

Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger

Havi Carel



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Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger

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Havi Carel



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Printed in the Netherlands

For my father and mother, Rafael and Cynthia Carel

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Foreword

Few authors are capable of transcending the dichotomy between life and death with such conceptual clarity and philosophical precision as does Havi Carel. In this highly original and scholarly contribution, she cogently demonstrates how psychoanalysis and philosophy are natural bedfellows. Death saturates life and becomes an ontological force in all aspects of being and becoming necessary of the human subject both to repudiate and embrace. Freud and Heidegger revolutionised this notion, yet from different theoretical projects and epistemologies that appear on the face of things to be incompatible. Dr Carel splendidly demystifies this confusion through her meticulous exegesis and critique of each theorist in such a way that reveals how psychoanalysis becomes an existential enterprise and how metaphysics is forever grateful to psychological investigation.

Although Freud was unfamiliar with Heidegger's work, Heidegger was introduced to Freud through Medard Boss who reports that Heidegger "couldn't believe that such an intelligent man could write such stupid things, such fantastical things, about men and women". In his *Zollikon Seminars*, Heidegger was quick to denounce psychoanalysis as a neo-Kantian conception of science applied to the human being (ZS, p.260) that attempts to explain phenomenology through causal reduction (ZS, p.7), in which the unconscious, for Heidegger, becomes a pure hypothesis (ZS, pp.214, 319). Little did Heidegger appreciate their shared commonality: namely, that each of their respective theoretical systems hinges on our relation to death, which Carel shows is dialectically unified within life itself, further informing our aesthetic and ethical sensibilities. When the reader comes to appreciate the subtle nuances of how life and death are ontologically and developmentally conjoined, discrepancies between Freud and Heidegger will appear inconsequential. This project is simply the best account to date of how life and death are situated in the respective philosophies of these two men. There is no other book of its kind.

Jon Mills
Editor
Contemporary Psychoanalytic Studies

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Introduction

This book aims to show that mortality is a fundamental structuring element in human life. It examines this structuring by looking at different ways in which the relationship between life and death may be thought about. The ordinary view sees life and death as dichotomous: death is the external endpoint of life and therefore life and death are completely separate. On this view, death is a negation of life and therefore contains no positive attributes. Against this stance that sees life and death as completely separate, this book explores views that see them as interlinked. Because they are interlinked, death can play an active role within life (this claim shall be explained in detail) and because it has a role in life it is not simply a negation of life. This position provides a robust view of death as something more than mere negation, as well as an account of how death is active in life and how it structures life and our conception of it.

Since the explanatory onus of this position is higher than that of the ordinary view, why should we adopt it? The answer is that on the ordinary account, death becomes a brute fact, devoid of all philosophical and existential significance. Contrary to that, I argue that death is not merely an external endpoint about which we can say nothing, but a structuring force that shapes life ontologically and influences our understanding of it every living moment. Within a view of the human being as finite, the question of our attitude towards death becomes a crucial factor, and whether we acknowledge this fact or remain oblivious to it, the ontological demand remains constantly active. This affects our view of ourselves, our choices and capacity to plan the future and relate to the present. In short, the requirement that we understand ourselves as finite structures human existence far more than the ordinary view allows. It is this continuous and significant moulding that I want to bring out by developing a new account of the relationship between life and death.

I focus on two conceptions of this relationship: the psychoanalytic conception of Sigmund Freud and the philosophical conception of Martin Heidegger. Both thinkers emphasise the extensive influence death has on everyday life and give an account of its structural and existential significance on both a personal and a metaphysical level. Freud's death drive and Heidegger's being-towards-death are two accounts of how death operates within life. By bringing the two together, this work presents a reading of death that establishes its significance for life, creates a meeting point for philosophical and psychoanalytical perspectives, and examines the problems and strengths of each. It then puts forth a unified view, based on the strengths of each position and overcoming the problems of each.

The question of finitude is philosophical and personal, conceptual and existential, and a central issue for human psychology. Every form of life is

finite, and every human life is accompanied by an awareness of this fact. Every human project, expectation and action takes place within this framework. This makes it a meeting point for philosophical and psychoanalytical enquiries and a good place to explore the relations between the two disciplines. By bringing together Freud and Heidegger this book creates dialogue between radically different languages and disciplines. As such, it must be read with an awareness of the constant translation, incorporation and synthesis taking place in it.

As a book that bridges two disciplines it must ask how psychoanalytic concepts and ideas can be applied in philosophy and vice versa. I address this question by focusing on both the similarities in the subject matter and the differences in technique, presuppositions and aims. Psychoanalysis and Heidegger's philosophy deal with the same subject matter; they are both theories about mental life, emotion and action. *Dasein*, Heidegger's name for a human being, and the Freudian subject are two accounts of these human phenomena. In this sense they treat the same subject matter and ask similar questions.

At the same time, their presuppositions are immensely different. *Dasein* is a phenomenal being, an active agent, and as such is perspicuous to introspection. The Freudian subject is split, conflictual and barred from its unconscious. From these two very different views stem two very different theories. But these theories also have commonalities that are often overlooked: both give a significant place to the world humans inhabit, seeing context, society and history as crucial to understanding the individual. *Dasein* is being-in-the-world, conceptually and practically embedded in its environment; the environment also plays a central role in Freud's account of pathological behaviour as unsuccessful coping with the external world. This emphasis on our rootedness in the world and on the worldly and bodily reality as significant to understanding mental events and processes is shared by both.

Furthermore, both Heidegger and Freud offer holistic views of human existence. Both attempt to explain and organise an entire field, and not just explain some isolated phenomenon. This is clear with respect to Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. As for psychoanalysis, James Hopkins notes:

Psychoanalytic like physical theory ranges holistically over a vast number of instances and cases. Although a certain amount of theory may be seen to be applicable in a given case, its justification consists in the way it serves to order and explain the whole field (1982, p.xli).

Additionally, both aim to account for the complex and interactive nature of the human being by providing a picture of a unified (albeit conflicted) and embodied human being, which has a developmental history, a social context and is situated in the world. Therefore, both theories place substantial weight on the influence of external conditions on the development of the individual.

However, one should not overlook the differences in technique and aim between the two accounts. While philosophy positions personal interest within a

general project, psychoanalysis is an intimate dialogue focusing on private experiences. These different practices indicate different aims – to come closer to an understanding of the world and to improve one’s well being – that may nonetheless be seen as affiliated. Understanding and self-understanding both partake in a general quest for making sense of our surroundings and ourselves, a quest Heidegger approaches through hermeneutics and phenomenology, and Freud through an analysis of speech and exploration of the unconscious.

This leads to another similarity, coming from the opposite direction: some philosophical texts have a therapeutic dimension as a meta-philosophical ideal. Like any other form of knowledge or quest for knowledge, philosophy can be examined from the perspective of well-being. Epicurus used an analogy to medicine to argue that the philosophical value of arguments lies in their ability to solve human problems and relieve pain.

For empty is that philosopher’s argument by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated. For just as there is no use in medical art that does not cast out the sickness of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul (1994, p.87).

In this sense the exploration of death and the attempt to reconstruct its relation to life is, among other things, a therapeutic attempt to grapple with the general human concern with finitude. This is by no means an attempt to reduce philosophy to its therapeutic function; rather I endeavour to point out the importance of such a dimension, which has been largely overlooked in modern philosophy.¹

A second issue we must address at the outset is the question of the status of Freud’s theory today; a century after psychoanalysis has been established as a clinical practice and a cultural institution. A vast literature addressing the status of psychoanalysis has emerged, mainly dealing with the question whether psychoanalysis is a science. This literature was a steady stream throughout the 20th century in what came to be called ‘the Freud wars’. Today there are signs of reconciliation based on recognition of the similarities between certain projects in psychology and cognitive science and the Freudian project of a science of the mind.

An exemplary work drawing the parallels between psychoanalysis and the cognitive sciences of today is Patricia Kitcher’s *Freud’s Dream* (1992). Kitcher views Freud’s project as interdisciplinary in nature, trying to unify (in the terms available to 19th Century science) neurophysiology, psychology, sociology and anthropology. Freud’s aim, Kitcher argues, was to provide an explanatory model of the psyche based on a quantitative physiological

¹ With the notable exception of Ludwig Wittgenstein and some of his followers. Other exceptions are Martha Nussbaum, John Cottingham and Jonathan Lear.

foundation (which Freud calls the ‘economic’ dimension), with a functional (‘topographic’) account of the various agencies and their interaction, and a causal (‘dynamic’) dimension. Although Kitcher judges the project to have failed, many argue otherwise. Contemporary work in evolutionary biology and in neuroscience is showing strong conceptual affinity with and empirical support for Freudian insights, in particular for the idea of an unconscious, dream theory and the model of the mind as containing separate functional domains (Solms, 2004; Hopkins 2005a, 2005b; Wegner et al, 2004). Mark Solms writes:

[I]t appears that Freud’s broad brushstroke organization of the mind is destined to play a role similar to the one Darwin’s theory of evolution served for molecular genetics – a template on which emerging details can be coherently arranged. At the same time, neuroscientists are uncovering proof for some of Freud’s theories and are teasing out the mechanisms behind the mental processes he described (2004, 58-9).

Similarly, we find evolutionary biologist Robert Trivers remarking, “All the machinations Freud imagined going on early in life had a reality [...] which I had formerly disbelieved”. He further says that his research on parent-offspring conflict was “congenial to the emphasis that psychoanalysis and related disciplines placed on family interactions” (2002, p.258).

Returning to the question about the scientific status of psychoanalytic theory, it seems that there can be no simple answer to the question because the question itself assumes we have a clear idea of what ‘science’ is. Therefore, what is important is not to try to answer the question, but to show that certain criticisms of psychoanalysis are problematic and sometimes dogmatic. This is particularly true of criticisms that are fuelled by suspicion of psychoanalysis and in particular of Freud’s notion of the unconscious. To take two examples discussed at length by Adolph Grünbaum (1984), Popper’s argument that psychoanalytic hypotheses are irrefutable and therefore not scientific betrays his misunderstanding of what a psychoanalytic hypothesis is. Similarly, Habermas’ division of human knowledge into ‘science’ and ‘culture’ does nothing to aid our understanding of either, and hence arguing about which camp psychoanalysis should fall into is equally unhelpful.

Questions such as what Freud was trying to do, what the empirical basis of his theories is and what is the outcome of psychoanalysis, are not questions one could hope to answer without paying serious methodological attention to the interdisciplinary nature of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is an historical discipline, bringing together elements from sociology, anthropology, philosophy and of course psychology. Not only do questions about the status and nature of psychoanalysis use concepts that are themselves fiercely debated, but moreover each question could be approached from a range of perspectives, because of the interdisciplinary nature of psychoanalysis as a comprehensive

science of the psyche. What I hope to achieve here is simply to set up the issues and present some responses I find compelling and productive.

Moreover, the question of the scientific status of psychoanalysis does not concern us here, as the classification of psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline would not alter its philosophical significance. This significance, discussed at length by philosophers such as Richard Wollheim (1982, 1984, 1991, 1993), James Hopkins (1982), Jonathan Lear (1988, 1998, 2000, 2004), Sebastian Gardner (1993), Marcia Cavell (1993) and others, has become by now well established.

Questions about the testability of psychoanalytic hypotheses, its efficacy as a clinical practice and its empirical confirmation – although important – do not pertain to the philosophical view of psychoanalysis as a theory of the mind. In what follows I would like to treat psychoanalysis, and in particular Freud's corpus, as a set of philosophical theses about the psyche and its relationship to the body that adds up to a sophisticated developmental theory of the agencies making up the human mind.

In light of this discussion, a final analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis can be proposed. In the same way that philosophy is not a science, but a discipline that has an important relationship with science, psychoanalysis could be thought of as maintaining an influential relationship with science, rather than as a scientific discipline. My aim in this book is to focus on psychoanalytic theory rather than on its practice, for this is a philosophical essay and my interest here is to draw out the metaphysical picture underlying Freud's discussion of death. Therefore, I do not make any further references to psychoanalytic practice. Viewing psychoanalysis as related to – and not a part of – science allows us to focus on the philosophical ideas underpinning it.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

The book contains three parts. Part One presents the psychoanalytic perspective on death through Freud's reading of the death drive as opposing the life drive, Eros. Chapter One explains the difference between Freud's drive and the similar notion of instinct, and sets up the scientific and historical context within which Freud conceived of the death drive. Although Freud posits the death drive within a dualistic view of life and death, this position does not maintain its stability, and the development, change, and re-articulation of the death drive and of the dualistic position are traced in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three shows how Freud's formulation of the death drive oscillates between two positions. On the one hand, he persistently supports a dualistic picture of life and death drives; on the other hand he regards the death drive as a primary force within life. Through a textual analysis of Freud's late work I argue that the first, dualistic position contains inherent inconsistencies that render it invalid. But the second position has problems of its own, which are

next analysed. I ask the following questions: what is the explanatory value of the death drive? How can we explain the economic clash between seeing the death drive as the source of aggression and as the Nirvana principle, aiming towards elimination of tension? Are the life and death drives distinguishable, and if so what is the relationship between them?

Other problems include the lack of clinical and empirical support for the death drive hypothesis; the unclear distinction between sadism and masochism; and the dynamic and overlapping nature of the drives as eluding classification. The solutions I offer to these problems support the conclusion that the death drive is a fundamental primary force active within life. I argue that the death drive is an umbrella term for several dimensions and tendencies that are not entirely consistent with one another. I end this part with a new reading of the death drive that explains which elements of it are still illuminating despite the problems detailed above.

Part Two engages with Heidegger's account of death. Although Heidegger's later work takes issue with death through his discussion of mortals, *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*) contains his most systematic analysis of death, on which I focus.² I clarify Heidegger's concept of death and respond to criticisms that the concept is incoherent. I argue that Heidegger's notion of death contains both temporal finitude and finitude of possibility, so only a combined understanding provides us with a full and coherent account of death. I then explore the tension between authenticity as individuation on the one hand and sociality and *Mitsein* (being-with) on the other. This tension, symptomatic of all dimensions of Dasein's existence, is particularly prominent with respect to death because of death's individuating force. However, I argue that the ontological significance of death is not limited to tracing the boundaries of life. I see death as a *border* concept, which on the one hand limits Dasein, but also works constantly within Dasein, endowing it with meaning as finite.

With this interpretation in mind, I analyse the tension between individuation (as authenticity) and relationality (which is all too often mistakenly identified with inauthenticity) with respect to death. I do so by showing why the dichotomous view of authenticity and inauthenticity is untenable, and therefore why we should re-read them as interdependent. This does not eliminate the possibility of an authentic encounter with death, but reconstructs it within a framework that sees inauthenticity as a necessary dimension of Dasein. This component is the social dimension of Dasein, to which Heidegger assigns two existentials (fundamental structures of Dasein): *Mitsein* and *das Man* (the "They" or the "One"). The difference between the two

² Although the discussion focuses on *Being and Time*, I make some references to other texts from the 1920's and early 1930's surrounding the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927.

existentials is analysed and the discussion concludes with shifting the focus of the analysis from authenticity to sociality.

Part Three is a meeting point combining Freud's and Heidegger's positions to create a unified view of life and death. It starts from the conclusion of Part One – that Freud's dualistic view should be replaced with an understanding of the death drive as the source of aggression. From this it works towards a unified view using the strengths and advantages of each thinker's position. The main premise of the unified view is that seeing life and death as dichotomous is inadequate and should be replaced by a position accounting for the influence of death on life and explaining how it takes place.

I therefore replace the life/death dichotomy and the sharp distinction through which they are usually understood, with a view that acknowledges and explains death's fundamental effect on life. The origins of this stance are found in both thinkers: Freud gives the death drive an active and significant role in the organisation of the psyche while Heidegger illustrates the constant presence of finitude in life through being-towards-death.

But both perspectives also have limitations and inconsistencies, which must also be addressed. Part Three is a series of encounters that engage with these limitations. The encounters show (1) how death influences life, (2) what are the ethical implications of this influence, (3) how these ethical implications make possible an authentic relationship to the death of the other, (4) how an authentic relationship to the death of another enables affective states other than anxiety to lead to authenticity, and finally, (5) given that death is covered up in inauthenticity, show that there is an unconscious attitude towards death, contrary to Freud's claim that the unconscious does not contain any understanding of its own mortality.

To summarise, this book provides a framework for understanding death as an active force within life. It presents an account of death as a non-pathological moment structuring life and shows that constructing a reflexive attitude to death is central to understanding life. This view rejects the dichotomy detaching the two and proposes to re-introduce death into life to create a unified view of life and death.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND REFERENCING

Freud: I translate the German term *der Trieb* as 'drive' to distinguish it from another German term also used by Freud, *der Instinkt*, which will be rendered here 'instinct'. Throughout the text I use the Strachey translation in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, but wherever the term 'instinct' appears, I replace it with 'drive'. There are two exceptions. The first is the title of the essay *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (*Triebe und Triebchicksale*), which I did not alter in order to avoid confusion. The second is the adjective 'instinctual', which is maintained as the translation

for *Triebanlage*, as there is no English alternative for it. A detailed discussion of these terms is provided at the beginning of Part One.

Heidegger: whenever a term is first mentioned I give the German term in brackets and present the alternative English translations in a footnote. Three terms that are widely familiar by now are retained in the German original: *Dasein*, *Mitsein* and *das Man*. I translate *Sein* as 'being' and *das Seiende* as 'entity', rather than following Macquarrie and Robinson, who use an upper case 'B' to mark *Sein* ('Being') and lower case 'b' ('being') for *das Seiende*. Their translation creates a double confusion: firstly, by giving the impression that being (*Sein*) is a noun rather than an infinitive, and secondly, by obfuscating the distinction between being and entity. A detailed discussion of these concepts is provided in Part Two.

All works will be referred to in brackets, containing the author's name, year of publication and page number. All English quotations of Freud are from *The Standard Edition*, referenced in the common abbreviated form (SE followed by volume and page numbers). The Standard Edition reference will be followed by the German reference to the *Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe* (FS followed by volume and page numbers). In a few cases where I refer to a text not published in the *Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe* the reference is to the *Gesammelte Werke* (hereafter GW).

English quotations of Heidegger will be from the best translation available and the English reference will be followed by a reference to the relevant volume of the *Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe* (GA followed by volume and page number). English quotations from *Being and Time* are from the Macquarrie and Robinson translation, although this translation is sometimes modified. Where this occurs the modification will be indicated in brackets. The English quotations from *Being and Time* will be followed by a reference to *Sein und Zeit* 7th edition (hereafter BT and SZ, respectively).

PART I

The Metaphysics of the Death Drive

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One

Freud's Drive Theory

Is death a negation of life? Is it a part of life or an external border? Freud grappled with these questions as he was formulating the death drive. His struggle did not end with a single unproblematic formulation, but the process itself manifests the difficulties in defining, describing and representing the death drive. As we shall see, Freud's formulation of the role and function of the death drive is problematic because he was grappling with several ideas, not all of which were compatible with one another.

Thus we find in the death drive an attempt to unify contradicting aspects, namely, aggression and the drive towards complete rest, the Nirvana principle. As such, the death drive was an attempt to bring together in an explanatorily effective way a wide range of tendencies. Therefore the death drive has different objects and modes of action, diverse manifestations, and is used by Freud to explain the regulation of several psychic functions. This complexity is the source of some confusion about the concept and its place within Freud's broader drive theory.

Another source of confusion is the life drive (Eros)/death drive (Thanatos) dualism Freud was trying to bolster.¹ From 1920 onwards Freud repeatedly attempts to put forth a dualistic and dialectical model of the drives, but his model collapses time and time again. The dualistic view fails, I argue, because it assumes that the life and death drives mutually influence each other but are at the same time separable, whereas I believe that strictly speaking no such separation exists.

Further problems stem from the scientific model of the nervous system on which Freud based the death drive. The death drive rests on a neurophysiologic model that has long been rendered obsolete, as I shall discuss in detail. If we want to retain the notion, the death drive itself has to be updated so as to release it from the erroneous assumptions Freud used at the time to ground his theory, assumptions that have been completely discredited.

Despite these problems, there is still much to be gleaned from the concept. The aim of this part is to rework the death drive into a useful concept that is coherent and independent of dated scientific grounding. Moreover, the focus here is metaphysical. The motivating question is: in what ways can Freud's death drive illuminate our understanding of the relationship between life

¹ I follow Freud in using the terms 'Eros' and 'life drive', and 'Thanatos' and 'death drive', interchangeably.

and death? Within this metaphysical context, I claim that Freud's notion of the death drive contains useful insights and can shed substantial light on the question of the relationship between life and death. But a great deal of revision and clarification is required in order to make these insights visible to the contemporary eye. This part sets out to achieve this task.

A major factor contributing to the clouding of the concept is Freud's dualistic view of life and death drives as mutually opposed groups. As I will show, this dualistic conception ought to be replaced. The correct view of the relationship between the two groups is one in which the life drives have no effect on the death drives, but the death drives affect life. I base this view of the drives on a broader picture of life and death in which death structures and influences life, while life has no similar bearing on death. This picture is opposed to the view of death as an external border, which was discussed in the introduction. On my view, death is both external and internal to life; it is a part of it, as well as its limit. It is this general view that I would like to illustrate and support with Freud's notion of the death drive.

Although the death drive is a fundamental concept in Freud's later work, it is based on extraordinarily speculative hypotheses and its clinical application is highly contentious. Hence the circumstances of its appearance and its credibility have been much discussed. These discussions culminated, by large, in a complete rejection of the death drive by later psychoanalysts, a tendency already prevalent in Freud's lifetime, which he himself discusses in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*) (SE 21:119-120; FS 9:247-248).

In his biography of Freud Ernest Jones writes: "The book [*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*] is further noteworthy in being the only one of Freud's which has received little acceptance on the part of his followers" (1957, Vol.3, p.287). John Friedman holds that "the same situation exists today; there is no support for Freud's notion of the death instinct" (1992, p.189). K.R. Eissler remarks: "Freud's final systematization of drives is still being rejected by the vast majority of psychoanalysts" (1971, p.26). Antonio Virsida (2001), Robert R. Holt (1965), Henri Ellenberger (1970) and Allan Compton (1983) concur. Rejection comes also from Reich, Fenichel, Penrose, and Bibring, to name but a few (Friedman, 1992, p.189).

Those who embrace Freud's death drive include Melanie Klein and the Kleinians who accept the notion and moreover stress its clinical usefulness (Rosenfeld, 1987, pp.125-7; Gillespie, 1971 p.158; Segal, 1993, pp. 55-61). Others accept the general drive model but replace the death drive with aggression. On this view aggressive energy is comparable to libido, so the dualistic view is maintained with sexuality and aggression as its two poles (Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein, 1949). Finally there are those who reject the drive model entirely and look for a different motivational theory (Frank, 2003).

Duncan Barford lists three groups of views that reject the death drive. There are those who see the death drive as redundant; they view the drive theory

as adequate without the death drive. A second group sees the death drive as purely speculative, “couched in mystical or biological terms”; they view the death drive as immaterial. And finally there are those who reject the death drive on ethical grounds, as making psychoanalysis “reactionary and unhelpfully fatalistic” (1999, p.12). This demonstrates that the reasons for rejecting the death drive were manifold, and not just limited to questions of clinical application. It is these problems that led to widespread rejection of the death drive. I argue that this rejection is not the only response available and show why a different, reconstructive approach proves valuable.

Freud explains the general aversion towards the death drive and the problems with its clinical application as manifestations of the human tendency to repress death. But the scepticism with which the death drive was greeted can be traced back, at least in part, to the intrinsic unrepresentability of the death drive, which is one of Freud's central postulates: the death drive is mute and traceless (SE 19:46; FS 3:313). Why does Freud formulate the death drive as traceless? This and the following two chapters explain the reasons for Freud's unusual hypothesis, and show how it leads him to problematic assumptions.

Freud describes his growing interest in the death drive as a tentative theory and a process of overcoming repression, which even he accepted only retroactively. This process, analogous to the one occurring within the psychoanalytic community, is described in *Civilisation and its Discontents*:

I remember my own defensive attitude when the idea of a drive of destruction first emerged in psychoanalytical literature, and how long it took before I became receptive to it. That others should have shown, and still show, the same attitude of rejection surprises me less. For ‘little children do not like it’ when there is talk of the inborn inclination to ‘badness’, to aggressiveness and destructiveness, and so to cruelty as well (SE 21:119-20; FS 9:247-8).

Freud goes on to articulate several central principles he uses to formulate his notion of the death drive: the explanatory contribution of the death drive to psychoanalytic theory (in accounting for unpleasurable repetition and in explaining the origin of sadism and masochism); the question to what extent the death drive fits into his existing theory of the drives and the ways in which it improves it; and how close a match exists between the theoretical concept and the clinical data (SE 21:119-20; FS 9:247-8). His introduction of the death drive into his drive theory can be seen as motivated by these considerations.

But even if there was a theoretical and clinical need to postulate a death drive, a central problem remains. In his formulation of the death drive Freud is attempting to validate two contradicting notions: the first describes death as the Nirvana principle, and is formulated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*) and in *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (*Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*) (SE 18:7, FS 3:215 and SE 19:159, FS

3:341). This position regards death as the discharge of all excitations, as the zero point of all tension and the complete halt of all life processes. The second position regards the death drive as aggression, destructive energy generating violence and tension. This position is prevalent in *Civilisation and Its Discontents* and in *The Ego and the Id (Das Ich und das Es)*, where antagonism and dualism become dominant psychic features (SE 21:64, FS 9:193 and SE 19:12, FS 3:275).

The existence of these two contradictory tendencies in texts written and published in chronological proximity is not accidental; the tension and swift changes in Freud's theoretical formulations are a result of the fact that Freud was trying to explain more than one set of phenomena with the death drive, and therefore could not develop a coherent and stable concept. I argue that the death drive as formulated by Freud is not a single concept, but an umbrella term covering several tendencies and forces, which are contradictory on economic and dynamic levels. If we approach this term with the demand for a single unified concept, contradiction is inevitable. Rather, what is required is a prising apart of the different elements and a close examination of each. This will enable us to determine which parts of the concept are anachronistic, and which are illuminating and deserve reconstruction.

More concretely, I suggest separating the Nirvana principle from aggression, discarding the obsolete Nirvana principle, and reconstructing the death drive as aggression with a particular emphasis on self-destructiveness. The reasons for discarding the Nirvana principle will be explained in detail in what follows. The outcome will be a new interpretation of the death drive that salvages the notion from internal contradiction and allows us to retain the term, albeit in modified form.

WHAT IS A DRIVE?

Before we approach the death drive, we first need to look at Freud's general drive theory and distinguish his drive concept from the seemingly-similar notion of instinct. In *Three Essays on Sexuality* Freud gives his first full definition of drive that takes it beyond the neurophysiologic schema of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* and the "Schematic Picture of Sexuality":

By a 'drive' is provisionally to be understood the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation, as contrasted with a 'stimulus', which is set up by single excitations coming from without. The concept of drive is thus one of those lying on the frontier between the mental and the physical. The simplest and likeliest assumption as to the nature of drives would seem to be that in itself a drive is without quality, and so far as mental life is concerned, is only to be regarded as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work. What distinguishes the drives from one another and endows them with specific qualities is their relation to their

somatic sources and to their aims. The source of a drive is a process of excitation occurring in an organ and the immediate aim of the drive lies in the removal of this organic stimulus (SE 7:168; GW 5:67).

This definition describes a drive as a force, pressure and demand, whose source is somatic. The aim of the drive is the removal of excitation in the somatic source. As such it is a 'frontier' concept, connecting soma and psyche, although Freud does not offer an explanation of how the connecting takes place. The somatic process is related to the mental process as a "demand upon the mind to work" (ibid.).

Jonathan Lear offers a unifying interpretation of the term, seeing it not as a frontier concept connecting soma and psyche, but as a single force that has both a psychological and a physiological expression. As such, "the distinction between a drive and the biological stimuli it represents is essentially an *epistemological distinction* – marking a boundary in the way things are studied" (1998, p.123). Freud focuses on the psychological dimension of the drive, but this does not mean that the physiological dimension disappears; it is merely put aside for the purposes of the psychological discussion.

The drive itself is without quality, acting only as a transmitter of somatic pressure in the source organ to the mental system. It is a purely quantitative force translating somatic pressure into a mental demand. As Allan Compton points out, what is missing from this definition is the relation of outside sources of stimulation to the production of drive excitation and the relation of outside factors to the removal of excitation. Compton also stresses the hypothetical nature of the drive theory, and defines it as "a hypothetical force which is held to be responsible for certain kinds of behaviour called instinctive behaviour" (1981, pp.221, 205).

Freud thought of a drive as a basic motivating force that has a clear biological source and an evolutionary function. He probably felt that his notion of drive would fit into a Darwinian vocabulary. This is suggested by his remark that "the present development of human beings requires [...] no different explanation from that of animals" (SE 18:42; FS 3:252). The same drives that govern animal life in general – a drive for 'self preservation' or 'mastery' – should also explain human behaviour.

Freud displays a Darwinian view of humans as one more species, whose sophisticated mental apparatus and cultural structures should in principle lend themselves to evolutionary explanation equally well as amoeba. Moreover, Freud was trying to establish a "biological psychology" and thought he was engaged in "studying the psychical accompaniments of biological processes" (SE 22:95-6; GW 15:102). So the Freudian notion of drives is embedded in a Darwinian and materialist position, and has led authors like Frank Sulloway (1979) to call Freud "biologist of the mind".

In *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*, Freud repeats the definition of drives as "on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical

representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism” (SE 14:122; GW 10:214). It is clear that the drive is not the biological pressure but its psychological effect, “a measure of the demand made upon the mind” (ibid.). Laplanche and Pontalis define it as a “dynamic process consisting in a pressure which directs the organism towards an aim” (1973, p.214).

A drive has a source, aim and object. Its *source* is physiological stimulus, its *aim* is to eliminate the tension exerted by the instinctual source and it is through the *object* that the drive may achieve its aim. The source is always a physiological need, and the aim is uniform in all drives: to eliminate the urge originating from a physiological need. Whereas the object of the drive could be almost anything, or at least an extremely diverse range of objects, real or imaginary. Freud thinks of a drive in terms of need and its satisfaction. “A better term for an instinctual stimulus is a ‘need’. What does away with a need is ‘satisfaction’” (SE 14:118-9; GW 10:212).

Finally, it should be noted that the satisfaction, whether obtained by a real or imagined object, is in any case temporary, and hence the strong link between drive and repetition, and that in two senses. In the first sense, all drives are cyclic and their demands only temporarily satisfied. In the second sense, a drive pushes the organism to recreate a previous state of affairs in which there is no need. The aim of the drive is to lead the organism to behave so as to eliminate its pressure and thus return to the harmonious state of not having a need. Lacan’s distinction between need and desire is useful here. A physiological need translates into the psychic realm as desire, its mental and culturally mediated expression.²

Although Freud attributed great significance to his drive theory, he was also extremely tentative and cautious about it. He was well aware of the problems and contradictions in the theory and was careful to point this out. He repeatedly describes his theory of drives as “the least complete portion of psychoanalytic theory” and says that the drives are “at once the most important and the most obscure element of psychological research” (SE 7:168n; GW 5:67n, SE 18:34; FS 3:245).

Even in a late text published in 1930, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Freud says: “of all the slowly developed parts of analytic theory, the theory of the drives is the one that has felt its way the most painfully forward. And yet that theory was so indispensable to the whole structure that something had to be put in its place” (SE 21:117; FS 9:245). The hesitation with which Freud puts forth his assumptions about the drives and the importance he attributes to them become all the more pertinent when we turn to look at his formulation of the death drive.

² Lacan adds a third concept, *demand*, which is a need that is translated into language so as to communicate it to others. See Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen (1991, pp.205-8). For a discussion of need as an alternative notion to drive, see Frank (2003, pp.695-7).

DRIVE, NOT INSTINCT!

In order to understand what Freud meant by the term '*der Trieb*', which I translate as 'drive', we need, firstly, to distinguish it from the term '*der Instinkt*', and secondly, to situate it against the background of contemporary work on instincts and innateness.

Freud uses the term *der Instinkt* to designate rigid, innate behaviour. Instincts differ greatly from drives because of this rigidity. An instinct produces fixed behaviour, while drives express themselves in an astonishing variety of ways. "It is in the essence of an *Instinkt* that it could not have a vicissitude: the pattern of behaviour that it fuels and directs is preformed and fixed", writes Lear (1998, p.124).

Instinctual behaviour is said to be innate, that is, behaviour that is not learned or acquired. Such behaviour is stereotypical and constant, characteristic of the species. It appears in animals that were raised in isolation from others and develops fully formed in animals that have been prevented from practicing it (Lehrman, 2001, p.26). One influential proponent of innateness theory was Konrad Lorenz (1966 [1963]), who developed a theory of instincts, within which the aggressive instinct featured prominently.

But there are problems with instinct theories and with the notion of innateness. Daniel Lehrman discusses five problems in relation to Lorenz's theory of innate behaviour, but these problems are more general and so applicable to our discussion:

1. The problem of interpretation: seeing behaviour as 'innate' when it is in fact altered by environmental change or has a physical explanation.
2. Contrasting maturation with learning: Lorenz contrasts the maturation of an innate behaviour with a learned behaviour. This contrast is mainly based on isolation experiments, where an animal is removed from its group. But an animal isolated from its fellow-members is not necessarily isolated from the processes that contribute to the development of its behaviour. The behaviour is not innate simply in virtue of it developing in isolation from other animals.
3. The problem of the levels of organisation in an organism: Lorenz lumps together many different kinds and levels of behaviour, in order to distinguish 'innate' from 'acquired' behaviour, but overlooking many other differences.
4. The nature of evolutionary levels of behavioural organisation: Lorenz overlooks the qualitative and quantitative differences in behaviour when viewed against the background of evolutionary change.
5. The manner in which physiological concepts may be properly used in behaviour analysis (Lehrman, 2001, pp.26, 29, 33, 35).
6. An additional problem discussed by Donald Hebb is that there are factors in behaviour that do not fall either under the heading of learning

or under that of genetic determinants (for example the significance of royal jelly in the development of the queen bee), so ‘unlearned’ does not necessarily equate ‘genetic’ (1982, p.14).

In addition to these conceptual problems there is also evidence that behaviour that was taken to be innate, or instinctual, is in fact learned or acquired. For example, the capacity of rats to build nests was previously thought of as an innate capacity. It has been shown that rats that had no experience of handling solids prior to the time at which they were supposed to build nests, were incapable of doing so, or did so ineffectively (Lehrman, 2001, p.28). This illustrates that innate behaviour, defined as hereditarily determined and as arising independently of the animal’s experience, in fact requires environmental and experiential input.

Empirical data shows that without certain environmental conditions and exposure, no innate behaviour remains intact. Moreover, some ‘instinctual’ responses (such as pecking in chicks) have an embryological physiological explanation that shows them not to be innate but a result of physical pressures operating on the chicks while still inside the egg. These considerations and evidence led to a rejection of the notion of instinct, which is now considered obsolete and “no longer has more than a historical interest” (Karli, 1991, p.15. See also Lehrman, 2001, p.36).

The difference between this notion of instinct, held by biologists and ethologists in the 19th and early 20th Century, and Freud’s notion of drive is enormous. Although the concepts differ hugely they are regularly conflated, much to Freud’s disadvantage.³ Freud’s drive does not produce a stereotypical behaviour but simply pushes towards a discharge of tension. In this sense drives are underdetermined compared to instincts, which are a fully determined behaviour, often in response to a cue. As Pierre Karli states, “it seems that there is no relation between Freud’s *Trieb* and Lorenz’s *Instinkt*” (1991, p.14).

Freud uses the term ‘drive’ to refer to an underlying physiological force that creates pressure on an organism to behave in a way that will relieve the pressure. The behavioural path that will be taken to relieve the pressure remains completely open and strongly contingent on external factors. A simple example would be the sexual drive, eliciting mate-seeking behaviour. If successful, the behaviour will relieve the pressure until it builds up again. But

³ James Strachey, the general editor and translator of Freud’s work into English has contributed to the conflation of the two terms by translating Freud’s German term ‘*der Trieb*’ into the English term ‘instinct’. This has given the term a deterministic and rigid connotation that is unfortunate and misleading. This choice is even odder given that Freud used another term, ‘*der Instinkt*’ to refer to ‘instinct’. The result is that the English translations do not discriminate between *der Instinkt* and *der Trieb*. This will be corrected in future editions of the Strachey translation, where *der Trieb* will be translated as ‘drive’.

exactly in what way the pressure is relieved is not prescribed by the drive and will depend on cultural, social and environmental constraints.

The tremendous variation we find in mate choice and sexual behaviour makes drives open-ended concepts. As Laplanche and Pontalis note,

[Freud's] use of '*Trieb*' accentuates not so much a precise goal as general orientation [...] The Freudian conception of *Trieb* – a pressure that is relatively indeterminate both as regards the behaviour it induces and as regards the satisfying object – differs quite clearly from theories of instinct (1973, p.214).

On the other hand, one of Lorenz's notions, that of vacuum activities (*Leerlaufreaktionen*), seems similar to Freud's notion of the drive and shares some of its problems. These vacuum activities are similar to drives in that in lack of appropriate object and conditions for the performance of certain activities, they accumulate as pent-up energy, aggression, etc. and eventually find an outlet, in this case an inappropriate one.

Lorenz's example is that of the male dove: if he is removed from female doves he will begin to court females of other species, stuffed birds, and eventually will perform the courtship dance to a corner of its cage. For Lorenz, this type of behaviour is evidence of the accumulation of reaction-specific energy in the instinctive centre until it "'forces' its way through the inhibiting innate releasing mechanism and 'goes off' without any detectable external stimulus" (Lehrman, 2001, p.35).

This is particularly relevant to Freud's notion of drives because Lorenz has a special interest in an aggressive instinct that injects all types of behaviour with aggression: food seeking, hunting, mating, territorial defence etc. Lorenz thinks of this aggressive instinct as an all-encompassing force that "far from being the diabolical, destructive principle that classical psychoanalysis takes it to be, is really an essential part of the life-preserving organisation of instincts" (1966, pp.47-8). The aggressive instinct plays a significant role in increasing the reproductive fitness of its bearer. Among the positive roles of the aggressive instinct Lorenz lists the balanced distribution of animals of the same species in an available territory, selection of the strongest by rival fights and defence of the young (1966, p.43).

Prima facie this idea seems similar to Freud's notion of an aggressive drive. But Lorenz's account of a general and evolutionarily helpful aggressive instinct is problematic both theoretically and empirically. Theoretical problems are the following:

1. It is unclear whether Lorenz is referring to the instinctive behaviour, or to an endogenous force that generates the behaviour.

2. There seems to be no evolutionary explanations as to how it would come about that animals possess an 'all purpose' aggressive drive (how would this be selected for?).
3. It is not clear how this aggressive instinct could give rise, through the ritualisation of aggressive behaviour that Lorenz describes, to another instinct, which diverts aggression into harmless ritualised action.
4. The relationship between instinct and reason, or 'intelligence' as Lorenz calls it, is unclear: Lorenz claims that intelligence is incapable of controlling aggression, but this is clearly false; human intelligence has prevented at times aggression from being freely expressed (through legislation, political action or other preventive measures).
5. His explanation of love as a limiting case of intra-specific aggression seems incredibly reductive: to explain love as inhibited aggression, a result of discrimination stopping an animal from harming particular individuals (against the background assumption that aggression is the default response), reduces all types and aspects of social interaction to an exception to the overarching application of an aggressive drive (Karli, 1991, pp.12-4).

Additionally, there seems to be no empirical evidence supporting a self-generating aggressive instinct: "the evidence for Lorenz's notion of aggressive energy is virtually nonexistent", write Robert Baron and Deborah Richardson (1994, p.19). Leonard Berkowitz concurs in saying that no one has been able to find any sign of the drive reservoirs in the body or the brain. He further adds that supposedly spontaneous aggression and other instances of seemingly 'vacuum' behaviour "are much more likely to be responses to stimuli in the surrounding situation than actions that are only 'pushed out' by internal forces" (1993, pp.383-4).

These problems lead Karli to conclude that aggressiveness as the internal source of a specific energy that allegedly discharges in the form of diverse acts of aggression, has a heuristic value of zero: "not only does it explain nothing, it also obscures the real problems by failing to lead us to ask truly pertinent questions" (1991, p.15). He further points out the difference between Lorenz and Freud, namely that Freud does not claim, as Lorenz does, that the processes described are real or that they have universal explanatory value, any more than he claims there is a direct causal link between an aggressive drive and aggression (1991, p.14). Armed with the distinction between drive and instinct and with an understanding of Freud's drive concept, we can now turn to the development of the death drive in Freud's later work.

Two

The Development of the Death Drive

Beyond the Pleasure Principle, published in 1920, presents Freud's first formulation of the death drive and his mature drive theory. The essay has therefore come to take an important place amongst Freud's corpus and its unique baroque style has attracted special attention. For these reasons it is worth saying a few words about its structure and style. It is a highly problematic essay, Jean Laplanche notes, which "remains the most fascinating and baffling text of the entire Freudian corpus" (1976, p.106). Daniel Greenberg describes it as "the least plausible, the most inscrutable and speculative of all of Freud's major theoretical contributions" which has come to be viewed as "a forgivable bit of eccentricity on the part of an otherwise formidable master" (1990, p.271).

In this text, perhaps more than anywhere else in his writing, Freud appeals to extra-psychological evidence and principles from diverse fields: neurology, biology and myth. The result is a "vast metapsychological, metaphysical and metabiological fresco" that is "only sporadically and superficially subordinated to logical imperatives" (Laplanche, 1976, pp.106-7). Nonetheless, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* constitutes the first formulation of the death drive and plays a pivotal role in explaining the need for such a hypothesis.

Freud's discussion of the death drive in the essay contains much deliberation, obscure formulations and constant theoretical and terminological shifts. This confusion constitutes part of the plural meaning of the death drive for Freud, which is why I see the difficulties he experienced with it as integral to the concept. The death drive is a theoretical dilemma articulated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* through repetition, metaphor and constant change and reconstruction.

The metaphorisation and repetition create strange gaps in the text, making its unity and coherence (and hence that of the death drive) highly questionable. As Laplanche comments, "one may derive the impression that every question in [*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*] is poorly posed and in need of reformulation" and the text reads as "an unrestrained series of interruptions" (ibid.).

In order to make sense of Freud's strange writing on the death drive we should note the metaphysical tone of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Although Freud refers to the metaphysical context within which he attempts to work out the question of death as 'speculation' (*Spekulation*), his aversion to

philosophical discourse is explicit.¹ This aversion expresses itself in the repetition and ambivalence of the text, which is a result of Freud's attempt to express a metaphysical 'speculative' thought in a quasi-scientific, quasi-empirical manner.

The confused structure and constant fluctuations of the text point to a double lack. Firstly, there is a lack of a language capable of synthesising the metaphysical speculation with the traditional structure of the scientific essay. Secondly, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the death drive hypothesis. More broadly, the discussion of death in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is confused and confusing because it utilises physiological, psychological and metaphysical ideas and principles, without delineating the different levels of discussion.²

The essay sets out a new dichotomy of life drives and death drives as two opposing groups, replacing two former oppositions: object-libido/ego-libido and sex drives/ego drives. It is clear at the outset that Freud has a theoretical commitment to some kind of dualistic view, because such a view accounts for the most significant element in Freudian thought: conflict. Freud saw conflict as the most fundamental element in psychic processes and behaviour, and therefore needed a plural model. A theory based on the idea of conflict must have at least two opposing elements in it in order for it to give an appropriate explanatory and structural framework to conflict.³

As we shall see, Freud laboured to create these dualistic models, but this creation is in many cases artificial. If we look carefully, we find a single concept underlying each dual set in Freud's formulations. Thus underlying object libido/ego libido, we find primary narcissistic libido. In the case of sex drives/ego drives, we find 'unspecified drive' as the common source of both. In the case of sadism and masochism we find primary masochism as the original aggressive force.

Each of these examples shows a single source that once endowed with specific direction and object, is split into two specialised forces. This creates an appearance of diversity and duality, which in turn accounts for the conflictual processes Freud wants to establish as explanations of symptoms, neurotic

¹ Freud's aversion to philosophy has been extensively noted, not least by Freud himself. For example, in *An Autobiographical Study* he writes: "Even when I have moved away from observation, I have carefully avoided any contact with philosophy proper. This avoidance has been greatly facilitated by constitutional incapacity" (SE 20:59; GW 14:86). Freud's particular avoidance of Nietzsche is discussed in detail in Assoun (2000).

² In this context Derrida writes: "All the disciplines thus named, and thereby identified within their regional borders, notably 'metaphysics' and 'biology', not to mention 'demography', necessarily presuppose a meaning of death, a preunderstanding of what death is or of what the word 'death' means" (1993, p.27).

³ For a discussion of conflict as central to Freud's thought see Greenberg (1990). Gay makes a similar point in his biography of Freud (1995, p.397). For a dialectical interpretation of conflict see Fayek (1980).

behaviour etc. A dualistic structure underpins the entire discussion of aggression and drives, but this structure is neither empirically justified nor the best description available. This insistence led Freud to the unstable formulation of two classes of drives, and ultimately led to the collapse of this view.

THE INITIAL FORMULATION OF THE DEATH DRIVE

Freud opens *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by positing the pleasure principle (*das Lustprinzip*) as regulating mental processes. Organisms in general, including humans, seek pleasure and seek to avoid unpleasure. Pleasure (*Lust*) corresponds to a diminution in the quantity of unbound excitation and unpleasure (*Unlust*) to its increase in a given period of time. According to the pleasure principle, the aim of the organism is to lower the level of unbound excitation, excitation being defined as unpleasure and its discharge as pleasurable (SE 18:8; FS 3:217-8). This account of pleasure and unpleasure is purely quantitative: pleasure corresponds to the lowest possible level of excitation within a system and unpleasure to a raised level. Most of the unpleasure we experience is perceptual: this could be pressure exerted by unsatisfied drives or external perception that could either be distressing in itself (rain or cold) or may arouse unpleasurable expectations (spotting a predator).

Control over the level of excitation is exercised either by lowering tension (providing temporary relief), or by maintaining a constant level of excitation; neither is necessarily possible at a given moment. Freud does not propose a third possibility: absolute divestment of energy, or death. The pleasure principle (which Freud also calls the principle of constancy and the principle of inertia) is inspired by Fechner's hypothesis about the relationship between pleasure and stability and by Exner's formulations (SE 18:8; FS 3:220, and also Kitcher, 1992, p.24; Holt, 1965, p.103). The underlying picture of the mental system was of an inert system that becomes flooded by excitation that must then be discharged. The discharge, in the form of motor action, is a reflex arc action.

The economic foundation of the pleasure principle is the principle of constancy, which is a tendency towards stability (SE 18:9; FS 3:219). The constancy principle is, in turn, a modification of the Nirvana principle, which is posited as the fundamental principle of psychic processes. And so, already in the opening pages of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* we encounter the death drive (the Nirvana principle) as underlying the pleasure principle.

The pleasure principle is further modified by the demands of external reality, yielding the reality principle, which "demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure" (SE 18:10; FS 3:220). But this simple account, even with the reality principle, does not offer a satisfactory explanation of certain repetitive behaviour. This type of behaviour seeks to raise the level of

unpleasurable excitation and therefore indicates that the explanation offered by the pleasure principle is partial.

There is, it seems, another principle that lies beyond the pleasure principle's explanatory domain.⁴ "Even under the dominance of the pleasure principle there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind" (SE 18:17; FS 3:227). People who repeatedly return to unpleasurable experiences are not masochists nor are they acting in accordance with the reality principle, but are victims of an alien, so it seems, compulsion to repeat. Therefore, Freud infers, the mind must contain tendencies that are more primitive than, and independent of, the pleasure principle.

Is there clinical evidence supporting the existence of a repetition compulsion? Freud points to a compulsive urge to re-live traumatic events and past experiences of suffering and unpleasure, exhibited in war neurosis patients and in those suffering from traumatic neuroses.⁵ Dreams in traumatic neuroses repeatedly reproduce the traumatic moment – contradicting the principle propounded in *The Interpretation of Dreams (Die Traumdeutung)*, that dreams are a wish-fulfilment (SE 4:122; GW 2/3:127). The *Fort-Da* game played by Freud's grandson recapitulates his painful separation from his mother; and in transference the analysand repeats painful early interactions. The conclusion from this extensive and repeated clinical evidence is that there must exist a compulsion to repeat that can override the pleasure principle.

If we take into account observations such as these, based upon behaviour in the transference and upon the life histories of men and women, we shall find the courage to assume that there really does exist in the mind a compulsion to repeat which over-rides the pleasure principle (SE 18:23; FS 3:232).

In order to explain these transgressions of the pleasure principle Freud postulates another principle, which answers a more fundamental need than the pleasure principle and is independent of it. This new principle, the compulsion to repeat, has an instinctual character and overrides the pleasure principle, demanding a return to painful experiences. Freud's hypothesis is that the traumatic experience, which caught the affected person unprepared and therefore

⁴ *Das Jenseits* means the hereafter or the next world.

⁵ Freud criticises his theoretical assumption of the pleasure principle with empirical evidence. Lacan sees this dialectical method as shaping the character of Freudian psychoanalysis, where the theoretical is subjected to an empirical critique, which in turn is subjected to the theoretical. This dialectic shapes psychoanalysis as a singular historical product, which is subjected to the 'discovery context' of hypotheses and their examination in Freud's concrete practice. Lacan notes: "the theory has been forged only for the discoveries that preceded it [...] this imposes on us a sort of retroactive leap if we wish to mark here the essence of Freud's position" (1979, pp.33-4).

shocks her, has as a result captured a large portion of energy. The repetition and return to the event is an attempt to regain a sense of control over the unexpected circumstance and to experience it without the original fright. On Freud's view, a similar event that is accompanied by physical trauma does not cause the same compulsion to repeat, because the trapped energy has been released as physical pain.

Freud is adamant that this compulsion to repeat unpleasant events is not masochistic or a malfunction of the pleasure principle. The function of the repetition compulsion is to bind the instinctual excitation reaching the primary process; a failure in its function creates neurosis or other disturbances. A successful binding enables the pleasure principle to proceed once again in its regulative operation. But until the excitation has been bound, the task of binding takes precedence, independently of the pleasure principle (SE 18:34-5; FS 3:245).

Marrying drive and repetition allows Freud to take the next step, which is to define drives in general as having a conservative, repetitive nature: "a drive is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces" (SE 18:36; FS 3:246). This is an unusual view of drives as agents of conservation and inertia rather than promoting development and change. This relates to Freud's definition of drives as internal. Every development or change in an organism is the result of external pressures; change is a response to external conditions in accordance with the self-preservation principle, not an internal force.

This turns our view of the drives around, so instead of regarding them as a factor compelling towards change and development, "we are now asked to recognise in them the precise opposite – an expression of the *conservative* nature of living substance" (ibid.). The drives aim to promote the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life and change is strictly the result of an external disturbance of this inertia. If this claim is followed to its logical end, it must be concluded that the most fundamental aim of every living creature is to return to an inanimate form, which is the earliest state of things in organic terms, or in other words, to die. In this sense – a restricted instinctual sense that comprises only half of the instinctual domain (the other half being Eros) – "the aim of all life is death" (SE 18:38; FS 3:248).

This leads Freud to the paradoxical conclusion that life is a detour on the way to death, based on "the drive to return to the inanimate state" (ibid.).

Seen in this light, the theoretical importance of the drives of self preservation, of self assertion and of mastery greatly diminishes [...]. We have no longer to reckon with the organism's puzzling determination to maintain its own existence in the face of every obstacle. What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion (SE 18:39; FS 3:249).

Self-preservative drives are conservative drives, because they ensure that the organism will die “only in its own fashion” (SE 18:39; FS 3:249). This makes life “circuitous paths to death, faithfully kept by the conservative drives” and places the struggle for life, and so also the Erotic drives (although this is not stated explicitly here) *in the service of the death drive* (SE 18:39; FS 3:248). The repetition compulsion therefore overrides the pleasure principle, replacing the striving for pleasure with a striving for death.

What emerges is a view of the sex drives, which were originally classified as drives of life and change, as conservative drives *par excellence*, when examined according to the new criterion. Despite their vital appearance and preservative role, the sex drives are as conservative as other drives in that they bring back earlier states of living substance, but additionally, they are conservative to a higher degree in that they are “peculiarly resistant to external influences; and they are conservative too in another sense in that they preserve life itself for a comparatively long period” (SE 18:40; FS 3:250).

At this point the first set of dual concepts – sex drives/ego drives – collapses. If sex drives are as conservative as other drives, the distinction between ego drives (pressing towards death) and sex drives (pressing to maintain life) disappears. Both groups express the urge to return to an earlier state. Additionally, with the introduction of narcissism, Freud begins to view libido as originating in the ego and as initially narcissistic. He claims that all libido is at first located in the ego (narcissistic libido) and is later extended on to objects. So the opposition between ego drives and sex drives proved to be inadequate. “A portion of the ego drives was seen to be libidinal; sexual drives operated in the ego” (SE 18:52; FS 3:261). So the distinction between the two kinds of drive, which was taken to be qualitative, is now reformulated as topographical. There is no qualitative difference between drives, only a difference in their location. Ego drives are located in the ego, whereas sex drives are directed outwards.

Are all drives libidinal? Despite his unwillingness to admit this, Freud cannot provide an example of non-libidinal drives. This formulation pushes him into a monistic position in which all drives are libidinal. In order to resolve the problem without falling into a monistic position Freud replaces the sex drives/ego drives dualism with a new opposition between *life* drives aiming to extend and replicate life and *death* drives, pushing towards death.

Our views have from the very first been dualistic, and today they are even more definitely dualistic than before – now that we describe the opposition as being not between ego drives and sexual drives, but between life drives and death drives (SE 18:53; FS 3:262).

Freud then describes life as moving “with a vacillating rhythm” in which one group of drives rushes forward in an attempt to reach the final aim of

life as swiftly as possible, whereas the other group “jerks back to a certain point to make a fresh start and so prolong the journey” (SE 18:40-1; FS 3:250).

To defend himself against the claim that if all drives are libidinal then there are not really two groups of drives, Freud argues that since the drives have not been completely charted, the fact that non-libidinal drives have not been discovered does not mean they do not exist. Despite the fact that clinical evidence shows only the existence of libidinal drives, he refuses to conclude that there are no drives that are non-libidinal (SE 18:53; FS 3:262).

Freud next tries to demonstrate the existence of such non-libidinal drives by pointing to the sadistic component in the sex drive. He explains sadism as a death drive driven out of the ego that reappears linked to an object, enabling the libido to exit the ego and project itself onto an object.⁶ Whereas sadism is a death drive that has been directed outwards, masochism is regression to the primal stage prior to the externalisation of the destructive drive (SE 18:54; FS 3:263). According to this description there is, again, only one source of drives: ego drives, which can remain in the ego or be directed towards external object as sex drives. Freud is forced to conclude that ego-libido and object-libido have a common source, and this leaves him, as he confesses, in a “highly embarrassing situation” (ibid.).

So far we have seen two formulations: one is an attempt to classify drives as either self-preservative (ego) drives, or drives directed outwards (sex drives). But once Freud introduces the urge to return to an earlier state as the aim of all drives, the distinction disappears. The second formulation that is intended to correct this monistic position is one of life and death drives, which he also calls sex- and ego drives. But this formulation does not solve the problem, because all the ego or death drives Freud can point to are libidinal.

He crafts a way out through an analogy. Freud applies the specialisation of the drives, created by endowing them with a specific direction, to sadism and masochism. Sadism and masochism, Freud argues, are reversible, and it is their *direction* rather than any intrinsic quality that determines their function. Ego and sex drives are specialised in the same way: one is directed inwards and the other is externalised.

Freud proceeds to re-invoke the Nirvana principle, which he defines as “...the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli”. This tendency is “one of our strongest reasons for believing in the existence of death drives” (SE 18:55-6; FS 3:264). This way Freud can maintain the death drive, making it the basis of the pleasure principle. The problem is, again, that the pleasure principle and the Nirvana principle (which is an expression of the death drive) are too close in their regulative function to justify a dualistic view.

⁶ A detailed analysis of the development of sadism and masochism appears later in this chapter and in Chapter Three.

This close association between the pleasure principle and the Nirvana principle makes the life and death drives fundamentally linked. “If, therefore, we are not to abandon the hypothesis of death drives, we must suppose them to be associated from the very first with life drives” (SE 18:57; FS 3:266). Life drives are the part of Eros directed towards objects, which seeks to unify and hold together living substance (SE 18:60n. FS 3:269n.). The ego drives are non-sexual drives, but they too have a libidinal character and are actually sex drives whose object is the ego. So both ego drives and sex (object) drives do, after all, have a common libidinal nature.

Again, Freud’s attempt to maintain a dualistic position fails. This time he resorts to constituting a third category of drives. A new opposition appears, an opposition between libidinal drives – ego drives (narcissistic and self-preservative drives) and object drives (sex drives) – and another category of drives, whose existence Freud presupposes and demonstrates through the destructive drive. The final formulation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is an opposition between libidinal (ego *and* object) drives and mute death drives, which produce no direct evidence for their existence (SE 18:60-1n.; FS 3:269n.).

Freud’s original view presents a psychic model governed by two principles. The pleasure principle prescribes an aim to increase pleasure by reducing the level of unbound excitation. The Nirvana principle defines an aim to return to an inanimate state (the compulsion to repeat). But this binary model of pleasure and unpleasure is in fact a positive and negative expression of the same principle, which Freud names firstly the pleasure principle, then the compulsion to repeat and finally the Nirvana principle, synthesising both aims. An organism wishes instinctually (that is, unconsciously) to return to an inorganic state, whether by disposing of internal excitation through the work of the pleasure principle, or by disposing of external excitation through the work of the death drive.

Because of the primacy of the Nirvana principle (and hence of the death drive) Freud must replace the economic model (defining pleasure and unpleasure as quantities of unbound excitation) with a metaphysical one, appearing at the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Instead of the economic explanation of attraction towards pleasure and rejection of unpleasure, Freud explains life as subjected to death in the form of the death drive. The death drives become the regulative principle of life, which is seen as both originating from it and finding its end therein: “The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death drives” (SE 18:63; FS 3:271).

CONFLICT VS. INTERTWINING

The next significant discussion of the death drive appears in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), a systematic treatise published three years after *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This discussion has two central themes: the first is the conflictual and ambivalent nature of mental life. Conflict is explained as the result of the

opposing action of life and death drives. As was pointed out earlier, the idea of conflict in fact motivates Freud to posit the existence of two opposing groups of drives. The second theme appears later in the essay, and substitutes the first to some extent. This theme stresses the mutual immersion and intertwining seen in the common origin and effect of the two groups.

Freud's dualistic view combines these two themes by positing the life and death drives as two opposing forces that share the same origin, serve one another at times, and obey the same principles. The dualistic view is both a hypothesis (Freud has no direct evidence of the death drive) as well as the putative outcome of the speculative process described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud's use of the two-drive model as both the point of departure and the final conclusion of his study shows how ensnared by the dualistic worldview he was.

Freud begins by observing the quick shifts between contradictory positions, such as love and hate, and asking what could explain these. The explanation brings together dynamic and structural elements. Ambivalence, described as a fundamental phenomenon, and conflict are the dynamic elements creating interaction between the various mental agencies. The result is a pluralistic picture, within which we find disagreement and struggle between psychic components (SE 19:42-4; FS 3:309-11). This position is illustrated in lecture 31 of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933), "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality" ("*Die Zerlegung der psychischen Persönlichkeit*"). Freud describes the ego as serving three "tyrannical masters" – the id, the superego and external reality – running between them in a failed attempt to reach a compromise, but never satisfying anyone. "The poor ego has things even worse: it serves three severe masters and does what it can to bring their claims and demands into harmony with one another. These claims are always divergent and often seem incompatible. No wonder that the ego so often fails in its task" (SE 22:77; GW 15:84).

He also uses the metaphor of a parliament composed of various groups representing conflicting interests to describe the psyche, a picture of inherent dissatisfaction. The two-drive model supplies Freud with a theoretical structure that can accommodate both dualism and conflict. This enables Freud to view life as a "conflict and compromise" between the life and death drives and to provide a dualistic answer to the problem of the goal and purpose of life (SE 19:40-1; FS 3:308).

The additional advantage of a dualistic view is that it also explains the fusion and blending of the two groups. Freud is seeking a versatile psychic model whose dynamics are governed by conflict and ambivalence, but also contains the possibility of fusion of these conflicting forces. The aim of Chapter IV of *The Ego and the Id* is to provide such a model, in which the drives are "fused, blended, and alloyed with each other" regularly and extensively (SE 19:41; FS 3:308).

At this stage Freud sees the life drives (Eros) as composed of sex drives and other drives derived from them (sublimated drives) as well as of self preservation drives, which belong to the ego but have a libidinal source. On the other side we find the death drives, which are not easily detectable, and are tentatively represented by sadism. Life is simultaneously the source of continuity (Eros) and the drive to destruction and death (sadism) (SE 19:40; FS 3:308). Up to this point Freud restates his position in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, but now the conflict between the two groups of drives becomes metaphysical, since it provides an explanation of life as “conflict and a compromise between these two trends” (SE 19:41; FS 3:309).

This is the culmination of the dualistic, conflictual tendencies in Freud’s work, supplying a paradoxical answer to the question of the aim of life: to live and die, to be and cease being, to preserve and destroy. Two kinds of forces exist constantly in any organism, both active in every sphere, although not in equal proportion. The way in which the two groups combine can influence the direction of the drive, and therefore its effect. For example, when the death drive is directed inwards, it causes self-destruction. When directed outwards, the death drive might cause an organism to kill another one, thus contributing to its self-preservation.

Freud is adamant that no action is derived from one group of drives only, because the merging of the two groups is necessary *de facto*. This raises questions as to the plausibility and need for the distinction itself, and makes the distinction between Eros and death drives purely hypothetical. It is impossible to isolate a drive, despite the fact that the dualistic view is based on this assumption. As Freud confesses “the distinction between the two classes of drives does not seem sufficiently assured and it is possible that facts of clinical analysis may be found which will do away with its pretension” (SE 19:42; FS 3:309). This is an insurmountable problem for Freud, who as a clinician professes to craft his theory in accordance with observation. He never found empirical support for the assumption that there are two groups of drives, so Freud’s solution was to add an *ad hoc* correction to his model. He now claims that the two groups of drives are always fused, so it is impossible to observe a single drive at work.

Through the swift change of love into hate and vice versa, Freud demonstrates further that the separation between the two groups is artificial and strictly theoretical. Clinical observation shows that love can turn into hate and hate into love.

If this change is more than a mere succession in time – if, that is, one of them actually turns into the other – then clearly the ground is cut away from under a distinction so fundamental as that between erotic drives and death drives (SE 19:43; FS 3:309).

Freud concludes that the energetic source of both love and hate (representing Eros and destruction) is de-sexualised libido. This displaceable and neutral energy is employed by the pleasure principle in order to obtain discharge, while being indifferent about the path of discharge (SE 19:44; FS 3:311). The same energy – sublimated energy retaining the main purpose of Eros: binding and uniting – works for the contradicting aims of both life and death drives (SE 19:45; FS 3:312).

Freud takes a further step demonstrating how inseparable the two groups are, by pointing to secondary narcissism. In this situation the ego works against the aims of Eros and in the service of the death drive. By capturing libido from energy that is bound to an object, the ego posits itself as a love-object. Through this process of de-sexualisation of libido, the ego assists the death drive to take over libido, while turning itself into the object of the death drive and risking its own destruction. The outcome is an ego, whose drives were previously identified with the death drive, which is now filled with libido (SE 19:56; FS 3:323).

By capturing libido the ego turns from an abettor of the death drive into a representative of Eros and life. Freud's dualism once again narrows down to a monism, this time a monism of Eros:

Over and over again we find, when we are able to trace instinctual impulses back, that they reveal themselves as derivatives of Eros. If it were not for the considerations put forward in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and ultimately for the sadistic constituents which have attached themselves to Eros, we should have difficulty in holding to our fundamental dualistic point of view. But since we cannot escape that view, we are driven to conclude that the death drives are by their nature mute and that the clamour of life proceeds for the most part from Eros (SE 19:46; FS 3:313).

Freud can save the two-drive dualism only by concluding that the death drive is mute and lacks positive expression. Because he can demonstrate the action of the death drive only as Eros-mediated, Freud must now attach another *ad hoc* supposition to the theory: the death drive cannot express itself independently. At the end of Chapter V of *The Ego and the Id* he synthesises the drive theory with the second topography by describing Eros and Thanatos fighting inside the id, the mental agency within which drives are now seen to be located. Therefore the id is dominated by the “mute but powerful death drives”, which in turn desire to find peace by putting Eros “the mischief-maker” to rest (SE 19:59; FS 3:325).

The Ego and the Id closes with the following view. The principle of stability guides life, which is described as a “continuous descent towards death” (SE 19:47; FS 3:313). Eros repeatedly produces excitations that interrupt stability and constancy, and therefore prolong the journey. The id, guided by the

pleasure principle, fights excitation in various ways: for example by responding to sexual demands (SE 19:46; FS 3:313).

The guiding psychic principle is the desire to reach complete rest through discharge of tension, a desire Freud has already introduced as the Nirvana principle. The death drive is the main regulative principle of life (through the constancy or Nirvana principle) while Eros creates undesired interruptions.

THE DEATH DRIVE AS PSYCHIC PRINCIPLE

In *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924) Freud affirms the existence of primary masochism, identifies it with the death drive and with sadism, and shows that the three override the pleasure principle. Whereas in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud claims that “there *might* be such a thing as primary masochism” in this essay the existence of primary masochism is taken as certain (SE 18:55; FS 3:3). The essay opens by stating that the existence of masochism is incomprehensible in light of the pleasure principle.

For if mental processes are governed by the pleasure principle in such a way that their first aim is the avoidance of unpleasure and the obtaining of pleasure, masochism is incomprehensible. If pain and pleasure can be not simply warnings but actually aims, the pleasure principle is paralysed – it is as though the watchman over our mental life were put out of action by a drug (SE 19:159; FS 3:343).

Masochism contradicts the pleasure principle by having unpleasure as its goal. In light of this, Freud needs to re-interpret the relationship between the drives and the pleasure principle. As the pleasure principle tells us, every rise in the level of excitation results in unpleasure, whereas a reduction of tension is pleasurable. As a result, the Nirvana principle (and the pleasure principle) in fact serves the death drives, “whose aim is to conduct the restlessness of life into the stability of the inorganic state” (SE 19:160; FS 3:344). This is a summary of the position presented in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Ego and the Id*.

However, now Freud redefines the Nirvana principle and the pleasure principle as distinct principles with separate, sometimes contradictory, aims. He claims that despite the fact that the Nirvana principle is an extreme expression of the pleasure principle, the two should nonetheless be distinguished. Freud retracts his earlier claim, that the Nirvana principle serves the death drive, pointing to a mistake in his former formulation: it was a purely quantitative account identifying tension with unpleasure and discharge with pleasure. Freud’s counter example is that of sexual excitation (tension) which is extremely pleasurable.

Pleasure and unpleasure are not determined *quantitatively* through the level of excitation, but *qualitatively*. There can be pleasurable excitation as there

can be an unpleasurable discharge of excitation. But the shift to a qualitative difference encounters a problem: he cannot define the qualitative element, which he nonetheless posits as distinguishing pleasure from unpleasure. Thus the quantitative economic account is replaced by an unknown qualitative element. "If we were able to say what this qualitative characteristic is, we should be much further advanced in psychology" (ibid.).

The Nirvana principle is turned into the pleasure principle by the life drive that has "alongside of the death drive, seized upon a share in the regulation of the processes of life" (ibid.). So the Nirvana principle expresses the death drive (the wish to return to an inorganic state) whilst the pleasure principle expresses the demands of the libido (sex and self preservation). A third principle – the reality principle – shares the reign with them. The reality principle is a revised pleasure principle expressing the demands of the external world as taken into account in the striving for pleasure. Each of the three principles demands that its agenda be carried out, but the three are not mutually exclusive – another example of Freud's pluralistic and dynamic view (SE 19:161; FS 3:344).

This also shows Freud's insistence on maintaining multiplicity and his rejection of conceptual hierarchy. It illustrates his continuous attempt to reconcile the death drive as the most fundamental force in psychic life with a multiple-agency and drive model, ruled by a dynamic balance between several forces. None of the three principles: the Nirvana, pleasure and reality principles, is put out of action by another. "As a rule they are able to tolerate one another, although conflicts are to arise occasionally from the fact of the differing aims that are set for each" (ibid.).

Returning to the problem of masochism, Freud states that the libido's task is to make the death drive innocuous, by diverting it (with the help of the muscular apparatus) towards objects in the external world (SE 19:163; FS 3:347). A portion the death drive is connected to the sexual function, becoming "sadism proper". Another portion of it remains internal, and becoming libidinally bound turns into erotogenic masochism. This theme of fusion and mixture of the drives is repeated in Freud's claim that

we can only assume that a very extensive fusion and amalgamation, in varying proportions, of the two classes of drives take place, so that we never have to deal with pure life drives or pure death drives but only with mixtures of them in different amounts (SE 19:164; FS 3:347-8).

The main claim of the essay identifies the death drive with masochism and primal sadism (SE 19:164; FS 3:348). This leads to another collapse into monism, this time in postulating a common origin of both sadism and masochism in primary masochism. This leads to a further identification. The death drive is identical to masochism, but it is also defined as primary sadism. If the death drive is identical to sadism and also to masochism, then sadism and masochism must be identical as well. This demonstrates how overly generalised

the death drive is. Any form of aggression, whether directed inwards or outwards, is a manifestation of the death drive, placing the explanatory value of such an all-engulfing principle in doubt.

Freud insists that there is a portion of this death drive that resists binding. But how large that portion is “we cannot at present guess” (ibid.). This is due to the silent existence of the death drive, which has no trace. So the death drive splits into two: part of it remains completely unknown because it is unbound, and another part is externalised as sadism, or turned once more into the ego as secondary masochism. By identifying primary masochism with the death drive Freud assigns to both a fundamental regulative role and posits them as the primary source of aggression. The death drive becomes a basic force prior to the secondary life drives, which wait to merge with the death drive.

The symmetry of the two groups of drives, already weakened in *The Ego and the Id*, is replaced by a new view of the death drive as the basic constituent of the psyche. This view of the death drive as primary masochism is ambivalent. It contains on the one hand an erotic libidinal element and on the other retains the self as its object. This demonstrates that the self can be a libidinal object, and moreover that the direction of a libidinal investment can be easily reversed.

THE DEATH DRIVE AS THE SOURCE OF AGGRESSION

Chapter VI of *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) opens with the statement that “of all the slowly developed parts of analytic theory, the theory of the drives is the one that has felt its way the most painfully forward. And yet that theory was so indispensable to the whole structure that something had to be put in its place” (SE 21:117; FS 9:245). This tension between, on the one hand, conceptual problems with the two-drive model and, on the other hand, its indispensability, is articulated in *Civilisation and its Discontents*. The tension is expressed in the ambivalent position described above.⁷ Freud wishes to incorporate the drive theory into the wider context of his work, but cannot overcome the problems that the drive theory poses, in particular the dualistic view.

With Schiller’s dictum that hunger and love move the world, Freud returns to the pre-1920 opposition of ego drives/object drives, rather than to the life drive/death drive opposition of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (SE 21:117; FS 9:245). Freud tries to stabilise and maintain a clear distinction between object and ego, or between internal (self) and external (other) investment of energy.

Freud distinguishes between object drives (libidinal ‘love drives’) and ego drives, which are not libidinal. But the presence of sadism amongst the love drives is peculiar, since “its aim was so very far from being loving” (ibid.). In

⁷ On the relationship of ambivalence to the death drive see K.R. Eissler (1971).

order to respond to this taxonomy problem Freud shifts his classification of sadism. Sometimes he sees sadism as an object drive, aggression directed at an external object; at other times it is seen as an ego drive aiming at self-preservation. But as sadism is clearly a part of sexual life, where affection can be replaced by cruelty, Freud decides to classify it as one of the object drives (SE 21:117-8; FS 9:245).

The formulation of narcissism led Freud to conclude that the ego itself is invested with libido, and that it is the libido's "original home, and remains to some extent its headquarters" (SE 21:118; FS 9:246). When narcissistic libido is turned towards objects it becomes object-libido, but it can also revert into ego-libido. With this Freud concludes his volte-face from his original position, which regarded the libido as external to the ego *by definition*, to the admission that libido originates in, and ultimately returns to, the ego. This is also evident in Freud's theory of mourning. In mourning a libidinal attachment that was externalised towards an object is severed and that libidinal energy is *regained* by the ego.

Freud finds himself driven into a monistic understanding of the drives, according to which all drives have a libidinal nature. Freud's position here is similar to that held at the end of *The Ego and the Id*, where he admitted that the dualistic view is untenable.

Since the ego-drives, too, were libidinal, it seemed for a time inevitable that we should make libido coincide with instinctual energy in general [...] Nevertheless, there still remained in me a conviction, for which I was not as yet able to find reasons, that the drives could not all be of the same kind (ibid.).

Next we find a reference to the argument of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; the opposition is between the uniting force of Eros and the disintegrating work of the death drive. This opposition allows the dualistic position renewed legitimacy, but only on the basis of the same unjustified conviction that there must be a death drive (SE 21:118-9; FS 9:246). But the opposition between the two groups of drives, Freud admits, is neither simple nor clear. He still cannot point to any manifestation of the death drive, and this casts a serious doubt over its existence, which is still categorised as speculative. "It was not easy", he writes, "to demonstrate the activities of this supposed death drive [...] It might be assumed that the death drive operated silently within the organism towards its dissolution, but that, of course, was no proof" (SE 21:119; FS 9:246).

This problem is solved with the prototypical example of sadism, whose twists and turns of direction, aim and object are contradictory and result in its ambivalent function. Freud explains sadism as an externalised death drive (originally an 'ego-drive'). This makes sadism a death drive operating in the

service of Eros (originally ‘object-libido’ or ‘sex-drive’), because sadism ultimately assists self-preservation (SE 21:119; FS 9:246-7).

In addition, Freud defines sadism, an externalised death drive, as a sexual drive, which makes love take a destructive form by turning it into hate. So death drives can turn into Eros, and vice versa. These processes of reversal and externalisation are the source of neurosis, which expresses the struggle between noisy Eros and the mute death drive. The energy of the life drives is libidinal; distinguishing them from the imperceptible death drives existing “as something in the background behind Eros” (SE 21:121; FS 9:248). The death drives can be detected only through their alliance with colourful Eros, as Freud repeatedly writes, therefore we have no evidence of their existence (SE 21:119; FS 9:247, 19:46; FS 3:313, 19:59; FS 3:325). The action of the death drive is visible only through its mediation, reversal and externalisation or re-internalisation through which sadism or secondary masochism is created (SE 21:119; FS 9:247).

Sadism and masochism are each an amalgam of Eros and aggression. They are the meeting point at which the conflict between life and death erupts, the site of strife. The death drive becomes sadism through a double transformation: it becomes an object-drive and, through externalisation, enters the service of Eros. This charged meeting point creates neurosis, the outcome of this conflict between the interest of self-preservation and the demands of the libido (SE 21:118; FS 9:245-6).

By seeing sadism and masochism as amalgams of two types of drives Freud is led to postulate the existence of *non-erotic* aggression, which is now distinguished from both. He is now surprised that “we can have overlooked the ubiquity of non-erotic aggressivity and destructiveness, and can have failed to give it its due place in our interpretation of life” (SE 21:120; FS 9:247). By formulating non-erotic aggression Freud can once again return to the dualistic view, as ‘pure’ aggression contains no erotic component. And so libido once again comes to be the exclusive energy of Eros, and is distinguished from the aggressive energy of the death drive (SE 21:121; FS 9:248).

But this position is flawed. Although Freud laboured to keep apart the death drive and Eros, neither force exists independently. Even in its purest appearance, the death drive is accompanied by a high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, tethering it to (auto)erotic pleasure (SE 21:121; FS 9:249). This bond is more fundamental than could be expected from the dualism Freud is seeking; it ties together the gratification of the ego with the destructive function of the death drive. “The drive of destruction, moderated and tamed, and, as it were, inhibited in its aim, must, when it is directed towards objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature” (ibid.).

The texts dealing with the death drive contain a constant oscillation between conflict and strife on the one hand and intertwining and mutual dependence on the other. The two groups of drives are separable only conceptually, not empirically, and there is no evidence of pure death drive.

Moreover, the origin of both groups cannot be determined as purely libidinal, because this would entail monism. Freud tries to address these problems with the intertwining thesis. Freud claims that self-destruction and external destruction are mutually dependent. A restriction of aggression directed outwards increases self-destruction. This dependence makes it impossible to distinguish between the different origins of the drives. "The two kinds of drives seldom - perhaps never - appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions and so become unrecognizable to our judgement" (SE 21:119; FS 9:247).

This leaves Freud with empirical and theoretical problems. Firstly, given that the two forces are inseparable in observation, he cannot base his theory on empirical evidence. Secondly, the theoretical justification for retaining the dualistic view is undermined by the idea of mutual immersion and constant combining of the two forces. The closing paragraph of Chapter VI supports the idea of an aggressive drive and reiterates the conflictual view:

[C]ivilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind [...] [The] aggressive drive is the derivative and the main representative of the death drive which we have found alongside of Eros and which shares world-dominion with it. And now, I think, the meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us. It must represent the struggle between Eros and Death, between the life drive and the destructive drive, as it works itself out in the human species (SE 21:122; FS 9:249).

Freud reinstates strife as a fundamental principle guiding both phylogenetic and ontogenetic development, positing a metaphysical view of life as co-governed by death. The emerging position is one that sees life as permeated by the death drive and governed by the conflict between it and Eros.

AGGRESSION AS A FUNDAMENTAL PHENOMENON

In *Why War?*, a letter exchange with Albert Einstein published in 1933, Freud recapitulates his dualism:

According to our hypothesis human drives are of only two kinds: those which seek to preserve and unite [...] and those which seek to destroy and kill [...] Neither of these drives is any less essential than the other; the phenomena of life arise from the concurrent or mutually opposing action of both (SE 22:209; FS 9:281).

But the difficulty of empirically isolating the two classes of drives has prevented their recognition (SE 22:210; FS 9:281). As Freud admitted earlier,

the theoretical basis of the model of the drives does not have empirical support, since we see only a mixture of instinctual forces and influences, which is difficult to break down into its components. In addition Freud chooses to emphasise the simultaneous operation of the drives, resulting in an outcome that expresses its mixed instinctual source. "It is very rarely that an action is the work of a single instinctual impulse (which must in itself be compounded of Eros and destructiveness)", he writes. "In order to make an action possible there must be as a rule a combination of such compounded motives" (*ibid.*).

In order to approach these compound drives Freud employs the notions of ambivalence and integration, similarly to the way he applied the notions of conflict and intertwining in earlier texts. Ambivalence stresses instability and flux, providing tension and movement. Integration emphasises stability and assimilation. Rather than placing the drives in an oppositional framework, the second description regards them as complementary. As before, Freud oscillates between the two descriptions, given that both are compatible with a dynamic model of opposing forces. Both ambivalence and integration are helpful notions for understanding the dualistic view because they account for the internal dynamic of the drives, while at the same time leading to a coherent outcome: a behavioural or psychic pattern.

Ambivalence and integration also characterise the split between the internal and external work of the death drive. The death drive makes up a zero-sum system, with overall balance between its internal and external expressions. An unused portion of the death drive must be externalised in order to protect the organism from its destructive work. "The organism preserves its own life, so to say, by destroying an extraneous one", Freud writes (*SE 22:211; FS 9:282*). And yet a portion of the death drive remains operative within the organism, and is expressed in both normal and pathological phenomena.

We see two types of continuities in this account: continuity between life and death drives, seen in the fact that the death drive can operate as a life drive when turned into aggression directed outwards. The second continuity is between normality and pathology. The death drive appears in both normal and pathological phenomena, blurring the distinction between normality and pathology. As we have seen through an examination of these texts, many conflicting and overlapping ideas appear in Freud's formulation and re-working of the death drive. The critical examination of these ideas offered in the next chapter will enable us to prise apart and assess the different elements making up the death drive.

Three

Collapse of the Dualistic View

The previous chapter showed the motivations and problems driving Freud during the decades in which he formulated the death drive and integrated it into his general drive theory. Starting with the distinction between object libido and ego libido, and reformulating the distinction time and again until he reaches the Eros/Thanatos distinction, Freud pays increasing attention to behaviours, tendencies and processes displaying aggressive or destructive form.

In his growing awareness of the central role of aggression in psychic life, Freud encounters difficulties describing, classifying and supplying empirical evidence of this aggression. A further difficulty arises when he tries to place the newly discovered aggression within a general drive theory. The problems are manifold and appear mainly because Freud is relying on mistaken hypotheses. The idea of the nervous system as inert, the reflex arc model, the constancy principle, the drive towards complete rest and the notion of instinctual energy making up a zero-sum system, have all been disproved and accordingly abandoned by the mid-20th Century.¹

But is the fact that psychoanalysis originally rested on scientific assumptions that are no longer accepted a sufficient reason to reject the death drive? Does the rejection of some of the underlying principles (from neurology, physiology and so on) necessarily entail a rejection of the death drive? We cannot ignore the possibility that there are valuable insights in the notion that are worth preserving by way of reconstructing the death drive. In what follows I suggest that the notion of the death drive contains useful philosophical and psychological insights that should be preserved, even if the underlying scientific ideas Freud was relying on at the time are no longer accepted.

I take it as a working hypothesis that the death drive contains metaphysical ideas that are relevant and useful to our thinking about death. We need to prise apart the old-fashioned scientific ideas from the metaphysical framework developed by Freud, in order to separate the philosophical wheat from the erroneous scientific chaff. Accordingly, I begin by examining the problems of the death drive, which are even more acute when applied to the dualistic view. I then propose to reformulate the death drive and place it within a more coherent non-dualistic position that does not suffer from the problems that plague the dualistic view Freud was so keen to support. What I show is that

¹ For an elaboration of these discredited hypotheses see Kitcher (1992), especially Chapter Six.

some vital elements in the notion of the death drive can still make a significant contribution to our thinking about death, despite the fact that Freud's original view is no longer tenable.

Freud introduces the death drive in order to explain all behaviour that is not in accordance with the pleasure principle. He does so by offering a theoretical construct in the form of an aggressive drive but also posits the Nirvana principle as the aim of all organic systems to rid themselves of excitation and strive towards complete rest. This leads to contradictory formulations of the death drive.

Part of the function of the death drive is to unify a variety of aggressive phenomena such as destructiveness, sadism, masochism and hate. But Freud is also proposing a more general metaphysical speculation about life as a conflict between life and death drives. This position raises serious problems:

1. Positing the death drive reduces all forms of aggression to one source. Could a single drive explain all types of aggression and destructiveness? Or are there vital details in the individual origins and characteristics of each aggressive phenomenon that are subsumed by the reductive hypothesis of the death drive?
2. Even if we were to accept such a reductive concept, its explanatory value is not clear. What does the notion of the death drive add to the already unifying concept of aggression?
3. Assembling various forces under the auspices of the death drive makes it an unstable category whose meaning can only be derived from the specific context of its application. The death drive has no autonomous meaning. Since the death drive derives its meaning from the concrete situation, it does not contribute to an understanding of the given phenomenon (aggression or destructiveness). Rather, it is the death drive that gets explained by its instances, but it ultimately lacks autonomous content.
4. Freud subsumes under the concept of the death drive two essentially contradictory tendencies: the Nirvana principle striving to *eliminate* all tension, and aggression *creating* tension. How can the death drive explain both the tendency towards elimination of tension *and* aggression that increases tension?
5. A more specific problem is that of masochism (discussed in *The Economic Problem of Masochism*). If masochism is a manifestation of the death drive as self-directed aggression aiming at unpleasure, how does that square with Freud's view that the death drive is equivalent to the Nirvana principle, which aims to discharge all tension?
6. Freud's attempts to posit a two-drive model are unsuccessful both theoretically and empirically. Is there really a difference between Eros and Thanatos? If so, why do they keep collapsing into one another?

DOES THE DEATH DRIVE HAVE EXPLANATORY VALUE?

This section addresses points 1-3, which raise the following issues:

1. Is the death drive too reductive?
2. Does it have autonomous meaning?
3. What is its explanatory value?

The notion of the death drive is on the one hand too wide, explaining all types of aggression as well as the putative urge towards complete rest. This leads the notion to be economically incoherent, as will be discussed in the next section. But a prior point must be examined: are all types of aggression the same? Freud suggests a positive answer, but as a psychological taxonomy this approach seems to erase important differences. For example, if both sadism and masochism stem from the same aggressive source, should they be classified as belonging to the same group? Should they be clinically approached in a similar fashion? The answer to both these questions seems to be no. The problems and symptoms characterising sadism are very different from the ones characterising masochism, as is their treatment. Another example, group aggression and individual aggression: should we attempt to describe or treat the two as belonging to the same cluster? Again, the answer seems to be negative.

As to the second point, one could justifiably ask: what does the death drive mean? Because it is so general, the notion of the death drive is vague. The death drive cannot explain a given situation because it itself becomes meaningful only as a collection of situations. On Freud's account, any behaviour meriting the adjective 'aggressive' arises from the death drive. If we take a certain set of aggressive behaviours, say, sadistic ones, the death drive would come to signify this set. If we take another set of masochistic behaviours, the death drive would mean this set. As it stands, the significance of the notion seems entirely dependent on the observed phenomenon. If Freud were never to meet any masochists, would his notion of the death drive exclude masochism?

Any science relying on observation and empirical data relies on this data and should be willing, in principle, to modify and update its concepts in accordance with new empirical observations. The opening paragraph of *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* describes this process.

We have often heard it maintained that sciences should be built up on clear and sharply defined basic concepts. In actual fact no science, not even the most exact, begins with such definitions. The true beginning of scientific activity consists rather in describing phenomena and then in proceeding to group, classify and correlate them. Even at the stage of description it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from the new observations alone [...]. They must at first necessarily possess some degree of indefiniteness; there can be no

question of any clear delimitation of their content. So long as they remain in this condition, we come to an understanding about their meaning by making repeated references to the material of observation from which they appear to have been derived, but upon which, in fact, they have been imposed (SE 14:111; GW 10:210).

This seems to be a sophisticated, fruitfully flexible approach. But in the case of the death drive, it seems to be too flexible. There is no initial restriction on the type of behaviour that could be classified as aggressive or as lowering tension. Hence we find sadism and masochism, passive-aggressive and substance-induced aggression, aggression displayed in group situation and aggressive fantasy, all tied to the death drive as their source. By analogy, any behaviour that leads to discharge of energy or lowering of tension would be in accordance with the Nirvana principle.

One way of responding to this issue is by applying the term 'aggression' purely descriptively. Karli, for example, proposes the following definition: aggression means, "threatening or striking at the physical or psychic integrity of another living being" (Karli, 1991, p.10). He sees the danger in the shift from using aggression descriptively to attributing to it an explanatory and causal role. When accorded a causal role, aggression is reified and becomes a natural entity, a danger that can be avoided by using the term strictly descriptively.

This suggestion makes a lot of sense, but it would be unacceptable for Freud. For he is proposing a metaphysical view, which cannot be taken to be purely descriptive, because it is embedded in a physicalist view of the drives as elements connecting body and psyche, and is meant to have an explanatory and causal role in the explanation of behaviour. Although Freud would reject the purely descriptive use of the concept of aggression, this suggestion will be useful when we discuss the reconstruction of the death drive.

As to the third point, it seems that the explanatory value of the death drive is not satisfactory. Because of the two problems set out above – the excessive promiscuity of the notion of aggression and the fact that it iron significant differences between the various phenomena – its explanatory value is limited. The concept as presented by Freud does allow too much in and lumps together behaviours and tendencies whose differences are significant. In this sense, those rejecting the death drive as an unhelpful speculation are justified in their criticism.

What does seem valuable is the view of aggression as an overarching human characteristic, a view that has been embraced and developed in later psychological theories, most notably in Melanie Klein and the Kleinian school. Nonetheless, the conclusion of this section is that even if we were to accept Freud's drive theory, we have good reason to reject the death drive as formulated by Freud. An alteration and reconstruction are needed if we are to retain this notion.

THE CLASH OF AGGRESSION AND THE NIRVANA PRINCIPLE

Given the opposition in aim and economic outcome between aggression and the Nirvana principle, it seems that Freud is trying to explain two contradictory tendencies with the single notion of the death drive. Whereas the Nirvana principle promotes the discharge of tension and pushes towards complete rest, aggression constantly raises the level of tension.²

Further splits are found within the aggressive drive. It can be a movement away from homeostasis, or towards it, depending on the original state of the system. It can also be regarded as either lowering or raising the level of tension, depending on the direction and effect of aggression. This section will address these problems as formulated in points 4-5:

4. How can the death drive be the source of both the Nirvana principle and aggression?
5. Is there a solution to the economic problem of masochism?

Two strategies are available here. The first is to show how the two elements – the Nirvana principle and aggression – are not incompatible. The second is to show that one element is redundant or flawed and to eliminate it. I opt for the second strategy because the Nirvana principle and the neurophysiologic reflex arc model that underlies it have long been rejected and no longer have scientific support. There is no reason to maintain a dated and discredited concept, especially if it creates grave theoretical problems, as the Nirvana principle does. Since there is tension between the two elements and there are independently good reasons to eliminate the Nirvana principle, I pursue the second strategy.

The Nirvana principle is “the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli”, the expulsion of which leads to the most desirable state of the organism (SE 18:55-6; FS 3:266). The most pleasurable state, therefore, would be one of no tension at all: death. In this sense the death drive indeed deserves its dramatic name; it is a drive towards death, towards an inanimate state.

It is important to note that although Freud did not distinguish between the two, the constancy principle is secondary to the Nirvana principle. To paraphrase Silenus, the best is not to have been born at all; the second best is to die soon. Since the organism, in order to live and reproduce, must contain some level of energy, the second best option is to keep that level constant. As Freud writes in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology (Entwurf einer Psychologie)*:

² Although one may argue that ultimately the discharge of aggression may lower energy levels. The response would be that Freud formulates aggression as *instinctual*, and therefore as constantly regenerated, so a temporary discharge will ultimately be followed by renewed aggressive pressure.

In consequence, the nervous system is obliged to abandon its original trend to inertia (that is, in bringing its level [of quantity] to zero). It must put up with [maintaining] a store of quantity sufficient to meet the demand for a specific action. Nevertheless, the manner in which it does this shows that the same trend persists, modified into an endeavour at least to keep the [quantity] as low as possible and to guard against any increase of it – that is, to keep it constant. All the functions of the nervous system can be comprised either under the aspect of the primary function or of the secondary one imposed by the exigencies of life (SE 1:297; 1950, p.374, translation modified).

But the death drive is also an aggressive force identified with sado-masochism (SE 19:164; FS 3:348). The aggressive drive is a source of tension that acts contrary to the Nirvana principle and to the constancy principle. It *raises* the level of tension by providing aggressive instinctual pressure. The contradiction is even stronger in the case of masochism, where the rise in tension is an explicit search for displeasure – diametrically opposed to the pleasure principle.

So how are aggression and the Nirvana principle both subsumed under the death drive? Laplanche explains the tension by identifying two distinct intentions on Freud's part. The first intention is to affirm the fundamental economic principle of the psyche, which is the tendency to reduce all tension to zero. The Nirvana principle is this radicalised wish for maximum energy discharge. The second intention is to attribute a metapsychological status to aggression (1976, p.85). These two intentions assign two separate functions to the death drive, which are expressed in the distinction between the Nirvana principle and aggression.

The problem deepens if we add to it the economic problem of masochism. Freud attributes to a single drive the tendency towards radical elimination of tension, the extreme form of the pleasure principle, and the masochistic search for unpleasure, “which, in all logic, can only be interpreted as an increase of tension” (ibid. p.108). On this view the notion of the death drive is incoherent because it means different things, both economically and conceptually.

Let us look more closely at this analysis. Laplanche separates three elements that make up the notion of the death drive. The first element is *the priority of the reflexive phase*. This priority relies on the notion of narcissism, which breaks down the distinction between object and ego. Whereas originally Freud thought libido could only be directed towards an external object, narcissism allows the ego to become the object of libido, so the object is no longer the sole target of libido. With the introduction of narcissism, we now find two types of libido: object-libido and ego-libido.

With this initial state of primary narcissism in mind, Freud now defines the initial state of the infant as a self-directed reflexive state, prior to any differentiation between self and other. Unaware that objects outside it exist, and

not yet endowed with a self to speak of, the infant simply directs its libido towards this undefined embryonic self. This is primary narcissism, instinctually supported by narcissistic libido (Greenberg, 1990, p.273). This general self-reflexive stage applies also to the death drive, so at the earliest stage we find primary masochism, as self-aggression bound with an element of sexual excitation. This primary masochism can then be directed outwards, in which case it becomes sadism, or it can be redirected towards the ego (this time with an awareness of the inner-outer distinction), in which case it becomes secondary masochism.³

The second element is *the priority of zero over constancy*. Despite Freud's lack of distinction between the goals of the Nirvana principle and of the constancy principle, the two goals do not necessarily coincide. In the case of hypotension, for example, in order to achieve constancy we require an *increase* in the level of excitation, but in order to achieve zero tension, we require a further *decrease*. Laplanche argues that Freud failed to distinguish between the quantum of divergence in relation to stability and the quantum of energy (excitation) itself.⁴ This, in turn, led him to try to affirm "against all biological or psychological plausibility" the primacy of the Nirvana principle in relation to constancy (Laplanche, 1976, P.116).

But this affirmation is highly problematic. When Freud posits the pleasure principle, he does not discuss its relation to the principle of constancy. He maintained the idea that energy discharge is equivalent to pleasure ever since the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, where we find the pleasure principle as 'the principle of neuronic inertia'.⁵

We find the same idea in 1915: "the nervous system is an apparatus which has the function of getting rid of the stimuli that reach it, or of reducing them to the lowest possible level; or which, if it were feasible, would maintain itself in an altogether unstimulated condition" (SE 14:120; GW 10:213). The constancy principle is only introduced secondarily, as an adaptation of the principle of inertia that is necessary for organic life. This same claim is reiterated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; where behind the pleasure principle we find the Nirvana principle (SE 18:9; FS 3:219).

This leads Laplanche to equate the principle of constancy with bound energy and with secondary process, and the pleasure principle with unbound energy and primary process. So far, the death drive thesis does not seem so radical. All that Freud has done is correlated mental economic principles with

³ See *On Narcissism: an Introduction*, SE 14:73; FS 3:39. See also Laplanche (1976); Herbert Rosenfeld (1971); Eissler (1971).

⁴ It is noteworthy that Fechner did distinguish the two, naming the divergence quantum 'sensation' and the energy quantum 'excitation' (Laplanche, 1976, P.116).

⁵ "Since we have certain knowledge of a trend in psychical life towards *avoiding unpleasure*, we are tempted to identify that trend with the primary trend towards inertia" (SE 1:312).

primary and secondary processes. What makes it radical, says Laplanche, is that Freud takes the two priorities (the priority of the self-reflexive phase and the priority of zero) and places them within the *biological domain* - the third element.

The transition from the Nirvana principle to the principle of constancy is what enables biological life. In the transition from a mechanism regulated only by the death drive to an organisation subject to the constancy principle, "it is the very idea of life that would serve as mediator and catalyst" (Laplanche, 1976, p.121).

In this third move death is incorporated into and internalised in life as a drive. The resulting formulation, of which Laplanche is critical, is a death drive that is both primary and internal to life, an expression of Freud's "more or less obscure perception of the necessity to refute every vitalistic interpretation, to shatter life in its very foundations" (1976, p.123).

So what is the solution to the economic clash within the death drive? We can reconcile the Nirvana principle and aggression by bringing out their common tendency towards annihilation. By focusing on their *aims*, rather than on their economic contradiction, we can see that both are ultimately aimed at destruction, whether destruction of self (the Nirvana principle, masochism) or of others (sadism). The contradiction exists only on an *economic level*, and covers over their common annihilative tendency. If we reject the economic view (and there are good reasons to do so, which I discuss below), the affinity between the two tendencies emerges clearly and the contradiction disappears.

We should not focus solely on the economic dimension, but examine the aim and outcome of the two tendencies. When viewed in this way, the integration of the Nirvana principle and aggression usefully accounts for a series of phenomena: aggression, melancholia, sadism, masochism, guilt, depression and suicide, whose unique annihilative features are not captured by the notion of an aggressive drive alone. The combination of the Nirvana principle (as an annihilative tendency) and aggression provides a valuable tool to identify and describe a range of related phenomena.

But the Nirvana principle is an economic principle based on a discredited model of the nervous system. Is there justification for retaining this principle? I think that there is no reason to preserve the Nirvana principle in its Freudian formulation, which is based on economic principles of a discredited neurophysiologic model. Moreover, discarding the Nirvana principle will solve the clash between aggression and the Nirvana principle, and therefore allow us to reformulate the death drive as a coherent concept of annihilative aggression.

In order to make this move, I examine the scientific validity of the assumptions about pleasure, discharge and homeostasis Freud utilised in his work. If these assumptions, which underlie his economic account, turn out to be obsolete, we can solve the clash between the Nirvana principle and aggression, by discarding the former.

Freud's principle of neuronc inertia, later formulated as the pleasure principle, is based on the idea that the nervous system is inert and receives its energy from exogenous sources. It was also thought that this energy was experienced as unpleasurable, and that it was expelled through a reflex arc response. This reflex arc model describes the motor evacuation of an excitation, postulating that it is *the same quantity of the same energy* that is transmitted to one end in order to be released, in the form of movement, at the other end (Laplanche, 1976, p.120). This conception of the nervous system was not peculiar to Freud, and was also held, with some variations, by Fechner and Breuer, among others.

This view, which was common throughout the 1880's, was already incompatible with physiological discoveries made by the end of the nineteenth century, and Freud himself corrects the position in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Laplanche 1976, p.121). Nonetheless, Freud continues to think in terms of this framework as late as 1920, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. As Compton notes, "although Freud abandoned the attempt to write psychology for neurologists, he retained the ideas about excitation at some constant level and the relation of pleasure and unpleasure to decreases and increases in the level of excitation" (1981, p.200).

Most commentators agree that it became evident as early as 1930 that the nervous system was not inert and did not operate on the reflex arc model. Freud believed that the nervous system was the passive receptacle of energy and information. "We now know that neither of these ideas is correct" writes Allan Hobson. He adds that most modern psychoanalysts agree that Freud's energy concepts are "completely outmoded and must be discarded" (1988, pp.283-4). Kitcher concurs by saying, "the pleasure principle rested on a mistaken picture of neural action" (Kitcher, 1992, p.156, see also Holt, 1965, pp.108-9; Hebb, 1982, p.35).

Compton notes two problems with neurological energetic theories. Firstly, the idea that there is an overall level of energy in the nervous system that is increased by endogenous or exogenous stimuli is spurious (1981, p.204). Freud, and other physicians in his time, thought that the nervous system could not produce its own energy but this idea has been entirely discredited. As has been repeatedly shown, the nervous system operates with its own energy produced in the same way as all other physiological energy. The nervous system does not function as a reflex arc.

Secondly, the constancy principle on which these ideas are based is incompatible with observational data. Once the passive model of the nervous system has been discarded, there was no need for external excitation in order for discharge to take place, and more generally, "the behavioural picture seemed to negate the notion of drive, as a separate energiser of behaviour" (Hebb, 1982, p.35).

According to Holt, the nervous system is not passive; it does not take in and conduct out energy from the environment, and it shows no tendency to

discharge its impulses. “The principle of constancy is quite without any biological basis” (1965, p.109). He goes on to present the difficulties that arise from the pleasure principle as linked to a tension-reduction theory. The notion of tension is “conveniently ambiguous”: it has phenomenological, physiological and abstract meaning. But empirical evidence against the theory of tension-reduction has been “mounting steadily” and any further attempts to link pleasure with a reduction of physiological tension are “decisively refuted” (1965, pp.110-2).

Additionally, the organism and the mental system are no longer considered closed systems. So the main arguments for the economic view collapse, as does the entropic argument for the death drive (1965, p.114). A final, more general criticism of Freud’s economic theory is sounded by Compton, who argues, “Freud fills in psychological discontinuities with neurological hypotheses” (1981, p.195).

The Nirvana principle is part and parcel of the economic view and the incomplete and erroneous assumptions about the nervous system (Hobson, 1988, p.277). It is an extension *ad extremis* of the pleasure principle, and as such is vulnerable to all the above criticisms. The overall contemporary view provides strong support for discarding the Nirvana principle and reconstructing the death drive as aggression.

One may ask why these authors do not discuss the Nirvana principle specifically. I believe that the reason these writers do not give the Nirvana principle particular attention is that this principle is an even more obscure and counter-logical notion, part of the generally rejected death drive. Kitcher, for example, notes: “Since it never attained the status of orthodoxy, I will not consider the Eros/Thanatos duality” (1992, p.91).

Nonetheless they acknowledge its place within the larger passive reflex arc model of the nervous system (Holt, 1965, p.113). I therefore take the general criticisms of the economic view and of the reflex arc model, as well as the discrediting of the pleasure principle, to all be relevant – and therefore devastating – for the Nirvana principle as described by Freud.

These criticisms lead to the conclusion that the Nirvana principle is obsolete. We can therefore solve the clash between aggression and the Nirvana principle by discarding the Nirvana principle and the underlying economic model that is no longer tenable. But although there is no justification to hold on to the term in its original meaning, there is, I believe, good reason to retain a notion of an annihilative tendency as inherent to the death drive. This annihilative tendency will provide a descriptive grouping of tendencies that are not captured by aggression alone.

After discussing the life drive/death drive relationship I show how this annihilative tendency complements aggression, and how the two put together provide a basis for a reconstruction of the death drive as something more than aggression alone.

ARE THE LIFE AND DEATH DRIVES DISTINGUISHABLE?

This section addresses point 6, which raises the problem of the two-drive model. This model is unstable and its two antagonistic elements, Eros and Thanatos, repeatedly collapse into one another. Two questions arise:

1. If there are two separate drives, as Freud claims, what is the relationship between them? Three possible answers present themselves. The first is that the two drives are equal in force and priority. The second is that Thanatos is prior to Eros. The third is that Eros is prior to Thanatos. I discuss these options.
2. If Eros and Thanatos are inseparable should that lead us to see Freud's two-drive theory as reducible to a monistic position? The question must be examined with respect to both theoretical and empirical separability. As we have already seen in the textual analysis, the dualistic view collapses time and again. This section clarifies why this is so and raises a further question about empirical evidence of the death drive.

The complex relationship between Thanatos and Eros manifests the problems of the two-drive model. On the one hand the death drive is opposed to Eros, but on the other hand, the sexual drive always contains a sadistic component that is a portion of death drive. In certain respects the death drive is more fundamental than Eros (Freud sees it as prior to the pleasure principle) but it needs Eros in order to be expressed. The two drives are presented as opposed, but sometimes serve each other's aims, as in the case of externalised aggression which protects the organism.

On the one hand, the death drive exists only with Eros and never appears in pure form. As Freud frequently says, it is impossible to break down the amalgam into its original components. On the other hand, Freud also claims that the death drive is more fundamental than Eros and exists independently of it. What, then, is the relationship between Eros and Thanatos?

The view Freud wanted to support is one in which Eros and Thanatos are equal but opposed forces. This view is appealing because of its symmetry and dialectic dynamics. But Freud's own examples refute this picture. The symmetry seems to be repeatedly contested by examples in which the death drive seems to be more powerful and more fundamental than Eros.⁶ The opposition between the life drive and death drive is refuted time and again.⁷ We can see this in numerous examples that demonstrate the overlap and collapse of

⁶ See for example SE 18:23; FS 3:232. SE 18:63; FS 3:271. SE 19:47; FS 3:313. SE 19:160; FS 3:344. SE 19:164; FS 3:348. SE 21:120; FS 9:247.

⁷ See for example SE 18:40; FS 3:250. SE 18:63; FS 3:271. SE 18:53; FS 3:262. SE 18:54; FS 3:263. SE 18:57; FS 3:266. SE 19:41; FS 3:308. SE 19:46; FS 3:313. SE 19:164; FS 3:347-348. SE 21:118-9; FS 9:246-247. SE 22:210; FS 9:281.

one drive into another. This position seems to be least harmonious with the clinical evidence Freud presents.

A more compelling alternative, and one that fits the empirical material better, is to regard the death drive as more fundamental than Eros and as a continuous presence within Eros. This is the view I argue for. Eros is incomplete without the death drive and needs the death drive to become fully developed and active.⁸

The death drive (as sadism) is a basic component of Eros. The death drive supports Eros *as containing a sado-masochistic component*, containing a dimension of the death drive as a normal state.⁹ Freud sees the fusion of the two drives as a way to maintain both difference and connection between the two. He writes:

In sadism, long since known to us as a component drive of sexuality, we should have before us a particularly strong alloy of this kind between trends of love and the destructive drive; while its counterpart, masochism, would be a union between destructiveness directed inwards and sexuality – a union which makes what is otherwise an imperceptible trend into a conspicuous and tangible one (SE 21:119; FS 9:247).

So far we have seen that the death drive is necessary for the function of Eros as constituting its sexual aim. But is the death drive more fundamental than Eros? Freud identified the death drive as primal sadism, which is active in both erotic and non-erotic fields, so it would seem that the death drive is indeed a primary force (SE 19:164; FS 3:348).

But Freud does not spell this point out clearly, possibly because he is keen to preserve the dualism of the two drives. So although he constructs the death drive as a pre-condition of Eros he also claims that both “share world dominion”, and that “neither of these drives is more essential than the other” (SE 21:122; FS 9:249, SE 22:209; FS 9:281).

Freud’s inconclusiveness led some interpreters to wonder whether Eros could be seen as the primary force, a possibility we shall now consider. If we

⁸Friedman claims “Eros truly becomes itself when conjoined with *Todestrieb*” (1992, p.319).

⁹“It would seem that sadism merely contributes the aggressive component to the various phases of sexuality. Yet if understood adequately, this contribution will have a still deeper significance. What Freud is describing is the constitution of the sexual aim itself. In other words, the sadistic component is not, in any sense, ‘added on’, or some accidental feature of an otherwise purely libidinal interest [...]. The sexual aim and desire are themselves defined and de-limited by and through sadism; they are given their own *morphe* and *actualitas*. And it is only with the aim so determined that a particular object (of desire) can appear at all, that an object can be cathected” (Friedman, 1992, p.319).

find that this view is untenable this will be the first step towards establishing the primary role of the death drive as the correct interpretation of the two-drive model.

The 'Eros First' View

Perhaps, then, Eros is the primary force and the death drive is secondary to it? Could we regard Eros, or love, as the most significant force within mental life? As Lear argues:

Within the human realm love becomes a far-reaching psychological force: what is special about human life is that it develops in complexity and structure through the mind's own activity. Freud saw this development as fuelled by love, but [...] he did not work through the consequences of positing love as a basic force in nature (1998, pp.12-3).

This position rejects the dualistic view, but for different reasons than the ones presented earlier. On Lear's view, love (his term for Eros) is the central force in psychic life; the death drive does not exist as a psychic force. The immediate difficulty with this suggestion is that it takes us back to the problem that triggered the speculation of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The existence of psychic and behavioural phenomena that oppose the pleasure principle and the unifying work of Eros demand an explanation that goes *beyond* the pleasure principle. This was the problem Freud faced, which led him to postulate the death drive. Let us see how the proponents of an 'Eros first' view address this problem.

There are three ways of arguing for the 'Eros first' position. Lear argues that the death drive does not exist as a psychic force; Deleuze argues that the death drive is identical to Eros; and Laplanche argues that the death drive is internal to sexuality. I examine Lear's view in detail and then discuss briefly the other two positions, which pose less of an objection to Freud's formulation.

Why does Lear reject the death drive? He argues that the death drive lacks empirical traces, interpreting this as Freud's failure to give a distinctively psychoanalytic account of human aggression (1998, p.13). Relying on Freud's "other fundamental rule", that psychological phenomena should have a psychological explanation, Lear argues that Freud violated his own rule of psychic autonomy in his attempt to explain aggression with the help of the death drive, by turning to the body as the source of the drives.

But Freud never abandoned the idea that psychoanalytic theory had to be grounded in a physiological neuroscience. The economic principles of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* were never abandoned by Freud, and were actually repeatedly brought up as indications of the direction psychoanalytic theory should take. Freud writes in 1914 in *On Narcissism: an Introduction*: "all

our provisional ideas in psychology will presumably one day be based on an organic substructure” (SE 14:78; GW 10:144).

And again, two years later in the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*: “the theoretical structure of psychoanalysis that we have created is in truth a superstructure, which will one day have to be set upon its organic foundation” (SE 16:389; GW 11:403). Holt notes, “The same set of biological propositions [as the ones of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*] were retained as fundamental assumptions in Freud’s post-1900 theories, with only some terminological changes” (1965, p.94 and cf. p.107; cf. Kitcher, 1992, p.53).

As a Darwinian, Freud viewed the human being as an organism, which, despite its intellectual and emotional sophistication is ultimately motivated by the search for pleasure and governed by bodily need and environmental demands, like any other organism. The distinguishing features of humans – culture, consciousness, and language – are all a late addition of a secondary veneer, creating the impression of a cultured rational creature. But underlying the sophisticated diversity of human mental life Freud saw drives shared by other organisms, underneath culture he saw humans as animals (SE 18:42; FS 3:252).¹⁰ The mental system may be infinitely more complex in humans, but its fundamental pressures and motivations are the same as those of other organisms.

This view requires embodiment: in order to understand psychic processes and behaviour, one must see the psyche as nested within a body. This requirement is prominent in Freud’s biological starting point, his frequent appeals to future knowledge that will allow us to correlate mental states with brain states, and the importance of the quantitative (economic) dimension in his description of the mental machinery.¹¹ Hobson holds a similar view: “the separation of psychology from neurophysiology that ensued from Freud’s disappointment with his ‘Project’ was programmatic and institutional but *not* conceptual” (1988, p.278).

Lear criticises Freud’s use of drives as border-concepts connecting the body to the psyche, and insists on the need to differentiate the psychic from the biological. Whereas ‘love’ (Eros) is a purely psychological force, ‘death’ (Thanatos) is purely biological, claims Lear, and therefore the two should be treated as belonging to separate domains. This suggestion introduces an artificial distinction between the two realms, at the point in which Freud was looking for a connective element: a frontier concept (drive) that would explain the

¹⁰ This view was popular at the time and was also held by Darwin, Mill and James, who saw human will and action as developing from instincts and habits (Kitcher, 1992, p.34; see also pp.66-7).

¹¹ See Sulloway (1979), Kitcher (1992) and Marcia Cavell (1993) on these points. See also Freud’s *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*, and *The Ego and the Id* for his own elaboration of these issues.

interaction between body and psyche. In his entry on psychoanalysis in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1926, Freud writes:

Psychoanalysis derives all mental processes (apart from the reception of external stimuli) from the interplay of forces, which assist or inhibit one another, combine with one another, enter into compromises with one another, etc. All of these forces are originally in the nature of *drives*; thus they have an organic origin (SE 20:265; GW 14:301).

Similarly in the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* he refers to psychoanalysis as “biological psychology” and says, “We are studying the psychical accompaniments of biological processes” (SE 22:95-6; GW 15:102).

Classifying love as purely psychological and death as purely physical overlooks Freud’s fundamental point in his formulation of the two: they are drives. Freud defines these forces as drives, as ‘frontier concepts’ that translate somatic pressure into mental pressure. ‘Love’ has a physical component in the form of somatic erotic pressure, and ‘death’ has a psychological component in the form of aggression. Freud addresses these forces as two groups of *drives*, and not, as Lear presents them, as ‘love’ and ‘death’, the former purely mental and the latter purely physical.

Lear’s attempt to purify psychology neglects the prominent physiological component that is intrinsic to Freud’s pleasure principle (we get pleasure from certain bodily sensations) and so central to early experiences (‘love’ or attachment develops as a result of positive physical experiences such as breastfeeding). Both Eros and the death drive are intimately connected to the body. Clearly death has a physiological aspect, as do aggression and love: this is not a problem. Why should Lear reject the integrative picture of the drives Freud suggested as a way of accounting for the interaction between psyche and soma?

Lear wishes to discriminate the psychological from the physiological. But this goes against Freud’s attempt to formulate a motivational theory that links the mind and the body. What prevented Freud from giving a physiological account of mental activity was not his desire to delineate a purely psychological domain, but the undeveloped state of anatomy, cognitive science, neurology and the other brain sciences, that could not provide him with the necessary model or empirical grounding for his theories. But throughout his career Freud endorsed the basic assumption that there is a physiological process underlying every mental state, an assumption he never abandoned.¹²

¹² Kitcher: “the most distinctive feature of Freud’s work was its grand sweep, its attempt to draw on all the relevant sciences to construct a complete theory of mental life, including its primeval origins, organic foundations and proximate psychical causes” (1992, p.41). Karli too places great importance on Freud’s expression of the hope that one day the underlying neurophysiology will be developed enough so as to replace his psychological model (1991, p.15).

This is not to say that Freud was a reductionist of sorts, or that he wished for an ideal psychological treatment to eventually become pure pharmacology. Neither is true. The claim that there is a brain state underlying every mental state does not make psychoanalysis obsolete. On the contrary, knowledge about the brain may enhance psychoanalysis and improve the way we think about and treat mental disorder. So Lear's appeal to the 'purity' of the psychological explanation is irrelevant to what Freud set out to do. Lear argues:

The concept of drive, as it is used in psychoanalysis, should be a distinctively psychological concept. In formulating psychoanalysis as a distinctive realm of inquiry Freud decided to theorise about the human being in abstraction from his physiological makeup. So if a drive cannot be characterised in psychological terms, it loses its claim to be a psychological concept (1998, p.125).

But this argument is bizarre. Symptoms are nothing but mental contents, ideas that find expression in the body: paralyse, vomiting, the inability to speak – these are symptoms that are analysed and expressed as ideas in the therapeutic process, "the flesh made word", to use Lear's expression. As Lear notes: "ideas are expressed archaically, often in bodily language: in a gagging reflex, say, or an aching heart, in difficulty beginning to urinate [...]. Ideas permeate even the most basic bodily functions" (1998, pp.ix-x). Why would we want to exclude these, to theorise about the human being in abstraction from his physiological makeup, when this physiological makeup is so pertinent, so influenced by and so intimately linked to the psyche?

Within this general context it is easier to understand Lear's motivation for denying the existence of the death drive. But this denial contradicts Freud's repeated claims that "the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man" (SE 21:122; FS 9:249). Similarly: "as well as Eros there was a death drive" (SE 21:118-119; FS 9:246, translation modified). Freud was committed to the death drive as a source of non-sexual aggression he saw as ubiquitous (SE 21:119-20; FS 9:247-8). He saw the death drive as a fundamental force of aggression and destructiveness.

Lear overlooks the metaphysical and existential significance of death, captured so compellingly in Freud's notion of the death drive, and regards death simply as biological decomposition. This view cannot accommodate the idea expressed by the notion of the death drive: that death is a process within life, and is continuously exerting its influence on life processes in the form of the death drive. As such death is not merely an external end point that signals the disintegration of the organism. It is a psychic force playing a prominent role within mental life. Seen as aggression, the death drive no longer lacks the empirical expression Freud was searching for when he thought about the death drive as the Nirvana principle.

Phenomena such as masochism, suicide, guilt, melancholia, depression negative therapeutic reaction, Rosenfeld's (1971) 'destructive narcissism' and resistance to treatment, are best described as expressions of an annihilative and aggressive tendency Freud dubbed the death drive. Seeing the death drive as providing a coherent grouping and a valuable characterisation of these common phenomena addresses Lear's complaint that Freud had no shred of psychoanalytic evidence for the existence of the death drive (1998, p.13). This defence is still strong even if we accept Lear's requirement and confine ourselves to the psychological realm, in which instances of aggression and self-destructiveness are anything but rare.

Lear understands death as "a brute Something Else with which love is locked in struggle" (ibid. p.14). Even if life is a struggle between love and death, Lear thinks we should focus on what death is struggling with, that is, on love. Yet the inference from the fact of death's being a foreign 'Something Else' to concentrating on love is misleading. It is because death is so utterly other, a foreign force of negation and externality, that its appearance is elusive and its function difficult to interpret. Lear's decision not to investigate death because of its otherness seems to be an unfounded stipulation.

Deleuze, who identifies repetition as a fundamental mode of experience, presents a different argument against the dualistic view. On Deleuze's account, Eros expresses itself through the repetition given to it by the death drive, which becomes a regulative principle. This view, put forth in *Difference and Repetition*, reduces the two forces to a single drive.

We see no reason to propose a death instinct which would be distinguishable from Eros, either by a difference in kind between two forces, or by a difference in rhythm or amplitude between two movements [...]. Thanatos is completely indistinguishable from the desexualisation of Eros, with the resultant formation of that neutral and displaceable energy of which Freud speaks. This energy does not serve Thanatos, it constitutes him: there is no analytic difference between Eros and Thanatos, no already given difference such that the two would be combined or made to alternate within the same 'synthesis' (1994, pp.18-9, 113).

Deleuze points out that the death drive is de-sexualised Eros or de-sexualised libido, and that therefore there is no qualitative or quantitative difference between the two. As we recall, Freud addressed this same problem in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, in his attempts to distinguish ego libido from object libido (SE 21:118; FS 9:246). The introduction of narcissism led Freud to admit that the ego could be the object of libidinal investment; and if this is so, then the distinction between ego libido and object libido is erased. Ego libido is simply object libido that takes the ego for its object. Freud addresses what he perceives to be the threat of monism by replacing the ego libido/object libido duo with the Eros/Thanatos one.

As we have seen, this distinction is no more stable than the previous ones, and as I show in the next section, this leads to a collapse of the dualistic view. But this collapse is not equivalent to the claim that the death drive is simply Eros. There are important differences between the two drives, and although they cannot be maintained within a dualistic view that is no reason to assume the death drive simply disappears as a result of the collapse of the dualistic position. Aggression, for example, cannot be entirely subsumed under Eros.

Finally let us look at a third suggestion for an 'Eros first' view, made by Laplanche (1999). Laplanche argues that the opposition between life and death drives is "not a difference between sexuality and non-sexual aggressivity, but in the heart of sexuality itself" (1999, p.40). This argument can be seen as a synthesis of the arguments made by Lear and Deleuze. The former argues for the primary role of love, or Eros, and the latter argues that there is no difference between Eros and Thanatos.

Laplanche incorporates the death drive into the life drive and distinguishes what he calls 'sexual life drives' from 'sexual death drives'. In order to make this move he redefines the life drive and the death drive as bound and unbound excitations, respectively. The principle of binding introduces order to the 'sexual life drives', whereas the principle of unbinding is the 'sexual death drives'. Both drives belong to the domain of sexuality, and both are therefore forms of libido (Laplanche 1976, pp.123-4; cf. 1999, p.40). On his view, only sexual drives are 'drives proper' and so the discussion of drives must focus on the realm of sexuality, where aggression is expressed as sadism and masochism.

Laplanche's main goal is to de-metaphysicalise the death drive and present it as an energetic mode of unbound elements in the unconscious. But Laplanche still remains within the realm of certain formulations of Freud. When he says that "the so-called death drive is in effect that 'pure culture' of otherness that we detect in the deepest layers of the unconscious", he concurs with Freud's attempt to present the death drive as radical otherness, as a force alien to life that nonetheless is found within it (1999, p.52). Whether Freud was right in identifying the death drive as 'otherness', is a different question altogether, and this of course requires qualification and examination of the concepts and ideas used by Freud.

Laplanche's attempt to relocate the death drive to the realm of sexuality is not entirely coherent, as there are remnants of the death drive outside sexuality. Even if we take his definition of the death drive as unbound excitations, these are not confined to sexuality alone, and neither is the unconscious. Laplanche himself argues that the unbound elements in the unconscious are expressions of the death drive, but these elements are not all sexual. Moreover, the existence of non-sexual aggression would also serve as evidence for an independent death drive. Therefore even on Laplanche's formulation some instances of the death drive go beyond sexuality.

These three ‘Eros first’ critical strategies – denying the existence of the death drive, identifying the death drive with Eros, and incorporating the death drive into Eros – are ultimately unconvincing for the reasons presented above. This has been another step towards establishing that there are good reasons for retaining a revised notion of the death drive and of viewing it as primary to Eros. Before we do that, we must address a further important question: are the two drives separable, theoretically and empirically? We now turn to the separability question.

The Separability of Eros and Thanatos

As was shown, the dualistic position forces Freud into highly problematic conclusions. Among these is the inseparability of the death drive and Eros, both in their manifestation and common origin, which places grave doubts on the existence of two separate groups of drives. A position that appears untenable emerged: Freud seems to position the death drive as *prior to* Eros and at the same time as an operative force *within* Eros (as an essential component of sexuality). Both tendencies – the primacy and the immanence of the death drive – can co-exist in a metaphysical view of the death drive as internally grounding life, but not in a dualistic framework.

Additionally, Freud has no direct evidence of the death drive. He is therefore forced to assume it is mute and lacks any positive expression. This places Freud in a difficult position as a clinician who professes to base his theory on clinical observation. What justification can there be for an unobservable psychic element? Freud argues in response that the death drive can only be expressed when united with Eros. But if the only observable phenomenon is the admixture of the two groups, their merging is a necessary presupposition and their separation only theoretical, why does he continue to insist that there are two groups of drives? As Freud repeatedly admits, the distinction between the two classes of drives “does not seem sufficiently assured and it is possible that facts of clinical analysis may be found which will do away with its pretension” (SE 19:42; FS 3:309. See also SE 21:119; FS 9:247). In response to these problems Freud could have abandoned his two-drive theory rather than introducing into it increasingly peculiar *ad hoc* modifications.

Freud’s original distinction between sex drives and ego drives is contradicted when he is forced to admit that all drives have a libidinal nature. This impels Freud to re-formulate the dualism, which goes from the distinction between ego drives and sex drives to a distinction between libidinal drives (ego and sex drives) and non-libidinal drives (tentatively represented by sadism), and finally to the distinction between life and death drives. But this distinction is no freer from the problems of the dualistic view than the previous distinctions; so Freud is forced to describe the death drives as mute and untraceable. Every time Freud seems to be on the verge of renouncing the dualistic position, he engineers a way out by reformulating his dualism. Each reformulation brings the life and

death drives closer together, until Freud is forced to admit that the two drives are mixed to the point they cannot be distinguished empirically and perhaps also theoretically.

Furthermore, the distinction between the aims of Eros and Thanatos is obscure. The pleasure principle serves the death drive; its functions of lowering tension and blocking stimuli support the Nirvana principle. We also find that the death drive in its externalised form, as sadism or aggression directed outwards, serves Eros, preserving life by generating aggressive behaviour in the organism. An organism injected with aggression may respond more assertively to threats and competition, thus enhancing its chances of survival. So there is no clear distinction on a functional level either, as both groups of drives strive to eliminate tension and possess an aggressive dimension. Within the realm of sexuality the two drives are even more tightly interlaced, as sadism is a basic component of Eros.

As we know, Freud repeatedly claimed that the two drives are intertwined and that we can never encounter a pure drive in operation. Because the admixture of the two generates action, they can never be perceived independently of each other. Freud is therefore forced to admit that perhaps they do not exist independently.

At the same time one can suspect from this example that the two kinds of drive seldom – perhaps never – appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions and so become unrecognisable to our judgement (SE 21:119; FS 9:247).

This places Freud's dualism in serious doubt. But does the fact that the two drives are inseparable *de facto* mean that there really is only one source of drives? As we have seen, Freud tried to repair the problem by attributing muteness and invisibility to the death drive. This would work, but only if we view the death drive as the Nirvana principle. If we turn to the aggressive element of the death drive, the mute and invisible death drive is no longer a tenable hypothesis. The robust role aggression plays in many domains of psychic life makes this hypothesis unconvincing, and it is unclear why Freud does not turn to aggression as an obvious manifestation of the death drive. One area in which Freud did focus on aggression is the sexual sphere. Nowhere are the two groups of drives more linked or is the aggressive component more pronounced than in the sado-masochistic drive, to which we now turn.

The Sado-Masochistic Drive

Freud uses the terms 'sadism' and 'masochism' irregularly, sometimes indicating sexual inclinations and so libidinal drives, and sometimes to indicate a destructive force of a non-sexual nature. The first account of the death drive in

Beyond the Pleasure Principle sees it as firstly directed against the organism itself, as primary masochism (SE 22:211; GS 12:358). This is a change from Freud's previous position, in which he described primary sadism (*Ursadismus*) as the original form of aggression.

Laplanche explains the two formulations by distinguishing sexual from non-sexual aggression (1976, p.89). Primary sadism is more original, but it is a non-sexual drive, pure aggression prior to its erotisation. The sexual nature of primary sadism appears only when it is turned towards the subject itself, that is, when it becomes masochism. So, when understood in sexual terms, masochism is prior to sadism, but when speaking of aggression in general it is sadism that is primary (SE 19:164; FS 3:348). Both are forms of aggression based on the death drive, which is therefore the source of the sado-masochistic drive.

The complexity of the sado-masochistic drive derives from its ability to transform in various ways. It can reverse its role from passive to active, and exchange an external object for an internal one (from another person to the ego).¹³ In the transformation from sadism to masochism these two processes are intertwined to the point of being indistinguishable.

The first appearance of the sexual component of the sado-masochistic drive is tied to the transformation of aggression into self-directed aggression. This state is reflexive, and in it an externalised drive (sadism) becomes internalised (masochism) and later sexualised. In this situation the object of the drive is lost and reappears through the ego, through the reversal of the active role of the aggressor into a passive, masochistic one (Laplanche 1976, p.92). Autoerotism is a second stage that comes after directing towards oneself the previously self-preserving activity, which used to be directed outwards as aggression.

The death drive is the origin of the sado-masochistic drive, which is later translated to the sphere of sexuality as primary masochism and its two derivatives: secondary masochism and sadism. This raises the following objection: although Freud needs the death drive as an instinctual source and as a metaphysical construct, primary masochism could have functioned equally well as such an axiom. This, in turn, raises an earlier criticism, asking whether the death drive is not a superfluous theoretical construct, replacing and obscuring the clearer notion of aggression.

In response one could say that primary masochism (or primary sadism in the pre-sexualised stage) itself needs to be explained and contextualised, and that this is the function of the death drive (*qua* aggression). The death drive explains both sadism and masochism by providing a metaphysical foundation for aggression, tying the different forms of aggression to a common source and bringing out the affinity between processes that appear extremely different, if not opposed.

¹³ For Freud's most complete account of drives see *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*, SE 14:109 (*Triebe und Triebchicksale*, FS 3:75).

This section addressed two questions: whether there is a hierarchical relationship between Eros and Thanatos and whether the two drives are separable. The answer to the first question was that the death drive is prior to Eros. This required ruling out two other options: that the two drives are symmetrical, or that Eros is primary. As we have seen, Freud's attempt to posit the two drives as equal and mutually opposing in a dualistic view has failed. I next examined and rejected the 'Eros first' view. Therefore the way has been cleared for the view that takes the death drive to be prior to Eros. I also argued that the two drives operate at a level of proximity and overlap that renders the dualistic view untenable. I then discussed the particular case of the sado-masochistic drive as a prime example of the close link between Eros and Thanatos.

A NEW READING OF THE DEATH DRIVE

The problems discussed above lead us to conclude that the dualistic position Freud tried to sustain throughout his work cannot provide an adequate theoretical framework for the life and death drives. An alternative picture is created by discarding the Nirvana principle (but preserving the insight that self-destructive behaviours are distinctively annihilative), while retaining the central role of aggression and erotic attachment, without placing them in a dualistic framework.

Recapitulating briefly, the problems with the death drive were:

1. The death drive explains all aggressive phenomena in a non-discriminatory way that reduces all aggression to a single tendency.
2. The explanatory advantage of the death drive over the already unifying notion of aggression is unclear.
3. The death drive has no intrinsic content and only retroactively acquires contents from the observed phenomenon.
4. Freud formulates the death drive as the Nirvana principle and as aggression. There is an economic contradiction between the two.
5. A similar economic contradiction is seen in the case of masochism seeking unpleasure, and hence increasing tension. If masochism is an expression of the death drive, how could it act in opposition to the Nirvana principle, which aims to discharge tension?
6. Eros and the death drive share the same aims and repeatedly collapse into one another.

I reformulate the death drive by turning it into a plural concept (as death *drives*). Seeing the death drives as plural implies that the various aggressive phenomena are related but differing, ultimately conjoined through their shared tendency towards destruction. In this way the relation between sadism and masochism and between various forms of aggression can be

explained and their similarities and common origin presented without erasing their differences. As a plural concept, the death drive can encompass the drives related to aggression, self- and other-directed destruction, as well as the tendency towards stagnation and repetition. Some of these drives are not economically compatible with others and therefore create a comprehensive notion of death drives as a family of tendencies categorised as negative and annihilative.

Seeing the death drives as plural tackles the first problem by allowing a separate account of different behaviours Freud reductively explains with the death drive. This account is descriptive and detailed, overcoming the tendency to be too abstract and reductive. A second step is to thematically group behaviours into nested groups, ending with the broadest grouping, that of the death drive. The nested system allows us to maintain the specificity of every individual type of behaviour while grouping it with similar behaviours. The grouping enables common features to emerge, for example the ambivalence of love, the self-destructiveness of masochism etc. This nested system has the further advantage of bringing out further similarities between different groups.

Freud did not conceptualise death as an external event that limits life, but as manifested within life. He attempts to represent the role of death in life by seeing life as aiming towards death and by positing the putative regulative principle of Nirvana. Even if one rejects the Nirvana principle, as we do, we should still take into account the metaphysical motivation for formulating the Nirvana principle. Freud was trying to express the continuous presence of death in life. A complete rejection of the death drive overlooks this metaphysical consideration, and operates with a static, biological conception of death. The static account of death neglects Freud's insight that there is a constant, dynamic interaction between life and death, and that death, as the death drives, plays a role within life. It is this metaphysical view of the relationship between life and death that I maintain, whilst rejecting the Nirvana principle in its Freudian formulation.

As a result of the considerations presented earlier, the Nirvana principle and the constancy principle are removed from this reconstruction. These principles have been shown to rest on a mistaken view of the psychic system as inert and the erroneous equation of pleasure with the reduction of tension. It is now a well-documented fact that organisms placed within a sensory deprived environment will actively seek stimulation and that the psychic system is not energetically closed off. There is no justification for retaining the pleasure principle or the Nirvana principle. This also explains the anomalous place of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* amongst Freud's admirably clear texts.

Eliminating the Nirvana principle has the further advantage of addressing the problem of the empirical manifestability of the death drive, as well as the problem of its clinical application. The Nirvana principle clashes with Freud's commitment to empirical observation and to clinical application. If we view the death drive as aggression we gain both manifestability and clinical

utility. Abandoning the Nirvana principle and retaining the notion of aggression constitutes a simple response to these two problems.

Nonetheless, there is a feature of the Nirvana principle that I retain in the reconstructed view: it unifies various types of self-directed aggression. Within the broad spectrum of aggressive behaviour and tendencies, self-directed aggression stands out in particular as requiring explanation. Whereas aggression directed outwards is easily explained as enhancing survival and reproduction, and therefore as compatible with evolutionary principles, a large group of destructive behaviours seem to have no evolutionary or other kind of rational explanation.

Behaviours such as depression, melancholia, negative therapeutic action, self-harm and suicide have something in common over and above their aggressive nature. They are annihilative and self-destructive. This tendency requires a distinct grouping, which I call Nirvana tendencies. So in this specific sense I retain an element of the Nirvana principle as having an annihilative aim. The Nirvana principle descriptively unifies these self-destructive behaviours by providing this self-annihilating aim. I believe that this provides the death drive with a significant descriptive function that is otherwise lacking.

As for the status of drives as motivational theoretical constructs, I would like to maintain them, too, in an altered form. As discussed above, Freud's account of the economic dimension of the mental system was strictly materialist. Some attribute a reductionist aspiration to him as well. In Freud's account drives inject energy into the mental system by delivering somatic demands into the mental system as 'demand for work'. This view has been disproved. But the underlying view of need-based motivation is indeed viable and also compatible with evolutionary theory. The need, it is important to note, is a bodily need and therefore the notion of drive bridges the gap between psychological and physiological accounts.

Finally, we must address the collapse of the death drive and Eros into one another, which was so fateful for Freud's dualistic view. The new, more modest, formulation of the death drive as aggression no longer demands the oppositional positioning of the two drives that characterised the dualistic view. Aggression is part of erotic activity and fantasy and there is no need to position the two as conflicting forces. Of course there will be instances in which the two overlap (as in sexual sadism) or oppose one another (aggression and love towards the same person).

But this is allowed for in the new plural model. If the two groups of drives are not meant to explain strife, there is no restriction on the ways in which they may interact. The interaction may be oppositional, intertwined or parallel. Freud wanted the two forces to be oppositional so he could explain conflict and ambivalence on both intra-psychoic and interpersonal levels. But aggression in itself could explain conflict, and its interaction with love could explain ambivalence in a less restrictive fashion.

An Aggressive Drive?

One curious fact about Freudian theory is the tension between Freud's repeated acknowledgments of the ubiquity of aggression and his refusal to posit an aggressive drive. Aggression, it seems, was always a problem for Freud. Holt notes that for many years Freud maintained "a curious kind of blind spot" about aggression. He saw and worked with it clinically, but when it came to theoretical statements, Freud "tried to get rid of it as a special kind of self-preservative manifestation of ego-instinct or a sadomasochistic form of sexuality" (1965, p.112). Compton describes Freud similarly as holding back from tying together aggression, hatred, destructiveness and sadism and offering them an equal footing with sexuality (1981, p.373).

Freud's deliberation and hesitation in theorising about aggression is apparent in his writing. Until 1920 aggression was viewed in the context of sexual sadism or designated by the term ambivalence; the use of these terms continues later as well (SE 14:138, 18:102; GW 10:230-1, GW 13:111). We also find a discussion of hate as a primary attitude towards the external world in 1915: "it cannot be denied that hating, too, originally characterised the relation of the ego to the alien external world" (SE 14:136-9; GW 10:229-32).¹⁴ Holt sees this as a grave problem for object-relations theory, which Freud never clarified. He thinks that this conception is sharply at variance with direct observation of infants, who delight in new experience (1965, p.117). If the psyche has as its basic principle the tendency to get rid of stimuli and if any tension increase in it is unpleasant, then any nearing object must be originally distressing and must arouse an emotional reaction that would be, in effect, hate.

I am not convinced that this difficulty is so pervasive. The attacking quality of the external world is balanced by Freud's elaborate formulation and focus on attachment, investment and love. It seems that the pivotal concept for Freud is not hate, but ambivalence. Freud wants to bring out the fact that love and hate are closer and quickly change into one another, and that ambivalence towards love objects (expressed as episodes of anger and hate) is the general form of attachment.

In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (*Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*), Freud makes a similar general assumption: "men give evidence of a readiness for hatred, an aggressiveness, the source of which is unknown, and to which one is tempted to ascribe an elementary character" (SE 18:102; GW 13:111). Although this text is published only a year after *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud makes no reference in the essay to the repetition compulsion or the Nirvana principle. Other than in a brief footnote, he does not make the link to the death drive nor does he propose an aggressive drive. However it seems that by this point Freud is taking the ubiquity of hostility as a

¹⁴ Note the similarity of this formulation to Lorenz's notion of an aggressive instinct discussed in Chapter One.

starting point. This is a position he returns to later, employing it in support of the death drive.

During the 1920's Freud's view of aggressiveness is incorporated into his second topography, consisting of id, ego and superego. He now formulates aggression as directed towards the ego by the superego. The superego criticises the ego, generating guilt that is expressed as a need for punishment, which is self-directed aggression. The continuous attacks of the superego on the ego may result in pathological cases such as melancholia, in which the superego operates as a pure culture of the death drive. As Freud writes in *The Ego and the Id*:

If we turn to melancholia first, we find the excessively strong super-ego which has obtained a hold upon consciousness rages against the ego with merciless violence, as if it had taken possession of the whole of the sadism available in the person concerned. Following our view of sadism, we should say that the destructive component had entrenched itself in the super-ego and turned against the ego. What is now holding sway in the super-ego is, as it were, a pure culture of the death drive, and in fact it often enough succeeds in driving the ego into death (SE 19:53; FS 3:320).

Because Freud views psychic economy as a zero-sum system, inhibition of aggression directed outwards increases the resources of the superego. Identification, a form of desexualisation, is accompanied by instinctual defusion, releasing the destructiveness. This is the source of the cruelty of the superego (Compton, 1981, p.378).

In 1930 Freud takes up again the discussion of manifestations of aggressiveness. In *Civilisation and Its Discontents* he confesses that until now he was unable to recognise "a special independent aggressive drive" (SE 21:111; FS 9:238) and arrives once more at the view that the death drive is the source of aggression. "I can no longer understand," Freud writes, "how we can have overlooked the ubiquity of non-erotic aggressivity and destructiveness and failed to give it its due place in our interpretation of life" (SE 21:120; FS 9:247). He also states "the inclination to aggression is an original self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man" (SE 21:122; FS 9:249).

Freud thus moves away from the economic focus of the Nirvana principle, towards viewing sexuality as the site in which life and death drives fuse. Sadism is taken to be the representative of the death drive. With the exception of two issues (the lack of a clear somatic source and the question of the existence of primary masochism) Compton and others think that at this stage in Freud's thought aggression can fully replace the death drive (Compton, 1981, p.376).

Many psychoanalysts, such as Compton, Gillespie, Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein, think that Freud could have resolved the problem of aggression by abandoning the life drives/death drives schema and the pleasure principle, retaining aggression and sexuality within a reformed dualistic view. As W.H.

Gillespie writes, “aggression is an instinct, equal and opposite to the sexual instinct”. He argues that “most analysts have compromised the death instinct by accepting the theory of a primary instinct of aggression, but rejecting or at least ignoring the self-directed death instinct theory” (1971, p.157).

Following this approach, Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein worked out the necessary assumptions for an aggressive drive (1949). They were willing to do without a discernible source for aggression, and based their concept on clinical evidence. They also assumed that aggressive discharge may itself be experienced as pleasurable, so be regulated by the pleasure principle. In terms of impetus, libido and aggression could be said to operate in a strictly parallel fashion. But the aim and object of an aggressive drive would require a different formulation than that of the corresponding aspects of libido. They also assumed that aggressive trends may be sublimated or aim-inhibited, as sexual trends are.

This seems like a neat solution: instead of the outdated and metaphysically suspect death drive, we can view aggression as a drive analogous to sexuality. This solves the problems arising from the ego/sex drives distinction, namely, that the ego drives are annihilative, that both groups of drives are libidinal so the distinction between them remains unclear. But despite the focus on the ubiquity of aggression, Freud never recognised it as a primary independent drive, but only as a probable manifestation of the death drive. Why?

The answer is that aggression does not fit the fundamental concept of drive in several respects. Firstly, aggression does not have a somatic source. Whereas the sex drives are derived from clear somatic sources, aggression has no parallel source. As Compton notes, psychoanalytic evidence for an aggressive drive is very similar to the evidence for sexual drive, “while the background of supporting, physiological, and directly observable evidence present for sexuality is totally lacking for aggression” (1981, p.383). Physiological changes associated with aggressive behaviour are secondary and respond to environmental stimuli rather than being primarily somatic stimuli, leading to a search for an appropriate object. Therefore these changes are only general preparation for action, and hence differ from sexual behaviour, which is specific.

Secondly, aggression does not have a clear aim: the diversity and plurality of its expression are striking in comparison to the sex drives. Almost any action that comes to mind has an aggressive element in it, and that element is difficult to distinguish from other similar types: assertiveness, powerfulness, will to mastery, competitiveness and so on. The flexibility of aggression makes it employable in a vast range of situations and its general nature makes it impossible to assign it a fixed aim.

Thirdly, as noted earlier, self-directed aggression, or masochism, is incompatible with the pleasure principle. Freud therefore chooses to derive innate aggression and destructiveness from the death drive, rather than propose an independent aggressive drive (Compton, 1981, p.382). Because the death drives are postulated as more primal and free of the pleasure principle, and

because of their clear link to the repetition compulsion, Freud uses this construction to solve the problem of masochism.

These problems lead to the conclusion that aggression does not fit into Freud's drive theory. There are further conceptual problems that have already been brought up in the early discussion of Lorenz's notion of an aggressive instinct. One such problem is the failure to differentiate an aggressive drive from aggressive behaviour. Since aggression does not have a clear aim, the aggressive drive could be seen as the energetic source of activity in general. This was Lorenz's mistake. His notion of an aggressive drive is conceptually incorrect because there is no explanation of how an all-purpose aggressive drive would arise. It is also impossible to distinguish the aggressive element from any other kind of energy required to perform any task – aggression and libido would become indistinguishable under such a conceptualisation.

Another respect in which the death drive focuses special theoretical attention on self-aggression lies in the fact that the death drive is a later version of the ego drives. Although this is by no means identification but more of a genetic relation, the two groups share an annihilative aim. In the case of the death drives the annihilative aim is clear from the definition of the drive as aiming towards destruction and disintegration. The ego drives, too, contain an annihilative element in them, especially when contrasted with the reproductive and life-perpetuating sex drives.

So although an aggression/sexuality dualism seems an attractive proposal, it is impossible to fit it into Freud's drive theory and it also lacks coherence in several respects. Aggression does not lend itself to the concepts that make up the drive: especially somatic source and aim. It does not delineate a specific domain like sexuality does. It has no somatic source like sexuality does. And it does not provide a model that is generally applicable to all phases of development, like sexuality. The interactions and environmental impact of aggression demand a significantly more complex model and continuous feedback that will allow for an awareness of the effects of aggressive actions upon objects (Compton, 1981).

In "Comments on Aggression" Anna Freud discusses the major differences between sexuality and aggression in regard to aim and object. She argues that while libidinal aims are always specific to the drive, aggression can associate itself with aims and purposes of a variety of extraneous kinds, from mastery to war. She also notes that in opposition to the increasing effectiveness and sophistication in the achievement of sexual aims, in the case of the aggressive drive what becomes increasingly sophisticated is not the execution of an action aimed at gratification, but an increase in control over the drive, which prevents its expression.

Similarly, while sexual drives undergo clear qualitative transformations in the oral, anal and phallic sexual organisations, the aggressive drive has no clear parallels (Anna Freud, 1972, pp.163-5). She further notes that with respect

to object relations the developmental lines of sex and aggression become significantly different after infancy.

We call a 'good lover' one who is faithful to his objects, i.e. constant in cathecting them. In contrast, the 'good hater' is promiscuous, i.e. he has free aggression at his disposal and is ready to cathect with it on a non-permanent basis any object (1972, pp.165-6).

Brenner agrees that aggressive aims cannot be treated in strict parallel to sexual aims (1971). Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein suggest that the aims of aggression are more limited and rigid than those of sexuality (1949). But it can be argued against this view that the instrumentality of aggression is more varied, plastic or expansive. Compton says in conclusion: "when careful studies are more abundant perhaps we shall choose to view aggression as something other than a drive" (1983, p.387). Perhaps we will want to modify the drive concept, as Brenner does, to accommodate knowledge about aggression.

The centrality of aggression and its overarching presence in life processes indicate that it is not merely one force amongst many within life.¹⁵ But on the other hand, the suggestion of replacing the life/death drives duality with sexuality/aggression duality has its limitations. Moreover, the suggestion to discard the Nirvana principle completely would result in discarding an important descriptive tool. The solution is to view the death drive not as one side of an internal conflict (as in the dualistic view) but *as* conflict; the death drive as an inner principle of aggression and self-aggression, not one side of a struggle. As Laplanche argues, the death drive is present in Freud's final formulations "not as an element in conflict but as *conflict itself* substantialized, an internal principle of strife and disunion" (1976, p.122).

It is also clear that the drive notion in its Freudian formulation cannot be wholly maintained. It needs to be revised so as to overcome the problems discussed above in relation to aggression. I propose to move away from the economic notion of the drive, but maintain aggression with a reconstructed Nirvana principle and also maintain the link between soma and psyche that is expressed in the drive concept.

This suggestion issues from the fact that Freud uses the term 'aggressive drive' mainly to designate the death drive as directed outwards (sadism), but he does not clearly differentiate between 'the death drive', 'the aggressive drive' and 'the drive of destruction' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.17). Despite the lack of demarcation, Freud always considered aggression as a fundamental phenomenon that affects our thoughts, actions and emotions to a considerable extent. Laplanche and Pontalis write:

¹⁵ Hopkins notes the evolutionary role of self-directed aggression as one of self- and social control. Through the agency of the superego individual self-control and group functioning are guaranteed and maintained (2003).

There is no kind of behaviour that may not have an aggressive function [...]. Psychoanalysis had gradually come to give great importance to aggressiveness, showing it to be at work in the early stage of the subject's development and bringing out the complicated ebb and flow of its fusion with and diffusion from, sexuality. The culmination of this increasing stress on aggressiveness is the attempt to find a single and basic instinctual underpinning for it in the idea of the death instinct (1973, p.17).

Additional value in retaining the death drive lies in two elements. The first is the fact that Freud is focusing on a drive. It is "a demand made by bodily processes on the functioning of the mind" (Brenner, 1971, p.137). As was argued earlier, the connection between the psychological and the physical is a great contribution of the drive concept. The ability to conceptually reconnect body and psyche through the drive creates a more comprehensive understanding of the human being, overcoming the problems stemming from mind/body dualism. Freud did not believe that psychoanalytical evidence was sufficient to provide a solid basis for the theory of the drives. Thus "he resorted to the idea of a death drive because he felt compelled to base the psychoanalytical theory of aggression on more than just psychoanalytical evidence" (Lear, 1998, p.13).

But the fact that the death drive has a physiological grounding is what makes it so compelling: the death drive is a connective element, which places psychic phenomena within psychosomatic feedback processes and defines the psyche as embodied and rooted in its biological existence. The notion of aggression in itself does not supply this connective element and could therefore find support in the death drive.

The second element is the Nirvana principle as a collective term for self-annihilative and self-aggressive tendencies. The specific way in which I use the term, now no longer linked to the economic principles behind its initial coining, gives it a descriptive value. The Nirvana principle groups together a host of self-destructive behaviours and thus defines a sub-set of aggressive phenomena that could not be aptly described using aggression alone.

As this reconstruction shows, the death drive is not reducible to aggression. I believe such a reduction would not capture Freud's intentions, mainly because aggression is usually perceived as directed towards an object, and that that object would usually be external. On Freud's understanding, the primary object of aggression is the self, and it is initially a self-directed drive. This insight is captured in the Nirvana principle as an important indicator of self-aggression.

Moreover, there is a cluster of self-destructive phenomena that is not captured by aggression alone. These phenomena are characterised by self-destructiveness and loss of vitality that is missed out in their description as aggression that is simply turned towards the self. Rosenfeld writes:

I believe that some deadly force inside the patient, resembling Freud's description of the death instinct, exists and can be clinically observed. In some patients this destructive force manifests itself as a chronic paralysing resistance which can hold up analysis for many years. In others it takes the form of a deadly but hidden force which keeps the patient away from living [...]. It is this deadly force which resembles most closely Freud's description of a death instinct that remains mute and hidden but opposes the patient's desire to live and to get better (1987, p.107).

Further evidence for the clinical significance of self-aggression can be found in the work of Hannah Segal (1993) and others.

This new reading of the death drive overcomes the problems presented earlier by replacing the dualistic view with a pluralistic alternative. The Nirvana principle has been maintained in a modified form, enabling a view of the death drive as providing the instinctual basis of aggression, with special emphasis on self-destructive tendencies. And aggression itself is conceived of as a nested grouping of various types of aggression, not a single force. Dropping the demand for singularity enables a reading that accommodates all aggressive tendencies and grounds them on an instinctual basis.

SUMMARY OF PART I

Freud laboured over the instability and competing definitions of the death drive in his late work. After reviewing the formulation and development of the death drive, I discussed three issues arising from Freud's conception of the death drive: the explanatory and descriptive value of the death drive; the tension between the Nirvana principle and aggression; and the separability of Eros and Thanatos. I argued that the dualistic view proved untenable, paving the way for a reconstruction of the death drive as aggression with a particular emphasis on self-destructiveness.

This reconstruction described the death drive as a complex quasi-unity of several drives and tendencies, some of which are contradictory; for example, the pleasure principle and masochism, the Nirvana principle and aggression. The death drive was formalised as a metaphysical concept, providing a general framework for understanding aggression and self-destructiveness. I argued that the death drive should be seen as a metaphysical principle that recognises and unifies negative aspects of human life: ambivalence, aggression and self-destructiveness. The instability, incoherence and shifting nature of Freud's formulation were used to reject his dualistic picture. The new view took the death drive to be a metaphysical expression of the role death plays in life, through aggression and self-aggression.

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PART II

Give to Each His Own Death

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Four

Being towards Death

This chapter and the next present a reading of Heidegger's being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*) and make two general claims. The first is that being-towards-death places death and finitude as structuring components within existence, thus breaking with the traditional view of life and death as mutually exclusive. Heidegger's notion of being-towards-death is a way of conceptualising life and death, possibility and limitation, as intimately linked. Moreover, they are linked in a specific way: death influences life as a limit whose presence in life must constantly be taken into account, even within the context of everyday activities and projects.

This view is similar to Freud's in many ways. For both thinkers death is an active force in life, not merely an external boundary, and both saw a need to rethink existence as significantly influenced by this metaphysical picture. If death shapes every living moment and affects the ways in which we think about temporality, possibility, action and decision, existence itself must be reformulated as radically structured by its limits. This is not only an epistemic claim about the influence awareness of our mortality has on the way we live, but an ontological claim about our structure. Heidegger calls this structure *Dasein*, and his analysis of *Dasein* as finite is the centre of this and the following chapter.

It is important to note at the outset that Heidegger's concept of death is different from the ordinary concept. As Taylor Carman points out, "An enormous amount of confusion has resulted from the fact that by 'death' Heidegger does not mean quite what is commonly meant by the word. But neither is his existential conception of death wholly alien to our ordinary understanding" (2003, p.276). The main task of this chapter is to work out the meaning of Heidegger's concept and thus clarify numerous misunderstandings and show the irrelevance of the resulting criticisms that have been directed at it.

Although the issue of finitude is expressed as a metaphysical matter, it is obvious that our attitudes towards death are not purely theoretical and abstract. The problem of death is informed by two other factors. The first is the highly personal nature of death – death always belongs to a specific *Dasein*, it "lays claim to it as an individual *Dasein*" (BT 308; SZ 263). So although someone could sacrifice their life for someone else and 'die for them', that would only be a postponement. Strictly speaking, "no one can take the Other's dying away from him" (BT 284; SZ 240). In this sense, death individuates *Dasein*, emphasising its uniqueness and its radically individual nature.

The second factor is the social dimension of death, comprised of the prevailing attitudes towards it in a particular society.¹ These attitudes usually express an attempt to deny death by cultivating an attitude of indifference towards it or bracketing it as irrelevant to life. Such tranquilisation encourages a “constant *fleeing in the face of death*” (BT 298; SZ 254). The social attitude to death therefore alienates Dasein from its unique relationship to its finite existence by discouraging an existential understanding of it and therefore makes Dasein inauthentic.²

Accordingly, the second claim of this part is that there is a tension between the personal attitude towards one’s own finitude and the public dimension of death. This tension informs not only the discussion of death, but also changes the way we think about the nature of social existence. Death is a domain in which the tension between the individual and society becomes pertinent, according to Heidegger, because whereas *das Man* (the “They”, “the One” or “the Anyone”) aims at tranquilisation, Dasein must disentangle itself from this tranquilisation in order for it to face death authentically.³

Therefore, thinking about death requires taking into account both its personal and public dimensions. This, in turn, allows the meaningfulness of death to emerge as a comprehensive structure, reflecting Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein as inherently social. Although Heidegger stresses the personal significance of death for each individual, he also emphasises its significance with respect to the social nature of Dasein. Both aspects must be addressed in order to provide an overall metaphysical model of the relationship between life and death.

¹ For a historical account of changing attitudes towards death see Jacques Choron (1963, 1972).

² The German term for authenticity, *Eigentlichkeit*, has been interpreted, analysed and criticised extensively since 1927, particularly in existentialist philosophy and in Theodore Adorno’s critical work, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1973). The double meaning of both ‘proper’ and ‘property’ in the German ‘*Eigen*’ is retained in alternative translations of the term as ‘appropriateness’ (Stambaugh) or ‘ownedness’ (Carman), but the emphasis on the relationship to the self, which resonates in ‘authenticity’, tends to be lost. I therefore retain the Maquarrie and Robinson translation of *Eigentlichkeit* as authenticity, while bearing in mind the inflated resonance of the English term.

³ The German term *das Man* refers to an unspecified individual and is used in the same way as the English ‘one’. It is used to express views or actions without attributing them to any particular individual. ‘One would think that the president ought to resign,’ or ‘they say it is going to rain’ are examples of such impersonal attributions. Heidegger uses *das Man* to indicate an internal agency made up of social norms and conventions that eclipses the authentic self. It is important to emphasise that Heidegger defines *das Man* as an *existentiale*, part of Dasein’s ontological structure. The English translations of the term are ‘the “they”’ (Macquarrie and Robinson, Stambaugh), ‘the One’ (Dreyfus, Carman), or ‘the Anyone’ (Kisiel). I use the German, which has by now become widely familiar.

Heidegger brings out the tension between death and sociality by stressing the *individuating* quality of death. Death is one's ownmost and not to be outstripped – it belongs strictly to a particular Dasein and picks out or individuates it (BT 308; SZ 264). Underlying this tension is the question of the relationship between being-with (*Mitsein*) and authenticity. Does Dasein have to be individuated in order to be authentic? The confusion surrounding this question has two sources. Firstly, Heidegger bases his analysis on individuation, yet claims that the social dimension of Dasein is a fundamental part of its structure: Dasein *is Mitsein*, being-with. Viewing death as individuating covers over the place of sociality in Heidegger's account of authentic Dasein.

Secondly, Heidegger structures the social dimension of Dasein through two *existentiales* (his term for a special set of categories that describe Dasein): *Mitsein* and *das Man*. This duality expresses an intrinsic ambivalence or conceptual confusion about sociality. Thus a discussion of death also requires answering the question of the relationship between Dasein and society: is this relationship inherently conflictual, or is sociality a neutral and moreover essential feature of Dasein?

As Dreyfus points out, the reply to this question depends upon one's goals. Thus existentialist readings are interested in exploring the tension between Dasein and *das Man* as the force of levelling and conformism, whereas pragmatist interpretations focus on *das Man* as the source of intelligibility and shared practices (Dreyfus, 1995, pp.428-9). I present the different views on this issue and conclude that *contra* certain pragmatist readings of Heidegger, *das Man* cannot be read only as a neutral *existential*, the general background of significance implicitly providing intelligibility to human practices and actions (Dreyfus 1991, 1995; Carman 1994, 2003; Okrent, 1988).

Coupled with the individuating character of death, the conflict between Dasein and the social creates a cleavage between my death and the death of another. This is a central point in Heidegger's analysis, an expression of the fundamental tension of individual existence within a social context, or the radical difference between first and third person perspectives (Carman, 2003, p.268f., pp.307-13).

Heidegger deals with this tension by advancing a two-step argument. He first claims that for Dasein to be fully aware of its possibilities and freedom it must free itself from the levelling forces of society acting on it through *das Man*. Only when it is capable of viewing its existence outside the normative pressures of society can Dasein become authentic. In the second step Heidegger advances the possibility of a group of authentic Dasein coming together in a community. Within such a community the individual fate (*Schicksal*) of each Dasein joins that of the others, creating a destiny (*Geschick*) for that community by "choosing its hero" (BT 436; SZ 384).

With respect to death, Heidegger leans heavily on the distinction between the first and third person perspectives. He differentiates my own death

from the death of any other Dasein, claiming that from the first person perspective death is the radical closure of *all* possibilities of existence, whereas from the third person point of view death is one more event in life. This leads to the view that Dasein can only experience its own death authentically, but not the death of another.

Heidegger therefore limits his analysis of death to the first step, which is the condition rather than the culmination of Dasein's potential authenticity, and does not discuss the possibility of sharing death or having an authentic experience of the death of another. This position creates what is in my view an unjustified identification between individuation and authenticity and can be overcome by reconstructing certain sections of the book.

I claim that there are good reasons to reject or at least reformulate the strong opposition between my death and the death of another. I explore the possible ways in which Dasein may experience the death of another and demonstrate that this experience may be authentic. I further argue that the rift Heidegger introduces between my death and the death of someone else rests on an understanding of authenticity and inauthenticity as mutually exclusive. Therefore part of the task is to reduce the gap between authenticity and inauthenticity. I follow the literature that sees authenticity and inauthenticity as interrelated, and thus views *das Man* as an inherent albeit conflictual part of Dasein's structure, not an external hindrance.

As a result of this reinterpretation of *das Man*, Dasein acquires new openness towards others from which a new capacity emerges: the capacity to experience authentically the death of another. This allows for a new understanding of being-towards-death as a relational existentiale, by moving away from individuation as the sole condition of authenticity and opening a path for other ways of achieving authenticity.

As was mentioned already, by 'death' (*Tod*) Heidegger does not mean what we commonly understand as death, namely, the passing away or termination of an individual's life. This point has been largely overlooked in the literature on Heidegger's death analysis and this basic misunderstanding of his view has been the source of a broad range of criticisms (Levinas 1969, 1998; Edwards 1975, 1976, 1979; Philipse 1998; Chanter 2001, Sartre 1956). I shall, at the outset, explain what Heidegger's notion of death is and show that careful attention to the details of his analysis is crucial for understanding his argument. Without attention to detail misunderstanding is rife and generates critical interpretations that are ultimately unjustified.

I then address two key features of Heidegger's death analysis that have been largely overlooked and have therefore led to numerous criticisms that are ultimately unjustified. The two key features are the crucial albeit often ignored distinction between death and demise, and the precise meaning of the obscure formulation of death as possibility. I show how by reinterpreting Heidegger's concept of death we can achieve a full and coherent understanding of the

concept. I do this by following two interpretations of Heidegger's concept of death, offered by William Blattner and Hubert Dreyfus. After presenting their views I show that there is a dimension of finitude that is still missing from their interpretation. And finally, I suggest a way of augmenting the new interpretation, thus making it more comprehensive.

DEATH AS STRUCTURING EXISTENCE

Death plays a central role in Heidegger's early work, in particular in *Being and Time*, and is a crucial element in Dasein's structure and existence.⁴ In the 1929-1930 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics (Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik)* Heidegger writes: "Finitude is not some property that is merely attached to us, but is *our fundamental way of being*" (1995, p.5; GA 29/30:7).

Death defines and shapes Dasein's existence as its limit. It is "the limit-situation that defines the limits of Dasein's ability-to-be" (Blattner, 1994, p.67). It is a limit that becomes existentially significant because of Dasein's unique capacity to anticipate it, a capacity that structures everyday life by making it an existence moving towards death: being-towards-death.

The first thing to note from a phenomenological perspective is that Dasein does not experience its own death. Death is not a phenomenon contained within Dasein's experiential horizon nor is it an experience that Dasein undergoes. We should therefore note at the outset that Heidegger is not offering an analysis of what he calls demise (*ableben*), the event that ends Dasein's life. Heidegger is not interested in the event that transforms a living body (*Leib*) into a corporeal corpse (*Körper*).

Rather, his analysis focuses on the ways in which Dasein's existence is shaped by mortality and how life is, paradoxically, a process of dying (*sterben*). We are therefore not presented with a phenomenology of death but with an analysis of being-towards-death, a phenomenology of mortal, finite existence (BT, p.277; SZ, p.234).

The same point applies to the death of others. Heidegger is equally not presenting us with a phenomenology of the death of others. Although someone

⁴ This book focuses on Heidegger's early treatment of death, mainly in *Being and Time* (1927), but also in the lecture-courses from that period: *History of the Concept of Time* (given in 1925), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (given in 1927), *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (given in 1928) and *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (given in 1929-1930), as well as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929). The later Heidegger attributes importance to death, as seen in the use of the term 'mortals' (*Sterblichen*) replacing 'Dasein', but it is not as central or as clear and there is no sustained treatment of death in the later work. I therefore centre my study of Heidegger's treatment of death and finitude on the early period, focusing mainly on *Being and Time*.

else's death could be a definitive and profound event for me, I am barred from experiencing their death. At most, I experience my loss. As Heidegger writes, "Death does indeed reveal itself as a loss, but a loss such as is experienced by those who remain. In suffering this loss, however, we have no way of access to the loss-of-Being as such which the dying man 'suffers'" (BT, p.282; SZ, p.239).

This leads Françoise Dastur to write, "There is a phenomenology not of death, but of our relatedness to death, our mortality" (1996, p.42). Therefore, she claims, the analysis focuses not on death but on *being in a relation* to death. Because of death's inaccessibility it can only be related to by scrutinising its effect on life. "Phenomenologically speaking, then, life is death's representative, the proxy through which death's resistance to Dasein's grasp is at once acknowledged and overcome" (Mulhall, 2005, p.305). It is therefore clear that Heidegger is not focusing on the moment of demise, which is phenomenologically inaccessible, but on the anticipation or forerunning (*vorlaufen*) towards death that constitutes Dasein as mortal and its existence as being-towards-death.

The direction of the investigation must therefore be one of looking to life and everyday existence and examining the ways in which they are shaped and affected by death. So although death is external to experience and not an event within it, death influences everyday existence and Dasein's structure, which is now characterised as being-towards-death. In a passage from the *History of the Concept of Time* Heidegger writes:

The certainty that 'I myself am in that I will die' is the *basic certainty of Dasein itself* [...]. If such pointed formulations mean anything at all, then the appropriate statement pertaining to Dasein in its being would have to be *sum moribundus, moribundus* not as someone gravely ill or wounded, but insofar as I am, I am moribundus. *The moribundus first gives the sum its sense* (1992, p.317; GA 20:437-8).

Death grounds Dasein's existence because it constitutes Dasein as temporally finite: "Only in dying can I to some extent say absolutely 'I am'" (Heidegger, 1992, p.318; GA 20:440). This gives a revised meaning to Dasein's temporal structure, and first and foremost to the notion of projection (*entwerfen*). Dasein constantly projects itself towards its future, by making plans, carrying out projects and choosing to pursue certain possibilities over others. In this projection of itself towards its future Dasein also projects itself towards death, its impossibility to be anything or to have any more possibilities. Death is the possibility of no longer being able to be there, no longer being able to be Dasein (BT, p.294; SZ, p.250). So Dasein's movement towards the future is a movement towards annihilation.

Dasein presses into the future by projecting itself towards its chosen possibilities. But this movement is not entirely free; it is bound by Dasein's past

choices and actions, as well as by some of its given features: Dasein is born into a certain family, place and culture. It is historically and socially situated in ways that were given to it, rather than chosen by it. This is Dasein's thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) or givenness. Dasein is further limited by its finitude of possibility and by death.

This emphasis on Dasein's limitations is expressed in its formulation as *thrown projection*. This formulation expresses the fact that the freedom to press into a certain possibility, the freedom to shape one's future, is not unbound. What the formulation of Dasein as thrown projection expresses is rather the idea of *bound* or *finite* freedom. The task is therefore "to conceive freedom in its finitude, and to see that, by proving boundedness, one has neither impaired freedom nor curtailed its essence" (Heidegger, 1984, p.196; GA 26:253).

This idea of bound freedom is further expressed in the fact that death is not an ordinary aim or event that Dasein can project itself towards. While all other possibilities give Dasein something to be, death is the closing down of Dasein's temporal structure. It is also different from other possibilities because it is unavoidable: each person has to die their own death, so to speak. This necessity generates a difference between my death and the death of others. All events, including the death of others, take place within my world and are therefore subsumed under my experiential horizon. But my death is the end of my experiential horizon: it is the possibility of the impossibility of existence (BT, p.307; SZ, p.262).

Dasein does not only have a finite structure, but is also endowed with the ability to conceive its death. One unique feature of Dasein is its ability to understand that it is going to die and therefore to live as finite. Death is not only an ontological fact structuring Dasein as temporally finite, but this fact is also necessarily reflected in Dasein's life. Death is therefore not only an external endpoint but bears internally on how Dasein lives and what kind of projects and choices are open to it. Although we may not explicitly express it in this way, we always make plans within the horizon of temporal finitude. One normally makes plans for – at best – the next few decades, but does not make plans for the next millennia, or take on personal projects that cannot be completed within a human lifespan.

So death is a limitation that is expressed in the types of projects and plans we make. It is therefore implicitly present in our self-awareness and self-conception. Because death is a constant accompaniment or condition of all events within life, the phenomenological project of understanding death is a demand to understand life as finite, rather than the event that ends Dasein's life.

Heidegger therefore introduces a distinction between Dasein's dying (*sterben*) and demise (*ableben*), and the perishing (*verenden*) of all other life

forms, which lack an awareness of their finitude.⁵ For Dasein, death is an issue and a (unique) possibility which it must face somehow. It is this relation to death that Heidegger explores, which is why he focuses his analysis on being *towards* death.

But the projection towards death is a unique and problematic projection. Phenomenologically it is a projection towards something that cannot be experienced, as was established earlier. Ontologically it is a projection towards something that is *not*, towards annihilation. This makes being-towards-death a projection towards obliteration. Thus Dasein's existence is a continuous movement towards extinction, where death is a paradoxical culmination of existence.

The more unveiledly this possibility gets understood, the more purely does the understanding penetrate into it *as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all*. Death, as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be 'actualized', nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself *be* (BT, p.307; SZ, p.262).

Death does not give Dasein anything to *be*, and in this sense it is not an ordinary kind of possibility. Rather, death destroys Dasein, who is nonetheless compelled to constantly move towards it. Although the movement is certain, the time and manner of Dasein's death remain indefinite, so it is a constant accompaniment to every moment of Dasein's existence.⁶ This makes it all the more important to Dasein's self-understanding.

The Three Characteristics of Death

Heidegger points out three features of death: it is *ownmost* (*eigenst*), *non-relational* (*unbezüglichlich*) and *not to be outstripped* (*unüberholbar*). The term 'ownmost' indicates death's essential belonging to Dasein. This characteristic singles out death as something that cannot be taken away from a particular individual or passed on to someone else (BT 284; SZ 240). In this sense death is different to other attributes or events that can be performed or given to a different Dasein. Someone else can teach my class for me if I am ill, or volunteer to donate

⁵ This claim is both problematic and inessential to Heidegger's view. It is problematic because it reintroduces the Cartesian mind/body dualism in the form of the reason (Dasein)/nature (animal) divide. It is inessential because some animals may be Dasein too, so their capacity to sense their finitude does not alter Heidegger's general claims. Yet Heidegger insists on a hyperseparation between Dasein and animals, thus implicitly accepting the distinction (Cf. Plumwood, 1993).

⁶ This uncertainty disappears in the case of suicide, which perhaps explains the sense of relief experienced by those who decide to end their life once the decision has been made.

blood instead of me. But death is my ownmost because even if someone else sacrifices their life for me, I still have to die myself. We each owe nature a death.

The second characteristic, non-relationality, expresses death's individuating effect on Dasein. Death singles Dasein out and severs its relations to others. As individuated by death, Dasein is singled out. Its death severs it from friends and family, from its relational ability. It can also be said that death severs Dasein's links to its world and to the entities within it.

The third characteristic, not to be outstripped, is a combination of two further attributes, death's *certainly* and *indefiniteness*. Because it is certain, the threat of death hangs over us constantly. Because it is indefinite, that is, we do not know when we shall die, we are constantly anxious about its time of arrival. As a result, we cannot outstrip or overtake death, we are not able to hold it fixed as we can with other events, such as a friend's visit. We can wait for a visit that is meant to take place next week. Eventually the visit takes place and once it has ended we can view it as a past event, as an event that has already taken place and that has been temporally surpassed. Death cannot be similarly overtaken or surpassed. As long as Dasein exists, it is always in front of it and always indefinite.

An example of the combination of certainty and indefiniteness is given in Nabokov's 1935 novel *Invitation to a Beheading*. The protagonist, Cincinnatus, is a convict on death row, awaiting his execution. Cincinnatus is repeatedly tormented by false alarms of his impending execution given out by his sadistic jailor. Cincinnatus says, "The compensation for a death sentence is knowledge of the exact hour when one is to die. A great luxury, but one that is well earned. However, I am being left in that ignorance which is tolerable only to those living at liberty" (1959, p.14). Death is a possibility that is distinctively and only ever impending. It is something which "Dasein itself has to take over in every case", but which cannot be controlled, surpassed or temporally determined like other events (BT, p. 294; SZ, p.250).

Dasein is therefore constantly running towards (*vorlaufen*) its death. It is in the constant position of *anticipation* towards death: death is always and only ever something that is yet to come. We therefore never expect its actualisation, because death gives us nothing to be actualised (BT, p.307; SZ, p.262). Rather, to anticipate death is simply to live as finite and to understand one's structure most fully. For Heidegger this understanding of one's finitude exposes Dasein's ownmost ability-to-be (*Seinkönnen*) and the possibility of authentic existence (BT, p.307; SZ, pp.263-4). Anticipation is therefore a very different attitude to expecting (*erwarten*) an event, because expecting means waiting for an actualisation. Death is not an event that can be actualised.

This produces an inherent tension in death. On the one hand, it is the completion of Dasein; but this completion is Dasein's annihilation. Death transforms Dasein from incompleteness and infinity to totality and finitude. As long as Dasein exists there is a part of it that is still lacking and towards which it

constantly moves (BT, pp.293-4; SZ, p.250). Death gives Dasein its totality by supplying the outstanding part, which also destroys Dasein. Dasein cannot be a totality in any usual sense, because the moment of completion is the moment of Dasein's annihilation (BT, p.286; SZ, p.242).

Death brings about the completion *and* annihilation of Dasein, and is therefore unlike the completion of a painting, the end of a road, the ripening of a fruit, or finishing a loaf of bread by eating the last slice. Death is a different kind of ending altogether. The comparison to the ripening of a fruit is particularly salient, because its fulfilment or perfecting (*vollenden*) is also its culmination. Dasein, too, fulfils its course with death, but leaves no end product. Death is an endpoint, but not a teleological end. By juxtaposing Dasein's end to these other kinds of ending Heidegger points out the untimeliness of death. Dasein may die before it fulfils its projects, but on the other hand it may well have passed its prime before it dies (BT, p.288; SZ, p.244). As a result, for the most part, Dasein ends in an untimely manner, or unfulfilled.

On the other hand, Dasein is clearly 'not-yet' as long as it is (BT, p.289; SZ, p.245). We are asked to think about death not as the actual point in time at which Dasein suffers demise, but as being-towards-the-end (*Sein zum Ende*). "Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is" (*ibid.*). Dying is a relation to our finitude, a way of existing towards our death (BT, p.291; SZ, p.247).

It is important to note that our relation to death is not something that Dasein should understand theoretically or contemplate. Being towards death is an active and practical position. Dasein's way of being towards death reveals itself in its choices of possibilities towards which it projects itself, in Dasein's particular movement towards its future. When Dasein anticipates death it frees itself, because death illuminates all other possibilities as being part of a finite structure. Viewing itself as such a finite structure enables Dasein to view its existence as a finite whole. This understanding, again, is not theoretical but is always enacted. Therefore Dasein not only understands itself as a finite whole but *exists* as one.

There are two ways for us to respond to our mortality: authentically and inauthentically. Dasein can choose to respond authentically to death, to resolutely anticipate it. This attitude opens the possibility for Dasein to authentically engage with its existence, since it has now grasped it more fully *as finite* and has improved its understanding of itself as thrown projection or as finite temporality. On the other hand, Dasein can flee from death and cover it up by adopting the *das Man* attitude of neglecting and dismissing death. Heidegger calls this attitude 'inauthentic'.

These two attitudes to death, authentic and inauthentic, are not merely philosophical or abstract. These attitudes underlie all of our everyday practical concerns and types of engagement with the world, because all our actions are performed within a temporally finite horizon. As a result no one is exempt from

having some sort of attitude towards death, even if it is one of avoidance. Whether Dasein assumes an authentic attitude towards death, by resolutely facing its finitude, or whether Dasein flees from its mortality, it is always bound by death. Death is an active force structuring and determining Dasein's relationship to its future and its conception of itself as finite and temporal.

ELUCIDATING HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPT OF DEATH

But the precise meaning of being-towards-death is not immediately clear. Is the formulation of Dasein as being-towards-death an expression the fact that it is constantly moving towards death? Or is it the unique capacity of Dasein to understand itself as finite? And if death is simply the absence of existence, then how could it be a possibility? Surely death is the impossibility of all possibilities, and moreover not something that is possible but necessary.

The confusion surrounding these issues and the ensuing criticisms convinced many that "Heidegger's allegedly deep analysis of death does not contain significant philosophical insights. It is a mesmerising play with words, a masterly piece of rhetoric" (Philipse, 1998, p.354). Others have argued that Heidegger's death analysis is a series of "platitudes" that are "clearly false" and contain "flagrant contradiction" (Edwards, 1979, pp.50-60).

I argue that these critiques stem from a failure to note two key features of Heidegger's death analysis. The first feature is the specific sense Heidegger gives the term 'possibility' (*Möglichkeit*) in *Being and Time*. The second is the crucial distinction between death and demise, with which I begin. Heidegger uses three terms in his discussion of death: perishing (*verenden*), demise (*ableben*) and death (*Tod*). All organisms perish but Dasein perishes in a particular way, indicated by the special term demise (BT, p.291; SZ, p.247). We can therefore see that Heidegger does not use death to indicate the event that ends Dasein's life. This event is what Heidegger called *demise*, which is a special case of perishing.

"The ending of that which lives we have called perishing. Dasein, too, 'has' its death, the kind appropriate to anything that lives; and it has it, not in ontical isolation, but as codetermined by its primordial kind of Being [...] We designate this intermediate phenomenon as its 'demise'" (BT, p.291; SZ, p.247). Dasein demises rather than perishes because of Dasein's way of being, namely, existence, which Heidegger takes to be distinct from animal life. Because Dasein exists, and is engaged in an interpretation of its existence, it is aware of its finitude, or of its future demise. But as we can see in the quotation above, demise is not death, nor is it dying (*sterben*), which Heidegger defines as a way of being-towards-death. "Let the term '*dying*' stand for that *way of Being* in which Dasein *is towards* its death (BT, p. 291; SZ, p.247).

Demise is commonly misunderstood as the *inauthentic* end of one's life, which stands in opposition to both authentically dying and to perishing. But, as

Blattner argues, this oversimplifies the text. Heidegger is not equating demise with inauthenticity and death with authenticity, but rather claims that when Dasein understands its death inauthentically, it focuses on demise instead (1994, p.55). Seeing demise as inauthentic death creates interpretative confusion and has led those who understand demise in this way to say that “it is undeniable that there is a certain instability in Heidegger’s talk of ‘demise’” (Mulhall, 2005, p.302).

Rather, by the phrase “intermediate phenomenon”, Heidegger means that demise is intermediate between factuality (*Tatsächlichkeit*) and facticity (*Faktizität*) or interpretation. Perishing is *factual*, the biological fact that organic life is finite. Demise is the *factual* interpretation of that fact, of which Dasein is uniquely capable (Dreyfus, 1991, p.309. Cf. Blattner, 1994, p.54).

But demise is not inauthentic death. Rather, when Dasein relates inauthentically to its death, it turns its attention to demise instead (Blattner, 1994, p.55). When confronted with death, Dasein transforms its anxiety into fear of a future event, its demise. The event that ends life, demise, is taken as a substitute for death, that can be dealt with by tranquilisation, whereas anxiety cannot be similarly assuaged. In this erroneous interpretation death is levelled down to an ontic event because it is not understood as an *existentiale*, a way to be (Leman-Stefanovic, 1987, p.62).

So death and demise are clearly different terms, signifying different phenomena. By saying that Dasein is towards its death (*Sein zum Tode*), Heidegger picks out another feature of Dasein’s existence, which gives it its finite structure. But this feature is not demise. I shall explain shortly what death means in *Being and Time*. But before we turn to that, let us look at the special sense Heidegger gives the term ‘possibility’.

The term ‘possibility’ does not indicate “a free-floating ability to be” in which Dasein is equally indifferent to all possibilities (BT, p.183; SZ, p.143, translation modified). Nor is it a modal category, signifying what is not yet actual and not at any time necessary. Rather, possibility is an *existentiale*, a fundamental axis of Dasein’s structure. Dasein is primarily “Being possible” (ibid.).

This notion of possibility emphasises Dasein’s openness and self-determination, its ability to project itself towards its future by pressing into possibilities. But these possibilities are not unbounded. Dasein’s possibilities are limited by its thrownness, the given circumstances and affectivity (*Befindlichkeit*) in which it finds itself. “In every case Dasein, as essentially having an affectivity, has already got itself into definite possibilities [...] Dasein is Being-possible which has been delivered over to itself – *thrown possibility* through and through” (ibid., translation modified).

Therefore, Heidegger’s definition of death as a possibility of impossibility demands an explanation. How can death be a possibility at all? If

'possibility' does not mean merely logical possibility, but an existentielle, a way for Dasein to exist, what kind of possibility is death?

From the exposition of the two key issues: the specific sense of the term 'possibility' and the distinction between demise and death, it seems that Heidegger's death analysis is indeed plagued by contradiction and paradox. But as I show below, once we determine the precise meaning of the term 'death', the question of how death can be a possibility is answered. And once the two key features of death are clarified, the meaning and scope of Heidegger's concept of death becomes comprehensible and moreover illuminating.

I perform the explication in two steps. First, I present the two most salient views on Heidegger's concept of death, those of William Blattner and Hubert Dreyfus. The second step is to explain what these views leave out and why an addition to their view is required, and to present an augmented interpretation of Heidegger's concept of death.

Blattner on Death

Blattner (1994) starts out from the problem presented above, namely, how can we make sense of Heidegger's claim that death is a possibility? As we have seen, a possibility is not just logical possibility but a possible way to be or to exist, as Heidegger says in §31 of *Being and Time*. So saying that death is a possibility implies that there is a way of being (which Heidegger calls death) in which Dasein is unable to be. This, says Blattner, is a contradiction (cf. Edwards, 1975).

To solve the problem one could either argue that death does not have an ordinary meaning in *Being and Time*, or that possibility is used in a special way in this particular formulation. Instead of taking death to mean the end of one's life, and then changing the meaning of the term 'possibility' as others have done (Edwards, 1975), Blattner redefines the concept of death so as to mean something very different from its ordinary meaning.

Blattner takes the difference between death and demise to be radical and fundamental. For him demise is the event that ends Dasein's life, what we usually call death, but death is something very different in *Being and Time*: it is an extreme form of an anxiety attack. Blattner supports this view with a close reading of §52 of *Being and Time*, through which he demonstrates the difference between death and demise (Blattner, 1994).

We can find further support for the strict distinction between death and demise in other relevant passages of *Being and Time*. Heidegger writes: "when Dasein dies – and even when it dies authentically – it does not have to do so with an Experience of its factual demising, or in such an experience" (BT, p.291; SZ, p.247). Heidegger does not claim that demise (the event that ends Dasein's life) is significant for the phenomenological investigation of death, as he states

explicitly and as commentators point out (Leman-Stefanovic (1987), Dastur (1996), Mulhall (2005)).

Additionally, as was noted earlier, the event that ends one's life, demise, is phenomenologically opaque. We cannot experience our demise or that of others (BT, 291; SZ, p.247 and BT, p.282; SZ, pp.238-9). *Death*, on the other hand, is, as Heidegger says, "a phenomenon of life" and is available for phenomenological investigation (BT, 290; SZ, p.246; and cf. *Introduction to Metaphysics* (p.139; GA 40:100)). This supports Blattner's reading of death as radically different from demise.

What Blattner suggests is that death in *Being and Time* means an anxiety attack, the condition of being unable to be anything because one is paralysed by anxiety. This view affords a way out of the otherwise paradoxical view that death is a possibility (or in other words, a way to be) in which Dasein is unable to be (1994, p.49), which is Blattner's starting point. As he says, "death is a condition in which Dasein's being is at issue, but in which Dasein is anxiously unable to understand itself by projecting itself into some possible way to be" (1994, pp.49-50).

Blattner takes Dasein's existence to have both a thin and a thick sense. The thin sense is one of mere existence, of being an entity that has Dasein's kind of being. The thick sense is tied to Heidegger's notion of possibility as something Dasein projects itself into. The thick sense of existence is therefore that of being able-to-be someone by throwing oneself into some definite possibility, or understanding itself as something (1994, p.59). In order to throw oneself into a possibility Dasein must have an affective disposition for this possibility over others, and it must stand in relation to Dasein's past choices and actions and present preferences and projects. Any particular possibility must make sense against a background of motivational preferences and understanding.

But when Dasein is anxious this background disappears. Dasein's world recedes as a whole, withdrawing the network of meaningfulness and intelligibility that gives Dasein's preferences and projects their meaning. Anxiety brings out the insignificance of entities within the world, robs Dasein of its ability to understand itself and its world, and makes everyday familiarity collapse (BT, p.231-233; SZ, p.187-189).

As a result, all possibilities become equally irrelevant for Dasein, because they lose their affective and motivational significance that was part of Dasein's meaningful world. As Blattner says: "I cease to make sense, for I am cut off from the context that lets things make sense" (1994, p.62). Because Dasein is anxious, all possibilities become uninteresting and distant. Although Dasein still *is* in the thin sense, it still exists, it is *unable to be* in the thick sense. So in anxiety Dasein is, but is unable to be (it is unable to press into possibilities), and this formulation matches Heidegger's characterisation of death as the possibility of impossibility (1994, p.62).

Blattner thinks of death as existential death, or a moment of anxiety that removes Dasein from its world and context and bears it to itself. This makes death a limit-situation or the end of an ability to be something, to exist in the thick sense. As Blattner argues, understanding, or the ability to press into a possibility, is not a process but ability. The finitude of the ability to be is spelled out by its limit, or death (1994, p.67).

This interpretation serves as a reply to critics who take the formulation of death as possibility to be incoherent. For example, Paul Edwards insists on possibility being understood as ‘not actual’, and therefore argues that the possibility of impossibility is simply impossibility *per se*.

The total absence of experiences and behaviour is most emphatically *not* what we mean by ‘possibility’ in any of its ordinary senses and it is *equally* not what Heidegger himself meant when he introduced the word ‘possibility’ in his special sense to mean the actions or conduct or mode of life which a person may choose (1975, p.558).

Edwards complains that Heidegger’s juxtaposition of possibility with actuality is “an incomplete disjunction”, because death (and prenatal non-existence) is total absence, and therefore neither possibility nor actuality (1975, pp.560-561). But as Blattner shows, death *is* a possibility; it is not non-existence but existence (in the thin sense) without the ability to press into any possibility. This explains Heidegger’s seemingly baffling definition of death as a possibility.

On Blattner’s reading death is not complete absence (demise), but a peculiar condition in which Dasein is unable to take up any possibility and is therefore unable to act. Blattner’s interpretation is preferable to Edwards’ because it takes Heidegger’s use of the term ‘possibility’ to be consistent throughout *Being and Time* and moreover presents a coherent and elegant interpretative solution to the problematic formulation of death as possibility. For Blattner, the term ‘possibility’ has a fixed meaning, but ‘death’ does not mean ‘deadness’ or being dead, but *being unable to be*. Edwards points to the same contradiction, but does not offer an interpretative solution.

Dreyfus on Death

Dreyfus’ view has an affinity to Blattner’s but also differs in important respects. Dreyfus, too, does not take death to mean ‘the event at the end of one’s life’, but rather takes the term to signify the limitedness of Dasein. Understood existentially, death illustrates “in a perspicuous but misleading way” that Dasein is powerless, that it can never make any possibilities its own (1991, p.310). This is because Dreyfus takes possibilities to arise from the public or social realm, which he calls the Background. Because possibilities are part of the public world, they are available for anyone and therefore have no intrinsic meaning for

a particular Dasein. "They would be there whether I existed or not, and so they have no intrinsic meaning for *me*" (ibid.).

All the possibilities available to Dasein are therefore ungrounded and have no ultimate reason or grounding in Dasein. Dasein's preferences are to some extent arbitrary, because they arise from Dasein's social environment and are defined by its thrownness. Therefore, the only possibility that essentially belongs to Dasein is its nullity or groundlessness. So death, claims Dreyfus, is not the *existentiell* or ontic possibility of demise, but the *existential* ontological possibility of not really having any possibilities.

This extreme existential nullity is covered over by thinking about death as an event that had not yet happened to me, rather than as the condition of my existence that is always relevant and structures Dasein's existence. "The cover up consists in assuming that the anxiety of death is a response to the end of being alive or to the possibility of that end rather than to the true condition of Dasein" (1991, p.311).

Both Blattner's and Dreyfus' views are supported by Heidegger's identification of being-towards-death and anxiety: "Being-towards-death is essentially anxiety" (BT, p.310; SZ, p.266). Anxiety is the affective state (*Befindlichkeit*) in which Dasein discloses its groundlessness, its inability to project itself into a possibility, or its inability to be. Dreyfus thinks that anxiety reveals the publicness of possibilities; that they belong to anyone and therefore cannot provide a source for Dasein's fixed identity (1991, p.310).

Blattner says, similarly, that in anxiety Dasein is cut off from its possibilities, and is therefore unable to be in a thick sense. These possibilities, which are usually taken up unreflectively, provide a transparent, shared framework of everyday life. Once these possibilities are removed, as in the situation of anxiety, the backdrop of intelligibility disappears as well, leaving Dasein unable to project itself into any particular possibility, or in Blattner's words, unable to *be*.

Both Dreyfus and Blattner emphasise the inability to act that characterises anxiety and what they call 'existential death' (Dreyfus, 1991, p.310; Blattner, 1994, p.68). It is this condition of being cut off from the world and therefore being incapable of action that death and anxiety share. This unique condition is what Heidegger calls non-genuine authenticity. The terms genuine (*echt*) and non-genuine (*unecht*) pertain to understanding (BT, p.186; SZ, p.146). Genuine understanding expresses being-in-the-world as a whole, whereas non-genuine understanding is partial or reductive. Anxiety or authentic being-towards-death, qualifies as *authentic* but *non-genuine*. These states are authentic because they disclose the world as a whole, but they are non-genuine because they cut Dasein off from its world and leave it unable to act (Dreyfus, 1991, p.194). So the condition of anxiety or of being unable to be, is a condition of non-genuine authenticity.

When it is anxious, Dasein is equipped with authentic understanding but unable to enact it. In order to achieve authentic *and* genuine understanding Dasein must be resolute, which allows it to act with a “sight which is related primarily and on the whole to existence”, which Heidegger calls transparency or perspicuity (*Durchsichtigkeit*) (BT, p.186; SZ, p.146). Death and anxiety are both conditions in which action is ruled out, in which Dasein is unable to be.

This seems to be a compelling account of Heidegger’s concept of death that solves both the problematic formulation of death as possibility and accounts for the difference between death and demise that is often overlooked in the literature. Dreyfus and Blattner interpret Heidegger’s concept of death (and anxiety) as the complete breakdown of Dasein’s world, which makes Dasein unable to be anything (Dreyfus, 2005, pp.xix-xx). Both point to an experience of complete helplessness, of finitude, as the experience captured by the Heideggerian notion of death.

More recently Dreyfus has expressed the view that death is the structural condition of a complete loss of identity. He interprets dying as the “resigned, heroic acceptance of this condition” (ibid.). This formulation is close to Blattner’s idea of death as being unable to be anything; or in Dreyfus’ terms, losing one’s identity. Both views take it as a starting point that death cannot be the event that ends Dasein’s life, because that leads to a contradiction in the formulation of death as possibility, and ignores Heidegger’s explicit distinction between death and demise. Both take it to be an existential position rather than a physiological event.

Dreyfus’ and Blattner’s view offers the strongest and most coherent interpretation of the difficult passages on death in Chapter I of Division II of *Being and Time*. What I refer to from now on as the Dreyfus/Blattner view is the following: death is the condition of being unable to be anything, when being is taken in the thick sense of pressing into a possibility. This continuous threat of loss of identity and anxiety structures Dasein’s existence. The essential view I extract from both interpretations is that death is not demise, nor is it authentic demise or anything of the sort. When Heidegger discusses death, being-towards-death and anxiety, he is not referring to demise or to our attitude towards demise.

Despite its strengths and ability to provide a coherent interpretation of Heidegger’s view, the Dreyfus/Blattner view is not free of problems. A first problem is pointed out by Dreyfus himself, who criticises Blattner. He argues that since an anxiety attack is sudden and unmotivated “it is hard to see how one should live in order to be ready for it, and Blattner does not even try to explain what a life of readiness for an anxiety attack would be like” (2005, p.xix).

Additionally, it is not clear that Heidegger thinks that Dasein can be ready for this kind of attack, and moreover, anticipatory or forerunning (*vorlaufen*) resoluteness is already constantly anxious (ibid.). If authentic Dasein is constantly anxious, it does not need to be ready for an anxiety attack. Dreyfus suggests that Blattner’s notion of an anxiety attack is in fact not an authentic

experience of death, but the nearest experience to death that an *inauthentic* Dasein can have. In what follows I bracket Dreyfus' and Blattner's disagreement about anxiety and forerunning resoluteness as the state of preparedness for such an attack, because I do not think that this issue is central, nor is it the strongest aspect of Blattner's view.

There are further problems with the Dreyfus/Blattner view. I think that their interpretation solves local problems in specific sections of *Being and Time*, at the expense of the overall meaningfulness of the concept of death. The reason I think their position is local rather than global is that it lacks the central notion of temporal finitude, without which many central ideas of *Being and Time* cease to make sense.

The discussion of temporality and the phenomenology of our attitudes towards the death of others, the characterisation of death as certain and the analysis of other types of ending, are all central elements of *Being and Time* that revolve around the notion of temporal finitude. All of these concepts are tied together through the notion of temporal finitude. Thus in the Dreyfus/Blattner interpretation they have no unifying theme and lose their connection with the concept of death, because it does not contain a temporal dimension.

This group of concepts surrounding temporality loses its coherence and relevance to the main thrust of Division II if we understand death only through the Dreyfus/Blattner interpretation, namely, as the condition of being unable to be anything that remains unlinked to Dasein's mortality. The Dreyfus/Blattner view solves the problems and contradictions that obfuscate Heidegger's discussion of death, but at the same time their analysis is incomplete because it lacks the essential notion of temporal finitude that is so crucial to Division II.

An Addition to the Dreyfus/Blattner Interpretation

In order to fill in the missing dimension of temporal finitude I make an addition to the Dreyfus/Blattner view. The addition is the dimension of temporal finitude, which I take to be an essential aspect and prototypical state of being unable to be. This additional dimension provides the link between death as finitude of possibility (the Dreyfus/Blattner interpretation) and temporal finitude. On my understanding, death illuminates both types of finitude: finitude in possibility and temporal finitude.

I maintain the Dreyfus/Blattner view but add to it a second and related analysis of temporal finitude. This essential element makes the emphasis on temporality, historicity and finitude coherent and links these terms to the analysis of death in a way that makes *Being and Time* a coherent whole. I therefore use the term 'death' from now on as containing both *temporal finitude*

and *finitude of possibility*.⁷ It is crucial to my interpretation that the two types of finitude are internally related, and that both are essential components of the transition to authenticity.

There are several reasons why this addition is important and constructive. Firstly, Heidegger's discussion of being-towards-the-end brings out Dasein's mortality as a structuring principle and central concern for Dasein (cf. Leman-Stefanovic, 1987, p.6). Being-towards-the-end defines Dasein as finite temporality, as a constant projection towards its future which ultimately reaches its annihilation. Temporal finitude underlies all possible projections into the future. As such, Dasein's death as its temporal end is a constant accompaniment and condition of every possibility or project.

Death is constantly present in life because it is only ever impending and can never be made actual, that is, be experienced by Dasein. Moreover, whereas other things are possible only at certain times, Dasein's end is possible at every moment. Our end is "always and only a possibility" and as such is persistently present in Dasein's existence (Mulhall, 2005, p.303).

Secondly, temporal finitude provides further illumination of the obscure formulation of death as a possibility. In the same way that death in the Dreyfus/Blattner view was not a possibility in the ordinary sense of the word, but a possibility of being unable to take up any possibility, Dasein's temporal end is also not a possibility in the ordinary sense. Dasein's end is not a possibility waiting to be realised, but an ontological condition underlying Dasein's temporal structure.

Both the possibility of being unable to be and temporal finitude are conditions for the meaningfulness of all other possibilities and both are limit situations that define the boundaries of meaningful experience. Dasein's finitude of possibility is an ever-present threat to Dasein's everyday meaningful dealing with the world. Dasein's finitude is a fundamental although ungraspable aspect of its existence that accompanies every moment of life. The result is a being, Dasein, who is both mortal and finite.

Thirdly, finitude of possibility and temporal finitude are conceptually related. Both define the end or limitation of life, and as limit concepts they assign significance to life by delineating its confines. Being-towards-the-end expresses temporal finitude; death (in the Dreyfus/Blattner sense) is the finitude of possibilities, the helplessness and limitation on what is achievable within life. The two are also related through the concept of anxiety. Anxiety is the state of being dead (in the Dreyfus/Blattner sense); it is also the affective state that discloses Dasein to itself as finite, as being-towards-the-end.

A further common feature is that both types of finitude raise issues that do not pertain to demise, but to the question of how one ought to live knowing

⁷ Richard Polt suggests the term 'mortality' (1999, p.86). The problem with this term is that it does not designate the end of Dasein's life, but the condition of being finite.

that one will die. In other words, the concept of death reformulates human life as mortal and finite. Dasein's relation to death is not something that is realised when it demises, but something it either realises or fails to realise in its life (2005, p.303).

Confronting death as Dasein's ownmost possibility in fact requires Dasein to acknowledge that it is its life that is its ownmost. The confrontation with death, or with the limits of life, brings out the fact that Dasein's being is always an issue for it, that "its life is something for which it is responsible, that it is its own to live (or to disown)" (Mulhall, 2005, p.306). Because death is possible at any moment, the radical contingency of each individual life becomes apparent.

Acknowledging this is to acknowledge finitude in three interrelated senses: the groundlessness of Dasein (Dreyfus), the possibility of impossibility (Blattner) and temporal finitude. As Mulhall says, death brings out the fact that our existence has limits, "that it is neither self-originating nor self-grounding nor self-sufficient, that it is contingent from top to bottom" (ibid., cf. Hatab, 1995, p.411).

DEATH AND MOODS

The disclosive character of moods (*Stimmungen*) and affectivity or state-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit*) plays an important role in Dasein's existence. As Heidegger notes in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (*Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*), "With every mood wherein 'something is this way or that', our Dasein becomes manifest to us" (1990, p.155; GA 3:227). Within the general Heideggerian view of moods as disclosing the world, he singles out a specific affective state as disclosing death: anxiety.⁸

Moods colour the presence of death in existence in the various ways in which we relate to and disclose. Moods are also related to two other central aspects of Dasein: its thrownness and its sociality. Moods reveal Dasein's thrownness (BT, p.310; SZ, p.265). In the same way that Dasein finds itself in a world, it also finds itself in a mood (hence the affinity between *finden*, to find, and *Befindlichkeit*, affectivity). Also, through the communicative *existenziale* of discourse (*Rede*), Dasein responds to and has exchanges with other Dasein, with affectivity as the background to that exchange. Affectivity is a state one is in, how one finds oneself. "Understanding is never free-floating but always goes with some affectivity" (BT, p.389; SZ, p.339, translation modified).

Moods are not merely epiphenomenal to our uncovering of the world; they constitute the uncovering. Moods disclose the world, reveal our thrownness into it and enable us to respond to it (Inwood, 1999, p.132). Moods are

⁸ In his English translation of *History of the Concept of Time* Kisiel translates *Angst* as dread; all other translators use anxiety.

disclosive; they link us to the world and enable its experience: “The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something” (BT, pp.175-6; SZ, pp.136-7).

Moods reveal that Dasein is open to the world as something that can affect it (Mulhall, 1996b, p.77). Different moods are different ways in which to realise the relationship between Dasein and its world. Moods reveal our inability to escape a certain scheme and therefore link Dasein to its world on an ontic *existentiell* level as well. As such, moods are not purely subjectivist; they are not private expressions of Dasein’s internal dynamic (feelings). Moods, like the rest of Dasein’s world, are specifically oriented and limited by its culture, surroundings, and social context. Much like discourse, moods (in their ontological form as affectivity) belong to the social level and in this way limit Dasein by investing it with a concrete set of possibilities and contents from which it can view and experience the world.

Moods are non-subjective; they are not just an inner state of Dasein, but an expression of how the world is or how we experience something in the world (Inwood, 1999, p.131). Therefore moods reflect a *relation* between Dasein and its world (fear of a real snake is such a relation, whereas fear of a non-veridical hallucination is not). This is expressed in Heidegger’s insistence that Dasein does not control its moods; it cannot put them on and take them off at will, like a pair of gloves (GA 39:89). Rather, “a mood assails us. It comes neither from ‘outside’ nor from ‘inside’, but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being” (BT, p.176; SZ, p.136).

Anxiety: the Only Route to Authenticity

With respect to death, anxiety has a special disclosive capacity. As Heidegger claims in *What is Metaphysics?* and in *Being and Time*, anxiety discloses the nothing, or the vacuity of not pressing into any possibility, in opposition to other moods that disclose this or that entity or even entities as a whole (1993, pp.102-3; GA 9:113-5). This places anxiety in a privileged position, as an integral part of Dasein as a questioning being. Anxiety has a special disclosive value with respect to death, since it manifests what is beyond entities and the world; the nothing (BT and SZ, §29, §53). As opposed to *das Man*, shielding us from truth, anxiety bares us to ourselves as finite in both senses delineated above: as temporally finite and as based upon nullity. When all possibilities become equally distant and inhospitable, Dasein is individuated.

But in anxiety there lies a possibility of a disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualizes. This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity

and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being (BT, p.235; SZ, pp.190-1).

As opposed to ontic fear, anxiety is not directed at some particular entity or event. While fear is always a fear of some particular thing, anxiety is a disruption of Dasein's being-in-the-world. Anxiety arises when being-in-the-world and existence become a problem, when their normal inconspicuous unfolding is interrupted. It is a revelation of the disappearance of the concrete everyday world and the uncanny character things take on. The everyday world of entities withdraws, leaving Dasein exposed and alienated, not at home and unable to be. The totality of involvements that creates meaning, the projects and possibilities of Dasein lose their meanings. Dasein's world collapses and becomes completely lacking in significance (BT, p.231; SZ, p.186).

Anxiety prevents Dasein from relating to itself and to its world in an everyday manner. The everyday links and significance arising from ordinary practices and the shared social world recedes and Dasein is forced to view this world as a whole, to look at its existence from the outside, as if nothing within this world mattered. It is Dasein's old and familiar world that has become inhospitable, uncanny, through Dasein's sudden inability to care about it. Through anxiety Dasein discovers this strange world to be its world, without the tranquilising *das Man*, and is forced to rediscover a more primordial world in its wholeness (BT, p.232; SZ, p.187).

The reaction to this moment can be either rejection and return to inauthentic or undifferentiated everydayness, or the start of a new understanding. Anxiety reveals Dasein's lostness, but also makes clear its relationship to possibility and the openness of existence. If Dasein accepts it, anxiety reveals Dasein and its world by "lighting up the world and Dasein in their full functioning while revealing their groundlessness" (Dreyfus, 1991, p.182). Dasein can also choose to flee from anxiety, to actively plunge into the world, in a way that suggests that the everyday world is organised so as to provide tranquillisation.

Whatever the response to it may be, and even if Dasein wishes for it to arise, anxiety does not appear on demand. It appears in the most unpredictable places and moments: including the safest and most familiar ones, the most harmless and innocuous situations (BT, p.234; SZ, p.189 and cf. Heidegger, 1992, p.289; GA 20:400). Just as Dasein does not choose to exist but simply finds itself in the world, it does not choose anxiety but finds itself assailed by it.

Anxiety and the uncanny sense of being not at home (*unheimlich*) pursue Dasein constantly but also implicitly. They threaten Dasein's lostness in *das Man*. Implicit anxiety is a stable feature of Dasein, which permeates both authentic and inauthentic states, but in everydayness it presents itself inconspicuously. It is an underlying permanent feature of Dasein's existence that is more primordial than feeling at home (BT, p.234; SZ, p.189).

The encounter with the world as world through anxiety individuates us and opens the possibility for authenticity. But this individual stance is empty, as Dasein is constructed of the concrete contents of its world. Being-in-the-world is what fills Dasein with content and meaning, without which it remains an empty and meaningless structure. From this perspective the retreat to individuation cannot be maintained for long, because in anxiety Dasein is unable to be. Anxiety undermines being-in-the-world and therefore Dasein must return to being in the world. Anxiety includes not only the solitary encounter with the world as a whole and with Dasein's groundlessness, but also the rediscovery of its world and projects as necessary to its existence.

The Call of Conscience

The silent call of conscience comes from nowhere, signifies nothing, and yet conveys a positive content. Dasein's lack or nullity has a positive meaning. Heidegger makes this possible by basing Dasein's existence upon nullity. Dasein's existence is ultimately groundless; nothing anchors it. A 'not' exists as the null basis of Dasein's existence and as such constitutes and conditions it. This nullity belongs to the existential meaning of thrownness and is constitutive for it (BT, p.330; SZ, p.284).

But this nullity is not a contingent lack, separating an actual privation from abstract perfection. The lack is structurally inherent to Dasein's existence, and not only when it is inauthentic:

Existential nullity has by no means the character of a privation, where something is lacking in comparison with an ideal which has been set up but does not get attained in Dasein; rather, the Being of this entity is already null *as projection* [...]. This nullity, moreover, is thus not something which emerges in Dasein occasionally, attaching itself to it as an obscure quality which Dasein might eliminate if it made sufficient progress (BT, p.331; SZ, p.285).

Nullity underlies Dasein's structure, action and existence, and therefore in order to be in the world, Dasein must have persistent, albeit implicit, anxiety (Inwood, 1999, p.145). A groundless nullity is revealed as the basis of care (*Sorge*), and as the meaning of Dasein's being (BT, p.331; SZ, p.285). Dasein contains a lack within itself. The German word *Schuld* means guilt, debt and responsibility, thus identifying the basis of existence (conscience, guilt) as ultimately lacking or null (BT, p.331; SZ, p.285). The phenomenon of guilt also reveals the structure of Dasein as based on nullity (Mulhall, 1996b, p.128). The call of conscience makes Dasein aware of the nullity of its basis, and yet affirms and pushes it to realise its ability-to-be and the weightiness of its choices, its intrinsic openness and the resulting freedom (BT, p.334; SZ, p.288).

TEMPORALITY, HISTORICALITY, REPETITION

Temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) is the meaning of Dasein's totality, or care (BT, p.425-6; SZ, p.373-4). In Division II of *Being and Time* Heidegger repeats the analysis of Dasein, this time interpreting its fundamental structures temporally (BT, p.352; SZ, p.304). The discussion of temporality, historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) and repetition (*Wiederholung*) is intended to deepen the analysis of Dasein given in division I.

Dasein is a temporal and historical being, embedded in a community and capable of the transition from fate (*Schicksal*) to destiny (*Geschick*). The temporal meaning (*Sinn*) of Dasein is *Mitsein*, a social and historical being-with. The explication of the temporal meaning is intended to enhance division I by presenting the full meaning of Dasein as integrated in a society and as sharing a destiny with a community, as *Mitsein* in the full historical and social sense.

In order to understand the full meaning of *Mitsein*, it is first necessary to understand Dasein as temporal and historical. The temporal analysis re-describes the existentials presented in the existential analytic as unified within ecstatic temporality (BT, p.277; SZ, p.234). It is impossible to regard Dasein as a sum total of past and present events, because this reduces it to an object with fixed properties, existing within time as a series of 'nows'. Against this view, Heidegger sees Dasein as temporal change and movement (*Bewegtheit*), which articulates the gap between Dasein and its possibilities and the stretch between Dasein's birth and death:

Factual Dasein exists as born; and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death. As long as Dasein factually exists, both the 'ends' and their 'between' *are*, and they *are* in the only way which is possible on the basis of Dasein's Being as *care*. Thrownness and that Being towards death in which one either flees it or anticipates it, form a unity; and in this unity birth and death are 'connected' in a manner characteristic of Dasein. As care, Dasein is the 'between' (BT, pp.426-427; SZ, p.374).

This gap never closes because the projection into possibilities never halts and because Dasein is never pure possibility; it is always also thrown, born, situated. Dasein is never united with the 'there', the world or its possibilities, and is therefore always projecting towards it. This gap and the constant movement resulting from its structure constitute Dasein as projection towards a future goal, but from within thrownness. Without temporality, Dasein's understanding and existence cannot be grasped, as temporality makes them intelligible (King, 1964, p.44).

Dasein understands itself not only as 'I am' but also as 'I can be' and 'I already am', this dynamic openness being its main characteristic. The disclosure

of possibilities is enabled through our temporal existence drawing us from the past to the future, allowing us to see ourselves as an ability-to-be immersed in a given world, as thrown projection.

Authentic Dasein has the unity of a *future* that makes *present* in the process of *having been*. Resoluteness brings itself into the Situation (*Situation*), the concrete present (BT, p.374; SZ, p.326). In authentic resoluteness the three temporal modes are unified into ecstatic temporality, which is revealed as the meaning of authentic care. But the three temporal modes are also united in originary temporality, because primordial unity of the structure of care is temporality (BT, p.375; SZ, p.327).

In primordial temporality the projective character of Dasein is ‘ahead of itself’, grounded in the future, which expresses Dasein’s *existentiality* (BT, p.376; SZ, p.327). But Dasein always finds itself as a thrown fact, as having been, or as *facticity* (BT, p.376; SZ, p.328). The third temporal mode, the present, is included in the past and the future, but not as *falling*, which is the inauthentic present. Rather, when resolute, Dasein *brings itself back* from falling in order to be authentically ‘there’ in the moment.⁹ The unity of existence (characterising the future), facticity (characterising the past) and falling (or bringing oneself back from falling as the present) constitutes the totality of the structure of care. Finally, the future has to be understood as finite, as being-towards-the-end. Originary temporality is *finite*.

The unity of past and future is contained within the present. Falling (*verfallen*), the present absorption in the world and everydayness, is not a negative state (BT, p.220; SZ, p.175). It represents a normal state of affairs in which Dasein plans and performs tasks whilst immersed in idle talk, ambiguity and curiosity. Falling is Dasein’s basic kind of existence that belongs to everydayness (BT, p.219; SZ, p.175). It is not a “bad and deplorable” ontic state Dasein should aim to get rid of (BT, pp.220-1; SZ, p.176).

The past enables the future to disclose itself as a horizon of new possibilities. Dasein can only expose what is already there, and can only return to itself because it was already there. The temporal basis of Dasein lies in the future but its content lies in its past. In authenticity the present is articulated through resoluteness, which is an attitude towards new possibilities. The present possibilities are the ontological source of the present, which is the relation between past and future. This structure is dynamic as each reflexive stage

⁹ ‘The moment’ (Dreyfus) is a translation of *Augenblick*, which is also translated as ‘the instant’ (Hofstadter), or ‘the moment of vision’ (Macquarrie and Robinson). I shall follow Dreyfus in using ‘the moment’, because this formulation lends itself nicely to such expressions as ‘being in the moment’ and ‘the moment of transformation’, as well as being consistent with the English translation of Kierkegaard’s *Oieblik*, which is the source of Heidegger’s term (Dreyfus, 1991, p.x).

projects Dasein into another. This is authentic temporality, manifested through anticipatory resoluteness (BT, p.351; SZ, p.304).

The temporal structures of Dasein are ultimately subjected to finitude. Dasein always projects itself towards its death, and therefore every temporal dimension of Dasein contains mortality as its boundary. Temporality is the axis through which finitude becomes meaningful, since the movement towards the future is also the movement towards the end.

Inauthentic temporality covers over finitude. Within everyday care Dasein develops a 'reckoning with time', and entities within the world are seen as endowed with 'within-time-ness' (*Innerzeitigkeit*). The notion of time that is available in everyday life is not originary temporality, but shared time, which is public and handy (BT, pp.463-464; SZ, p.411). This shared dimension of time enables different Dasein to share temporal concepts and to belong to the same community or generation, to have a sense of history. This, in turn, is a condition of Dasein's destiny, which makes up the authentic historicising of Dasein (BT, p.436; SZ, pp.384-5). It is only at the meeting point of temporality and historicity, when temporality is instantiated in entities as historicity, that Dasein can become authentic. Repetition enables authentic historicity, by explicitly handing down Dasein's possibilities, connecting past and future. This historicity is based on Dasein's understanding of itself as temporally finite, as being-towards-death (BT, p.438; SZ, p.386).

Inauthentic temporality, on the other hand, is the projection of a substantial structure onto this dynamism. We fall into inauthentic temporality when we misunderstand the dynamic quality of the reflexive stages. Every authentic temporal term has an equivalent in inauthenticity. Thus in inauthentic temporality we find repetition replaced by *forgetting*, the moment by *making present*, and anticipation by *awaiting* (BT, SZ, §68).

Nonetheless, as Dasein takes its authentic possibilities from inauthentic facticity, inauthentic existence is the basic factual ground from which Dasein emerges. Grounding temporality in facticity ensures that it is not merely a formal structure but has specific contents, differentiating and situating each Dasein in its concreteness. Authentic temporality is not merely a structural horizon of Dasein but also an active process of selection of factual contents, determining the ones that are to be preserved and repeated.

Repetition

Authentic temporality bridges the past (as thrownness) and future (as projection) through repetition. Repetition is grounded not only in temporality, but also in historicity; it is as an *historical* being that Dasein repeats. Authentic understanding is futural because it comes towards itself from the possibility of itself that Dasein has chosen. In this movement towards itself Dasein takes on its being as it already is, as it already was in the past. By returning to itself Dasein

brings itself back with everything it is and was. Heidegger names this *repetition* (*Wiederholung*), because it repeats the past in the present, which is a movement towards the future.

Repetition is a unique way in which Dasein already was/is. Authentic historicity appears through repetition, through Dasein's return to itself, which precedes itself. Dasein returns to itself in a repetitive motion, which also advances towards the future (BT, p.437; SZ, p.385). It is this moment (*Augenblick*, 'the instant') that allows resoluteness to take over Dasein's past, creating repetition: a conscious and explicit form of repetition. Resoluteness becomes repetition.

Repetition is not stagnant or conservative, and is an implicit repeating of a heritage, which neither attempts to conserve the past, nor explicitly aims at progress (BT, p.438; SZ, p.386). For the most part, this repetition is part of a cultural heritage that may be observed in minute practices that are never explicitly expressed as a set of rules. Dreyfus' example of conventions of distance standing is a good example of a practice that does not and is not in practice taught, but is a result of implicit imitation (1991, pp.18-9). As such repetition plays an important role in Dasein's self-conception and action.

Explicit handing down, on the other hand, manifests Dasein's historicity, discloses and clarifies Dasein's context and framework to itself in a resolute moment. Although Heidegger defines repetition as a neutral structure, it clearly has a positive role in Dasein's self-understanding, and more specifically, in its contribution to Dasein's authentic understanding of itself as bound to its fate and heritage. Repetition relates Dasein to its social and historical context, thereby forming Dasein's relation to the world.

Repetition should be understood in relation to fate and destiny. Fate is the way in which Dasein occurs or historicises (*geschehen*) the way it stretches along; it is ontic, individual temporality. Destiny is ontological, it is the social dimension of fate and hence historicity in the full sense. Repetition belongs to historical Dasein, who does not repeat automatically, but belongs to its destiny, which it *chooses* to repeat.

In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger finds a singular type of the present – the moment – that is related to repetition:

Resoluteness temporalizes itself as repetitive coming-back-towards-itself from a chosen possibility [...]. In the ecstatic unity of *repetitive self-precedence*, in this past and future, there lies a specific present [...] the *moment* (1988, p.287; GA 24:408, translation modified).

This structure of repetition contains components of present (*Augenblick*, the moment), future (Dasein preceding itself) and past (repetition). The moment is the singular appearance of resoluteness, which carries with it the unity of temporality. It unites the three temporal modes and discloses

possibilities. The moment constitutes action and creates the relation between Dasein and world. It is a moment of individuation, but not as alienation from the world or from being-with-others, rather as opening the factual possibilities of Dasein's concrete existence.

To conclude, it is important to note how temporality, which eventually turns out to be the meaning of being, is related to mortality. Temporality always structures Dasein as mortal, even if Dasein fails to understand itself as finite. Finitude puts certain restrictions on Dasein's existence and on its temporality, but at the same time gives Dasein its temporal unity, as well as the context within which it can receive its heritage and ground itself as historical.

Towards a Relational Understanding of Mortality

Although Heidegger's discussion of death focuses on Dasein's attitude to its own death, the relationship to the death of the other and the social dimension of mortality are no less significant for understanding mortality. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the social dimension of death and mortality, despite the fact that it receives a less developed treatment in *Being and Time*.¹

I argue that the tension between Heidegger's emphasis on individuation and the underdeveloped but crucial social dimension of mortality brings out important aspects of his death analysis, and moreover raises difficult problems both with the role individuation plays in the transition to authenticity and with the significance of authenticity itself. This tension highlights an important opposition between two themes of *Being and Time*: one centred on the individual, freeing it from normative constraints through authenticity; the other embedding Dasein within a social world and grounding intelligibility in the social dimension.

These conflicting themes surface most clearly in the discussion of mortality, because the question of how to live is, for Heidegger, subordinate to the question of how to die or be towards the end. Because finitude plays a pivotal role in Dasein's self-understanding, the extent to which individuation is required for authentically understanding finitude determines the extent to which it is necessary for Dasein's understanding of its existence. Both dimensions are essential to Dasein's overall structure, so determining the place and role of each within this structure is an important step in assessing Heidegger's account of finitude.

This chapter clarifies two major ambiguities in *Being and Time*. The first is the relationship between *Mitsein* and *das Man*, the second the relationship between authenticity and inauthenticity. I examine the notion of being-with, *Mitsein*, in relation to *das Man*. Do the two concepts overlap? Are they juxtaposed? Are they reconcilable? With some answers in mind, I then

¹ Many commentators, notably Levinas (1969, 1998) and Nancy (1991, 2000), but also Dreyfus (1991), Olafson (1994a), and Critchley (1998), made the more general claim that Heidegger's treatment of sociality is cursory and deficient. Olafson writes, "Heidegger's account of Dasein as a social being is the least developed and in many respects the most problematic element in his conception of it" (p.55). Dreyfus says, "Heidegger's chapter on [...] *the one*, is not only one of the most basic in the book, it is also the most confused" (p.143 and see also p.144).

examine the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity, to which the tension between individual and society is central.

The Heideggerian assumptions concerning the distinctions between authenticity and inauthenticity, and individual and society, are questioned. This paves the way for a more relational understanding of mortality, for a new meaningfulness conferred on the death of another, and for moods other than anxiety to serve as leads to authenticity, themes that are developed in Part Three.

MITSEIN AND DAS MAN

The question whether finitude individuates Dasein or should be seen as relational is most acute when examining the relationship between authenticity (with individuation as its condition) and *Mitsein*, or even more so, *das Man*. Significant questions emerge: why is individuation a condition of authenticity? Are authenticity and sociality mutually exclusive? Under what conditions is a community of authentic Dasein possible? In order to answer these questions we must first discuss the *Mitsein* analysis and its relationship to *das Man*. Two interrelated questions arise: should *das Man* be seen as neutral or as negative? How should we understand the relationship between the two concepts?

How Should we Understand Das Man?

As interpreters have pointed out, Heidegger runs together two notions in his discussion of *das Man* (Dreyfus, 1991, pp.154-8, 1995; Philipse, 1998, pp.346-7; Carman, 1994; Olafson, 1994a, 1994b). On the one hand, *das Man* provides an essential element of *conformity* – it is the source of the intelligibility and meaningfulness of shared public practices, without which common understanding would not be possible. On the other hand, *das Man* is *conformism* – the force of levelling, tranquilisation and averageness, dulling and limiting Dasein's understanding of itself and its world.

Heidegger picks out this aspect of sociality with the term *distantiality* (*Abständigkeit*).² We worry about the extent to which we are distanced from the mainstream or average person in our opinions, behaviour or practices. The sense in which we can be said to err when we mispronounce a word or break a social convention is the measure of our distance from this implicit average. Dreyfus' example of distance-standing conventions illuminates both the implicitness of such understandings and the unease resulting from their breaking (1991, pp.18-9).

² *Abständigkeit* is also translated as 'apartness' by Kisiel in his translation of the *History of the Concept of Time* (1992), and as 'standnoffishness' by Carman (1994), although the latter is criticised by Olafson (1994b).

If we take inauthenticity to be the mode of existence in which Dasein is held under the sway of *das Man*, we get two respective interpretations of inauthenticity. On the interpretation of *das Man* as conformity, inauthenticity is simply the everyday context within which we perform actions and partake in practices in a natural and unquestioning way. If we interpret *das Man* as conformism, inauthenticity becomes an impediment under which Dasein is alienated from itself, and its actions and opinions are completely dominated by the insidious “they”. So how should we understand *das Man*?

Certain interpretations, such as those of Dreyfus (1991, 1995) and Taylor Carman (1994), attempt to overcome *Being and Time*'s ambivalence towards sociality by regarding *das Man* as neutral, as “the shared norms that determine both equipmental use and the point of such use which Heidegger calls significance” (Dreyfus, 1995, p.425). On this reading, *das Man* loses its negative role and becomes the condition of intelligibility, the basis for social background familiarity, into which human beings are always already socialized.

Similarly, Carman's Wittgensteinian interpretation of *das Man* sees it as the anonymous social norms that are the source of the meaningfulness of the world (1994, p.219). According to this reading, authenticity means taking up these norms by understanding their constitutive role, not by breaking them. Authenticity therefore *coincides* with *das Man*, dissolving the tension between authentic Dasein and *das Man*. This Dreyfus/Carman reading finds further textual support in Heidegger's explicit claim that there is no normative preference for authenticity and that inauthenticity is not a lesser or lower state (BT, p.68; SZ, p.43).

Carman is aware of the ambiguity of the term *das Man*, but argues that Heidegger's account of conformism rests on his social conception of Dasein's self-understanding (1994, p.214). Dasein is *de facto* ontically individuated, but also *ontologically* individuated “in virtue of the peculiar self-directedness of its understanding”, its mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) (1994, p.215). Authenticity and inauthenticity are both ontic manifestations of ontological mineness, and the social existence of Dasein takes it as its point of departure (1994, p.217).

But Heidegger also says that the *ontic* individuality of Dasein threatens to obscure the *ontological* structure of mineness. The ontic fact of Dasein's individuality does not warrant an ontological claim that it understands itself as such. This allows Carman to argue that against this background of ontic individuality and ontological mineness, Dasein may understand itself authentically or inauthentically. So “although existence is always my own, authentic selfhood is not ontologically basic” (1994, p.216). This supports his further claim that *das Man* is not a lesser state that should be superseded. Carman finally acknowledges the internal relation between conformity and conformism, which constitutes anonymous social normativity “and yet also generates precisely a kind of conformism, dependency and inauthenticity” (1994, p.221).

There are several problems with these interpretations, in particular with Carman's. He disregards Heidegger's definition of authenticity as *individuation* (BT, p.308; SZ, p.264). According to Carman there is no position of total individuation, so on his account anxiety and resolute anticipation of death, both requiring individuation, are impossible. This puts his interpretation in a problematic position, because it cancels the transformative role of anxiety (as individuating) but does not offer an alternative account of the move to authenticity, which becomes inexplicable.

Furthermore, if inauthenticity is compliance with the social norms of *das Man*, and authenticity means the same thing, the difference between the two modes is eradicated, an undoubtedly bizarre outcome. As a further consequence, Dasein remains subjected to *das Man* regardless of its mode of existence. This obliterates the central function of authenticity: releasing Dasein from *das Man* and opening up the possibility of authentic solicitude.

Other criticisms have been directed at Dreyfus' interpretation (Olafson 1994a, 1994b; Ewing, 1995). Olafson argues that in Dreyfus' account *das Man* is "magnified and almost exalted", and that Dreyfus attributes to Heidegger a cultural determinism that is foreign to Heidegger's views (1994a, p.59-60). Dreyfus' rubric of 'shared social practices' lacks an equivalent in Heidegger. This catchall term lumps together skills and know-how with social conventions and norms. This conflates Heidegger's clearly separated ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) and *Mitsein* analyses, the first delineating Dasein's relation to manipulable objects in its environment, the second encompassing social expectations and rules. Skills and know-how are not primarily social categories, but relate to Dasein's relation to *zuhanden* entities, and therefore cannot be a form of *Mitsein*.

Moreover, these skills seem to be independent of history and tradition in both an ontogenetic and phylogenetic sense. Once acquired, the particular story of how they were acquired by me or you, or the historical facts of how they came about plays no role in the further practice of the skill. The question of who taught you to ride a bicycle, or when were bicycles first used by commuters, is irrelevant to the actual everyday practice (1994a, p.61). And finally, if all of Dasein's knowledge, meaning and ability to cope are a result of *das Man*, how can Dasein ever break away from *das Man*? If Dasein is, as Dreyfus says, 'interpretation all the way down', how can Dasein "clear away concealments and obscurities" or break up "the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way" (BT, p.167; SZ, p.129)?

Both Dreyfus' and Carman's interpretations run counter to numerous explicit remarks in *Being and Time*, which emphasise the negative role of *das Man*. Remarks such as "By publicness everything gets obscure" and the references to "the dictatorship of *das Man*" are not neutral. *Das Man* is presented as levelling down all possibilities of being, and as such it "deprives the particular Dasein of its answerability", leaving it dispersed and selfless (BT, pp.164-5; SZ, pp.126-7). Everydayness is characterised by distantiality,

averageness, levelling down and publicness, which disburden and accommodate Dasein (BT, p.166; SZ, p.128).

Heidegger clearly describes Dasein as subordinated by *das Man*. A complete curtailing of freedom and choice holds any particular Dasein in the same relation to the multitude as any other. This provides Dasein with a false sense of security and releases it from the burden of thinking or choosing for itself. The hegemony of *das Man* results in conformism and effacement of Dasein's self.

The power of this control over a particular Dasein stems from its internalisation and acceptance by Dasein, and therefore from the inability to sense it as an external influence. As an internalised agency, *das Man* has complete power over any individual Dasein, and moreover compels Dasein to resist any opportunity to be released from its hold. *Das Man* is marked by mediocrity, fear of difference and flattening of possibilities (BT, p.165; SZ, pp.127-8).

Dreyfus and Carman deliberately dismiss these explicit remarks concerning the negativity of *das Man*. Dreyfus (1995) argues that overlooking the conformist element of *das Man* is a worthwhile sacrifice because it retains the coherence of the text and its relevance to contemporary philosophy of mind and action. But this interpretation requires a drastic reconstruction of *Being and Time* and construes *das Man* as the highest achievement of *Mitsein*, rather than its deformation (Olafson, 1994a, 1994b; Ewing, 1995). As such this interpretation not only lacks textual support but also requires an active selection of passages, which amounts to a radical reconstruction of *Being and Time*.

The problem remains: how should we understand *das Man* without compromising either its structural necessity or its destructive role in relation to authenticity? How can we maintain *das Man* as an existentials, part of the ontological structure of Dasein, and *das Man* as a normative shadow cast over Dasein? This question has not been resolved. At best, we find Dreyfus remarking that

there is no way to reconcile an interpretation that takes *das Man* to be a surmountable, ontic, existentiell deformation of authentic Dasein with one that takes it to be an existential, ontological structure upon which authentic Dasein is grounded [...]. Yet, there are enough passages on each side so that neither claim can be dismissed as a simple lapse (1994, p.428).

Carman concurs that there are passages in *Being and Time* that directly support both readings, so "the dispute ultimately turns on which interpretation best makes sense of other crucial notions in Heidegger" (1994, p.204). Ultimately Dreyfus' verdict is inconclusive. He thinks that the reasons for choosing one interpretation rather than another depend on the goals of a particular engagement with the text (1994, pp.428-9).

An alternative interpretation understands *das Man* as a negative element, a deformed sociality that can be overcome (Olafson, 1994a, p.59). This interpretation takes seriously the rhetorical privileging of authenticity over inauthenticity in *Being and Time* and is textually well supported. Statements such as: “Dasein, as everyday Being-with-one-another, stands in *subjection* to Others. It itself *is* not; its Being has been taken away by the Others” express a clear normative stand (BT, p.164; SZ, p.126. See also BT, pp.164-5; SZ, pp.126-7).

If lost Dasein must find itself, then it must have had an original state of unity that was destroyed. Everydayness is seen as negative since it eclipses Dasein’s self. Dasein has a true self that is overcome by *das Man*. Macann makes a similar point when he says that falling could remain an ontological structure only if it was presented as a fall from a primary state in which Dasein was itself. “That into which Dasein falls would then be something *secondary* while that from which it falls would be *primary*” (1992, pp.221-2).

Olafson points out, as others have, that Heidegger “can hardly be said to have done a good job of distinguishing between the innocuous and the objectionable forms of social anonymity” (1994a, p.57). As a remedy he suggests separating two senses of ‘I’: as formally distinct from others and as standing on one’s own. Although we are all by definition formally distinct from other Dasein, standing on our own is an achievement, a result of progress and development, and not something that is granted to all Dasein like formal distinctness.

He next suggests seeing *das Man* as a distorted modality of *Mitsein* that is a transitory stage of socialisation, which can and should be overcome. This reading does not view *das Man* as an essential constituent of Dasein, and therefore it can be overcome (Olafson, 1994a, p.59). But this interpretation clashes with Heidegger’s explicit statement that *das Man* is an existentiale, part of Dasein’s positive constitution (BT, p.167; SZ, p.129).

How can *das Man* be overcome if it is an essential part of Dasein’s structure? This problem seems to point to an ambiguity in the text rather than to any misinterpretation. Heidegger says *das Man* is an existentiale, but at the same time, says that it can be overcome. He further hints at that by calling the ‘I’ a *formal indicator*, “indicating something which may perhaps reveal itself as its ‘opposite’ [...]. In that case the ‘not-I’ is by no means tantamount to an entity which essentially lacks ‘I-hood’, but is rather a definite kind of Being which the ‘I’ itself possesses” (BT, p.152; SZ, p.116).

If Olafson is right that *das Man* can be overcome, at least by some Dasein some of the time, then his suggestion that *das Man* is at bottom a deformation of *Mitsein* seems plausible (1994a, p.59). But Carman (1994) raises the further objection that the two concepts Olafson distinguishes between – the formal individuality and authentic self – are both *ontic* notions.

Olafson fails to see the centrality of the ontological notion of *mineness*, which is more than mere formal distinctness and less than the *ontic*

determinations of authenticity, inauthenticity or indifference (1994, p.217). And since Heidegger says that authenticity is an existentiell modification of *das Man*, he must mean a possibility that is actually available to Dasein but not one Dasein ever likely to realise (Macann, 1992, p.218).

Olafson's response is convincing (1994b). He argues that Carman has not shown that his distinction between skills and social roles is in any way incoherent. Thus joining these two forms of competence requires us to distort Heidegger's view. The gravest error here is taking other Dasein to be ready-to-hand entities. Additionally, if *das Man* were a condition for intelligibility, then authenticity – overcoming *das Man* – would be the state in which this intelligibility is no longer available to authentic Dasein, and this clearly makes no sense.

For these reasons Olafson's view seems more plausible than the robust and positive role Dreyfus and Carman attribute to *das Man*. On their understanding *das Man* is the repository of all practical knowledge of a society, and as such the bearer of intelligibility and culture. Dreyfus and Carman expect the narrow notion of *das Man* to perform a task much heavier than the one Heidegger has designated to it, and moreover erase the negative connotations of levelling and covering over he explicitly attributes to the notion.

But Olafson's reading has its own problems. Firstly, Dasein is inherently social. If sociality is an essential part of Dasein's structure, how can it at the same time be constantly invading and curtailing Dasein's true self? Olafson thinks that Heidegger is thinking of a mode of publicness that "has got altogether out of hand and leaves no room at all for individuality. What is rather strange is that he seems to view such a state of affairs as our common fate as social beings" (1994a, p.57). This leads to a methodological concern: if Heidegger is merely presenting a phenomenological analysis, is he pointing to an essential flaw that is ontologically etched into Dasein's structure? And if *das Man* is an existentiale, how can it be overcome?

Another way of presenting the issue is by pointing out the problem of the priority of *das Man* and Dasein's 'true self'. Heidegger sometimes says that Dasein is first and foremost *das Man* and mostly remains so (BT, pp.167-8; SZ, pp.129-30). Here authenticity is seen as an existentiell modification of *das Man* (BT, p.168; SZ, p.130). In other places he claims the opposite, that the 'I' has a primary status and *das Man* is only one mode of being such an 'I' (BT, p.152; SZ, p.116).

Here the *Man*-self is an existentiell modification of the authentic self (BT, p.365; SZ, p.317). This ambiguity in the text is linked to the broader question of the relationship between authenticity and inauthenticity, so the clarification of the broader point will shed light on the concept of *das Man*. The problems and possible interpretation of the authenticity/inauthenticity distinction is addressed in the next section, but before moving on to it, we need to address the second question about *das Man*.

The Relationship between Das Man and Mitsein

A related confusion stems from an ambiguous attitude towards the social, expressed through the two existentials: *das Man* and *Mitsein*. Both are essential components of Dasein, both structure it; both are constant aspects of its existence. But whereas *Mitsein* is a neutral axis of existence indicating Dasein's capacity for sociality in its most general and abstract form, *das Man* is usually understood as negative since it covers over Dasein's self, suffocating it with the levelled averageness (*Durchschnittlichkeit*) of the 'everyone' (BT, p.69; SZ, p.44).

By positing *Mitsein* as a central existentielle Heidegger emphasises the importance of sociality to Dasein's constitution. Just as we are always born into an already existing world and so are being-in-the-world, we are also always born into a world that already has other Dasein in it, who stand in relation to us, so we are always being-with-others. In the same way that Dasein with no world is meaningless, Dasein with no others is meaningless as well – an implausible theoretical construction lacking the developmental and environmental factors structuring Dasein.³

The Cartesian view of the individual mind as the minimal unit of meaning is, for Heidegger, the fundamental error of modern philosophy, which should be corrected through a phenomenological description of Dasein as structured by existentials that connect it to the world and to other Dasein, and by a projective openness and receptivity towards both world and others.

This leaves us with the question how to situate *das Man* in relation to being-with. On one interpretation (the one favoured by Dreyfus and Carman), the two existentials are neutral, and to some extent overlapping. *Mitsein* expresses Dasein's capacity for sociality, for relating to and communicating with others. *Das Man* articulates the shared norms and conventions that create Dasein's meaningful world. On this neutral reading, there must be some overlap between the two. But why is sociality duplicated in two existentials? This reading faces a further problem, namely, of *das Man* being a catchall term, a problem that was discussed earlier.

On a second interpretation the two existentials have different functions and normative status. Whereas being-with is a general structure of Dasein's sociality, *das Man* signifies subordination to social norms and total assimilation to others' opinions. On this reading we maintain the difference between the two

³ The idea that the human being is non-autarkic is the basis of feminist and psychoanalytic theories, such as Jacques Lacan's and object-relations theories. This view regards the subject as inseparable from the external world (especially the mother) and criticises the 'masculine' concept of a rigid impermeable border between the two (e.g. the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy as male fantasy (Luce Irigaray) or as a defective description of human existence and development (Melanie Klein, DW Winnicot, Lacan).

existenciales, but once again face the tension and need to consolidate the conflicting conceptions of sociality in the text.

Unsurprisingly, it seems that *Being and Time* contains both dimensions of *das Man*: conformism and conformity, and that the two are neither reducible nor identical. There is some indication, though, that *das Man* can be overcome so that the conformist element, at least, may be superseded. But it is also impossible to ignore the negative function of conformism. One way of solving the issue is by noting that the Dreyfus/Carman reading does something different from Olafson's. Whereas Dreyfus and Carman are outlining what Heidegger *should* have said, Olafson presents the most coherent interpretation of what Heidegger in fact *did* say.

An additional point in support of Olafson is that holding on to the conformism/conformity duality has substantial explanatory power when we turn to Heidegger's account of authenticity. If *das Man* is neutral, why should Heidegger consider authenticity to be an achievement? If we lose the conformist dimension of *das Man* we can no longer make sense of the transition to authenticity.

But authenticity is not the simple negation of sociality or of *das Man*. This would go against the Heideggerian picture of Dasein as inherently social. I claim that we need to acknowledge both Dasein's inherent sociality *and* the tension between individual and society. On this view Dasein is inherently conflicted, similarly to Freud's view of the psyche as made of multiple agencies that are continuously at war with each other.

Lawrence Hatab makes a similar point when he says that the tension between authenticity and *das Man* can be understood better if we interpret *das Man* in a less pejorative way as socialization, the ways a person is incorporated into a culture. Authenticity would have to contain the tension between socialization and individuation, "something that would never have to mean an asocial break but rather the particular, creative ways in which individuals cut their path within a social world" (1995, p.413n.). Authenticity would not imply isolated individuation, but would remain essentially being-with.

Finally we should note that the problems that are raised by the analysis presented in Division I are addressed, in part, in Division II. Heidegger's negative appraisal of *das Man* stands in opposition to his admiration for the role of community and destiny in §74 of *Being and Time*, where he presents the possibility of a community of authentic Dasein. The possibility of authentic community stands in opposition to inauthentic sociality, which is criticised throughout Division I, and yet postulated as the central mode of everyday human existence.

As Rudi Visker puts it: "the fact that [ambiguity] is both embedded in Dasein's structure of Being, and that it can and should be overcome is precisely the problem *Being and Time* struggles with" (1996, p.67). The tension between individual Dasein and everyday community (as *das Man*) is understood as incapacitating Dasein throughout Division I, but this relation is radically altered

in Division II and in particular in §74: “Dasein’s fateful destiny in and with its ‘generation’ goes to make up the full authentic historizing of Dasein” (BT, p.436; SZ, p.385).

Being and Time proclaims *das Man* to be the source of Dasein’s inauthentic alienation from itself, and yet posits community as a necessary structural element of Dasein and the condition for its full authenticity. An exploration of the complex notion of authenticity may prove to be helpful to the aporia reached in the interpretation of *das Man* and of Dasein’s sociality.

AUTHENTICITY AND INAUTHENTICITY

The concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity are arguably the most complex and least understood notions in *Being and Time*. Heidegger’s explicit remark that these terms have been chosen “terminologically in a strict sense” has not reduced the prodigious mass of interpretation devoted to these concepts, whose relationship to one another and to mortality has been debated extensively for nearly a century (BT, p.69; SZ, p.43). Most commentators agree that Heidegger’s alleged neutrality “simply does not stand up to a close examination of numerous passages” (Macann, 1992, p.242). Against Heidegger’s claim that he is offering an evaluatively neutral account Macann argues, “The supposedly neutral descriptions are undoubtedly evaluative recommendations and were intended as such” (ibid.).

A major strand of interpretation of these concepts in existentialist philosophy and in perfectionist readings privileges authenticity as the central concept of *Being and Time*.⁴ Other readings point out that everydayness is inauthentic and therefore the majority of Dasein’s life is in effect inauthentic, so the prescriptive tone of *Being and Time* cannot possibly be as thunderous as the former interpretations take it to be. There are also many middle positions. This striking wealth of interpretations is very much rooted in Heidegger’s inconsistent way of expounding the concepts, resulting in a highly unsettled picture of the meaning, function and relationship of authenticity and inauthenticity. This complexity can be attributed, at least in part, to the intricate relationship between authenticity and inauthenticity, and of both to death.

Heidegger defines authenticity and inauthenticity and introduces the third mode of modal indifference (*Indifferenz*) each stemming from ‘mineness’ (*Jemeinigkeit*), which is the ontological condition of these ontic modalities. Mineness belongs to Dasein as the condition for both authenticity and inauthenticity (BT, p.78; SZ, p.53). Authenticity and inauthenticity occupy opposite ends of a polarity, yet both belong to Dasein (Nancy, 1993, p.100; and BT, p.68; SZ, p.43). Both modes are conditioned by a claim to a first person

⁴ See the discussion of bad faith and freedom in Sartre (1956). For the perfectionist reading of *Being and Time* see Mulhall (1996, 2001), as well as Cavell’s comments in Chapter Six of *In Quest of the Ordinary* (1988).

existence, whose relation to the public sphere could be harmonious, oppositional or one of subjection. Both are *positive* and concrete ways of taking up possibilities, and as such are grounded in being-in-the-world.

But these terms are not symmetrical. Inauthenticity is a continuous mode and part of Dasein's ontological structure because of the intimate link between falling (*verfallen*) and fleeing (*fliehen*). Falling is an existentially and the primary mode of Dasein's existence in everydayness. Fleeing, which is not clearly demarcated from falling, is the common inauthentic mode of everydayness. Authenticity, on the other hand, is prompted by the call of conscience and anxiety, and therefore lacking both the continuity and necessity of inauthenticity.

Authenticity and inauthenticity are basic possibilities of Dasein's existence (BT, p.235; SZ, p.191). The transition from one mode to another (always discussed by Heidegger as the transformation from inauthenticity to authenticity, never the other way around) takes place through the call of conscience. This inner call comes by surprise, and cannot be brought about, which is one reason Heidegger cannot have a normative prescriptive position about authenticity. This call can lead Dasein, who chooses either to answer or to ignore it, to authenticity, or leave Dasein in its inauthentic mode. In the mode of indifference the call has neither been taken up nor ignored, but has gone unnoticed or never took place. The call is expressed through reticence, and is contrasted with the loud chatter of the they-self (*das Man-selbst*).

The they-self keeps on saying "I" most loudly and most frequently because at bottom it is not authentically itself [...]. As something that keeps silent, authentic Being-one's-Self is just the sort of thing that does not keep saying "I" (BT, pp.369-70; SZ, pp.322-3).

Both authenticity and inauthenticity can be characterised in several ways and therefore their interpretations differ widely. Some argue that authenticity is ontological and therefore primary, and that inauthenticity is a fall from authentic grace (Stambaugh, 1978). Others claim that inauthenticity must be an original mode, and therefore inauthenticity itself cannot be a modification, whether existential or existentiell, of authenticity (Macann, 1992, p.233). Carman thinks both are ontic states (1994, p.217). Lewis claims that authenticity is impossible (p.35, 2005). And some see authenticity as ontological and fleeing as an ontic modification of it. As a result of the interpretative difficulties of all the positions that attempt to trace a clear delineation between authenticity and inauthenticity, many commentators think that the distinction does not hold at all.

As we know, the relationship to mineness that makes the two modes possible is a relationship to the self, and as such relates not only to Dasein's constitution but also to its self-understanding, and hence to its being-towards-death (BT, p.68, p.369; SZ, p.42, p.322). In the inauthentic mode Dasein is not itself, or rather has a self that has been taken over by *das Man*, covering up its

death (in both the Dreyfus/Blattner sense and as temporal finitude). The existentialist readings of *Being and Time* endorse the notion of a pure authentic self that has been corrupted by *das Man*, and therefore regard authenticity as a liberating achievement.

But as we have also seen, pragmatic interpretations see *das Man* as the agency of social norms, which provides the basis for intelligibility. Without *das Man* there could be no world and no meaning. As Dasein is socially constructed, it needs *das Man* as the condition for communication and sharing a world with others. On this reading, pure authenticity is impossible because of the essential role of *das Man*.

The difficulty of determining the relationship between the two modes comes from the text, in which Heidegger makes two contradictory statements. At the end of §27 of *Being and Time* Heidegger claims that authenticity is a modification of inauthenticity: “Authentic Being-one’s-self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the ‘they’; it is rather an existentiell modification of the ‘they’ – of the ‘they’ as an essential existentielle” (BT, p.168; SZ, p.130).

But in §64 he claims the opposite: “It has been shown that proximally and for the most part Dasein is not itself but is lost in the they-self, which is an existentiell modification of the authentic self” (BT, p.365; SZ, p.317). Each of the above interpretations confronts difficulties of internal consistency as well as being textually selective. I suggest giving up the dichotomous distinction in favour of a continuous view of the two modes.

Blurring the Distinction between Authenticity and Inauthenticity

What is the relationship between authenticity and inauthenticity? Are the two modes clearly distinguishable? Can Dasein have a purely authentic attitude to its death and finitude? The line of interpretation that seems the most fruitful and least fraught is the one that denies the distinction is a clear-cut dichotomy. This view, or more precisely family of views, reacts to the contradictory statements Heidegger makes by reformulating the distinction as blurred and the two states as internally related.

A better interpretation than the oppositional model of authenticity and inauthenticity is one that sees authenticity as immersed in everydayness, and as a state that can only initially arise out of either the undifferentiated mode or inauthenticity. The textual evidence cited above supports the view of the modes as interdependent. These are reasons for rejecting the reading of authenticity as the product of a conscious choice between binary oppositions. Moreover, one cannot actively bring about the call of conscience, and so cannot deliberately trigger the process of becoming authentic, so viewing it as conscious choice is spurious.

Redemption from *das Man* is a condition for authenticity, but as was previously discussed, the function of *das Man* is neither clearly established nor

easily stabilised. *Das Man* controls and stupefies Dasein, but it is also part of Dasein's structure. If we accept both claims we are forced to understand ourselves as structurally flawed. This was the aporia which ended the previous section. But if we no longer understand authenticity and inauthenticity as dichotomous, then the move to authenticity does not entail leaving *das Man*, everydayness or being-with-others. Rather, authenticity becomes the full exposure of the horizon of the everyday, fully retaining Dasein's relationship to other Dasein and to the world. And this includes the everyday structures of intelligibility that seem to depend to some extent on *das Man*.

Authenticity and inauthenticity are not dichotomous or mutually exclusive, but related in a more complicated way. Some regard authenticity as a momentary leap out of inauthenticity, and claim that as such it must reoccur (Visker 1996). Visker criticises Heidegger for promising to provide an authentic everydayness, a promise that cannot succeed. Because he views authenticity as momentary, Visker thinks that in order to have basic continuous existence, we must be inauthentic (1996, p.80). In other words, inauthenticity is a necessary component of existence.

But Visker overlooks two important points. Firstly, authenticity need not be thought of as momentary. Anxiety is momentary but the authenticity that follows is indeed a return to the everyday, to the full thrust of thrown projection and worldly life. Recall the distinction between genuine and non-genuine authenticity. Anxiety is non-genuine authenticity because in it Dasein is not a full participant in its world and projects. In anxiety Dasein is unable to be. Non-genuine authenticity is temporary, an anxiety attack, but the genuine authenticity that may follow is a continuous mode of existence located in the only place we have: in the everyday world.

Secondly, authenticity does not arise solely from inauthenticity but may also arise out of indifference, in which case its relationship to inauthenticity remains unclear. It is easy to conflate inauthenticity with the average undifferentiated mode, but the two are not the same (BT, p.69; SZ, p.44, BT, p.78; SZ, p.53). The undifferentiated mode is average everydayness, prior to the call of conscience. After the call, the response could lead to either authenticity or inauthenticity. But Dasein could also remain undifferentiated. This is another reason to reject the dichotomous view of the two modes.

Another reason that should lead us to give a central place to both inauthenticity and indifference is that the transition to authenticity is individual. While one Dasein becomes authentic, everydayness and *das Man* remain as they were. But does that mean that the everyday must be hermetically sealed by *das Man*? According to Visker, the answer is yes. If we remain in the everyday we remain forgetful, hence the everyday is completely owned by *das Man* and there is no possibility of genuine authenticity which is immersed in the everyday world.

Against this view I suggest that rather than resigning the everyday to inauthenticity we should dismantle the ideal of pure authenticity by regarding

inauthenticity and indifference as necessary components of existence. This position allows the everyday to have a significant disclosive function because it allows Dasein to be authentic as a continuous way of being-in-the-world.

Intelligibility is given in the world, in everyday existence. There is no primordial basis from which Dasein is thrown into existence, but rather thrownness itself is the basis. Falling is not a descent from authentic existence to an inferior state, but a ground in itself (BT, p.68; SZ, p.43 and cf. Nancy, 1993, p.99). Dasein's possibilities are disclosed through everydayness and averageness and do not exist beyond it. Therefore inauthentic everydayness is the source of intelligibility and ontological disclosure. Moreover, it is our only starting point; everydayness as thrownness is the ground of all possibilities.

This position sees authenticity and inauthenticity as equally primordial: both are ontic modalities of indifference. From this we can construct a new understanding of the two states. The dichotomy dissolves, and the two modes of existence are seen as mutually dependent. This releases *Being and Time* from the contradictory nature of the authenticity/inauthenticity distinction understood as a dichotomy, thereby opening everydayness to its disclosive capacity and allowing Dasein the freedom of exploration outside the confines of anxiety.

This view solves a further problem, raised by Dreyfus (1991) in the appendix to his commentary on *Being and Time*. Dreyfus distinguishes two accounts of falling. One account sees falling as absorption in equipment and conforming to *das Man*. Levelling goes along with practical intelligibility. The second account is of Dasein actively resisting the call of conscience. Here levelling is not structural (falling) but a motivated form of covering up (fleeing). Dreyfus argues that this makes inauthenticity both inevitable and incomprehensible (1991, p.333f.). It is inevitable because absorption is inevitable. It is incomprehensible because authenticity is so rewarding, that once discovered, why would Dasein return to inauthenticity? Why is maintaining resoluteness difficult? Dreyfus concludes that Heidegger never addresses these questions, and takes the fact that Heidegger drops all talk of fleeing in *Basic Problems* and thereafter as indicating that he recognised the problem.

If we view the everyday as undifferentiated rather than inauthentic, inauthenticity would cease to be inevitable. It is true that indifference cannot continue indefinitely, because Dasein would eventually have to face the call, or be in a situation that demands it to respond to it either authentically or inauthentically. But this view does respond to the first of Dreyfus' criticisms, because inauthenticity no longer has to be seen as inevitable.

As for the second criticism, that inauthenticity is incomprehensible once authenticity is achieved, we find a compelling reply in Carman. He argues that, resoluteness is not a stable, self-sufficient mode of existence, but a perpetual struggle against the levelling and banalising forces of idle-talk, ambiguity and curiosity. "Authentic existence is thus constituted by the very forces against which it has to push in its effort to grasp itself in its facticity" (2000, p.24). Without the forces of levelling and tranquillising, authenticity

would be meaningless. It is only meaningful as a position *against* something, a position of resistance and refusal. Therefore the danger of inauthenticity is perpetually there.

Dreyfus' further question, why is it difficult to maintain authentic resoluteness, is answered by looking carefully at the language with which authenticity and resoluteness are described. The choice of authenticity is not a choice at all, but a gestalt switch or transformation that comes from Dasein's accepting its powerlessness (Dreyfus, 1991). It is a new form of self-understanding and formal view of the world, not a specific reply to a moral deliberation. Authenticity is not expressed in the specific contents of Dasein's choices, but in the expansion of its ability to view itself and its world and to respond to this new perspicuity. Authenticity is a new openness or ability to view oneself as a whole; it is a structural shift.

This interpretation is further supported by looking at the German term *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness). As both Dreyfus and Albert Hofstadter point out, *Entschlossenheit* means determination or resolve, but *Ent-schlossenheit* means un-closedness, openness. It is not so much an expression of Dasein's will or choice, as openness or letting be. Heidegger says in *Introduction to Metaphysics*: "To will is to be resolute. The essence of willing is traced back here to open resoluteness. But the essence of open resoluteness <*Entschlossenheit*> lies in the de-concealment <*Ent-borgenheit*> of human Dasein for the clearing of Being and by no means in an accumulation of energy for 'activity'. But the relation to Being is letting" (2000, 22-3; GA 40:23). In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger writes, "The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of a subject, but the opening up of human being, out of its captivity in that which is, to the openness of Being" (1971, p.67; GA 5:55).

Falling and fleeing are therefore intertwined. Inauthenticity is the constant temptation of fleeing that is part of everydayness and is present as a threat even in authenticity. Structural falling is an ordinary starting point and not a fall from authenticity to inauthenticity. As a result, inauthenticity assumes a grounding function as a continuous possibility against which authenticity is defined, and everydayness has a central disclosive role.⁵

Lawrence Vogel makes the same point, saying that possibilities do not come from nowhere but are handed down to Dasein from the factual world to which it belongs. *Das Man* "does not arise from external circumstances but from the heart of Dasein's existence" (1994, p.12). This integrative interpretation is

⁵ Abraham Mansbach supports this interpretation: "total authentic existence cannot be achieved, for the 'they' is an original constituent element of factual Dasein [...] [Inauthenticity] belongs to Dasein's essential nature, it is a mode of being-a-self" (1991, p.81). See also Einar Øverenget: "[Authenticity] does not appear prior to and independently of our dealings with the world" (1998, p.259).

more faithful to the text, and gives a better description of human existence as containing conflicting elements.

A further misunderstanding lies in the assumption that authenticity requires isolation, or that it clashes with *Mitsein*. This identifies inauthenticity with *Mitsein* and authenticity with solitude. But both dichotomies are untenable because authenticity does not entail solitude. It is true that when faced authentically death individuates Dasein and anxiety cuts it off from its world. But this is only the first step, that of non-genuine authenticity. Genuine authenticity is inherently linked to *Mitsein*.

Resoluteness, as authentic Being-one's-self, does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free-floating "I". And how should it, when resoluteness as authentic disclosedness, is authentically nothing else than Being-in-the-world? Resoluteness brings the Self right into its current concerned Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into solicitous Being with Others (BT, p.344; SZ, p.298).

Heidegger does not regard authenticity as isolated detachment from the world. In opposition to the moment of anxiety in facing one's own death, resolute existence contains both being-alongside and being-with. Therefore resoluteness contains a high level of communal commitment and involvement with other Dasein. Carman argues in support that authenticity does not mean consisting entirely of first person perspective. Not any and all overlapping of first and third person perspectives necessarily amounts to a loss of self and alienation (2005, p.287). The ability to perceive oneself through second and third person perspectives is an important part of being-with. So authenticity cannot merely mean being wholly oneself as simply removing all other points of view from a person's self understanding.

Joan Stambaugh claims that the ambiguity in the relationship of authenticity and inauthenticity stems from the relation between phenomenology and fundamental ontology. In phenomenological terms inauthenticity is predominant, because it is the constant state of existence for most Dasein most of the time. Authenticity is the result of a transformation from inauthenticity and therefore secondary to it. But in the terminology of fundamental ontology authenticity is more primordial, and therefore predominant. And because fundamental ontology has to do with the ground of Dasein's being it is more primordial than phenomenology. So in this sense "it is ultimately authentic *Dasein* which can lead us to an insight into the meaning of Being" (1978, p.159).

Stambaugh concludes that authenticity is the fundamental level of *Dasein* and inauthenticity is a flight from authenticity, however prevalent inauthenticity might be (1978, p.160). But by adopting this position she is repeating the problem underlying Heidegger's analysis of the two modes. If inauthenticity is inferior to authenticity (a claim Heidegger refuses to make; and

in this Stambaugh distorts Heidegger's explicit intention) that means that most people are 'wrong' or misled about their lives most of the time. How could this be a phenomenological claim? Stambaugh does not address this issue, but claims that inauthentic Dasein is somehow living inappropriately and untruthfully, a claim that is hard to accept from within a phenomenological framework.

Another misunderstanding contributing to the dichotomous view is regarding the authenticity/inauthenticity distinction as two choices or possibilities. Authenticity is not a content or response, but a formal transformation of Dasein's understanding, which is active and practical (BT, p.186; SZ, p.146). This view is illustrated by Richard McDonough, who reformulates the distinction through Aristotle's matter/form distinction. He views inauthenticity as matter (potentiality) and authenticity as form (actuality). As such the two complement each other and account for the dynamic transformation from inauthenticity to authenticity in teleological terms (1998, p.69).⁶

We established that we should distinguish three modes: authenticity, inauthenticity and undifferentiatedness. This third mode of indifference is neutral and characterises average everydayness. As such it serves as the starting point of the phenomenological analysis (BT, p.69; SZ, p.43). An integrative model connects the modes instead of positing a hierarchy in which authenticity is preferred. This integrative understanding is more comprehensive and views reality as containing conflicting elements. Freud's notion of the subject as containing opposing forces acting against each other and yet maintaining the structure of an integrative whole is a useful way of understanding how the tension between the two modes can exist together with their complementarity and mutual dependence.

Finally, the relationship between falling, everydayness and inauthenticity has to be reviewed. Many interpretations identify the three as different facets of the same mode. But this creates incoherence in Heidegger's notion of inauthenticity, and overlooks the distinction between falling and fleeing. Moreover, if falling, which is an ontological existentials, is identified with inauthenticity, then Dasein is *essentially* inauthentic. But this cannot be right, because Heidegger defines inauthenticity (along with authenticity and indifference) as *ontic-existential*.⁷

⁶ Frank Schalow expresses a similar view. "The analyses of inauthenticity and authenticity prove complementary because the dissimulation found in the former can only be activated within the 'open expanse' distinguishing the latter, while the factual dominance implied in concealment really presupposes unconcealment" (1992, p.229).

⁷ Macann argues that without an original concept of being one's self the entire project is vitiated from the outset. In order to posit such an original being one's self we must provide what he calls a *progressive* analysis of fallenness into the they from some pre-ontological neutral state (1992, p.243). So the starting point is not ontic, but pre-ontological and the endpoint is, again, not ontic, but ontological.

An additional confusion arises from Heidegger's conflicting formulations about falling and fleeing. He sometimes says that falling creates a tendency to flee, and in other places claims that Dasein's anxious fleeing in the face of itself is what generates falling (BT, p.221, SZ, p.177; BT, p. 230, SZ, p.186 and cf. Carman, 2000, p.15f.). On the second account, Dasein would indeed be doomed to exist inauthentically, because it would be persistently fleeing. Moreover, fleeing cannot ground falling, because it is an ontic existentiell possibility, whereas falling is ontological existentielle.

On the other hand, falling, much like inauthenticity, is sometimes described as neutral and sometimes as negative. In certain places in *Being and Time* falling is presented as the neutral temporal mode of the present; in others it is an *aggravated* movement away from authenticity, an *alienating* downward plunge (*Absturz*) characterised by turbulence (*Wirbel*) (BT pp.222-3; SZ, p.178). Carman resolves the ambiguity in Heidegger's account of falling by claiming that it is neither authentic nor inauthentic, but undifferentiated (Carman, 2000, p.24). Indifference is the state in which neither authenticity nor inauthenticity has been chosen, so on this account falling is indeed a neutral state.

It has by now become clear that the account of everydayness as a deficient mode of existence, governed by *das Man* and falling is only a partial account. Everydayness is also a source of meaning and intelligibility. This interpretation is supported by the distinction between absorption in the world (everydayness) and fallenness in *das Man*. But notably, the two phenomena are on occasion conflated and interchangeably used by Heidegger.

This interchangeable use of the terms is based on a further identification of absorption in the world with being-alongside the world, as for example in the expression 'absorption alongside' (BT, p.220; SZ, p.175). Theunissen notes that in most places Heidegger uses the concepts 'everyday' and 'inauthentic' as meaning the same, "so it is *its* [Being-in-the-world] equation with *absorption in the 'world'* that is the real ground of the confusion of inauthenticity with everydayness" (1984, pp.193-6).

We are now in a position to distinguish the neutral and essentially temporal notion of falling (as present) from the negative notions of inauthenticity and fleeing, and from the further notion of everydayness. Falling must be seen as essentially temporal and therefore as part of Dasein's ontological structure. Inauthenticity or fleeing is ontic-existentiell, and therefore not essential, even if it is a common state.

And finally, everydayness is the locus of the phenomenological description of Dasein. As such it must contain both the authentic and inauthentic dimensions. It must allow for inauthenticity as well as being the sole source of intelligibility available to Dasein. The resulting position is one that sees everydayness as giving meaning to Dasein's world, as the only place for Dasein to *be*.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEATH ANALYSIS

Heidegger presents authenticity and inauthenticity as two possible attitudes towards death (both in the Dreyfus/Blattner sense and as temporal finitude). Authenticity is a relationship of struggle and conflict with death and finitude, while inauthenticity covers over mortality and the possibility of anxiety. Inauthenticity offers some psychological comfort at an epistemic price: it covers over the truth of our groundlessness and mortality in a life of forgetful existence. Resolutely facing death is the condition of authenticity. The difference between anxiety and fear discussed earlier demonstrates the difference between the two modes. Fear is anxiety as fallen into the world, inauthentic and directed at a particular entity. Anxiety is authentic and does not have an object (BT, p.234; SZ, p.189).

How does the integrated reading of authenticity and inauthenticity affect our understanding of death (in both senses)? Firstly, the emphasis on authenticity as individuation, as retreating from the world and severing the relations to it, is overturned. According to the view constructed in this chapter, authenticity is a more genuine engagement with the everyday world, not its erasure. Therefore individuation is no longer a crucial factor for death and authenticity. Looking firstly at death as anxiety or being unable to be anything: the momentary anxiety attack is individuated and is therefore *non-genuine* authenticity. But what follows, *genuine* authenticity, is an authentic form of being-with and full participation in the world.

Death as temporal finitude or mortality, on the other hand, does not seem to require a complete breakdown of Dasein's relations. Against Heidegger's emphasis on my own death as the only way to understand mortality, I argue that other experiences of grief and mourning for others can also intimate mortality. This opens the way for an authentic attitude to the death of others, the reconstruction of which I present in the next part.

Secondly, the emphasis on resoluteness as solicitude and on the idea of a community of authentic Dasein becomes more tenable on the less solitary reading of authenticity. The fabric of everydayness can underpin a sustained social existence, which enables us to link authenticity and *Mitsein*. This idea also supports the idea that the death of another is a disclosive experience and as a lesson of mortality.

Thirdly, anxiety loses its exclusive role as the only affective state leading to authenticity. This opens the way to other, more relational moods, such as love, to be routes to authenticity. Heidegger hints at this in saying that even in authenticity itself, sober anxiety is accompanied by unshakable joy (BT, p.358; SZ, p.310). This points to the tense affinity between the sober anxiety of authenticity and the feeling of joy; as I show, other moods can allow authentic disclosure as well. This reading rejects the emphasis Heidegger places on individuation and offers a relational view of Dasein and authenticity.

SUMMARY OF PART II

This part presented Heidegger's concept of death and its relationship to authenticity, *Mitsein* and temporality. The idea that death is intertwined with existence and not an external event closed off to existence was illustrated through being-towards-death, an existentially structuring Dasein. I discussed different interpretations of Heidegger's concept of death, and presented the Blattner/Dreyfus view of death as being unable to be anything. I argued that this interpretation lacks a dimension of temporal finitude, which I then supplied. I used the augmented interpretation to respond to criticisms of Heidegger's concept of death.

I then examined the relationship between *Mitsein* and *das Man*. The question whether *Mitsein* is a neutral existentially and *das Man* is its distortion, or whether *das Man* can be viewed as neutral as well, was addressed and different interpretative strategies examined. I concluded by pointing out that the tension between the two readings could not be resolved without addressing the broader issue of the authenticity/inauthenticity distinction. I showed that regarding the distinction as a rigid dichotomy is untenable and that the two concepts are complementary. Finally, I argued for a more relational understanding of death, by moving from viewing individuation as the condition of authenticity, to a view of authenticity and being-with as intertwined.

PART III

Encounters between Freud and Heidegger

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Death Structuring Existence

This part examines how Freud and Heidegger coincide and differ in their conceptualisation of death's presence in life and suggests points of contact through which a unified view may be constructed. The overall aim of this part is to synthesise the Freudian view of death with the Heideggerian one, in order to achieve two goals. The first is to create a picture of the relationship between life and death as linked. Through a series of five encounters, I show how this view overcomes the individual deficiencies of each thinker's position, using the strengths of each to augment the other's view.

The second aim is to create dialogue between philosophical and psychoanalytic concepts of death. This aim is worked out in detail in each encounter, where a comparative analysis of common terms, such as repetition and moods, demonstrates the differences and similarities, strengths and weaknesses of each discipline, thereby enacting this dialogue in a concrete way.

The first encounter illustrates the main claim of the book, that death is central to the understanding of existence. The second encounter explores the ethical implications ensuing from Heidegger and Freud's accounts of death. The third encounter continues the ethical focus, arguing that there can be an authentic relationship to the death of another. The fourth encounter uses the conclusion reached in the third to argue that if an authentic relationship to the death of another is possible, then the focus on anxiety is unjustified and other moods may also lead to authenticity. The fifth and final encounter examines the relationship between the unconscious and death, and explores the analogy between Freudian repression and Heideggerian covering up. Introducing an unconscious element into Dasein creates an affinity between it and the Freudian subject, which serves to further support the unified view.

DEATH IS CENTRAL TO UNDERSTANDING EXISTENCE

For both Heidegger and Freud death is a central concept actively shaping life processes. Both thinkers give death a central place in existence and emphasise its continuous relevance to life. Furthermore, both see death as a constitutive element of existence. Being-towards-death structures Dasein as temporally finite, and as such determines Dasein's understanding and action. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* Heidegger writes: "As a mode of Being, existence is in itself finitude [...] *More original than man is the finitude of Dasein in him*" (1990, p.156; GA 3:228). Similarly, the death drive regulates psychic dynamics,

produces aggression and is an umbrella term for a large group of drives. These psychic dynamics are not fully reconcilable with each other, as has been previously discussed, but nonetheless manifest the death drive and the way it operates within life.

Neither thinker posits death within a dualistic mind/body scheme, rejecting the distinction. Freud rejects it by defining the drives as psychophysical energy; Heidegger rejects it by constructing being-in-the-world as a holistic account of Dasein (cf. Dallmayr, 1995, p.548). Death is a part of existence not just as a factual event, but also as a limitation that must be acknowledged by finite self-aware beings. Because Heidegger and Freud reject the mind/body distinction and regard humans as embodied and holistic, both give death a central place in their theories. Death on their view has far more significance than it would have in a physicalist account, in which it would simply be the endpoint of life and have no influence within life.

Both approaches regard death as a metaphysical force rather than a material event. Heidegger explicitly rejects the ordinary understanding of death as the event that ends life (which he calls demise). On both accounts death must be understood as a defining limitation generating metaphysical constraints on life. This is clear in Freud's formulation of the death drive as both an internal physiological drive and as a metaphysical force. His quasi-mythical account in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and his reliance on Aristophanes' myth quoted in Plato's *Symposium* illustrate this point (SE 18:57-8; FS 3:266). Heidegger, too, sees death as ontological, fundamentally structuring Dasein's existence.

Heidegger and Freud both emphasise the difference between the physiological dimension of death and the reflexive awareness of it, which provides its continuous presence in life. Heidegger is emphatically not interested in physiological demise but in Dasein's temporal finitude. Freud argues that death is barred from the unconscious and focuses instead on the death drive. The view of death as a factual hermeneutic horizon is central for both. This hermeneutic horizon depends on the human capacity to understand the 'as-structure' of death, or in other words, depends on the ability to have a meaningful human world, in which there are no brute facts but interpretation. As Heidegger writes in *The Thing (Das Ding)*: "Mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death" (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.178; GA 7:180).

This metaphysical understanding of death sees death as constituting and regulating life processes and structuring self-understanding. It rejects a dualistic model of life and death that sees them as opposed forces locked in struggle, the model Freud tried to defend. It is important to reject the dualistic model explicitly because it presents the spurious view of Eros and Thanatos as having equal standing. The unified view, on the other hand, posits death as a primary force in life. This is another dimension of the centrality of death developed here.

One could argue that the death drive is contained in every psyche, whereas authentic being-towards-death is only achieved by few. Heidegger

emphasises ‘the few’ as those capable of authenticity and thinking, but this does not contradict the fact that every Dasein necessarily has some kind of attitude towards its death.¹ Although authentic being-towards-death may only be attained by few, all Dasein must have some sort of attitude towards their death. The asymmetry between being-towards-death and the death drive is only real if we see being-towards-death as a product of authenticity. A more correct way of thinking about being-towards-death is as a general neutral existentials that could be assumed authentically or inauthentically. This further differentiation into authenticity and inauthenticity is ontic, and therefore inessential.

DEATH’S PRESENCE IN LIFE

In *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* Freud states that the death drive does not appear only in pathological cases but takes part in normal life patterns:

In studying the phenomena which testify to the activity of the destructive drive, we are not confined to observations on pathological material. Numerous facts of normal mental life call for an explanation of this kind, and the sharper our eye grows, the more copiously they strike us (SE 23:243; GW 16:89).

Freud assumes that the death drive, like all other drives, is an integral part of the psyche, and should not be viewed as a pathological disposition. Despite earlier difficulties in maintaining the dualistic model, Freud stresses again in this late text, written in 1937, the explanatory power of the two-drive model as offering an account of the human tendency towards inner conflict (SE 23:244; GW 16:90). He claims that only this view can account for the wealth of psychological and behavioural phenomena in human life: “Only by the concurrent or mutually opposing action of the two primal drives – Eros and the death drive – never by one or the other alone, can we explain the rich multiplicity of the phenomena of life” (SE 23:243; GW 16:89).

Rather than reading this as yet another defence of the dualistic model, I interpret Freud’s insistence as a return to the problem that gave rise to the death drive hypothesis in the first instance. What place should we give death in our life? How should the relationship between the two be perceived? Like Heidegger, Freud rejects the conception of death as simply the negation of life. And like Heidegger Freud is looking for a metaphysical, rather than merely psychological account.

¹ In *Contributions to Philosophy* Heidegger writes of the few and the rare who can go beyond the history of metaphysics to the ‘other beginning’: “For the rare who bring along the utmost courage for solitude in order to think the nobility of being and to speak of its uniqueness” (1999, p.9; GA 65, p.11).

Freud introduces death in the form of the death drive into psychic dynamics in order to go beyond a mechanistic explanation of psychological processes to a total metaphysics of life and death. This metaphysical view does not regard death as the final stage of organic life, but sees it as a meta-principle constituting and influencing life processes. On this view, life and death drives are not conflictual forces, but the death drive is an organising principle and ethical imperative. As such it structures the psyche, rather than being its pathological distortion.

The urge to return to an inorganic state (to die) and the drive to return to an earlier state (the conservative drive) appear in both Eros and Thanatos as two types of repetition. Viewed as repetition, death is not a simple opposition or negation of life, but a fundamental element that constitutes life's regularity (Deleuze, 1994, p.112). On this view, the death drive regulates repetition, which in turn forms the basic patterns of life. Eros manifests itself through repetition while the death drive is what gives Eros its repetition. This breaks down even further the pseudo-symmetry between Eros and Thanatos that stands at the basis of Freud's dualistic model, and gives the death drive a regulative function.

Although I agree with Deleuze that the dualistic model of the drives is untenable for the reasons presented in Part One, it nonetheless seems that Freud does not formulate the death drive as a transcendent force operating outside life, as Deleuze thinks. Rather, the death drive is an internal, immanent force, and as such belongs to life and is a part of it. On the other hand, this does not entail falling back into the dualistic model. There is a source of disintegration and destruction in the psyche itself, and although this force is mixed with Eros, it is not symmetrical to it.

Deleuze also criticises Freud for his one-dimensional conception of death thought only as a drive, and his refusal to give it a place within the unconscious or make it a prototype. Deleuze aims to normalise the death drive as structuring the psyche, giving death an even more central position within life and psychic organisation. Laplanche takes a similar position by regarding death as the most extreme organising principle of the logic of the unconscious. "Absent from every unconscious, death is perhaps rediscovered in the unconscious as the most radical – but also most sterile – principle of its logic" (1976, p.126).

Deleuze and Laplanche's view emphasises death as central to the functioning of life, and show that it is not pathological but a normal part of the psyche. Freud acknowledges this when he writes: "Some portion of the death drive, however, remains operative within the organism, and we have sought to trace quite a number of normal and pathological phenomena to this internalization of the destructive drive" (SE 22:211; FS 9:282).

If the death drive is not pathological, then it operates in both those categorised 'sick' and 'healthy', calling the distinction itself into question. Regarding the death drive as a non-pathological general force shows the extent to which Freud's formulations blur the distinction between normality and

pathology. When does a manifestation of the death drive become pathological and to what extent is it healthy? As the quotations from *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* show, normality for Freud is a fiction, and mental disorders are a matter of degree. All egos are locked in a battle with ever-threatening id and conflict is the normal condition of the multi-agencied psyche:

But a normal ego of this sort is, like normality in general, an ideal fiction. The abnormal ego, which is unserviceable for our purposes, is unfortunately no fiction. Every normal person is, in fact, only normal on an average. His ego approximates to that of the psychotic in some part or other and to a greater or lesser extent (SE 23:235; GW 16:80).

The strength of Freud's position comes from the fact that it describes general psychic processes and structures, not a specific mental disturbance. The Freudian model of the drives is a general theory of motivation, applying to both those classified as healthy and those labelled mentally ill.

Having established the role of the death drive, we are now led to the question of how to deal with it. Should we try to repress or control the death drive? Should we try to cure ourselves from it? Given the previous discussion about normality, it seems that the answer is no. Firstly, on Freud's account of drives as having a somatic source, it is as implausible as trying to rid oneself of a bodily need. In the same way that hunger, for example, is part of a repetitive cycle of demand and satisfaction and its appearance is not a manifestation of any pathology, the death drive is part of psychosomatic organisation and function, and as such is a neutral phenomenon, not a criterion of illness.

Even if we reject Freud's notion of a drive, as the conclusion of Part One suggested, we are still left with aggression as a fundamental force, which cannot be completely gotten rid of. The question that arises from the Freudian account is how we should best control aggression, not whether we should rid ourselves of it.

Secondly, the death drive has diverse manifestations. Destruction and aggression can take on different forms of expression, from sublimation into a work of art to a world war. Acknowledging the existence of the death drive does not entail an automatic affirmation of all such expressions. We need to examine carefully the different expressions of the death drive in view of their ethical implications.

For Heidegger as well, death both in the Blattner/Dreyfus sense and death as temporal finitude is not pathological. It is an ontological condition of Dasein's existence. It structures Dasein as temporally finite and limited by its thrownness. Mortality is a condition of Dasein, whatever its attitude towards it might be, and finitude is written into any projection as its background limitation. Within the differing attitudes towards death, the need to respond to its presence in life remains a constant demand. All responses to finitude address mortality; they all engage with death, whether by covering up or through an authentic

encounter with it. All of these responses are specific responses to a general condition of mortality and finiteness.

Furthermore, labelling behaviour or an attitude as 'pathological' is a normative classification and as such is alien to Heidegger's phenomenological project, a comprehensive account of human life and world. Within this account, the fact that finitude determines the horizon of existence is a general feature of human life. As such it is neutral and moreover a necessary condition of human existence.

Finally, being-towards-death is an existentiale, and as such belongs to Dasein's structure. It is not authentically assumed by every Dasein, but is part of every Dasein's structure. It belongs to each and every Dasein, regardless of the specific way in which they assume it. To conclude, on both Heidegger and Freud's account death is a general structure and force within life, whose existence is a given fact, not an abnormality that needs to be explained.

REPETITION

The death drive was first brought to Freud's attention by the appearance of repetition, and more specifically, the compulsion to repeat unpleasurable experiences, memories and dreams. Freud describes repetition as a manifestation of the death drive, which is otherwise invisible and traceless (Hertz, 1985, p.101). But repetition also characterises drives in general (1973, p.107). It explains the conservative nature of all drives as well as the cyclical structure characterising life on both a physiological and a psychological level. Laplanche and Pontalis regard repetition as an entropic force, which pushes human psychic organisation towards regression and decreases the level of psychic order (1973, p.107). The Nirvana principle pushes towards an abolition of all tension, until it becomes part of the death drive. Repetition posits the reduction of activity as a regulative ideal, and death is its fulfilment.

Freud treats the compulsion to repeat as an autonomous factor, which cannot be reduced to the conflictual dynamic between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. So "in the final analysis, [repetition] is seen as the expression of the most general character of the drives, namely, their conservatism" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.78).

Eros and Thanatos contain two distinct types of repetition. While the repetition of Eros produces order on all levels as a unifying force, the repetition of the death drive is entropic. We can accordingly distinguish formal repetition (serving Eros), which is repetition in form but order in content, from entropic repetition (serving Thanatos), which is not only formal but also regressive content. I call the formal pattern of repetition *repeating*, and reserve the term *repetition* for conservative stagnant entropy. *Repeating* is the basic pattern of all drives. Drives are cyclical so we can only hope for temporary relief from need, never a final and complete satisfaction. *Repetition* is the fundamental manifestation of the death drive.

Conservatism and the urge to return to an inorganic state are the main characteristics of repetition, which connect it to the death drive. Repeating is conservatism (maintaining the status quo) and repetition is reactionary movement (the urge to return to an earlier state). But this distinction is blurred in Freud's writing. *Repeating* is the urge to resist change, or in other words, the tendency towards 'more of the same'.

Accordingly, change is strictly a result of external pressure, such as a change in the environment that requires the organism to react to it, rather than an event instigated internally. *Repetition* can be best described as the radicalisation of conservatism, or the wish to return to absolute peacefulness. In this case repetition is so extreme and radicalised that it becomes a termination of psychic and organic life. Repeating is ubiquitous in mental and physiological processes. But repetition is a *termination of the repetitive cycle itself*, and as such it is a self-destructive process.

Repeating is akin to Heidegger's notion of handing down (*Überlieferung*), because it involves conservation rather than annihilation. But for Freud repetition is an automatic or compulsive act; it is unconsciously doing what one cannot help but do. Because it is unconscious we do not notice when and what we repeat, but under analytic conditions the therapeutic process exposes the repetitive pattern.

Whereas Freud sees *forgetting* as the condition of repetition, Heidegger focuses on conscious repetition. He defines repetition as authentic *being-as-having-been*, while breaking away from the past is an act of forgetting and as such is inauthentic (BT, p.388; SZ, p.339). For Heidegger repetition is an explicit positive mode of reliving a past, repetition as meaningful disclosure (BT, p.437; SZ, p.385). It is a full realisation of the historical and social heritage passed down to the present (BT, pp.446-447; SZ, p.395).

Freudian repetition requires repression, while Heideggerian repetition is conscious and intentional. Freudian repetition is what Heidegger calls forgetting, a blind repeating of an unknown original experience. Heidegger's conception lacks the compulsive nature of repetition as an acting-out of a pre-written unconscious script. Heidegger's repetition cannot explain what Freud is trying to account for: compulsive repetition of unpleasurable situations contradicting the pleasure principle. Heidegger's repetition is positive: seizing productive, desirable patterns or contents. Whereas Freud's repetition is negative, so "Man hands on misery to man, It deepens like a coastal shelf" (Phillip Larkin, 1988, p.180).

The difference between Freud's view of repetition as repressed and Heidegger's view of repetition as intentional arises, in part, from their different understanding of the relation of repetition to temporality and history. Both thinkers stress the link between repetition and temporality. Heidegger describes repetition as an authentic relation to history and heritage, a relation that ultimately takes place on a group level, between a generation and its past. History in the psychoanalytic sense is very different. It is the personal narrative

of the analysand, which is subjective and private, and in this sense independent of objective constraints. The psychoanalytic account of history is committed to a subjective stance because the basic unit of analysis is the individual.

Although the relation between psychoanalysis and the social sphere has been widely explored, the focal point of analysis remains the individual, even if she is understood within the context of a family or social group.² Because the aim of psychoanalysis is the individual, history is relevant only in so far as it advances the therapeutic effort. As such psychoanalysis is to a large extent an ahistorical discipline, which is by and large uninterested in socio-historical and political circumstances, and was therefore also blind, at least initially, to the specificity of psychoanalysis as a context-borne practice.

In temporal terms, Freud stresses the dialectic play of past events (in the analysand's personal history) and their present recollection through analysis. The recollection, which is always also a re-articulation, changes the function of the repressed contents and thus brings about a change in future conduct through the present retelling of the past. The dialectic process involves the re-writing (in itself the product of a re-telling that requires a witness) of the past, which changes as it is recollected and told, and retroactively reconstitutes the meaning of a past event. This past event, in turn, modifies the present psychic condition. This analytic dialectic is akin to Heidegger's ecstatic temporality and authentic repetition, through which Dasein connects its future with a historical past that also constitutes Dasein as it is in the present.

The difference between the two conceptions lies in the place given to repetition: while Freud grounds his general model of therapeutic action in repetition, Heidegger's understanding of repetition is much more specific, as can be seen in his notion of handing-down. Freud's repetition is grounded in physiological cycles (hunger and sleep, for example), and it connects psyche with soma through the repetitive nature of the drives. Thus repetition goes far beyond a symptomatic pathology, and becomes a general principle governing human life.

Despite the positive meaning Heidegger gives repetition, he also links it with anxiety. He claims that anxiety brings Dasein back to its thrownness as repetition (BT, p.394; SZ, p.343). He describes the structure of anxiety as 'bringing-back' (*Zurückbringen*), which is neutral: bringing-back is not characterised by forgetting or by remembering. Bringing-back can be followed either by authentic repetition or inauthentic forgetting. Anxiety reveals the *possibility* of an ability to be authentic "which must, in repeating, come back to its thrown 'there'" (ibid.). As such, anxiety is the source of potential authenticity, which can appear as repetition.

² Frantz Fanon's (1982) *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Herbert Marcuse's (1966) *Eros and Civilisation* are two notable examples of applying psychoanalysis to a social level, as are, of course, Freud's writings on civilisation and society.

Anxiety can be considered the catalyst of a reaction that extends beyond the emotional level of individual experience. Heidegger states that the character of having-been constitutes anxiety, because having-been (temporally manifested as the past) is what enables us to have a *Befindlichkeit* (affectedness) at all, or, in a more general formulation, because moods are only possible on the basis of temporality (BT, p.390-1; SZ, p.340-1).

Heidegger links moods to a more specific temporality, claiming that moods bring us *back* to something, as they are related to the temporal mode of the *past* (BT, p.391; SZ, p.341). Whereas fear is connected to forgetting and bewilderment (expressed also through the passivity of awaiting and the temporal mode of the present), anxiety enables the clear sight of the totality of Dasein's world. Repetition and anxiety are tied together through the temporal mode of the past.

But anxiety is different from other moods. Whereas fear is characterised as a forgetting that awaits and makes present (BT, p.392; SZ, p.342), anxiety brings Dasein back to its thrownness in explicit repeating. Thus anxiety reveals the possibility of an authentic ability-to-be. This ability must come back to its thrown 'there' (its past), as something *futural* (BT, p.394; SZ, p.343). Anxiety connects the past with the future – not in passive awaiting but through active seizing of the present (BT, p.394; SZ, p.344). Although anxiety is not the moment (*Augenblick*), it is what holds the moment of vision "*at the ready*".

Freud too links anxiety and repetition. He creates the link through repression, which is ultimately the causal source of both processes.³ The compulsion to repeat distressing situations is one of the sources of anxiety. For Freud anxiety is the product of the return of the repressed. When repressed material threatens to resurface, anxiety follows. But the tendency to reappear is a permanent trait of the repressed, which is therefore inherently linked to repetition in two senses.

The first is at the level of content: the material that was repressed is the material that reappears. The same material, although in the guise of a secondary formation, is brought from the unconscious into consciousness, and repeated in a different psychic location. The second sense is that the return of the repressed is governed by a repetitive structure. In this sense there is no repression without repetition (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.398).

³Although, as James Strachey points out, in his later writings Freud argued that anxiety is one of the chief motive forces *leading* to repression, and not a *consequence* of it. See editors' note on "Repression", SE 14:145.

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Seven

The Ethics of Death

Although Heidegger and Freud both conceive of death as central and non-pathological, the ethical perspectives stemming from their conceptions differ greatly. Heidegger bases his ethics on authenticity, individuation and the relationship to one's own death (in the Dreyfus/Blattner sense and as temporal finitude). For him death is a structural and temporal axis that does not give existence any specific content. Death influences life through being-towards-death, a structural component of Dasein that does not limit the specific contents of Dasein's awareness of its finitude.

Freud's ethics, on the other hand, focus on the death of another and our relation to it. He calls attention to the way in which loss and transience shape life, and within this general structure singles out the death of another as the epitome of loss. For Freud death is not neutral, but a negative force, the source of destructiveness and aggression innate to human nature. Moreover, the instinctual origin of the death drive makes it part of the id, which is largely unconscious, and as such blocks it from being worked on directly. This chapter contrasts Heidegger's focus on individuation with the significant role Freud gives to the death of another, and spells out the different ethical outcomes of their analyses. I then explore the similarities between the superego and the call of conscience.

THE ETHICAL DIMENSION OF THE DEATH DRIVE

In 1933 Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein were invited to exchange letters on the question 'why war?'. Freud's letter reveals a surprising view. Not only is it understandably bleak, given the political circumstances, but it seems as though he actually justifies the existence of violence and cruelty through an instinctual-biological hypothesis of innate aggression: the death drive. These are his remarks in the closing pages of *Why War? (Warum Krieg?)*:

[The death drive] would serve as a biological justification for all the ugly and dangerous impulses against which we are struggling. It must be admitted that they stand nearer to Nature than does our resistance to them for which an explanation also needs to be found [...]. For our immediate purpose then, this much follows from what has been said: there is no use in trying to get rid of men's aggressive inclinations (SE 22:211; FS 9:282-283).

Is the death drive a hypothesis of innate evil? Does the existence of the death drive mean that human beings are inherently cruel and destructive? And if so, is the ethic of the death drive simply an ethics of evil? I answer these questions in the negative, and put forth a new understanding of the death drive that transforms its ethical dimension from an ethics of evil to an ethics of finitude. Instead of subscribing to the pessimistic view Freud expresses in his letter, this understanding transforms our view of the death drive by overcoming the limitations of the innate evil hypothesis, which is replaced by a model that gives death significance within life and emphasises the role of the death drive in regulating the psyche.

As Freud argues, directing aggression outwards is essential to the survival of the organism; otherwise this same aggression would be directed against the organism itself. So it is in the interest of each organism to behave in a sadistic way, trying to rid itself of as much aggression as possible. This grim assumption provides an explanation for sadistic behaviour. It could even justify aggression as an act of self-preservation. And so, Freud's hypothesis of the death drive normalises and explains sadism, and moreover naturalises and essentialises its existence, postulated as a central component of the psyche.

Freud goes on to say: "Some portion of the death drive, however, remains operative *within* the organism" and is expressed in "a number of normal and pathological phenomena" (SE 22:211; FS 9:282, emphasis in the original). This normalises and naturalises not only sadism, or aggression directed outwards, but also masochism – the latter being perhaps even less intuitive than the former. Repetition of painful situations, self-destructiveness, death wishes and self-inflicted suffering are all expressions of an internally directed death drive.

The death drive thus becomes a metaphysical postulate, standing at the basis of Freud's conception of the human, not an individual disturbance of any particular individual. We all contain a dimension of destructiveness in us, the innate capacity for aggression and evil doing to ourselves or to others. Against the tendency to regard evil as a corruption of an essentially benign human nature (for example in Rousseau's noble savage and in views of childhood as a state of purity), Freud claims it is an integral part of the psyche.

Postulating the death drive as the source of aggression raises the question of its normative implications: how should we treat the death drive? What could be possible ways of re-directing the destructive urge? Is it possible to overcome or entirely control aggression? The theory of the death drive has been conceived by many as the height of Freud's pessimism, as an admission that we are born with an innate capacity for destruction. But, I argue, this is not the only ethical position that can be derived from the death drive hypothesis. There are other ways of viewing the problem of innate aggression which do not focus solely on the pessimistic conclusion attributed to Freud. In what follows I make two such suggestions.

First Solution: Neutralising the Death Drive

The first solution lies in Freud's formulation of aggression as a force whose objects can be changed and direction reversed. This flexibility in direction and object means that aggression is not necessarily harmful or inherently evil. Aggression can simply be seen as neutral energy, as a resource that can be implemented in ethically diverse ways. Aggression can be used to destroy an enemy or defend property, so it is not necessarily destructive for the aggressive individual. Aggression can have the productive aim of preserving the life and welfare of the individual, although this may involve aggression directed towards a perceived threat. This view of the death drive sees it as raw energy, almost a will-to-power, actually serving the life drives or life itself.

We can also acknowledge the death drive as an inherent negative tendency, but attempt to divert or sublimate it. So although "there is no question of getting rid entirely of human aggressive impulses" we can control aggression via sublimation and a strengthening of the superego, resulting in an unhappy but tame social order (SE 22:212; FS 9:283). This trade-off is presented in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, in which Freud ties the dualistic model of life and death drives to the question of war and civilisation to explain civilisation as a process of sublimation and control over instinctual life. Civilisation is an evolutionary process that develops through the action of Eros, striving to unite people, families, and nations.

Against this synthetic drive stands the destructive force, attempting to disintegrate biological, psychological, and social unities. Human development is the dialectical struggle between Eros and destruction: "the meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us", Freud says. "It must represent the struggle between Eros and Death, between the life drive and the destructive drive, as it works itself out in the human species" (SE 21:122; FS 9:249).

Within this progressive framework the death drive can be seen as productive, perhaps even necessary to the development of human culture. But the civilising process does not go hand in hand with happiness. Freud has already concluded that violence and aggression cannot be extirpated from human existence, certainly not without a price. The idea that people can be completely satisfied and thus released from the need for violence is for Freud a naïve illusion. So human aggression is innate, but nonetheless it is not necessarily negative and certainly not uncontrollable. As a first step Freud suggests that we acknowledge its presence in human behaviour and psychic processes. His notion of the death drive is delegated this task.

The next step is to see whether the destructive outlet of the death drive can be displaced, sublimated or transformed into a neutral or even a positive outlet. Masochism, for example, could be turned into aggression directed at an external object. This aggression could, in turn, promote the survival or pleasure of the organism (for example, competitive sports). The crucial step Freud takes

is to overcome the resistance to acknowledging the fact that we contain aggressive tendencies. Once this assumption is in place, we can turn to the question of how to handle aggression, a question with practical implications, on both a clinical and a social-political level. Without it, we cannot even begin to formulate an answer.

The ethical question, therefore, is not whether aggression can be abolished from the human mind, but rather how this aggression can be channelled into non-destructive activities. Therefore, the thesis of inherent aggression does not necessarily lead to ethical determinism or pessimism. Aggression can be dealt with as negative energy sublimated for positive aims. The idea of neutrality is reinforced by abandoning the dualistic model, so the death drive is no longer a destructive force whose antidote is Eros, but rather a primary psychic force, more fundamental than Eros.

The problem with this strategy is that it does not think through fully the deeply negative nature of the death drive, as well as the fact that sublimation takes its toll. The idea of neutral energy has already been expressed in Freud's notion of libido, which is so different from the death drive. Taking the death drive to be a duplication of libido confuses Freud's explicit distinction between psychic energy (libido) and the death drive. This is even less plausible if we take into account the juxtaposition between libido as sexual energy (Eros), and the death drives, posited in direct opposition to it. The description fails to address the metaphysical claims related to the death drive, such as the inertia and urge to return to an inanimate state expressed by drives in general and the death drive in particular.

So far we have viewed the death drive as the impulse of destruction and aggression. I now turn to a second solution to the problem of innate destructiveness by focusing on a different aspect of the death drive. Instead of treating it as the source of aggression, this solution regards it as the harbinger of death, decay and finitude, as a psychic representative of mortality. Seeing the death drive as the source of decay and finitude opens up a new way of regarding it; it is seen as a manifestation of the presence of death in life. It also allows us to understand ourselves as finite, limited creatures.

We can see how these two strategies are related to the discussion of the double meaning of the death drive in Part One. There I discussed the problem of formulating the death drive as an aggressive drive raising psychic tension, as well as an expression of the Nirvana principle, which pushes towards complete discharge of tension. The conclusion there was that the Nirvana principle should be discarded, that there is nothing to support the idea that organic systems aim to return to a tensionless state.

Nonetheless, what I retained from the Nirvana principle were the metaphysical motivations that led Freud to suggest such a principle in the first place. These motivations were the general view that death has a continuous presence in life and the attempt to give an economic account of this presence. I concluded that if we reject both the Nirvana principle and these motivations, we

are left with an aggressive drive, and then indeed could discard the notion of the death drive altogether.

But this reductive approach fails on two counts. Firstly, it does not provide a complete picture of the metaphysical relationship between life and death as intertwined. And secondly, it lacks the internal distinction between other-directed aggression and self-directed aggression. I therefore argued that even if Freud was mistaken about the details of the Nirvana principle, he still succeeded in giving a unifying term for a host of behaviours: depression, self-harm, suicide and melancholia. This distinct group of self-destructive tendencies is not captured by aggression alone.

What I propose here is not the revival of the Nirvana principle, but a metaphorical view of the death drive as a series of 'Nirvana tendencies' that have features not captured by the concept of aggression. If the first solution I suggested earlier *reduces* the death drive to an aggressive drive, the second solution *broadens* it into a metaphor for limitation and finitude and sees it as the source of self-destructive behaviour.

These 'Nirvana tendencies' point towards what would be missing from reducing the death drive to mere aggression. This is the helplessness and limitation, the failure and disappointment that are so much a part of human life. I use these 'Nirvana tendencies' to suggest an ethics of finitude, based on the understanding that coming to terms with our finitude (both temporal finitude and other kinds of limitation) is the task and achievement of human life (cf. Cavell, 1988).

How does finitude change our view of life? How should finite creatures live? How is finitude manifested in life? If we want to answer these questions, we must formulate an ethics of finitude that examines the ethical meaning of death and limitation, and replaces the reductive view of the death drive as aggression. This solution, I believe, succeeds in rethinking the place of destructiveness in human life, rather than merely trying to channel it into less destructive outlets.

Second Solution: the Ethics of Finitude

Given that the death drive is a destructive force, I suggest that we see Freud's view not as a pessimistic but as a realistic position, offering an encouraging insight into how we can lessen destruction and suffering. This requires that we establish the ethical significance of the death drive. This ethics of finitude has to be framed within a psychoanalytic context, so we must first determine what the ethics of psychoanalysis are. If there is an ethical point to the psychoanalytic conception of the human being, it cannot be dictated by any particular ethical system. Psychoanalysis aims to analyse the structure and function of the psyche, so this description cannot be subordinate to any particular set of ethical claims.

Freud focuses on the diverse forms suffering and self-understanding take; he is not interested in making ethical judgements. This does not mean

psychoanalysis has no ethics, but rather that the ethical position of psychoanalysis is centred on suffering and sees the ethical role of therapy as reducing it. As such it acknowledges that ethical conceptions can be the *source* of suffering, as the agency of the superego illustrates.

The superego is a delegate of social norms within the psyche, and its function is to internalise these norms, turning them into an integral part of the psyche. It uses ethical judgements to produce guilt, by accusing the ego of being morally deficient. The pangs of conscience and self-accusations of being 'bad' or 'immoral' are the weapons of the superego in its battle against the ego.

From a psychoanalytic point of view what matters is the mechanism that creates the suffering, not the specific moral values it contains. Moral values are culture-specific and at least in this sense contingent, whereas the superego is a psychological structure generating blame and guilt, whatever their specific normative contents might be. The only psychoanalytic ethical criterion is minimising suffering and enhancing self-understanding. These two aims are not necessarily compatible, but are linked through the idea that an awareness of painful thought and behaviour patterns may eventually contribute to their alleviation. This is not a rationalising notion of 'where id was, ego shall be', but the realisation that limitation is part of our existence, and should therefore be respected and acknowledged, not fought against.

As a highly personal form of self-exploration committed first and foremost to therapeutic aims, psychoanalysis is not interested in Truth or Ethics as aims in themselves, but only as vehicles of therapeutic progress. In this sense the ethical claims of psychoanalysis are both modest and concrete. The aim of psychoanalysis is to analyse and relieve suffering. This aim is not without an ethics of its own, the ethics of acceptance, responsibility and faithfulness to oneself, in the patient pursuit of well being and flourishing.

With this general context of the ethics of psychoanalysis in mind, let us return to the ethics of the finitude and see what ethical notion can be derived from the death drive and how it connects to the bleak conclusions Freud expressed in *Why War?*. With Laplanche, I argue that Freud was trying to express an ethical imperative through the death drive, which gives it a positive ethical significance (Laplanche, 1976, p.6). This ethical imperative is stated in Freud's 1915 essay *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death (Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod)*: "If you want to endure life, prepare yourself for death" (SE 14:300; FS 9:60). Moreover, this reading of the death drive does not see life and death as opposing forces; rather life is subjected to death and finitude. Regarding life as a finite process gives it concrete meaning, which should be understood through mortality and finitude.

How should we understand this ethical imperative? Whose death should we prepare for? And how will preparing for death help us endure life? The first clue for understanding this imperative lies in Freud's argument in *Negation*, where he claims that the unconscious is structurally barred from knowing its own death, annihilation or negation, and therefore can only

acknowledge the death of another person (SE 19:239; FS 3:378). As Deleuze writes: “Freud supposes the unconscious to be ignorant of three important things: Death, Time and No” (Deleuze, 1994, p.114).

Therefore, any unconscious projection towards death must be a projection towards the death of another, never my own. We can never entirely accept our own mortality; there will always be a residual fantasy of immortality active within the unconscious. This fantasy makes it so hard for us to accept our own death and facilitates the repression with which we combat thoughts about it.

Barred from preparing for our own death, we can prepare only for the death of another. Hence Freud’s call to prepare for death is the call to prepare for the death of another, or in other words, to be ready for the possibility of loss and mourning, for disappointment and failure.¹ The death drive expresses not only our own mortality, but also the many forms of loss and transience we experience *within* life.

It is important to note at the outset how my interpretation diverges from Laplanche’s. On his view, the ethic of the death drive is one of “distrust concerning every form of enthusiasm, be that of *Amor Fati*, and of a lucidity that does not hide the irreducible meshing of my death with that of the other” (1976, p.6). Whereas the meshing of my death with the death of another is indeed a central theme of the ethics of finitude, this distrust of enthusiasm is foreign to Freud’s attitude. If a distrust of enthusiasm is a limitation on our capacity to work and love, as Freud put it, then it has no place within the Freudian ethical imperative. In my view, the ethical imperative is not to be distrustful of enthusiasm because it is marked by limitation and finitude, but to embrace it as such; to embrace it with transience as its condition. I shall return to this idea shortly in the discussion of *On Transience*; for the time being let us return to the ethical imperative.

If we admit that we have no unconscious knowledge of our own death and place this insight with the ethical imperative to prepare for death, we can conclude that the only way we can fully (and that includes unconsciously) grasp our own mortality is through identification with a loved person. But this identification is always ambivalent, comprised of both fear and desire towards the death of a loved one (SE 14:293; FS 9:53).

Ambivalence is most prominent in mourning, where loss is taken to be both a punishment and the fulfilment of a secret wish (SE 14:298; FS 9:58). This gives the death of another a significant metaphysical status. Rather than seeing it as merely an instance of loss, it provides a link to understanding death and loss in general and hence provides the key to the individual capacity to acknowledge

¹ Heidegger makes a similar connection between finitude as limitation and finitude as death when he writes: “in order to designate the finite in human beings it might suffice to cite any of our imperfections” (*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p.149; GA 3, p.219).

finitude. Freud's link between the biological death drive and its metaphysical implications enables this understanding.

If we compare this view to Heidegger's emphasis on my death as non-relational and ownmost, we can see two diametrically opposed paths to understanding finitude. For Heidegger the significant death is one's own death; for Freud it is the death of another. For Heidegger only the encounter with my death can lead to authenticity, whereas for Freud the only path to finitude is via identification with another.

Let us look more closely at identification as the source of understanding death. This reading does not give priority to my death or to the death of another but posits them as inherently linked. They are linked because our self-understanding is largely based on identification with others. This intersubjective dimension plays a major role in the construction of the psyche and makes death – although barred from the unconscious – a link between self and other. This opens psychoanalysis to a new view in which the self is no longer an insular unit of meaning. The link between death and intersubjectivity is the basis for this ethics of finitude.

Transience as Ethics

In his short 1916 essay *On Transience* Freud describes the impasse between himself (representing science) and his companions, a young poet and a friend (representing art), encountered during a stroll in the Dolomite Mountains. The young poet is saddened by the transient nature of all things bright and beautiful, and experiences the worthlessness of all that he would otherwise have loved and admired, but which he now sees as "shorn of its worth by the transience which was its doom" (SE 14:306; GS 11:292).

Freud, on the other hand, claims that "Transience value is scarcity value in time. Limitation in the possibility of an enjoyment raises the value of the enjoyment" (ibid.). As Adam Phillips puts it, for Freud "it is impermanence that confers value; it is the fact of death, of the prodigal forms of transience, that creates pleasure". Moreover, death as the extreme and ultimate form of loss and transience is what "makes life loveable; it is the passing of things that is the source of our happiness" (1999, p.26).

This attitude towards life and death is clearest in the case of mourning, a process of coming to terms with loss, in which mourning the death of a loved one is the epitome of irrevocable loss. Freud uses mourning to make a broader point about loss and disappointment in general. He suggests incorporating loss and mourning into our lives in a way that will help us understand life as a holistic experience that is not burdened with disappointment and grief, but rather takes these as a starting point.

But is not seeing existence as confined by disappointment and grief simply pessimism? Freud defines human existence through mortality, fragility and disappointment not because he is pessimistic, but because he thinks this

description is more accurate. “But this demand for immortality is a product of our wishes too unmistakable to lay claim to reality: what is painful may none the less be true” (SE 14:306; GS 11:292). The Freudian worldview works within the immanent confines of the human while finding a positive meaning to this confinement. “A flower that blossoms only for a single night does not seem to us on that account less lovely” (ibid.).

Embracing this position means realising the limitation of the fantasy of transcendence and immortality, or of the religious worldview.² As Phillips notes, only once we are “happily convinced that there is nowhere else to go,” can we begin to live. “When transience is not merely an occasion for mourning, we will have inherited the earth,” writes Phillips, who extracts from Freud a lesson about acceptance and realisation of human limitation (1999, p.12).

Freud’s project involves making sense of our lives as bound by mortality, not as seduced by promises of an afterlife. Mortality is what makes life intelligible, by providing us with a key to decipher the way in which we live. For Freud this is the starting point of life, and therefore of ethics. This lesson should be learned despite the refusal of the unconscious to acknowledge its own mortality. Consequently it should be learned by coming to terms with the mortality of others.

Freud focuses on death because it is the defining experience of a finite life. Death marks life with finitude, operates as the ultimate signifier of loss and limitation. Death makes life a constant work of mourning. Freud acknowledges the connection between living and mourning by reading the pain experienced by his companions as the ambivalence rooted in the idea of life itself. “The idea that all this beauty was transient was giving these two sensitive minds a foretaste of mourning over its decease; and, since the mind instinctively recoils from anything that is painful, they felt their enjoyment of beauty interfered with by thoughts of its transience” (SE 14:306; GS 11:292).

In this sense, to live is to mourn. However, this double bind of life and death does not leave life simply shadowed by death, imprinted by loss and grief. The dismay and disappointment that are part of life do not ultimately designate it as a sad parade of loss and irony. Life is ruled by nature as the source of laws and limitations constituting our lives, the first and foremost being death. But like the rules of chess, which not only regulate the game but also constitute it, nature can be viewed as the constraint that makes life possible.

Freud expresses through the death drive a sentiment both sober and deeply sympathetic to the particular hardship of modern life, disenchanted and free from the idols of permanence and eternity. We must acknowledge that everything we achieve may be lost; everything gained may be taken away. In our refusal to acknowledge this we are, as Freud puts it, “living psychologically

² Freud’s views on religion were comprehensively discussed in *The Future of an Illusion* (*Die Zukunft einer Illusion*), where he writes: “[religious ideas] are illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind” (SE 21:30; GS 11:438).

beyond our means”, demanding more out of life than it could possibly offer (SE 14:299; FS 9:59). Understanding life as transient and fallible is not necessarily pessimistic, nor need it stop at that. Acknowledging finitude can actually have a positive function on life by making it more bearable, and “to tolerate life remains, after all, the first duty of all living beings” (SE 14:299; FS 9:60).

Tolerance in this sense is not merely bare endurance, but the art of adjusting, of affirming the total complexity of life. The ethical imperative inscribed in the death drive is one of tolerance, patience and acceptance. These are not to be confused with resignation, cynicism, or despair. The ethical imperative requires us to learn the lesson of ambivalence, that life consists of fulfilment and disappointment, and that the two are inseparable. Striving towards absolute happiness creates only frustration, as it cannot be achieved within this ambivalent worldview. But nor should we give up the idea of happiness; rather, we should use the ethical imperative to delimit what is achievable within human life.

According to Freud, once we make room for death, loss, and contingency as part of our lives, we can start shaping our lives from a realistic, modest, achievable standpoint.³ Phillips adds that if we give up the ideals we measure our failures against, if we give up the idea of perfect happiness or eternal bliss, we need no longer deem ourselves constant and necessary failures. That with which we must live – mortality, suffering and death – can be the point of departure for a self-conception that is not burdened *a priori* with guilt, shame and sin. Relinquishing the ideal of perfection opens up a creative space for human attempts and errors, for play and imagination, for quaint forms of satisfaction, and thereby gives us hope. Exchanging our perfectionist ideals for attainable ones means pursuing life in a way that is no less hopeful (1999, p.115ff.).

The notion of the death drive that is usually read as an affirmation of a thesis of innate evil can be read not as a simple message of despair, but as a new way to formulate an ethics of finitude. Instead of taking death as a limitation and barrier, we can use it productively to understand life as a source of limitation but also of joy. Freud saw the way in which love and hate, life and death, Eros and Thanatos, link together, making love, joy and beauty contain transience. Positive emotions and experiences can be seen as intimating mortality, revealing a truth about life that is simultaneously a truth about death.

The superego, or conscience, provides a further link between death and ethics. It is an internalised death drive, resulting in guilt and self-persecution on the one hand, but serving as the source of ethics on the other. “Ethics is thus to be regarded as a therapeutic attempt – as an endeavour to achieve, by means of a

³ Freud’s view of happiness supports this point. “One has to assume happiness when fate does not carry out all its threats simultaneously”, he writes to Fliess after his daughter overcame an illness (Mason, 1985, p.440).

command of the superego, something which has so far not been achieved by any other cultural activities” (SE 21:142; FS 9:269).

Ethics, according to Freud, is an attempt to conquer human destructiveness and aggression by attaining control of the superego. This turns ethics into a work of sublimation and self-control, but moreover into a therapeutic attempt to heal humanity of one form of suffering. Once we understand the death drive as creating and enabling such an ethical dimension of human existence, rather than simply crippling and limiting it, we can begin to see how it connects desire and restraint, instinct and reason, nature and moral law. In response to the question ‘why war?’ Freud was correct in saying that war arises as a result of the death drive, which makes human nature fallible, cruel and perfidious. But if we stop there we miss the crucial link between ethics and the death drive that is the productive ethical dimension of death.

THE ETHICS OF AUTHENTICITY

So far we have established the centrality of death in Freud’s and Heidegger’s accounts of life. We have also looked at Freud’s ethics of finitude. What would be Heidegger’s equivalent ethical position? To answer this question we should bear in mind the different way in which death is central for each thinker. Freud’s ethics of finitude stems from his emphasis on transience and on the death of others. Heidegger, on the other hand, has an individuated notion of death, which he characterises as ownmost, non-relational and not to be outstripped. This notion leads, as I show below, to an ethics of authenticity, centred on one’s own death.

Heidegger’s ethics of authenticity deals first and foremost with oneself, rather than with Dasein’s responsibility to others. In this sense Heidegger partakes in the Nietzschean tradition, where the ethical imperative comes from the self, and there is no external criterion for judging authenticity. Whereas normative systems are based on evaluating an action or a person according to objective, external criteria, the individual-centred vision of *Being and Time* is founded on the phenomenological exploration of an individual.

Accordingly, its ethical dimension focuses on individuation rather than sociality. Heidegger’s vision of authenticity goes beyond normativity, although it is drawn from it and retains a certain relationship to it. Authenticity goes beyond the social realm because its ultimate appeal is to the self and the internal dialogue (call of conscience) within Dasein. Authenticity is Dasein’s hermeneutic relationship to itself that is immediate but nonetheless critical.

The basic requirement of the ethics of authenticity is an ability to experience the self in a way that is both critical and practical. This reflexivity is a practical attunement to the Situation in which Dasein is, not an abstract introspection. Seeing the relationship to the self as introspection cuts Dasein off from two crucial elements: the concrete Situation to which Dasein must respond and Dasein’s ability to act. Genuine authenticity *applies* the perspicuity

(*Durchsichtigkeit*) achieved in the moment (*Augenblick*) so that it illuminates and informs Dasein's actions and projects.

The first step in authenticity is achieving the ability to examine and review one's actions and choices, making them the result of a reflective process and not merely following *das Man*. The second step is achieving a harmonious spontaneity in which understanding is implicit, natural, so the reflective element ceases to stand out and the relation to the self is organic and practical, rather than abstract and theoretical. Authentic self-understanding is *enacted*.

Heidegger's ethics of authenticity is based on individuation. As such it is diametrically opposed to the line taken by Levinasian ethics, for example, for whom ethics are based first and foremost on the relationship to another. But there are consequences to one's behaviour and attitude to another, which must be accounted for, even in authenticity. This makes the relationship to another a pre-understanding stemming from *Mitsein* as structuring Dasein, which is mirrored in the later sections of *Being and Time* by the idea of a resolute community of authentic Dasein (BT, SZ, §74).

With this self-reflexive and critical view of authenticity in mind, the ethical position in *Being and Time* can be stated as the imperative to authentically grasp one's existence and finitude. This imperative is not stated explicitly in the text, and cannot be stated for internal reasons (as was discussed in Part Two), but still is the main prescriptive conclusion of *Being and Time*. Authenticity is the demand to own up to one's own death – and hence to one's own life. So the imperative to own up to death is the main ethical claim of both Heidegger and Freud. But whereas in Freud it is always the call to prepare for the death of another, for Heidegger only facing its own death can make Dasein achieve authenticity.

This link between death and authenticity is the major key to deciphering the ethical aspect of *Being and Time*. With this link in mind, we can now examine specific concepts that are related to ethics: responsibility for oneself and for another, guilt and conscience, and authenticity. Although Heidegger does not present these concepts as explicitly ethical, the implicit normative dimension of *Being and Time* can be easily extracted. So what is the ethical idea enveloped in these concepts? Can authenticity be formulated as an ethical imperative?

Authenticity is the imperative to be true to oneself.⁴ As such it is a formal injunction to integrate the various levels of Dasein's existence into a meaningful whole. The transition to authenticity is based on individuation and on an ethically self-sufficient Dasein, stressing the discrete and isolated nature of authenticity. But as Mulhall points out, there is a problem: "the transition

⁴ Mulhall writes, "an authentic confrontation with death reveals Dasein as essentially thrown projection, its relation to its own Being at once holding open the possibility, and imposing the responsibility, of living a life that is both genuinely individual and genuinely whole – a life of integrity, of authenticity" (1996b, p.120).

with which Heidegger is concerned seems inexplicable in its own terms” (1996b, p.131). How can inauthentic Dasein call itself back to authenticity? If the authentic kernel is hidden in everyday concealment, how can it be uncovered? What part of Dasein can prompt the change?

Mulhall overcomes this problem by modifying Heidegger’s model of the call of conscience to an intersubjective one. Instead of regarding the call as an internal dialogue within a split Dasein, Mulhall regards the call as coming from outside, that is, from another. This interpretation is textually supported by two comments in *Being and Time* in which Heidegger refers to the voice of conscience as the voice of a friend, and where he notes that resolute Dasein can become the conscience of others (BT, pp.206, 344; SZ, pp.163, 298). Phillippe Van Haute similarly suggests regarding the call of conscience as the source of the social dimension of Dasein: “the voice of conscience is perhaps nothing other than the call of a community that we are always already thrown into” (1996, p.194).

This modification is avoidable if one is willing to acknowledge that Dasein has contradicting tendencies within it. I suggest a solution that is opposite to Mulhall’s. Rather than locating the source of the call of conscience in another, I suggest that the call is the voice of another in me. If we view Dasein as *Mitsein*, then Dasein’s self is inherently relational, and contains alterity within it, which is what speaks in the call of conscience. Dasein contains otherness in it, and is not closed off by individuation. This view has some parallels to the Freudian subject, which is also constructed of several agencies. This view explains how Dasein can call itself back from inauthenticity, affirms the idea of internal dialogue – Heidegger explicitly talks about a *call* and a *voice* – and avoids the need for an external reconstruction.

Furthermore, the split between conscious and unconscious maps on to the inauthentic/authentic distinction in a way that further enhances this argument. If everyday consciousness is inauthentic, the potential for authenticity can be located in the unconscious, and emerge in response to the call of conscience, with no recourse to an external agent. Mulhall’s argument itself attests to the fact that there are authentic Dasein in the world who did not become authentic through a third party. So on his own account he implicitly agrees that the possibility of self-originating authenticity exists.⁵

The next step is to spell out the ethical significance of authenticity. This ethics has no objective or shared content, and is only a formal imperative to be

⁵ “A first or self-befriending friend would be required only in a world in which human inauthenticity was universal and absolute; and Heidegger’s conception of human existence neither entails nor permits such a possibility. He does claim that lostness in the they-self is Dasein’s typical position [...] but this makes authenticity a rare and fragile achievement, not an impossible one. And no community of beings to whom an understanding of their own Being necessarily belongs could utterly lose sense of themselves as capable of authenticity” (Mulhall, 1996b, p.181).

true to oneself, which comes from the anticipation of death. The content provided by resoluteness to the present Situation gives it an intimate self-given content, lacking objective features. This ethics rejects the idea of external judgement, and makes ethical justification the prerogative of a morally self-sufficient Dasein.

One could argue against the ethics of authenticity that whatever choice Dasein makes could be defined as authentic, since the sole criterion of authenticity is an internal sense of correctness. The lack of external criteria distinguishes authenticity from other formal ethical injunctions such as Kant's, leaving it to struggle with a rule-following problem. But this would only be a problem for an ethical theory concerned with the impact one's conduct has on others. An ethics of individuation focuses on the impact of a course of action or decision on *me*; the impact on others is only secondary. This ethics addresses the question 'how shall I live' from the most intimate and crucial point of reference to the self – a point of reflexive criticism – and therefore has an exclusively personal set of priorities.

A related problem is that forms of behaviour that are accepted as ethically unjustifiable can be legitimised by claiming that they are authentic; Heidegger's support of Nazism is often cited as a prime example of this problem. This is a general problem of many individual-based forms of thought: nihilism, certain strands of existentialism, Nietzschean thought and Heidegger's notion of authenticity all face this problem. All these forms of thought share a rejection of normativity. In this sense all individualistic ethical ideas have some link to normativity but they all go beyond it by setting a different ethical criterion. This criterion stands in some relation to normativity, be that a relation of negation, apathy, or iconoclasm, but at the same time transgresses it.

If we take seriously the suggestion that the call of conscience can come from another Dasein, a further problem emerges (BT, pp.206, 344; SZ, pp.163, 298). If an external agency can serve as one's conscience, they would determine for Dasein what its authentic self is. This opens the way for an authoritarian discourse that, combined with the formal structure of authenticity, can dictate to Dasein how to act.

But similarly to the previous problem, this is a question of filtering the external normative pressure through an internal sense of self, realising that no choice made by Dasein is exempt from self-legislation based on critical reflection. The reply to these problems is given in *Being and Time*. Through his phenomenological analysis and hermeneutic construction of Dasein, and the particular emphasis on individuation and authenticity, Heidegger buttresses the self, giving it autonomy and improving its ability to respond appropriately to external authority.

Another dimension of the ethics of authenticity is that while Heidegger acknowledges the importance of being-towards-death, he construes it as a neutral existiale. One may even suggest that if authenticity is desirable and the encounter with death is the key to authenticity, then death has a positive

dimension to it. In opposition to Freud, who accounts for the negativity of death by formulating the death drive as aggression and regards its ethics as preparation for loss and mourning, Heidegger's analysis of being-towards-death is neutral. This is problematic in two ways.

The first is phenomenological: how can being-towards-death be neutral while the language of anxiety and covering death up by *das Man* indicates the contrary? At best being-towards-death can be *masked* as neutral by *das Man*, by not thinking about it, fearing it (the ontic misinterpretation of anxiety), or stoically accepting it. But that does not make it neutral. The second problem is hermeneutic: how does finitude influence Dasein's interpretation of existence? As a central existentially structuring existence being-towards-death must yield some knowledge about life, it must enhance Dasein's self-understanding.

In response to these problems I propose that for Heidegger death is not neutral but positive, because confronting it is the link to authenticity. As the source of authenticity it has a positive dimension that might be covered over but cannot be erased. Another level of the positivity of death can be found in Dasein's guilt. Dasein always has a guilty, hence moral, relationship to others, guilt stemming from debt and death. Guilt belongs essentially to Dasein (BT, p.328; SZ, p.282). Dasein is guilty by the mere fact of its relationship to others. It has, in virtue of its *Mitsein*, already become guilty towards other Dasein (BT, p.334; SZ, p.288). Finitude generates a positive ethical dimension as the indebtedness to others.

Displacing the Tragic-Heroic Paradigm

To end this section I present a Freudian reading of Heidegger's ethics of authenticity based on Simon Critchley's argument that both philosophy and psychoanalysis share a 'philosophy of the tragic', the recognition of the essential finitude of the human being. His version of an ethics of finitude, as "the question of the meaning and value of human life [that] becomes a matter of what *sense* can be *made* from the fact of finitude", juxtaposes Freud's ethics of finitude to Heidegger's tragic notion of finitude (1999, p.220).

Rather than seeing finitude as generating a heroic conception of the human being, Critchley aims to displace the tragic-heroic paradigm, which he sees as predominant in philosophy and psychoanalysis, with a comic paradigm. By this he means something quite similar to Freud's reading of finitude, that is, reading human existence as permeated by shortcoming, lack and failure. Humour, says Critchley, "recalls us to the modesty and limitedness of the human condition, a limitedness that calls not for tragic affirmation but comic acknowledgement, not heroic authenticity but a laughable inauthenticity [...]. Only comedy is truly tragic" (1999, pp.224-5).

Critchley chooses an opposite position to Heidegger's, by stressing not the possibility of death, but rather its impossibility. The result is an ethics of finitude

that is Freudian and anti-Heideggerian, based on acknowledging weakness and limitation rather than tragically attempting to affirm them:

Against Heidegger and with Blanchot and Levinas, death is conceived as the impossibility of possibility: Death is that in the face of which the subject is not able to be able - this Dasein cannot choose its hero. On such a view, finitude is not something that can be heroically assumed in a free fatefulness but is, rather, something radically ungraspable, a weaker and ever-weakening conception of finitude. My intuition is that laughter, a certain sort of laughter, opens up this ungraspable and ever-weakening relation to finitude (1999, p.222).

Critchley then moves to Lacan's Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, in which he reads the ethical imperative to act in conformity with your desire. Tragedy is the exemplary model of this ethics, because in it desire is bound up in a relation to death. Turning back to the Heideggerian understanding of human existence as being-towards-death, Critchley takes the Lacanian paradigm to conform to the Heideggerian model. Both see the appropriate ethical comportment in the face of death as "being-towards-death, where we act in such a way that we do not give way on our desire". This is the correspondence between free ethical action and "fateful deathly desire, that the subject *should*, through the work of analysis, aspire to the *Freiheit-zum-Tode* that is the core of tragic experience and the tragic-heroic paradigm for thinking finitude" (1999, p.228).

Against the background of this tragic-heroic paradigm Critchley suggests that comedy shows us the failure of human action to keep up with desire. The body "in all its dreadful fallibility" is the site of the comic (although one could argue it is the site of the tragic for this same reason), which opens a new relation to finitude that replaces the tragic triumph of life with a life that "slips away, runs off, dissipates" (1999, p.230). This tone, anti-Heideggerian and anti-Lacanian is Freudian more than anything else. It is the quiet acknowledgement of life's passing away, the soft trickle of sand in the hourglass of time. And this acknowledgement rather than resignation is accompanied by laughter, not tears. Critchley concludes that this is "an affirmation that finitude cannot be affirmed because it cannot be grasped" (1999, p.235).

Comedy exposes our tragic condition more than tragedy does, because it exposes us as so finite that we cannot even grasp our own finitude (1999, p.237). This is a Freudian reading of Heidegger's being-towards-death, favouring the modest and the quaint over the tragic pathos of Heidegger and Lacan. Critchley uses Freud to reinterpret Heidegger's diagnosis of death, so as to place it within an immanent view of finitude. This brings Heidegger and Freud closer, at least as a Freudian interpretation of Heidegger. It is this kind of rapprochement I aim for in the next section on the call of conscience and the superego.

THE CALL OF CONSCIENCE AND THE SUPEREGO

After juxtaposing the two ethical positions stemming from Freud's and Heidegger's notions of death, this encounter ends with an analogy between the call of conscience and the superego as ethical agencies. This analogy supports a Freudian reading of Heidegger, which regards the call of conscience and Dasein's response to it as internal and yet dialogic.

In the call of conscience Dasein calls itself so it is both the speaker and the addressee. This internal dialogue requires Dasein to contain more than one agency, so the split within it is structural and inherent. Through this I show that Dasein is split and reflexive, and that different parts of it are in conflict with others, much like the Freudian subject and its id, ego and superego.

Although it calls against our expectations and will, the source of the call is not external. The call does not come from another Dasein. It somehow comes "from me and yet from beyond me" (BT, p.320; SZ, p.275). Although it is self-generated the call is involuntary; it is something Dasein has neither planned nor prepared for nor voluntarily performed. In addition, the call comes out of *nowhere* – a metaphor Heidegger pursues in his discussion of groundlessness and nullity as the basis of Dasein (BT, p.316; SZ, p.271).

Both caller and called are Dasein: "In conscience Dasein calls itself", only in two different modes – Dasein as inauthentic, as they-self, and Dasein as individuated and authentic (BT, p.320; SZ, p.275). How can Dasein simultaneously be both the authentic caller and the inauthentic addressee? As we saw in the previous section, this problem led Mulhall to reconstruct the call as coming from another Dasein. I suggested that the call does come from Dasein, but not from its rational conscious part.

For this suggestion to work, we must identify more than one internal agent operating in the call. This is made possible under a Freudian view of a multiple-agency subject. Heidegger stresses the alien nature of the caller by saying that it is not Dasein that calls but rather 'it', (*das Es*), which calls from *within* Dasein. This 'Es', reminiscent of Freud's *das Es* (the id, or unconscious), decentralises Dasein because it introduces into it a foreign element that is not accessible to consciousness or under its control.

This internal foreignness generates anxiety; the dread of the discovery of something uncanny that is related to one's self as its doppelganger. The caller is Dasein in its uncanny mode, unfamiliar to the everyday *Man-selbst* ('they-self'), calling in an *alien* voice. The fact that it is internal makes the 'Es' more threatening, driving Dasein to flee it just like it flees in the face of its death. What Dasein is fleeing is the following question: "What if this Dasein, which finds itself in the very depths of its uncanniness, should be the caller of the call of conscience?" (BT, p.321; SZ, p.276)

The call "summons the Self to its ability-to-be-its-Self, and thus calls Dasein forth to its possibilities" (BT, p.319; SZ, p.274; translation and grammar modified). The uncanny feeling arises out of Dasein's encounter with its own

ability to be itself, with itself as having a horizon of possibilities circumscribed by death. Dasein can choose to hear the call, and recognise itself as a limited whole grounded in nullity (BT, p.321; SZ, p.276) it could also choose to ignore the call and plunge itself ever more forcefully into the numbing buzz of everyday, characterised by idle-talk (*Gerede*), curiosity (*Neugier*) and ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*).

In opposition to the bright chatter of the everyday, the call communicates solely by *keeping silent* (*Schweigen*) (BT, p.318; SZ, p.273). The call *individuates* Dasein by silencing the chatter of the they-self. The call has no content. It can give none of the verbal instructions or information characterising public communication. By juxtaposing chattering and keeping silent Heidegger presents a linguistic parallel to the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity. According to this division, language has a levelling effect on Dasein as idle talk, while reticence allows Dasein the inner attunement to respond to the call.⁶

When Dasein is called by silence, the call hovers on the limits of language. Of course silence is part of speech and can be as significant as an utterance. But it is also the negation of language, something external to it. As such silence brings out the repetitiveness and meaninglessness of idle talk, the hysterical nature of chatter designed as a cover up. There is a sense of urgency in that silence; once it makes Dasein aware of the superficiality of idle talk, it demands change. Heidegger describes the silent demand of the call as a *push* (*Stoß*) or abrupt arousal (*abgesetzten Aufriüttelns*) (BT, p.316; SZ, p.271). This is a shift from the mentalistic language of deliberation and choice, to enacting choice through action. Authentic Dasein does not decide to be authentic, but responds to the unique demands of the Situation (*Situation*) by finding itself *pushed* into action (Dreyfus, 1991).

A call that is internal but over which Dasein has no control seems a baffling construction. But light can be shed on it through Freud's view of the mind as containing a non-rational and untamed unconscious. The unconscious, too, calls from me and yet from beyond me. It is part of the psyche, but is not under the control of, or even epistemically available to the conscious self. It is a part of the psyche that is by definition alien and inaccessible. Through the unconscious Freud rejects the view of the mind as transparent to itself and as governed by conscious rational processes. This non-rational and uncontrolled component appears in Heidegger's call of conscience and in Freud's unconscious.

In *Open Minded* Jonathan Lear compares two models of the mind: the rational philosophical model and the non-rational psychoanalytic one, and shows the advantage of a non-rational understanding of the psyche. For Lear

⁶ Language is not entirely denigrated in *Being and Time*. It also has a central role in phenomenology (see Heidegger's analysis of *logos* as speech) and remains the locus of the question of the meaning of being.

psychoanalysis is important to philosophy not only because it gives an account of human motivation, but also because it shows how a predicate calculus of irrationality can be constructed, while “philosophical accounts of irrationality tend to fail to capture either the immanence or the possible disruptiveness of the irrational” (1988, p.87).

Psychoanalysis is the first attempt to work out a “truly non-Socratic approach to human rationality. Psychoanalysis begins with the idea that mind must be sometimes irrational” (1988, pp.89-90). Psychoanalysis offers an expansion to the philosophical tradition, which portrays irrationality as organised structures of propositional attitudes, the symmetrical opposition to the rational mind (1988, p.105). Philosophy regards any phenomenon of irrationality as a clash between two rational parts of the psyche, and Lear argues that this description fails to explain the immanence of the clash.

This perspective suggests a new way of thinking about the call of conscience. If the call is irrational and uncontrollable – *daimonic* in Socratic terms – the attempt to incorporate it into a rational theory of the mind is bound to fail. But if we incorporate an irrational, internally disruptive element into Dasein, we can interpret Dasein as containing multiple agencies and therefore as not rational, unified, or transparent. This affords a better framework for understanding the call of conscience as the expression of a conflicted self. This also narrows the gap between everyday inauthentic Dasein and its uncanny authentic twin, again showing the inauthenticity and authenticity distinction to be less substantive.

With this model in mind, let us explore the analogy between the call of conscience and the superego. The superego is one of the agencies making up the Freudian conflictual picture of the psyche. In this picture, psychic agencies struggle against each other, each aiming to achieve a different goal. The outcome is a compromise between the agencies relative influence. This conflictual model can be applied to Heidegger’s description of the call of conscience and to the struggle between authentic and inauthentic parts of Dasein, which reflect a similar internal plurality. This model can articulate the work of irrational agencies that are otherwise unaccounted for and allow Dasein to be simultaneously (unconsciously) authentic and (consciously) inauthentic. “When Dasein is appealed to, *is* it not ‘there’ in a different way from that in which it does the calling?” (BT, p.320; SZ, p.275).

As Heidegger states, only a thin wall separates the “they-self” from its uncanny twin, the authentic anxious self (BT, p.323; SZ, p.278). If we view authenticity and inauthenticity as mutually exclusive positions, we face problems like the one Mulhall discusses. How can Dasein be both authentic and inauthentic at the same time? On the Freudian view, Dasein can become authentic in some of its parts, while remaining inauthentic in others, because the self is no longer viewed as homogenous. This view of the call of conscience further integrates the authentic and inauthentic dimensions of Dasein, so it serves as further support for the intertwined view of the two states.

In light of this integrative view, we can also reassess the ethical aim of the call. The call allows Dasein to move from the inauthentic “they-self” to an authentic projection of its ownmost ability-to-be. This transformation is the ethical aim of *Being and Time*, and as such voices the ethical demand of the book. But the dichotomous view of authenticity and inauthenticity on which this transformation is based is not plausible; it collapses because the two modes are neither independent nor symmetrical. Therefore, the ethical imperative is not to overcome inauthenticity, but to integrate the two modes, to acknowledge limitation and finitude as inherent to human existence, and to accept the dependence of authenticity on inauthenticity.

Guilt

The superego functions as a judge, censor and conscience. It is created through the internalisation of parental prohibitions and demands (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.435). Freud describes it as set against the ego, having a critical function that denigrates the ego (SE 14:250; FS 3:201). Similarly, Heidegger describes the call as a *summons that warns and reproves*, functioning in a *critical* fashion (BT, p.324; SZ, p.279). The voice of conscience speaks of *guilt* (BT, p.325; SZ, p.280). This guilt is not the product of Dasein’s contingent behaviour, but in so far as any Dasein exists it exists as *guilty*, as *indebted* to others (BT, p.326; SZ, p.281). This establishes guilt as a structural component of Dasein, much like the superego.

Guilt is the link between death and ethics. For Heidegger guilt (*Schuld*) expresses the ultimate nullity and lack of ground of Dasein. This lack indicates that all of Dasein’s commitments and projects are conditional and none can be justified beyond their contingent value. They are all ultimately grounded in Dasein’s thrownness, which is itself contingent (BT, p.330; SZ, pp.284-5). Guilt also indicates responsibility or indebtedness (*Verschuldung*) to others. The ethical achievement of the call is bringing Dasein to recognise its existence as groundless, lacking an ultimate justification and always already indebted.

Guilt also links death and ethics in the function of the superego. The superego produces guilt, with which it persecutes the ego. Freud calls the superego of the melancholic “a pure culture of the death drive”, through which the superego gains its power and control (SE 19:53; FS 3:320). Hana Segal writes that “all guilt feeling arises from the operation of the death drive” and that the super ego is made of a portion of the death drive (1993, p.58). The internalised death drive turns against the ego to persecute it with guilt, shame and a sense of inadequacy and failure.

This judgmental voice is, moreover, an internalisation of social and ethical norms, but in the opposite sense of *das Man*. Whereas *das Man* is an internalised other that soothes and plunges Dasein into inauthenticity, the superego as an internalised other tortures Dasein from within. For Freud the source of persecution is the superego: an external voice that has been

internalised. For Heidegger, Dasein is persecuted by its understanding of itself as finite, an understanding he mostly flees from. For both the voice of conscience/superego is an internal voice that is at the same time alien or external and therefore creates a sense of being persecuted *from the inside*.

A notable difference between the call and the superego is that the call has a potentially fruitful end, as opposed to the destructive superego. The call of conscience has a transformative role that uses guilt productively, to facilitate the transition to authenticity and enable authentic solicitude with others. It is to this link between death and sociality that we now turn.

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Eight

Death of Another

Heidegger and Freud distinguish two attitudes towards death: the social attitude governed by etiquette, conventions and fleeing from death (an inauthentic attitude, in Heidegger's terms), and the powerlessness we experience in the face of our own finitude (an authentic attitude). This distinction crosscuts the distinction between one's attitude to one's own death and to the death of others, resulting in four possible attitudes. These are: an authentic and inauthentic attitude to my own death, and an authentic and inauthentic attitude towards the death of another. But although Heidegger sketches two possible attitudes towards one's *own* death: authentic and inauthentic, he only discusses the *inauthentic* attitude towards the death of another. The possibility of an *authentic* attitude towards the death of another goes unmentioned. I address this lack by reconstructing such an attitude.

Heidegger's neglect of the authentic attitude to the death of another is part of a broader deficiency in his *Mitsein* analysis. I therefore begin by examining Heidegger's account of Dasein's relationship to others. I explore some problems of the *Mitsein* analysis and make suggestions for their resolution, followed by an *internal* reconstruction of an authentic attitude to the death of another. I argue that Heidegger's lack of attention to an authentic attitude to the death of another is a lacuna that can be filled whilst remaining within a Heideggerian framework.

The second, synthetic part of the chapter develops an *external* reconstruction of an authentic attitude to the death of another through Freud. I juxtapose Freud's and Heidegger's views on the death of another, and then present a synthesis of both views. The main vehicles for the synthesis are Freud's notions of mourning and identification, based on Freud's essays *Mourning and Melancholia* (*Trauer und Melancholie*) and *Psychopathic Characters on the Stage* (*Psychopathische Personen auf der Bühne*) (SE 14:243; FS 3:194 and SE 7:303; FS 10:161).

I use mourning and identification to expand Heidegger's focus on one's own death so as to include the experience of the death of a loved one. The ambivalence Freud identifies as inherent to our attitude towards the death of another shows how the loss of a love object is also a loss of self, constituting a more intersubjective understanding of the relationship to the death of another.

THE *MITSEIN* ANALYSIS: PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS

The lack of an authentic relationship to the death of another is linked, in my view, to some general deficiencies of the *Mitsein* analysis, some of which have been studied before (Levinas, 1998; Olson, 1988; Mulhall, 1996b). As Mulhall writes: “Heidegger’s need to deny his dependence upon others has led to a fundamental mutilation of the potential wholeness and integrity of his text – a distortion of the fit between its form and content that amounts to a distortion of its authenticity” (1996b, p.136).

The most general characteristic of *Mitsein* is its formal construction. In comparison to the detailed analysis of *das Man*, the *Mitsein* analysis remains abstract and neutral. It is also markedly sketchy compared to the detailed analysis of Dasein’s relationship to its inanimate environment and tools. As Theunissen notes: “the statement ‘insofar as Dasein is at all it has the mode of being of being-with-one-another’ remains a pure supposition so long as it has not been demonstrated” (1984, p.177).

The formal construction is demonstrated by the fact that the text mentions only one relation – that of *Mitsein*, or being-with – which does not contain any sub-categories within it. The type of relationship (friendship, family relation, relation to a lover or stranger) and the mode of relating (love, hate, obedience, apathy, alienation) are not clearly distinguished within Heidegger’s analysis. As William Richardson notes, this analysis has left *Mitsein* “strangely bereft of any serious development” (1967, p.296). But as I argue below, Heidegger’s framework could accommodate a much more elaborate analysis of *Mitsein*.

I suggest an elaboration of the *Mitsein* category by adding sub-categories to it. The sub-categories should contain two variables; one is the type of relationship e.g. a family relationship, friendship, being in a group and so forth. The second variable is the often-labile affect colouring the relationship – love, hate, apathy, and so on. Each type of relationship could therefore have any one of an array of emotions attached to it: Dasein could love or hate its father, could be apathetic or remorseful towards a stranger, etc.

This allows the *Mitsein* category to cover all human relations and possible permutations. It also accounts for the many different and changing emotions we have towards others in long-term relationships; it could account for the ambivalence and natural dynamic of a relationship. Someone could love their father, and then feel hate towards him, or be in the ambivalent position of feeling both at the same time.

This leads to another aspect lacking from the *Mitsein* analysis; the fact that the people we are with, are already in a certain given relation towards us (e.g. parent, lover, enemy, stranger). Some of the relations can be altered (Dasein can befriend its enemy, or break its ties to a friend), but for the most

part the initial relation is given rather than chosen. This aligns this aspect of *Mitsein* with thrownness, something that should be made explicit.

Furthermore, for the most part Dasein cannot choose how and with whom it is in a general sense (e.g. in which country it lives, who surrounds it on the bus, the people it works with, etc.). Of course Dasein chooses its friends and lovers, but in a deep sense its choices are limited, especially in more quotidian social interactions. Another dimension of the same issue is that Dasein does not choose its parents or siblings, classmates and fellow citizens. The centrality of thrownness to the *Mitsein* analysis should be expressed, because it expands Dasein's given environment to include its emotional ties and mode of social interaction.

Another aspect lacking from the *Mitsein* analysis is a developmental dimension. Introducing such an aspect into *Mitsein* accounts for the different ways of being-with of children and adults, and provides a much-needed developmental dimension to Dasein's modes of being-with. Thinking of Dasein as developing and changing introduces a dynamic aspect to its ways of being-with.

This makes Dasein's description more detailed and accurate so that in conjunction with the mood analysis, it provides an account of emotional and social development. Furthermore, this analysis is consistent with Heidegger's account of Dasein as temporality. It thus further contributes to the view of Dasein as thrown-projection.

Finally, the analysis lacks an account of the relationship between Dasein's environment and other Dasein sharing that environment. The analysis of the thingly environment precedes the *Mitsein* analysis (BT, p.154; SZ, p.118). This raises the question of the relationship between tools and practices and the place of others in Dasein's world: is one more primordial than the other? Can another Dasein be part of an equipmental totality, like a teacher in the classroom? To what extent do we rely on other Dasein for learning practices and everyday skills? Does the fact that anyone can use a ready-to-hand mean that it already contains a social dimension?

The two accounts – being-with and being-in – are not explicitly related in *Being and Time*. But, as I suggest here, their relationship can be developed from the text. Some of these issues have been taken up in an exchange between Olafson (1994) and Carman (1994), who debate whether everyday practices can be broken down into technical skills and a social component. The debate centres on the relationship of the two dimensions of tool use and on the questions whether there is a hierarchy between the different dimensions.

Heidegger regards being-with and being-amidst as two equally important components of being-in-the-world (BT, p.153; SZ, p.117). But the relationship to another bears an undesirable analogy to being-amidst. It is structured in the same way as my relationship to present-at-hand or ready-to-

hand entities: it is *my* relationship to these things that determines the connection, since they lack intentionality.¹

The passivity of things is the template used to analyse the encounter with others, so that “‘encounter’ in *Being and Time* hardly means: *We* encounter *each other*, but almost entirely: Inner-worldly beings encounter a *Dasein* that lets itself be encountered” (Theunissen, 1984, p.181). Theunissen adds that the specific sense of an interhuman encounter is eradicated in this presentation of the concept.

This is a serious problem, but it can be overcome by synthesising the two types of encounters, seeing both as enmeshed. The world of an infant is dominated by the care of another, and it is primarily through another’s mediation that it comes to know its world. The question of the hierarchy between the two types of relationship disappears if we view the two processes as each enabling the other. So in reply to the objection that Heidegger privileges the relationship to objects over the relationship to other *Dasein* I present a synthetic view of both as jointly making up *Dasein*’s world. Although this is only an outline of a way to enhance the *Mitsein* analysis, it shows that the possibility of augmenting the analysis exists.

INTERNAL RECONSTRUCTION OF AN AUTHENTIC ATTITUDE TO THE DEATH OF ANOTHER

The everyday way in which we are towards death and the limitations on experiencing the death of another are set out in §47 and §51 of *Being and Time* (BT, pp.296-7; SZ, pp.252-3, BT, p.282; SZ, pp.238-9). It is important to note that in these sections Heidegger focuses on death as temporal finitude, as *Dasein*’s being-towards-the-end. In what follows, I continue to use the term ‘death’ to mean both finitude of possibility (death in the Dreyfus/Blattner sense) and temporal finitude.

As we saw in Part Two, Heidegger rejects the idea that the phenomenon we are focusing on is the *event* ending one’s life. I cannot experience my demise, and although I can be with someone else when their life ends, I cannot experience their death in a genuine sense; at most we are ‘there alongside’ those who are dying (BT, p.282; SZ, pp.238-9). This is the first limitation on experiencing the death of another.

Furthermore, there are social barriers preventing us from linking the death of another to our own death, or utilising it as an analogy that can give us

¹ Theunissen writes on this point: “Being-with-one-another is essentially, and indeed more exclusively than with Husserl, represented by the model of my relation to the other and not by the model of the relation of the other to me. So it is for the most part thought in that very direction that is also determinative for being with the ready to hand and the present at hand and hardly at all in the opposite direction that distinguishes the relation between human beings prior to the relationship to ‘things’” (1984, p.179).

some insight into mortality. In everyday understanding death is taken to belong to no one in particular (abstract), and as an actual event (BT, p.297; SZ, p.253). Heidegger uses the characterisation of death as ownmost and non-relational as the basis for the crucial distinction between my death and the death of another. Once characterised this way, Heidegger proceeds by focusing on *my* death as ownmost, non-relational etc.

But let us apply these same characteristics to the death of another. The death of another is also the other's ownmost, non-relational and not to be outstripped. Even if this death is *another's* ownmost, there is still a possibility, not explored in *Being and Time*, of experiencing the death of another authentically *as the death of another*. This does not entail the reduction of the death of another to an ontic experience.

Rather, the death of another could also have the ontological significance of uncovering finitude. Although it is not mine, it still opens the possibility of understanding annihilation and loss. Without reducing the impenetrable dimension of anxiety (death in the Blattner sense), I claim that the death of a loved one calls attention to finitude and limitation as well as my death. Heidegger himself opens this possibility, at least suggestively, when he writes: "The deceased has abandoned our 'world' and left it behind. But *in terms of that world* those who remain behind can still *be with him*" (BT, p.282; SZ, p.238).²

There is no internal constraint in *Being and Time* that determines the encounter with my death as the exclusive route to authenticity. The exclusive focus on one's own death in fact runs counter to the account of resoluteness developed in Division II from §60 onwards, describing it as opening up the possibility of being the conscience of others, and finally, in §74, where an authentic community is presented (BT, p.436; SZ, p.384-5). If authenticity and being-with are compatible, and moreover complementary, why should there not be a way of authentically experiencing the death of another? And moreover, why should not the death of another enable the transformation to authenticity by exposing human finitude?

Firstly, let us see what Heidegger says about the inauthentic attitude to the death of another. This attitude masks the emotional and ontological meaning of the death of another. The inauthentic attitude to mortality has no disclosive value because it lacks any application to the self. Dasein lacks the capacity to experience mortality as its common fate with others. On the contrary, the purpose of the inauthentic encounter is to distance Dasein from the unpleasant occurrence, to view it as an indefinite something that is not yet occurring for oneself, and is therefore no threat (BT, p.297; SZ, p.253).

² This and similar passages in §§47-53 show why the Blattner interpretation of death as an anxiety attack cannot be the whole story. It is clear that Heidegger refers here to the ending of another, their ceasing to exist and not their temporary inability to press into a possibility.

Moreover the inauthentic attitude does not differentiate between the deaths of people who stand in various relations to Dasein. The death of a stranger and the death of someone dear (*Nächste*) are both subsumed by the inauthentic attitude towards them (BT, pp.296-7; SZ, pp.252-3).

This public attitude stands in opposition to the earlier description of death as non-relational and individuating. The result is that finitude becomes cut off from the social level of existence. Our limited capacity to relate to the death of another is justified by the individuation and non-relationality of death:

The greater the phenomenal appropriateness with which we take the no-longer-Dasein of the deceased, the more plainly is it shown that in such Being-with the dead, the authentic Being-come-to-an-end of the deceased is precisely the sort of thing which we do not experience. Death does indeed reveal itself as a loss, but a loss such as is experienced by those who remain. In suffering this loss, however, we have no way of access to the loss-of-Being as such which the dying man 'suffers' (BT, p.282; SZ, pp.238-9).

When experiencing the death of another, Dasein does not lose its being; it experiences loss *within* its existence. But I think that the move from the singularity of death to the exclusion of the possibility of an authentic attitude to the death of another is unjustified. We cannot experience their death from their point of view, but we can certainly experience it as a profound experience of mortality and finitude. Without cancelling the ownmost and non-relational nature of death, it is possible to argue that there are other authentic events within experience that do not involve the annihilation of Dasein's world but that nonetheless disclose its finitude. If Dasein can have an authentic understanding of other events within its world, the death of another is surely a good candidate for being one of these experiences. Heidegger may have been too quick to identify the death of another with inauthenticity.

The following passage is a description of the inauthentic attitude to death. It stresses the *das Man* quality of encountering death as an occurrence within existence, rather than a threat to it. This analysis is based on the fact that the death of another is only experienced as an event within the world. As such it lacks a disclosive function, becoming simply something that happens within everyday life.

In the publicness with which we are with one another in our everyday manner, death is 'known' as a mishap which is constantly occurring – as a 'case of death'. Someone or other 'dies', be he neighbour or stranger. People who are no acquaintances of ours are 'dying' daily and hourly. 'Death' is encountered as a well known event occurring within-the-world (BT, pp.296-7; SZ, pp.252-3).

But this description is an account of the everyday inauthentic *das Man* dimension of encountering death, not an exhaustive account. It therefore leaves open the possibility of an authentic understanding of the death of another. Heidegger does not clearly demarcate the point at which his account shifts from merely descriptive to an ontological analysis, and therefore gives the false impression that he thinks that this is the only available attitude.

Whilst immersed in *das Man*, Dasein cannot experience anything authentically, in particular its social links. But, as was established in Part Two, there is also the possibility of being-with that is not subsumed entirely in *das Man*. This possibility is also presented in the later sections of *Being and Time*. This gives us further reason to think that an authentic attitude to another, and moreover to the death of another, is possible within the Heideggerian framework.

If an authentic relationship to another is possible, as the later sections of Division II suggest, if authenticity and *Mitsein* are not mutually exclusive, then an authentic attitude towards the other's death should be possible. We can now make use of the *Mitsein* category developed in the previous chapter, to produce a fuller relationship to the death of another. The death of another gets its meaning from the emotional ties and loss involved in such a death, and therefore the categories added to the *Mitsein* analysis enable us to develop a complete account of experience of the death of another.

The formal definition of the relationship, its quality, its thrown aspects and its developmental dimension could all be harnessed to produce a phenomenology of Dasein's experience of the death of another.³ Such an experience is not limited to just being alongside the dying person. It is an experience of loss *par excellence*. And it is not just a loss within being; it is a loss of part of one's being.

The effect the death of a loved one has on Dasein and the relation between these emotional effects and the social rituals designed to cope with them also contribute to uncovering mortality. The social expression of mourning is not just a crude masquerade (although it could be that) whose only function is the narcissistic denial of one's own death, as Heidegger portrays it (BT, p.298; SZ, p.254). It also constitutes powerful social mechanisms that sustain the mourning Dasein as a solicitous *Mitsein*.

The possibility of authentically experiencing another's death is further expressed through Heidegger's distinction between leaping-in (*für ihn einspringen*) and dominating and leaping-ahead (*ihm vorausspringen*) and freeing (BT, p.158; SZ, p.122). While leaping in is taking up Dasein's decisions and choices and dictating them to it, leaping ahead is a solicitous relationship allowing resolute Dasein to share a destiny and a future together, and engage in a meaningful exchange.

³For a literary example of such a phenomenology see Simone de Beauvoir's account of her mother's death, *A Very Easy Death* (1969).

Within this understanding of Dasein as part of a community, the death of another Dasein could be attentively and solicitously experienced as an authentic relationship that has come to a close.⁴

There are two elements in Heidegger's analysis that allow an authentic relationship to the death of another. The first is the possibility of solicitous authenticity. Although anxiety is individuating, resolute Dasein can return to its everyday world and experience it authentically. If this experience includes authentic being-with, there is no reason why it could not include authentic being with another who is at its end.

The second element is the nature of this experience itself. Experiencing the death of a loved one would not be merely an experience within being. It would constitute an actual loss of part of Dasein itself; when the loved one is gone, a part of Dasein's being is gone too, and not in a metaphorical sense. It is gone because the shared world is gone, because the meaningfulness of Dasein's life cannot remain intact in the face of such loss. Dasein's world must change and Dasein must change with it in response to the loss.

This is even clearer in the case of sustained mourning, such as in the loss of a child. Such a loss may indeed shatter Dasein's being until it becomes a mere shadow of the original. As such, the authentic experience of the death of a loved one is an intimation of human finitude and mortality in the strongest sense. We can therefore reject the identification of two dichotomies: my death/the death of another and authenticity/inauthenticity. By showing that this identification is not necessary, we open the possibility of an authentic attitude to the death of another, leading to a more solicitous notion of death.

EXTERNAL RECONSTRUCTION OF AN AUTHENTIC ATTITUDE TO THE DEATH OF ANOTHER

Heidegger's claim that death is Dasein's ownmost stands at the basis of his analysis. But this ownmost character is not unique to death; it is a broad category that applies to all aspects of Dasein's selfhood and is indeed its foundation. Heidegger claims that "no one can take the Other's dying away from him" – but neither can one take away Dasein's hunger, sorrow, or birth (BT, p.284; SZ, p.240). All first person attributes cannot be detached from Dasein, whose central characteristic is *mineness* (*Jemeinigkeit*).

⁴ Luce Irigaray claims that it is not only the authentic relationship to the death of another that creates solicitude, but also the authentic relationship to my own death: "The reflection that each gives off and receives is the passage by way of a primary relation to death: in virtue of the individuation and specialness that death can still impart to each. Liberated by what is thrown back to it with this reflection, each is given back over to what is most proper, and can thus be bound to the others in the Being of their Being: the simpleness of death" (1999, p.72).

Some, such as Herman Philipse, have argued that mineness simply states an analytic truth about personal identity: my mental and physical states belong to me. Philipse thinks that the claim that death is Dasein's ownmost is "an empirical platitude" because death, like any other bodily affair, cannot be removed or taken away from that particular body (1998, p.358). But mineness is not the analytic truth that one person is distinct from another. Of course Dasein is formally distinct from others and therefore the set of properties and states that characterise it belong to it, and not to others (Olafson, 1994a).⁵ If it were only that, then death would be 'mine' as much as any other state or attribute, and it would not be a specific way of characterising death.

Heidegger means something else by 'mineness', over and above the analytic truth that my states are mine. Mineness is an existential *owning up to death as mine*. In this *existential* sense of mineness death is indeed more significant and weighty than hunger or a headache. It is the genuine understanding of my existence as finite. We can now see why Philipse's verdict that Heidegger's characterisation of death as ownmost and non-substitutable merely states the trivial empirical truth that everybody dies, is a misunderstanding.

The characterisation of death as ontologically constituted by *mineness* and *existence* distinguishes death (as both temporal finitude and as limitation of possibilities) from other attributes. That is because not all moods, thoughts or physical states are ontological; they are merely ontic, or contingent. Death, as delimiting Dasein's temporal horizon is what gives it its finite structure, and is therefore ontological. Every state of Dasein belongs to it and moulds its existence, but not every state is ontological or necessary to Dasein's structure and existence in the way temporal finitude is.

Death in the Dreyfus/Blattner sense (as the inability to be) is also *ontologically constitutive* of Dasein's existence. Both are limit situations (*Grenzsituationen*) that define Dasein's existence. Both types of finitude are ontological, an essential part of Dasein's structure. Therefore owning up to them is qualitatively different from owning up to an ontic state. It is also existentially crucial to Dasein's self-understanding and the most demanding piece of self-knowledge.

Heidegger is pointing to a particular capacity for finitude or limitedness that is unique to Dasein and is particularly acute in the case of Dasein's death. In order to pick out death or even demise as demanding an existential response Heidegger does not need to show that they are more 'mine' than other characteristics. He only needs to point out that death (in both senses) is an ontological feature of Dasein. And this he has certainly done, so death's being ownmost means: a defining condition of Dasein's existence. The first-person

⁵ Carman comments in a similar vein that the first person perspective is not the most important feature of Dasein (2005).

emphasis on *my* death does not only point out the exclusivity of my *own* death, but also the more general fact of human finitude.

The strongest argument for the uniqueness of my death is that it annihilates my existence, whereas all other experiences occur within my existence. But as we saw earlier, this is only one dimension of finitude, temporal finitude. It would be a mistake to understand Dasein's finitude only as temporal. If we apply the broader sense of the term – death as temporal finitude *and* as the inability to be – we can see that the loss of self that occurs in temporal finitude is not the only intimation of mortality. Two further such intimations are anxiety (in the Blattner sense) and the death of others.

Mourning and Identification

In the 1917 essay *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud sets out to explain the process of mourning and its pathological derivative, melancholia. This process turns the normal working through of loss into a destructive process of self-deprecation.⁶ Freud realised that the process of detachment from the lost object is an *active* intra-psychic process, and not an automatic attenuation of suffering. In order to complete the work of mourning the subject needs to withdraw the libidinal investment in the lost object.

The result is retrieval and freeing of libido, which will eventually be ready for new attachment. This process is highly demanding in energetic terms, and is manifested in complete preoccupation with memories and emotions attached to the lost object. This working through leads to a temporary withdrawal of interest in the external world (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, pp.485-6). This positive process of negating a negation, deleting a lack, is one of overcoming death through a renewed reinvestment in life, or in other words, 'killing death'.

Melancholia, on the other hand, is the opposite process: death's victory over life. In melancholia the mourner identifies with the lost object. This identification is an ambivalent one: we love the lost object but also resent it for deserting us. The portion of hate contained within the ambivalent attitude to the lost one is then internalised and viciously re-directed against the ego. Therefore a loss of a loved person is a loss of a part of the self, the part that identified with it. Both mourning and melancholia illustrate that the boundaries of the self are diffuse and porous, and that the psyche is intersubjectively constructed.

In other words, the inner/outer distinction is not clear when applied to the psyche, and whatever we define as 'inner' is nonetheless the product of external influence. This influence takes place through identification and introjection. Therefore the death of another is not only the loss of an external love object, but also the loss of an internal object that has become part of the

⁶ Julia Kristeva studies the relationship between femininity and melancholia in *Black Sun* (1989).

self. Because it had earlier identified with the loved person, the ego loses a part of itself when it loses a loved one, the part that has been internalised through identification or introjection.

When viewed from this perspective, the central role of *Mitsein* in constructing Dasein comes to the fore.⁷ An echo of this can also be heard in Heidegger's characterisation of Dasein's relationship to others as based on guilt (BT, p.328; SZ, p.282). Dasein's guilt implies an ongoing debt to others, a fundamental relationality that characterises it: in being-with-others Dasein has already become guilty or indebted towards them (BT, p.334; SZ, p.288).

Mourning emphasises the emotional intensity and the blurring of boundaries experienced in the death of another. The loss of a loved one demonstrates the complexity of the distinction between self and other, or inner and outer, through which relationship and severance, attachment and detachment, are constructed. Like other Freudian concepts, our relationship to the death of another is permeated with duality and opposing tendencies, with "conflict due to ambivalence" (*Ambivalenzkonflikt*) (SE 14:298; FS 9:58).

Loss is always also the first step of re-investment and contains a dimension of satisfaction stemming from the ambivalence that is part of any love relationship. We fear losing what we love, but the disappearance of the love object elicits mourning that is mixed with relief, even joy, at the libidinal redemption. The death of a loved one arouses ambivalence because it brings out the conflict and mixture of love and hate, sorrow and happiness, which characterise intimate relationships.

These loved ones are on the one hand an inner possession, components of our own ego; but on the other hand they are partly strangers, even enemies. With the exception of only very few situations, there adheres to the tenderest and most intimate of our love-relations a small portion of hostility which can excite an unconscious death-wish (ibid.).

Another level of ambivalence or duality lies in the fact that the loss of another person is always also a loss of self, because *the relationship itself* is part of the self. The libidinal investment has to be retracted and worked through, in order to be re-invested at a later stage. As such the investment is part of the self and therefore the loss of a loved one is a loss of a part of the self, the part that was invested in the relationship.

A third level of ambivalence is the process of detachment on the one hand, and involvement, or re-involvement, on the other, which characterises mourning and loss. The detachment is the actual and symbolic separation, which involves acts of untying and detaching oneself from the dead (lowering the

⁷ The emergence and function of the superego also support this argument. The superego as the internalised parental authority cannot come into existence without an intersubjective process.

coffin into the grave, giving their clothes to charity). The involvement is an opposite trend, in which emotions connected to the deceased rise again, old accounts are vital and alive once more and memories return with a lively force. Looking through photos, reading old letters, reminiscing, are motivated by an urge to latch on to the dead person and refuse to acknowledge the separation.

Mourning also exemplifies the reversibility of the drives, which further establishes the claim about the diffuse boundaries between the self and others. The libido that was invested in a love object is reversed and turned back into the ego, showing that the distinction between ego libido and object libido is an artificial one. In melancholia there is a double reversal. Not only the *direction* of the investment is reversed, but also its *content*: love turns into hate, affection into aggression, vitality into destruction and death. Melancholia turns object love into ego hate.

This brings out the constructive potential of the encounter with the death of another to understanding the boundaries between self and other. Through the work of mourning we learn to see ourselves as invested in others and intertwined with them. As a retraction of an investment that has lost its object, mourning demonstrates the flexibility of that investment, which can be directed both inwards and outwards. This shows that the subject is not an atomistic, self-sufficient unit, but dependent on and continuous with others.

These two characteristics – ambivalence and reversibility – supply the complexity and intersubjective dimension needed to enhance the attitude to the death of another given in *Being and Time*. They enable us to develop further the possibility of authentically experiencing the death of another. If Dasein sees a part of itself reflected in and intertwined with another, the death of that other becomes central to the understanding of mortality. If the loss of another is also the loss of self, the sharp dichotomy between the two kinds of death no longer obtains. This also paves the way for removing the sharp dichotomy between the attitudes towards the two kinds of death.

Regarding internal and external loss as closer and less distinguishable enables us to transcend the dichotomy between the two kinds of loss. The ‘objective’ value of a lost object becomes secondary to *the sense of loss* attached to the object (which might even be imaginary), which Freud deems significant even if the loss itself is invisible to an outsider, as it is in melancholia (SE 14:243; FS 3:194). A loss of an external object (the death of a loved person) is transformed into an internal loss of self. The differentiation between my object and my self is erased, as is the difference between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ loss, and real and imaginary object. The capacity to lose and mourn does not differentiate between myself and others.

The ambivalence expressed in the complex, conflictual relation to the loss of another can be expanded into a more general understanding of human existence as always connected with and dependent on others. This is manifest in our need for relationship with others for development and normal behaviour. Any conception of human existence should include a social dimension as its

basic feature.⁸ This is what Heidegger emphasises with his notion of thrownness: we are always born into an existing world, thrown into a given environment.

This view allows us to regard death as a border element that constitutes Dasein but which is also influenced by *Mitsein*. Even in directing myself towards my death I still maintain a fundamental relation to others. Thus mourning disrupts the distinction between my death and the death of others, and shows that Dasein is *Mitsein* also in mourning. Because the distinction between my death and the death of others is the condition of seeing death as individuating, its disturbance also destabilises the authenticity/inauthenticity distinction, and shows that the two modes are interconnected.

By using the notions of identification and mourning Freud showed the fragile and indeterminate nature of the boundary between self and others. This can serve to establish a connection between self and others that remains intact also in the case of the death of another. Because the subject is inherently intersubjective and grounded in sociality (e.g. the superego), this social dimension also influences the relation to the death of another. Hence the authentic relationship Dasein can establish towards its own death should also be possible towards the death of others.

⁸ This aspect is more developed in the work of Lacan, who stresses the symbolic as a given environment we are born into and thus as logically preceding the individual.

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Death and Moods

The previous chapter expanded the notion of authenticity by showing how an authentic relationship to the death of another is possible. This chapter continues to extend the notion of authenticity by exploring new ways of approaching and achieving it. It criticises the exclusive role Heidegger gives to anxiety and suggests alternative moods that can lead to authenticity. The chapter opens with the question of why anxiety is so central in *Being and Time*, and whether it is the only route to authenticity. I then explore alternative paths to authenticity and to encountering death, first through the Heideggerian interest in love and boredom and then through the Freudian notion of transience.

DISCLOSIVE MOODS: ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO AUTHENTICITY

As was described in Part Two, moods (*Stimmungen*) and affectivity or state of mind (*Befindlichkeit*) play a substantial role in structuring Dasein's understanding and experience. Amongst these, anxiety plays a special role as the only affective state disclosing both the nothing and being-in-the-world as such (*Basic Writings*, pp.93-110; GA 9:103-22; BT, p.232; SZ, p.187). Because of its epistemic role as world-disclosive, anxiety is privileged as the only affective state leading to authenticity.

Although *Being and Time* has an elaborate phenomenology of moods and affectivity, no other affective states are presented as possible links to authenticity. The distinction between affective states that reveal the world as being so and so, and anxiety – the only affective state that reveals the nothing and being-in-the-world as such – gives anxiety a privileged position.

But why is anxiety the condition of authenticity? Why can only anxiety disclose the nothing and being-in-the-world as a whole? Could other reactions in the face of death or the nothing – hysteria, cynical laughter, apathy, sorrow or even acceptance and joy – be authentic?¹ What makes anxiety the only affective state that can lead to authenticity? How does the anguish of anxiety productively disclose? These questions are raised in order to open a space for other affective

¹ Critchley also opens up alternative ways of responding to finitude. "Laughter returns us to the limited condition of our finitude, the shabby and degenerate state of our upper and lower bodily strata, and it is here that the comic allows the windows to fly open onto our tragic condition. Tragedy is insufficiently tragic because it is too tragic [...]. Comedy is tragic by not being a tragedy" (1999, p.235).

states as alternative routes to disclosure, hence broadening the access to authenticity. I question the exclusive link between anxiety and authenticity in two ways: by locating instances in which anxiety does not lead to authenticity and by looking for alternative disclosive affective states.

There are instances in which anxiety does not lead to authenticity: we may experience objectless anxiety without being authentic (as in an anxiety disorder). Although one could argue that these types of anxiety are ontic moods rather than ontological affective states, they still seem experientially indistinguishable from the metaphysical anxiety Heidegger describes. One could also categorise these types of anxiety as inauthentic, because they are epistemically limited rather than world-disclosive. Yet they are genuine experiences of anxiety. They have all the characteristics of metaphysical anxiety, such as lacking an object, a sense of uncanniness and experiencing the world as insignificant. This suggests that anxiety in itself is not a sufficient condition for world disclosure, and in turn, of authenticity.

An additional problem of privileging anxiety is that it is involuntary, comes out of nowhere, and appears, uninvited, in the most innocuous situations. We cannot prepare for it, summon it, or control it (cf. Dreyfus' critique of Blattner's notion of anxiety, 2005, p.xix). It rises out of everyday mundane events in an unpredictable manner. Heidegger writes in *What is Metaphysics?*:

Original anxiety can awaken in existence at any moment. It needs no unusual event to rouse it. Its sway is as thoroughgoing as its possible occasionings are trivial [...]. We are so finite that we cannot even bring ourselves originally before the nothing through our own decision and will (*Basic Writings*, p.106; GA 9:118).

Additionally, Heidegger cannot recommend any active steps towards authenticity since anxiety takes Dasein by surprise, strikes at it within the ordinary everyday world. We cannot prepare for it, summon it, or instigate its arrival. Could other experiences of the nothing or other affective states have a disclosive value as well? In *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger opens a possible route for affective states other than anxiety to disclose the world:

Even and precisely when we are not actually busy with things or ourselves, this "as a whole" overcomes us – for example in genuine boredom [...]. This boredom reveals beings as a whole. Another possibility of such revelation is concealed in our joy in the presence of the Dasein – and not simply of the person – of a human being whom we love. Such being attuned, in which we "are" one way or another and which determines us through and through, lets us find ourselves among beings as a whole (1993, pp.99-100; GA 9:110).

Profound boredom is the source of “remarkable indifference”. Its disclosive capacity arises from its action, which Heidegger likens to that of a muffling fog. It muffles everything until it is covered with indifference. This brings to mind the world-disclosing capacity of anxiety, which reveals being-in-the-world as a whole, because all details and projects sink into equal insignificance. Profound boredom has an equally world-disclosive capacity, which could also lead to authenticity.

Love is another such possible link. The careful attention we give someone and the joy we have in their presence also reveals beings as a whole. This revealing is, more importantly, the *basic occurrence* of Dasein (Heidegger, 1993, p.100; GA 9:110, cf. BT, p.230; SZ, p.186). This brings out Dasein’s nature as disclosive, but moreover as *disclosing through attunement*, through moods and emotional receptivity.

Heidegger claims that although other moods can disclose beings as a whole, or the world, they are unable to expose the nothing in the way anxiety can. “But just when moods of this sort bring us face to face with beings as a whole they conceal from us the nothing we are seeking” (1993, p.100; GA 9:110-1). But this is a different claim about the disclosive function of anxiety than the one put forward in *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time* Heidegger says that what is being disclosed in anxiety is being in the world as such (BT, p.230; SZ, p.186). We are accustomed to say after the fact that ‘it was nothing’ that caused the anxiety, because no particular entity within the world was its source. But what we call ‘nothing’ is in fact the world as such, so what is disclosed in anxiety is the world as world.

On the *Being and Time* conception of anxiety, it is indeed akin to Heidegger’s characterisation of profound boredom and love as world-disclosing. A further comment in *What Is Metaphysics?* paves the way for a further analogy. “[Anxiety] stands [...] in secret alliance with the cheerfulness and gentleness of creative longing” (1993, p.106; GA 9:118). The negativity of anxiety is balanced by positive moods, such as love and gentleness, and by the neutral mood of boredom. These comments open the way for affective states other than anxiety to disclose the world or beings as a whole and therefore to be potential paths to authenticity.

There is a critical tension between two claims Heidegger makes. On the one hand he gives moods and affectivity an important epistemic role, and on the other he singles out anxiety as the only affective state leading to authenticity. Given the centrality of moods to disclosure, perhaps it would be more appropriate to distinguish between different levels of disclosure, rather than institute a dichotomy between anxiety and all other moods.

So love and boredom (to name the examples Heidegger uses) are also possible ways of disclosing central features of the world. There are others. In a later text, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, based on a lecture course from 1937-1938 Heidegger turns to wonder “as the basic disposition compelling us into the necessity of primordial thinking” (1994, p.143; GA 45:165). This primordial

thinking could be equated to an authentic and hence truthful viewing of the world, and in this sense wonder also has an important disclosive function.²

So we see that in principle there is no barrier to bringing further moods into the discussion and examining their disclosive function. Once we have established that, we can introduce Freud into the discussion, to gain a helpful insight from his conception of moods and anxiety.

A Comparative View of Anxiety

Like Heidegger, Freud diagnoses the mood of his time as a mood of anxiety, in this sense elevating anxiety to the level of an ontological or disclosive affective state. Both relate modernity and technology to anxiety. Freud writes:

Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety (SE 22:198; FS 9:270).

This description bears an affinity to Heidegger's diagnosis of the 20th century as dominated by anxiety and various forms of its evasion. Both Heidegger and Freud connect this general state of anxiety to technology. Heidegger writes in *What is Philosophy?*: "Doubt and despair on the one hand, blind obsession by untested principles, on the other, conflict with one another. Fear and anxiety are mixed with hope and confidence" (1956, pp.90-1, bi-lingual edition).

Within this context, both acknowledge the link between private moods and public modes of experience or attunement, accounting for the relationship between the general, ontological affective states and personal ontic moods. For both the analysis of anxiety is tied to the general state of modernity, perhaps of man's newly found sense of omnipotence and the dangers brought about by that sense. For both, anxiety is rooted in the historical and civilisatory conditions of modernity.

Although in *Being and Time* anxiety is built into the ahistorical structure of Dasein, modernity and historicity are central themes for Heidegger. Even though he begins writing about modernity only at a later stage the concept remains a central one for Heidegger from then onwards. The affinity between Heidegger and Freud on the issue of modernity seems to point to an historical awareness shared by both.³

² Despite the difference between Heidegger's thought before and after the 'turn'.

³ Heidegger begins to discuss modernity in his 1929-1930 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. His position is best exemplified in *The Question Concerning Technology (Die Frage nach der Technik)* (1993, pp.283-318; GA 7:5-36).

Another central feature of anxiety that both thinkers note is its physiological element. Freud was well aware of the physiological and psychosomatic aspects of anxiety, which make it not only a mood but also a psychophysical state. Anxiety is understood through the anti-dualism or holism that both he and Heidegger share. Dasein and the Freudian subject are embodied, and as such their moods are reflected in bodily functions and reactions (BT, p.234; SZ, p.190).

Turning to differences, we can see that although anxiety plays a positive ontological role for Heidegger, it has severe psychological implications. But Heidegger's analysis of anxiety is based on its momentary nature: anxiety strikes and then retracts. Its only result (which is essentially positive) is the transformation to authenticity.

However, although it is momentary, it is also recurring, so it is important to examine the long-term existence of an anxious Dasein. In this sense Heidegger's discussion of anxiety is limited to its momentary epistemic role, and is not explicitly positioned within the wider phenomenology of moods. The significance of a prolonged anxious existence is not examined in *Being and Time*. Anxiety is portrayed as a momentary response to metaphysical disclosure, not as a continuous state of existence like pathological anxiety disorders are for Freud.

Uncanny Disclosure

Heidegger describes the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) as a feeling of strangeness and alienation, of being not-at-home. In this situation the general familiar context disappears, and Dasein loses its understanding with which it comports itself and pursues its projects. The uncanny is the origin of individuation and appears as a mute and empty call, which "discourses in the uncanny mode of *keeping silent*" (BT, p.322; SZ, p.277).

This uncanny moment is not irrelevant to everyday life. In fact, the uncanny is intimately linked to the everyday because it is the appearance of the familiar as estranged and foreign. Heidegger posits the uncanny as a fundamental mode of existence, which has been covered up by everydayness and *das Man* but reappears when concealment breaks down. This explains its unpredictable appearance; the uncanny is not a novel encounter with a strange object that can be avoided. It is a fundamental form of existence, which is "the more primordial phenomenon". Everyday familiar existence is a mode of uncanniness, not the reverse (BT, p.234; SZ, p.189).

The experience of the uncanny occupies a privileged position for Heidegger, because it is a world-disclosive experience. Although its appearance is rare, the uncanny plays a central role in overthrowing Dasein's forgetfulness. This is not an ordinary kind of disclosure, but a disclosure of the familiar world as alien, estranged, not-at-home. As Heidegger writes in the *History of the Concept of Time*, "Anxiety is nothing but *the disposition to uncanniness*" (1992,

p.291; GA 20:402, translation modified). Previously Heidegger described anxiety as a situation in which one is distanced from its world and network of significance. The uncanny is an experience of homelessness. As such Dasein's projective character always carries it beyond any particular world, in which it might consider itself 'at home'. The uncanny is the flip side of feeling 'at-home', when a trivial moment exposes what Dasein does not wish to see, as if a corner of everyday life "has curled up, and there was a glimpse of the lining" (Nabokov, 1959, p.124). Mostly, we attempt to flee the uncanny by succumbing to the clammy embrace of *das Man* (BT, p.234; SZ, p.189).

In *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger explains the uncanny as an eerie feeling accompanying Dasein's sinking into indifference. It is when the familiar world recedes and stops making sense that the uncanny emerges and exposes an unfamiliar aspect of the quotidian. This pulling away of the world makes new aspects of it emerge, and forces Dasein to re-examine it through the turning away of things, from a vacuous suspension, hovering in anxiety (Heidegger, 1993, p.101; GA 9:111-2).

The experience of the uncanny confronts Dasein with its existence as thrown projection, always already fallen into the world. Dasein is confronted with the fact that it is never all it could be, and therefore any position it occupies within the world is always a partial fulfilment of one possibility among many. Dasein is ultimately groundless because it can only ever choose one possibility, and must tolerate not having chosen the others and not being able to (BT, p.331; SZ, p.285).

Its freedom is conditional, based on a fundamental groundlessness or thrownness. Dasein is thrown into a world that it has not at bottom chosen so it is never totally at home in any particular world. Therefore its uncanniness is part of its constitution as a projective thrownness (Mulhall, 1996b, p.127). This, in turn, means that care, as the basic structure of Dasein, is always permeated with uncanniness, making it an integral feature of human experience.

Does the uncanny have to be inherently linked to anxiety? Heidegger formulates the uncanny as an integral part of anxiety, but I suggest prising the two apart, through two alternative accounts of the uncanny, given by Freud and Stanley Cavell. They describe it as an eerie feeling of discomfort and as a philosophical mood, respectively. As such, the uncanny is detached from the full-blown anxiety Heidegger sees as containing it. If we can provide an account of the uncanny as independent from anxiety and nonetheless world-disclosing, we will have another instance of an affective state that allows us access to authenticity.

In his 1919 essay *The Uncanny (Das Unheimliche)* Freud provides two formulations of the phenomenon. The uncanny is a class of the frightening which leads back to what is long known and familiar (SE 17:220; FS 4:244). And the uncanny is something that is secretly familiar, which has undergone repression and then returned from it (SE 17:245; FS 4:268).

In this essay, Freud recounts E.T.A. Hoffman's tale of *The Sandman*, the story of the young Nathaniel, haunted by the appearance and reappearance of the sandman as a semi-fantastic character, who steals his eyes, kills his father, and drives Nathaniel to his tragic death (1982). Freud explains Nathaniel's obsession with the sandman as castration anxiety, in which the eyes take the place of the penis.

Freud claims that the origin of the uncanny feeling is not intellectual or cognitive, but is rather a certain mood that accompanies an encounter with the familiar. Despite the fact that we know "the sober truth", this knowledge "does not lessen the impression of uncanniness in the least degree" (SE 17:230; FS 4:254). The uncanny feeling has no connection to any external objective problem; it has to do, rather, with a certain suspicion or fear, a loss of faith in our basic grasp of reality.

Freud offers two alternative explanations of the uncanny. The first regards it as stemming from primary narcissism, when the ego creates an inner double whose function is to ensure the preservation of the ego. Once this stage is passed, the double remains as a residue whose function is reversed to become a destructive one, as the uncanny harbinger of death. The second explanation of the creation of the double belongs to a later developmental stage, and suggests that the superego splits off from the self and thus becomes a critical double which stands separate from the ego and attacks it (SE 17:235; FS 4:258).

When Freud defines the situations that evoke uncanny feelings he describes an uneasy emotion that attaches itself to familiar objects that all of a sudden appear alien. He describes the uncomfortable feeling that arises from seeing body parts or automatons behaving as humans (SE 17:226; FS 4:256). Compulsive repetition can evoke an uncanny feeling. The unconscious has such a compulsion to repeat, manifested by the return of the repressed. Such repetition can either take the form of the return of familiar content that has been repressed, or of a primitive belief, which has supposedly been overcome, but is suddenly verified.

An uncanny feeling in literature expresses residues of primitive beliefs. In reality this feeling is the return of the repressed and is more powerful (SE 17:373; FS 4:271-2). In both cases the uncanny can appear as a mild sensation or a feeling of discomfort, but does not require anxiety. This is one example of an uncanny experience that is not linked to anxiety.

Cavell criticises Freud's insistence on understanding the uncanny as a type of castration anxiety. He thinks that the two explanations: seeing the uncanny as the return of the repressed and explaining it as castration anxiety can be combined (1988). Cavell then goes on to compare the uncanny feeling Freud discusses to the philosophical procedure of casting extreme doubt (1988, p.158). Casting doubt causes the familiar world to vanish, leaving the sceptic in a state

of uncertainty.⁴ The return from the sceptical moment is the return of the familiar: the world returns as it was, and yet with what Cavell calls ‘a perfect difference’, a difference which either applies to everything or to nothing at all, thus making the difference complete and unnoticeable. This perfect difference, says Cavell, *is* the uncanny (1988, p.166).

He concludes that philosophy is unhappy with everyday life, and although it needs an answer to the threat of scepticism, the everyday seems lost and remote in the uncanny moment. In this sense the everyday is not trivially given but a philosophical task. “The world must be regained every day, in repetition, regained as gone” Cavell writes. “Freud too thinks of mourning as an essentially repetitive exercise [...]. Learning mourning may be the achievement of a lifetime” (1988, p.172).

Here the uncanny is not an anxious experience, but an experience inherently linked to mourning. In the uncanny moment the everyday is lost, and by learning mourning it can be regained. This relationship between everydayness and mourning is linked to the idea of transience as underlying human experience, discussed previously. Transience and the sceptic’s threat of losing the everyday are both acknowledged through mourning. Here too the uncanny is not linked to anxiety, allowing affective states other than anxiety to link us to authenticity. The uncanny and transience are both ways in which we can move away from the Heideggerian emphasis on anxiety as a crucial element in the transition to authenticity.

Cavell links the two ideas by suggesting that we can regain the everyday through mourning; through a deep understanding of everything we love and depend on as transient and fallible. After realising that the world exists for us only as lost, we can overcome this realisation through mourning. Since the world is lost and uncanny we must regain it every day through the work of mourning. Mourning is a condition of accepting the beauty and value of the world. Beauty as an ephemeral thing whose disappearance we cannot prevent contains within it mourning for its future annihilation and recognition of the fragility of our relationship to it.

LOVE INTIMATING MORTALITY

Rather than focusing on anxiety, Freud turns to more positive experiences as an answer to the question of how to face death or how to mourn. The question of mourning is the question of how to treat our losses, which Freud responds to with the notion of transience. For Freud transience is the condition of anything

⁴ This description brings to mind Descartes’ hyperbolic doubt in the beginning of the second meditation: “So serious are the doubts into which I am thrown [...] that I can neither put them out of my mind nor see any way of resolving them. It feels as though I have fallen unexpectedly into a deep whirlpool which tumbles me around so I can neither stand up on the bottom nor swim up to the top” (1996 [1641], p.16).

having value. I use his notion of transience to show that positive experiences of love, beauty and happiness could intimate an understanding of finitude as much as death and anxiety. Positive experiences could therefore serve as alternative routes to authenticity, replacing anxiety.

In *On Transience* Freud claims, “The proneness to decay of all that is beautiful and perfect can, as we know, give rise to two different impulses in the mind”. One leads to “aching despondency” while the other leads to rebellion against the fact of transience that has been asserted (SE 14:305; FS 10:225). These attitudes towards transience are linked to the question of mourning, as mourning is a process of coming to terms with loss.

For Freud’s companions mourning is unbearable. “The idea that all this beauty was transient was giving these two sensitive minds a foretaste of mourning over its decease” (SE 14:306; FS 10:226). For them to mourn is to acknowledge the loss and transience of life itself; an unbearable psychic process. As Phillips puts it, because they cannot acknowledge transience they cannot mourn, and because they cannot mourn they cannot afford to love, as love is always love for a transient object (1999, p.27).

But for others, such as Freud, mourning is a creative force, in which what was lost is overcome. For those who overcome the fantasy of permanence, the value of an object – in this case the value of life – is enhanced by its transience, “its evanescence only lends it a fresh charm” (SE 14:306; FS 10:225, grammar modified). These people do not require the fantasy of permanence and eternity. For them acknowledging loss is the condition of pleasure, and loving life means loving transience. They can affirm life, beauty and desire *because* they are transient, not in spite of that fact (Phillips, 1999, p.26ff.).

The lesson Freud gleans from his stroll in the mountains is that there seems to be an inescapable knot tying together loss and pleasure, transience and beauty, death and life. Mourning the death of others and coming to terms with ones’ own finitude seem to articulate the ultimate form of loss and transience. Thus mourning is not only about death but also about life and its relation to death, or pleasure and its relation to loss. In this sense, learning how to mourn constitutes the most valuable lesson for life.

Freud’s idea, shared by Heidegger, is that life and death are inseparable and tied together. There is no point in trying to posit life and death in a dichotomous relation, which fails to account for the uncanny reminders death inserts into life, or for the continuous presence of death in life through manifestations of finitude. By avoiding the life/death dichotomy and blurring the sharp distinction through which they are usually understood, a more complex view arises, which gives an account of how death influences and affects life, how death exists in life in a constant and fundamental manner.

Nonetheless, Heidegger and Freud differ in an important sense. Whereas for Freud life and death, love and hate, Eros and aggression are intimately linked as two fundamental aspects of existence, for Heidegger death rules the entire dynamics of life; it gives Dasein its meaning as temporal and

historical. The lack of Eros, or the fact that there is no primary explanation or motive for life to balance the pivotal role of death in the text, is a prominent feature of *Being and Time*, although from the perspective of Heidegger's project in its entirety, this is counter-balanced by the overarching predominance of being (Heidegger, 2000, p.1; GA 40:1).

On Transience offers alternative ways to authentically encounter finitude, thus refuting the Heideggerian exclusive focus on anxiety. Through ambivalence and the two-drive model Freud links life and death, value and transience, teaching us to see hate hidden in love, potential decrepitude in beauty and death in life. Life and death both reflect the limitation and transience that constitute human experience as finite.

How is death articulated through positive emotions? According to Freud and to some extent also Heidegger, death is the ultimate experience of loss; in Heideggerian terms one might say that death is the loss of all possibility of loss. Death is the defining experience of a life limited by finitude. Death marks life with finitude, operating as the ultimate signifier of loss and limitation. Finitude makes life a constant work of mourning for all transient things.

But this double bind of life and death does not leave life simply shadowed by death, imprinted with loss and grief. The dismay and disappointment that are a part of life do not ultimately designate it to be a sad parade of loss and irony. Rather, life is ruled by nature as the source of the laws and limitations constituting our lives, the first and foremost being death. In this sense death can be viewed as a welcome constraint, the condition of possibility for having a life at all.

This allows a transition in the way we view death. On the basis of Freud's ethics of finitude I argue that letting go of perfectionism opens up a creative space for an attainable notion of well-being. Exchanging perfectionism for attainability means pursuing life in a way that combines realism about what can be achieved within a positive horizon (cf. Phillips, 1999 and Craib, 1994).

Finding an alternative view can open us to a new experience of living, marked by death and finitude, but allowing room for play and creativity within the confines of that space. By distinguishing the inevitable from the chosen, we can construe a life that avoids omnipotent fantasies of supreme control and respects the ineluctable limitations of life.

Freud's work did much to enable such a view. He realised that modesty is a necessary tool for therapeutic achievement and that a lessening of suffering can be achieved by re-articulating life as limited and immanent. This understanding opens a place for potential happiness, distinguished by its achievability. As such it is potentially more satisfying and comprehensive, because it allows us to understand death as existing in life rather than as something that should be repressed. By linking love and happiness with death and transience a more comprehensive understanding of life is achieved. This is also the key to new paths to authenticity, which encounter finitude in positive experiences.

Death and the Unconscious

Freud sees the prevalent attitude towards death as one of repression. Nonetheless he argues that we have no unconscious conception of *our own* death, which led Freud to emphasise the death of another and the attitudes towards it. This view constitutes one of the main differences between Freud and Heidegger. For Freud a complete understanding of death is always of the death of *another*, because the unconscious cannot contain the fact of its annihilation. Heidegger emphasises one's *own* death as significant. Earlier I showed that Heidegger's notion of death could be made more relational. Now I critically examine Freud's claim that we have no unconscious attitude towards our own death.

I first explore some of Freud's comments that contradict his explicit view, and examine possible points of contact between Heidegger and Freud's positions. I then ask whether the Heideggerian notion of covering up is a form of Freudian repression, and if so, whether death can be seen as repressed material in the unconscious of inauthentic Dasein. A positive answer has two significant implications. First, it must allow Dasein to have a depth structure with an unconscious component. Second, it means that Freud is wrong in claiming that there is no unconscious awareness of death.

I then suggest that an unconscious acknowledgement of one's own death is possible, provided that it is mediated through the death of another. The next step is to map this position onto the authenticity/inauthenticity distinction, showing that Dasein must have an unconscious attitude to its own death if it is to be authentic, and that the inauthentic attitude that covers up death has affinities to Freudian repression.

“AS IF IT WERE IMMORTAL”

Thoughts for the Times on War and Death was written six months after the outbreak of World War I, and is concerned with attitudes towards death and loss. The essay contrasts the rational theoretical understanding of death with its denial in practice:

To anyone who listened to us we were of course prepared to maintain that death was the necessary outcome of life, that everyone owes nature a death and must expect to pay the debt – in short that death was natural, undeniable and unavoidable. In reality, however, we were accustomed to behave as if it were otherwise. We showed an

unmistakable tendency to put death on one side, to eliminate it from life (SE 14:288; FS 9:49).

Freud concludes that, “at bottom no one believes in his own death [...]. In the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality” (ibid.). Thus death cannot appear as contents in the unconscious, although on a conscious level we behave as if we understand our mortality. Freud writes: “death is an abstract concept with a negative content for which no unconscious correlative can be found” (SE 19:58; FS 3:324).

It is important to note that the absence of death from the unconscious is not a problem for the death drive. There is no ideational content at the drive level, so the death drive does not give us anything to represent. As Angel Garma writes: “The fact that there is no unconscious representation of one’s own death does not imply that the death instinct does not exist [...]. One’s own death can only be represented by a total lack of mental representations” (1971, p.146).

The split between what we are willing to acknowledge consciously and what we are unable to admit unconsciously is the split between the rational conceptualisation of death as an unavoidable fact and the unconscious complete denial of this fact. This distinction maps onto the distinction between social and private attitudes to death: whereas socially and consciously we accept our death, privately and unconsciously we are barred from doing so.

This description of the split attitude towards death based on the individual/social distinction is diametrically opposed to Heidegger’s, who distinguishes between our existential acknowledgement of death (authentic and individuated) and the social denial of it (inauthentic and governed by *das Man*). Whereas Freud constructs a barrier preventing us from acknowledging our death (the unconscious is unable to know death), Heidegger demands this very acknowledgement as a condition of authenticity. For Heidegger, the leap to authenticity requires an encounter with death. And since for Heidegger there is no unconscious, there is no internal barrier that may prevent this encounter.

The shift from inauthentic public fleeing from death to the authentic embrace of my finitude is therefore an individual quest demanding Dasein to free itself from the shackles of *das Man* by answering the call of conscience. This does not alter Dasein’s structure.¹ Thus the change in the attitude towards death can be categorised as contingent – depending on the appearance of the call of conscience – and as bound solely by the internal content of Dasein’s conscience. This makes Dasein potentially receptive to the call and capable of acknowledging its own death – in opposition to Freud’s structural barring of that acknowledgment.

¹ The exception is of course *das Man*, but as was discussed in Chapter Five, because there is no pure authenticity, resoluteness does not require discarding *das Man* but rethinking Dasein’s relationship to it.

Despite this difference both thinkers recognise the split between the public and personal attitudes to death and acknowledge that each individual experiences both positions. But Freud seems to oscillate between two views of the social dimension of death. On the one hand, he places considerable weight on the loss of another and sees mourning as an authentic expression of loss. On the other hand, he views public utterances about death as highly censored (both socially, by limiting what is acceptable to say about death, and individually, by presenting a rationalised position towards it) and partial.

As he points out, “the civilised man will carefully avoid speaking of such a possibility [...] and can hardly even entertain the thought of another person’s death without seeming to himself hard-hearted or wicked” (SE 14:289-90; FS 9:49). Heidegger’s view is more uniform. He thinks that the public attitude towards death is one of covering up and fleeing it and that the death of another is not encountered authentically.

Freud also points out that “our habit is to lay stress on the fortuitous causation of the death – accident, disease, infection, advanced age; in this way we betray an effort to reduce death from a necessity to a chance event” (SE 14:290; FS 9:50). This attempt to portray death as avoidable constitutes the inauthentic fleeing from death Heidegger analyses. The problematic relation to the owning of death is partially overcome by a splitting process that creates a rational, conscious attitude (inauthentic) and an irrational, unconscious one (complete denial). Breaking death into two topographically distinct components allows us to combine the conscious rational idea that ‘everyone must die sometime’ with an unconscious denial of the relevance of this to *me*, thus maintaining the unconscious illusion of immortality.²

But this solution still leaves us tormented by the tense relationship to our own death. We are incapable of acknowledging it fully, but are nonetheless haunted by it. Freud makes no suggestion about how to deal with this residue, which also exposes the limits of rationality within the Freudian schema. He does, however, suggest that we avoid living beyond our psychological means, or in other words, acknowledge the limitation and finitude of our own existence. This acknowledgment is not a heroic embrace of our limits, like the Heideggerian resolute confrontation. Rather, Freud’s ethics of finitude is a quiet appeasement emerging from a lesson learnt slowly and patiently, the lesson of mourning (cf. Stanley Cavell, 1988, p.156).

Heidegger’s strategy for dealing with this undesired ownership is the opposite one. Heidegger wants us to acknowledge our death in a single blow, to allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by death in the experience of anxiety. Freud,

² This immortality is possible, Wittgenstein argues, as long as we live in the present. If we have no sense of past and future and do not experience the passing of time as a progression towards death then we become eternal. “If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present” (op.cit. §6.4311).

more modestly, wants us to learn to comply with the inevitable. We need to prepare for our own death by learning to accept it, by letting it be. But this cannot be done directly. It is through mourning that we can learn to separate ourselves from the fantasy of immortality, but only partially.

But how can we learn mourning without letting this knowledge into the unconscious? Is knowledge of death possible without any unconscious participation? Does Freud leave any room for an unconscious acknowledgement of death? Returning to *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, we find Freud insisting that the kernel of death, negation, is absent from the unconscious:

Our unconscious, then, does not believe in its own death; it behaves as if it were immortal. What we call our 'unconscious' – the deepest strata of our minds, made up of instinctual impulses – knows nothing that is negative, and no negation; in it contradictories coincide. For that reason it does not know its own death, for to that we can give only a negative content (SE 14:296; FS 9:56).

Freud's position is clear: the unconscious can only respond to the idea of its own death with *disbelief*. The disbelief regarding our own death is complimented by two additional attitudes towards the death of others: *confidence* in the death of an enemy, and *ambivalence* towards the death of a loved one.

I suggest the following path to understanding our own death within this schema. Although we cannot demand the unconscious to recognise death, we can look to ambivalence as an alternative route to such recognition. We can view ambivalence as made up of the two other attitudes Freud lists: disbelief and confidence, or even relief.

As such ambivalence would be an intermediate position between denial (of my own death) and confidence (in the death of an enemy). This would be an intermediate position between the two attitudes (disbelief and confidence) but also between the two types of death: my own and another's. If we add to this the identification with loved ones we can gain an insight into ourselves as mortal, through the ambivalent response to the death of a loved one. The relationship to a loved other allows us a circuitous path to understanding our own finitude.

In the attitude of what he calls "primeval man" Freud finds this ambivalence: on the one hand primeval man "took death seriously" but on the other he also "denied death and reduced it to nothing". These contradictory attitudes coincide only in the case of the death of a loved one, someone who has been partially internalised through identification, and is in this sense a part of one's self. The result is ambivalence:

Then, in his pain, he was forced to learn that one can die, too, oneself, and his whole being revolted against the admission; for each of these loved ones was, after all, a part of his own beloved ego. But, on the other hand, deaths such as these pleased him as well, since in each of

the loved ones there was also something of the stranger (SE 14:293; FS 9:53).

This passage illustrates my point that through the death of a loved one with whom we identify, we realise that we too will die. This is the source of the ambivalence in our love relations, since acknowledging the death of a loved one comes dangerously close to acknowledging our own death, or at least our vulnerability. Freud goes on to say that in order to face his own death, 'primeval man' had to devise a compromise: "he conceded the fact of his own death as well, but denied it the significance of annihilation" (SE 14:294; FS 9:54). The various notions of an afterlife and the myriad of preservation techniques from mummification to deep freezing are manifestations of this compromise.

Freud concludes that "our unconscious, then, does not believe in its own death; it behaves as though it were immortal [...]. Thus there is nothing instinctual in us which responds to a belief in death" (SE 14:296; FS 9:56). Freud suggests that we give death the cultural place that is its due, and give "a little more prominence to the unconscious attitude towards death which we have hitherto so carefully repressed" (SE 14:299; FS 9:59). We can make life more tolerable by preparing ourselves for death, by acknowledging the repressive attitude of culture towards death.

The essay concludes that repression, which has in the past been an appropriate mechanism for dealing with death, is no longer operative, due to socio-political changes such as frequent and grand-scale wars. We must develop a new way of dealing with death, based on removing the repression and creating the psychic space necessary for a process of acknowledging death and bereavement.

IS DEATH THE UNCONSCIOUS OF INAUTHENTIC DASEIN?

So how do we work through our mortality and come to grips with our finitude? Since the unconscious is barred from having any conception of its death, any working through of mortality must be done on a conscious level. In this sense preparing for death is not an analytic task of uncovering unconscious material, but a conscious reassessment of life's stakes and values. This process, although conscious, is not necessarily a process of denial based on rationalisation. It is rather an emotional work, based on a form of acknowledgement, not resignation.

Freud does not spell out this process beyond setting the ethical imperative to "prepare for death". He therefore leaves it to us to develop this suggestion. One way to do this is by incorporating the Heideggerian emphasis on one's own death into this schema. But is there a notion of unconscious in Heidegger's account of Dasein? If so, does that unconscious have place for death in it?

In first glance, it seems that there is no room for an unconscious within Dasein. From a phenomenological point of view Dasein cannot contain an

impenetrable, unapproachable portion. As William Richardson writes: “For how can a method whose only scope is the study of the conscious processes in man discover anything about what is by definition not conscious, *unconscious*, in him?” (1988, p.180).

On the other hand, understanding (and self-understanding) always contains an implicit trace of hiddenness, of incompleteness, which is a result of the subjective viewpoint that by definition gives a partial perspective, a specific angle or a particular point of view. If we apply this general rule about the limitation of any particular point of view to Dasein’s view of itself, we can see that Dasein is not entirely conspicuous to itself at all times. We can therefore assume that Dasein has a portion that is un-conscious. But this idea would at most allow for a preconscious, the psychic contents that are not repressed, but are simply not conscious at a given moment.

The preconscious is distinguished from the unconscious in an important sense. Whereas the conscious and preconscious systems are in principle transparent to conscious introspection, the unconscious is *by definition* opaque. The unconscious is not a second, inaccessible form of consciousness, but a separate psychic system (which is the original system from which consciousness develops) governed by different rules. The idea of a phenomenon as partial or containing a hidden aspect is very different from the idea of the unconscious. Whereas what is hidden can, in principle, be disclosed through conscious introspection (for inner objects) or observation (for outer objects), the unconscious is impervious to conscious probing.

This leads Joseph Kockelmans to argue that at first sight we may believe that we can locate Freud’s notion of the unconscious within Heidegger’s conception of phenomenology, because his underlying methodological assumption is that what shows itself (phenomena) has aspects that are hidden. But this hidden aspect is very different to Freud’s conception of the unconscious. “For phenomenology attributes to the ‘unconscious’ the structure of consciousness itself, namely intentionality, and thus reduces the unconscious to an inferior form of consciousness” (1988, p.32). So we cannot assume that phenomenology can accommodate a Freudian unconscious.

But perhaps this verdict is too quick. Maybe there are good reasons to assume an unconscious in Dasein, especially with respect to death. I suggest that Dasein not only can but has to have an unconscious because of the structure of covering up Heidegger presents as the inauthentic denial of death performed by *das Man*. If inauthentic Dasein covers over death, the covered up material must be deposited somewhere where it can be aroused in response to the call of conscience. Such a hidden space is the Freudian unconscious. Let us work out this suggestion in detail.

Heidegger and Freud agree that an *inauthentic conscious* attitude to death is possible and moreover pervasive. Heidegger expresses this through the notion of *das Man* and Freud by saying that “we show an unmistakable tendency to put death on one side, to eliminate it from life” (SE 14:289; FS 9:49, grammar

modified). Both deem it necessary to construct an *authentic conscious* relation to death. This is Heidegger's authentic, anxious encounter with death, which is a conscious wilful encounter.

But can Freud endorse an authentic conscious relation to death, given that a purely conscious idea lacks an unconscious dimension? Would this attitude be authentic? I suggest that this authentic conscious attitude is what Freud offers us in his ethical imperative. The call to integrate death into our lives, to stop living psychologically beyond our means, is analogous to the call to face death resolutely, to end our flight from it. But there is a significant difference in tone between the two calls: Heidegger's rhetoric is virile and active; Freud's is reactive and passive. This does not mean that one is more adequate than another, but points to two different ways of authentically facing or coming to terms with one's own death: resolute response to anxiety and quiet appeasement created through mourning.

Turning back to inauthenticity, we now need to ask whether Heidegger's putative rejection of the unconscious is compatible with the idea of fleeing from death. If inauthenticity means covering up death, where does the repressed material go? Although Heidegger claims we cover up our death, he does not tell us where the repressed material is retained. I suggest that the idea of covering up requires an unconscious. Inauthentic Dasein covers over death by turning it into repressed material that continues to exist in an unconscious.

It is important to avoid the view of the unconscious as a storage space and of uncovering as merely stripping a cover to expose something that is objectively there. Both the unconscious and what is covered over are not recovered by merely reversing the covering up. Uncovering is a creative process, a structural change, not simply baring something. Therefore the analytic process is not just one of recovering repressed memories but a creative process of self-discovery and restoration. Heidegger's notion of truth as *aletheia*, literally un-covering (*a-letheia*) is similarly described as an *event*, a happening of truth in which truth is created in as much as it is uncovered.

We can therefore view uncovering as an awakening, a recovery of vitality and interaction between conscious and unconscious elements. The unconscious is not a static storeroom, but constantly interacts with consciousness. An awakening of one unconscious part in response to the call of conscience can, in turn, awaken another part, and so on, to create a chain reaction of awakening dormant unconscious elements that underlie consciousness. Covering over requires a continued investment of effort to prevent awakening and to maintain Dasein in non-truth. Covering over or repression can be seen as a systematic paralysis, a failure of awakening, a refusal to respond to the call.

This suggestion is corroborated by Heidegger's discussion of anxiety and the call of conscience. Since anxiety can arise, it must exist in dormant form in Dasein. Hence, the notion of my own death cannot disappear; it must be covered up, otherwise it would not be able to affect Dasein through anxiety.

Heidegger allows for this by stating that anxiety and uncanniness are Dasein's hidden but more fundamental way of being (BT, p.234; SZ, p.189).

Although this suggestion seems to be incompatible with phenomenology, it also seems reasonable to assume that Dasein must have some sort of an unconscious part, because inauthenticity is enabled by covering up and fleeing. If to enable inauthenticity Dasein must cover over its own death, then it must also have the potential of uncovering what it covered up. We therefore must ask whether covering up can legitimately be seen as a form of repression. The answer will tell us if Dasein has something that could justifiably be called an unconscious. If it does, this will raise doubts about Freud's claim that our own death is barred from the unconscious.

IS COVERING UP A FORM OF REPRESSION?

Is covering up a form of repression in the Freudian sense, i.e., an action that turns conscious material unconscious? Heidegger defines covering up (*verdecken*) as the counter-concept of phenomenon. If phenomena are what show themselves, what is covered up is invisible or appears in disguise as a semblance (*Schein*). However, he also says that what can become a phenomenon can also be hidden. What can show itself can also not show itself. In fact, the need for phenomenology arises because the phenomena are for the most part *not* given (BT, p.60; SZ, p.36).

Heidegger distinguishes three modes of covering up. The first is *hiddenness* (*verborgen*), in which the phenomenon has still not been discovered. The second is *burying-over* (*verschütten*), in which the phenomenon has been discovered but is covered up again. And finally *disguising* (*verstellen*), in which the phenomenon has been discovered but is partially covered up again and is only visible as a semblance (*Schein*) (BT, p.59; SZ, p.35). The common feature of these modes is that the covering up is reversible. The disappearance of the phenomenon is not an erasure; it still exists although it is not available to the phenomenological gaze. This is the key element common to covering up and the unconscious.

There are further parallels. Phenomenology aims to uncover psychological phenomena, and as such is parallel to psychoanalysis; both methods aim at uncovering the mind and its functions. But the two methods also differ. Psychoanalysis operates through free association and uncovering memories. This process is essentially dialogic and requires a witnessing analyst. Phenomenological scrutiny does not require this dialogic set-up. Psychoanalysis focuses on memory, emotion and the analysand's psychic life. Phenomenology focuses on cognition, perception and experience, which it sheds light on through attentiveness to mental processes and phenomenal content. And finally, Heidegger's covering up is public or supported by society as a whole through *das Man*, not by an individual as is the case with the Freudian unconscious.

Covering up is ontologically significant. Because it resists uncovering it makes phenomenology an active pursuit, an act of *wresting* being from the phenomena. Because it illuminates being it is both a positive and self-critical activity (BT, p.61; SZ, p.36). In this sense, too, the two methods have a similar function of self-scrutiny ultimately resulting in enhanced self-understanding or raised level of psychic integration.

Bearing these parallels in mind, let us now turn to the particular covering up of death. In falling Dasein covers up its ownmost being-towards-death (BT, p.295; SZ, p.251). This covering up is fleeing, so in falling being-towards-death is an evasion that *conceals* (BT, p.299; SZ, p.255). Covering up does not just hide Dasein's mortality; it also hides the full meaning of its life. What is covered up is not only the fact that death is always our own death, but also that life is always our own life (cf. Mulhall, 2005). A confrontation with death is a confrontation with Dasein's existence as a whole, and therefore demands an engagement with the question of how should Dasein lead its finite life?

The denial of death is also the denial of the significance of death for life. It is the denial of mineness not just as the condition of death but also as the condition of life. Because Heidegger focuses not on death but on being towards it, or living a finite life, what is being covered up is not just the demand that we face our own death, but also the requirement that we take responsibility for our finite life. In other words, the issue that is being covered up is that of how to incorporate finitude into our view of life, how to understand life as a meaningful limited whole.³

If covering up is the mechanism Heidegger points to as the source of hiddenness, for Freud it is repression. Repression is the process in which the subject attempts to repel, or to confine to the unconscious, representations that are bound to a drive (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.390). If the death drive is the instinctual source of thoughts, images and anxieties about death, these are then repressed in a way that prevents them from re-emerging but does not eliminate them altogether.

So can we now say that covering up is a form of repression? The answer is positive, I believe, because the two mechanisms share many functional and structural features. Both act as defence mechanisms, both deport unpleasant or threatening ideas elsewhere, both retain their contents while covering them up. The most significant feature is the last, the fact that the repressed or covered up contents are not annihilated but are kept underground, as it were, thus maintaining the possibility of being uncovered and of affecting conscious processes.

³ Wittgenstein expresses a similar sentiment in the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1922). "The contemplation of the world *sub specie aeterni* is its contemplation as a limited whole. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling" (§6.45).

THERE IS AN UNCONSCIOUS AWARENESS OF DEATH

So where are the repressed or covered up thoughts about death located? If they are repressed, then they must be located in the unconscious, but Freud rules out that option. If we now take Heideggerian covering up as a form of repression and agree that death is covered up, we contradict Freud's claim that there is no unconscious awareness of our own death. Are the two claims reconcilable?

One possibility is to say that Heidegger was right, and there is no unconscious. That Dasein is in principle accessible to itself, and therefore the thoughts about death are merely covered up, not repressed. This would require a stricter differentiation between covering up and repression, which seem to have substantial parallels. And if there is no unconscious, the covered up thoughts about death should be easily accessible.

But then the idea of covering up would become meaningless and the emphasis on anxiety as a unique and difficult encounter with one's own death would make no sense. Then the covering up of death would mean that Dasein consciously decides not to think about it. This is a performative contradiction. Dasein cannot order itself not to think about something, because as soon as it decides not to think about something, this thing becomes the object of thought. Dasein will probably end up thinking about it even more than it would without the prohibition, or think about not thinking about it.

In order to cover up something it needs to be moved from where it is easily accessible to a location that will keep it from resurfacing into consciousness. This topographic relocation is the hallmark of Freudian repression, which requires an unconscious. For covering up to work, there has to be some sort of unconscious part of Dasein. Note that this does not have to be part of an individual, concrete person. We could, with John Haugeland, think about Dasein in a more abstract way, as "the anyone and everything instituted by it: a vast intricate pattern – generated and maintained by conformism – of norms, normal dispositions, customs, sorts, roles, referral relations, public institutions and so on" (1982, p.19). If we accept Haugeland's loose and general notion of Dasein we can reconcile the two claims: that death is covering up and that individuals do not have an unconscious.

But Haugeland's definition of Dasein has been largely criticised. Roderick Stewart and Hubert Dreyfus both argue that Dasein must refer exclusively to creatures like us, namely, individual finite organic units (Dreyfus, 1991; Stewart, 1987). Dreyfus criticises Haugeland for allowing cities and car factories to also be Dasein, pointing out that "Haugeland's interpretation runs up against many passages that make it clear that for Heidegger Dasein designates exclusively entities like each of us, that is, individual persons" (p.14 and cf. Stewart, p.98).

Stewart claims that *Being and Time*, with its emphasis on mineness, anxiety, care, and being towards death, would cease to make sense if we read it with Haugeland's Dasein in mind (pp.99-100). So we are back with the need to

posit an unconscious as part of an individual Dasein's structure and back to the original problem: how is the need for an unconscious (to explain covering up) reconcilable with Freud's refusal to admit death into the unconscious?

We could say that Freud was wrong and that there is an unconscious awareness of death, for otherwise death cannot be repressed. In this case the knowledge of my death is contained in the unconscious and is not available to conscious thought processes. This model has several advantages. Firstly, it explains where covered up ideas go and hence supports Heidegger's notion of an inauthentic covering up of death. Secondly, it explains the connection between our thoughts about death and the death drive, as the repressed material in the unconscious is defined as bound to a drive.

Thirdly, it opens another route for the indirect influence death has on life by placing death in the unconscious, where it can work on the psyche without being consciously identified or acknowledged. This option gain limited textual support from Freud's remark at the end of *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, namely, that we should rethink our *unconscious* attitude towards death, a statement that contradicts his explicit claim that there is no negation in the unconscious, that of death included (SE 14:299; FS 9:59).

The rejection of Freud's postulation seems like the only solution, despite Freud's explicit claims to the contrary. But what I propose is not a flat-out rejection of Freud's exclusion of death from the unconscious. Rather I suggest that there is an awareness of death in the unconscious but it is not awareness of *my own death* but of the death of another. This is permissible on the Freudian view and allows Dasein to have unconscious (repressed) attitudes towards death.

If we now incorporate the earlier discussion about mourning and identification as persuasive means of learning about my death through the death of the other, we can see how this view solves the impasse. This view solves the problem of the lack of unconscious knowledge of my death via a circuitous route. Instead of trying to introduce a notion of my death to my unconscious, I suggest that one can learn of one's death through knowledge of the death of another. And since this knowledge is allowed into the unconscious, that would enable a comprehensive understanding of our finitude. This knowledge would be comprehensive in two ways. First, it would incorporate unconscious ideas about death, and not just conscious one. Secondly, it would overcome the divide between my death and the death of others.

To have such a comprehensive attitude towards death one needs to make one's repressed thoughts about death conscious, so authenticity requires an uncovering of the true significance of death. One way of performing this uncovering is through psychoanalysis. This returns us to Heidegger's insight that covered up phenomena need to be disclosed no less – and perhaps more – than disclosed phenomena (BT, p.60; SZ, p.36).

Here phenomenology and psychoanalysis coincide. Both are methods for exploring the hidden recesses of human mind and experience, both account

for what is covered up and both provide tools for uncovering what is repressed. Hence the notion of repression is echoed in the idea of covering up. An authentic encounter with death would be an occasion for uncovering or un-repressing. The significance of authenticity (that can be thought of as the result of successful analysis) is in providing an uncovered – or better, discovered – life.

SUMMARY OF PART III

This part created a unified view of Freud's and Heidegger's accounts of how death is present in life and examined points of agreement and disagreement between the two thinkers. A series of five encounters made up the unified view by taking up themes explored earlier and treating problems and tensions within those themes.

The first encounter showed how both thinkers see death as central to the understanding of existence and as a non-pathological force within existence, marking it with finitude and limitedness. It also illuminated repetition as an essential concept to understanding death and temporality.

The second encounter focused on the ethical implications of this view. For Freud the death drive is a source of destructiveness and aggression, and death a negative albeit ineliminable feature of life. The Freudian imperative to prepare for death was interpreted as a call for acknowledging loss and finitude. It was used as the basis for an ethics of finitude, which sees suffering and transience as integral to human life. Heidegger, on the other hand, regards death as having a positive aspect, because by encountering it Dasein can become authentic. For Heidegger authenticity is an individual quest not externally accountable. I read this position as an ethics of authenticity.

The third encounter continued the examination of ethics by focusing on our relationship to others, and in particular to their death. I suggested ways to enhance Heidegger's *Mitsein* analysis and then showed how an authentic attitude to the death of another can be reconstructed within the framework of *Being and Time*. The internal reconstruction was followed by an external one, which used Freud's notion of mourning to suggest that the death of others has a profound influence on our understanding of mortality.

If the third encounter broadened authenticity by suggesting an authentic relationship to the death of others, the fourth encounter widened it by expanding the spectrum of disclosive affective states. The fourth encounter compared the analysis of moods in Heidegger and Freud, in order to open the way for moods other than anxiety to facilitate the transition to authenticity. I used Freud's notion of transience to show how positive emotions can disclose death and as such are as important as anxiety.

Finally, the fifth encounter discussed the relationship between death and the unconscious. I argued that contrary to Freud's position, there must be an unconscious attitude to death. If inauthentic Dasein covers up its own death, this

entails an unconscious agency within Dasein in which knowledge of death is concealed, yet active. I argued for the existence of an unconscious in Dasein, making use of Heidegger's insight that phenomenology describes the obtuse and not merely disclosed phenomena.

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Conclusion

This reading of Freud's and Heidegger's concept of death and the construction of the unified view demonstrated the presence in and influence of death on existence. I illustrated this general idea by examining the central place Freud and Heidegger give to the death drive and being-towards-death. I then constructed a unified view that regards death as structuring life.

Freud and Heidegger share the idea that existence is shaped by death, but important differences distinguish the two figures; first and foremost, the different discipline each thinker worked within. One of my aims was to create dialogue between philosophy and psychoanalysis, revealing their common interest in human life and death. The dialogue took into account the different aims and contexts within which each discipline operates, but at the same time stressed their shared concern for human well-being and self-understanding. Heidegger's emphasis on hermeneutics and the self-reflexivity of his project are akin to Freud's formulation of psychoanalysis as self-uncovering.

Part One presented Freud's dualistic model of life and death drives. I examined the development of the death drive in texts from 1920 onwards, and showed that the death drive is a complex quasi-unity, not a single coherent drive. I then criticised the death drive hypothesis, arguing that it is a quasi-metaphysical postulate that was intended to explain a wide range of clinical phenomena, but in fact has no explanatory value over and above aggression. Moreover, Freud positioned the death drive within an inherently instable dualistic model. I examined these problems in detail and then suggested a new reading of the death drive.

This reading regards the death drive as a metaphysical concept that unifies diverse expressions of aggression and self-destructiveness. Its main importance lies in the metaphysical insights that arise from it, such as the intertwining of death in life and the inherent presence of self and other-directed destructiveness in psychic life. I concluded that although the underlying scientific assumptions Freud relied on in his formulation are today completely discarded, we can still regard the death drive as a useful notion capturing the fundamental presence of ambivalence, aggression and destructiveness in human life.

Part Two read Heidegger's being-towards-death as structuring Dasein and rendering death a necessary component within existence. Being-towards-death breaks with the traditional understanding of existence and death as mutually exclusive, and expresses the ontological and existential significance of death. I looked at criticisms of Heidegger's analysis of death and suggested an interpretation that overcomes these criticisms.

This interpretation finds two kinds of finitude in Heidegger's concept of death: temporal finitude and the inability to be anything (Blattner's anxiety). With this interpretation in place, I argued that we should also view death not as individuating, but as containing a social dimension. I emphasised Dasein's sociality in order to form the basis of a more relational understanding of death.

The shift towards a relational understanding of death was achieved partly through deconstructing the authenticity/inauthenticity distinction. I argued that pure authenticity does not exist, that Dasein is inherently a being-with, and that the emphasis on individuation is exaggerated in *Being and Time*. Rather than reading the two modes as mutually exclusive, I offered an alternative understanding that emphasised the dependency of authenticity on inauthenticity and their intertwining.

Part Three brought together Freud and Heidegger in a series of five encounters, in order to contrast the two positions and ultimately create a unified view. The fundamental similarities between the two were set out in the first encounter, which presented life and death as intertwined and death as an active force in life. For both death is a limit concept that renders life finite. For these reasons both regarded the human interest in death as something that should be developed and thought through. The de-pathologisation of death, and the way it is structurally incorporated into Freud's and Heidegger's views, illustrated how death is part of our lives, something we comport ourselves towards, whether understandingly or not.

The second encounter developed the ethical implications of the centrality of death. For Freud death is a negative force, the source of destructiveness and aggression. Heidegger regards the encounter with death as positive because it is the condition of authenticity. At the same time, this encounter with death does not dictate specific content, since anticipation is to be filled by entirely personal content. Whereas the negativity of the death drive explains human aggression, being-towards-death remains a deliberately neutral structure.

Although neither thinker explicitly addresses the ethical implications of his view, I developed their metaphysical positions into contrasting ethical views. I grounded what I called Freud's *ethics of finitude* in the death of another as an experience of loss and finitude. This ethics calls us to prepare for loss and transience, and to accept the vulnerability of everything we find valuable.

In contrast, I read what I called Heidegger's *ethics of authenticity* as an individual quest, a self-determining process of articulation, not externally accountable and as such highly individuating. I ended with a comparison of the call of conscience and the superego, demonstrating that Dasein is not completely rational, self-transparent and unified. Freud's notion of the subject as composed of conflicting agencies was connected to Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as engaged in the internal dialogue of the call, to show how both contain multiple agencies. Freud's plural model, I argued, could explain how Dasein can

be both the authentic caller and the inauthentic addressee of the call of conscience.

The third encounter critically examined Heidegger's *Mitsein* analysis and pointed out the respects in which it is underdeveloped. I then suggested enhancing the analysis with additional categories. This included distinguishing various relations and emotions towards other people; recognising the structural constraints within which they are embedded; and introducing a developmental dimension into *Mitsein*. I regarded intersubjectivity as the key to the structure and development of the individual and showed that this is in line with Heidegger's emphasis on *Mitsein* and the formation of an authentic community.

I then focused on the death of others. I argued that although Heidegger does not discuss an authentic attitude to the death of another, there is no internal constraint excluding such an attitude. I showed that this attitude is possible within Heidegger's framework. I then presented an external reconstruction, using Freud's notion of mourning to show that a loss of an external object is also a loss of self. This insight was inserted into Heidegger's analysis of the death of another, to show that despite Heidegger's emphasis on one's own death, it is not the only route to understanding finitude. The experience of the death of another also intimates mortality.

The fourth encounter examined the disclosive role of affective states, in particular that of anxiety, which Heidegger sees as the only appropriate affective response to my death. An anxious encounter with our own death enables the transformation to authenticity. But is anxiety the only affective state that could do this? I argued that Heidegger himself was open to the possibility that other affective states and moods could function in a similar way: boredom and love are two such examples. These moods reveal beings as a whole and so can be seen as alternative routes to disclosure that do not depend on individuation.

I then introduced Freud's idea of transience to suggest that it is not only through anxiety that one encounters death, but that opposite experiences of beauty and love are inherently transient and therefore confront us with finitude. Everything beautiful and cherished contains the kernel of its destruction in its transience. We therefore have an ambivalent attitude towards these experiences and objects. This ambivalence links love and hate, beauty and transience, life and death, a link that stands at the basis of the unified view.

The fifth and final encounter explored the unconscious and its relation to death. Freud's claim that the unconscious cannot grasp its own death was contrasted with Heidegger's claim that the encounter with my own death is the only route to authenticity. I questioned Freud's claim that there is no trace of death in the unconscious by suggesting that in order for inauthentic Dasein to cover up its death, it must have some sort of unconscious. Through an analogy between covering up and repression I argued that death is indeed present in the unconscious, as the discarded portion of inauthenticity. This explains how death can be covered up.

What are the repercussions of the unified view? One direction for further research is a re-articulation of our ideas of well-being in light of the unified view. If we accept that transience and ambivalence fundamentally structure the possibility of well-being, we could persuasively replace perfectionist notions with more attainable ones. By drawing on Freud's realism, which defines human happiness as a lessening of suffering, we can shape a more modest approach to the question of well-being, the advantage of which is its attainability.

Acknowledging the limitations of human life and human bodies leads to a new understanding of well-being. If happiness is transient in nature, if needs can never be perfectly fulfilled, then the idea of well-being must be transformed. Reworking the relationship between life and death leads also to a new view of happiness. Linking well-being and death would enable us to construct a more comprehensive model of the human being, in which the relationship between life and death is reconstructed as continuous rather than as a rigid dichotomy.

I end by returning to the relationship between philosophy and psychoanalysis. There is much to be said in favour of a dialogue between the two disciplines. This can enhance and enrich philosophical styles of argumentation and conceptualisation, as well as apply philosophical critical strategies to examine psychoanalytic assumptions. Psychoanalysis (as discourse *and* practice) created a fruitful way of engaging with human beings, which can contribute to philosophical discourse in several ways.

Firstly, psychoanalysis turns our attention towards emotions. In opposition to many approaches in the Western philosophical tradition (particularly in the Analytic world), psychoanalysis sees emotional life as constituting human beings, thereby viewing the psyche as complex and as containing non-rational elements. In this sense psychoanalysis offers a comprehensive view of the human being, and conceptualises rather than denies irrational, conflictual and incoherent psychic elements.

Secondly, psychoanalysis is committed to the concrete individual as its basic unit of analysis. The analysand is a specific person, with a unique and concrete narrative. As such, psychoanalysis contributes to a humanistic focus on the person, rather than an attempt to strip it down to a mind. A firm grounding in the reality of concrete human beings is essential to any analysis of human life, and could be used to moderate the philosophical tendency to abstract and objectify.

Thirdly, psychoanalysis is committed to its therapeutic and clinical application, which is its *raison d'être*. Its aim – improving people's lives (in the modest sense of reducing suffering) – justifies its existence. It is there to help people make good on their desires and hopes. Its ability to intervene in repetitive behaviour patterns and to bring about an improvement in one's life can inspire philosophy to reassume its ancient therapeutic role. The practical dimension of philosophy as a source of advice and problem solving has been lost to an increasingly professionalized discourse. As a discipline that is first and foremost

a therapeutic practice, psychoanalysis can encourage philosophy to develop aspects such as social responsibility and a therapeutic dimension.

I aimed to show not only the ways in which philosophy can gain from the encounter with psychoanalysis, but also the mutual inspiration and influence that meaningfully tie the two discourses together as humanist disciplines. This renders the relationship between the two disciplines an ongoing dialogue, which for many years has been incorporated into psychoanalysis. The tools of philosophical analysis and critique and its ability to overcome prejudice and see beyond the particular and the socially accepted, can contribute much to psychoanalysis as a discipline saturated with individual narratives. Moreover, as a discipline with only a vague sense of ethical questions on the one hand but a real need for ethical commitment on the other, a philosophical examination could benefit psychoanalysis on a practical level.

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