



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

DEPARTMENT FOR  
CONTINUING EDUCATION

# Philosophy of History

Week 7: Heidegger

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# *Being and Time*

- phenomenological
- *Dasein*: existence, literally 'being-there', or 'being-that-is-there'
- openness

# temporality

- ‘Dasein “is” its past in the way of *its* own Being’ (§6¶2)
- Dasein’s ‘ecstases’: past/present/future
- ‘Dasein, as temporal, is open ecstatically’ (§74¶11)
- ‘Factual Dasein exists as born; and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death’ (§72¶8)

- ‘The movement of existence is not the motion of something present-at-hand. It is definable in terms of the way Dasein stretches along. The specific movement in which Dasein *is stretched along and stretches itself along, we call its “historizing” [Geschehen].’* (§72¶9)
- *geschehen*: to happen, or occur
- *Geschichte*: history, that which has happened
- *Geschichtlichkeit*: historicity

# Two dynamics

- Dasein is its future because it is its past
- Dasein is its past because it is its future

# first dynamic

- ‘Dasein has grown up both into, and in a traditional way of interpreting itself [...] By this understanding, the possibilities of its Being are disclosed and regulated. Its own past—and this always means the past of its “generation”—is not something which *follows along after* Dasein, but something which already goes ahead of it.’ (§6¶2)
- ‘thrownness’ (§72¶8)

# second dynamic

- 'being towards death'
- the resolve to be authentic
  
- focus (in the present);
- goal (in the future) - *projection*;
- takes one back to one's past, one's tradition.

# the past as:

## tradition

- Dasein thrown into, falling into the future
- inauthentic historicity

## heritage

- a source of possibilities for a lived life which can be taken up by Dasein's projection into the future
- authentic historicity
- resoluteness
- fate

- ‘Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate – that is to say, authentic historicity.’  
(§74¶8)

# authentic historicality (§74¶9)

- ‘It is not necessary that in resoluteness one should *explicitly* know the origin of the possibilities upon which that resoluteness projects itself.’
- ‘the repetition [*Wiederholung*: retrieval] of a possibility of existence that has come down to us’
- ‘the repetition makes a *reciprocative rejoinder* to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there’

# Authentic existence is historical:

1. as a way of happening or historizing;
2. as a disclosure and retrieval of the past;
3. as a creative repetition, achieves change and establishes a new possibility for the future.

# Heidegger on Nietzsche:

- '[Nietzsche] distinguished three kinds of historiography [*Historie*] – the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical – without explicitly pointing out the necessity of this triad or the ground of its unity. *The threefold character of historiography is adumbrated in the historicity of Dasein.*' (§76¶13)

# Heidegger on Nietzsche:

- *unity of the three modes*: authentic historicality combines monumental, antiquarian and critical.

# Heidegger on Nietzsche:

1. the monumental: the way in which Dasein is futural – Dasein opens up a future for itself by retrieving a ‘monumental’ possibility;
2. the antiquarian: the way in which Dasein thereby discloses, revives and maintains a past possibility;
3. the critical: the way in which Dasein is thereby able to open up a present for itself – a ‘disavowal of that which in the “today” is working itself out as the “past”’ (§74¶9)

## §6: 'The Task of Destroying [*Destruktion*] the History of Ontology'

- 'When tradition [...] becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it "transmits" is made so inaccessible [...] that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial "sources" from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn.' (§6)

- ‘If the question of being is to achieve clarity about its own history, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved [...] But this destruction is just as far from having the negative sense of shaking off the ontological tradition. We must, on the contrary, stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition [...].’ (§6¶¶8-9)

# later criticism of *Being and Time*

- account of Dasein too individualistic;
- also too activist, with its conception of willful authenticity;
- insufficiently historical, in the sense of being attentive to historical diversity and change;
- most of all, too constrained by the focus on Dasein, as if being only is or could be what it is or could be for Dasein.

- ‘The fundamental error that underlies such ways of thinking is the opinion that the inception of history is primitive and backward, clumsy and weak. The opposite is true. The inception [*Anfang*, ‘beginning’] is what is most uncanny and mightiest. What follows is not a development but flattening down as mere widening out; it is the inability to hold onto the inception [...].’ (*Introduction to Metaphysics* [1935], p. 165)