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### Fear and Anxiety as Indication of Being in *Being and Time*

It is without question that anxiety is a mood that derives from the disruption of comfort and as a result, initiates feelings of fear and or despair. However, if we're willing to observe the discomforts of anxiety in the existential sense as the purest insight to our most authentic selves, then we must raise the question of how anxiety functions in being. Is anxiety the genesis to a path of ultimate authenticity in being? Or is anxiety a revelation of self authenticity in a way that happens arbitrarily? The question of being in relation to anxiety is spoken about extensively by Martin Heidegger in section six of *Being and Time* where he indicates that it is through anxiety that Dasein faces the discomfort of its own freedom. Moreover, he claims that anxiety is where the world reveals itself to our being and where our being exposes itself to the uncanniness of the world.

In this essay, I explore Heidegger's examination of anxiety and how he determines its structural role in Dasein through a critical distinction between the moods of fear and anxiety and how that distinction leads to the revelation of authenticity. I argue that Heidegger's analysis of anxiety demonstrates how anxiety is the encompassing mood of being that indicates a disclosure of existence. Additionally, I argue that anxiety in its bare form is necessary for overcoming a

state of being that is implicated by the comforts of familiarity and that the acknowledgment of discomfort is essentially a path to free thought.

I will begin by providing a brief analysis of Heidegger's distinction between fear and anxiety in paragraph 30 as it is essential to understand what he means by "anxiety" and how anxiety does not need to be born from or accompanied by fear. I will then continue into an analysis of paragraph 40 where Heidegger elaborates on the function of anxiety in the authentic self. Next, I will argue that Heidegger's examination of fear and anxiety does in fact initiate a path to authenticity and freedom. Finally, I will draw a comparison between Heidegger and Kierkegaard to demonstrate where Heidegger drew inspiration from Kierkegaard and where they differed in opinion on the topic of anxiety and authenticity.

To understand anxiety, we must first distinguish it from the "phenomenon" (Heidegger 179) of fear. There are three ways, as Heidegger explains, that we can analyze fear. He claims they are, "that in the face of which we fear, fearing, and that about which we fear". (Heidegger 179) The critical point here is to note that each of the ways in which we can fear is concrete and threatening. For example, a child is not yet afraid of snakes because they are unaware of the threat they pose to them. In juxtaposition, an adult is afraid of snakes because they have learned them as threatening. As Heidegger states, "Fear is a mode of state-of-mind" (Heidegger 181). This implies that to Heidegger the fundamental difference between fear and anxiety is that fear derives from something concrete and anxiety is an unpinnable specter. In "The Ontological Import Of Heidegger's Analysis Of Anxiety In *Being And Time*", Oren Magid reinforces this distinction between fear and anxiety by stating, "In fear, a determinate entity within the world threatens Dasein with a determinate detrimentality, and Dasein attempts to prevent its drawing

nearer by fleeing from it” (Magid 451). In other words, when Dasein is threatened by a physical encounter of that which is feared, it initiates a flight response.

Anxiety, however, is far from a fleeing physiological response that occurs from a tangible source as fear does. Instead, anxiety is the anxiety of being itself. Heidegger asks, “How is it that in anxiety Dasein gets brought before itself through its own Being, so that we can define phenomenologically the character of the entity disclosed in anxiety, and define it as such in its Being, or make adequate preparations for doing so?” (Heidegger. 228). This question proposes that anxiety is a sudden revelation of awareness to the self. Heidegger goes on to claim, “That about which anxiety is anxious reveals itself as that in the face of which it is anxious – namely, Being-in-the-world.” (Heidegger 233). To refer back to Magid, he states, “In anxiety, Dasein discloses an indeterminate threat to an indeterminate possibility of its being.” (Magid 454). Coupled with Magid’s clarification, it is evident that Heidegger is ultimately arguing that Dasein’s implementation of anxiety is evidence for the disclosure of being. Moreover, anxiety is a response to the self’s contact with a glimpse of the authentic self.

However, it appears that anxiety can also function as inauthenticity because of the fine blurry line that separates fear and anxiety. Now not only does there need to be a distinction between fear and anxiety, but there needs to be a separation of the authentic and inauthentic versions of being. Heidegger states:

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

After all, the mood of uncanniness remains factically, something for which we have no existentiell understanding. Moreover, under the ascendancy of falling and publicness, ‘real’ anxiety is rare. Anxiety is often conditioned by ‘physiological’ factors. This in its facticity, is a problem ontologically, not merely with regard to its ontical causation and course of development. Only because Dasein is anxious in the very depths of its Being, does it become possible for anxiety to be elicited physiologically. (Heidegger 234)

My interpretation of this passage maintains that fear can induce physiological anxiety by the way of “fleeing” and is, therefore, evidence of a version of anxiety that is inauthentic. However, Heidegger claims inauthentic anxiety is the result of flight from worldly fear as suggested in his analysis of fear. Does this passage then imply that both authenticity and inauthenticity are evidence of being? If this is the case, then all forms of anxiety are essential components of being. More simply, if I experience fear-induced anxiety, then that is a sign of being as much as experiencing anxiety outside of fear. In addition, Heidegger never provides any insight as to what can provoke “authentic” anxiety which complicates the distinction he draws between the importance of authenticity versus inauthenticity.

Although Heidegger’s complicated vernacular and redundancy of terminology may convolute his ultimate interpretation of the forms of anxiety, it is evident that he believes anxiety unlocks the prospect of authenticity. Magid remarks on this statement by articulating, “Anxiety, in which Dasein senses a threat to its being that cannot be made sense of in its inauthentic falling, forces a confrontation with Dasein’s authentic and sole for-the-sake-of-which. It does not, however, make it the case that Dasein is equipped with the ontological understanding required to appropriate this ground of its self-understanding in its self-interpretation. Anxiety

merely opens up this possibility.” (Magid 459). It appears that the experience of fear and anxiety both provide glimpses of the self and authentic being. To elaborate on this, Heidegger states, “But in anxiety there lies the possibility of disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualizes.” (Heidegger 235). As suggested with this quote, facing the discomfort of anxiety is merely the gateway for self-understanding while also disclosing the very essence of being.

Heidegger’s interpretation of anxiety as the potential for individualization and authenticity replicates some of Kierkegaard’s own ideas regarding the functionality of anxiety. However, Kierkegaardian anxiety is not at the mercy of oneself for the discovery of authenticity. Instead, this revelation can only be experienced with the acknowledgment and acceptance of God. In his text, *The Sickness Unto Death*, a companion text to *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard explains how anxiety morphs into despair, which he deems is a “sickness” that can only be remedied by faith (Kierkegaard 272). This implies that anxiety has both positives and negatives. It is negative in that there is only one solution of Christianity and if ignored then one will exist in a constant state of despair. The positive in his despair is that anxiety, like Heidegger claims, is a sign of existence. In “Faith and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Heidegger on Existing in 'Closest Closeness' to the Nothing” Travis O’Brian states, “For both Kierkegaard and Heidegger the experience of anxiety reveals that becoming oneself means: to be essentially related to oneself as an impossibility, an impossibility which the self, if it is to become itself in truth, must then relate to as its "ownmost" possibility.” (O’Brian 73). This merely supports the claim that to both philosophers, anxiety is the path to become “oneself” while simultaneously exposing the essence of being.

While Heidegger claims that a simple acknowledgment of anxiety is the acknowledgment of being, Kierkegaard believes that despair is the cause of trying to navigate despair and anxiety on your own. (Kierkegaard 286). Therein lies the fundamental distinction between their interpretations of anxiety. Heidegger believes that anxiety derives from a sudden awareness of the self and that it can be conquered personally. (Heidegger 235). Whereas Heidegger suggests anxiety and despair are linear journeys ultimately leading to faith as its solution and recognition of the self as only possible under the cloak of God.

In conclusion, anxiety is the fundamental physiological function of being that presents a form of the most authentic self. It is through a separation of moods and embracement of discomfort that anxiety reveals the exposure of being. Despite claims from Kierkegaard that anxiety and despair are the first steps into a long philosophical road to authenticity, it is evident that a recognition of anxiety is an indication of being. Heidegger ultimately conveys that anxiety as a mood serves to function as the recognition of self and different forms of anxiety expose authenticity and inauthenticity.

## Works Cited

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