

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF
'BEING AND TIME'
BY WAY OF SECTION 42

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In this paper I attempt to demonstrate the peculiar importance of Section 42 for understanding *Being and Time* as a whole. I would like to maintain that this little section containing Hyginus' "Myth of Care" represents, in a very special sense, a high point or culmination of *Being and Time*. It seems the first step toward fulfilling this claim must be to reveal the circumstances under which Section 42 'comes on the scene' in *Being and Time*.

At the end of Section 41 the result of the preliminary existential-ontological analysis of Dasein was that Dasein's being is care. However, at the same time the question was raised as to whether this basic existential-ontological structure of Dasein must itself be explicated in terms of an even "more primordial phenomenon,"¹ i.e., perhaps the structural unity and totality of care can be shown to rest upon a more essential ground. Before taking up this question, Heidegger wanted to show that, having explicated Dasein's being as care, he had not merely forced care "under an idea of his own contriving."² Section 42 is therefore defense against the possible charge that, in the analysis of Dasein's being as care, rather than conceptualizing existentially what was revealed in an existentiell-ontical manner, Heidegger has merely contrived or made up this care structure. Heidegger repeats this charge once more in Section 42 and at that time I will further discuss its significance.

I will try to demonstrate that in the explication of this section the crucial question as to whether Dasein's being as care is itself grounded in a "more primordial phenomenon" gains a more explicit directedness, that *Being and Time*, in a certain sense, culminates in

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Seventh edition, (Niemeyer Verlag: Tübingen), Trans., by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Harper & Row Publishers: New York, 1962), p.241.

² *Ibid.*

Section 42 and that consequently Section 42 is revealed as being very important for understanding *Being and Time* as a whole.

The title of Section 42 is "Confirmation of the Existential Interpretation of Dasein as Care in terms of Dasein's Pre-ontological Way of Interpreting Itself." From this title we gain three important insights about the section: 1) Dasein's understanding of itself here is "pre-ontological" and "unaffected by any theoretical interpretation."³ 2) Because there is a "self-interpretation" going on we must comply with Section 29 of *Being and Time* in which we were told that in *Being and Time* Dasein will interpret itself and 'we' will "listen in" on this self-disclosure and then raise what is disclosed to a conceptual level. We, of course, have already "listened in" and raised what we heard to a conceptual level in the ontological analysis of Dasein's being as care. However, because Section 42 and its little fable represent Dasein's 'unique pre-ontological self-interpretation' regarding its being as care, a type of interpretation which appears nowhere else in *Being and Time*, we must pay close attention to this section and perhaps "listen in" differently. Finally, 3) Section 42 is a 'confirmation' (*Bewährung*) of Dasein's being as care. On the one hand, Heidegger's mention of 'confirmation' is a prefiguring of Section 44 in which he shows the traditional correspondence theory of truth to be a derivative mode of truth, the foundation of which is truth as "uncovering" or "disclosure." Confirmation is the phenomenal context within which Heidegger demonstrates this to be the case. Thus, for Heidegger, "'Confirmation' signifies the being's showing itself in its self-sameness."⁴ On the other hand, without actually explicating Heidegger's entire treatment of truth as 'uncovering', we can say that Section 42 and the fable therein represent an ontic-existential confirmation of Dasein's being as care in that Dasein expresses or asserts of itself truly, i.e., Dasein uncovers itself as it is in itself 'primordially' and pre-ontologically. In Section 42 the truth of Dasein's being as care will be confirmed.

Before stating the fable, Heidegger reiterates the charge against the existential analytic of Dasein's being as care in the following manner: "The document which we are about to cite should make plain that our existential Interpretation is not a mere fabrication."⁵ The charge is that Heidegger "made up," "contrived," or "fabricated" the existential analytic of Dasein's being as care. Thus, Heidegger presents a piece by Hyginus which he calls 'Zeugnis' and

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.261.

⁵ *Ibid.* p.242.

'*Aussage*', both of which mean or have the sense of 'witness', 'evidence', 'testimony', or 'deposition'. Also, in this piece Dasein's testimony is *niedergelegt*, i.e., reported or deposited as one would an official document. Yet, Heidegger then says that Dasein's reporting or self-interpretation as care is done 'in an ancient fable.'⁶ It must be noted that '*Fabel*' has a meaning quite different from '*Zeugnis*' or '*Aussage*'. A fable is something someone, in this case Hyginus, "makes up." And so, Heidegger seems to want to defend the existential-ontological analysis of Dasein's being as care against the charge that it was mere fabrication by presenting as evidence a fable which Hyginus fabricated. What sort of evidence can such a fable constitute?

First of all, we must note Heidegger's playfulness and irony in using a number of terms to refer to the fable by Hyginus. This same irony is in play when Heidegger says that the demonstrative force of this fable is "*nur geschichtlich*," i.e., "merely historical."⁷ In both of these examples of playfulness, there is however the utmost seriousness. Heidegger does seriously offer this fable as a testimony against the charge of fabrication? And, of course, for Heidegger history is not an arbitrary concern. His own words express his seriousness on both counts: "If Dasein is 'historical' in the very depths of its being, then a deposition (*Aussage*) which comes from its history and goes back to it, and which, moreover, is prior to any scientific knowledge, will have especial weight, even though its importance is never purely ontological."⁸

Again we ask, how can this fable serve as defense against the charge of fabrication? Later in *Being and Time* it becomes clear that historicity is a kind of being which Dasein possesses as a basic structure of its being. Thus, a poem which is grounded in this structure of Dasein must represent Dasein's genuine uncovering itself as it is in itself. There is still something more to be said about this fable as testimony against the charge of fabrication in reference to historicity and care and I will return to it shortly. However, it is now time to look at the fable itself.

In the fable, Care, when crossing a river, picked up some clay and gave it shape. Jupiter appeared and bestowed upon Care's creation spirit or life. There was then a dispute among Care, Jupiter, and Earth, each of whom wanted to give this creature their own name. Finally, Saturn appeared and acted as 'mediator' in the dispute. He

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.241.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.241-242.

decided that because Jupiter gave this creature spirit, at the creature's death he would receive its spirit. Earth, who contributed the body, would get the body and nothing more. However, because Care first shaped this creature, she would possess it as long as it lives. As to its name, it was called 'homo' having been made out of 'humus' (i.e., earth).

Heidegger makes three points explicitly about this fable. First, as long as Dasein is in-the-world it "has the stamp of care."⁹ Second, Dasein is named in relation to its 'facticity', i.e., *homo* in relation to the nature of its body as earth or *humus*. For Dasein, "existing is always factual."¹⁰ Third and most importantly, in the fable, Saturn, i.e., Time, comes to mediate among Jupiter, Earth, and Care in deciding in what respect Dasein is to be and is to be named. In this fable the "still more primordial phenomenon" (*noch ursprünglicheren Phänomens*) which grounds the care structure is prefigured, i.e., time. Therefore, the question raised at the end of Section 41 as to the ground of care has now been made more explicit. Also, we must note that later in *Being and Time* it will be ontologically demonstrated that Dasein's historicity is made possible as well by temporality which is the determinate condition of historicity.

In reference then to the question concerning the adequacy of the fable to function as testimony against the charge that the existential-ontological analysis of Dasein's being as care was mere fabrication, this introduction of time was very important. For it seems that if this fable is to be adequate and genuine testimony against that charge, not only must the basic characteristics which constitute Dasein, namely care and historicity, be present in the fable, but also their ultimate ground, i.e., temporality, must itself be made manifest.

Heidegger regards Hyginus' "Myth of Care" basically as a historical document. But because this fable was used by Goethe in his *Faust* we are entitled to include as a part of the 'historicity' of this fable Goethe's assimilation and development of certain aspects of it there. This inclusion of *Faust* will prove important for the further interpretation of the fable and of Section 42 as a whole.

In the second part of *Faust*, Act 5 opens at midnight with the appearance of four gray women entering the palace where Faust is spending his last few hours before honoring his pact with Mephistopheles. These four women are sisters and are called Care, Guilt, Want and Need. Care is the only one who is able to gain access to Faust's room to speak with him. The other three wait outside this room for

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.243.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.236.

the arrival of their brother, Death. We should not be surprised then that in the fable in *Being and Time* it is sister Care who gains access to Dasein and that brother Death is close by. [It should be noted that death is introduced explicitly for the first time in *Being and Time* in the little fable.] Also, it seems fair to conjecture that sister Guilt will be waiting just outside of Section 42.

Care describes herself to Faust as "Ewig ängstlicher Geselle"¹ and asks him, "Hast du die Sorge nicht gekannt?"² Care describes herself as "anxious company" and asks Faust, "Have you never faced Care?" She attempts to persuade Faust to see death as his ownmost human horizon but he refuses. Care says, "The human being is, his life long, blind; Thus, Faustus, you shall meet your end."³ Care blinds Faust in an attempt to exhibit to him his character as 'average everydayness' even in the face of death. And so, with the help of Goethe, through a connection made between death and care, anxiety and guilt have been introduced into *Being and Time*, in a significant manner, for the first time.

At this point in our journey through Section 42 it is obvious that this small section harbors much more significant information for an adequate interpretation of *Being and Time* than first meets the eye. In light of this we must begin to pay even closer attention to Heidegger's next step in the section.

Let us first return to the very beginning of *Being and Time*, to the first lines of the book. Heidegger begins *Being and Time* with a quote from Plato's *Sophist*. The Eleatic Stranger poses a question to Theaetetus as to the meaning of Being. This question arises "directly" in the center of the dialogue. Thus *Being and Time*, begins in the middle of a Platonic dialogue. Given such a conspicuous beginning, we are perhaps entitled to ask what will happen in the middle of *Being and Time* itself. There are 83 sections in *Being and Time*, and thus, we could say that Section 42 is the middle of the book. I would like to suggest that, in light of the analysis of Section 42 thus far and of the analysis to come, 'what happens' in the middle (i.e., in Section 42) is in some sense a "culmination" of *Being and Time*. But before revealing this culmination, perhaps it should be asked if there is any other evidence in Section 42 which would at least intimate that this section is indeed a culmination.

In Section 42 Heidegger quotes Seneca from his *Epistulae*

¹ Goethe's *Faust*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, (Doubleday Anchor Books: New York, 1961), p.458.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p.462.

Morales; there Seneca says, "... God is immortal and man mortal. Now when it comes to these, the good of the one, namely God, is fulfilled by his Nature; but that of the other, man, is fulfilled by care (*cura*)."¹⁴ Aside from the obvious support that Seneca gives to Heidegger's claim that Dasein's being is care, two things must be noted concerning this quote. In the first place, this is the only reference made to "the good" in the entirety of *Being and Time*. Secondly, this quote was taken from Seneca's epistle No. 124, his 'last' (i.e., *letzten*); a word which also carries the sense of 'ultimate'), entitled, "The One True Good As Attained By Reason." Because this epistle deals with the 'highest principle', namely, the good, in relation to man and God, perhaps this is Seneca's 'ultimate' or 'culminating' epistle.

It also seems significant to note that almost immediately after this quote Seneca says, "How, then, can we regard as perfect the nature of those who have no experience of time in its perfection."¹⁵ For Seneca, to experience time in its perfection is to experience it as the "three fold, —past, present, and future."¹⁶ And it is only man, of all animals, that could have such an experience. It will be shown that Seneca's connection of man's good as care to time in its three constitutive elements is important for understanding Section 42.

In finding the good at the center of *Being and Time*, one is immediately reminded of a Platonic dialogue in which the good appears near the middle, i.e., *Republic*, Book VI. There Plato tells us that in the same way that the sun lights up the visible realm, nourishes it and provides the possibility of our seeing this world truly, so the good lights up the realm of the forms such that we can know them and discover their truth. In the *Republic*, Socrates says, the good is "ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, that it is something beyond Being which illuminates Being and lets Being be disclosed."¹⁷ To this Heidegger says, "wir wollen . . . nicht anderes, als uns aus der Höhle ans Licht zu bringen,"¹⁸ i.e., "we want nothing else than to bring ourselves out of the cave and to the light." Is the appearance of "the good" at the center of *Being and Time*, in Section 42, (the only time

¹⁴ *Being and Time*, p.243.

¹⁵ Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, trans. by Richard M. Gummere, (Harvard University Press: London, 1925, 1943, 1952), p.446.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ John Sallis, "Radical Phenomenology and Fundamental Ontology", in *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. VI, 1976, p.149.

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe, Band 24. Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt a.m., 1975, p.404.

"the good" is mentioned in *Being and Time*) yet another signpost pointing toward the importance of this section?

It will be 'suggested' later in *Being and Time* (and this was actually made explicit in the *Grundprobleme*) that in the same way the good for Plato is that which is beyond Being and lights Being up, so time for Heidegger is also beyond Being as that which lights it up. Granted that this is the case, I would like to propose the following: Heidegger agrees with Seneca that the good for Dasein is care. If care is indeed founded upon temporality as its determinate condition and meaning, then not only is it clear that the ultimate 'good' for Dasein is time, but also that Dasein's being for the first time in *Being and Time* has been "lit up" by its most primordial ground, i.e., time. Thus, with the lighting up of Dasein's being, *Being and Time* itself has been lit up in the middle, namely, in Section 42. This latter claim will become clearer shortly.

To claim that *Being and Time* culminates, comes to a high point or is somehow fulfilled in Section 42 seems to require more than simply showing the lighting up of Dasein's being as care. Perhaps in order to claim such a culmination it must be made evident that *Being and Time* in its essential 'method' and 'content' has been made manifest in this little section. The question is then, what exactly has been lit up in Section 42?

It seems the phenomenological method of *Being and Time*, i.e., letting the phenomenon show itself from itself, has been maintained. Dasein is giving a self-interpretation of its own being. Moreover, because Dasein's understanding of itself in the fable by Hyginus is pre-ontological and therefore primordial, we must assume that Heidegger is inviting us to "listen in," granted in a somewhat different way, once again on Dasein's self-disclosure.

In the title of Section 42, the upcoming discussion of truth was prefigured in the word *Bewahrung*, perhaps in an attempt to assure the validity of Dasein's testimony which was about to be given. Dasein's historicity is revealed in reference to the justification of using Hyginus' fable as evidence against the charge that the existential-ontological analysis of Dasein's being as care was mere fabrication. In the fable itself, with the help of Hyginus, death and time are introduced in their relatedness to Dasein's being as care. With the assistance of Goethe we were able to see that Care had a brother Death and a sister Guilt close by. Moreover, Care's visit to Faust at the palace, in which she describes herself as "anxious company," is an effort to persuade Faust to rise out of his everydayness and authentically be-towards-his-death. She attempts this persuasion by reference to Faust's facticity and being-towards-

the-future. Faust, of course, does not face time which underlies even Care, and she says, "Be it rapture or dismay/He will wait another day/Worry lest the future vanish/And so he can never finish."¹⁹

Time was at first introduced in a rather primitive way and Seneca helped us to see the forthcoming development of time in its three ecstases, i.e., having been, present and future, as these related to Dasein's full understanding of its being. Also, Seneca told us that the good for Dasein is care and we were able to trace a relationship, by way of analogy, between the good in the *Republic* and time in *Being and Time*. Thus, the function of time was rendered analogously to the good as a "lighting up" of Being and of the being of Dasein.

In Section 42, *Being and Time* itself is lit up in its three temporal ecstases. Section 42, the Section 'presently' being discussed, is lit up. However, so is the having been of *Being and Time*, i.e., the preceding existential-ontological analysis of Dasein's being as care is lit up and thus the entire care structure is being confirmed. Finally, the future of *Being and Time* is lit up by disclosing time as the horizon of Being, the meaning of care and the ground for guilt, death, anxiety and historicity. The temporal structure of *Being and Time* itself is presented in Section 42.

It could be said that Section 42 viewed more generally performs a twofold function in which all of the above mentioned elements of *Being and Time* are worked out. In one sense, this section is the ontico-existential confirmation of the existential-ontological analysis of Dasein's being as care; therefore, with the completion of Section 42 we have the full existential/existential conception of Dasein's being as care. In another sense, given this full conception of care, the foundation has been laid for addressing the central question of the Second Division of *Being and Time*, the question of the possibility of Dasein's being a unity and a whole, i.e., of being "authentic care." And so, Section 42 completes the basis from which the remaining tasks of *Being and Time* must proceed. These tasks are, on the one hand, the existential analysis of Dasein's existential attestation to its possibility of being authentic in the call of conscience as being resolute; on the other hand, the existential analysis of Dasein as having the possibility of authentic being-towards-death or anticipation which finds its existential counterpart in Dasein's existential attestation to its possibility of authentic being-towards-death in anticipatory resoluteness, which itself forms the basis from which the primordial interpretation of Dasein's being as temporality proceeds.

¹⁹ Goethe's *Faust*, p. 460.

One final question could be asked. Granting that the fable constitutes adequate testimony against the fabrication charge as discussed earlier, what other reason could Heidegger have for using a fable, Hyginus' "Myth of Care"?

We must remember that *Being and Time* begins in the middle of a Platonic dialogue, i.e., *Sophist*, and in the middle of *Being and Time* itself we are still in the middle of a Platonic dialogue, i.e., *Republic*. Even the introduction of Section 42 as representing a response to a serious charge which impedes the progress of philosophy can be seen to convey the spirit of Plato. Given this relation in *Being and Time* of Heidegger to Plato, perhaps the reason for using a fable could be stated in reference to the following. In Platonic dialogue a myth or a simile is sometimes used because "the single conception set forth by the myth or the simile must be grasped as a whole before the relevance of its details or the validity of its arguments can be perceived."²⁰ In the same way that Plato sometimes uses myths to free himself from the critical dialogue such that an idea can be rendered in its wholeness and 'all at once', so Heidegger may have chosen the "Myth of Care" to 'say' *Being and Time* 'all at once', "unaffected by any theoretical Interpretation."²¹

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²⁰ Herman L. Sinaiko, *Love Knowledge and Discourse in Plato: Dialogue and Dialectic in Phaedrus, Republic and Parmenides*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1965), p.234.

²¹ *Being and Time*, p.241.