look at thinkers who have attempted to develop an alternative picture of human agency to that based around the image of individual self-consciousness. Although this is closer to Heidegger's project, and addresses his criticisms of the contemporary understandings of politics better than the attempts of Sartre, I seek to show that the attempts to develop a politics which responds to this image of agency fail. To this end, I examine the works of Connolly and Foucault and find that their attempts to consider difference and otherness share Heidegger's failure to provide an analytics of understanding agency which allows for an articulation of the political dimension of the relations between agents.

The final thinker I will look at, Charles Taylor, seeks to develop a politics which reflects a conception of agency that does not aim at a grounding and objectifying knowledge of our nature. Rather, for Taylor (as for Heidegger), reflection upon ourselves- whether centred around a substantive conception of the subject or universal communicative norms- cannot deliver the self-certainty about our natures that is associated with the conceptions of reason that have previously emerged. Taylor thus moves away from the project of seeking knowledge about ourselves through an isolation of privileged capacities, practices or conceptions of reason and
instead, like Heidegger, seeks a hermeneutic approach to understanding human being. Unlike Heidegger, Taylor gives explicit consideration to how this approach might work in the moral and political arenas.

In each instance my interest is in the ways in which these thinkers frame moral understandings or analytics from Heideggerian claims about agency and, in turn, how they retain an inability to ally any revisions in the instrumentalist conception of agency to an adequate articulation of the political dimension.
Chapter 4: Sartre and the Politics of Existential Freedom

**Introduction**

**Aims and Outlines**

Having concluded in the first part of the thesis that Heidegger's conception of agency, centred around the account of Dasein, is not developed into a theory of either moral or political agency, I now turn to the first of three thinkers who have sought to develop these dimensions in the light of Heidegger's work.

For my purposes, Sartre is a natural place to start. That Heidegger continues to be read is, in part, due to his influence on the French tradition of thought\(^1\) which is the predominant site of the ongoing critique of the modern conception of the subject-itself one of the central themes of Heidegger's work. In turn, this tradition has largely developed in relation to Sartre's work. Even a cursory glance at *Being and Nothingness* reveals the centrality of Heidegger's thought in the early Sartre's mind; Tom Rockmore reports that this was echoed in a letter Sartre wrote to Simone de Beauvoir in which "he complaints that in rereading his journal he became aware that the clearest ideas were due to Heidegger"\(^2\). It is important to note that these concerns are a facet particularly of Sartre's early works; as a result this Chapter focuses on that period.

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1. There is an extensive body of literature dealing with this linkage; it is perhaps most thoroughly dealt with by Tom Rockmore in his *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism and Being* and is also the subject, to a lesser extent of Vincent Descombes's *Modern French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut's *Heidegger and Modernity* and Richard Wolin's "French Heidegger Wars".
Sartre is of particular interest because he claims, in *Being and Nothingness*, to have discerned both the manner in which Heidegger misrepresents the relationships between human beings and the reasons underlying this error. Specifically, Sartre thinks that Heidegger's conception of Dasein fails to capture the conflictual nature of human relationships, bypassing the 'reef' of solipsism by submerging the phenomenon of one human's relation to an Other within the image of "a crew". Sartre thus finds that Dasein cannot serve, as Heidegger suggests that it does, as the basis for an understanding of the nature of human freedom.

This Chapter is divided into four Sections. Firstly, I provide a brief overview of the foundations of Sartre's project of excavating the activity of Being-for-itself in relation to Sartre's own reading of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein. In doing so, I refer to Heidegger's claims in the *Letter on Humanism* that Sartre's conception of the congruence of their concerns is mistaken. Secondly, I examine whether Sartre is nonetheless right to assert that any adequate conception of human reality and, by extension, the relationships between human beings requires a starting point that draws on Cartesian origins. This section is concerned with the implications of Sartre's decision to remain within the philosophy of consciousness. My third section follows Sartre's attempt to turn his philosophy to the provision of a theory of intersubjectivity. I consider the limits of Sartre's account, in part through a comparison with Heidegger's conception of freedom. This is continued and concluded in my fourth section which asks whether Sartre's failure to give a convincing account of the intersubjective dimension of human being is, in fact, illuminated.

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by aspects of Heidegger's account which cut deeper into the notion of human being than Sartre's focus on individuated consciousness allows.

Section 1) Sartre's Methodological Framework

1.1 Sartre and Heidegger: Preamble

*Being and Nothingness* is a long and complex work marked by many influences. That Heidegger is, at the very least in Sartre's eyes, one of the key thinkers in the book is undoubted; a notion perhaps most powerfully confirmed (the titular similarity aside) in Sartre's claim in the Introduction that:

> certainly we could apply to consciousness the definition which Heidegger reserves for *Dasein* and say that it is a being such that in its being, its being is in question.  

Having delineated what he takes to be the common ground he shares with Heidegger, Sartre immediately follows with a statement of what he takes to be the crucial difference:

> But it would be necessary to complete the definition and formulate it more like this: consciousness *is a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself.*

Sartre, in other words, finds human existence to be more than simply one, reflexive, facet of an unified Being. Rather, the negating capacity which both thinkers ascribe to human being leads them in opposite directions. For Heidegger, our existence is

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4 *BN.*, p. xxxviii.
5 *BN.*, p. xxxviii.
fundamentally understood through our participation in the question of the meaning of Being. There is nothing about consciousness, person or man which, for Heidegger, is apart from Being. The temporality of Dasein is fundamentally an aspect of, and a window into, Being.

For Sartre, in contrast, human reality is a distinct and separate realm of being. The seeming separateness of consciousness and its object, which for Heidegger is indicative of a more fundamental unity within the ontology of Being, signifies instead for Sartre a fundamental division within reality. Human being, as conscious being, is a different type of being from the rest of the world. Further, conscious being as being-for-itself is in fact marked by being apart from Being altogether: "Man is the being through whom nothingness comes to the world"\(^6\). *Being and Nothingness* is thus partly constituted by an attempt to revise the formal implications which Heidegger draws from the reflection upon the appearance of reality. In order to examine these differences a brief account of Sartre's contrasting methodological structure and development is required.

1.2 *Sartre's Humanist Foundations*

Human being is treated by Heidegger as fundamentally defined by the temporality of Dasein, and thus the disclosure and disclosedness of Being. Thus, in Heidegger's view, there is nothing fundamental about human existence that cannot be rendered transparent in terms of Being. The analysis of Dasein is therefore an analysis of the different manners in which Being comes to have

\(^6\) *BN.*, p. 24.
meaning. There is, beyond what follows from this, nothing that is authentically essential about human being. Hence, one finds in *Being and Time* a rejection of any attempt to treat any further aspects of human being, whether conceived of as the ego cogito, subject, 'I' or consciousness as fundamental. *Being and Time* and the works that follow are a thoroughgoing critique of any position which prejudices the question of the meaning of Being through an acceptance of the unexamined basic categories of substantive subject/object-ivity.

Sartre, however, places human reality at the very centre of his philosophy. The human subject is not, as it is for Heidegger, simply of interest to Sartre insofar as it is a clue to a 'deeper' or more fundamental question of Being. In fact, the basic question of *Being and Nothingness* is, as Sartre acknowledges in the first paragraph of the main body of the book the same as that which motivated Descartes; how am I to understand my relation to the world? Thus, although Sartre rejects the Cartesian attempt to establish the imagination as the unifying moment of soul and body, he nonetheless remains centred on the conception of the human subject.

To see how Sartre's different philosophical origins underpin different philosophical and, ultimately, political conclusions from those of Heidegger requires a more detailed account of his ontology.

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7 See my previous Chapter, "Heidegger and the political", especially pp. 129-130xx.
8 BN., p. 3.
Sartre's departure point is the existence of reflexivity. Given the existence of consciousness which, following Descartes, Sartre takes as the indisputable foundation of all that can be known about our Being, Sartre then goes on to excavate what can be known of that Being. Unlike Descartes, Sartre's theory is atheistic and thus Being is not from the first indexed to the existence of a deity. Further, the Being with which he is concerned is human Being; the ontology that he seeks to provide is aimed at giving an account of human existence. This contrasts strongly with Heidegger's efforts to distance his conception of his own 'scientific' method from either empiricism or the human sciences.

One way to conceive of the difference between Heidegger and Sartre here is to ask how one might heuristically understand 'Being' and reflection upon it by human beings at the outset of their treatises. For Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being is perhaps best understood as an attempt to understand the widest range of phenomena possible, with no preconceived target about which knowledge is sought. *Destruktion*, the search for transparency and the hermeneutics of suspicion all testify to Heidegger's desire that, in seeking to address the question of the meaning of Being, the focus on human beings should not import hidden assumptions. As Heidegger's later critiques of humanism display, the emphasis on the individual subject or self is simply a manifestation of Being, not a category of Being within itself. In other words, humanity apart is never the final explanandum.
Sartre, on the other hand, frames the ontological problem in a more traditional manner. Sartre follows Husserl in asserting that "knowledge refers to consciousness" and that "[a]ll consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness of something". Sartre's project thus remains formally Cartesian. What can be known of Being can be known only as the result of the activity of consciousness. Sartre has an alternative account, of course, of what can be taken to follow from this in terms of the constitution of the *cogito* but his philosophy is fundamentally Cartesian in its taking as central the problem of the two regions of Being uncovered by consciousness. Sartre aims in *Being and Nothingness* to furnish an ontology which will serve as an "examination of the in-itself - which is never anything but what it is- which will allow us to establish and to explain its relations with the for-itself". It is through this analysis that Sartre will provide his account of the human subject.

### 1.3.1 Sartre and Husserl

Following Descartes, Sartre takes the fundamental ontological question to be that of the relation of man to his world; a relationship defined by the conscious subject and its relation to its object. In analysing that relationship, Sartre retains the belief that all that can be known must be founded on what can be shown to necessarily follow from the existence of that relationship.

Sartre, however, follows Husserl in using the doctrine of intentionality to challenge both the conclusions Descartes draws

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9 BN., p. xxvii.

10 BN., pp. xlii-xlili.
and the depth of his methodical doubt. In assessing how our perceptions can be said to meaningful, Husserl suggests that what is required is not simply the assertion that our self-consciousness is consciousness of ourselves as a psychophysical entity which straddles the separation between mind and body. Rather, Husserl argues, in order to determine what we can know about consciousness and ourselves we can take as apodictic only that evidence which is derived from the essence of intentional acts per se.

Husserl therefore extends Descartes methodical doubt in a Platonic way. Meaning, knowledge and certitude can all be derived only by an analysis of how anything comes to be intelligible, and that analysis ought to be eidetic, or essentialist, rather than idiosyncratic or arbitrary. The essence of any meaning implies, Husserl argues, an act of cognition and an object about which that cognition is about. Intentionality thus states that "consciousness only exists as consciousness of". Husserl, as was seen previously however, retains the aim of establishing how one can come to know what we do about the world; he continues to seek to explain how mental states relate to their object. As Hodge has put it, the notion is of "meaning as constituted through a relation between thought as cognition and thought as that which is thought about, with a fulfilment of meaning in the actual existence of the object". We can know about ourselves only that which follows from the analysis of the necessary formal structures implied by

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11 For a discussion of Husserl's doctrine of intentionality see my previous Chapter, 'Heidegger and the Critique of Subjectivism'.
13 Joanna Hodge, Heidegger and Ethics, p. 184.
consciousness— not what is suggested by the content of particular perceptions themselves.

For Husserl, therefore, the Cartesian Ego is overblown. The intentional act, in its essence, proves nothing beyond an Ego which is constituted by "the contents of phenomena and the place where they appear"¹⁴. It is this conception of place, not as res extensa or matter, but simply as a "transcendental 'field' "¹⁵ which is the Husserlian Ego. The Ego, transcendental to any particular conscious representation does not, as Descartes argued, have the character of a substantive entity. It is, for Husserl, simply the constancy which underlies the sense of personhood which lies outwith, but binds, any individual's set of conscious representations.

From a concern with what can be known about human beings from their perceptions of reality, Husserl's analysis retains a fundamental and Cartesian dualism between the knowing subject and the objects about which it seeks knowledge. Husserl attempts, however, to ground an epistemology which, unlike Descartes's, is founded entirely in terms of an analysis of self-grounding consciousness which is free of external metaphysical commitments.

Leo Fretz has pointed out¹⁶ that just as Husserl radicalises Descartes so Sartre radicalises Husserl. Expanding the conception of the extent of doubt required to establish what can be known against the rigours of scepticism, Sartre argues that Husserl's

¹⁶ Fretz, "Individuality in Sartre's philosophy", p. 72.
conception of the Ego retains too much unestablished metaphysical assumption. This, Sartre claims, is because Husserl is content to take acts of perception as the subject matter of his supposedly
eidetic analyses of consciousness, when, in fact, this merely amounts to a question-begging of what one wishes to establish-
the constancy of individuated human being.

Sartre argues that Husserl's taking of acts of perception as the raw material of his analyses is overdetermined and contrived. Husserl says that he sees perception as a suitable source of evidence because it provides a model of clarity and stability in a way which, for example, the inconstancy of the emotions does not\[17\]. Sartre finds these illegitimate criteria to operate in selecting one's examples. They ensure that those phenomena which run contrary to the conclusion one wishes to reach- the establishment of the Ego as constant and binding- are excluded from consideration. In other words, the transcendental Ego as the source of ongoing individual personhood is no more convincing than the Cartesian substantive Ego, and ultimately amounts to a theoretical fudge of the sort instanced by Descartes's recourse to the pineal gland.

Sartre's alternative is to address what he considers Husserl's methodological error, and to include all intentional transactions (including those of imagination and emotion as well as of perception) in the consideration of what it is that underpins and binds these acts. \textit{Pace} Husserl, Sartre seeks to show that the sense we have of ourselves as individuated and unitary can be established through an examination of consciousness and,

therefore, without an appeal to a transcendental ego. Thus, although Sartre continues to start with the notion of consciousness, he attempts to show that the experience of our individuality and personhood can be derived from the analysis of consciousness alone. Sartre considers himself to be borrowing from Heidegger in seeking to show that the Ego is not radically detached from the world in a way which demands the explanation of that separation; rather human being is associated with a conception of consciousness as an activity within the world.

To understand these claims one needs an account of how Sartre believes Husserl's account of human being can be derived and improved upon by a focus on conscious activity alone and, secondly, how Sartre's account differs from Heidegger's.

1.3.2 Being-for-itself, Consciousness and Human Being

Being-for-itself, human being, is set aside from the other sorts of entity in existence, Beings-in-themselves, as conscious being. Sartre does not equate consciousness and Being-for-itself; consciousness is rather the defining activity of Being-for-itself. I have already discussed above the intentional nature of consciousness- the task now is to show how Sartre assigns individual personality to the activity of consciousness.

Consciousness is, for Sartre, the means by which Being-for-itself brings nothingness to the world. Consciousness, as the activity by which being is both revealed and negated has three moments for Sartre.
The first is intrinsic to all meaning as an aspect of intentionality. Beings first become differentiated from the rest of Being by consciousness by means of a conscious negation of the object as not being anything else. In other words a book appears as a book by way of its not being an armadillo, a jacket, or any other of the alternative meanings that might be attached to it. Without this first negation the part of the world I posit as a book would be undifferentiated from the rest of Being and it is thus through this negating that consciousness can be said to bring Being into the world, through its role as meaning endowing activity.

The second negation is more complex. In being aware of an entity, e.g. a book, as there I imply that my consciousness is a presence to the object, and that the object is not my awareness. There is, in other words, an implicit pre-reflective awareness of the acts of consciousness as separated from their object. Fretz has characterised this second moment of consciousness as "nonpositional consciousness of itself"\textsuperscript{18}, where 'itself' refers to the awareness of perception which constitutes the first moment of consciousness.

This second step, which marks the first move towards the personalisation of consciousness, leads to a third step which Sartre sees as both explaining what one means by using the term 'I' or 'Me' and as being derived from consciousness alone. The final negation is of the second moment of consciousness, in which the unity of the awareness of perceptions is itself the object.

\textsuperscript{18} Fretz, "Individuality in Sartre's philosophy", p. 76.
Sartre thus rejects Husserl's conception of a consciousness transcendent Ego, and instead makes the Ego a facet of conscious activity itself. Sartre attempts, in Being and Nothingness, to show how this account of consciousness can underpin a full and proper understanding of human reality.

Heidegger, of course, objected to the rendering of Dasein as human reality; a point he made at length in the Letter on Humanism, and which was discussed in my preceding two Chapters. The extent to which Sartre was, at the time of writing Being and Nothingness, aware of the importance of this difference despite his expressed closeness to Heidegger's work is debatable. For my purposes, however, it is enough simply to note that there is a significant difference between the two, centred around Sartre's retention of a Cartesian humanism.

Some commentators reject or dismiss Sartre's work as a regressive misunderstanding or underestimate of Heidegger's break with tradition; a tendency encouraged by the bluntness of Heidegger's own attack in the Letter on Humanism. It is clear that there are fundamental and important differences between the two, as outlined above, but the following section will now provide a new analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Sartre's sticking with the Cartesian path as a precursor to the third section which cashes out the political implications of this decision for both Sartre and Heidegger.

19 For a treatment of this topic see Christina Howells's "Conclusion: Sartre and the deconstruction of the subject" in C. Howells (ed.) The Cambridge Companion to Sartre, esp. pp. 344-350.
20 An accusation levelled by, for example, Rockmore in Heidegger and French Philosophy, but denied by Ferry and Renaut in Heidegger and Modernity, p. 95-97. Howells gives a review of some of Sartre's detractors, as ibid.
Section 2) Sartre and the Philosophy of Consciousness

There would, of course, be much more to be said in an exhaustive account of the philosophical differences between the respective projects of Heidegger and Sartre. This might take the form of a return to a study of the coherence of the Sartrean *cogito* compared with the integrity of Dasein within the rest of Heidegger's *oeuvre*. In the latter case I have suggested that I would view *Being and Time* as more consonant with the rest of his work than some, and thus would read Dasein as a forerunner of Heidegger's later concerns rather than simply an early humanist infection. Although interesting, I want to leave a further examination of these themes aside in order to examine instead the philosophical consequences of the differences between the two, with a view to looking at the extent to which the political contrasts between Heidegger and Sartre can be attributed to the play of these divisions.

The first stage in this process is to examine Sartre's claim that the analysis of Dasein fails to adequately account for human reality, and why he believes that retaining a focus on the paradigm of consciousness addresses the inadequacies he diagnoses.

2.1 Sartre on Dasein

In seeking to account for how what is apparent comes to be so, Sartre remains, as the subtitle of *Being and Nothingness* suggests, a phenomenological ontologist. In making individual human reality the absolute ontological basis of meaning, however, Sartre departs from Heidegger's position in which the experience of the individual
human Being is taken to indicate a more fundamental, and pre-ontological, structure to meaning.

Whether or not he is right in his claim that Sartre simply sees past the true extent of the departure from the humanist way which Dasein represents, Heidegger is quite correct to identify a concentration on the individual human consciousness as the difference between himself and Sartre. In Being and Time Heidegger argues that the oldest questions of traditional philosophy, crystallised in the works of Descartes and Kant, did not require the answers it had always been presumed that it was the philosopher’s role to give. Whereas Heidegger’s suggestion is that this was because the questions themselves were symptoms of a fundamental error in thinking about Being, Sartre goes some way to confirming Heidegger’s diagnosis of the differences between them by reading Heidegger as having laid the groundwork for a more adequate approach to these questions.

Thus, in Being and Nothingness, Sartre praises Heidegger for providing a method (phenomenological ontology) with which to examine Being, but retains the Cartesian emphasis on the representation of the world by the conscious individual and, hence, criticizes Heidegger for failing to flesh out certain dimensions of that entity. Although the attempt to utilise Heideggerean arguments in Cartesian-inspired debates about consciousness may seem, at best, odd\textsuperscript{21}, what is of interest in the context of this study is Sartre’s assertion that Heidegger’s account fails on three counts.

\textsuperscript{21} Fretz, “Individuality in Sartre’s philosophy”, p. 80. Essentially Fretz’s point is the one Heidegger makes in the Letter on Humanism; a choice needs to be made between a metaphysical and a non-metaphysical framework.
Firstly, as has been discussed in the previous section, Sartre believes that Dasein can be best understood in terms of a refined understanding of consciousness. At heart, this reveals a fundamental difference in the theoretical concerns of the two thinkers. This leads to Sartre's second criticism, viz that Heidegger misrepresents freedom. I consider this claim immediately below, but Sartre's assertion is that freedom is constituted in the activity of the individual human conscious, and that it is this which is responsible for being and beings coming to have the meanings they do. Thirdly, and of particular relevance to the criticisms of Heidegger looked at in the previous part of this project, Sartre accuses Heidegger of having an inadequate account of human being which leads him to have an inadequate account of the nature of intersubjectivity.

2.2 Sartrean Ontology and the Centrality of Consciousness

As was seen above, consciousness is at the absolute root of Sartrean ontology. In a world where anything appears as anything at all, consciousness is necessarily entailed and further, argues Sartre, close study reveals that it is consciousness that gives meaning to the world.

In Sartre's philosophy the centrality of consciousness as the source of meaning and knowledge of the world, rather than simply the means of access to it, is reflected in his basic ontological distinction between Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself. For Heidegger what is immediate is the question of the meaning of Being: for Sartre it is consciousness of the question of Being which
is fundamental. Thus in the first Chapter of Part Two Of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre states boldly where he finds Heidegger to have failed. How, asks Sartre, "could there be an understanding which would not itself be the consciousness (of) being understanding?"22 In other words, Sartre implies, what Heidegger and the analytic of Dasein are blind to is the cogito through which any meaning of Being comes to presence to the self. Without the basic distinction between those entities which merely appear and those entities to which things appear, Sartre contends that Heidegger's account of human reality will lapse into a description of the phenomenon of our existence in the terms of thing-hood. The error here is not to inscribe existence simply in terms of substantia, as Heidegger criticizes Descartes and his successors for doing, but to miss what it is that separates off human being from the rest of being.

For Sartre, this mistake consists in describing human being in terminology which applies to Being-in-itself; inanimate ad unconscious being. It is self-evident from the experience of first-order awareness, claims Sartre, that Being is fundamentally riven by a divide between those beings that exist simply in light of the manner of their being and those beings which are defined rather as overflowing their being, as the means by which nothingness and meaning enter the world. The latter, Being-for-itself, is conscious being23; it is around the link between being and consciousness that Sartre's ontology revolves.

In analysing Heidegger's work in terms of the success of a description of human reality, Sartre mistakes Heidegger's

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22 BN., p. 73.
23 For a discussion of the various complexities of the ways in which Sartre uses the terms 'consciousness' and 'Being-for-itself' see Barnes's section 'Embodied Consciousness' in her essay "Sartre's Ontology", esp. pp. 20-22, in C. Howells (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*. 172
intentions. The difference between the two here is best understood by examining Heidegger's identification of the basis or origin of meaning as pre-ontological. Dasein uncovers the meaning of Being, but it does so neither as representing Subject nor as the creator of meaning. Heidegger is clear that he focuses on Dasein because it provides access to Being, of which it is an aspect. Any account and any ontology are, however, derived from a horizon of meaning and Being which extends beyond any conscious reflection. Thus, Heidegger accepts that talk of the Subject and consciousness are meaningful but not primordial.

My first Chapter dealt with what Heidegger means when talking of 'fundamental' or 'primordial'. What is of importance here is that Heidegger, having considered that the most transparent or indubitable entity might be the conscious 'I', rejects such a notion. Thus, Heidegger accepts the possibility of a "formal phenomenology of consciousness"24 but it remains only a derivative concern; merely an attempt to understand one region of Being.

It is this belief to which Sartre takes particular exception. Any account which does not take consciousness as central will necessarily fail to distinguish between the two regions of Being (for- and in- itself). Sartre reads Heidegger as pointing towards an account which can be used to properly understand human Being by placing it in a concrete and discrete ontology, in which it stands apart from the world to which it attributes meaning. As Heidegger was later to protest, and as Being and Time itself makes clear, the treatment of Dasein as basically a tool in the Cartesian effort to study the nature of human reality is mistaken. Nonetheless it is

24 BN., p. 151.
this outlook that prompts Sartre's most basic charge against Heidegger; that "the Dasein has from the start been deprived of the dimension of consciousness, it can never regain this dimension" 25.

Both Being and Time and Being and Nothingness profess to be works of phenomenological ontology. Heidegger considers the use of that method, in the analysis of Dasein, to aim at the provision of a formal (although concrete) interpretation \([\text{Interpretierung}]\) of the question of the meaning of Being. For Heidegger, the aim of fundamental ontology is not to determine the structure of how men, or a man, inhabits the world, but to establish how things come to show themselves as they do. His notions of transparency \([\text{durchsichtigkeit}]\) and Destruktion are not intended to signify that his work gives an explicit structure of Being, but rather form part of a philosophical approach which opposes that project in the first place; whether explicitly undertaken or implied by an acceptance of the tenets of humanism. In Sartre's work, by contrast, it is human reality, conceived of as conscious Being-for-itself, that is the pivot and subject of his ontology in itself.

Given the different object of the two studies, the convergence and divergence of their terminology at different moments can be used to demonstrate the disparity of the two projects almost \(\text{ad nauseam}\). Having identified Heidegger's own perceived antihumanism as the fundamental division between the two, however, this study does not need to identify all such moments. What is relevant are the reasons Sartre gives for Heidegger's inability to give any account of the political dimension of experience. As was stated above, Sartre's charge is that Heidegger

\[25 \text{BN., p. 73.}\]
is unable to give an adequate account of human reality as a result of seeing consciousness as simply one aspect, rather than the central pivot, of Being. To understand this does not require a survey of the full breadth of both thinkers' ethical horizons; a comparison of the two on the nature of freedom and the relationship to other individuals will suffice.

2.3 Sartre's Notion of Freedom

2.3.1 Heidegger on Freedom: Recap

Heidegger, as was seen in the previous Chapter\textsuperscript{26}, has a radical notion of freedom that he is at pains to divorce from any emancipatory ideal associated with either the subjective individual 'I' or collective 'We'. Freedom, on Heidegger's account, consists of an understanding of (and approach to) Being that allows things to show up in ways which do not overlay them with technological preconceptions or judgements that overlook how beings come to have the meanings they do. Heidegger, thus, does not provide an account of political freedom but of how certain political understandings reflect ontological understandings that are unfree; Heidegger talks of freedom in terms of 'free relationships' to technology and humanism, for example. Freedom is not, therefore, a basic or essential capacity or ability of the self, but of the context of the interpretation of phenomena as a whole.

Conceptions of the state that centre on the liberty of the individual or collective are analysed by Heidegger as further

\textsuperscript{26} See my Chapter 'Heidegger and the Political'.
manifestations of the technological/humanist understanding of Being. Although this does not necessarily rule out discussion of how political life can make humans more free, Heidegger's objection is that this is already a monopolistic hegemony. What is required, both philosophically and politically, is not more considerations of how human being can be made more subjectively liberated but a fresh consideration of what these aims entail. Heidegger thus shuns talk of the modern state in terms of a return to a consideration of the Greek conception of the polis which looks instead at how all aspects of life can become dominated by the technological humanism that he sees as characterising all modern life.

Sartre's treatment of the concept of freedom is rooted in his humanist foundations. Exactly how Sartre theorises freedom is to be found in his analysis of bad faith.

2.3.2 Sartre, Bad Faith and Freedom

Sartre defines conscious being in relation to the absolute freedom of the negating activity which characterises consciousness. Consciousness, in other words, cannot be viewed in the same way as Beings-in-themselves; rather it is undetermined and indeterminable. Conscious being, Being-for-itself, is Being which has nothingness at its heart; that is it is always able to transcend any thinglike nature which one might ascribe to it.

It is important at this point to be clear about the distinction between consciousness and Being-for-itself which was mentioned above. The two are not synonymous - consciousness is not, for
example, to be conceived of as a soul inhabiting a body. Instead, Sartre suggests that the attempt to understand human being on the Thomist model misses the point. There is no gap between the mental and the physical to be bridged, nor is the body a tool which consciousness uses. Rather, Sartre says that "consciousness exists its body."27

The intimate embodiment of consciousness, and more generally its necessary participation in the realm of Being-in-itself, Sartre calls the facticity of Being-for-itself. This might seem contradictory; if transcendent consciousness is necessarily embodied, does this embodiment (its facticity) not constitute a limit on the absolute freedom which Sartre suggests characterises Being-for-itself? This, however, is an error caused by the conflation of consciousness with Being-for-itself. The entity that is free is Being-for-itself. This is not because it owns or contains consciousness; Being-for-itself does not exist between the poles of its transcendence and facticity but is composed of them. The facticity of Being-for-itself should not be seen as a limit or constraint acting upon the individual, but simply facts constitutive of the situation in which freedom comes to exist and be expressed. Failing to make this distinction would lead one to think that consciousness was free but Being-for-itself is not. In fact, freedom is a description of the constant and inescapable activity of Being-for-itself, performed in a necessary context and directed by consciousness.

His humanist origins and the notions of Being-for-itself, consciousness and freedom, thus combine to mould Sartre's basic

27 BN., p. 73. Italics in original.
concern in Being and Nothingness; the description of human being in terms of absolute freedom. Moreover, it is this nexus of concerns which leads Sartre (echoing Heideggerian terminology although not, Heidegger insists, meaning) to frame the leit-motiv of existentialism; that "existence comes before essence"28.

It is through the analysis of Bad Faith that Sartre pursues and presents his account of what he takes to be the fundamental aspect of human existence: freedom. Drawing on his skills as a novelist Sartre presents various, by now famous, situations (the waiter, the coquette) through which he seeks to excavate human freedom.

Bad Faith/self-deception [mauvaise foi] is the denial, implicit or explicit, that one is truly free. This is motivated, argues Sartre, by the desire to avoid the anguish which accompanies the realisation that one's freedom makes one wholly responsible for all that one is and does. This can be done in one of two ways; an identification with one's being not in terms of Being-for-itself, but with just one of the two poles of which it is composed.

Sartre's first example is that of an individual who seeks to deny his freedom and responsibility by identifying his existence solely with his facticity. Thus the waiter seeks to immerse himself in the role of a waiter, telling himself that he has no choice but to carry the tray just so, to wipe down the tables this way and so on. Sartre accepts that particular roles come with particular scripts, but is unequivocal when it comes to the freedom of that individual to stop playing any particular role he has chosen to pursue. There

is no role which we cannot give up; the transcendence of Being-for-itself cannot be obliterated by circumstances.

Sartre is equally certain about the futility of the alternative path of self-deception. Denying one's facticity, rather than one's capability to transcend it, is also necessarily a deception. Sartre uses the example of a coquette who seeks to deny responsibility for her impending acceptance of her seduction by seeking to identify her existence entirely with her transcendence. To this end, Sartre describes a scene in which a woman flirting with a paramour, distances herself from the responsibility which attends that situation by identifying her self as a disembodied consciousness. Her body- she tells herself- is a possession of, but not constitutive of, her inner self; further, since it generates the sexual desires causing her future seduction, she is neither responsible nor able to resist.

Sartre is clear that this is simply another version of the same self-deception. The account of Bad Faith serves two purposes in Being and Nothingness; it solicits a phenomenological/anecdotal agreement from the reader and, Sartre argues, offers a proof of the ontology of consciousness he has offered. To understand why he thinks this to be so one needs to examine what it is that Sartre claims the existence of Bad Faith reveals, and why.

Conscious being, Being-for-itself, cannot be defined wholly in terms of either of its two poles- the self is a meld of the quality of transcendence with its necessary embodiment. The intentionality of consciousness, whilst adequate for the apprehension of Being-in-itself, is unable to represent its own
nature to itself. Faced with its own being, self-consciousness is unable to represent its own condition: the attempt to present consciousness as its own object necessarily mistakes the Nothingness beyond being that characterises Being-for-itself.

Thus, although Sartre's initial examples show Bad Faith in its aspect as a psychologically attractive fiction (which one might avoid given greater sincerity), its more fundamental aspect is—because of its intrinsic link to the basic structure of intentional representation—unavoidable. It is this aspect that is crucial to Sartre; having elicited a recognition of the symptom he purports to show what must be the cause.

I will leave a consideration of the persuasiveness of Sartre's theory of consciousness and the reliability of his method until after the next step, which is to consider how Sartre's account of human freedom informs his accounts of interpersonal relationships.

Section 3) Sartre and Being-for-Others.

Preamble: Reasons for focusing on the early Sartre

Sartre's thought frequently leads him to make pronouncements on ethical and political matters but, like Heidegger, these comments are never developed into an ethics or politics. In contrast to Heidegger, however, Sartre does not explicitly reject the project of providing an ethics\(^2^9\). Indeed, Juliette Simont argues, much of Sartre's work reads as an ethical commentary on

\(^2^9\) Although this is not to discount Joanna Hodge's study, *Heidegger and Ethics*, which argues for the importance of ethics as a motif underpinning Heidegger's work.
the "ethical problematic" made in his two main works (Being and Nothingness and the Critique of Dialectical Reason).

Given Sartre's lack of explicit focus on a theory of either ethics or politics, this study will not attempt to extract one from the detailed comments on either problematic made by Sartre, most expansively in the Critique of Dialectical Reason. This is not because I consider Sartre's later work to be irrelevant, or the differences from his earlier work insignificant, to a proper understanding of his thought, but because the very importance of his later formulations illuminates the limits of his earlier work. In assessing whether Heidegger has any insights to offer or underpin those seeking to develop a political theory it is Sartre's earlier work which is most revealing. Therefore, it is not Sartre's later theoretical moves that are of interest, but the limits and conflicts of the earlier work.

3.1 Sartre, Solipsism and Ethics

Although it does not constitute an ethics, one of the central themes of Being and Nothingness is evidently to clear the space for that project; indeed the final sentences of the book are a promissory note to deliver such a work. An exposition of the bars to a proper understanding of ethics and morality in the work of others is, therefore, a recurring theme of Being and Nothingness. Sartre's position, in this regard, is radical. He takes from Heidegger the belief that philosophers have previously

misunderstood human being as a result of a fascination with explanations and ontologies that seek identification with a suprahuman certainty. He departs from Heidegger in suggesting that this realisation leads one to individuated human consciousness rather than a concern with Being. By focusing on, and attempting to understand, human being through Heideggerian concepts Sartre's work seeks to combine the two perspectives; a project Fretz is far from alone in viewing as an "attempt to realize the impossible"\textsuperscript{32}.

These qualms aside, it is useful to focus on one of the problems of Heidegger's understanding of human being (for this is unambiguously how Sartre reads Dasein) which Sartre sees as common to the traditional understanding of the self. In Sartre's view, neither the tradition nor its critics have come up with an understanding of human being which addresses the problem of solipsism. It is this that lies behind Sartre's accusation that Dasein is blindly collective.

Sartre looks at Heidegger's consideration of intersubjectivity in his Chapter 'On the Existence of Others'. Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger are united with Kant, argues Sartre, in failing to pass through an Idealistic conception of other people to what he calls a 'concrete' understanding of them. All these thinkers are stranded, Sartre memorably claims, on "the reef of solipsism"\textsuperscript{33}. In this light, a consideration of the political implications of Sartre's approach to Heidegger requires two things. Firstly, an examination of those aspects of Sartre's criticism necessary to understand his

\textsuperscript{32} Fretz, "Individuality in Sartre's philosophy", p.80.
\textsuperscript{33} BN., p.223.
difference from Heidegger and, secondly, an understanding of how Sartre believes he has surpassed Heidegger's account.

3.2 Sartre on Heidegger and Solipsism

In considering the various attempts to render an account of the existence of Others\textsuperscript{34}, Sartre considers the experience of feeling shame. Shame, says Sartre, requires the existence of an Other human reality; it is only felt in the presence of an Other- "shame is shame of oneself before the Other"\textsuperscript{35}. Any account seeking to explain this phenomenon must, therefore, furnish an explanation of human reality which accounts for the concrete reality, not just of oneself, but of the Other as well.

A Cartesian based realism, with the assumption of a separation between material and spiritual matter, cannot do this, claims Sartre. The Other on this scheme is encountered only as body (possibly as spiritual body) but this retains the difficulty of explaining how the two are linked, and without this we have no explanation as to why our experience of the Other leads to shame. There is nothing in Cartesianism to throw us outside of the Other as mere Object- whether as "stone or tree"\textsuperscript{36} or conjecture. The latter path Sartre identifies with Idealism, epitomised by the Kantian attempt to capture the reality of the Other in our mental representations of him/her. This approach equally fails to capture the reality of the Other in a way which throws me outside my own framework of reference however:

\textsuperscript{34} For the purposes of this section I have capitalised 'Other' where this refers to the existence of another person.
\textsuperscript{35} BN., p. 222.
\textsuperscript{36} BN., p. 224.
... the Other within the perspective of Idealism can be considered neither as a constitutive concept nor as a regulative concept of my knowledge. He is conceived as real and yet I can not conceive of his real relation to me. I construct him as an object, yet he is never released by intuition. I posit him as a subject, and yet it is as the object of my thoughts that I consider him. 37

What Sartre demands is that the analysis of Being-for-itself should consider the role of Being-for-Others in a way in which the cogito encounters, but does not constitute, the Other. 38. Heidegger's conception of Being-with (Mitsein) fails this test in Sartre's estimate.

Mitsein does, of course, as an ontological category refer to Others- which Sartre sees as an improvement on the merely analogous status of Others in the work of Kant and Husserl. As was seen at the beginning of this Chapter, Sartre views the understanding of intersubjectivity at play in the notion of Mitsein as best characterized by the image of a crew. It is to this conception that Sartre objects. He does so on two connected grounds.

Firstly, he argues, the conception of Mitsein as a basic ontological structure is an arbitrary one (Sartre later refers to the notion as that of a "We-subject" rather than the more fundamental "Us-object") and, most damagingly, at odds with Dasein. Heidegger, Sartre is arguing, cannot have it both ways; either it is Mitsein that is the prime unit of human reality or it is the individual consciousness- which Sartre takes to be the true

37 BN., p. 228-9.
38 BN., p. 251.
39 See BN., p. 426-430.
interpretation of Dasein. It cannot be both. As Peter Caws puts it, "the being of the Other [is given] only in a kind of indissoluble coupling, not in its own right"\textsuperscript{40}.

Secondly, Sartre claims, this problem arises because the Other is given in Heidegger's work in a way which is not concrete. That is to treat human reality along the lines of \textit{Mitsein}, apart from being inconsistent with using instead the individuality of Dasein, mistakes the basic experience of the Other. The collective experience of the crew suggested by \textit{Mitsein} is parasitic on a more fundamental experience of the Other that is marked, Sartre claims, by conflict.

The question at hand now, therefore, is whether Sartre's theory-that of the look- overcomes these problems.

3.2.1 Sartre and the Look

It is in the experience of being caught in the gaze of an Other that Sartre believes he has both the explanation of shame, and the concrete proof of the existence of a definite Other. Shame, argues Sartre, can only exist through my becoming conscious that my own being is the object for an Other. This, in turn, demands an Other who challenges the significance of the meanings and projections I have attached to the objects in the world, and to my own being. The Other is not just an Object for me, but, crucially, is capable of seeing me as an Object. In the gaze of the Other the fragility of my freedom and my lack of solid centre is revealed; a state of affairs which culminates in the familiar Sartrean account of the struggle

for power and the strategies of avoidance which he sees as characteristic of human relations. Thus, Sartre says

It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject. For just as the Other is a probable object for me-as-subject, so I can discover myself in the process of becoming a probable object for only a certain subject. 41

It is not enough for one to construct an ideal subject- although Sartre concedes shame may be felt simply because we believe another to be present. Rather, the phenomenon can only be based on the experience of actually "being-seen-by-another"... "a concrete, daily relation which at each instance I experience"42.

Sartre, therefore, feels that, in contrast to Heidegger (amongst others) he has provided an account- through the phenomenological analysis of shame- that treats the existence of Others in a concrete way. How convincing ought one to find this claim?

There is, in fact, nothing in Sartre's account to show that the concrete other that he considers necessary for the experience of shame is not merely an abstraction. Since physical presence need only be suspected, the Other with whom I am concerned is not necessarily an individual identifiable by a proper name. Indeed, as Leo Fretz points out43, reflection upon the "other I" before which I feel shame can lead to the realisation that "the I that I just now encountered in the experience of shame... was not the product of a constituting deed on the part of a real other, but of myself, in the

41 BN., p. 256-7.
42 BN., p. 257.
43 Fretz, "Individuality in Sartre's philosophy", p. 87.
sense that it was I that looked at me" 44. That is to say that the Other as theorised here is entirely consistent with an internalised structure of my own Ego, which, Sartre has previously argued, is outside consciousness.

These are difficulties Sartre continues to address throughout his career, culminating in the Critique's attempt to understand how actual subjects relate to each other in conditions of material scarcity. This, however, is of less importance than the basic structure of Sartre's project; the establishment of an ethical/moral base, derived from the account of the individual subject found in Being and Nothingness, from which a politics arises. Peter Caws describes this inquiry as "the raising of the characteristic features of the existential subject- lucidity, negation, project- to a collective level"45.

Returning to an analysis of Sartre's account of human reality as contrasted with Heidegger's notion of Dasein will illuminate why the former fails to provide the understanding of intersubjectivity which would allow him to ground an ethics, morality and ultimately politics of existential freedom.

3.2.2 Sartre, Freedom and Value

It has been widely noted that the early Sartre's account of the conflictual nature of human relations hardly constitutes a basis for a politics of solidarity. Iris Murdoch, indeed, sees his real brilliance as lying in the portrayal of "the psychology of the lonely

44 Ibid., p.87.
45 Caws, Sartre, p.154.
individual"46. Murdoch's insight merits following up. The accusation that Sartre's work is no more successful than Heidegger's in conceiving of, or valuing, the difference between individuals in political terms is an enlightening one.

Sartre is right in asserting that Heidegger's failure to provide either an ethical or moral account (with the implications for his flirtation with totalitarian politics) rests on an inadequate conception of intersubjective relationships. My contention, however, is that Sartre is triply wrong to think that altering the account of Dasein to incorporate the Cartesian cogito addresses that problem. The first error is to overlook the hermeneutical aspect of Dasein. This leads to his second mistake which is to see Dasein as lacking, rather than deliberately bypassing, an account of consciousness shaped by the Cartesian cogito. Thirdly, therefore, Sartre overlooks the development of the critique of instrumental reason associated with such humanist perspectives in Heidegger's work.

Heidegger does lack theories of both intersubjectivity and politics that adequately allow for the differences between individuals. This lack of political imagination is not, as Sartre thinks, caused by Heidegger's failure to render a full philosophical account of the individual human being. Rather, Sartre's problems stem from a mistake akin to that he himself perceives Heidegger as making; levelling the difference between subjects. This is, ironically, arguably a product of a process that Heidegger lays bare- the universalist pretensions of humanism.

Sartre thus can be seen as repeating the mistake he accuses Heidegger of—submerging the differences between subjects into an unitary account—for reasons which Heidegger points to. What emerges in both cases (regardless of the extent to which one reads Dasein as aiming at an account of human reality) is the impossibility of grounding a political theory in the certitude driven ontologies of human being that characterise some philosophical accounts. The contrast between Heidegger and Sartre's projects—and the similarities in relation to their lack of political imagination—can be examined in an analysis of Sartre's theory of value.

For the Sartre of Being and Nothingness, value is indexed to what it is that reflexive consciousness perceives itself as lacking. Value, thus, at one level permeates all desire—emerging as an appetite for something which is perceived as needed. This need, in turn, revolves around a fundamental "lacked"—the desire for the total self; Being-for-itself-in-itself. This desire is impossible to fulfil, argues Sartre, it is the realm of God not man.

Value, therefore, is a product of human freedom; to believe values are built into the fabric of the universe is to be guilty of the spirit of seriousness. This is a variation of Bad Faith, consisting in the denial of our responsibility for the choices and values that inevitably spring up from our freedom. There is no facticity that limits our freedom, claims Sartre, for facticity is the very material of our freedom; it is us. Thus, Sartre claims, I can be said to choose how to interpret and value all that I experience; my birth, bodily fatigue, the torture visited upon me during war or my skin colour. All are real, but all can be
interpreted according to the projects I choose. In all circumstances I remain able to accept or reject any meanings that come before me, contra the claims of those who would assert that meanings are ossified within the fabric of things. Sartre gives examples to show how we choose our values.

Along with the difficulty in considering others at all, which accompanies Sartre's entanglement with solipsism, it is this conception of the unattainable nature of value that makes the provision of either a morality or a politics so difficult for Sartre. Given Sartre's own definition of value, as intrinsically linked to the freely chosen project of an isolated Being-for-itself against those around it, it seems hard to see how any regulation of moral or political conduct could appear as anything other than Bad Faith in l'esprit de sérieux. That an ethics or politics remains an aim at all is a question which runs throughout a reading of Sartre's work-it runs counter to, and perhaps explains his later abandoning of, the starkness of his original existentialist insights.

Comparing Sartre's humanist outlook with Heidegger's hermeneutical concern with Being allows one to see why this should be so. For Sartre, freedom is the necessary activity of human consciousness, and human being is the founding concern of his study. Sartre, therefore, struggles to say why any particular social configuration ought to be valued; however one conceives of those around one or the situation one finds oneself in, the formal nature of one's freedom is unthreatened. Sartre says as much in his account of the status of deliberate reflection. All causes and motives of my behaviour arise from the projects of my consciousness. Where reflection seems to indicate otherwise
Sartre is clear—"voluntary deliberation is always a deception... When I deliberate, the chips are down"\textsuperscript{47}.

Freedom, for the Sartre of \textit{Being and Nothingness}, exists independently of how one relates to one's fellow man or what one makes of the world. In the light of this it is unsurprising that Sartre's project—of finding grounds for an existential morality which defends the value of one's fellow man, and for a politics that reflects this—is lost. Iris Murdoch puts it thus:

> It as if only one certainty remained: that human beings are irreducibly valuable, without any notion of why or how they are valuable or how that value can be defended.\textsuperscript{48}

Sartre, therefore, fails on two counts. Firstly, he fails to escape the problem, as he perceives it, of solipsism. As a result, secondly, he also fails to show why or how freedom ought to be considered a social or political value outside of the projects of any given individual. In both regards, a return to a comparison with Heidegger's work is informative as to why this should be so.

\textbf{Section 4) Sartre's Critique and Heidegger's Defence: Political Implications}

\textit{4.1. Sartre and Heidegger: The Contested Notions of Freedom}

In contrast to Sartre, value, ethics and politics are all peripheral concerns for Heidegger. When he does deal with these concepts it is usually to criticize existing notions as reflecting a
deeper humanism. This relates to, and indeed culminates in, the alternative conception of freedom with which Heidegger operates and which was explored in the previous Chapter.

Freedom, in Sartre's account, is located within the activity of an individual consciousness, and its formal nature is unaffected by relations with Others, or the theorised understanding of oneself or one's situation. Although one's relations with Others or the way one understands oneself and one's world lends a different flavour to the conscious experience of one's freedom, it never detracts from it.

On Heidegger's account, by contrast, freedom is dependent from the first on self-understandings that exist in a shared, public space (represented by the One- das Man- in Being and Time). Further, the quality of the taking up of these understandings in framing the interpretations one comes to have of the world has an effect on the quality of one's freedom. Dasein, as the activity of interpreting Being, does not stem from the bare existence of an isolated individual consciousness but, as Heidegger's argument in Being and Time is intended to show, must depend first on a particular context. Moreover, the misunderstanding of this context- at both an individual and collective level- affects the nature of freedom: this is behind Heidegger's critique of instrumental rationality.

A failure, whether private or public, to understand how we are constituted is, therefore, significant for Heidegger. We become unfree, for Heidegger, when a failure to recognise the temporality of our understanding of Being becomes reified in the public
meanings available to us. For Heidegger, believing that my goals and values can be understood apart from the public and temporal contexts in which they were produced is not only an error of hermeneutical understanding, but an expression of a world view which precludes one from possible understandings of Being.

For Heidegger, therefore, freedom cannot be considered a facet of human existence in a traditional humanist sense. It is always intrinsically involved in a context in which one cannot take human Being, conceived of in terms of subjectivity, as the fount of all meaning or value. For Heidegger, Sartre's sticking with the Cartesian problem of how to place consciousness in the world is simply a variant of the basically instrumentalist understanding of the world to which he is opposed.

4.2 Sartre and Heidegger on Intersubjectivity and Agency: Political Implications

Sartre accuses Heidegger of failing to understand the true nature of intersubjectivity with the crew-like understanding expressed in *Mitsein*. The implication of the 1943 *Being and Nothingness* is clear; this understanding of human being is bound, if developed, to lead to totalitarian moral and political self-understandings which fail to defend the freedom of the individual. Sartre aims in *Being and Nothingness* to bring Heidegger's phenomenological approach to bear on the Cartesian problem of how we are placed in the world we experience. Sartre claims in *Being and Nothingness* that this will lead to an ethics. To see why this promise is never fulfilled, and why it never develops, as he clearly believes it will, into a framework allowing for a political theory
one needs to look at the structure of Sartre's disagreement with Heidegger.

Sartre sees Heidegger's account of Dasein as providing an avenue of escape from the solipsism which he identifies as inevitable in ontological accounts which retain a reliance on suprahuman values or beliefs. Sartre criticizes Heidegger, however, for failing to make his departure point individual consciousness, and identifies this as the error underlying Heidegger's inability to provide an adequate account of the singular nature of human freedom which he sees as vital to any theory of intersubjectivity, itself crucial to ethical or political understandings. Sartre thus aims to amplify the existentialist parts of Dasein in order to provide what he sees as a truer and more authentic account of human being. In doing so, however, he is unable to satisfactorily clear the hurdle of solipsism and provide a political account on the existentialist terms from which he first moves.

Sartre's critique of Heidegger can, from the perspective of a political theorist, be split into two parts and, from these, an attendant conclusion can be drawn. Firstly, Sartre has a philosophical critique of the constitution of Dasein, as underemphasising the importance of consciousness in understanding Being. Secondly, he identifies this error as compounded in Heidegger by an account of the relationships between subjects which is submerged in a totalizing collective subject-\textit{Mitsein}. This, for Sartre, obliterates the individualistic nature of human freedom and leads to a reifying of one set of values in Bad Faith. For Sartre, freedom is- in the first instance at least- the domain of the individual. Sartre's implicit conclusion,
and the underlying project of *Being and Nothingness*, is that a revised account of human being, in terms of individuated consciousness, will allow for a satisfactory account of the relationships between subjects that will, in turn, lead to an adequate understanding of ethics and politics.

Sartre's position combines a linking of Heidegger's ethical and political failings to his philosophical shortcomings, with a tacit acceptance that an adequately revised theory of human being will suffice to ground an ethical and political framework. In his 1945 lecture *Existentialism is a humanism* this strand of Sartre's thought finds perhaps its keenest expression as he seeks to link the existentialist understanding of existence to a conception of freedom that is allied to certain key historical and moral movements within humanism. Heidegger's 1947 broadside against Sartre, the *Letter on Humanism* (and the later work on technology and identity in general) points to the limitations of Sartre's position. It is worth considering those criticisms here.

Firstly, Heidegger distances himself from any humanistic interpretation of his work: Sartre's Cartesian inspired inquiry is one. Heidegger thus can, and does, draw back from any interpretation of Dasein or *Mitsein* as attempting to capture the underlying essence of Man in humanist, including existentialist, terms. It is not enough, in Heidegger's scheme, to bring the Subject into its world; rather the acceptance of the primacy of that separation in the first place is the error.

Secondly, Heidegger can extend this philosophical criticism of the humanist interpretation of his work to a defence of his social
and political stance. Thus, the more modest interpretation of his work does not seek to identify principles upon which an ideal politics should be based, but provide a rejection of the objectivist/subjectivist error upon which it should not. In his interview with Der Spiegel, for example, Heidegger distances himself from Nazism as simply another manifestation of the technological enframing of which liberal humanism is also a part. Heidegger is thus increasingly able to pull back from any engagement with social or political responsibility by challenging the notion of identity which underpins an understanding of the properly human with atemporal principles of morality or politics.

These moves and claims are both self-serving and, when taken with Heidegger's blithe linking of Nazism with all humanist liberal politics, repugnant. At the same time, however, Heidegger's declared departure from the course Sartre and others believe he has taken is supported by his philosophical position. The antihumanist strand of the analysis of Dasein does exist, as Heidegger claims, in Being and Time\(^ {49}\). Heidegger, of course, does bear more responsibility for the humanist misinterpretation of his work than he allows and Sartre's indications about the inadequacy of taking Mitsein as a template for an account of intersubjective relations has a degree of bite. Nevertheless, Heidegger's defence extends further than Sartre allows, and in a way which reflects on Sartre's own failure to provide an account of intersubjective relationships of the type he seeks.

\(^ {49}\) A point discussed in my Chapter 'Heidegger and the Critique of Subjectivism'.

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If one accepts Heidegger's antihumanist interpretation of his work\textsuperscript{50}, then Sartre's criticism of him— that he fails to provide a satisfactory account of human being upon which to base a political theory— loses its force. Heidegger, on this account, is more radical than Sartre gives him credit for; it is the demand for the provision of an account of human being, which Sartre himself desires, that Heidegger takes issue with. Thus, while Sartre is right that Heidegger provides no account of human being and intersubjectivity upon which a politics could be based he misreads— or at the least overplays— the extent to which Dasein and Mitsein represent an attempt to do this. Rather, as I suggested in my Chapter Heidegger and Modernity, if one views these concepts as part of an argument against the drive to certitude represented, not just by the distanced subject but by the philosophy of consciousness in general, then Sartre's criticism of Heidegger seems to reflect more on himself than on his intended target.

In other words, Heidegger's criticism of Sartre is that in taking human existence as his departure point and focal concern he remains bound to a technological understanding of Being. In doing so, Sartre's position lacks both transparency and an understanding of the historical horizon of Being. Heidegger explicitly directs this criticism at Sartre in the Letter— "neither Husserl nor— so far as I have seen till now— Sartre recognises the essential importance of the historical in Being"\textsuperscript{51}. Heidegger's value to the political theorist is not, therefore, to offer the definitive account of human being upon which political theorists can base the derivation of political frameworks, but to point to the historical and contextual

\textsuperscript{50} Although, of course, doing so in no way entails that one sees this as unambiguous or accept that this excuses his identification with Nazism.

\textsuperscript{51} Martin Heidegger, \textit{Letter on Humanism}, p. 243.

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conditions which pertain as much to politics as to any self-understanding.

Sartre's attempt to delineate an understanding of human being along existentialist lines is as open to Heideggerian criticism as the earlier attempts to understand human being on Cartesian or Husserlian terms. What emerges is a calling into question of any position which seeks to found an ethical, moral or political understanding based on a reified understanding of Being, whether resulting from an adherence to the philosophy of consciousness or humanist perspectives.

4.3 Conclusions

Sartre is right that Heidegger fails to give an account of human being which allows for the acceptance of intersubjective difference necessary to any non-totalizing politics. Attempting to address this problem by recasting Dasein along humanist lines through a reintroduction of the philosophy of consciousness fails, however, to take full account of what Heidegger takes to be the (pre-political) greatest totalizing impulse of modernity; the hegemony of instrumentalist reason of which he considers humanism a part.

On Heidegger's account, therefore, one cannot- as Sartre does- seek to bypass the problems of traditional philosophy through a recasting of Dasein in terms of human consciousness. Reading Heidegger's work on those terms fails to take account of the full depth of his critique; that traditional understandings of human beings and, by extension, politics are necessarily partial
interpretations of Being. Specifically in relation to Sartre, Heidegger's point is that the identification of human being on existentialist terms retains the privileging of an atemporal certitude about Being.

It is the attempt- not merely the failure- to provide a single and definitive account of human nature (even existentialist) which is the target of Heidegger's criticism. As was seen in previous Chapters, it is not any talk of subjectivity at all to which Heidegger objects, but the placing of the philosophy of consciousness at the centre of one's thinking. Sartre's attempt to render a definitive account of the ontology of consciousness and self-identity is marked by the finality that Heidegger associates with all perspectives marked by a technological understanding of Being.

Sartre accuses Heidegger of providing an account of intersubjectivity which eliminates difference. Ironically, Heidegger's charge is that the closure to difference is effected by Sartre precisely because of the status he accords to an account of the subject and intersubjectivity, and the exclusivity of human being in questions of the meaning of Being. In contrast to Sartre, some thinkers have developed accounts from Heidegger which seek to develop and emphasise non-anthropological conceptions of difference. Of these, I want to turn my attention to one of the more familiar philosophical accounts, that of Michel Foucault, and to focus particularly on how this aspect of Heidegger's work is expressed in the more overt works of political theory found in the writings of William E. Connolly.
Chapter 5: The Politics of Difference: Foucault and Connolly

Introduction

Aims and Outlines

I concluded my consideration of Sartre's response to Heidegger's work in my last Chapter with the observation that Sartre's attempt to incorporate Heideggerian insights into an account of intersubjectivity fails on two accounts. It neither provides nor completes the philosophical and phenomenological account of human reality as Sartre believes, nor does the humanist emphasis on the philosophy of consciousness offer an escape from the instrumental rationalism which, Heidegger argues, characterises (amongst other things) modern politics.

I undertook at the end of that Chapter, therefore, to consider the works of some theorists who use Heidegger's work to support a conception of difference which they believe is more fundamental than the contrasts found between individual subjects. To this end I look in this Chapter at the work of Michel Foucault and William E. Connolly. I selected the former because he directly acknowledges the influence of Heidegger in his work, which has itself been highly influential upon many thinkers from a wide range of disciplines. Like Heidegger, however, Foucault does not present an explicitly political theory and so I look at the work of William E. Connolly, who does, and claims to do so in relation to the work of Foucault. In neither instance is my account intended to be exhaustive. Rather, I aim to trace, through an examination of the work of these two thinkers, the ways in which those who privilege Heidegger's
hermeneutic suspicion of traditional conceptions of identity seek to develop a political theory of Heideggerean openness.

More needs to be said about why I have chosen these two thinkers. In the first instance I have chosen Foucault because he does develop a suspicion of traditional humanist understandings along Heideggerean lines. Unlike Heidegger, Foucault places much emphasis, at least implicitly, on liberation and particular historical and social contexts—although in both instances his success in doing so has been widely questioned. In addition, Foucault is of interest for two further, associated reasons. Firstly, because he acknowledges the importance of Heidegger—most particularly a Heideggerean interpretation of Nietzsche—in his work. Although one should never take a comment by Foucault on his own work as authoritative, Dreyfus reports his claim in a late interview that "For me Heidegger has always been the essential philosopher... My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger". Secondly, Foucault also represents a major figure in the French intellectual scene through which Heidegger's work largely survives and re-emerges after his denazification.

For the political theorist, Foucault's work, like Heidegger's, remains marked by the lack of a conceptually discrete consideration of the state. William E. Connolly claims to find in Foucault's work an ethos which he feels can be developed into a distinctly political account, and it is to his attempts to do so

1 On this see Tom Rockmore's *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism and Being*, p. 57.
4 See William E. Connolly, "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault" in *Political Theory*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Aug. 1993). Also see Connolly's *The Ethos of Pluralization* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) and, to a lesser extent, *Identity/Difference: Democratic*
with which I will be concerned in the second section of this Chapter.

A third and concluding section will consider the criticisms levelled at both, particularly by Charles Taylor, and, briefly, the interpretation they offer of Heidegger's work. In the light of these concerns I evaluate what remains of value in their work to the political theorist.

Section 1) Foucault

Preamble

My aim in the following sections is not to provide a complete or exhaustive account of Foucault's work. Foucault's concerns and influences were both various and, frequently, divergent. Thus, in what follows I take three aspects of Foucault's work of particular interest for my purposes. In the first instance I look at Foucault's early preoccupation with non-essentialist alternatives to traditional identities and identity thinking in his specific histories. I continue, in my second section, by tracing how this reflects, at least in part, a Heideggerean concern which is addressed explicitly in Foucault's consideration of the role of Man and humanism in the Western tradition. My third section examines the ethical and political conclusions that Foucault draws from his work on these topics. This section pulls together these concerns, and provides a comparative contrast between Foucault and Heidegger in each case. A final evaluation of the coherence of

Foucault's notions of agency, intersubjectivity and politics awaits the concluding section of this Chapter.

It should be noted that I say comparatively little about the differences between the various interpretations and reinterpretations Foucault himself makes of his work: viz the stages of archaeology, genealogy and the ethical techniques of the self into which his work is usually divided. Indeed my account of Foucault's ethical and political emphases will involve moving from the middle to the late periods of his work almost seamlessly. This is not to claim that there are not differences there which are important in developing a full reading of Foucault, but that they are, in themselves, peripheral to the ideas and concepts with which I am concerned. I contend that the themes I have identified remain relatively stable and constant throughout the Foucauldian oeuvre. Much has been said- not least by Foucault himself- about the disparities and continuities within his work. Again, I will leave these largely uncommented on, but it will suffice to say that I take Foucault's late claims to have been interested in both power and the subject as useful and not mutually exclusive.  

If there is a *leit-motiv* running through Foucault's work, however, it is the interrogation and disturbance of the established and traditional concepts and institutions of Western society. The following section, therefore, provides something akin to an overview of Foucault's thought.

1.1. Foucault and the Suspicion of Identity

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5 Gutting in his editor's introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 4, relates Foucault's 1969 characterisation of his early work as "imperfect sketches" for the archaeological method of analysing discursive formations, a method itself reconsidered in 1979 when Foucault asks "what else was I talking about... but power?", a question not so rhetorical as one might think as Foucault says five years later "it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research".

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1.1.1 Foucault's Early Work

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. 6

This relatively late statement from Foucault is perhaps the best encapsulation of the most persistent themes of his work: the excavation, suspicion and disruption of the basic assumptions of Western institutions and concepts.

Foucault's earliest works do not, however, deal specifically with the general concepts to which he later turned his attention. Rather, in *Madness and Civilization* and *The Birth of the Clinic* Foucault seeks to demonstrate how the categories of illness and madness have contributed to the construction of what is deemed normal in medical disciplines at different times in history. Following Canguilhem, Foucault claims that the past histories of medicine and madness cannot be understood in terms of what is taken to be normal in the present, for norms are themselves defined in part by what has been constructed as abnormal. Foucault also acknowledged a debt to Bachelard's notion of the discontinuity of different theories throughout historical periods.

One can already see parallels with Heidegger's attempt to show that it is untenable to understand or construct knowledge on ahistorical or atemporally objective grounds. The early works do not explicitly aim at developing a general critique of epistemological theory, however; Gutting refers to an interview

with Foucault in which he "remarks that it was only after finishing The Order of Things that he saw the possibility of construing the earlier works as part of a unified enterprise." In order to trace how Foucault develops and deepens these insights it is necessary to look at what Foucault called his archaeological method.

1.1.2 Foucault and the Archaeology of Knowledge

With The Order of Things and The Archaeology of Knowledge Foucault moves from highly localised studies of particular disciplines to more general observations about the conditions for, and production of, knowledge. Although both works deal with the ways in which knowledge is produced- especially in history and the human sciences- I will concentrate on the Order of Things. This is, firstly, because it is structured in a way which allows for a more easy comparison with Heidegger's thought and, secondly, because its emphases on the concept of Man and the human sciences are also useful in a comparative contrast with my interests in Heidegger, pursued in the next section of this Chapter.

In The Order of Things, Foucault analyses what he calls the three *epistemes* of Western history. An *episteme* is, as Gutting puts it, the "conceptions of order, signs and language... along with the conception of knowledge they entail... of a period." Foucault develops the underlying theme of his early work in seeking to show that the fundamental epistemological categories- and therefore what has been deemed knowable- have altered radically from one historical period to another. The later Archaeology of Knowledge would attempt to undertake an analysis of the grammar

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8 Ibid., p. 140.
underpinning the historical method itself in an attempt to demonstrate that Foucault did not wish simply to claim for himself the methodological certitude that he had identified as the arrogance of previous periods. Instead of examining how tenable that claim is, I want to focus on the critique Foucault offers of what he takes to be the current and dominant concept which is emblematic of the present *episteme*: the notion of Man as understood in the human sciences.

Already, the parallels between Foucault's archaeological method and Heidegger's "hermeneutics of suspicion" are apparent. Both thinkers seek to question afresh the established principles and tenets of modernity. At the same time, however, this should not be understood as a straightforward rejection of the particular emphases of, for example, the Enlightenment. Rather, what is attacked is the ahistorical nature of the perspective which structures these claims. I want to turn my attention now to another theme common to the two thinkers: the centrality and finitude of Man and the philosophy of consciousness in the concepts and understandings of modernity.

1.2. Foucault and the End of Man

Foucault, like Heidegger, asserts that the dominant understanding of existence at present is inconsistent, even on its own terms. The main argument which emerges from Foucault's examination of the human sciences and the key concept of Man in *The Order of Things* is that the assumption that there are a set of *a priori* principles or a constant and basic Law or entity which can ground 'truth' and 'knowledge' is a flawed one. Foucault argues, as

was seen above, that historical epochs are characterised by a specific and dominant mode of classifying and ordering existence. In modernity Foucault claims that it is the constitution of Man that has become central:

Man's mode of being as constituted in modern thought enables him to play two roles: he is at the same time at the foundation of all positivities and present, in a way that cannot even be termed privileged in the element of empirical things. 10

The modern age is defined, in other words, by a concentration on Man as both the object and subject of knowledge. In The Order of Things Foucault seeks to show how the modern sciences- whether mathematical, empirical or human- are both linked and apart from previous understandings of the world. This separation from what went before and linkage to each other is effected in both cases by the notion of 'Man'.

When Foucault claims that 'Man' is a peculiarly modern entity what he claims is new and distinctive is the focus in modernity on human being as the means by which representation of the world comes about. Thus, Foucault claims, "what came into being with Adam Smith, with the first philologists, with Jussieu, Vicq d'Azyr, or Lamarck, is a minuscule but absolutely essential displacement, which toppled the whole of Western thought: representation has lost the power to provide a foundation"11. In other words, the Classical acceptance that words and ideas simply and directly represented things collapsed. Instead, Foucault suggests, it was the foundation of representation, viz the notion of 'Man', which became the basic ordering concept of modernity. Foucault suggests that the clearest moment of the modern age is found in Kant's

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11 Ibid., p. 238.
critical reflection upon the limits and categories which underpin representation.

'Man', for Foucalt is not one simple notion or entity. Rather, it names a number of understandings of, and approaches to, human being which focus on its role in founding representation, knowledge and truth. Man is both, therefore, the knowing subject, and the object about which knowledge is sought. Foucault considers several connected notions which are part of the modern reflection on the conception of man. In each case what is at issue is again reflected in the Kantian corpus: how can Man as the knowing and constituting Subject also be the Object of that gaze?

Foucault considers the attempts made to understand the being of Man (to provide what he calls an 'analytic of finitude') in these terms through what he takes to be three predominant themes of modernity: Man viewed as an "empirico-transcendent doublet", through the "'cogito' and the unthought" and through the "retreat and return of the origin"12.

To treat Man in terms of the 'strange' empirico-transcendent doublet is to attempt to ground one pole of Man's Being (whether the objective or subjective) in the other. Thus, Foucault argues, Marx, Comte, and recently the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty have sought to show that it is either the objective, empirical and physical constitution of Man which is taken to ground knowledge (Marx, Comte), or the philosophical constitution of Man that gives meaning to the 'outside' world (the phenomenologists). The former approach, the privileging of the empirical, Foucault calls positivism; the latter, the privileging of the transcendent or

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12 Ibid., p. 318, 322, 328.
philosophical, he calls eschatology. Beyond these differences they are, he claims, essentially the same. Both camps, bound by the fundamentally dual conception of Man which fires them, attempt to reduce the terms of the other to their own. Like Heidegger, Foucault does not think it is the execution, but the aim, of these attempts that leads to their failure. The goal, of finding a certain and permanent ground for knowledge in the identity of human being understood in terms of a fundamental diremption, is as unrealistic for Foucault as it is for Heidegger.

From similar premises, Foucault rejects the attempt to find certitude through an analysis of the *cogito*- whether it be Cartesian, Husserlian or, by extension, early Sartrean. As was seen above, Foucault argues that the attempt to identify Man with pure consciousness is barren, unable to make the connection from the experience of consciousness of the Subject to its reality as object. Since Kant, and arguably even in Descartes, the thought processes of the *cogito* cannot simply be identified and accepted; the realisation that there is always something beyond the thought itself— the non-thought or the unthought— has rendered this assumption impossible. The experience of thought no longer evidences the existence of an 'I' as thought of by Descartes, Kant or Husserl (and in this latter example one can see a direct parallel with Heidegger). Whereas a consideration of the *cogito* does not necessarily lead to the reductionism of the empirico-transcendental doublet, it equally cannot provide a complete, coherent account of human being. This, Foucault believes, is because the modern age's focus on man as the means and manner of representation has rendered impossible the very idea of a simple identity of conscious being; reflection upon the *cogito* throws us,
in other words, not onto our final identity but the finitude of our existence. The collapse of representation means that the concepts of labour, life or language cannot be seen as pure or final grounds of our identity.

In contrast, Foucault looks to the work of Hölderlin, Heidegger and, especially, Nietzsche who all refer to a Return to an origin which does not seek to 'complete' man but points to the "void of the origin". This strand of thought is the most advanced of the three approaches to existence found in modernity for Foucault, because it does not lay claim to present a totalised account of Being based upon an identity-centred around Man- that is only partial. Foucault believes that these positions remain flawed, however, because there remains a promised 'complete' or authentic moment to be found, in Heidegger's case, in the proper understanding of "the insurmountable relation of man's being with time". There remains, therefore, a continuation and duplication of the modern motif of objective foundation: "[i]t is in the analysis of that mode of being, and no longer in the analysis of representation, that reflection since the nineteenth century has sought a philosophical foundation for the possibility of knowledge".

It is, therefore, in this last instance that modern thought finds its completion and, ultimately, its nemesis. The notion of a Return, to an origin of man which characterises Being in ways which fundamentally challenge the projects of modernity—viz, completion and explicit knowledge by a knowing Subject—is attractive to Foucault. This is because it encompasses an awareness of the finitude of human experience. For Foucault,

14 Foucault, The Order of Things, p. 344.
15 Ibid., p. 335.
16 Ibid., p. 335.
Heidegger and, particularly, Nietzsche's notion of the Return represents a truer analytic of finitude than the other two approaches discussed:

If the discovery of the Return is indeed the end of philosophy, then the end of man, for its part, is the return to the beginning of philosophy. It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For this void does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think. 17

This is particularly apt, in Foucault's eyes, because it recognises and opposes the "anthropological sleep" 18 that he believes the philosophies of Man- of the first two types- have inculcated in modern thought. The focus on the constituting Subject, and the objects it constitutes, is part of a historical epoch that has been marked by a drive for total identity and completion using categories which cannot deliver those goals. Modern thought, Foucault thinks, has been trapped and hypostatised within anthropological categories that can no longer be thought of as coherent in relation to the Enlightenment aims which accompany it. Should these "arrangements" disappear, Foucault memorably claims, "if some event ... were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did ... then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" 19.

This is the conclusion, not the beginning, of The Order of Things. There is no attempt in the book, or Foucault's later works, to give any concrete answer as to what will replace Man. Rather, what

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17 Ibid., p. 342.
18 Ibid., p. 340.
19 Ibid., p. 387.
follows, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and beyond, is an elaboration of the critical perspective from which Foucault posits that the end of Man is to be expected. There are two strands of Foucault's thought in, and after, *The Order of Things* with which I am concerned. The first is how Foucault expands on his claim in *The Order of Things* that "one might say that knowledge of man... is always linked, even in its vaguest form, to ethics or politics". This will involve a tracing of some of the ethical and political implications that Foucault, along with others, draws from his work. The second concern will be to analyse how coherent the account of Being and human existence with which Foucault underpins this statement is.

### 1.3 Foucault's Ethical and Political Conclusions

#### 1.3.1 The Move to Genealogy

Unsurprisingly, Foucault offers no explicitly ethical or political theory in which he states what could conventionally be taken to be the ethical and political implications of his work. My aim in looking at Foucault's subsequent work is to show how his later thought develops his critique of the Enlightenment conception of the knowing Subject into what he considers ethical and political areas. It is worth restating that my aim is not to provide a wholly faithful account of Foucault's theoretical consistency but instead to identify the political themes which arise from his earlier concerns.

In the later works, Foucault increasingly aimed to show how his early analyses can be brought to bear on the modern practices of

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20 Ibid., p. 328
politics. It is in this mode that Foucault talks of his work as 'genealogical' and publishes *Discipline and Punish*. Whereas this book might appear, at first, to be another historical examination of a particular set of institutions and social concepts- the use of punishment and control within societies- Foucault claims that his analysis of the birth of the prison system is the history of a "new economy of power"\(^\text{21}\). Foucault argues that the "completion of the carceral system" is one, major, mechanism amongst others which combine to "exercise a power of normalisation"\(^\text{22}\).

With these analyses Foucault adds another dimension to his work. The early phases of his work can be read as an attempt to show, *contra* the Enlightenment orthodoxy as Foucault perceives it, that truth is a "thing of this world"\(^\text{23}\). In the later works, he adds to this a more overtly pessimistic dimension. To his earlier concern, to show that 'Truth' does not result from unchanging a *priori* principles, Foucault adds a more urgent concern with the technical and controlling aspects of truth: knowledge and power. The move from considering the "truth axis" to a concern with the "power axis"\(^\text{24}\) marks both a move to a more recognisably political stance on Foucault's part, and a politicisation by him of his earlier work. Foucault is no longer content simply to show how the truths of medicine or the human sciences are constituted by historical practices. Rather, he now aims to show how it is power that fashions these disciplines/discourses and, further, that there has been a move in recent times for power to be exercised and expressed in ways at once controlling of the individual and increasingly insidious.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 293, 308.
\(^{24}\) Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics", p. 352.
Power for Foucault is not fundamentally exercised by individuals, nor is it a substance\(^{25}\). Foucault's prime concern is how the way knowledge is constituted reflects systems of power. Power and truth, therefore, go hand in hand:

'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.

'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'régime' of truth. \(^{26}\)

*Discipline and Punish* trades on a twofold definition of 'discipline'. On the one hand, there is the standard conception of the discipline of prison, the police, legal system and the mechanisms of social control. Increasingly the latter take the form of "lighter, more rapid, more effective" techniques of surveillance, as opposed to physical punishment. This modern trend moves the first sense of discipline closer to Foucault's second: discipline as the nexus of truth and power relations which shape human beings. Thus, in *Discipline and Punish* we find the claim that:

... discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion... it establishes calculated distributions... It must master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organised multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from them and which form a resistance to power that

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\(^{26}\) Foucault, "Truth and Power", p. 133.
wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions—anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions. 27

This holds true both for the disciplining of political subjects by the state and, especially, for the shaping and controlling of human actions and self-determination in the face of a modern power/knowledge nexus "that insidiously objectifies those on whom it is applied"28. For Foucault, the political questions of modernity are not about how to control the power of the State, but how one can analyse the ways in which power and truth operate to produce these relations. This, Foucault argues, takes one beyond the limits of the State. Foucault talks of the need for "subversive recodifications of power relations" and claims "that one can perfectly well conceive of revolutions which leave essentially untouched the power relations which form the basis for the functioning of the State"29. These struggles are painted in Clausewitzian terms by Foucault; he suggests that in the face of modern understandings of existence the cause of human freedom is losing a war that is largely hidden from us.

This stance is continued through to the final works- the History of Sexuality and the late interviews and essays, of which perhaps What is Enlightenment? stands pre-eminent. Foucault talks in these works of ethics as techniques and care of the self. In his 1983 lectures at the Collège de France and Berkeley he links his own analyses of truth to parrhésia, the Socratic practice of truth-telling30. Further, in What is Enlightenment?, he compares his

27 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p. 219.
28 Ibid., p. 220.
30 On this see both Arnold Davidson "Ethics as ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought" and Paul Rabinow "Modern and counter-modern: Ethos and epoch in Heidegger and Foucault", both in G. Guizing (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Foucault (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
outlook to Kant's, and finds a common link in the concept of critique. Whereas Kant introduces the notion of critique in respect to a past in which reason was not sovereign, Foucault sees critique as motivated by the question "What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?"31. This, he argues, entails a refusal of what he sees as the "blackmail of the Enlightenment"32. For Foucault, the concept of critique applies equally to the action of universal and objectifying reason upon human being in the present as it does to the religious or feudal rationalities of the past.

A position has now been reached where Foucault's various thoughts can be marshalled together in order to provide an account of his treatment of the understanding of human being and the political implications which follow from it. In doing so, I will also provide a comparison with Heidegger's thought.

Foucault, like Heidegger, starts by challenging modern and Enlightenment approaches to the understanding of human being and experience. Also along with Heidegger, Foucault presents a critique of the notion of certitude which underlies modern understandings of truth and knowledge, particularly when applied to the understanding of human being. Both thinkers find that the fundamental philosophical conceptions of human being prevalent in modernity, from Descartes to Kant and beyond, are internally incoherent. Foucault and Heidegger also concur that the Enlightenment, and post-Enlightenment, conception of knowledge as objective certitude is partial, at best, and inappropriate when applied to the understanding of human being.

31 Michel Foucault (ed. Paul Rabinow), "What is Enlightenment?" in The Foucault Reader, p. 34.
32 Ibid., p. 42.
The two thinkers, however, part company in their responses to the metaphysics of the subject-Object distinction. Foucault's criticism of Heidegger, as was seen above in the discussion of his section 'The Retreat and Return of the Origin', is that the latter retains, in his emphasis on the history of Being, the impulse to foundational objectivism. Habermas picks this out as a particular problem for Foucault in the light of the general proximity of Foucault's early works to Heidegger; for Habermas the Foucauldian concept of an *episteme* is instantly rendered problematic. I will have occasion to return to the overarching arguments about Foucault's relativism below, but the issue at hand is that Foucault believes the motivations which underpin his analyses lie elsewhere.

Foucault believes that the thrust of his work can be distinguished from Heidegger's, and to some extent from his own early thought, by his greater awareness in avoiding relapsing into the objectivism found in the tradition. This means that Foucault has to find a basis other than unchanging principle or law-like truth for his work; he believes this is to be found in his genealogical analysis of power. The implication is twofold; firstly, this will provide a clearer understanding of the nature of truth and, secondly, it will demonstrate the errors of previous understandings. This will be liberating, both ethically and politically, for human beings. To this end, Foucault talks of the genealogical interpretation of his work- the unmasking of the way that power forms truth- as ethical.

This is, as Foucault readily acknowledges, a position heavily influenced by Nietzsche; a point which will again become important

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33 See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 267.
in the consideration of the overall coherence of Foucault's position below. For now, however, two points are of particular importance. Firstly, Foucault reinterprets his previous work as a build-up to the genealogical project of unmasking how the truths of the present are based on historical nexuses of power. Secondly, Foucault is at pains to point out he is not offering a more objective foundation or alternative set of epistemological or moral principles with which to understand the world. Rather, he suggests, his work provides a set of strategic tools for understanding and furthering the cause of human being and freedom: it is not a privileged truth that underpins his work, but an ethos.

This is perforce a whistle-stop account of Foucault's work and development. My aim has been to show that there are common themes that run throughout Foucault's treatment of his basic concepts of truth, knowledge, power and the subject which themselves are indexed to a fairly consistent (within the context of his own oeuvre) conception of human freedom and its importance. The next step is to analyse how Foucault conceives of human freedom, and the ethical and political inferences he draws from it.

1.3.2 Human Freedom, Genealogy and Power/Knowledge

It is clear that Foucault, whilst highly critical of morality, believes strongly in the ethical value of human freedom. Thus, although Foucault is suspicious of traditional 'objective' understandings or moral images of 'Man', his interest remains, nevertheless, focused on human action. Thus, Foucault in What is Enlightenment? reflects upon what a mature approach to philosophy would look like; it...
will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom. 34

This interpretation of Foucault's work allows two important conclusions to be drawn about how he conceives of freedom. Firstly, he conceives of freedom as a facet of human relationships and subjects. Foucault claims to have no organising principle or founding lens through which history needs to be understood. He offers, therefore, no ontology underpinning human action and understanding, but an interest in the limits and structures of human actions in particular contexts. Thus, where Heidegger talks of an essence of Man in relation to the history of Being, Foucault focuses instead on the "undefined" work of human freedom. The evaluation of any particular account or institution is not indexed to an essential role for Man, but to the effects it has on the shape of human freedom. For Foucault, this does not entail that one ceases to be concerned with the Subject—quite the opposite: "It is through revolt that subjectivity... introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life"35. Foucault views freedom as a facet of the actions and relationships of subjects. This, as has been discussed, is in contrast to Heidegger's conception of freedom which is a facet not of man's relation to man, but of Man to Being36. Hubert Dreyfus usefully puts the contrast between the two in the

34 Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", p. 35. Emphasis my own.
36 See my previous Chapter "Heidegger and the Political", pp. 132, 151-153, and esp. 147. Note, however, that I am not following Foucault's understanding of Being in Heidegger's work, as Foucault does, as objective.
following terms: "Foucault is not interested in how things show up but exclusively in people's actions"\textsuperscript{37}. Foucault does not seek to overcome the notion of the Subject by providing a new set of poles with which to frame the Subject-object division; rather he aims to provide a historical perspective which reinvigorates the understanding of the practices that have produced modern subjectivity.

At this stage it might appear that the second aspect of Foucault's conception of the character of freedom- that it is both undefined and nonteleological- might lead him close to the theories of the early Sartre. There are, however, key differences. Foucault does not aim to render a theory of the essential nature or ontological foundations of subjectivity; he is opposed to the anthropological assumptions inherent in even the most minimalist existential account. The subject, in Foucault's work, cannot be understood in terms of basic structures of consciousness; rather, the philosophy of consciousness itself must be understood in the light of the power structures prevalent at the time. This original disagreement between the two- Foucault sees no worth in the attempt to establish outside of historical analysis what man is really like- leads to an equally fundamental different conception of freedom.

For Sartre, as was seen in the previous Chapter, freedom is in the essence of human being. It may be denied but not escaped. Foucault, in marked contrast, has no theory with which to pronounce the inevitability of human freedom. Rather, his approach, which find its roots in Nietzsche and Heidegger's hermeneutics of suspicion, rejects the viability of a theory which

seeks the 'truth' of human being without an awareness of the contextual and historical contingency of any such search. Thus, in contrast to Sartre's picture of the individual framed in terms of Bad Faith and authenticity, Foucault claims that the work of human freedom is, and must be undefined.

Like Heidegger, Foucault extends a critique of the modern understanding of Man- in Foucault's case focusing on the human sciences- to an examination of the bases upon which any attempt to understand human being must stand. Also with Heidegger, and pace Sartre, Foucault rejects the philosophy of consciousness as the ultimate or original basis for any understanding of existence. Foucault claims, however, that what is called for is not a history of Being which surpasses any reference to the Subject, but an understanding of how power constitutes the Subject. For Foucault this involves an examination of how subjects are currently formed which requires an examination of intellectual, institutional and physical discourses. In doing so, Foucault warns of the dangers of reinscribing the impulse to objectivity of which he is critical through a "theologization of man, the redescent of God on earth"38.

1.3.3 Foucault's Ethical and Political Conclusions

Thus, in contrast to Sartre's work, Foucault might be thought of as concerned less with the description of freedom than with the conditions of, and for, liberty and liberation. Foucault did not wish to be described as a philosopher but designated his chair at the Collège de France as in the 'History of Systems of Thought'. He does not, as both Heidegger and Sartre attempt to do, offer an explicit theory of how human being ought to be understood. Rather,

38 Bernauer and Mahon, "The Ethics of Michel Foucault", p. 152: the comment was made in correspondence with Sartre.
he offers critical analyses which problematicize existing 'truths', coupled with the enunciation of an ethos which values resistance. Following Foucault's own claims, Jon Simons characterises Foucault's work as a whole as a "transgressive work on limits".

Foucault does not, therefore, offer a new theory of the Subject but a set of analyses as to how any particular understanding of the Subject comes about. This, ultimately, is an account of the relationship between power and truth to which I return below. Given this analysis, it is futile to look to Foucault's work for a clearly defined set of ethical and political values correlated to the 'truth' of a particular conception of the Subject. Rather, one frequently has to index Foucault's ethical and political claims to what Connolly calls an 'ethical sensibility'.

There are, I argue, two distinct moments worth distilling from Foucault's position as described so far. The first is a Heideggerean suspicion of the constructs and accretions of modernity, particularly of the instrumental conception of the self. Foucault's analyses, it should be noted, range more widely than (although not necessarily at odds with) Heidegger's when looking at how these conceptions are embodied. The second moment, arising in part from Foucault's scepticism about Heidegger's success in escaping the objectifying impulse, is Foucault's attempt to adumbrate an approach with which human beings can revolt against traditional (and contemporary) understandings of themselves.

In both cases, Foucault's account is informed and motivated by his belief in the value of human liberation. For Foucault, genealogy, as the exposition of the relationship between power and

truth, is ethical in two ways: it allows the subject to become
liberated from the received wisdom and practices of their society,
and allows for what Foucault calls "rapport à soi"40, the ethical
relationship with oneself on aesthetic terms of self-creation.

If human freedom and the dispelling of the illusion of
rationalist claims to objectivity are the values that underpin
Foucault's position, what implications does he himself draw for
ethical and political practice? Again, Foucault's refusal to give a
positive image of the self or society means one cannot derive hard
principles or a moral code from Foucault's work: this has, in turn,
made him susceptible to being 'claimed' by many, often opposed,
camps. The Foucauldian ethos has been called on to support causes
from liberal individualism to communal, if minority, solidarity41.
What can be said, however, is that although he does not privilege
one conception of the subject, Foucault's analyses emphasise
certain themes or moments of subjectivity.

The first is an individualism. Foucault's suspicion of received
moral codes and modern self-understandings frequently entails a
Nietzschean moment in which the individual distances himself
from the practices and wisdom of others. Foucault, however, does
not elevate an isolationist conception of the will to power as
Nietzsche does. Since the individual, volitional subject is no less a
creation of contingent historical power than any other, it is, as an
identity no more privileged or true than any other. There is,
therefore, for Foucault no necessary atomism in the project of
self-creation which he espouses. Arnold Davidson, in this respect,
shows how Foucault's treatment of the Ancients in developing his

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40 Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics", p. 352. Italics in original.
41 See, for example, the collection of essays in Barry, Osborne and Rose (eds.) Foucault and Political
Reason.
conception of 'care of the self' demonstrates a wariness of identifying the self with the "modern understanding of subjectivity" which "shrinks the world to the size of oneself". As Foucault's suspicion of ossified and objectified identity leads him to an individualism, so, Davidson reports, it lead him to a concern that "the ancient principle 'Know thyself' had obscured, at least for us moderns, the similarly ancient requirements that we occupy ourselves with ourselves, that we care for ourselves". Thus in addition to individualism, one finds a commitment to solidarity and community in pursuing otherness and difference.

Foucault's point— that the construction of the subject is not to be understood in universalist terms which persist ahistorically—means that there is equally no one 'right' or true image of intersubjectivity. What one can say, however, in contrast to Heidegger's account, is that Foucault's retention of subjectivity as a focus means that intersubjectivity is at least an issue for him. Foucault is also less predisposed to view individual human beings, and their relations to each other, as constituent parts of das Volk, or in the confrontational, individualistic terms of the early Sartre. At the same time, however, Foucault's deliberately amorphous account of the subject means he does not offer a concrete theory of the relations between human beings but an account of the tools one would use in analysing them.

Similarly, Foucault's treatments of politics and political theory are either contained within localised histories or unclear.

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42 Arnold Davidson, "Ethics as ascetics", p. 131, 129.
43 Ibid., p. 134.
44 Bernauer and Mahon make this point also, in their essay (cited above) "The Ethics of Michel Foucault", see p. 156. It is also the topic of Mark Bevir's "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy" where he frames the distinction, as his title suggests, both more severely and speculatively.
Foucault does not, as he views it, seek to build a politics which responds to either the truth of Being or the truth of the nature of Subjectivity, since both are contingent and historical formations of power. Nevertheless, as one can distinguish proclivities towards particular approaches to Subjectivity in Foucault's work, the same is true of his approach to politics. In addition to extrapolating from the 'spirit' of Foucault's sociological analyses and the many suggestive comments Foucault made in interviews and on the political situations of his day, one can also turn to the direct treatments of politics and political theory found in the lectures and essays "Politics and Reason", "On Power" and "The Subject and Power".

Foucault opens his essay "The Subject and Power" with one of his periodic summations of the thrust of his work up to that point. After emphasising once more that his work is "neither a theory nor a methodology", he claims that "[m]y objective... has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. My work has dealt with [...] modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects."48.

In his Stanford lectures (published as 'Politics and Reason'), Foucault turns his attention to politics, reason and the state. In the lectures Foucault aims to account for what he takes to be the two opposing tendencies in modern political discourses; centralisation and individuation. Foucault outlines what he takes to be the Ancient Western understanding of politics- as centred around, and limited by, either a knowable and accessible conception

46 His defence, for example, of the rights of Boat People and his defence of sexual freedom.
47 The first two can be found in The Foucault Reader, the latter in Dreyfus and Rabinow's Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982). "Politics and Reason" is the text of Foucault's 1979 Stanford lectures.
48 Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power" in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, p. 208.
of the Good life or, later, by the edicts and power of the prince. In both cases (one might be termed metaphysical and the other strategic\textsuperscript{49}), Foucault argues that political power remains controlled by "divine, natural, or human laws"\textsuperscript{50}. In contrast, he argues, a new sort of political power and mechanism of control arises from Machiavelli's focus on the techniques and strategies of the prince: Foucault calls this new phenomenon "reason of the state"\textsuperscript{51}.

For Foucault what is distinctive about reason of the state is that the art of governing ceases to be about the pursuit of the Good life or the maintenance of the power of the prince, but produces a new aim- "to reinforce the state itself"\textsuperscript{52}. The new goal, the self-maintenance of the state, demands an increase in the strength of the state (to hold off threats from internal and external sources) over an indefinite period of time. Thus, rather than the explicit political theories of Aristotle and Christianity or the strategic advice to the prince offered by Machiavelli, Foucault claims that the most important expressions of political rationality are the 'police' manuals that appear from the seventeenth century onwards. By 'police' Foucault means everything that attempts to make subjects compliant with the interests of the state: whether "applied policies (such as cameralism or mercantilism), or as subjects to be taught (the German \textit{Polizeiwissenschaft}... the title under which the science of administration was taught in Germany)"\textsuperscript{53}.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{49} The terms used by Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{50} Foucault, "Politics and Reason", p. 77.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 76.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 76.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 79-80.
\end{flushright}
Divorced from a public and shared conception of the Good or the interests of a particular prince, the 'policing' of the state becomes an insidious and all-pervading mechanism of control, shaping every aspect of its citizens' lives. Through an examination of some writings on these topics, Foucault aims to show how the interests of subjects have been harnessed to the interests of the state. Thus land becomes territory, people become populations, schools become mechanisms for control, and the happiness, religion and morality of the citizens' lives are ordered by the need of the state to perpetuate itself.

Towards the end of the lecture Foucault makes a crucial distinction. Power is not to be identified with coercive force, but can rather only be exercised on the free individual:

A man who is chained up and beaten is subject to force being exerted over him. Not power. But if he can be induced to speak, when his ultimate recourse could have been to hold his tongue, preferring death, then he has been caused to behave in a certain way. His freedom has been subjected to power. He has been submitted to government. If an individual can remain free, however little his freedom may be, power can subject him to government. There is no power without potential refusal or revolt. 54

The reason of the state, with all its rationalisations, is not, therefore explicitly forceful or coercive. Instead, the true nature of the power of political rationality is to mould and produce the subject in a way that delimits the possibilities open to realisation by the individual. To truly pursue the cause of human freedom it is not simply violence or force that need to be questioned but the underlying tenets of political reason: individualisation and totalization. In other words, Foucault is arguing that the cause of

human freedom requires an attention not just to the centralised and centralising state apparatus but also to the way that the individual subject is formed. It is the conjunction of the two, rather than the domination of the one by the other, that Foucault takes to be the central problem facing any critique of political rationality.

At this point, three things are worth noting. Firstly, Foucault's treatment of politics and political theory is centred around the genealogical approach, itself motivated by an ethos that has at its heart the value of human freedom. Secondly, his analyses of power lead him to see the decisive political question as framed not in terms of Vollrath's distinction between das Politische and die Politik\(^55\), but in terms of Von Justi's distinction between die Politik (the perpetuation and defence of the state) and Polizei (the disciplinary mechanisms of the state)\(^56\). Foucault, therefore, shares with Heidegger the belief that it is an the concreting of the rationalist perspective that is the dominant issue of the politics of modernity. In contrast to Heidegger, however, Foucault does not attribute this directly to humanist understandings of the world. Thus, whereas Heidegger, insofar as he has a political interest at all, seeks to rethink the notion of the political in terms of the antihumanistic conception of the sendings of Being, Foucault seeks ways of understanding and controlling political rationality in order to protect human freedom. Thirdly, therefore, this leaves Foucault free (pace Heidegger) to identify his own concerns- the limiting of political rationality conceived of in terms of the reason of state- as intersecting with liberalism\(^57\).

\(^55\) See my Chapter "Heidegger and the Political, p. 119.
\(^56\) Foucault, "Politics and Reason", p. 82.
\(^57\) See Michel Foucault, "Knowledge, Space, Power" in The Foucault Reader, p. 242. See also Barry, Osborne and Rose's editorial introduction to Foucault and Political Reason and Jon Simons, Foucault and the Political, p. 56-9 for other considerations of Foucault's relation to liberalism.
Foucault considers liberalism as sharing his basic drive towards establishing a "principle of limitation that applies to governmental actions". He shares with Mill a support for nonconformity. It is clear, however, that he departs from traditional forms of liberalism in arguing that the desire to limit government cannot be built around the image of the universal rights-bearing and autonomous subject. Foucault's work and the concept of freedom with which he operates identify precisely that entity as one of the means by which governmental power itself can be expressed and exercised, through the surreptitious disciplinary mechanisms with which Foucault is occupied. Foucault argues that the true ethical and political question is not concerned with determining the principle as to how the state ought to be limited in relation to an universal conception of the subject or citizen. Hence, the question is the one that Foucault considers fundamental in the analysis of society in general: to see how political technologies, broadly conceived as above, contribute to the constitution of the self as subject.

Insofar as Foucault offers a moral or political argument, rather than a series of critical images, it is related to the refusal of the autonomous Subject as the starting point for one's political institutions or goals. In this respect is useful to examine how Foucault's similarities with, and differences from, Heidegger illuminate his work as political theory.

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58 Michel Foucault, "Knowledge, Space, Power", p. 242.
59 An observation also made by Jon Simons, Foucault and the Political, p. 116-117.
1.3.4 Foucault's Political Conclusions in Comparison with Heidegger

As I remarked above, Foucault shares Heidegger's subordination of political theory to a more general question of how to approach the understanding of human being. Foucault follows Heidegger in bypassing a distinctly political consideration in favour of what he takes to be a more fundamental (or disillusioned) approach- "I have never tried to analyze anything whatsoever from the point of view of politics, but always to ask politics what it had to say about the problems with which it was confronted"\(^{60}\). These problems, in Foucault's eyes, are concerned with power and the subject.

This leads Foucault's pronouncements on politics and political theory to mirror Heidegger's at times. Foucault sees his work as going through the traditional, and rather peripheral questions of politics to a more basic analysis. Hence, Foucault rejects the question of sovereignty as of real political importance:

... political theory has never ceased to be obsessed with the person of the sovereign... what we need, however, is a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty, nor therefore around the problems of law and prohibition. We need to cut off the King's head: in political theory that has still to be done. \(^{61}\)

Heidegger, it will be recalled, is similarly dismissive of law, the state or sovereignty in understanding politics, preferring instead to approach political questions with the motifs of \textit{poiesis} and the Greek \textit{polis}, understood as the place where understandings of Being are collectively gathered\(^{62}\).

\(^{60}\) Michel Foucault, "Polemics, Politics and Problemizations: An Interview" in \textit{The Foucault Reader}, p. 385.
\(^{61}\) Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power", p. 121.
\(^{62}\) On this see my Chapter 'Heidegger and the Political', section 1.3, pp. 123-129.
Similarly, Foucault rejects what he takes as the traditional political choice between liberalism and socialism. In attempting to control "nascent state rationality", he claims that "[o]pposing the individual and his interests to it is just as hazardous as opposing it with the community and its requirements"63. Again, this should call to mind Heidegger's own rejection of - or indifference to- the choice between the "I" or "We" subject as the basic unit of political understanding or value64.

Despite sharing Heidegger's subordination of the political to what he takes to be more fundamental questions, Foucault disavows anything which he believes amounts to a resurrection of objectivism. This refusal, in Foucault's view, applies equally to the traditional universal subject of liberal thought or the sendings of Being. Foucault will not, and cannot, draw on anything beyond his reliance upon the instruments of genealogy and the value of human liberation which he takes them to defend.

It has been claimed by some thinkers that given Foucault's refusal to give conventional 'grounds' to support his radical critique of existing political rationality "he thus forecloses the possibility of other institutions taking its place"65. This specific criticism arises from a more fundamental point, repeated by many writers, that Foucault's position is incoherent as a whole. Foucault's conception of genealogy as the "history of the present"66 and his associated accounts of truth and human being are all attacked as being marked, in the words of Charles Taylor, by

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63 Michel Foucault, "Politics and Reason", p. 84.
64 See Heidegger (tr. Lovitt), "The Age of the World Picture", pp. 132-3., and the discussion of this in my Chapter 'Heidegger and the Political', p. 138.
65 From Paul Rabinow's Introduction to "Politics and Reason", p. 57.
66 Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punishment, p. 31.
"confusion and contradiction... linked with the impossible attempt to stand nowhere".67

What Taylor is pointing to is the tension or contradiction between Foucault's conception of "truth as imposed order" and the application of the genealogical method- as if true- across historical epochs. This tension is expressed in different ways by different thinkers. Jon Simons sees Foucault as straddling the Kunderan-inspired poles of a life of unbearable heaviness in which experience appears as "entirely bound to a purpose that is experienced as an 'overriding necessity'", and a life of unbearable lightness in which "[t]o be devoid of purpose is to be constrained by no limitations".69 Dreyfus and Rabinow characterise Foucault's position in relation to the terms of structuralism and hermeneutics, Connolly contrasts the maintenance of an identity of generosity with the recognition of difference upon which this identity rests. These thinkers, who are linked by their sympathy for Foucault, defend him from accusations that the tensions in his work amount to contradictions by suggesting that Foucault is resorting to irony or strategies necessary in exposing the subjugations of power.

At a philosophical level these defences do not impress Foucault's critics. Thus Taylor claims that Foucault "adopts a Nietzschean-derived stance of neutrality between the different historical systems of power, and thus seems to neutralise the

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69 Jon Simons, Foucault and the political, p. 3.
evaluations that arise out of his analyses"70. Similarly, discussing how Foucault can distinguish particular instances of power and oppose them without an implicit anthropocentrism of the sort he criticises, Habermas offers an alternative expression of Taylor's objections, arguing that "Foucault only gains this basis by not thinking genealogically when it comes to his own genealogical historiography and by rendering unrecognizable the derivation of this transcendental-historicist concept of power"71.

The criticism is a direct one. However much Foucault, or his supporters, identify with an ethos of human liberation, the claim is that Foucault's account and genealogical analysis can provide neither a philosophical defence of that stance nor the means to support it. In considering these criticisms of Foucault I turn now to the debate in which they are presented between Charles Taylor and William E. Connolly. There are two reasons for placing my focus here. Firstly, Connolly defends Foucault's work against Taylor's charges of incoherence at some length. Secondly, in relation to the criticism mentioned earlier, Connolly's defence comprises part of a wider project in which he aims to develop specifically political conclusions from a Foucauldian perspective.

Section 2) Connolly's Adoption of Foucault

2.1. Connolly's Account of Foucault's Ethico-Political Spirituality

Connolly is very sympathetic to what he takes to be Foucault's message. There are, as above, two particularly interesting and associated parts to Connolly's work. The first is his dialogue with

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70 Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth", p. 162.
71 Jürgen Habermas, Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 269.
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Taylor about the coherence of Foucault's conception of truth, initiated by Taylor's 1984 article "Foucault on Freedom and Truth". The second, the building of a political theory from that account is to be found throughout his work, but culminates in his book *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* and the 1993 essay "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault". My analysis starts with this second, constructive effort. My consideration of Connolly's concept of truth accompanies a similar consideration of Foucault in my concluding section.

In his 1993 article Connolly professes to be, tellingly, of the "Foucauldian faith". He states his aim, to "fill out" Foucault through a dialogue with Nietzsche- one of Foucault's two dominant influences- until he reaches a perspective, as he puts it, that he can endorse. Insofar as this goes beyond Foucault's own work he terms his position "Fou-connoism". Connolly then applies this 'ethical sensibility' to suggest a "political spirituality" that culminates in the identification of three political themes which Connolly attributes to a Foucauldian ethico-political spirit.

The first step is to note that Connolly's introduction of Nietzsche is not intended to, and does not, compromise Foucault's position but complements it. Connolly uses Nietzsche to 'fill out' the gaps in Foucault's ethical stance, illustrating how Foucauldian genealogy, employed in the 'care of the self', pulls on the Nietzschean values of agonistic respect and a questioning of established identities. For Connolly, behind Foucauldian genealogy

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72 See footnote 67.
74 William E. Connolly, "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault".
75 Ibid., p. 369.
76 Ibid., p. 368.
77 Ibid., p. 368.
lies the insight that identity is always maintained in relation to difference or otherness. In *Identity/Difference* Connolly recalls how the early Foucault made these points in relation to sanity and madness, sickness and health. In the later Foucault, this becomes enshrined in the notion that truth and knowledge are always the products of power.

Connolly recognises that whilst Foucault might utilise the Nietzschean "notion of truth as imposed order," he does not take with it the Nietzschean concept of 'life' or 'will to power' as a straightforward regulative ideal. In this case, Connolly thinks, Foucault fills out Nietzsche. 'Life', when transferred from Nietzsche's work into Foucault's becomes not the celebration of a particular identity but a refusal to submit to ressentiment. Hence, Connolly argues, the Nietzschean conception of the power of 'life' as expressed in Foucault should be read not as providing a new Law, object or principle but as an "indispensable, nonfixable marker." Connolly argues that Foucault's diagnosis of the impossibility of transcendental and absolute identity is perfectly consistent with a Nietzschean commitment to celebrating the contingency of one's identity.

Connolly reads Foucault's basic assertion that "Nothing is fundamental" as expressing the claim that the stuff of Being is not ingrained with a logic, and cannot therefore be captured by an ontology simply of identity. In this alogical universe (he calls Foucault's account ontalogy), Connolly sees no essentialism in the valuing of what he calls a 'generous sensibility'. Rather, Connolly

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80 See Connolly, "Beyond Good and Evil", p. 378.
81 Ibid., p. 371.
82 Ibid., p. 377.
views it as the right response. Thus, Connolly claims, "[t]he point is to ward off the violence of transcendental narcissism... [t]he goal is modify an already contingent self... so that you are better able to ward off the demand to confirm transcendentally what you are contingently"\textsuperscript{83}.

It is against this realisation, of the contingency of identity that Connolly outlines Foucault's non-essentialist ethical sensibility. Once we have realised the contingency of existence, "[g]enealogical analyses that disturb the sense of ontological necessity" and a valuing of the "active cultivation of the capacity to subdue resentment"\textsuperscript{84} become not claims to truth but ethical and 'reasonable' strategic reactions. Further, once one allows this, Connolly argues that Foucault's understanding of the contingency of identity allows him to put the refusal of resentment "on a political register"\textsuperscript{85}. Unhampered by the Nietzschean fascination with the will of the individual or Heidegger's notion of Being\textsuperscript{86}, Connolly supports Foucault's valuing of a "generous sensibility that informs interpretations of what you are and are not and infuses the relations you establish with those differences through which your identity is defined"\textsuperscript{87}. This understanding of intersubjectivity has an associated political set of values: "[e]xplorations of new possibilities in social relations opened up by genealogy, particularly those that enable a larger variety of identities to coexist in relations of 'studied indifference' on some occasions, alliance on others, and agonistic respect during periods of rivalry and contestation"\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 373. Italics in original.  
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 367.  
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p. 378.  
\textsuperscript{86} In this latter instance, as I argue below, I think Foucault crucially misunderstands Heidegger.  
\textsuperscript{87} Connolly, "Beyond Good and Evil", p. 367.  
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 367-8.
2.2 Connolly's Foundations and Conclusions

Connolly's argument can be filleted as follows. He follows Foucault in rejecting Enlightenment (and Heidegger's 89) theories of being as wrongly appealing to transcendental criteria of necessity in thinking about identity. For Connolly the crucial aspect of identity is that it is contingent and historical. The constant danger, he argues, is the temptation to conceive of one's identity as if it was objective or necessary, and thus to overlook or accept the suppression and eradication of otherness and difference.

In the absence of "a highest law, nature, or principle [that] can be brought into full presence; [or] the confidence that there is a fundamental law or purpose governing existence that can be more closely approximated in life through hermeneutic piety" 90, Connolly argues we must realise the need to develop an ethically generous sensibility. Hence our moral and political relationships will cease to be concerned with the maintenance of our identities through the suppression of difference and violence against others.

These changes, Connolly thinks, will follow from our realisation (and adoption) of the irony resulting from an awareness of the paradox in the relation of identity to difference. Connolly puts it thus:

[The paradoxical element in the relation of identity to difference is that we cannot dispense with personal and collective identities, but the multiple drives to stamp truth upon these identities function to convert differences into otherness and otherness into scapegoats created and maintained to secure the appearance of a true identity. To

89 That this is a fundamental misreading of Heidegger I argue later. See especially in this regard Heidegger's "On the Principle of Identity" (tr. Stambaugh) in Identity and Difference (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).
90 Connolly, "Beyond Good and Evil", p. 386, fn. 21.
possess a true identity is to be false to difference, while to be true to difference is to sacrifice the promise of a true identity. 91

The giving up of the drive to ontological certitude that this entails, Connolly thinks, cultivates an ironical relationship to our selves. This irony in turn entails a moment of solidarity in which one realises that one is equal with everyone else in that there is no transcendental guarantor of any claim to necessity or superiority for one's identity. Hence, Connolly claims:

One may live one's own identity in a more ironic, humorous way, laughing occasionally at one's more ridiculous predispositions and laughing too at the predisposition to universalize an impulse simply because it is one's own... Laughing in a way that disrupts this persistent link between ethical conviction and self-reassurance... Such laughter counters and subverts a Hobbesian sense of humor, where I show myself to be ahead and you to be behind 92

The irony involved in the realisation of the contingency of one's own identity is applicable to those around one, and the relationships one has with others. This in turn means there is no drive to create and suppress 'scapegoats' such as exists in the politics of transcendental identity. Moral and political relations will thus be characterised, Connolly argues, by an acceptance of 'agonistic respect' for difference and others.

Connolly believes that these tendencies are allied to an "ethos of democracy"93 which entails an attachment to certain political practices. Hence, Connolly suggests that the ambiguity and equality of identity call for a democratic state in which "[i]ts role

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91 Connolly, Identity/Difference, p. 67.
92 Ibid., p. 181.
93 Connolly, "Beyond Good and Evil", p. 379.
as an instrument of rule and governance is balanced and countered by its logic as a medium for the periodic disturbance and denaturalization of settled identities and sedimented conventions."94 Connolly also argues for a limit to the monopoly of states as the site of political rights and duties and an associated "politicization of nonstatist global movements"95.

I will say little about the details of these institutional and 'practical' constructions. I want instead to focus on the arguments with which Connolly supports these recommendations. In this respect one finds a crucial declaration in Connolly's *identity/Difference*. Having argued that he and Foucault move in a world defined by the paradox of identity, Connolly argues that both their positions ought to be seen as primarily characterised by disruptive strategies. Connolly actively identifies his work with theorists who are characterised by what I called earlier a hermeneutics of suspicion and argues for those who seek to get by without transcendent, objectified Truth. Connolly anticipates (or perhaps more properly reflects on) those who are scandalised by what they see as the promotion of social or political strategies of liberation over the standards of consistency and philosophical rigour:

Critics treat the quest by Nietzsche, Heidegger and Foucault to expose paradoxes in the relation of identity to difference as expressions of incoherence or self-contradiction or amoralism in their thought... Critics translate the code of paradox into the charge of incoherence and easily enough convict opponents of the sin they have defined. 96

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94 Ibid., p. 379.
95 Ibid., p. 380.
I want to conclude my considerations of Connolly and Foucault's work by raising three considerations. Firstly, does Connolly's attempt to stave off those—particularly Taylor—who charge Foucault's position with incoherence succeed? Secondly, are Taylor and Foucault right to identify their conceptions of critique with Heideggerean suspicion—conceived of as the only partially successful attempt to encode otherness or difference? I argue this crucially misunderstands Heidegger, and in the light of this will provide, thirdly, an evaluation of the political value of Foucault and Connolly's work.

Section 3) Foucault and Connolly on Truth and Liberation

3.1 Taylor on Foucault and Connolly on Truth

As has been seen above, Connolly attempts to defend Foucault against Taylor's charges of incoherence. Given the non-logomorphic nature of the world, Connolly argues, both he and Foucault should not be judged by the standards of non-contradiction that are emblematic of the very positions they criticize.

Taylor is dismissive of this plea and the grounds (or lack of them) from which it is made. This "evasion" amounts to "confusion defended itself with confusion". Taylor starts by accepting that insomuch as theories of truth operate as "putative representations of an independent reality" they are, as epistemologies, best understood as attempts to secure particular ways of Being against question. Further, he accepts both that this may include force in

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98 Ibid., p. 377.
order to impress a "form onto 'that which was not designed to receive it' "\(^99\) and that one's "opponent may have to use another language to make his or her case"\(^{100}\). Taylor is clear, however, that this does not extend to allowing Foucault or Connolly to determine when and when not to "stick to a straight line of noncontradictory argument"\(^{101}\).

This is because, Taylor argues, one cannot "envisage liberating transformations \textit{within} a regime"\(^{102}\) or against any particular conception or regime of truth without some sort of (at least implied) theory of truth. Thus Taylor asks of Foucault and Connolly's work: "Are they not put forward as true?"\(^{103}\). Whilst agreeing that theories of truth which demand a logomorphic structure to the world are indefensible, this is not entailed by questions concerned with the "interpretations of human life by which we live"\(^{104}\).

Foucault and Connolly miss this distinction, between an underlying onto-logical structure of the world, and a logic informing human self-interpretations, asserts Taylor. It is a mistake to link the 'violence' of the first with the actual violence against the order of persons in the latter. For Taylor, human self-interpretations must be governed by a conception of truth if they are to have any force at all. This realisation, Taylor argues, allows one to see Foucault and Connolly caught on the horns of a dilemma from which irony will not be an escape.

\(^{99}\) Ibid., p. 377. The internal quote is from Connolly.
\(^{100}\) Ibid., p. 380.
\(^{101}\) Ibid., p. 381.
\(^{103}\) Charles Taylor, "Connolly, Foucault and Truth", p. 378.
\(^{104}\) Ibid., p. 380.
Taylor argues that truth is to be understood not as a claim to absolute certainty guaranteed by a transcendental logic, but as the need for human beings to operate some sort of discrimination between distorted and less distorted understandings. Thus, he claims, if Foucault or Connolly wish to render all conceptions of truth as equally distorted then, Taylor argues, without any notion of truth as other than imposition "there is no place left to stand." One may or may not sympathise with Foucault's political commitments, but his work offers no reason why the cause of liberation is to be considered superior to its opposite. If Foucault and Connolly wish instead to argue from the premise either of the value of liberation and revolution, or the paradox of identity and difference, then, Taylor argues, these can only rest on tacit claims to truth of the sort outlined above. In other words, Taylor demands an account from them of what is to count as a gain or a loss in our self-understandings; such an account must make reference to the truth of these understandings. Thus, Taylor asks, "in offering us a new way of reappropriating our history and in rescuing us from the supposed illusion that the issues of the deep self are somehow inescapable, what is Foucault laying open for us, if not a truth that frees us for self-making".

Hence, whilst proclaiming to find himself in sympathy with Foucault's basic ethical and political impulses to expose the 'denial of otherness', Taylor sees these as being without philosophical or practical support in Foucault's and Connolly's work. Insomuch as their ethical or political sentiments are coherent they rest on unexamined truth claims. It is at this point that Connolly and Foucault take refuge in 'irony' or 'strategies of disruption', yet Taylor argues, a more subtle understanding of truth as self-

105 Ibid., p. 383.
interpretation would allow them to see that it is at this point that "the real debate ought to start"\textsuperscript{107}. Considering this debate, over "what has been gained, and what lost, and what doors to otherness we have closed", Taylor professes exasperation with his perception that "the writer [Foucault] who has done so much to bring us to the threshold of a vital issue should have created one of the greatest obstacles to crossing it"\textsuperscript{108}.

Taylor's conclusion is clear. However much one agrees with the values Foucault and Connolly express at a moral or political level they offer no forceful argument for them: one's agreement or not is entirely contingent upon one sharing the detail of their avowedly aesthetic outlooks.

Applying Taylor's criticisms to Connolly one can see that the latter's support for democratic institutions and the fostering of agonistic respect- although one might feel them admirable- are not established in his work as responses to which one need be committed. One might argue, as Taylor does, that to seek to derive political commitments from an ethical stance of irony does, in fact, represents an attempt to be excused the need for coherence.

There is also a further set of questions about Connolly's political assertions. There is, in fact, no need to draw the political conclusions that Connolly does, even if one were to share his belief that the universe is 'really' fundamentally contingent. Even if one accepts, as Taylor does not, that there are no transcendent truths or features of the human condition, Connolly gives no reason as to why that ought to lead one to be modest of one's own identity, or respectful of others. In other words, it is

\textsuperscript{107} Charles Taylor, "Connolly, Foucault and Truth", p. 383.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p.383, 385.
not clear that my belief that all share my fundamental contingency will perforce lead to generosity or agonistic respect with regard to others instead of, say, an instrumentalist acquisitiveness. There may be pragmatic arguments to link my identification with the ontological predicament of others to an identification with an obligation to treat them a certain way but Connolly does not offer them. It is hard to see how any further appeal to Nietzsche would be of help here. Indeed, without some sort of transcendental moral guarantor of equality, which Connolly rules out, our stand in relation to each other might well resemble not the generous equals envisaged Connolly but the untrustworthy atheists feared by Locke. From this perspective it is hard to see how Connolly could develop an account of political legitimacy which takes account of intersubjective differences that extend beyond his own aesthetic vision.

As is seen in the next Chapter, Taylor's conception of truth and his associated readings of Foucault and Connolly, are less secure than he realises. What is established here, however, is that the Foucauldian ethos, as Connolly calls it, does not in itself ground an authoritative theory of politics. Before considering what does remain of value to the political theorist in the works of Connolly and Foucault, I want to develop this claim through an examination of the relationship borne by the latter to Heidegger.

3.2. Foucault and Heidegger

In The Order of Things, Foucault claims, as was seen earlier, to have avoided Heidegger's return to the objectification of a privileged identity; that of Being. Foucault finds Heidegger

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109 They might be more Hobbesian than Connolly would like!
important as a developer and conduit of Nietzschean unmasking, but sees him as failing to avoid the temptation to create another mask in its place. Specifically, Foucault thinks there is a move, in Heidegger's conception of Being and *Dasein*, to seek a return to the origin of Man.

I have argued previously\(^\text{110}\) against the objectivist and humanist interpretations of Heidegger's work: in any case Foucault's criticisms of Heidegger are not developed. As Gutting puts it, "Foucault's 'critique' is once again merely a matter of gratuitously denying the possibility of what the philosophers he is criticizing present as the ultimate achievement of their mode of analysis"\(^\text{111}\). I have already argued that Heidegger's hermeneutic of suspicion is symbiotically linked to his hermeneutic of everydayness. For Foucault to take the former without a simultaneous attention to its relation with the latter leads him to a vitiated understanding of both moments in Heidegger's work.

This is important for two reasons. Firstly, it allows Foucault, like Sartre, to read Heidegger as providing a less penetrating consideration of the subject-Object division than he in fact does. Secondly, this in turn means that Foucault misses a more fundamental similarity between himself and Heidegger: neither provide a satisfactory account of intersubjectivity or politics separate from their conceptions of agency or existence. Their failure to provide adequate grounds for considering these accounts legitimate means they are unable to support concerns with moral or political validity separated from more general concerns with meaning. Thus, in the fairly rare instances where politics becomes

\(^{110}\) See my previous Chapters 'Heidegger's Critique of Modernity' and 'Sartre: The Politics of Existential Freedom'.

\(^{111}\) Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*, p. 223.
of explicit interest to either Heidegger or Foucault they are largely unconcerned with questions of, say, a distinctly political authority.

3.3 Foucault, Connolly and Political Theory

Foucault and Connolly share and extend the critique of subjectivism found in Heidegger's work. They can be read as offering an exploration of human agency which is not structured by traditional modern understandings of the autonomous individual. What Charles Taylor points to, however, is that the nature of this exploration, when constructed in the languages of power alone, cannot serve as the basis for an alternative account of society and politics.

Foucault and Connolly both follow Heidegger in the attempt to overcome the philosophy of consciousness and the associated instrumental rationality which all see as characterising modernity. Both, however, fail to address the roots of Heidegger's political failings through the attempt to provide a politics of difference or otherness. In each case they do not address but share Heidegger's inability to articulate an intersubjective dimension which takes account of the differences which exist between agents. For both thinkers, therefore, legitimacy is not the product of, or indexed to, a political understanding of intersubjectivity. Instead their moral and political accounts depend on the persuasiveness (or otherwise) of truth claims which are either incoherent or privative.

Hence, although the content of their political commitments and pronouncements is less troubling than Heidegger's, it can be seen

112 For a reading of Foucault's work in this respect see Mark Bevir's "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy". By his own admission, Bevir attributes a rather more composed reading of Foucault on ethics and politics than is in fact to be found throughout the works as a whole.
that their failure to consider the question of intersubjective and political legitimacy puts them formally on the same footing. Foucault's belief in rebellion and liberation and Connolly's support of democratic and liberal institutions are as open to criticisms of aesthetic adventurism as Heidegger's refusal of these institutions, and embracing of Nazism. Connolly and Foucault's work provides a statement of moral and political values, but no arguments for considering these values, or any of their institutional implications, compelling. They neither establish the arrogance of theory per se nor lend theoretical support to the values they espouse. Thus Foucault and Connolly arguably succeed, as Heidegger does, in showing how political understandings can reflect and illuminate more general aspects of agency, but, also with Heidegger, these moments should be separated from their more ambitious, and less successful, efforts to offer a rethinking of the reason of the state or political theory in general.

I will now return to the arguments of Taylor by looking at how he uses Heidegger's work to develop both a theory of agency and of intersubjectivity.
Chapter 6: The Politics of Recognition: Charles Taylor

Introduction

Aims and Outlines

In my previous Chapters I have looked at Heidegger's critique of subjectivism and the instrumental rationalism that pervades modernity. Having argued that Heidegger's position rests on a double hermeneutic (of everydayness and suspicion) within which his philosophical terms must be situated, I suggested that his inability to articulate a notion of intersubjective difference means he is unable to provide a political theory. Further, I suggested, his attempts to politicise his philosophy in the absence of such an account leads to a recasting of his basic notions (fundamental ontology, Dasein, Being) into a political vernacular susceptible to the fascistic usage to which he puts them.

In the light of these claims I considered the attempts of Sartre, Foucault and Connolly to develop moral and political accounts that do not repeat Heidegger's failing. Sartre, I argued, does articulate an intersubjective dimension, but this success is bought at the cost of failing to address the depths of Heidegger's criticisms of the conceptions of agency which Sartre's Cartesian inspired humanism does not escape. Foucault and Connolly, I suggested, take on Heidegger's suspicion of the rationalist conception of agency but repeat his failure to offer an account of the relationships between agents that recognises the differences between them. In particular, Connolly's attempts to drive principles on which to found a political order from Foucault's truth analyses characterises social difference in terms of fundamental
features of agency. It is, rather, an account of intersubjective
difference, I argued, that is crucial to the development of any
account of political legitimacy. In the final analysis I suggested
that Foucault and Connolly's political claims are on a formal par,
though more palatable, with Heidegger's own philosophical
adventurism.

In this Chapter I look at the work of Charles Taylor. His work
seeks to develop a non-rationalist understanding of the nature of
human agency. For Taylor, the detached, epistemological Subject
needs to be replaced by a contextual perspective on agency; a task
he identifies as largely initiated in its modern form by Heidegger¹.
Further, Taylor explicitly aims to articulate an account of moral
and political relationships in intersubjective terms based on his
ontology of identity. He, like Heidegger, finds modern accounts of
these relationships unsatisfactory. My argument in this Chapter,
however, is that Taylor's strength in criticizing the modern
account of agency is not carried through into his own alternative
accounts of agency and intersubjectivity. These accounts, I argue,
are marked by Taylor's claim that the best account of moral and
political value draws on an ontology that makes reference to
preterhuman moral objects. I query this claim and, as a result,
Taylor's conclusion that a superior account of agency would
necessarily lead one to reject procedural liberalism. Ultimately, I
conclude that Taylor's thought does not, as it stands, lead to a
satisfactory account of political legitimacy.

To this end this Chapter is divided into four sections. Firstly, I
look at Taylor's ontological framework of agency. Secondly, I
provide an account of the moral and political conclusions that

¹ See Taylor's essay "Engaged agency and background in Heidegger". See also his essay "Heidegger, Language, and Ecology" in Dreyfus and Hall (eds.) _Heidegger: A Critical Reader._
Taylor draws from this account. My third section provides a critical analysis of these claims. A fourth and concluding section seeks, in the light of the previous three, to see how, in comparison with Heidegger's work, Taylor contributes to political theory.

Section 1) Taylor's Ontology of Agency

Taylor's treatment of agency and the moral and political dimensions of identity are spread throughout his oeuvre, from the writings on Hegel, to the essays contained within his Philosophical Papers, and, more recently, in "The Politics of Recognition." Taylor's concerns, however, find their basic foundation in his monumental Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. In the first part of his book he offers a moral ontology; a formal framework within which he thinks human beings must operate and understand themselves. The second part of the work attempts to provide an account of the content of the modern identity. It is to the ontology and method outlined in the first part of the book to which I will turn first.

1.1 Taylor's Introduction and Aims

Taylor's Sources of the Self reflects the dominant concern of his work, identified in the introduction to his collection of Philosophical Papers as "philosophical anthropology." With this focus comes a recurring theme: the impossibility of understanding human identity solely on the model of epistemological knowledge.

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found in the 'natural sciences'. Taylor characterises his work as a search for "richer languages" with which to understand ourselves; these languages will reflect the "inextricably intertwined themes" of "selfhood and the good".

What Taylor wishes to do is provide an account of "our" moral identity. Taylor, however, has a wider than usual understanding of what constitutes the 'moral'. For Taylor, moral concerns include not just our considerations on how to treat others fairly, but those questions which address "what makes life worth living". Taylor notes, therefore, that he takes as moral what others might consider as "self-regarding" issues.

His account rests on his identification of the asking of moral questions, thus conceived, as both necessary and implying "a given ontology of the human". The first set of arguments Taylor offers, therefore, are concerned with the fundamental need for moral identity in the first place.

**1.2 The Moral as Inescapable Framework**

What underpins all our approaches to moral questions, Taylor argues, is our capacity for, and need of, "strong evaluation". Discussed at length in Taylor's essay 'What is human agency?' strong evaluations are concerned with, following Frankfurt's terminology, 'second-order desires', "whose object is my having a certain (first-order) desire". Thus, although Taylor believes that some 'higher' animals are able to order their desires so as to

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5 *SOS*, p. 4.  
6 *SOS*, p. 4.  
7 *SOS*, p. 4.  
8 *SOS*, p. 5.  
9 In *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1*.  
10 Ibid., p. 15.
maximise the fulfilment that can be derived from them, the
distinctively human capacity for strong evaluation rests in the
qualitative ordering of these desires. Strong evaluation reflects
our ability to divide our desires and motives into the noble and the
base; acting out of spite might cause me much satisfaction but I
recognise it as part of a life with which I want no part. Following
certain motivations and desires, although they are real and
tempting, is judged as a less worthwhile course of action.

This qualitative distinction, Taylor argues, can only be derived
from a notion of merit as arising from beyond mere desire or wish-
fulfilment. Our sense that our moral impulses are real or deep,
coupled with "the demand to be consistent in our moral reactions"\textsuperscript{11} takes us outside of ourselves. The appeal to moral consistency,
and the idea of qualitatively more noble choices, "can only arise
when the [moral] reaction is related to some independent property
as its object"\textsuperscript{12}. One of Taylor's main goals in Sources of the Self
is to establish that this perception of the independent properties
of one's moral intuitions can be defended against those who argue,
from naturalistic premises, that moral realism is necessarily
illusory.

Taylor argues that the linking of moral claims to properties
beyond our isolated subjective wills and desires entails an appeal
to a background picture within which our values and actions are
situated. Our moral intuitions make reference, usually implicitly,
to a map of our assumptions about the self, society and the world
in which we move. It is with these 'background pictures', or moral
ontologies, and the way they are understood- or misunderstood- in
modernity, that Taylor is concerned. In developing this argument,

\textsuperscript{11} SOS, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{12} SOS, p. 7.
Taylor links the assault on moral realism with the social and political phenomenon of atomism: he promises to return to, and refute, the value of both.

Taylor's crucial claim can be found towards the end of the book. Without our moral intuitions, and the ontologies that they imply, we would lose any meaningful sense of relief in our lives. To lose our moral horizons, to be unable to articulate, or have the resources to articulate, a "believable framework" would be to experience a life without meaning. A world without these "spiritual contours" would be one where "nothing is worth doing", experienced in terms of "a terrifying emptiness, a kind of vertigo, or even a fracturing of our world and body-space".

1.3 The Self in Moral Space

Taylor, then, argues that the self needs to be understood as situated in moral space. The phenomena of strong evaluation and qualitative judgement are necessary to live tolerable lives. What these capacities and needs reveal, claims Taylor, "is the essential link between identity and a kind of orientation".

Taylor asserts that modern philosophy and the human sciences have been unable to account for this relationship, between the self and the good. This, claims Taylor, is a product of the attempt to treat the self as a target for objective study. The naturalist reduction, argues Taylor, cannot on these terms understand either the self or the good.

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13 SOS, p. 17.
14 SOS, p. 18.
15 SOS, p. 28.
Nor, argues Taylor, can the good be understood on 'subjectivist' terms - that is as simply an extension of the wills and desires of the subject. The self cannot be considered without reference to the "issues that matter for us"\textsuperscript{16}. For Taylor, the crucial aspect of our agency is the enunciation of our identity in terms of what has significance for us. The self, thus conceived, is not therefore a proper target for knowledge on objective terms. We cannot understand the self apart from its own self-interpretations: there is no absolute 'object' about which we seek knowledge. Nor, asserts Taylor, can we seek full and explicit knowledge of the self because our self-understandings are themselves linguistic. Hence, the very attempt to attain 'objective' knowledge of ourselves is itself an internal feature of the project of self-understanding. Finally, argues Taylor, the attempt to seek knowledge of a self apart from others also collapses with the realisation that our self-understandings are themselves products of a "language community"\textsuperscript{17}.

The crucial aspects of agency cannot be understood in wholly objectivist nor subjectivist terms. The crucial aspects of agency and identity are neither utterly volitional nor immediately objective. Rather, our identity is a product of our definition of "Who I am"\textsuperscript{18} and exists in the context of using language to describe, and accord significance to, the relations which lend meaning to my life.

These relations have associated social and moral dimensions as a product of the horizons of meanings available to us being part of a public language. Our orientation in moral space is not therefore

\textsuperscript{16} SOS, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{17} SOS, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{18} SOS, p. 35.
to be modelled merely on subjectivist opinion, or epistemological knowledge, but is a facet of the need for narrative structure. At this point\(^{19}\), Taylor references Heidegger as a thinker whose work illustrates how temporality, as a narrative element in our lives, has been traditionally misunderstood. But, in *Sources of the Self*, Heidegger is a peripheral figure. Typically, Taylor refers to Heidegger as sharing certain critical concerns with him, but any more fundamental methodological commonality goes unremarked upon. Taylor, therefore, acknowledges Maclntyre's notion of "life as a quest"\(^{20}\) as a more immediate influence at this point. I will argue, however, that- as Taylor later suggests\(^{21}\)- Heidegger is more of an influence than is being allowed in *Sources of the Self*.

This becomes clear when one identifies the parallels between Taylor's account of the limits of the modern understanding of the self and Heidegger's work. Taylor's account is given in his chapter 'The Ethics of Inarticulacy'.

1.4 *Taylor and the Ethics of Inarticulacy*

1.4.1 *The Centrality of the Best Account Principle*

Taylor's third chapter seeks to show how the modern misunderstanding of our identity, and its intrinsic relation to the good, arose. The problem, Taylor believes, is that we no longer have the languages with which to explain and express our moral identities. We have lost the belief in the external guarantors of moral claims- the Platonic *logos* or the absolute authority of the

\(^{19}\) *SOS*, p. 47.

\(^{20}\) *SOS*, p. 48.

Church- in the light of the move to a natural scientific conception of objective proof. With this loss came a further loss, the languages and self-understandings with which to refer to the good and the right as "real" or "part of the world". Further, Taylor argues, the naturalistic reduction does not leave the question open, but pushes us to see moral language which expresses external notions of the good as illusory and self-deceiving.

The link to Heidegger's work is a direct one. Heidegger's suggestion that the subject-object division and the resulting epistemological models of knowledge are not necessarily wrong or false but must be partial is mirrored by Taylor. Rejecting the primacy of the traditional scientific approach to understanding human being Taylor asks: "How can we ever know that humans can be explained by any scientific theory until we actually explain how they live their lives in its terms?". The question, of course, is rhetorical; there is, for Taylor, a more fundamental ontology than that based on the subject-object division, or the project of certitude.

Hence we find Taylor arguing that, in contrast to the partiality of the epistemological approach, it is the phenomenological approach that has priority in understanding our lives. This is expressed, in Taylor's work, in the 'Best Account Principle'. This states that in seeking to understand our existence we need an approach which "make[s] sense" of our lives... across the whole range of both explanatory and life uses. It is the best account on these terms- "which no epistemological or metaphysical

\[22 \text{SOS, p. 56.} \]
\[23 \text{SOS, p. 58.} \]
\[24 \text{SOS, p. 58.} \]
considerations of a more general kind about science or nature can set aside"- that "is trumps"25.

The comparison with Heidegger here is illuminating. Firstly, and obviously, Taylor shares Heidegger's hermeneutical and phenomenological concerns with the understanding of all phenomena, rather than taking as legitimate evidence only those which can be known with certitude. Secondly, therefore, Taylor's principle serves a role similar to that of 'transparency26, which I have argued previously is a crucial notion in Heidegger's work.

Transparency, in Heidegger's thought, functions alongside Heidegger's division between explicit, deliberate and practical interpretation [Interpretierung and Auslegung]27. These are, as I have claimed previously, key considerations because they reveal the extent to which interpreting Heidegger's conception of 'Being' as a source of justification (either for truth or politics) is a mistake. 'Transparency' is, for Heidegger, a necessary facet of explicit Interpretation and philosophy, of which Being and Time is a part. It is introduced as a part of the methodology of inquiry in both explicit and practical terms28. Taylor's introduction of the BA principle is, however, less theorised.

It is initially introduced as the principle by which people 'make sense' of their lives29- a practical guide used in the structuring of the narratives necessary, as was seen earlier, to living rewarding lives free from moral or spiritual vertigo. In the first instance, therefore, the BA principle looks like an observed facet of

25 SOS, p. 58.
26 For a discussion of this see my Chapter 'Heidegger and the Critique of Subjectivism', esp. p. 41-2.
27 Ibid., p. 63.
29 SOS, p. 58.
everyday, practical interpretation. However, in the following paragraph, Taylor goes beyond the assertion that the BA principle is an everyday heuristic used by individuals in the actual structuring of their personal narratives, and claims also that "theories of moral judgements as projections, and the attempts to distinguish 'value' from 'fact', fall afoul of this BA principle."\(^{30}\)

Taylor thus introduces the BA principle as both a practical heuristic operated by, at least 'self-aware', agents in the courses of their lives, and as the methodological criterion by which theories of the self and existence ought to be evaluated. That Taylor fails, in *Sources of the Self*, to clearly flag the interpretative contexts in which the BA principle works has a number of ramifications.

Most significant of these at this point is the unclear role Taylor assigns his phenomenological approach. Taylor offers the BA principle as both a methodological starting point which stresses that validity depends on interpretative transparency (as Heidegger introduces his use of phenomenology) and as a means of supporting the basic assumptions he makes in *Sources of the Self*.

Taylor thus frames a phenomenological principle that at once seeks to subscribe to the rigours of *Destruktion* in interpreting reality, whilst reinvigorating the deeper meanings\(^{31}\) unarticulated in the present understandings of modernity. He thus identifies both with Heidegger's injunction not to approach the interpretation of Being in terms of unproved "vouchsafed" revelations (e.g. subject-Object foundationalism)\(^{32}\) and with the Hegelian aim of

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\(^{30}\) SOS, p. 58. Italics my own.

\(^{31}\) See in this regard Taylor's discussion of the parallels between Heidegger's work and 'deep' ecology in "Heidegger, Language and Ecology" in *Philosophical Arguments*.

\(^{32}\) See Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology" in *Philosophical Arguments*. 

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establishing fuller articulations of the moral objects whose expression constitutes our moral growth. The indistinct way in which Taylor introduces the BA principle means that he is not clear on how these two aims relate to each other; an issue I return to in my consideration of Taylor's operation of the Best Account principle in the following section.

Having framed the BA principle, Taylor goes on to apply it to demonstrate the partiality of the self-understandings of modernity. What the hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches of Hegel, Heidegger and others\(^33\) demonstrate, Taylor suggests, is that we cannot explain the meanings of our moral languages and evaluations in the reductivist terms of epistemological accounts. The separation of interpretation from action, and subject from object, made in these accounts is queried by the BA principle. Taylor thus follows Heidegger in subjecting the self-understandings of modernity to the charge of internal incoherence resulting from a misunderstanding of the true nature of the interpretative process. Taylor argues, however, that he has in the final instance more in common with Hegel because his aim is authentic human self-understanding\(^34\).

The next step, therefore, is to see how Taylor thinks the tradition has failed, and how he thinks a better understanding might be articulated.

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\(^{33}\) Primarily Herder and Humboldt - see Taylor's "Theories of Meaning" in *Philosophical Papers Vol. I.*

\(^{34}\) See Taylor's *Hegel and Modern Society* and his "Hegel's Philosophy of Mind" in *Philosophical Papers Vol. I*
Taylor identifies one of the central problems of modernity as the inability to provide an account of the motivation behind our qualitative moral intuitions and claims. Our dominant modes of understanding ourselves and the world do not account for moral experience in the qualitative terms with which we actually live.

Taylor's BA principle states that we ought to consider as 'real' those moments crucial to an agent's own self-understanding. In particular, this entails an account-based on the recognition of the necessity of strong evaluation-which explains the 'reality' of moral judgements. Taylor identifies two claims underpinning his argument:

1. You cannot help having recourse to these strongly valued goods for the purposes of life... you need these terms to make the best sense of what you're doing...
2. What is real is what you have to deal with, what won't go away just because it doesn't fit with your prejudices... Your general metaphysical picture of "values" and their place in "reality" ought to be based on what you find real in this way. It couldn't conceivably be the basis of an objection to this reality.

Given the multiplicity of goods cited by different people and the conflict which individuals themselves can identify between different goods, we need, Taylor argues, "a multi-levelled understanding of the good". As MacIntyre notes, "Taylor is at once a pluralist and a realist about goods".

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35 See SOS, p. 57.
36 SOS, p. 59.
The need to order other goods is frequently fulfilled by appeals to "hypergoods". These are "goods which not only are incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about"\textsuperscript{39}. Hypergoods range from the Platonic conception of the Idea of the Good to Kantian and Habermasian universalizability. Perspectives in the light of different hypergoods have different responses to the conflict and plurality of goods. Thus, Taylor argues, there is, in Plato's work, a denial of the goods of property and family life which compete with the reductionist hypergood that culminates in the life of the philosopher. Alternatively, Aristotle aims to recognise all competing goods in his time, including the subordination of women and slaves.

This, Taylor argues, is at the root of the basic problem of modernity. In an age of pluralism it is no longer possible to account for our sense of the reality of the good in the reductivist terms of an extrahuman order- the sort of hypergood one finds expressed in the Platonic \textit{ontic logos}. Equally, the Aristotelian approach has been taken to culminate in a naturalism that cannot distinguish between perspectives on the good at all. This resonates with naturalist and projectivist accounts that can conceive of the reality of moral language, if at all, only in ways which fail to account for our sense of the "moral growth"\textsuperscript{40} that accompanies our sense of the good.

The need to develop an articulation of the good which can account for our moral beliefs and intuitions in a way which recognises both their reality and their claims on us, is the motivating force behind \textit{The Sources of the Self}. This is because

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{SOS}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{SOS}, p. 72.
the form it is presumed such accounts must take has, Taylor claims, been misconstrued in modernity.

One set of these accounts has sought to explain the 'power' of moral claims in terms of an ontological account of reality. Taylor observes that these objectivist accounts—whether based on a Platonic conception of the ontic logos, a single religious account or the commands of a divine King—can, in modern societies, no longer command the universal acceptance they once did. This partiality has led to the exclusion of those views and goods at odds with the dominant conception; an option Taylor no longer considers open in the pluralist societies of the modern world. To account for the reality of our moral judgements and our sense of the good this way is no longer enough to meet the challenges of a world marked by a collapse of universal common reference points and the emergence of self-reflexivity: "Platonism is dead"41.

A second set of accounts, framed in response to the claims of the existence of a natural order independent of human wills and desires also fails. Rather than look to an independent objective reality, this approach focuses on the projections of the subject as the source of value. These accounts, which also arise from the naturalist reduction of being to a neutral world and a world of human desires and projections, although able to comprehend pluralism, cannot account for the qualitative and real dimensions of our moral judgements and impulses.

Projectivism, for example, cannot account for the reality of moral claims and the qualitative dimension of our evaluations of the good. Thus, Taylor considers42 the early Sartre's account of

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42 Charles Taylor, "What is human agency?", Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1, p. 29.
value as arising from radical choice. Whereas Sartre's picture of a young man choosing between fighting with the resistance and looking after his mother is indeed a dilemma, Taylor argues, it is so only because the two alternatives embody different claims. If it was choice alone that was the source of moral value and dilemmas there would be no qualitative distinction between the choice to look after one's mother and to have an ice cream, claims Taylor.

Equally any conception of reality based on a naturalistic reduction can either offer no account of moral reality or do so only through importing hidden hypergoods it cannot itself explain. Taylor's treatment of Foucault's and Connolly's writings in this respect were discussed in the previous Chapter.

The basic understandings of modernity, centred around the volitional and desiring self detached from a neutral world are thus unable to support or explain the moral values and language we nonetheless feel and use. Nor can one appeal to one unquestionable order which validates a particular set of goods or hypergood against others without being aware that there are, Taylor thinks, other answers one could have meaningfully chosen. The prevailing ontological understandings of the world and self fail to leave an avenue, Taylor believes, for the developing of an account of our moral lives.

What is needed, Taylor suggests, is an understanding of agency which allows for an articulation of the good in accordance with the Best Account Principle. I need a way to evaluate hypergoods, or potential hypergoods, which offers a way of weighing up and

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43 SOS, p. 74.
deliberating upon the moral choices and dilemmas I am faced with. There needs to be a way of understanding myself and the world which accounts for moral reality: an "alternative between Platonism and projectivism"44.

Taylor considers the parameters and demands a best account on these terms must respect. Firstly, any account I offer must take account of my need to live a coherent life, characterised by the capacity to make strong evaluations and locate myself in a world of diverse moral goods capable of exerting real moral pressure on me. This, Taylor believes, rules out most contemporary accounts of the nature of the self or the world. Secondly, against this background my best account will serve as a basis for a practical evaluation of the various competing moral goods and claims I am faced with. It will not, Taylor suggests, offer me a priori principles about which hypergood I must choose nor what constitutive goods I will consider important, but it will allow me to understand something about how they derive their moral power.

Taylor concludes the consideration of modern accounts of the good, or the lack of them, by seeking to show how the failure to provide a best account on his terms, and the paucity of existing moral ontologies, has had a detrimental effect in modernity.

1.5 Articulacy and Moral Sources

Taylor offers several reasons why modernity's moral inarticulacy is damaging, and how a philosophy of articulation would have positive effects at an individual, moral and social level.

The first of these reasons Taylor flags as simply intuitional: a commitment to the Socratic belief that knowledge is itself "part of the telos of human beings". Fundamentally, however, Taylor's argument rests on his claim that "articulation can bring us closer to the good as a moral source, can give it power". It is through our articulations of our sense of the good that we can understand which goods are constitutive to our moral growth.

To fail to articulate this understanding is to run the risk of forgetting or obscuring the goods upon which our modern narratives implicitly draw. The reductive naturalist, Taylor argues, will still feel the power of the moral value of the individual - he will just not be able to say why. Similarly, Foucault's genealogy, Taylor feels, still draws on the notion of moral growth and the value of human liberation which it vitiates and cannot offer support for.

Taylor argues that the BA Principle, which treats the qualitative dimension of the moral as real, points to the inconsistencies implicit in these positions. Further, he argues, once one sees what it is these positions are actually drawing on, and articulates the moral visions that motivate them and give them power, we will see that "articulation can bring them [moral sources] closer". In articulating our notions of the foundations of the good life, Taylor believes, we will also find or develop an account which shows why our love of certain goods and the good is well-founded. Understanding and articulating why we "love or respect" our constitutive goods enables us to better live up to

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45 SOS, p. 92.
46 SOS, p. 92.
47 See, for example, SOS, p. 71., and Taylor's articles "Foucault on Freedom and Truth" and "Connolly, Foucault and Truth".
48 SOS, p. 99.
them: "that is why words can empower; why words can at times have tremendous moral force"49.

Conversely, the modern inability to account for, or conceive of, the reality of the good risks obscuring the moral sources by which our lives nonetheless continue to be motivated. Thus, towards the end of the book, Taylor claims that the norms 'we' just about all agree on- the "demands of justice and benevolence" which cross "great differences of theological and metaphysical belief"50 need an ongoing and vigilant defence. Without an account which offers this we risk distancing ourselves from the moral goods which empower us. This both cuts us off from the full richness of our being in terms of the goods that motivate us, and, in turn, threatens the stability of the standards to which we are committed. This account is needed in modernity, therefore, as "[h]igh standards need strong sources"51.

Section 2) Taylor's Moral and Social Ontology

2.1 The Dialogic Self

The key element in Taylor's account is a revised conception of the nature of agency and the self. Pivotal here is Taylor's assertion that the "crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical nature"52. The capacity for strong evaluation and the need to locate ourselves in moral space both require interpretations of ourselves in terms of meanings and languages which involve others. Taylor emphasises two ways in which our self-interpretations have social dimensions.

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49 SOS, p. 96.
50 SOS, p. 515.
51 SOS, p. 516.
The first of these follows from Taylor's assertion, already examined, that full human agents understand themselves and define their identity through an articulation of the good. Since this is achieved "through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression", then, following Wittgenstein\textsuperscript{53}, it follows that "[t]he genesis of the human mind is in this sense not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical"\textsuperscript{54}. In other words, "[p]eople do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on their own"\textsuperscript{55}.

Secondly, Taylor argues, the role of others in the language of identity extends beyond the merely instrumental. Our interaction extends beyond the moment of genesis; "[w]e don't just learn the languages in dialogue and then go on to use them for our own purposes"\textsuperscript{56}. Rather:

We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Even after we outgrow some of these others- our parents, for instance- and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live. \textsuperscript{57}

Thus Taylor identifies two moments of relating to others in the necessary process of defining one's identity in relation to the good. The first, already considered, is formal, reflecting the linguistic aspects of self-interpretation. The second is substantive: for Taylor it is simply true that fundamental, constitutive goods are, properly understood, qualitatively dependent on others.

\textsuperscript{53} SOS, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{54} Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", p. 32.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 32.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 32.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 32-33.
2.2 The Dialogic Self Contra The Punctual Self

For Taylor, therefore, if one wants to understand the wills and desires of the individual one has to make reference to the society of which they are part. Hence, Taylor argues, one needs to appeal to the dialogic model of agency in framing one's social and political understandings. Taylor's claim, however, is that the moral and political understandings of modernity are in fact based on a misunderstanding of the nature of agency with unhappy consequences.

These effects- "the grip of modern rationalism" - are linked by Taylor, in common with Heidegger and Foucault, to the nexus of epistemological certitude, instrumental rationality and the detached conception of the self. It is particularly in the attempt to offer an alternative account of agency that Taylor sees the closest parallels between his own work and Heidegger's.

Thus Taylor follows Heidegger in arguing that the failure of modern ontological accounts of existence arises from, and finds its keenest expression in, the concept of the punctual, disengaged self. Taylor, like Heidegger, finds Descartes and Kant to be at the forefront of the movement, to which he adds Locke.

The criticisms he offers of these thinkers are, he readily admits, familiar ones. As Taylor puts it, "the developing power of disengaged, self-responsible reason has tended to accredit a view of the subject as an unsituated, even punctual self". Sources of

59 See, for comparison, Heidegger's criticism of the punctual self on p. 187 of Being and Time, as cited in my Chapter, 'Heidegger and the Critique of Subjectivism', p. 45.
60 SOS, p. 514.
the Self and many of Taylor’s other works offer various accounts of how these notions became prevalent and where they can be identified, but he is clear that there is no simple cause and effect in operation. Rather, he takes the two, disengaged reason and the disengaged self, to coexist and reinforce each other.

Thus, although it might seem that the Enlightenment emphasis on scientific, objective reason is at odds with the Romantic focus on natural, creative expression, Taylor argues both are marked by deeper similarities. The naturalism of Romanticism, which indexes the good to the creative expression of the individual is summed up in Herder’s notion that "Jeder Mensch hat ein eigenes Maas"61. The scientific or calculative understanding of the good, expressed most simply in Benthamite utilitarianism, equally understands each individual in isolation from those around him.

Although these positions are, at times, in conflict they are actually more marked, Taylor argues, by a subscription to common beliefs. Primarily, they view the individual apart from his or her social context. For all their differences, those who seek to understand themselves and their moral identities in the terms of these positions are marked by a shared inward focus on the individual. Thus, as Olafson paraphrases Taylor on this point, "the development of modern scientific objectivism is merely the obverse of transcendental subjectivism"62.

What has emerged, Taylor argues, are various understandings of both the individual and society which are united in subscribing to the basic tenets of atomism, or as it is frequently called by those

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espousing it, individualism. I have already traced above Taylor's arguments about the limits of these conceptions of agency in terms of understanding moral reality. Taylor's criticisms of the disengaged subject extend further, however: "[w]hat is important to note here is that this is not just a wrong view of agency; it is not at all necessary as a support to self-responsible reason and freedom"63.

Indeed, Taylor claims, to conceive of the self on traditional epistemological terms, whether subjectivist or objectivist, is not just a vitiating understanding of our own agency, but underpins a social theory that exacerbates the problem. His claim is that a philosophical misunderstanding of agency gives rise to inadequate social practices.

Atomism, for Taylor, resonates with the focus on the individual found in modern conceptions of epistemology and agency. Taylor defines it in opposition to Aristotle's view that man is a social animal; atomism, by contrast, asserts that man can be both understood and exist independently of society64. Taylor qualifies this by stating that what is at stake for both himself and his opponents is not biological survival, but the conditions needed for men [sic] to "develop their characteristically human capacities"65. Taylor's criticism of atomism stems from his belief "that living in society is a necessary condition of the development of rationality, in some sense of this property, or of becoming a moral agent in the full sense of the term, or of becoming a fully responsible, autonomous being"66.

63 SOS, p. 514.
65 Ibid., p. 190-1.
66 Ibid., p. 191.
Before exploring Taylor's account of the limits of atomistic social and political theories it is important to recall why Taylor believes their basic motivating *motif* unsatisfactory. As was considered in the first Chapter, Taylor's objection to the punctual self-the individual agent considered in isolation from those surrounding him or her- is based on his operation of the Best Account Principle. For Taylor, the problem with attempting to understand the individual in modern, atomistic terms is the inability of that image to account for the crucial phenomenon of identity: our orientation towards the good.

Hence, Taylor claims, it is the dialogic self, not the punctual conception of agency, that will provide the basis for the 'best account' of moral ontology. In order to understand how this assertion underpins Taylor's development and analysis of social and political theories it is useful to trace his treatment of a key notion in both his own work and those of whom he is critical; the nature of human freedom. I turn first to the tradition of which he is critical.

### 2.3.1 Atomistic Conception of Freedom

Taylor argues that the notion of the punctual self is allied to what he calls an atomistic- or monological- understanding of the nature of human agency. Those who hold a fundamentally atomistic view of the individual locate freedom as a basic capacity which exists independently of society, argues Taylor. On this picture, values are a product of the wills, desires and choices of the individual considered apart from their social context. The
individual's moral fulfilment is thus seen in terms of individual, authentic self-expression. The hypergood that emerges is thus individual freedom conceived of as unconstrained choice: the social theses that result emphasise the primacy of right.

The predominance of rights theories in the modern world is a result of the fundamentally atomistic conception of the individual agent's capacity for choices as existing either pre-socially or independent of society. This conception of free choice, and the attendant notion of individual authenticity, becomes a hypergood: the aim of social and political life becomes the framing of a schedule of rights which reflects and secures this 'negative' conception of the liberty of the individual.

For Taylor, this wrongheaded approach is premised on a misconception. The false premise has already been discussed- the inadequate view of agency. This is expressed and expanded on in several ways throughout Taylor's oeuvre, but in each instance his arguments resonate with those offered in his consideration of freedom.

2.3.2 Taylor's Dialogical Conception of Freedom

Freedom, argues Taylor, is not a basic capacity of the lone individual but a facet of an identity framed and shaped by a society: "In other words, the free individual or autonomous moral agent can only achieve and maintain his identity in a certain type of culture". This social dimension, as we have just seen above, is not just one of instrumental reliance: freedom and autonomy "are carried on in institutions and associations which require stability

67 Ibid., p. 205.
and continuity and frequently also support from society as a whole—almost always the moral support of being commonly recognised as important"68. These early claims are reinforced in Taylor's later statements that "[m]y own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others"69.

Atomistic moral, social and political theories are thus mistaken in the way they conceive of, and thus seek to secure, freedom and autonomy. Taylor argues that in asserting a right what is actually being asserted is the good of certain capacities. What is missed by these theories, Taylor argues, is that freedom, autonomy and—in his later formulation—authenticity are only available as a result of common, publicly shared institutions, practices and relations which support these capacities as valuable.

In an essay on Heidegger70, Taylor follows Heidegger's argument that the disengaged subject of epistemology cannot explain the range of meanings phenomenologically available to an individual. Rather, Taylor follows Heidegger in asserting, one needs an approach which reflects the ways in which agency is shaped and expressed in practical, engaged activity. Similarly, Taylor suggests that the social and political theorists of atomism miss the link between the capacities and characteristics of the individual and the background vocabulary of social possibilities from which these individual articulations are drawn.

For Taylor, therefore, it is the dialogical conception of freedom which will provide the basis for a satisfactory understanding of politics. In order to defend and foster the values which motivate

68 Ibid., p. 205.
69 Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", p. 34.
70 "Engaged agency and background in Heidegger", as footnote 1.
us, Taylor argues, we need to recognise the dialogical and social dimensions of our agency. It is against this backdrop that Taylor frames his account of the demands of a politics of this sort.

2.4 Intersubjectivity and Recognition

Taylor's provision of an account of a 'better' politics is, therefore, based on his own 'best account' of moral ontology. Both the methodology and the content of Taylor's less distorted account of moral agency have already been considered. What is required is an account that can treat as real moral values which, for Taylor, requires an attention to the social context in which they arise. Our social context is, for Taylor, more than just an instrumental backdrop from which we emerge; it is an intrinsic part of many moral goods itself.

Taylor appeals to a model of intersubjectivity and a politics which express the fuller notion of the good with which his theory operates. What is required, Taylor argues, is a Hegelian recognition of the particularity of actual identities. This recognition is not based around an universal conception of the autonomous individual but "comes to include the equal value of what they have made of [their] potential in fact"71.

The proper recognition of others, therefore, involves more than just according them an universal respect in light of our common humanity. Once one understands that their identities are intrinsically linked to the particular communities of which they are part, genuine recognition entails more than that they conform with a detached conception of abstract identity. Thus to respect

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the dignity of others at times demands that we recognise the collective claims about the good made by the communities which ground their identities.

It is this focus on the importance of the articulation of the good within identity which grounds the wide scope Taylor wishes to extend to his notion of recognition. For, Taylor argues, implicit in the notion of the dialogic self is a moral identity that, clearly understood, will lead us to realise that it is in our own interests to recognise and respects the claims of others. This applies to the claims of others whether they come from a community with which we closely identify or from a culture further from our immediate interests.

The interest we have in taking the claims of others seriously is motivated, Taylor claims, by the recognition that our own best accounts of the good can be neither certain nor exhaustive. In a world of real and plural goods we can realise that others who live different lives from ourselves are still motivated by common interests in living happy and healthy lives. These interests reveal an "inescapable place for a sense of debt to, or solidarity with, some others"72. For Taylor, this is a debt which extends beyond the immediate communities of which we are part and extends to all those who make available articulations of the good. Taylor's implication is clear: the richest visions of the good are those which are developed in dialogue with as many significant others as possible.

Thus Taylor, responding to Quentin Skinner, claims that as a Christian, although he may not personally find the goods of Islam

72 Taylor, "Comments and Replies", p. 252.
or Judaism the basis of an adequate ethic for him, he can recognise
the "spiritual greatness"73 of them as moral sources. To refuse to
try and understand these goods- or any articulation of the good-
through a resort to a single, unquestioned approach to the world is
to suffer, Taylor claims, "betokens an astonishing selective
narrowness of spirit"74.

Taylor's theory of intersubjectivity is thus coloured by a
common interest we all have in pursuing the good. We share a
common feature which motivates all but the most damaged human
beings- the love of the good. The dialogic nature of the
articulation of the good links us not just to the community within
which we frame our own moral view; rather, our moral intuition
about the equal worth of all human beings links us to all
communities which make available visions of the good. Thus,
Taylor claims:

it is reasonable to suppose that cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for
large numbers of human beings, of diverse characters and temperaments, over a
period of time- that have, in other words, articulated their sense of the good, the holy
the admirable- are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and
respect... it would take a supreme arrogance to discount this possibility a priori. 75

There is, in Taylor's eyes, a moral dimension governing
intersubjective relations implicit in the most basic account of
agency. The presumption of equal moral worth is a safe hypothesis
when one realises the different articulations of the good which can
be found in perspectives other than our own.

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73 Ibid., p. 241.
74 Ibid., p. 241.
There is perhaps after all a moral issue here. We only need a sense of our own limited part in the whole human story to accept the presumption. It is only arrogance, or some analogous moral failing, that can deprive us of this. 76

The final step is to explain why a failure to engage with alternative perspectives constitutes an unacceptable arrogance. The form of the answer Taylor gives varies but remains essentially the same in each case. A failure to articulate one's vision in dialogue with others runs the risk of cutting ourselves off from the good; in Sources of the Self this good is identified with benevolence and a Christian notion of grace, in 'The Politics of Recognition' Taylor talks of a "fusion of horizons"77. This transformation of our standards occurs in particular instances when:

we learn to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different backgrounds of the formerly unfamiliar culture. 78

It may not itself be an achievable goal but it is clear that Taylor has, at least as a motivating ideal, a notion of a horizon so broad as to encompass the reality of all the goods of all different cultures:

that ultimate horizon from which the relative worth of different cultures might be evident 79

76 Ibid., p. 72.
77 Ibid., p. 67.
78 Ibid., p. 67.
79 Ibid., p. 72.
Taylor's aim, "to recognise a plurality of goods"\textsuperscript{80}, underpins the politics of recognition. Taylor's politics, therefore, are indexed to a conception of intersubjectivity which emerges from the nexus of his notion of the dialogical nature of identity and his conception of the moral realism around which that identity is built.

2.4.1 The Politics of Recognition

Taylor does not offer a detailed manifesto for the political institutions or policies which will follow from his conception of recognition. This is unsurprising given that his point is that the recognition of identity requires an attention to particular contexts. Taylor's claim is a more modest one; a revising of one's ontological understanding will impact on the horizons of positions and policies one is likely to consider advocating\textsuperscript{81}.

Hence, Taylor offers a diagnosis of the shifts he expects the move from an atomistic to a dialogical conception of the self will precipitate. Taylor's central claim is that the political problems of an age of pluralism (of both goods and cultures) cannot be addressed by recourse to principles framed in terms of a single overarching view of the good. The aim instead is to understand how we can protect and foster a plurality of goods, from the universal standards of individual human equality and dignity to the particular needs and aims of communities which enable individuals to give their lives meaning.

The worth of individuals is not therefore served by a simple protection of the individual from majority claims. Individuals need

\textsuperscript{80} SOS, p. 518.
\textsuperscript{81} See Charles Taylor "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate" in Philosophical Arguments, esp. p. 183.
to be understood against the collective backgrounds from which they emerge and there is thus a need to consider the goods and needs necessary to the existence of these communities. The political balancing act is not therefore simply between the competing inalienable rights of individuals, but between individual and collective goods.

Taylor is at pains to point out that he is not espousing a straightforward communitarianism. Of that, he says "[i]t sounds as though the critics of this liberalism wanted to substitute some other all-embracing principle, which would in some equal and opposite way exalt the life of the community over everything"\(^82\). Hence, Taylor does not argue that there should be an \textit{a priori} assumption of equal worth by all claims made by communities. That would be an alternative principle which would be both as partial as that of liberal proceduralism and patronising. Taylor believes instead that:

\begin{quote}
There must be something midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards on the other... What there is the presumption of equal worth... Perhaps we don't need to ask whether it's something that others can demand from us as a right. We might simply ask whether this is the way we ought to approach others. \(^83\)
\end{quote}

For Taylor, it would be at best self-defeating to unnecessarily risk cutting ourselves off from alternative articulations of the good. What is required, therefore, is an openness to collective goals as an intrinsic part of recognising the worth of individuals. Where the goods of collective life or cultural survival clash with


\(^{83}\) Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", p. 72.
individual choices or desires, a healthy attitude towards framing public policy requires that the goods of neither are automatically denied. To choose to support collective needs at the expense of the latter is not necessarily discriminatory. Instead it reflects the realisation that an individual's pursuit of the good life involves the pursuit of both private and public, individual and collective goals.

At this point the aim is to see why Taylor thinks the dominant ontological understandings of modernity have led to the advocacy of political systems that have failed to meet these demands. Prime amongst the political understandings based on the atomistic conception of agency to which Taylor objects is what Taylor calls neutral or procedural liberalism.

2.5 Taylor and Liberalism

Before analysing Taylor's criticisms of liberal political theory it is important to note, as Daniel Weinstock has, that "Taylor's arguments against liberalism are often difficult to assess because they tend to be addressed not at particular liberal thinkers but rather at liberalism as a general civilisation trend"84. Weinstock is right, but the main characteristics of that trend are discussed by Taylor; he links liberalism to the prevailing ontological and moral accounts of our identity.

Thus, Taylor adumbrates a liberal perspective centred around "various formulations of the main idea"85. This idea, which he identifies with thinkers as diverse as Rawls, Dworkin, Ackerman and emerging from the ideas of, amongst others, Locke and Kant is,

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at a political level, a prioritising of a procedural notion of political justice over any substantive moral ends. Broadly speaking, 'liberalism' in Taylor's vocabulary covers those theories, based on an atomistic conception of agency, which focus on the rights of the individual. As Taylor sums up the liberal perspective "[a] liberal society must remain neutral on the good life, and restrict itself to ensuring that however they see things, citizens deal fairly with each other and the state deals equally with all"86.

Taylor offers a picture of how this liberal commitment to the real goods of universal equal dignity and respect is expressed, both socially and politically. What is aimed at is a "fair and difference-blind society" based on "universal, difference-blind principles"87. Although these principles are debated there is an assumption that "one such theory is right"88.

Equal respect in this instance is indexed to an individualistic conception of autonomy. Motivated by this account the political principles generated aim to treat all the same irrespective of any difference. To give one individual or group rights which are not possessed by others is seen as discriminatory. Fairness is a product of finding the neutral principles which ignore the different contents people give to their lives in favour of an identical "universal human potential"89.

Taylor offers two associated criticisms of this type of politics. Both stem from his fundamental perception of liberalism as supporting, and motivated by, an account of identity and agency

86 Ibid., p. 57.
87 Ibid., p. 43.
88 Ibid., p. 44.
89 Ibid., p. 41. Italics in original.
which Taylor views as "inhuman"\(^{90}\). The first criticism concerns how effective liberalism is in delivering the hypergood of private autonomy which it espouses. His second criticism calls into questions whether the hypergood of private autonomy is itself an useful or adequate one.

2.5.1 The Practical Limits of Moral Individualism and Liberalism

The roots of Taylor's first set of criticisms have already been touched upon: the inability of liberalism to deliver the atomistic autonomy it values. This, for Taylor, is a result of the failure of liberals to see the importance of the moral community in defining and making available the basic capacity they value: private autonomy. This strand of Taylor's thought finds early expression in his essays on 'Atomism', 'What's wrong with negative liberty?' and 'The diversity of good'\(^{91}\), continues throughout Sources of the Self, emerging in its most sustained form in "The Politics of Recognition".

Taylor's worries descend from those of Tocqueville and Mill. A politics that emphasises the rights of the individual against those of the community is at risk of undermining the social articulation of, and commitment to, the moral visions upon which it is actually based. Where that good- the freedom of the autonomous individual- is understood as a basic capacity rather than a social achievement there is a risk, Taylor thinks, of individuals developing an apathetic or instrumental approach to the practices and institutions of a society. This conception of freedom, however, can only survive in a particular sort of society- one in which the value of individual freedom is part of a publicly available set of social

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\(^{90}\) Ibid., p. 43.
\(^{91}\) All in Philosophical Papers Vol. 2.
and moral meanings. The goal of individual freedom can thus lead to social consequences that militate against it.

The problem is not just practical, however. Unlike Mill, Taylor argues that the difficulties of establishing a society in which the autonomy of the individual thrives are not just practical. What is overlooked, Taylor argues, is that the good of autonomy is in fact not just private; rather, it is derived in part from common and collective action.

For Taylor, therefore, the problem with rights-based liberalism is not just that its operation is weakened by the vitiated understanding of agency with which its proponents operate. Rather, it is the partiality and limits of the atomistic conception of agency with which he takes issue. The political problem we face, Taylor argues, is not merely how to find a better way of defending an atomistic conception of liberty, but how to rethink the role and nature of politics in the light of a fuller understanding of human agency.

2.5.2 The Ethical Limits of Moral Individualism and Liberalism

Taylor's second strand of criticism hence forms the core of his objection to liberalism. His argument is that liberal political principles, based on the moral ideal of procedural neutrality derived from the detached conception of the self, are unable to recognise, or respond to, certain goods which are only available collectively. This also leads Taylor to conclude that liberal principles miss the importance which should be ascribed to actions taken to ensure the survival of community identities.
Thus, to the claim that liberalism is unable to preserve the autonomy it values is added a further claim; that the understanding of autonomy at issue is itself only partial. There is, Taylor argues, a public dimension to autonomy which is qualitatively different from autonomy in the private sphere; and the enshrinement of the latter dimension in a supposedly neutral liberal politics can threaten the former.

This inadequate understanding of agency underlies two problems which Taylor identifies with liberal neutralism. The first concerns the transparency of the principles themselves, the second their ethical adequacy.

The first problem Taylor identifies with liberal neutralism is that it cannot be neutral at all. Once one understands liberalism as based on an atomistic conception of agency which in turn rules out as legitimate certain (for Taylor both legitimate and necessary) understandings of the good, the worry Taylor has is that liberalism is "a particularism masquerading as the universal"92. The picture of the detached, autonomous and creative self upon which it is premised has, as Taylor points out, come under fire for being far from uncontestable. In practice, therefore, the supposed universalism of liberalism has served often oppressive European and American interests. The goods of equal respect and dignity when informed by a focus on the isolated individual have come to be seen as allied to cultural imperialism.

This worry about the neutrality of liberal political principles is deepened and compounded in Taylor's second criticism. It is not just the genesis and neutrality of liberal political principles that

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92 Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", p. 44.
Taylor calls into question, but the picture of the good that they are intended to defend. The problem with the Western political tradition, based on the conception of an atomistic self, is not just that it has been poorly executed; the ontological account upon which the hypergood of equal respect is premised is inadequate.

What is respected by a system of neutral, liberal politics is an identity with which Taylor thinks it would be impossible to live. To prioritise the right - the good of procedural equality irrespective of particular identity - over the good is to accept unquestioningly an individualistic, atomistic conception of agency. As we have seen above, framing autonomy, or the individual's good, simply in terms of the individual is an error. Taylor makes this point starkly in a reply to critics in Inquiry:

You cannot have an ideal without some notion of what gives human life value. Moreover, you will never be able to develop your ideal, or, indeed, even grow into an undamaged human being, without exchange with others, involving some modicum of love or at least recognition. 93

At the very least, Taylor suggests, what we need to realise is "some goods become accessible to us only through... common enjoyment". 94 In fact, for Taylor, "the making and sustaining of our identity, in the absence of a heroic effort to break out of ordinary existence, remains dialogical throughout our lives". 95 Moreover, even goods that might appear intrinsically private - those of, "the hermit [...] or the solitary artist" 96, are, Taylor argues, pursued in dialogue with others (God and a future audience respectively). A politics that responds only to the private dimension of autonomy

93 Taylor, "Comments and Replies", p. 250.
95 Ibid., p. 34.
96 Ibid., p. 34.
and interprets the claims of collectives as simply a threat is in error for Taylor. It confines us to an unitary but partial understanding of the good framed in the light of a mistaken notion of identity. A politics which seeks to rule against collective conceptions of the good as a matter of course isolates the individual from goods constitutive to a life which will be experienced as 'undamaged'.

Taylor finds liberal politics framed in terms of neutral principles of equal respect to be marked by an inadequate concept of agency. This expresses itself in two negative ways. Firstly, it obscures the liberal's own need for a society which can support their vision of the good. Secondly, it also obscures other collective goods that are available only through a richer understanding of public life. Taylor looks to the works of Rousseau and Hegel for examples of these goods; he names the non-competitive senses of dignity, honour and pride in oneself and one's community that can only exist in "a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals".

2.5.3 Taylor on Liberalism: Conclusions

Beyond the simple inability of an atomistic ontology of isolated choice to account for the reality of moral life, Taylor identifies several connected disastrous social and political implications that result from this misunderstanding. Prime amongst these is the link between an atomistic conception of moral agency and what Taylor calls liberal politics. For Taylor, the link between seeing one's community in terms of "self-fulfillers, whose affiliations are more and more seen as revocable" and the defence of that

97 Ibid., p. 50.
98 SOS, p. 508.
image of society with liberal principles needs to be examined. This is important, argues Taylor, because a society based on atomism and characterised by a liberalism based on moral proceduralism "cannot sustain the strong identification with the political community which public freedom needs"\(^99\).

A supposedly neutral procedural liberalism fails, as we have seen, on two accounts. Firstly, it is based on a misunderstanding of moral agency and thus revolves around goals which are either undeliverable or viewed as a single principle- ultimately undesirable: "the integral realisation of only this principle verges on the impossible"\(^100\). Secondly, Taylor argues, a less distorted account of our moral agency will allow us to realise the goods accessible through public action itself. As Habermas paraphrases Taylor here, the problem with traditional liberalism is that it "fails to recognize that private and public autonomy are equiprimordial"\(^101\).

The emphasis in liberal neutralism on a priori principles of equality reflected by 'difference-blindness' is thus counter-productive for Taylor. His argument is that refusing to take into account the differences between individuals, by referring to a model of identity that strips them of any particular identifications, denies precisely what it is that constitutes them as individuals. This is their situation within (usually linguistic) communities. To actually defend the goods which motivate procedural liberals- universal dignity and respect- demands, says Taylor, a realisation that these values are not best defended by

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\(^99\) Ibid., p. 508.
\(^100\) Taylor, "Charles Taylor replies", p.251.
\(^101\) Jürgen Habermas (tr. S. Nicholsen), "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State", in A. Gutmann (ed.), Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition, p. 112-113.
"neutral liberalism as a total principle"\textsuperscript{102}. Rather, he argues, recognising and responding to the claims of some individuals and communities may involve the suspension of difference blindness and the extending of certain rights and powers to some that are not available to others.

Taylor outlines his position in a response to Daniel Weinstock. His problem is not with the goods neutral liberalism is intended to defend, but with a position that "claim[s] to have found the principle of liberal society; or the principle which ought to trump all others wherever they come into conflict"\textsuperscript{103}. Taylor's point is that goods are plural, and that different goods are addressed by individual and collective rights and powers. To enshrine either set of rights or goods in a "single canonical principle", at the expense of the other, is a futile exercise in "trying to pretend that we aren't dealing with two independent goods which have to be combined"\textsuperscript{104}.

Section 3) Taylor's Moral and Social Ontologies: A Critical Analysis

As was seen in the previous section, Taylor offers a social and political analysis on the strength of his account of agency. This section first considers the merits of Taylor's ontology of agency. In the light of this, I then look at Taylor's account of the politics of recognition and his criticisms of liberalism.
3.1 Taylor's Conception of Identity: The Dialogic Self and Moral Realism

As traced throughout the previous two sections, Taylor's account of identity, upon which his political theories are based, is built upon two planks; the dialogic self and a moral realism. For Taylor, politics and the power of state should address this best account of our moral agency. Taylor's arguments thus rest on his claim that a politics which is based on the dialogic view of moral agency is superior to a proceduralist account based on an atomistic understanding of agency. Taylor's basic account of identity has, however, come under attack.

I want to consider, in the first instance two objections to Taylor's account of the dialogic self. The first questions the account of the good with which Taylor operates, the second questions his assumption that our dialogue in pursuit of that good requires recognition of and from as wide a constituency as Taylor suggests.

The crux of the matter is Taylor's notion of the good as the fundamental feature of our identity. For Taylor, the good is something which we are brought closer to through dialogic articulation with the result that our lives are lent empowering meaning. His politics of recognition is framed so as to respond to this need. The first question to ask, therefore, is whether Taylor's account of moral identity is, in fact, persuasive.

A central feature of Taylor's account is his claim that it is the independently real nature of the good and goods that makes the articulation of our moral sources enabling and empowering. Taylor
asserts that the hypergoods by which we structure our lives, properly understood, have a preterhuman reality. It is by articulating our relation to these sources that Taylor thinks we can draw the power we require to sustain our identities. The assumption implicit in Taylor's work is, as Rorty phrases it, that "a hypergood be at least as much found as made"105.

The crucial point here, on which many thinkers have taken issue with Taylor106, is whether he can establish the reality of the good on the substantive terms he desires. Taylor's account relates the notion of the good to a continual craving in human beings for deeper, richer meanings, the meeting of which counts as 'broadening our horizons' and constitutes our 'moral growth'107. The aim of Sources of the Self is to identify and articulate those hypergoods which will meet these needs and thus counter the sense of lost identity which Taylor identifies with the self-understandings of modernity.

The problem arises, however, when one considers the characterisation Taylor offers of some of the sources to which he finds himself drawn. Theistic sources impress Taylor, as we have seen, with their 'spiritual greatness'- an attraction which is understandable given his understanding of hypergoods "as a step to higher moral consciousness"108. The histories and accounts of the sources Taylor deals with are thus considered by him primarily in relation to the extent to which they contain the germ of a link to

107 See the first section of this Chapter for Taylor's account of moral growth.
108 SOS, p. 64.
higher (i.e. preterhumanly real) things. It is this approach to moral realism which is contentious.

For many thinkers "the intellectual depth and reach of modern unbelief"\(^{109}\) disallows an understanding of the nature of the good on these terms. From these perspectives, the 'good' or goods espoused by sources such as the Church or capitalism are not best analysed as the bearers, or otherwise, of higher moral meanings. Rather, Marxist, feminist and Foucauldian analyses offer causal histories which claim the moral sources on which 'we' draw are better seen as shaped by interests that have "very little to do with the truth or even the spiritual value of [their] creed"\(^{110}\).

The issue at stake here is not whether or not we have frameworks through which our moral identity is framed, but what the articulation of these frameworks involves. For Taylor, it involves an empowering "moral growth"; for those who share historicist views of the type adumbrated above, of whom Quentin Skinner is one, it culminates instead in the view that "[we] will some how have to be satisfied by whatever meanings we can find in everyday life"\(^{111}\).

The question of who is right in this debate is considered in the following section in relation to Foucault. At the moment, however, it is important to note that if Taylor cannot establish the power of his vision of the nature of the good then his assumption that it is through the articulation of these moral truths that 'we' sustain our social lives becomes tenuous. If Taylor is wrong in assuming that our moral frameworks are structured by independent, preterhuman

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\(^{109}\) Quentin Skinner, "Who Are 'We'? Ambiguities of the Modern self", p. 148.
\(^{110}\) Ibid., p. 148.
\(^{111}\) Ibid., p. 149.
and empowering expressions of the good—rather than say contingent histories—then our relations to other may take on a different aspect. Thus, our strong evaluations and moral identities might not lead to a sense of identification or common cause with others. On this understanding, for every Taylor whose hypergoods lead them to strongly evaluate "we are all one", there is a Nietzsche whose strong evaluations lead him instead to see the influence of others as a potential brake on creative self-expression.

The problem from this perspective is that Taylor asks a lot of his moral vision in framing his political theory. The respect for others he wishes to defend becomes, on his account, indexed to a view of the good which is premised on an ethical understanding that many do not share. This has two worrying implications for a politics of recognition. Firstly, if one does not relate moral meanings to empowering and edifying sources of the good then Taylor's assumption, that the realisation of the common features of our moral frameworks can address political conflict, does not appear to be necessarily safe. From this perspective, a greater articulation of our moral identities may be the cause, rather than the solution, of political conflicts. Secondly, Taylor's assumption that our moral frameworks articulate an "understanding of what a human being is" raises the suspicion that those with whom we disagree will be prone to being cast as 'damaged' rather than as political interlocutors.

112 A point well made by Quentin Skinner: "Too many of us have come to the painful conclusion that, even though it would be a fine thing to converse with angels, there are in truth no angels with whom to converse... we must somehow find the values to sustain social life within the practices of social life itself." in ibid., p. 149-150.
114 See Ibid.
115 Frederick A. Olafson, "Comments on Sources of the Self by Charles Taylor", p. 196.
Much rests, therefore, on the moral account to which Taylor's politics are indexed. The next step, therefore, is to see how persuasive an account it is.

3.2 Taylor, Heidegger and the Operation of the Best Account Principle

Taylor's moral and political claims thus depend, in part, on his attempt to provide a convincing account of reality "between Platonism and projectivism". For Taylor, this best account has two features; firstly, the claim that our identities are formed in dialogue with others and, secondly, that it is the orientation we thus gain in relation to moral objects and goods that lends our identities potency.

Taylor, as was seen in the previous section, manifestly fails to convince some thinkers of the second strand of his account. In response to one thinker who poses the criticism that our identities are not best conceived in terms of the language of selfhood that he offers, Taylor professes puzzlement:

[t]his is the more surprising to me, in that (on my view) Heidegger - a philosopher on whom both of us have drawn- occupies one such position. 118

The remainder of this section questions whether Taylor's view of what he has taken from Heidegger is well drawn. Indeed, as I argue below, it is not. Further, what he (mis)takes is a part of Heidegger's fundamental criticism of projects just such as Taylor's.

117 The criticism is offered by Frederick A. Olafson in his "Comments on Sources of the Self by Charles Taylor".
Taylor draws on Heidegger in two ways. Firstly, as referred to earlier in this Chapter, Taylor sees Heidegger as offering an account of agency which surpasses traditional accounts by stressing the constitutive nature of the engagement of the self with both the world and a public, social background horizon of meaning. Secondly, and less clearly, Heidegger exerts at least an influence in the formulation and the role of Taylor's 'Best Account' principle.

The difficulty involved in ascertaining precisely the role, or roles, of the BA principle in Taylor's work was discussed previously. This problem arises because Taylor conflates its role in supporting his argument that identity is dialogically constructed with a support for his claim that our identity is constructed in relation to a notion of the good that is real independent of human action. This leads Taylor to conflate his account of identity with his understanding of the good. What emerges, I suggest, from this is that the BA principle - insofar as it is intended to offer a grounding for Taylor's theory - does not establish Taylor's own project of offering a moral ontology.

The reason for this becomes apparent if one compares the BA principle with its predecessor, Heidegger's account of phenomenological hermeneutics.

3.2.1 Heidegger contra the BA principle

As discussed earlier\(^{119}\), Heidegger's espousal of hermeneutic phenomenology arises from a philosophical concern with the

\(^{119}\) See section 1.4.1 and my previous Chapter 'Heidegger and the Critique of Subjectivism' for a discussion of this and the following concern with transparency.
meaning of Being. For Heidegger, the best account is, formally, that which does not take as evidence any phenomena outside of the inquiry into the meaning of Being. It is this which constitutes transparency. Heidegger is clear that any attempt to understand *Dasein* in terms exceeding this criterion, particularly humanistic ones, runs contrary to the framing of his approach.

By contrast, the BA principle combines a practical claim about the most effective way individuals can articulate their moral sources with a supra-epistemological claim akin to Heidegger's phenomenological commitment to transparency. What is not clear, however, is how Taylor's humanistic rendering of the first sphere rests with the philosophical critique of the language of selfhood (and moral sources indexed to such self-interpretation) implied by the second dimension of the BA principle.

This tension becomes apparent when one examines the sources of the assumptions Taylor makes. In retaining a focus on the explanation of the modern identity Taylor shows his Hegelian roots. Taylor's ontology aims to show how our identities can best be articulated in terms of the moral space and framework in which we move. This provides Taylor's topography, in which the aim is to provide richer or fuller articulations of that framework.

The suggestion that arises in Heidegger's notion of transparency and rejection of humanism, however, and which is taken up and developed in Foucault's work, is that the conception of that moral space and framework is itself a peculiarly modern construction. Although they disagree about precisely what that entails, both Foucault and Heidegger agree that the better articulation of one's identity in modern terms offers no *a priori* justificatory power.
For Heidegger, the sources upon which our identities must be constructed in modernity are products of an understanding of agency which is at best illusory. More modestly, Foucault argues that the space within which our identities are articulated is itself fluid, shaped by the contingent historical practices of power.

For both Heidegger and Foucault, therefore, the histories through which our identities are constructed in modernity, on closer scrutiny, lack the justificatory power that Taylor attributes to them\textsuperscript{120}. This reading of Heideggerean transparency, developed in Foucauldian genealogy, suggests that the 'best account' of our identities does not lead to more or greater self-surety, but a continual questioning of the assumptions upon which that identity is based. Justifications and moral frameworks exist, but always relative.\textsuperscript{121}

This is important because it means that Taylor's arguments about the nature of moral identity do not necessarily have the status- that of a moral \textit{ontology}- which he claims for them. Heidegger's ontological focus is not directly on how one conceives of one's self or the world; or, in Taylor's terms, whether or not moral sources can be conceived of on Platonist, projectivist or a "third alternative"\textsuperscript{122} set of terms. For Taylor, this third alternative rests in a realisation that one's moral understandings are mediated by the self-interpretation of an individual situated within a horizon of public meanings. Heidegger's challenge, however, is to ask whether knowledge (or ontology on Taylor's account) can ever be understood in terms of how an agent comes to know- or articulate- a reality separated from them.

\textsuperscript{120} In this regard, see Réal Robert Fillon, "Foucault contra Taylor: Whose Sources? Which Self?", esp. p. 670.

\textsuperscript{121} A point covered in some detail in the above article.

From this perspective, the basic ontology within which Taylor moves— the notion of a separate, objective and at least partially knowable moral space within which our agency is situated—is structured by the initial distinction between the "in me" and the "outside of Me". Thus Taylor's topography and, therefore, his constitution of what counts as a fuller meaning upon which to premise a stronger articulation of our identities remains marked by the impulse to self-certitude that Heidegger identifies as the basic but flawed characteristic of the modern understanding of Being.

This does not, as previously argued, entail that Heidegger can countenance no talk of subjectivity or objectivity at all; merely that he asserts that this cannot be one's starting point in seeking to understand Being. Applied to Taylor's work, the suggestion is that the self—Taylor's main concern—is not a starting point for an ontology. This, however, causes problems for Taylor, who wishes to establish the reality of the moral in relation to self-interpretation. For Heidegger, however, a moral account based on the notion of the self is not necessarily wrong, but it is derivative of a more fundamental ontological understanding of reality. What this comparison suggests is that the philosophical authority of Taylor's account rests on the provision of an account which shows the notion of self to be fundamental.

For Heidegger, this account rests in taking human being to be derivative of Dasein, conceived of as the horizon of understandings required for any meaning of Being to exist at all. For Foucault, our self-conceptions are to be understood through historical analyses.

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123 Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 249.
that show how our identities draw on meanings and sources that are contingently shaped by power. Both Heidegger and Foucault focus on the conditions within which our identities are produced. They both conclude that there is a danger inherent in seeking to ontologize- or make certain- the features of our self-understandings without a scrutiny of the frameworks within which they are produced. On this view the problem with Taylor's account is his belief that a fuller articulation of his, basically humanist, notion of our moral framework will counter the "painful and frightening experience" that comes from perceiving our identities as based on meanings which are "unfixed, labile or undetermined"124. For Heidegger and Foucault, it is the claim that there is a moral space with objective, universal features that is without ontological warrant125.

Thus, a perspective informed by the Heideggerean notion of transparency, suggests that Taylor's focus on how we defend our identities is fundamentally of secondary interest. Rather, the fundamental questions concern what the articulation of those identities assumes and entails.

Hence, insofar as the BA principle serves to lend Taylor's account any philosophical authority, the basic question is postponed. Heidegger's contribution is not to better allow us to articulate 'our' conception of the good, but to call into question the adequacy of the grounds upon which these articulations are based. In other words, from a Heideggerean perspective, the problem with our understandings of reality is not whether or not our conclusions are valid, but what is entailed by the assumptions with which we start. For Heidegger, instrumentalism expresses itself not just in

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124 SOS, p. 28.
125 Or, at least, in Heidegger's case that it is available in modernity.
vitiated understandings of our own moral agency, but in the assumption that there is an objective, essential human identity to which we should aspire.

Taylor's account of the first of these questions—how my interpretations are related to the cultural and public background from which they emerge—is stronger than his considerations of the second. From a Heideggerean perspective the question of whether or not the 'I' may be a product of a more collective 'We' is less interesting126 than the assumptions upon which the whole nexus is built. Taylor's operation of the BA principle offers, I argue, a more persuasive support for his considerations on the former question than it does on the issue of whether or not the clearer articulation of our supposed deepest intuitions represents a more perspicacious understanding of Being. Specifically, the BA principle thus conceived does not lend Taylor's account of the moral realities of modernity the foundational status he accords them.

The BA principle thus serves to show how Taylor believes an account of moral identity ought to be rendered alongside the fundamental assumption of the essentially dialogic nature of selfhood he makes. What it does not do is show why that assumption, or the conclusions that follow from it, ought to be though of as true— or in Taylor's language "rich" or "full". To see why that should be so, one needs to look at Taylor's account of the basic nature of selfhood.

126 For a discussion of this see my Chapter, "Heidegger and the Political", section 3.1.
3.3 Taylor, Agency and Identity

Taylor's account of agency, as has been discussed above, rests largely on an account of self-interpretation. As has been argued above, however, it is far from clear that Taylor's account has the transparency which it would require in order to have the foundational power that the BA principle suggests it should.

Two things follow from this. Firstly, Taylor is open to criticism, as detailed above, that he accords too much importance to questions of the good and morality in his account of the constitution of identity. Secondly, it is unclear that the challenge to moral realism posed by modernity is met by a history of the development of the modern identity as offered by Taylor. For Heidegger, the problem of modernity is not that instrumental rationality is unable to deliver us the liberal ideal of private autonomy, but that human agency has come to be understood in terms of a basic autonomy—whether public or private—at all. In contrast to Taylor, and Hegel, Heidegger (and, later Foucault) argues that the frameworks within which our identities are framed are not marked by dialogic progression or the move towards greater certainty of identity. For Heidegger, no understanding of Being offers a certitude that extends beyond the finitude, temporality and hiddenness which accompanies any act of disclosure.

For Heidegger, therefore, the basic problem of modernity— and one which subsumes both moral and political categories—is how to meet, or at least be open to, understandings of Being beyond those which focus on humanistic ideals. Taylor's critique of subjectivist understandings of proceduralist/instrumentalist conceptions of
freedom, offered at the end of *Sources of the Self*\textsuperscript{127} reflects these concerns. Where Taylor and Heidegger differ, however, is in what they put in its place. It is not clear that Taylor's alternative— a politics of mediation between the public and private spheres grounded in the reality of the recognition of our equal moral worth— has what Olafson calls a "more secure basis in moral phenomenology than that of 'projection' "\textsuperscript{128}.

Heidegger's work suggests that Taylor's attempt to secure that basis in self-interpretation is unlikely to succeed; for the modern self is centred, in his eyes, around notions and ideals that are misconceived. Taylor does not offer an account of the self which shows why we ought to conceive of its moral identity as 'phenomenologically secure'. An account of that sort would either have to identify essential features of the self which would be undeniable, or accept a scaled down historicist account of the sort he rejects in others\textsuperscript{129}.

3.3.1 Taylor and Identity: Conclusions

The criticisms considered in this section suggest two shortcomings in Taylor's account of identity. His critics ask whether a moral realism of the sort Taylor espouses is ontologically coherent and, in turn, whether it can therefore establish the substantive commitments from all that would ground a politics of recognition. Taylor's ontological framework of identity at most might show why an individual has an interest in the society of which they are part, not that this interest ought to include the goods or recognition of others that Taylor wishes.

\textsuperscript{127} See *SOS* pages 519-520.
\textsuperscript{128} Olafson, "Comments on *Sources of the Self* by Charles Taylor", p. 194.
\textsuperscript{129} See for example my discussion of Taylor's treatment of Foucault in the previous Chapter.
This explains why Taylor shows himself unwilling to accept a history of moral identity that seeks sociological or historicist, rather than ontological, interpretations of the origins of moral value. For Taylor, what we recognise in others is informed by a basically Christian understanding of the moral worth of others. We recognise in others orientations towards the same objective notion of the good that underpin our own sense of self.

I have already suggested what some of the implications of these criticisms might be for Taylor's moral and political theories. I want to develop these further through a wider examination of the limits of Taylor's account of liberalism.

3.4 Taylor's Reading of Liberalism

I consider below two sets of criticisms which have been made of Taylor's account of liberalism. The first set is concerned with whether Taylor's characterisation of liberal thought, as failing to take into account the social dimension of moral value, is a fair one. The second set of criticisms are concerned with the suggestion that Taylor thus mistakes the nature of the liberal commitment to neutrality and procedure.

In considering Taylor's assertion that liberal theory risks cutting itself off from the values and social practices which sustain it, it is worth noting again that the general and idealised nature of Taylor's intellectual history makes things unclear. Richard Tuck\(^{130}\) and Daniel Weinstock both take Taylor's early essay on 'Atomism' to be a critique of rights theorists in general. They

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\(^{130}\) Richard Tuck, "Rights and Pluralism" in James Tully (ed.), *Philosophy in an age of pluralism: The philosophy of Charles Taylor in question.*
both find Taylor's claim that "foundational moral properties are supposed to inhere in individuals rather than in any other entities"\textsuperscript{131} underestimates crucial moments of particular rights theorists.

Tuck argues that, as a matter of historical fact, Grotius, Hobbes and Locke amongst many others do not reduce the moral to the political; rather, motivated by the "central ethical problem [...of] intercultural conflict"\textsuperscript{132}, they simply seek a political accommodation of a pluralist moral conflict of which they are keenly aware. Further, none of these responses need to be thought of as assuming that morality and moral value do not have a social dimension; simply that there is no one universal perspective on the good which can reconcile these differences.

Weinstock similarly takes issue with Taylor, perceiving him to claim that Rawls "justifies his preferred political principles without any awareness of the human goods which they subserve"\textsuperscript{133}. In Weinstock's view, Taylor simply mistakes Rawls's principles of justice as themselves foundational when it is precisely "the fostering of certain human capacities (a 'sense of justice' and a capacity to conceive, to revise, and to carry out one's own conception of the good life)\textsuperscript{134}" which is appealed to in grounding the principles.

Two things emerge from these criticisms and Taylor's response to them. The first is that Taylor asserts that the early essay 'Atomism' is more exclusively concerned with Nozick's formulation

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p. 160.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 168.
\textsuperscript{133} Weinstock, "The political theory of strong evaluation", p. 178.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 178.
of liberalism in *Anarchy, State and Utopia* than his critics allow. Because many of the key terms of *Sources of the Self* are drawn from, and build on, the early essays this move requires some scrutiny.

In 'Atomism', it is not Nozick but "social contract theory" [Taylor cites Hobbes and Locke], "[c]ertain forms of utilitarianism" and "contemporary doctrines which hark back to social contract theory" that Taylor nominates as his targets. Although Taylor's essay is clearly indexed to Nozick in particular, his work is very much treated by Taylor as emblematic of this much broader group of thinkers and theories. Taylor's later reinterpretation of his focus runs the risk of seeing him fall between two stools. If the essay was indeed specifically about Nozick (and not as one might easily assume about Rawls) it is odd that this is not both clearly flagged and that Nozick's own particular arguments are not more closely followed. Further, losing the general sweep of his arguments in that essay would make it unclear as to how one ought to understand Taylor's continuation of the use of the term in *Sources of the Self*.

Taylor clearly does retain a general application for the term atomism, therefore, and it does remain intimately linked to his criticisms of liberal theory. As both Tuck and Weinstock realise, and as was argued earlier, Taylor's objections to liberalism extend beyond a perceived inefficacy in delivering the goal of private autonomy, and encompass a critique of the goal- as hypergood-itself.

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137 In each case they are united as they "inherited a vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfilment of ends which were primarily individual": "Atomism", p. 187.
Thus, much more turns on the second of Taylor's claims about theorists of procedural or neutral liberalism: that they operate with a fundamentally atomistic ontology which limits the types of good of which they can conceive whilst simultaneously lending their partial (yet equally culturally situated) view a bogus authority. What procedural liberalism is certainly guilty of, for Taylor, is a "trump foundationalism"\(^{138}\): an assumption of "philosophical authority"\(^{139}\) based on an incomplete account of agency in atomistic terms. Thus, as Habermas observes, Taylor's core aim is not to supplement liberal principles but to "call[s] into question the individualistic core of the modern conception of freedom"\(^{140}\).

Taylor's assumption that procedural neutrality between individuals is simply an expression of a liberal commitment to an atomistic moral ontology has been questioned, however. Rather, some claim- Weinstock and Tuck above, for example- that some liberals are quite able to accommodate the realisation that individuals can find their good life through collective identification with a continuing subscription to a system of individual rights.

This is Weinstock's defence of Rawlsian liberalism. Rawls, Weinstock argues, can and indeed does accommodate the importance of "cultural stability" at the level of the particular "cultural community"\(^{141}\). Within a Rawlsian politics the needs of cultural survival can be addressed. This is because neutrality does not demand that one ignore these claims or never take public action to address them, only that any claim:

\(^{139}\) Ibid., p. 248.
\(^{141}\) Weinstock, "The political theory of strong evaluation", p. 182.
be given political weight regardless of the cultural community from which it emanates... While Rawlsian liberalism need not be neutral about human beings' nature as cultural beings, it must in conditions of cultural plurality remain neutral between the various cultures which coexist in a given society, lest it undercut the capacity of some to fully exercise their capacities as cultural beings. 142

Weinstock's point is similar to Tuck's, discussed above. His claim is that liberal neutrality need not arise from atomistic understandings of the good. Rather, a procedural account of both political justice and moral conduct may be differently motivated; as the only way to mediate between competing individual or communal visions of the good.

The point being made by those defending modern procedural moral and political theory is that our accounts of the good are realised (whether atomistically or socially) pre-morally. The debate is not, as it is for Taylor, about whether or not "there are goods independent of the will"143. There is in the works of many modern moral and political theorists conceptual room for that belief, even where it may not be subscribed to by the individual writer. From this perspective, the crucial fact is not whether or not an individual's identity is framed in relation to objective moral goods, but that there exist plural and conflicting perspectives of the good. On this account Taylor misreads both the motivation and role of procedural accounts of moral and political theory. The aim of morality is not to articulate or empower visions of the good; rather, given their existence, it is to see that they are lived up to. It is the job of morality to defend individuals in the light of the values and powers of these goods. Will Kymlicka makes this point

142 Ibid., p. 182.
when he argues against Taylor that "[m]orality is in the first place a social institution, and cannot be reduced to questions about what particular individuals should be or do"\(^{144}\).

This builds on the criticism of Taylor's notion of a moral framework that emerged in my discussion of his work in comparison with Heidegger and Foucault\(^{145}\). The existence of moral frameworks and values is not denied in much modern moral and political theory; rather (just as Foucault and Connolly point to the finitude of these frameworks), the point being made here is that our visions of the good, in themselves, lack the universal common features or power to eliminate social and political conflict\(^{146}\).

Taylor's response to his critics here is telling. Taylor claims that "what divides me from Kymlicka, and in general from other 'proceduralists', is a quite different view of the human condition"\(^{147}\). Taylor does not share a vision of human being which allows one to ever place moral or political demands over an ethical imperative \textit{a priori}. In deciding what moral or political decisions are justified we must always make reference, Taylor argues, to the demands of ethical life.

This is linked to the importance Taylor attaches to his account of moral realism in questions of human agency and intersubjectivity. For Taylor, liberal and proceduralist appeals to practical considerations, framed in the light of a separation between the right and the good, are flawed. Hence, in his account, the coercion of the state or an appeal to a moral principle can only

\(^{144}\) Ibid., p.173.
\(^{145}\) In Section 3.2.1 above.
\(^{146}\) Indeed, as Löw-Beer points out, they are frequently the motivating force behind violence and conflict.
\(^{147}\) Charles Taylor, "Comments and Replies", p. 244.
be justified in the light of a fundamentally ethical view of human being.

As the discussion in this section suggests, however, the assumptions upon which such a politics is based are not as secure as Taylor believes. Further, from this perspective, both Taylor's criticisms of liberal theory and his own politics of recognition become problematic. The point has now been reached where some general conclusions about the implications of Taylor's conception of the nature of politics can be considered.

Section 4) Taylor, Heidegger and Politics

Taylor seeks to develop an account of politics which meets what he sees as the threat posed by instrumentalist conceptions of human being. In doing so, he offers an alternative account of human being that posits moral identity as its central feature. Taylor argues the pursuit of the good, which constitutes an unavoidable part of our existence, is a feature we all share, as is the potential for clearer understandings of our moral identities to enrich our lives. Common to all clearly ('undamaged') agent's articulations of the good are certain moral ideals which apply universally. For Taylor, therefore, our moral and political dealings with others ought to be informed by the realisation and implementation of these ideals. This, in turn, entails a recognition of both the worth of all individuals, and of the needs of communities which these individuals require.

What Taylor calls 'liberalism' fails, he argues, to recognise, and hence to meet these needs. This stems from a failure to connect the good of the individual to the moral community of which they
are part. This is caused by the paucity of proceduralist accounts of morality which take the good to be simply extensions of the will of the individual. A better politics, in Taylor's eyes, will both recognise the social needs of moral agents, and conceive that agency in terms which reflect the reality of the goods that motivate them. It will also reflect the realisation that the good can be articulated in multiple ways, irreducible to a single principle. A focus on private or formal autonomy alone both fails to provide the practical realisations of the public dimensions of individual's moral identities, and fails to recognise goods which are themselves only collectively available. The aim ought rather to be the inclusion and fostering of as many perspectives on the good as possible. A politics based on recognition thus rejects liberal neutralism as premised on an inadequately proceduralist moral account, and focuses instead on the fostering of multiple and collective identities.

Taylor comes under criticism from liberals and non-liberals alike. Liberals stress the neutrality and proceduralism of the political theories they offer do not run contrary to the picture of moral identity Taylor offers. Rather, they argue, their accounts are based on non-ethical considerations in the justification and foundation of moral and political accounts. Taylor's concept of intersubjectivity, in contrast, requires a degree of commitment to his own brand of moral realism which, in fact, exceeds that demanded by ontological necessity. For these liberals, therefore, Taylor needs to look to alternative, less ambitious, sources upon which to base political identity.

From a non-liberal perspective the suggestion arises that Heidegger's critique of the modern identity cuts deeper than Taylor
allows. This line of criticism suggests that Taylor's rejection of the liberal conception of identity is of value, but that this is based on a questioning of the modern conception of instrumental rationality which undermines the alternative account of agency and intersubjectivity which Taylor seeks to provide.

The work of two of these thinkers, Heidegger and Foucault, can suggest where this arises. For both Heidegger and Foucault, freedom or autonomy conceived of in humanist terms are at best historically contingent ideals, with no secure phenomenological basis in any essential feature of the self. Both thinkers argue that an ontological account must do without autonomy, at least on these terms. Features of Taylor's history of agency in *Sources of the Self*, underpinned by the BA principle, reflect this, but the politics of recognition and his account of intersubjectivity in general build on a stronger, phenomenological account of the BA principle which Taylor offers little reason to accept. Indeed, they build on claims about the nature of the good which Taylor, in response to Olafson's and Alasdair MacIntyre's criticisms of the *Sources of the Self*148, describes thus:

The book, particularly towards the end, contains affirmations or hints of affirmations which go beyond what I made any systematic attempt to argue for. I thought and still think this is a good procedure, because it sometime helps the reader to understand what you've said, if you're a little more forthcoming on where you'd like to end up. But of course, readers, particularly philosophical readers, find it difficult to treat these hints differently from the central thesis I've been arguing. 149

This quote hints at a fundamental commonality between Taylor's political theory and Heidegger's treatment of the political. Taylor

148 Published, interestingly, two years after 'The Politics of Recognition'.
149 Taylor, "Reply to Commentators", p. 203.
and Heidegger both criticise the degree to which the detached subject of traditional epistemology has come to dominate modern understandings of agency. As Taylor says of projectivism: "Why should a shaky metaphysical theory, based on a flawed epistemology, trump the best account on the ground?"150. Both Taylor and Heidegger develop alternative accounts of agency, through accounts which are set up to run counter to the tradition of epistemological certitude. These accounts differ radically in terms of the substantive concepts of what is considered important in agency. For Heidegger, it is the capacity to be open to the 'sendings of Being'; for Taylor, it is an openness to real, plural and diverse understandings of the good.

The different content of these conceptions of agency, however, do not lead to radically different formal understandings of intersubjectivity. I have argued previously151 that, philosophically, Heidegger does not develop, but does not rule out, a theory of intersubjectivity; rather, he offers an account of the legitimacy of the conceptions of agency upon which modern accounts are based. As also argued in my third Chapter, when Heidegger does consider the place of the political he does so in terms of a conception of intersubjectivity which draws on social, political and cultural understandings that belong to the tradition his philosophical understanding criticizes.

As I have claimed above, and in the light of Heidegger's critique of the modern conception of identity, Taylor's position is similar. The social and cultural understandings which motivate Taylor are obviously indexed to far less destructive ideals than Heidegger's, but he remains nonetheless wedded to them. Thus, although Taylor

150 Ibid., p. 207.
151 See my Chapter "Heidegger and the Political", especially pp. 149-153.
offers a more extensive consideration of the relationships between agents than Heidegger, he does so in terms which subordinate the differences between them to a more fundamental identification with a shared identity in relation to a foundational account of the good.

There are arguably two strands to Taylor's thought. The first suggests that what he calls 'liberal' theories, which include a broad horizon of rights-based political understandings, are limited by their appeal to a detached notion of the individual subject as an adequate ground. His argument is that this assumption vitiates the ends and means which the liberal can contemplate. Taylor's second strand thus suggests a fuller, richer account of our identity from which such a politics could be drawn. Thus Taylor attempts to articulate a more powerful justificatory vision than is to be found in liberalism, and which will support a politics of recognition of the differences between agents.

My argument throughout this Chapter has been that Taylor's success in establishing his first strand of thought does not entail, and indeed undermines, the success of his second. This arises in part because, unlike Heidegger, Taylor's critique of modernity is limited to our own moral and political self-understandings. Taylor's assertion that political identity ought not to reflect the liberal conception of the self, but a richer, fuller account of identity retains the assumption (which he believes is made by liberals) that politics is an expression of an ethical ideal.

As shown above, Heidegger questions whether it is in fact a better articulation of the modern identity that is required\(^\text{152}\).

\(^{152}\) And again, of course, Foucault develops a similar point.
Heidegger's work suggests that it is the attempt to articulate understandings of human being on the models of explicitness and certitude which is part of the problem. Similarly, within the horizon of rights-based political theory are theorists who protest that their vision of politics is not based on the ontological assumptions Taylor ascribes to them. Rather, these theorists argue, it is precisely because they do have a fuller conception of ethical and moral agency than Taylor allows that they operate a limited conception of political identity. On this understanding, Taylor's attempt to reconcile intersubjective difference through an appeal to particular common moral sources does not contrast with the liberal's failure to acknowledge these sources. Rather, the liberal argues, it is precisely because these differences are recognised that a political framework has to be found within which conflict between them can be managed. For the liberal, or rights theorist, this is not done by making political identity dependent on a particular, or any, substantive moral identity.

Taylor thus identifies an important question for liberal theorists: how to clearly delineate a political identity from one's own ontological or moral commitments. In asserting that liberals need to look beyond atomistic conceptions of agency to explain and defend the value of autonomy, Taylor underestimates the degree to which liberalism contains such traditions. These theorists can, with justification, claim to be able to countenance supposedly richer, fuller conceptions of agency than Taylor allows. Taylor's reading of liberal theory here reflects his own retention of a politics which is intended to express a fundamentally ethical account of human being.
As I have argued in this Chapter, the philosophical authority Taylor seeks to accord his own humanistic account can itself be questioned from a Heideggerean perspective. Further, Taylor's approach might be thought of as repeating Heidegger's failings in attempting to frame political obligation in relation to a purportedly authoritative and objective moral ontology in the first place. As some of the theorists in this Chapter suggest, the basis of moral and political legitimacy in the modern era must be based on accounts of agency which account for intersubjective difference in alternative and more disparate terms. For these theorists, it is precisely the contestability of moral language and realism that leads them to frame political identities and autonomy procedurally and without appeal to moral sources.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

Heidegger and Agency

For the political theorist, Heidegger's legacy has two main strands. In the first instance, his work serves as the basis for an ongoing critique of the predominant conceptions and institutions of modernity, including those of politics. Further, Heidegger's work serves as the basis for those seeking to develop an alternative politics in the light of this critique.

In both cases the crucial factor is the account of agency. The problem with liberalism (and democracy, socialism and communism) is, in Heidegger's eyes, that it is the culmination of an understanding of Being which takes as fundamental an image of the human being as Subject. Heidegger believes that this perspective is perforce a misinterpretation, inconsistent on its own terms. For Heidegger, hermeneutical analysis reveals the inability of what he sees as instrumental subjectivism to account for the full range of the phenomena of Being. Yet, Heidegger argues, the language of subjectivism and the privileging of epistemological certitude are part of a wider domination of the world by technological reason. The problem, he claims, is that an, at best, partial account of human agency has been taken as both full and fundamental.

Heidegger argues that the image of the rational autonomous Subject, seeking knowledge of the Object of his study, has been taken as the basic departure point, rather than itself one of a range of phenomena to be understood. As a result, this partial
understanding of our agency has come to determine which phenomena are considered legitimate or, indeed, considered at all. Heidegger's argument is that the vitiated understanding of human agency leads, in turn, to a vitiated understanding of our freedom.

For Heidegger, this occurs because the account of our freedom is indexed to, and limited by, the placing of the epistemological Subject at the centre of our interpretations of existence. The freedoms and values attributed to this Subject are, especially when elevated to exclusivity, phenomenologically untenable. The legitimacy of any moral, social or political notions or institutions premised on this understanding is, for Heidegger, in question.

Thus, Heidegger's work suggests two ways in which the politics of modernity might be found wanting. Most famously, his recasting of Dasein in the terms of das Volk leads him, briefly but sincerely, to embrace Nazism as a political movement that can overcome global technology and reconnect politics with the values of a deeper, more divinely inspired understanding of our being. More significantly, Heidegger also provides the basis of an internal critique of traditional liberal and humanist politics whose aims are generated and justified by reference to a metaphysical or ontologically subjectivist conception of the human individual. For Heidegger, the difficulties liberals have in delivering the goal of individual autonomy stem not from their inability to find the one appropriate set of rules or institutions, but from the fundamental importance attributed to this aim in the first place. Further, any success a liberal, or similarly humanist, politics does have in ensuring its freedoms comes at the expense of the freedoms of a fuller understanding of human being.
Hence, Heidegger's suggestion is that unless one can find a language of agency which accounts for the full range of meanings and values available to us (and, as such, surpasses the language of epistemological certitude and instrumental reason), then our self-understandings will continue to be, at best, partial. Further, these partial self-understandings— in particular, the assumption of the primacy of the metaphysical conception of the autonomous, volitional individual— will continue to serve as the basis of a politics which is itself misconceived.

**Heidegger and Politics**

Although Heidegger's criticisms of the metaphysical foundations underpinning liberalism resonate with current issues within political theory, it is clear that his proposed political alternatives do not. Whereas some thinkers have sought to explain this through a separation of Heidegger's hermeneutic into two autonomous parts— a hermeneutics of everydayness and a hermeneutics of suspicion— and then sought to show that the fault lies with one pole at the expense of the other, I argued this was not the case. Rather, my interpretation is that both hermeneutical moments stem from a critique of instrumental reason of which Dasein is an expression.

Thus, if one wishes to retain Heidegger's philosophical questioning of traditional understandings of agency it is not an option to cleanse the Nazism from his thought by eliminating one of his two hermeneutical dynamics whilst retaining the critical perspective one identifies with the other. Heidegger's hermeneutical perspectives combine symbiotically to offer a basic criticism of modernity. For Heidegger, the understanding of agency
is not enhanced by seeking a Subject detached from the object of its intention. As a result, he does not offer a critical perspective that aims at objectivity within the terms of a Cartesian philosophy of consciousness. Rather, Heidegger argues, our agency is a process of self-interpretations that are intrinsically linked to the environment of which we are part. From a Heideggerean perspective, therefore, one can neither ignore his suspicion of the self-understandings of modernity nor his claim that it is nonetheless to our everyday engagements that we must look in providing an account of our self-interpretations. Heidegger's political commitments thus cannot be attributed to one pole of his philosophical thought without indicting the other. This does not entail, however, that Heidegger's philosophy has necessarily fascist implications. The philosophical interpretation which reads Dasein as the expression of a bipartite hermeneutical dynamic that denies the 'transparency' of the epistemological Subject does not, however, commit one to Heidegger's political adventurism. Indeed, I argue, the explanation of Heidegger's Nazism is likely to involve an interpretation of Dasein which is incompatible with my preferred philosophical interpretation.

I thus conclude that the problem for those seeking to develop political theories which respond to Heidegger's insights is not intrinsically contained within the philosophical construction of Dasein. Dasein alone does not, and cannot, serve as a full account of human agency. It is better read as a regulative principle governing the understanding of the horizons within which such an account is framed. The problem arises when Dasein is mistakenly read as providing a full account of human agency. Read this way, the problem with Dasein is not locating which aspects of its formulation are intrinsically fascist, but framing a theory of
agency which, whilst addressing the issues raised by Heidegger, includes the bases of moral and political relationships which Heidegger does not.

Following Stephen K. White's treatment of Heidegger's work, I identify Heidegger's failure to consider the relationships between subjects apart from the relationship between the individual and Being as at the core of his political failing. For Heidegger, the way in which instrumental rationality has narrowed the interpretative scope of our understanding of Being is of such overriding importance that all uses of technical reason are seen by him purely as obscuring better understandings of Being. In my discussion of Heidegger's work I point out - as he himself realises - that the languages of Subjectivity and of technical reason are, when not taken as fundamental, compatible with his other concerns.

There is, therefore, no conceptual bar to developing a political theory which resonates with Heidegger's thoughts on agency. What is required is the development of a conception of agency that, whilst meeting Heideggerean concerns, considers the mediation and co-ordination of intersubjective relations.

_Sartre, Agency and Politics_

Sartre is the first thinker I look at who tries to provide such an account. As I have argued, Sartre correctly recognises that Heidegger's account of politics is flawed because he fails to develop an adequate account of intersubjectivity. Crucially, Sartre maintains, Heidegger is unable to account for the radical differences which exist between Subjects and the values they hold.

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Unfortunately this realisation is, in Sartre's case, indexed to a fundamental misunderstanding of Heidegger's work. For Sartre, Heidegger's failure to capture the true nature of intersubjectivity stems from an underplaying of consciousness in the original construction of Dasein. Sartre, impressed with what he sees as the potential of a phenomenological ontology to overcome the traditional Cartesian problem of solipsism, seeks to remedy this in his account of consciousness.

For Heidegger, this treatment of Dasein is fundamentally misconceived. On these terms, Sartre accepts the division between Subject and world in opposition to which Dasein is framed. Marked by the dictates of instrumental reason, Sartre's work thus fails to avoid the obstacles which Heidegger identifies with all fundamentally Cartesian accounts: a drive to certitude on (humanist) terms that are ultimately unable to deliver that certainty.

Sartre's position thus remains, from a Heideggerian perspective, inscribed with the limits that mark all philosophies of consciousness. Seeking to provide an explanation of the origin of value in the terms of a Cartesian account of Subjectivity is, for Heidegger, an impossible project. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues all such accounts will be unable to provide the certainty at which they aim, whilst simultaneously narrowing down the scope of their inquiry in a way which obscures this limitation.

Heidegger thus outlines the flaw which bars Sartre from supplying a theory of intersubjectivity which will allow for a persuasive account of the bases of either morality or politics. For
Heidegger, the Subject is simply an inappropriate ontological starting point on which to base one's interpretation of the phenomena of existence. From this departure point, I argued, following Heidegger, that Sartre can neither escape the reef of solipsism as he claims, nor can he, by extension, say why one ought to have a moral or political understanding that reflects the value of human freedom as Sartre understands it.

Heidegger thus anticipates Taylor's criticism of Sartre's account of value\(^2\). Unable, on the model of radical choice, to account for the power moral claims exert upon us, Sartre provides an unsatisfactory image of the moral and political values he seeks to inscribe.

Thus, although Sartre identifies what it is that Heidegger lacks, he fails to take on the full depth and force of Heidegger's critique. Sartre thus seeks to develop a phenomenological perspective based on Heidegger's hermeneutics of everydayness, grounded in the philosophy of consciousness and divorced from Heideggerean suspicion. As a result, his account of intersubjectivity remains subject to the same criticisms that a richer understanding of Heidegger's work raises about other humanist and subjectivist accounts.

An examination of Sartre's work thus illustrates one of the lessons that Heidegger's work offers the political theorist. This is the futility of seeking to base one's moral or political understandings on an ontological account of agency which is couched in the terms of instrumental subjectivity. Thus, although Sartre is right that it is a theory of intersubjectivity that

Heidegger's account lacks, he is wrong to presume that this can be developed from within the philosophy of consciousness. Any early Sartrean notion of legitimacy would thus remain dependent on an ontological account of agency that Heidegger has undermined.

*Foucault, Connolly, Agency and Politics*

Foucault, in contrast to Sartre, realises that Heidegger's hermeneutical dynamic cannot be bent towards establishing an account of agency, based on conscious Subjectivity, possessed of the certainty required to ground authoritative moral or political claims. Foucault thus shares Heidegger's hermeneutical suspicion of the predominance in modernity of the philosophy of consciousness. Indeed, for Foucault, it is the hermeneutics of everydayness which, on Heidegger's part, masks an illegitimate desire for the reification of one particular identity.

Thus, in Foucault's hands, Heideggerean suspicion is transformed into a hermeneutics which translates the understanding of all meaning into the dynamics of power. For Foucault, there is nothing outside of this vernacular with which human agency can be identified without making illegitimate claims to 'discovering' a truth which is, in fact, only ever historically made.

A couple of things are thus of particular political interest in Foucault. The first is a continuation of the critique of the modern emphasis on the autonomous Subject as the definitive image of human being. Secondly, Foucault offers some indications of what political implications he takes to follow from this. These political concerns are not fully developed and, located within the often confusing Foucauldian nexus, not always easily linked together.
Most suggestive in this area, however, is Foucault's distinction between force and power\(^3\) and his resulting identification with the liberal aim of limiting government\(^4\).

Foucault, however, does little to develop these comments into a theory of politics. Some conclude that this is because he lacks the resources to offer any account of moral or political legitimacy\(^5\). William E. Connolly, on the other hand, argues that he can defend what he sees as a Foucauldian ethos and outline its political implications.

In fact, I find that neither Foucault nor Connolly offers an account of politics which extends beyond a continuing uncovering of the implications of theories of agency that are based on images of autonomy and subjectivity. Whilst I do not draw the conclusion— as some of Foucault's most vehement critics have— that this is because Foucault is conceptually incapable of developing a coherent theory of agency, I do argue that, in common with Heidegger, neither Foucault nor Connolly moves the argument beyond that point.

Both Foucault and Connolly continue Heidegger's assault on the dominant conceptions of agency in modernity. Their rejection of instrumental subjectivity does not, however, lead them to the extreme, fascistic politics which Heidegger embraced. Indeed both Foucault and Connolly show some sympathy with liberal democratic politics; it is with the traditional bases to those politics that they take issue.

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\(^3\) See my Chapter "The politics of difference: Foucault and Connolly", p. 227.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 229.
\(^5\) See my discussions of, amongst others, Taylor and Habermas in the above Chapter.
Foucault and Connolly's emphasis on power reflects Heidegger's own ideas on agency. This similarity continues, however, when one looks at how these thoughts are related to their provision of alternative political accounts. The Foucauldian concept of agency cannot, when framed exclusively in the language of power, be extended to ground an account of the legitimacy of the moral and political goals with which Foucault and Connolly suggest they identify.

Thus, I conclude, there is a parallel between Heidegger's approach to politics and that of Foucault and Connolly. All seek to develop understandings of politics from understandings of agency which are one dimensional. For both Heidegger and Foucault, morality and politics are structured according to understandings of agency which do not take account of a separate dimension of intersubjective action. Neither Heidegger's emphasis on Being nor the Foucauldian focus on power can in themselves generate moral or political imperatives. To suggest that they do, either indirectly, as in the case of Foucault's analysis of political reason, or directly, as Connolly does, leads to a political understanding marked by the adventurism- although less terrible- that characterised Heidegger's engagement.

Thus where an examination of Sartre's work reveals the impossibility of developing a politics based on a theory of agency itself framed simply in terms of the hermeneutics of everydayness, an examination of Foucault's and Connolly's work reveals the equal futility of seeking to develop a politics based on the hermeneutics of suspicion alone.
Taylor, Agency and Politics

Charles Taylor offers both an account of agency which he believes offers a specific consideration of the intersubjective dimension and a diagnosis of why the previous thinkers I have looked at fail to develop adequate political theories.

My analysis of Taylor suggests that comparing his work with Heidegger's is illuminating. As with all the thinkers examined in this thesis, Taylor is critical of what he sees as the predominant conception of agency in modernity. I argue that this stems from a commitment to phenomenological transparency (expressed in Taylor's Best Account Principle) akin to Heidegger's own phenomenological position.

It is from this position that Taylor rejects Foucault and Sartre's accounts of moral and political agency. As was seen above, Taylor finds that Sartre's account simply fails to account for the sense of obligation that moral claims exert upon us; it thus fails the phenomenological test.

Similarly, Taylor claims, Foucault's ontological account (or, as Connolly puts it, ontological) is equally unable to provide an explanation of the values by which we live our lives. Taylor's argument is that Foucault's ethical, moral and political support for 'otherness' is incoherent without an account of the source of the value of that otherness. For Taylor trying to explain the value of human agency in terms of power alone cannot provide that account.

Hence, although Taylor rejects the traditional account of agency, his phenomenological approach equally leads him to be
unsatisfied with Sartre and Foucault's accounts. Most importantly, however, Taylor takes issue with the atomistic ontological account of the individual that he believes underpins much of modernity's self-understandings. Without an adequate understanding of the nature of human agency and value, Taylor argues, it is unsurprising that the political orders envisaged from within each perspective are limited.

For Taylor, a stronger ontological account of both agency and the source of value is required. Whilst Taylor does not claim that this account alone will provide the content of one's political order, he does argue that to misunderstand the nature of agency can lead one to misconceive the parameters and aims which frame that order. Taylor thus sets out to provide a superior account of agency which leads onto his consideration of the legitimate scope of politics. The Best Account principle, with its Heideggerean phenomenological origins, leads Taylor to provide an account of agency that resembles Heidegger's in two crucial ways.

Firstly, Taylor shares Heidegger's rejection of those conceptions of agency based on the "rationalist model". In his view, neither an external metaphysical order nor subjectivist projection can viably explain the sense we have of the values we hold and the qualitative growth that following them instils in us. Hence he rejects atomistic ontologies of agency which seek to understand the individual subject apart from the context against which they move. These accounts are simply unable to explain the crucial phenomenon of human agency; our capacity to make strong evaluations.

6 Charles Taylor, "Engaged agency and background in Heidegger", p. 325.
Secondly, Taylor's account of this background itself mirrors that given by Heidegger. His hermeneutics of value leads him to a realism that explains moral values as the interpretations of moral objects. Ultimately, this leads Taylor— as it does Heidegger— to focus on certain fundamental values as divinely inspired.

It is from this nexus that Taylor develops his political theory. This falls into two parts. The first offers an account of how an improved politics might be shaped in relation to a superior understanding of human agency. The second, associated moment consists of a critique of traditional understandings of liberalism from this perspective.

For Taylor, the dialogic account of agency emphasises the importance of communities and collectives in making available the goods which make up a healthy and substantive life of freedom. Atomistic understandings of agency miss some collectively accessed goods entirely and lead to moral and political perspectives which do not best defend those goods and capacities which are recognised.

The defence of freedom, Taylor argues, requires a politics that reflects the roles communities have in facilitating the moral lives of individuals by legislating for the needs and survival of collective identities. It is only then that we can achieve the political aim of better expressing, and moving closer to, the moral sources that motivate us.

Thus, although Taylor recognises that "an ontological position doesn't amount to advocating something"7, he does argue that this

account of agency leads to moral and political parameters that can, at times, be incompatible with a rigorous, procedurally neutral liberalism. For Taylor, the attempt to defend human freedom through such a politics (although as I argue 'liberalism' is a broad term for Taylor as for Heidegger) is premised on the atomistic misunderstanding of human agency. Given the social, dialogic nature of agency, Taylor argues, it can be seen that the moral worth of individuals can require the extension of different rights and privileges to different communities in order to protect goods which may be threatened by the identical 'neutral' treatment of all.

Taylor's political philosophy thus rests on three planks, all supported themselves by his commitment to the phenomenological method. The first of these is his assertion that the agency of the individual must be understood within a social context. The second is that one's moral perspective consists in an orientation towards real, preterhuman goods. The third plank consists in his rejection of neutral, procedural liberalism as inconsistent with the first two planks and his sketching of an alternative politics of recognition.

My argument was that, while Taylor's treatment of the situated nature of agency represents his strength, his attempts to fill the moral and political lacunae he diagnoses are less successful. Put simply, the 'Best Account Principle' does not ground the brand of moral realism that Taylor offers; his account of agency conflates a persuasive case for seeing agency as engaged with an unpersuasive account of the substance of moral identity. It is these unwarranted set of ontological commitments which, I argue, lead Taylor to characterise the nature of politics in some unsatisfactory ways.
Taylor's belief in certain, privileged preterhuman sources of the good underpin the account he offers of the goods to which he thinks we must all be committed. It is these goods (e.g. love and benevolence) which, he claims, ground the assumption of the equal worth, and subsequent political respect, of others. Thus, for Taylor, the basic political problem of modernity is that it has failed to adequately express the modern moral identity.

My argument was that without establishing the truth of the modern moral identity in the realist terms he uses, Taylor's attempts to enrich the political reflection of our freedom and autonomy flounder. Taylor focuses on the ways in which politics might better reflect his, fundamentally moral, ontology of agency. He thus seeks to co-ordinate and reinforce what he sees as the basic moral motifs of modernity. What he does less well is address the challenge Heidegger's operation of the phenomenological approach throws up: what if the challenge to human freedom comes from the very attempt to articulate the modern moral identity? Even those more sympathetic to the achievements of modernity than Heidegger query whether or not it has the moral resources to ground the rich sense of growth Taylor seeks from our relations with others.

This break between the strength of Taylor's account of agency and his attempt to render an account of our moral and political identity lead me to look at the claims made by, amongst others, those seeking to defend the types of liberalism Taylor attacks. If

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8 See for example Quentin Skinner's argument that our history is best told not in terms of moral ontology or growth but as a story of causal links of 'contingent' moral value and 'lost possibilities' in "Modernity and disenchantment: some historical reflections" in James Tully (ed.), Philosophy in an age of pluralism: The philosophy of Charles Taylor in question, p. 55. Consider also Réal Robert Fillon's criticisms of Taylor in "Foucault contra Taylor: Whose Sources? Which Self?".
the conflicts between values in fact cannot be seen as expressing different interpretations of the good but are, in fact, more radically in conflict than Taylor allows then a couple of political ramifications follow.

Firstly, if one gives more modest or sceptical readings of the nature or basis of our moral reality then one's expectations of politics may change. If one views agency as engaged with truths indexed to contingent historical chance rather than separate moral goods, for example, then Taylor's efforts to found a principle of equal respect based on the recognition of the validity of others' moral interpretations in this latter sense, become problematic. This leads to a second concern; whether or not Taylor's rejection of liberal proceduralism is well-founded. Thus, I look at the work of several of Taylor's critics who argue he underestimates the degree to which liberals who may have a less expansive account of moral identity than Taylor, nonetheless can, or do, incorporate a more sophisticated ontological account of agency than Taylor allows. These thinkers ask whether, if one does not subscribe to his particular moral commitments, Taylor is right to assume that his ontological claims are not, in fact, best served by procedural liberalism.

I thus conclude that Taylor's strongest conclusions continue Heidegger's exploration of the nature of agency when conceived beyond the terms of epistemological certitude. For the political theorist, however, Taylor surpasses Heidegger's account in considering the social and intersubjective differences between agents. This, coupled with Taylor's division between ontology and advocacy, ensures that his politics are indexed to the needs and values that arise from the relationships between agents; this is in
contrast to those other thinkers I have looked at in the thesis, whose politics are often extrapolated from a single characteristic of the individual agent alone.

Taylor's ontological account bounds his political theory. He does not succeed, however, in providing a convincing account of political legitimacy because his ontological account of agency conflates a strong argument about the situated nature of agency with a weaker set of claims about the nature of our moral identities. It is this latter set of claims which lead Taylor to view political legitimacy as largely a question of the authentic expression of the goods upon which we draw. Within my Chapter on Taylor, I argued that the reality of these goods is not reliably established by Taylor. Thus I follow the arguments of those critics who suggest that, in the absence of such goods, legitimacy is not a product of the authentic expression of the goods one recognises, but derives from the approaches and procedures one has for dealing with those with whom one does not agree.

Conclusion

Heidegger raises questions with which the contemporary political theorist must be concerned. Foremost amongst these is concerned with the link between our understanding of the nature of agency and the nature of political identity. Heidegger's work is an early and powerful statement of one of the central themes of recent philosophy; the inability of the instrumental, rational Subject to wholly account for the nature of human agency. Heidegger's work is lent an extra resonance as many of the political projects which are taken to accompany the traditional
understanding of agency are seen as either failing or being radically challenged.

Thus the aim of this thesis has been to examine how Heidegger and his successors seek to develop an account of political identity from their reconsideration of the nature of agency. With the exception of the early Sartre's efforts, which I argue fail to address Heidegger's concerns about the limits of the traditional understanding of agency, I trace why each of the thinkers I look at fails to develop a persuasive account of political legitimacy.

In the cases of Heidegger, Foucault and Connolly, I argue that this is because each characterises agency in the terms of an understanding that exists independently of the goods and values of the subjects who hold them. Questions of how the differences between agents can be co-ordinated or negotiated are thus largely ignored. Instead the predominant issue becomes the extent to which a political system reflects what are taken to be basic ontological principles. In each case I argued that there was an insufficient case to establish the values that each thinker attached to these principles, without which a claim to political authority or legitimacy could not be grounded.

Charles Taylor makes the important distinction between ontological commitments and political advocacy. Further, for Taylor, a phenomenological account of agency entails a consideration of the social context of the individual. Thus, Taylor explores what he takes to underpin traditional constructions of political identity; particularly the moral values which are invoked by those subscribing to procedural neutralism and liberal autonomy.
However, Taylor's assumption that it is the success or otherwise in reflecting moral goods which provides the criteria by which to judge a political system undermines the authority of his own account of politics. As with Heidegger, the value judgements in relation to which Taylor frames his account themselves lack binding philosophical authority. In the light of this failure, Taylor's politics, which appeals to the fundamental nature of certain moral goods, remains open to the charge levelled at Heidegger; that it offers a notion of legitimacy only to those who share certain commitments.

In the final analysis, therefore, Heidegger's work is premised on his identification of two central themes of contemporary thought: the collapse of the instrumental conception of Subjectivity and the problems that have arisen with the defence of the political values that are associated with it. His work thus raises the perennial question of political theory- on what can the legitimacy of the state be based?—whilst proclaiming the inadequacy of the resources upon which modernity has drawn in providing an answer.

This thesis charted the failure of Heidegger and his successors to provide an alternative answer but argued that the debate has nevertheless been moved on. Heidegger's claim is that the traditional notion of epistemological certitude is not usefully applied to the understanding of human action; a suggestion that is applied to models of political justification by Foucault, Connolly and Taylor. For these thinkers, the politics of the instrumental Subject cannot adequately account for the need to recognise what Stephen K. White calls the "responsibility to otherness".  

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9 See my Chapter, 'Heidegger and the Political', p. 142.
These thinkers illuminate the question of how a rethinking of the notion of agency might reconfigure the understanding of political identity. Further, the different accounts of agency operated by each thinker culminate in different understandings of politics. The limits of their conceptions of legitimacy, coupled with the defence of liberalism offered by some of their critics, clarify a couple of issues. The first is that the political problems which Heidegger associates with modernity are not addressed through the provision of an alternative account of agency alone. As Taylor realises in a way that arguably Heidegger, the early Sartre, Foucault and Connolly do not, this is in part because of the gap that exists between one's ontological commitments and the values one holds.

The second issue also crystallises most clearly in an examination of Taylor's work. This is that there is a gap not just between one's ontological and moral commitments but also between the values one holds and what counts as politically legitimate. Again, this gap is not an absolute break but it does determine the parameters of the latter sphere. This corresponds with Taylor's claim that political justification will relate to, but not simply be determined by, the moral nexus from which we make sense of our world.

From this perspective, however, Heidegger's work has a further, more worrying suggestion with which Taylor deals less successfully. This is the philosophical claim which, I argue, underpins Heidegger's hermeneutical dynamic (although not his own political proclamations) that there is no understanding of human being which will deliver the moral or ontological certitude
required to determine that one has a 'right' politics. In other words, although Taylor is right that a theory of political justification will be influenced by- or at least compatible with- our basic ontological commitments, it is not clear that these commitments can in themselves ground universal or binding imperatives to moral or political action.

The suggestion that arises from Heidegger's work is not simply that the model of understanding based on epistemological certitude has failed because it is unable to lead to the atemporal or universal principles upon which our moral and political lives are based, but that the error is to look for principles of these sort as a foundation for justification at all. To borrow from Heidegger's pronouncement on epistemological treatments of subjective dualism, "the scandal is not that this proof has yet to be given, but that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again"\(^\text{10}\). From this perspective, Heidegger's value is not just to suggest we look elsewhere for the understandings of agency to which our moral and political justifications are indexed, but to open up the question of what sort of parameters such justifications will have.

This aspect of Heidegger's work has more in common with Foucault's refusal of the ontological or historical priority of any single identity. It suggests that one of Taylor's key aims- to express and reflect the goods upon which our moral and political lives are based- is overambitiously stated or, at least, contentious at points that Taylor considers phenomenologically secure. This line of thought argues that there are no common goods or truths which can universally justify either political or moral norms. This reasoning links with the liberal defence which argues that the

\(^{10}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 249. Original includes italics.
procedural and neutral dimensions of liberalism do not necessarily
deny the role of social context in framing our understandings of the
good; rather, they argue, it reflects the impossibility of justifying
either moral or political ideals through an appeal to the truth or
reality of these goods.

This is perhaps the common failing of all those thinkers who
seek to develop Heidegger's critiques of subjectivism and
modernity into political theories. Viewed alongside his political
failings, the culmination of Heidegger's work is arguably the
realisation that there is no final justification for the moral
beliefs which give substance to one's political identity.

If political identity does not find its legitimacy in relation to
the right or correct moral vision then the error common to
Heidegger and his successors is to frame an account of politics
that draws too heavily on the recognition of goods or truths that
are, at best, questionable. In each instance the articulation of a
particular vision of agency encompasses a particular good or
perspective that is taken to be the crucial foundation for the
framing of the appropriate political identity. Hence, in the final
analysis, the early Sartre's account of the individual conscious
Subject, Foucault and Connolly's language of power and Taylor's
hermeneutic, moral expressivism come to dominate the notion of
political identity operated by each thinker.

These thinkers have insights of various degrees to offer on the
nature of agency which, in turn, colour how one can understand the
construction of moral and political theories. The result is that
each frames political identity in relation to methodological or
moral realisations that lie outside of the realm of intersubjective
action. The casualty in each instance is an account of political legitimacy that lends sufficient weight to the substance and content of the negotiations between agents both within and about the nature of their political identities. It is ironic that Heidegger, who warned of the arrogance of previous philosophical understandings, set such a chilling example of where that omission can lead.
The following is a list of those texts which are referred to within the body of the thesis. Where I have cited particular essays within collections this is marked by a separate entry.

**Works by Heidegger**

*Basic Writings*  
(London: Routledge, 1994). Edited David F. Krell. Contains the "Letter on Humanism" (tr. Capuzzi and Gray) and "The Question Concerning Technology" (tr. Lovitt)

*Being and Time*  

*Discourse on Thinking*  

*The Essence of Reasons*  

*Identity and Difference*  

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*  

"Only a God Can Save Us":  
In Wolin, R. (ed.) *The Heidegger Controversy*.

Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger.  
Translated Alter and Caputo.
On Time and Being  
Translated Stambaugh.

"Overcoming Metaphysics"  
In Wolin, R. (ed.) The Heidegger Controversy.  
Translated Stambaugh.

Poetry, Language, Thought  
Translated Hofstadter.  
Contains "The Thing".

"Political Texts, 1933-4"  
In Wolin, R. (ed.) The Heidegger Controversy.  
Translated Lewis.

The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays  
Translated Lovitt.  
Contains "The Age of the World Picture".

"The Self-Assertion of the German University"  
In Wolin, R. (ed.) The Heidegger Controversy.  
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Davidson, Arnold. "Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought". In Gutting, G. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*.


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**Journal Articles**


Connolly, William E. "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault", *Political Theory*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Aug. 1993).


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