

The Disunity of Factical Life: An Ethical Development in Heidegger's Early Work

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In Heidegger's essays and lecture courses prior to the publication of *Being and Time*, it is apparent that Heidegger is exploring his signature ontological question about the being of beings. Through his sustained interpretation of Aristotle's analysis of factical life, he develops the senses in which the human being is the kind of being that is concerned about its being. Yet Heidegger also subtly shows that this is a being concerned about the *unity* of its being. In fact, this driving concern should not be ignored by any inquiry into fundamental ontology because the finitude of existence prevents any one mode of unity from being perfected and complete. However, the finitude of existence does not prevent this being from acting *as though* a prevailing sense of unity has managed to transcend the possibilities of ignorance and errancy. Attempts to exceed the finitude of factical life, which are commonplace and remarkably varied, indicate the fact that Dasein develops particular ways of handling its own unity and, importantly, its disunity. As I intend to show, Heidegger's early ontological investigation of how Dasein handles the relationship between unity and disunity informs his later understanding of ethics. Prescriptive normativity, which he critiques in his *Letter on Humanism*, tends to objectify values and thereby act as though disunity were not constitutive of finite existence.

In his early lecture courses, Heidegger's understanding of how Dasein handles the unity and disunity of factical existence is guided by

Aristotle's sense of human life as uniquely self-moved. In his WS 1921–22 lecture course, Heidegger shows that the ontological movements by which Dasein makes sense of itself in the world, namely, prestructure and relucence, are what determine the unity and disunity of existence. His analysis of ontological movement leads him to interpret the relationship between unity and disunity in much the same way that he comes to recognize the intimacy of truth and untruth. In this lecture course, an analysis of ruinance (*die Ruinanz*) helps to explicate the often underprivileged or ignored movement of disunity. My aim in this essay is to show how Heidegger's development of the relationship between disunity and unity, which takes place in an engagement with Aristotle, positions his 1946 proposal of an originary ethics (*ursprüngliche Ethik*). In particular, I will examine the originary ethical dimension of his method of formal indication and his interpretation of Aristotle's *hexis*.

ONTOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS

In Heidegger's WS 1921–22 lecture course, the question of ontological movement takes shape in Part III after he orients the investigation by establishing how his phenomenological method grants access to the situatedness of factical life.¹ The influence of Husserl's sense of intentionality on how Heidegger understands situatedness can be seen in the way that he introduces three categories of relationality, i.e. inclination, distance, and sequestration, in order to explicate factical life.² The categories themselves “can be understood *only* insofar as factical life itself is compelled to interpretation” (GA 61: 87/66). The exclusive connection to the interpretation of factical life is essential because Heidegger does not want us to think of these as logical categories in an epistemological ontology. Kant's categories of relation are *a priori* synthetic concepts whereby the understanding makes sense of the manifold of intuitions in its experience. But Heidegger is not focused on the achievement of a substantial or causal understanding of objects, rather only on the basic intentional relatedness of a being to its there. Heidegger develops the categories as “interpreta” of life, not as transcendental structures of the understanding.³ Clarifying his approach, Heidegger remarks, “The

categories are not inventions or a group of logical schemata as such, 'lattices'; on the contrary, they are *alive in life itself* in an original way: alive in order to 'form' life on themselves. They have their own modes of access, which are not foreign to life itself, as if they pounced down upon life from the outside, but instead are precisely the preeminent way in which *life comes to itself*" (GA 61: 88/66). To say that the categories are "alive in life" is to say they are the ontological movements of life as it "comes to itself." As we will see, Heidegger insists that the only way to understand the unity of these categories is to look at them as iterations of the categories of movement. Yet Heidegger also says that caring (*Sorge*) is "*the* basic relational sense of life in itself" through which "a concrete approach to the categorical explication [of factual life] becomes possible" (GA 61: 89/67). Care is the basic intentional character of ontological movement and reveals the specific way that the categories are alive in life.

I will review Heidegger's account of the categories of relationality and movement in 1921–22 not in order to trace their evolution into the existentials of *Being and Time* in 1927, though this is a worthwhile project, but rather for two reasons. First, the way that he relates these two sets of categories amounts to Heidegger's basic understanding of the unity of life, an understanding that I would argue does not substantially change through 1927. In particular, three senses of unity will emerge from this analysis. In turn, these forms of unity will help make it clear that ontological movement is Heidegger's way of setting the structure of factual life in motion so as to accord with the finitude of existence. More specifically, that ontological movement is a formal indication of Dasein's continual effort to make sense of existence in the world. Second, each description of the categories includes considerations that we would not hesitate to call ethical in other contexts. Drawing out the ethical content of these descriptions, which largely involve the inauthenticity of everyday life, reveals the intimate connection between ontology and ethics in Heidegger's work.

The first relational category is inclination (*Neigung*), which "imparts to life a particular weight, a direction of gravity, a pull toward

something” (GA 61: 100/75). But Heidegger is very clear that this weight is not a gravity pulling from the outside. Rather, the particular ontological movement of one’s own life itself forms a weighty inclination toward some thing or event. For its actualization, life can take up and develop the inclination that is alive in a relation. Much of Heidegger’s explanation of this category focuses on a particular development of inclination, which he calls proclivity. He says, “This proclivity impels life into its world, rigidifies it, and brings to maturation a petrification of the directionality of life. Life genuinely finds itself where its own proper proclivity fixes it” (GA 61: 100–101/76). The rigidification, petrification, and fixity of proclivity is the bane and boon of inclination. On the one hand, life “genuinely finds itself” in that which it is inclined to work on with dedication. This is how life takes hold of itself. On the other hand, the dogmatic petrification of a pursuit can lead to obsessive and tyrannical acts that refuse to alter course even in the face of legitimate opposition or refutation. In his analysis Heidegger continually tries to balance the inclusive opening up of and the exclusive focusing in on the weight of relations. For instance, he says that “inclination opens up and provides, from its world, meaningful things as possibilities for the development of worldly distantiations,” but then afterwards he explains that “proclivities, in which factical life becomes set in its ways, offer nutriment and opportunity for an exaggerated, preferential judgment as to what is important” (GA 61: 125/93). In other words, inclination as proclivity both opens up meaningful possibilities and, when it becomes exclusively sustained, closes others off with preferential judgments.

The second category of relationality is distance (*Abstand*), which is to say, having something before oneself. If inclination has to do with the draw of the weight of the meaningful, distance has to do with the manner of compartment toward what is meaningful. Distantiation is situating oneself at a certain distance from that which is meaningful, which allows for certain possibilities of relating to the world and disallows others. Digging deeper, Heidegger says, “Living in proclivity and dispersion, life does not maintain distance; it commits an oversight. . . . In oversight with regard to distance, life mis-measures itself” (GA 61:

103/77). In dispersed distantiation, one mis-measures the distance one should have to things, abolishes distances, and immerses oneself in worldly relations. The caring upsurge toward things “commits an oversight” that is “hyperbolic,” which we might think of as a kind of gluttony for meanings; “multiplicity itself becomes a mode of meaningfulness. . . care that this multiplicity is always available, does not run out, is present in ever new modes” (GA 61: 103/77, 104/78). In these descriptions of the category of distance Heidegger is developing an understanding of everydayness that will reach a certain level of maturity in his conception of *das Man* in *Being and Time*.

Entanglement in always renewing everyday meanings is presented as a kind of frenetic but restricted set of movements in which one nevertheless believes oneself to be free. Speaking more concretely, Heidegger remarks that life, in its mis-measuring care, is “intent on rank, success, position in life (position in the world), superiority, advantage, calculation, bustle, clamor, and ostentation, whether these be sought by thrusting oneself forward crudely and noisily or with refinement and grandiloquence” (GA 61: 103/77–78). Typically, life strives to narrow distances and bring itself into contact with the possibilities of rank, success, and so forth in the one-upmanship of a ‘refined’ conversation no less than in the posturing of a fistfight. What matters in the relation of distance is the how of positioning possibilities for being before-oneself.

The third and final category of relationality is sequestration (*Abriegelung*). In the distancing of comporting myself toward something that I care about, the “me” that it is before me is also experienced. In everyday proclivity and dispersion, the “before” of care is deferred and its relationality is attenuated. Nevertheless, from out of this obscurity, the relationality of “my” factual life becomes visible and speaks.⁴ Although Heidegger does not mention it in this early lecture, we can imagine that his analysis of *Angst* from *Being and Time* might be a further articulation of such a moment. The immersion in hyperbolic dispersion, where multiplicity itself has become meaningful, collapses into the anxiety of nothing having any meaning at all. Through the collapse of meaningful relations, the relationality of life itself becomes

painfully visible. Yet this possibility of coming before oneself as relational can be deferred by re-immersing oneself. Explaining sequestration, Heidegger says, “In being transported by the meaningful things in the world, in the hyperbolic development of new possibilities of experiencing and caring for the world, factical life constantly eludes itself as such. . . . In caring, life sequesters itself off from itself and yet in doing so does precisely not get loose of itself” (GA 61: 106/80). Sequestration increases care about the world so as to not genuinely care about itself; life remains “unworried” or “carefree” in order to flee the anxiety of facing itself without falling back on its usual stock of meanings.

Having reviewed inclination, distance, and sequestration, we must notice the manner of Heidegger’s explications: inclination is used to explain distance; inclination and distance are used to explain sequestration. It is not the case, however, that the latter builds up from the former as a derivative from its function or ground. At the outset of discussing distance, Heidegger says, “The task is now to set in relief a further structure of the relationality of life (caring), one which is equiprimordial with the category of inclination. . . .” (GA 61: 102/77). Ontologically, the categories of relation are equiprimordial. This has two basic meanings. The first is hermeneutic: each category can and should be used to interpret the others. Heidegger employs precisely the same method in *Being and Time* when discussing attunement, understanding, and discourse. There he says, “Attunement is *one* of the existential structures in which the being of the ‘there’ dwells. Equiprimordial with it, *understanding* constitutes this being. Attunement always has its understanding, even if only by suppressing it. Understanding is always attuned.”⁵ Just as equiprimordiality allows distance to be explained in terms of inclination within the categories of relationality, it allows understanding to be explained in terms of attunement. The co-explanatory approach of equiprimordiality remains unaltered between the lecture course of 1921–22 and the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927.

The reason that hermeneutic equiprimordiality endures during a time when so much of Heidegger’s terminology and methodology are undergoing discovery and revision is because of the second basic

meaning of equiprimordiality, which is ontological. Here there are two aspects. First, equiprimordiality is a description of the fundamental relationship between whatever is equiprimordial. It is a mistake to think merely that two separable, discrete things are ‘equally primordial.’ Equiprimordial things are in an intimate relationship of having each other – “Attunement always *has* its understanding” – which is also ontological – “Understanding *is* always attuned” (GA 2: 190/SZ 142–3, em). There is a codependence at work: understanding is not possible without an attunement disposing Dasein toward something to be understood and inclination toward something is not possible without a distance that determines the relation. In this way, equiprimordiality indicates a unity in which no one thing has an ontological priority or hermeneutic authority over another. Instead, everything depends on how each thing holds together with the others. Heidegger says, “The phenomenon of the *equiprimordiality* of constitutive factors has often been disregarded in ontology on account of a methodologically unrestrained tendency to derive everything and anything from a simple ‘primordial ground’” (GA 2: 175/SZ 131). The term “equiprimordiality” describes the specific kind of unity in which its parts are not derived from a more fundamental ground and the unity itself is not grounded in any particular part. For this reason, when we soon turn to the categories of movement, we must recognize that it would be an error to think that movedness will be such a ground for the unity of being-there. Instead, movedness is that unity becoming manifest; the fact that ontological movements hold together as a being is nothing other than the phenomenon of that being’s unity. This does not logically preclude the fact that each constitutive factor of being-there can contribute its own manner of movement to a unified phenomenon of movedness. Indeed, Heidegger says that each equiprimordial factor “is interpretative in relation to life in its entirety” (GA 61: 89/67). This suggests not only a hermeneutic potency but also a complex layering directly constitutive of the unity of a set of equiprimordial elements; this is what Heidegger preserves intact between 1921 and 1927.⁶

The hermeneutic potency and complex layering of the equiprimordial relational categories only deepens as we move forward in the lecture course. Heidegger makes a decisive claim in working out the unity of the categories. Referring back to equiprimordiality, he says:

The peculiar inseparability, noted earlier, of the three basic categories of the relationality of care (in general, their coexistence rather than their succession in order) as well as, at the same time, the possibility of their cohering together in a reciprocal movement that would serve to interpret them and determine their sense – both of these now become visible in the fact that, as is the case with inclination, so also the abolition of distance, no less than sequestration, can all be characterized as relucant and prestructive in their movedness, each for itself and all together. (GA 61: 121/90)

Heidegger follows the three categories of relation with two categories of movement: relucant and prestructive movement. In this passage Heidegger claims that the equiprimordiality of inclination, distance, and sequestration becomes visible insofar as they have a “reciprocal movement.” In other words, the inseparable unity of the relational categories must be sought in movement because their unity is itself the reciprocation of their movement. Paving the way for his interpretations of Aristotle’s notions of *ousia*, *echein*, and *kinesis*, Heidegger is demonstrating in his own way that reciprocating ontological movements are together the unity of factical life.

The connections between the categories of relationality are exposed by an understanding of movement, the purpose of which is to elucidate the “fullness, wholeness, and strict unity” of relational life (GA 61: 118/88). Yet a further clarification is introduced into the particular sense of unity being developed. The fact that the three relational categories each share in the two categories of movement means that the unity of these categories is analogical. This sense of unity has been picked up by various Heidegger scholars, and among

them Thomas Sheehan is one who has recognized the connection to movement. He writes:

When Heidegger speaks about the meaning of being (or, equally, about the time-character or truth or clearing of being), he is simply naming the analogical unity of the intelligible structure of entities, and not some super-thing that plays hide-and-seek with philosophers, revealing itself to some and hiding itself from others. Moreover, that intelligible structure is, for Heidegger, intrinsically kinetic, and it is bound up with the kinetic structure of man, which Heidegger originally calls ‘temporality.’⁷

In Sheehan’s use of the term “analogical unity” we can notice, simultaneously, his sensitivity to the equiprimordiality of the analogical structures. There is no “super-thing” orchestrating the connections between these structures and thereby producing a meaning for being. Instead, it is an analogical sharing of movement that grants access to the phenomenon of being. It is notable that Sheehan refers to the kinetic structure as temporality. He sees in Heidegger that the analogical unity of life is not, as traditional ontology would have it, a matter of logically duplicating predicates, an operation which rests upon a foundation of permanence and presence. This kind of attribution cannot adequately take into account the way that life gathers together in itself what it is not yet and what it is no longer. It is the same traditional logic that tends to exclude movement when thinking about the unity of being. The structures of relationality do not lend themselves to the predication of a common movement, but rather suggest an ontological movement that is more primordial than the ontic movement that predication indicates.

Heidegger describes two kinds of movement: reluctance and pre-struction. He explains the former as follows: “Life, caring for itself in this relationality [i.e., inclination], reflects light back on itself, which produces clarification of the surroundings of the currently immediate

nexus of care. As so characterized, the *movement of life toward itself within every encounter* is what we call *relucence*" (GA 61: 119/89). The movement of relucence is the way in which worldly encounters reflect back the meaning of existence. Because one cares about something and deals with it, one is, in fact, moving toward the meaning of oneself. Thus, the meaning of one's life shines back in whatever one encounters as meaningful, even in the case of something like the fearful. Life 'has' meaning, and an analysis of the movement of relucence articulates life's basic mode of appropriation and possession through encounter. Prestruction builds on what is encountered: "from the relucence world, life makes its claims and measures itself. Life begins to build out from this world and for it" (GA 61: 119-20/89). Life does not merely receive meaning, but projects itself into the world, and in this way always pre-possesses itself. "In caring, life is always projecting, beginning to be built; in being relucence, life is at the same time *prestructive*" (GA 61: 120/89). The "at the same time" of this passage is an indication that relucence and prestruction are themselves equiprimordial. Life measures itself relucently, but such relucence has always already been informed by prestructure, and life organizes itself prestructively, but only out of what it has discovered relucently.

Heidegger briefly explains relucence and prestructure, but then traverses backward to repeat his analysis of inclination, distance, and sequestration in terms of these movements in order to establish the unifying role of the categories of movement. This procedure explicitly demonstrates movedness acting differently but in common over the whole range of the categories of relationality. Heidegger is after the idea that the relationality of a factical being is held together by the concert of its movements; in other words, movedness provides an analogical unity to the equiprimordial senses of relationality. Behind these considerations we can hear Heidegger thinking through Aristotle's understanding of life as self-movement. Heidegger makes allusions to this, saying: "The articulation of prestruction and relucence, however, introduced for the first time a sense of movedness into the respective movedness of each relational category viewed in isolation.

Thereby the ‘how’ of the movement in question was clarified in a certain respect, a ‘how’ characteristic of *self*-movement, movedness in itself” (GA 61: 126/94). Yet, in the context of relational categories that constitute part of Heidegger’s destruction of traditional subjectivity, “self-movement” needs to be understood without the baggage of a subjective agent standing against an objective world. Heidegger clarifies several pages later: “In the categorical structure of movedness, as it is exhibited here, the movedness of factual life now has the character of a special autonomy, an auto-motion, which is precisely its *own* in the fact that life *lives outside of itself*” (GA 61: 130/96–97). Concretely, the self-movement of life is ecstatic. Here Heidegger offers a glimpse of the ecstatic sense of self-movement that will be more explicitly developed later in *Being and Time*.

The character of ontological movement, which we see now as the ecstatic self-movement of prestructure and reluctance, *is* the movement of making sense of existence. Heidegger’s work phenomenologically examines how meaning is shaped by the finitude of factual life. Prestructure and reluctance are categories of *making-sense* that Heidegger uses in 1921–22 as a formal indication of the way Dasein shapes what he will later call the clearing (*die Lichtung*) where disclosure takes place. This conclusion supports the thesis of Thomas Sheehan’s recent book, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, where he claims, “To the degree that Heidegger’s work is phenomenological (and to the end of his life he insisted it was), it was solely and exclusively about *meaningfulness and its source*.”⁸ The connection that I am proposing between the clearing and the ontological movements of prestructure and reluctance demonstrates that in the winter semester of 1921–22 Heidegger was already investigating existence as the disclosive movements of making-sense.⁹ If Sheehan’s thesis is right, and I do believe it has strong merit, this connection is a formative development in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. As Sheehan says, “The clearing is the very reason that existence ex-sists at all. . . . As the *telos* of ex-sistence, the clearing *structurally determines* what and why ex-sistence is at all. But the clearing is not different from ex-sistence.”¹⁰

DISUNITY AS RUINANCE

On the one hand, we have seen three kinds of unity emerge out of Heidegger's categorical analysis, namely equiprimordial, analogical, and ecstatic unity. In all of this, Heidegger is adamant that movement is essential to the unity of a factical being. Yet on the other hand, he explains that "the movedness of factical life can be provisionally interpreted as *unrest*. The 'how' of this unrest, in its fullness as a phenomenon, determines facticity..." (GA 61: 93/70). A restlessness is at work determining the descriptions of the categories, e.g., the proclivity toward rank and success, the gluttonous dispersion into a multiplicity of meaning, and the 'carefree' flight from oneself of sequestration. Much as we see in the analysis of the inauthenticity of *das Man* in *Being and Time*, the 1921-22 lecture course works out the idea that everyday movedness is characterized by the hyperbolic movement of unrest. Heidegger follows up the categorical analysis of factical life with a lengthy discussion explicating ruinance precisely because he needs to draw out the implicit work that disunity has been doing already in the unity of relationality. This is important in two ways. First, the kind of unity brought to the relational categories by movement is not pure cohesion but rather a living relation between unity and disunity. For a finite being, no one form of unity can ever be perfect, complete, and infallible. Second, this intimate, living relation is at the heart of both ontology and ethics. The ontological dimension of his project is explicit as Heidegger develops his analytic of Dasein in the 1920s, but the ethical dimension needs to be drawn out of his analyses of phenomena like ruinance.

To be sure, ruinance is just one example of the movedness of factical life that the categorical analysis can elucidate. However, much like *Angst* turns out to be more than a mere example in the argument of *Being and Time*, namely an existential that has an essential disclosive capacity, so too does ruinance have its own essential disclosive capacity. Heidegger's very first paragraph on ruinance is most instructive:

This movedness of factical life (a movedness which as such is produced by the world of factical life), as it

develops itself in this way and as it thereby intensifies, in procuring for itself, can be called “collapse”; it is a movement which by itself forms itself – and yet not by itself but by the emptiness in which it moves; its emptiness is its possibility of movement. Thereby we acquire a basic sense of the movedness of factual life, a sense we can fix in the term “ruinance” (*ruina* – collapse). (GA 61: 131/98)

Heidegger begins by identifying an intensification of movedness, a “procuring for itself,” that he calls collapse and at the end names “ruinance.” Yet something cryptic but important takes place in the middle of the passage: Heidegger says that collapse is a kind of self-movement – “it is a movement which by itself forms itself” – but then immediately he doubles back on that claim, saying that the movement is formed “not by itself but by the emptiness in which it moves.” We can understand this ambiguity by remembering that the movedness of life is reluctant and prestructure. The emptiness that makes ontological movement possible is not merely an internal emptiness into which life collapses, nor a physical space in which the body moves. His comments are scarce, but I would say that the emptiness of collapse is the clearing, *die Lichtung*. The sense in which the clearing has been formed both by itself and not by itself expresses the double movement of ecstatic prestructure and reluctance.

In the particular case of ruinance, we must understand why the prevailing meanings that are disclosed in the clearing collapse into emptiness. Ruinance is an intensified procuring of oneself for oneself. In the fervor and focus of such intensification, this comportment can radically constrict openness to the possibilities available to life. If this intensity matures, a finite being will move through clearings evacuated of new possibilities. As we know from Nietzsche’s critique of Judeo-Christian morality, ideas and values help determine the field of available possibilities for living. When specific ideas and values are held as absolute and unchanging, any possibility of rethinking or reevaluation is prohibited. Nietzsche recognized this comportment as unhealthy for

the individual and potentially a great danger to society.¹¹ Choking off vital possibilities that might otherwise show themselves leaves a barren emptiness that is the condition for collapse.¹² Trying to care for itself in a ruinant way, life “becomes in the end, openly or not, frantic over itself and confused” (GA 61: 140/104). Within the franticness and confusion of ruinant life, the disuniting of life from itself reverberates. The distinct disclosive capacity of ruinance is that life can discover the need to establish a better relationship between unity and disunity.¹⁵

I should be clear: Heidegger never directly labels ruinance as *Un-einigkeit* in the WS 1921–22 lecture course. However, careful interpretation keeps us on the scent of the question of unity and disunity and ultimately leads to the conclusion that factical life cannot be adequately investigated without taking into account the intimacy of disunity and unity. Speaking of his categorical analysis, Heidegger writes, “Insofar as it is factical life...that is to be brought into a safe-keeping that brings-forth, this life renounces – with the originality of the interpretation – the possibility of rootedly possessing itself, *of being itself*” (GA 62: 369/56). This passage is from *Indication of the Hermeneutic Situation*, which was written during the same year that the WS 1921–22 lecture course ended. Heidegger is saying that one investigating factical life must renounce possessing oneself through that procedure, which is nothing less than renouncing the possibility of a complete self-unity. The factically attuned categories embrace disunity *at the same time* that they try to make the factical unity of life transparent.

In an essay on ontological movement, Sheehan explains how Heidegger interprets Aristotle’s notion of *kinesis*. For Aristotle, natural entities are ontologically kinetic insofar as they are “fraught with absentiality.”¹⁴ In fact, it is absentiality, *steresis*, which allows an entity to be kinetic. Beings move into presence, but do so imperfectly and with untapped potentiality. Sheehan points out that in 1928 Heidegger “translated *dynamis* as *Eignung*, and *kinesis* as *Ereignung*, and he referred both terms, tentatively, to the word *Ereignis*, the event of an entity’s autodisclosure.”¹⁵ Sheehan is exposing Heidegger’s insistence on the privative presence that is in the event of each coming to presence.

Our discussions of ecstatic unity and ruinance have revealed disunity to be the absentiality in the movement of coming to presence. In the phenomenological attitude, factual life renounces possessing itself because there is a recognition that the absentiality of disunity is constitutive of its becoming present to itself.

Rather than renounce possession of itself, ruinant Dasein clings to a particular sense of unity by making antagonists out of its unity and disunity. Heidegger makes a similar point with respect to truth and untruth in *On the Essence of Truth*. Truth is the freedom of letting-beings-be, which is a comportment of resolutely remaining open within the primordial concealment, untruth, of beings. Yet Dasein errs when it tries to close itself off from the mystery of the concealed and instead insists on replenishing the meaning of the world with what is already easily available. In other words, Dasein takes into itself, as its own meaning, the particular sense of unity upon which it insists. Heidegger says, “They are all the more mistaken the more exclusively they take themselves, as subject, to be the standard for all beings” (GA 9: 91/149-50). What Dasein fails to realize is that flight from the mystery of untruth into the apparent security of a stable truth is really a flight from itself as an ecstatic, finite being. Insofar as ruinance is a flight from the disunity of one’s own ecstatic being, the same relationship holds between truth and untruth as it does between unity and disunity. This alignment is not meant to reduce one set to the other, but rather to help us to rethink unity and disunity from the ground up. Just as it is a mistake to take correspondence to be the essence of truth, so too is it a mistake to take any static sense of structure to be the essence of unity. The intimacy of truth and untruth is the same kind of kinetic intimacy that exists between unity and disunity in a finite being. The essence of unity is freedom of movement, but when disunity disrupts any particular unified movement, new possibilities for free movement become available so that Dasein can recompose (and hopefully rejuvenate) its relational life in the world.

INDICATIONS OF ORIGINARY ETHICS

Heidegger's early work on ontological movement explains why it is that a human being, as finite, is a being that is concerned about the unity and disunity of its being. I would argue that Heidegger's ethics, which he explicitly introduces in his 1946 *Letter on Humanism*, is concerned with what it means to take responsibility for finitude understood in this way. The connection is particularly apparent in his critique of the normativity of traditional values. Since disunity is the disruption of a prevailing sense of unity (in this case, one formed around normative valuation), attempting to exclude disunity is tantamount to attempting to exclude the possibility of change. Because disunity is constitutive of making-sense, the effort to claim that a particular set of values is objective (and therefore unchangeable) is really an effort resisting a dimension of existence itself. Heidegger writes, "Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid – solely as the objects of its doing. The bizarre effort to prove the objectivity of values does not know what it is doing" (GA 9: 179/265). When action is dominated by subjective valuations taken to be objective prescriptions, the way in which action itself is an effort to make-sense of the world can become dangerously constricted. In terms of the ontological movements of making-sense, normative valuation makes the prestructure of meaning excessive while the reluctance of meaning becomes deficient, thereby restricting the discovery of new possibilities for action. When normativity is allowed to hobble the making-sense of action, Dasein has failed to take responsibility for its finitude.¹⁶

Heidegger's ethics is an "originary" ethics because it attempts to reset the focus of ethics, aiming it toward understanding the ontological conditions that make normative valuation possible. In an essay on Heidegger's ethics, Jean-Luc Nancy writes: "It isn't philosophy's job to prescribe norms or values: instead, it must think the essence or the sense of what makes up *action* [*l'agir*] as such; it should think, in other words, the essence or sense of what puts action in the position of having to choose norms or values."¹⁷ Nancy rightly argues that the comportment

of remaining open for unconcealment, letting-be (*Sein-lassen*), is the very “essence of action” and originary in Heidegger’s ethics.¹⁸ In the passage from the *Letter on Humanism* above (GA 9: 179/265), Heidegger contrasts letting-be and normative valuation. This indicates that instead of an excess of prestructure (or reluctance, for that matter), letting-be finds a balance between these dimensions of making-sense. This balance or mean is not prescribed but rather discovered through an attunement, in each situation, to the finitude of being-there in the world.¹⁹

Rather than continue an analysis of the *Letter on Humanism* or turn to other relevant texts from that period, my aim here is to continue to retrieve insights from Heidegger’s early lecture courses, insights that can be interpreted as ethical developments by using the framework that I have established above. Two further steps will be ventured below, both related to letting-be. First, the comportment of letting-be was first a development in Heidegger’s phenomenological practices that took shape as he worked out his methodological access to factual life. This means that the method of formal indication (*formale Anzeige*), which is developed throughout Heidegger’s work in the 1920s, ought to exhibit signs of this particular ethical sensitivity. Second, Heidegger’s SS 1924 lecture course further develops, implicitly, the categories of relationality and movement while interpreting Aristotle’s sense of factual life. In particular, Heidegger is concerned with the comportment that handles experiences that disrupt our composure. In this context, he reinterprets *hexis* as a way that we can relate to the role of letting-be in his originary ethics.

1. In Heidegger’s WS 1921–22 lecture course, the categories of relationality and movement are formal indications. This method is a response to the fact that Heidegger himself is determined by his factual limits as he tries to gain access to factual life as such. His sense of access should be understood in terms of Aristotle’s notion of *echein*, which he discusses in terms of the famous phrase *zoon logon echon*. The reliance upon predication in the logic of traditional metaphysics allows for the misinterpretation of *echein* as possession, specifically that of a subject ‘having’ properties. Yet in discussing *echein*, Aristotle says, “what obstructs something from moving or acting by its own impulse is said

to have hold of it, as columns have hold of the heavy things that press down on them. . . . And in this way too what is continuous is said to hold together what it connects, as though it would be separated by each part's own impulse."²⁰ *Echein* can be thought of as a holding together of parts that each have their own tendencies of movement which nonetheless belong together in a continuity. Rather than possession or predication, this passage suggests the equiprimordial, analogical, and ecstatic ways in which ontological categories hold together.

In the human being, the holding together of *echein* is twofold. First, what is held together are the categories of relationality that each have their own equiprimordial tendencies of movement but which analogically share in the same categories of movement. Second, *echein* is a matter of how an ecstatic being conducts itself beyond itself, kairologically, in human praxis. In particular, Heidegger is concerned about how the phenomenological mode of knowing conducts itself. Not only does Heidegger develop the intellectual conduct of formal indication in order to phenomenologically preserve the tendency of movement of *that which is accessed*, but by the time of *Being and Time* both of these senses of *echein* help configure the relationships between the existentials in *the one who gains access*. As John Van Buren writes, quoting Heidegger's notes, "The formalizing method of formal indication 'springs from' and 'goes back to' 'one's own concrete life.'"²¹

Formal indication defines Heidegger's phenomenological method and his hermeneutic retrieval of Aristotle, but only does so through an ethical posture. As an indication, formal indication is a "departure" that is directed toward content but, as formal, resolutely holds itself back from its own inclination to determine content in advance.²² In other words, it holds itself in a kind of potentiality, *Möglichkeit*. Heidegger explains: "The understanding that follows the genuine way of approach is not in the full sense a grasp of the ontological meaning but is precisely determined by the approach – only by that but precisely by that. To be on the point of departure; to set out resolutely!" (GA 61: 34/27). The inclination against which the departure-character of formal indication resolutely stands is the desire to fix the content of the

phenomenon in question *before* the moment of encounter, which would be an ‘actualization’ before actuality. When a formal indication directs the understanding toward the object of concern, a prohibition deters or restrains the understanding.²⁵ Heidegger develops the method of formal indication in order to resolutely see past the hermeneutic obscurity of the ‘certainty,’ ‘self-evidence,’ and ‘obviousness’ of the traditional interpretations of Aristotle’s basic questions. The seductive yet false security of having determined the meaning of an encounter in advance is one of Heidegger’s fundamental objections to habits of atemporalizing fixity in Western metaphysics and its prescriptive ethical maxims. The categories that Heidegger formally indicates remain possibilities for being rather than fixed structures precisely because this approach *lets* the concealment of beings remain intimate with their unconcealment.

The basic danger of prescriptive ethical systems is that they do not let beings be in their situation, and although formal indication appears methodologically prescriptive, its approach is designed to avoid this ethical problem. The ontological problem of determining the being of beings in advance and the ethical problem of determining one’s conduct toward beings in advance have the same root in being closed off from the situatedness of being. Formal indication is kairologically attuned, therefore, to the situated relationship between the unity and disunity in the movedness of ecstatic beings. An originary ethics shares in the same kind of attunement by resisting the impulse to rely upon content determining maxims at the expense of the situated concealment and unconcealment of beings.

2. The categories of relationality and movement from the WS 1921–22 lecture course, which allow Heidegger to work out an understanding of factual unity and disunity, play forward into his SS 1924 lecture course. These categories strongly influence Heidegger’s manner of interpreting Aristotle’s notions of *pathos*, *doxa*, and *logos*, which in turn help to construct the existential characteristics of Dasein in the 1927 publication of *Being and Time*, especially attunement (*Befindlichkeit*), understanding (*Verstehen*), and discourse (*Rede*).²⁴ In 1924, Heidegger is particularly interested in how the transition is made from one form

of unity or composure – that is, one configuration of ontological movements – to another. If we look, for example, at his discussions of *pathos*, he says that “*hexis*, in relation to the *pathē*, is to be our clue to the more precise conception of the being-structure of the *pathē* themselves” (GA 18: 194/131). Aristotle’s *hexis* is interpreted in terms of *echein*: the continuous holding-itself-together in going after definite being-possibilities. Refusing to be limited by the traditional translation of *hexis* as habit, Heidegger understands *hexis* to be a mode of conduct that is essentially related to the possibility of being knocked out of one’s composure. It is the genuine being-composed of being-there in the moment when a *pathos* occurs, that is, when one might undergo a transposition and become-otherwise.²⁵ Heidegger points out that *aretē* must be understood in terms of *hexis* because one can cultivate *aretē* only by enduring risky situations in which we are in danger of losing our composure.²⁶ Analyzing the relationship between maintaining, losing, and regaining composure is Heidegger’s way of continuing his investigation of the unity and disunity of factual life. Consider the following passage:

The *pathē*, are the sort of thing that occurs *in the soul*, the sort of thing that is *in living-being*, and that means more precisely *being-taken*, *losing-composure*, *kineisthai*, which aims at the genuine being of living things, being-in-a-world...Being-out-of-composure *is in itself related to being composed*, *hexis*. We are taken in an average and everyday way; we move ourselves within parameters in relation to which there is a being-composed. (GA 18: 242/162)

Hexis has to do with how one handles the event of the *pathē*, namely, how one is moved by the inevitable event of becoming-otherwise. However, *pathos* and *hexis* are not two opposing forces, one standing for change and the other against it. On the contrary, Heidegger’s analysis of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* shows that, if one cultivates *aretē*, it is consistent with *hexis* to go along with change, to *let* oneself be moved by others in a mindful way. Aristotle’s ethical concerns speak to how

one maintains or regains composure even as one undergoes fundamental shifts in how one moves through the world. In this way, the disunity of being-out-of-composure shows itself to be an integral part of the ethical life of a factual being.

If we take seriously the work Heidegger did in his WS 1921–22 lecture course, which is meant as a preparation for reading Aristotle, then we can consider augmenting Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle in his SS 1924 lecture course accordingly. Heidegger's interpretation of *hexis* can be understood as how one handles being knocked out of composure, that is, how one handles the relationship between one's own unity and disunity. When *hexis* has *aretē*, one is able to find a kairologically appropriate balance between unity and disunity. In this way, letting-be and *hexis* have an analogous originary structure: letting-be is concerned with how prestructure and reluctance relate to each other, and *hexis* is concerned with how unity and disunity relate to each other. Moreover, letting-be has the same kind of *aretē* as *hexis*, namely finding a kairologically attuned balance between the two dimensions of making-sense. If I am right, we can retrieve this understanding of *hexis* from Heidegger's early lecture courses and place it alongside letting-be as an originary ethical comportment. The *aretē* of both comportments is then nothing less than how a finite being takes responsibility for its own finitude.

Notes

- 1 Theodore Kisiel briefly analyzes the WS 1921–22 lecture course in his groundbreaking work *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Yet after discussing formal indication, Kisiel dismisses the rest of the lecture course: "In view of the chronologically compromised character of the published edition, much of the analysis of this verbose, baroque, and turgid course can, for our purposes, be put off... This course is caught up in the turmoil of transition, complicated even in its actual delivery... In fact, the period initiated by this course is characterized by a further degeneration of style, a loss of the simplicity of expression in which some of the discoveries of the prior two years had been cast, a kind of scholarizing of older insights" (*The Genesis of "Being and Time,"* 235). While in many ways Kisiel is right about Heidegger's language, this lecture contains insights into the ontological movement of making-sense that Heidegger does *not* abandon in subsequent years, even if he does continue to transform his language. One can take as a starting point a key statement that Kisiel makes in his last paragraph: "The problem of facticity is a '*kinesis*-problem'" (*The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* 238).
- 2 In the fourth chapter of Scott Campbell's *The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life*, he lays out four categories of relationality. In the lecture course, it is true that a section on "the easy" (*das Leichte*) follows immediately after the first three. Yet Heidegger ends this section by referring to the "three basic categories" of the "relationality of caring" (GA 61: 109/82). He then lists inclination, distance, and sequestration, but puts "making things easy" in parentheses afterwards. This may well be ambiguous on Heidegger's part, but definitive proof comes when he subsequently repeats an analysis of only the three relational categories in terms of the two categories of

movement. This is not a significant point of contention, but for the sake of clarity I would suggest that Heidegger means “making things easy” to be a tendency within *each* of the three categories of relationality rather than its own category. See Scott M. Campbell, *The Early Heidegger’s Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

3 Cf. GA 61: 102/ 76–77.

4 Cf. GA 61: 105–6/79.

5 GA 2: 190/SZ 142–3.

6 Explicit reference to equiprimordiality is also present in the SS 1924 lecture course, to which we will be turning shortly. However, even though a methodological sensitivity to equiprimordiality is certainly present functionally in the lecture course, Heidegger has not yet taken the time to explain it with care. Here is the most significant passage in the lecture course: “We will come to understand that the determination of being-with-one-another is *equiprimordial* with the determination of speaking-being. It would be altogether wrong to deduce one from the other; rather the phenomenon of the being-there of human beings as such possesses *equiprimordially speaking-being and being-with-one-another*. These characters of the *equiprimordiality* of the being of human beings must be maintained uniformly if they are to actually hit upon the phenomenon” (GA 18: 64/45). Here Heidegger describes the fact that the characteristics cannot be derived from each other, but only implicitly does he preclude a derivation from another common ground, and he does not explain the positive relationship between the characteristics at all.

7 Thomas Sheehan, “On Movement and the Destruction of Ontology,” *The Monist* 64: 4 (October, 1981), 536. John van Buren’s discussion of Heidegger’s formally indicative appropriation of Aristotle’s concept of life is another place to look. There he says, “The existentiell principles (*archai*) of the basic character

- of practical motion-for-the-sake-of (*kinesis heneka tou*), which Aristotle's method inductively transcribes from concrete practical life, are supposed to be regarded neither as the Platonic forms (essentialism) nor as particular goods (ideology), but rather as the analogical similarities displayed immanently by different historical shapes of practical life..." John van Buren, "The Ethics of *Formale Anzeige* in Heidegger," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69:2 (1995), 162.
- 8 Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 10.
- 9 Sheehan acknowledges this semester as a starting point of Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle as proto-phenomenological but does not himself examine this lecture course and draw out the connection between the clearing and the ontological movements of prestructure and reluctance; see *Making Sense of Heidegger*, 12.
- 10 *Making Sense of Heidegger*, 23.
- 11 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 19, 61.
- 12 Yet another step is possible and not uncommon: when collapse takes place, but life is still buoyed by the desires, habits, and institutions of producing-oneself-for-oneself, there is a tendency to resort to the use of power over others in order to allay the feelings of insecurity and fallenness. The phenomenon of everyday tyranny emerges in the conjunction of these basic ontological movements: sustained ruinant collapse within oneself and the use of power or force to impose oneself on others. Socrates' characterizations of Meno's behavior speak to this possibility (see Plato, *Meno*, 86d).
- 13 Campbell offers an analysis of ruinance in terms of reluctance and prestructure and places his primary emphasis on temporality. Yet he makes no explicit connection to unity and disunity, which in turn means that he might well miss the distinctive disclosive capacity of ruinance. However, he does

discuss what he calls a “countermovement” against ruinance: “The countermovement can thus be described as the dismantling of life’s assumptions down to the factual immediacy of life, which Heidegger at one point describes as its wanting (*Darbung*)...The countermovement of life against ruinance, therefore, is in fact a matter of grasping that dimension of emptiness upon which life stands and which informs all its caring movements” (*The Early Heidegger’s Philosophy of Life*, 95). In my analysis, ruinance expresses an excess of disunity, which often results from an excess of prestructure that “wants” to secure unity once-and-for-all. Campbell’s countermovement must then be a reluctant shift toward the unity of existence that is guided by “the dimension of emptiness” rather than a dominating prestructive meaning. If this is right – he does explicitly connect this countermovement to reluctance on page 94 – then operating beneath Campbell’s discussion of ruinance and its countermovement is a sense of balance between reluctance and prestructure, and perhaps between unity and disunity. I will discuss such balance later when I bring up the *aretē* of letting-be and of *hexis*.

- 14 Sheehan, “On Movement and the Destruction of Ontology,” 537.
15 Sheehan, “On Movement and the Destruction of Ontology,” 537.
16 Gregory Fried is right to point out that Heidegger’s complete untethering from normativity is not only impractical but likely a source of his disastrous alignment with the National Socialists. It is true that “an intensely sensitive attunement to the radical finitude of historical situatedness” fails if it does not consider the guidance of historically situated normative values. However, my hope is that by retrieving the question of how one handles the unity and disunity of one’s existence, the basic insights of originary ethics can be steered away from a source of Heidegger’s personal failings. In particular, finding a balance between unity and disunity (which I will discuss shortly) allows for a *provisional* rather than exclusionary

- relationship with normative values precisely because the disruptive capacity of disunity is welcomed. See Gregory Fried, “Retrieving *phronêsis*: Heidegger on the essence of politics,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 47: 3 (December 2014), 293–313.
- 17 Jean-Luc Nancy, “Originary Ethics,” in *A Finite Thinking*, ed. Simon Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 173.
- 18 Nancy, “Originary Ethics,” 177.
- 19 Kisiel also notes, though without any further development, the connection between Aristotle’s doctrine of the Golden Mean of virtue and the categories that Heidegger uses to elaborate upon the primary category of care (*The Genesis of Heidegger’s “Being and Time,”* 236).
- 20 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2002), 1023a18–24.
- 21 John Van Buren, “The Ethics of *Formale Anzeige* in Heidegger,” 168. Van Buren’s work is particularly helpful for tracing the ethical sense of formal indication, especially in its development out of Heidegger’s work on Husserl, Kierkegaard, and Aristotle.
- 22 Kisiel confirms this interpretation of formal indication. Speaking of Heidegger’s WS 1921–22 lecture course, Kisiel writes: “the tentative, probing ‘having’ of formal-indicative definition, for all its decisiveness, is an insecure and so ‘in-authentic having’ which never fully determines or defines its object. This in fact is its formality, in providing only the ‘on-set’ of determination, seeking promising beginnings and directions for development to articulate its dynamic topic, like maps drawn lightly, in filigree, to prefigure ‘the’ way, only to recast to point to a new way. Philosophizing is according a never-ending ‘way’” (*The Genesis of Heidegger’s “Being and Time,”* 234–35).
- 23 For example, Heidegger warns against the tendency to take his formal indication of ruinance as a dogmatically fixed category. Such fixity carries the dangerous possibility of being used as a metaphysical foundation, which Heidegger characterizes

as a kind of drifting off into an assumed autonomy that has become blind to its own presuppositions and situation (see GA 61: 141-42/105). Heidegger is consistent in this warning. In a lecture course a year and a half later, he says: “A *formal indication* is always misunderstood when it is treated as a fixed universal proposition and used to make deductions from and fantasized with in a constructivistic dialectical fashion” (GA 63: 80-81/62).

- 24 It is noteworthy in this necessarily brief account of the lineage of the existentials that Heidegger refers to them as ontological movements in *Being and Time*. Heidegger writes, “Falling prey is an ontological concept of motion,” “*Das Verfallen ist ein ontologischer Bewegungsbegriff*” (GA 2: 238/SZ 180). The connection between the existentials and Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle’s ontology of movement has not gone unnoticed. Marjorie Oelie, for example, related *Befindlichkeit*, *Stimmung*, and *pathos* to movement in her essay “Heidegger’s Reading of Aristotle’s Concept of Pathos,” *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16.2 (Spring 2012): 389-406. She says that “by correlating *pathos* as emotion to physical change and ontology, *pathos* as passion or emotion leaves the narrow domain of psychology and is instead situated within the broader domain of life and its movements” (393). Charlotta Weigelt, for her part, focuses on the connection between *kinesis* and *logos* in “*Logos as Kinesis: Heidegger’s Interpretation of the Physics in Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*,” *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 9.1 (Fall 2004): 101-16. What tends to be addressed in the literature is the grounding of ontology in movement and its connection to one particular constitutive factor or another. What I hope to contribute is a sense that all of these connections together have behind them Heidegger’s development of the relationship between unity and disunity in factual life.

- 25 Referring to *Metaphysics* Δ , Heidegger explains that “In *pathos*, Aristotle sees, with the facts regarding *motion*, not so much the passive, but that something *occurs for me*. Here, *pathos* is taken in the broadest and the plainest meaning... of ‘becoming-otherwise.’ *Pathos* is a determination of beings with the character of alterability” (GA 18: 195/131).
- 26 Cf. GA 18: 179-81/121-22.