Death, Sex, and the Body: Phenomenology and Foucault Prof. Boedeker

**Handout/worksheet on *Being and Time* sections 39-41**

Chapter Six: Dasein’s being as care

§39. The question of the originary completeness of Dasein’s complete structure

So far in Division I, Heidegger has focused primarily on Dasein’s everydayness (= normality = how it is “by and large” = the ‘one’-self = de-clining = non-selfownership). Since this examination involves Dasein as it tries to avoid, flee from, or turn away from, its death, this Division doesn’t include a full discussion of the crucial possibility of death. For this reason, Division I fails to give a phenomenological description of a *whole* Dasein. In Division II, however, Heidegger describes how Dasein can take “ownership” of itself by confronting its death face-to-face, hence providing a phenomenological description of wholeDasein – indeed, as we’ll see, a Dasein that has *made itself* whole.

The mood of *anxiety* will play a crucial role in Division II of *Being and Time*, since anxiety is the mood we’re in when we come face-to-face with our death.

A terminological point: in these sections, Heidegger sometimes speaks of Dasein’s “ownmost possibility,” or “ownmost ability-to-be.” As we’ll see in Division II of *Being and Time*, this is one’s own death.

§40. Anxiety: a fundamental way of being disposed as an extraordinary way in which Dasein is disclosed

In order to understand the mood that Heidegger calls “anxiety” (Heidegger’s term is the now-famous “Angst”), it’s crucial to distinguish it from a mood that’s in some ways similar to it: fear (analyzed in §30). The mood of anxiety is extraordinary (literally “outside what’s ordinary,” or “normal”), and, fortunately, for most people, quire rare (p. 190). It is, I think, essentially the same thing as what’s called in psychology an *acute panic attack*. Recall from §30, in Heidegger’s description of fear, that each mood has (1) something we’re faced with (or, perhaps better: something that the mood is about); and (2) something, or someone, *for* whom we’re in that mood. In ordinary moods, such as fear, what we’re faced with (or what our moods are *about*)are intraworldly entities or other Daseins. As we’ll see in this sections, things are quite different with anxiety.

*Exercise 1*: What are we faced with in anxiety (i.e., what is anxiety *about*); and what, or who, are we anxious *for* (pp. 187-188)? How are these two features of anxiety related (see the first sentence in the first full paragraph of p. 188), and how is this relation different from that of ordinary moods?

*Exercise 2*: Recall that a Dasein’s world does not consists of entities, or things. Rather, it is the totality of its meaningful possibilities: the ultimate context of what we *can* do or *can* become. Given that this is what our world is, what does Heidegger mean when he says that in anxiety “*the world is disclosed as world*” (p. 188), such that “anxiety… discloses Dasein as *being-possible* (p. 188): “the *possibility* of handy entities per se” (p. 187)?

Since in anxiety there’s no *entity*, or *thing*, that we’re anxious about, Heidegger says that when we’re anxious, we’re anxious about “no-thing” (p. 187). Now Heidegger has sometimes been ridiculed for seeming to say that there’s some strange kind of *thing* called “the nothing.” Obviously, this isn’t what he means. Rather, we’re anxious about the fact that in anxiety our possibilities get disclosed to us for the first time as *mere* possibilities. In order to alleviate the impression that Heidegger somehow things of the “nothing” as a strange kind of thing, I hyphenate his term “*Nichts*” as “no-thing.”

*Exercise 3*: Why can anxiety “arise in the most harmless situations” (p. 189), i.e., in those in which we’re not afraid of anything at all?

*Exercise 4*: Recall that anxiety isn’t about entities, but rather about Dasein’s possibilities as *mere* possibilities. Try to explain in your own words Heidegger’s vivid description of anxiety on p. 186. Here, recall from pp. 87-88 in §18 that the *meanings* of handy entities consist of what they implicate, i.e., the entities that we use them ‘with,’ what we use these entities ‘in order to’ accomplish, and what we deploy them ‘at.’ And the totality of meanings is “meaningfulness.” Given that this is what Heidegger means by the “meanings” of handy entities, why is it that in anxiety we’re faced with complete “meaninglessness,” such that entities are encountered as “not ‘relevant’ at all” and “utterly without significance”?

*Exercise 5*: Normally, we don’t encounter possibilities as *mere* possibilities, but rather as possibilities *to be* carried out (or “closed in on”: brought “closer”). In anxiety, however, no possibility has any particular “hold” on us; all we see is that we *could* do this or *could* do that. What’s so disconcerting – and anxiety-provoking – about being faced with all of our possibilities *as mere possibilities*?

*Exercise 6*: For Heidegger, when we’re “at home” (pp. 188-189), we dwell at what we’re *familiar* with on an everyday basis (as described, e.g., on p. 54 in §12, p. 76 in §16, pp. 86-87 in §16, etc.). Why is it the case that in anxiety we’re “not-at-home,” i.e., we’re beset by “feeling out of place” (sometimes translated as “uncanniness”)? Try to describe the phenomenon that Heidegger is trying to indicate with these synonymous terms.

§41. Dasein’s being as care

In this section, Heidegger tries to get to the core of Dasein’s being, different aspects of which he has been describing throughout Division I of *Being and Time*. His answer is that Dasein’s being is *care*. Note that this is manifested in the fact that we “take care of” handy equipment and “care for” other persons.

*Exercise 7*: How do you understand what Heidegger means when he says that our being is care?

*Exercise 8*: Why does Heidegger say that“the expression ‘self-care,’ in analogy with ‘taking-care’ and ‘caring-for,’ would be a tautology” (p. 193)?

*Exercise 9*: One of the main advances in §41 is Heidegger’s characterization of the fact that Dasein is the entity that in its being revolves around its own being. On pp. 191-192, Heidegger describes this as Dasein’s being “out ahead of itself,” or “above and beyond itself.” What phenomenon is he trying to indicate with these synonymous terms?

*Exercise 10*: The concluding paragraphs of §41, especially pp. 195-196, haven’t received a lot of discussion in the vast literature on Heidegger, but I’ve placed them in **bold** here because they address phenomena that have become familiar to us through our study of Merleau-Ponty: habit and instinct. (You’ll see from one of the last endnotes in this section that I have to do some arguing for these translations of Heidegger’s terms “*Hang und Drang*.”) How, briefly, does what Heidegger says about these related phenomena coincide with Merleau-Ponty’s views of the matters?