AUTHENTICITY: THE DIALECTIC OF SELF-POSSESSION
REFLECTIONS ON A THEME IN ST. AUGUSTINE, VON HILDEBRAND AND HEIDEGGER
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In the world of the Flight man does not exist as a single delimited being but only as a chaos of feelings, impulses, and acts. None knows where his own chaos finishes and where that of another begins. Everything merges into everything else. But when an event demands it, man constitutes himself by gathering out of the chaos whatever is needed for this event, thus setting limits to the chaos. It is not man in his integrity who constitutes himself, but a fragment of man only, and only for the duration of the event; then, he vanishes once more into chaos. As he is not bound securely to anyone, he can vanish whenever it suits him to do so; but since he who belongs to none belongs to everything, he has to show himself whenever anything in the Flight commands him.

The above passage captures a central feature in the experience of the contemporary man who flees from God. The man who rejects the transcendent and supernatural orders "does not exist as a single delimited being but only as a chaos of feelings, impulses, and acts...," he does not know "where his own chaos finishes and where that of another begins."

The theme of personal identity and the conscious experience of that identity are surely important themes for philosophical reflection. Yet in the modern age they have also acquired an existential urgency. On the one hand, there is an apparently widespread loss of the sense of individual identity and sense of purpose which results in anxiety. On the other hand, these same lived experiences serve as basis for theories which posit an identity between man and what used to be recognized as a distinct and transcendent world.

The philosophical problem before us, then, is the question why would an individual ever fall into the error of thinking himself to be one with beings that in fact transcend him? What is

the condition of possibility for this error? At the same time, what is the condition for the possibility of distinguishing oneself from what one is not?

1. St. Augustine on the Loss of Self-Identity

The loss of the sense of individuality is not something new. The phenomenon is accurately captured by St. Augustine in the extraordinary tenth book of his work on the Trinity. It is there that he establishes the principle that the soul knows itself with certitude. And he does so despite the soul's tendencies to err about itself.

One such error, as identified by St. Augustine, is the result of a contamination or impurity of the soul which occurs because of the soul's selfish attachment to those things which bring it satisfaction. St. Augustine explains:

... because it is in those things of which it thinks with love, and it has grown accustomed to thinking of sensible things, that is, of bodies with love, it is incapable of being in itself without the images of these things. From this arises its shameful error, that it can longer distinguish the images of sensible things from itself, so as to see itself alone. For they have marvelously cohered to it with the glue of love, and this is its uncleanness that, while it endeavors to think of itself alone, it regards itself as being that without which it cannot think itself.  

St. Augustine's brilliant psychological description of the inner experience of the individual who turns away from God and transcendent beings gives us a key to the understanding of certain metaphysical theories which identify the individual with the things which are outside of and distinct from him. One such

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theory is Heidegger's identification of the individual with the things that are out there in the world. The attractiveness and plausibility of these theories lies in the fact that there are indeed certain subjective experiences which seem to confirm the metaphysical theory than man finds himself in the things he encounters outside of himself. Since man can in fact experience himself as somehow inseparable and even identical with these things, such metaphysical theories seem to be valid.

Before indicating the nature of this key that we find in the Augustinian description, I hasten to point out that St. Augustine clearly indicates that the distorted sense of identity stems from that fact that man thinks himself one with the things in the outside world, even though in fact he is not identical with them. Precisely because man is in fact a being distinct and separate from others, the task of self-knowledge demands that man distinguish himself from others.

What, then, is the Augustinian key to the understanding of the psychology of self-identification with the world and of the metaphysical theories than could spring from such experience? It has several distinct elements.

a) The dialogical principle

The first element of the key is contained in the existential fact that the soul seeks to know itself because it has first come to love some reality other than itself. We can speak of this fact as the dialogical principle. In a marvelous passage of that same tenth book St. Augustine asks the rhetorical question whether it is by reason of the eternal truth that the soul sees how beautiful it is to know itself because it loves what it sees and desires to imitate it in itself.

b) The normative principle

4 . De Trin., X.vi.: Ita enim conformatur eis quodam modo non id existendo sed putando, non quo se imaginem putet sed omnino illud ipsum cuius imaginem secum habet.
5 . De Trin., X.ix: ab eo quod alterum novit dinoscat.
6 . De Trin., X.iii: An in ratione veritatis aeternae videt quam speciosum sit nosse semetipsam, et hoc amai quod videt studetque in se fieri quia, quamvis sibi nota non sit, notum et tamen est quam bonum sit ut sibi nota sit?
The second element, which we can designate as the \textit{normative principle}, is contained in the response to the question why man has been commanded to know himself. The answer, as St. Augustine tells us, lies in the fact that man has been called to \textit{subject himself} to and to be ruled by that which is above him while governing that which is below himself.\textsuperscript{7}

c) The negative principle of self-forgetfulness

When, however, it acts out of evil desire, the soul \textit{forgets} itself. Thus, the third element of the key is the negative principle of self-ignorance.\textsuperscript{8}

d) The negative principle of need

And the fourth and final element is the principle of need. Having turned away from the intrinsic beauty and goodness of God, as well as of things in general, the soul turns in upon itself. But then it is \textit{no longer sufficient to itself}, nor is anything else sufficient to it. St. Augustine clearly identifies the condition of inner lack and nothingness which becomes the principle of motivation in so much of contemporary philosophy and psychology. St. Augustine captures the perennial condition of the self-centered individual in this brilliant and penetrating passage:

And, therefore, through its need and want, it becomes excessively intent upon its own actions and the fickle pleasures which it gathers through them, and thus by desiring to seek knowledge from those things that are without, the nature of which it knows and loves and which it feels can be lost unless held fast by devoted care, it loses its security; and it thinks itself so much the less, the more certain it is that it cannot lose itself.\textsuperscript{9}

2. Self-Identity and Self-Possession

St. Augustine's discussion in the tenth book of the work \textit{On}
the Trinity is primarily in terms of the soul's knowledge of itself. Yet in the notions of finding oneself and losing oneself more is already implied. The same is the case in the notion of subordinating oneself to something above. Conceptually, self-identity and self-possession are not equivalent. The later implies more.

In speaking of the sense of self-identity, we speak primarily of the cognitive element. Thus, we mean that one knows oneself to be one with oneself. The knower and what is known are one. To the extent that cognition is a mode of having as distinguished from being, we can say that self-knowledge or the sense of self-identity includes a self-possession. But it would be improper to restrict self-possession to a merely cognitive dimension. The cognitive act is also receptive. By its very nature, the cognitive function implies a certain distance from what is cognitively possessed. Indeed, this cognitive distance is a condition for objectivity in knowledge. For if the act of knowing "touches" or "grasps" the object in such a way that it in any way affects or exercises power over that object, the act would change or distort it, thus making a grasp of the object as it "in itself" impossible. The cognitive "having" of a reality is therefore a weak form of possessing; self-consciousness as a cognitive self-possession is a weak form of self-possession because it does not exercise power of the self.

Possession in the stronger or more proper sense would seem to imply a real and active sovereignty and power over the object. Although knowledge is presupposed for this kind of possession, the act of self-knowledge is not as such the exercise of a certain sovereignty and power over my own being. For this to occur the spontaneous acts other than cognition are necessary, acts in which something issues forth from the person, in which a "word" is spoken by the person by way of an adequate response to something.¹⁰

This stronger notion of self-possession remains to be developed. In anticipation of the outcome, let it be simply noted at this juncture that when the person fails to achieve authentic self-possession, he will replace it with the gesture of

¹⁰ See Section 3.f below.
appropriating, or more precisely, of incorporating the transcendent world into his own being as something that is his own, something that belongs to his being.

3. Dietrich von Hildebrand and the foundation for self-possession

a) The person's dialogue with a cosmos of values

Von Hildebrand explicitly shares St. Augustine's dialogical principle as the foundation for self-possession in the weaker sense. In the *Transformation in Christ* we read:

The only fruitful self-knowledge, and the only true one, is that which grows out of man's self-confrontation with God. We must first look at God and His immeasurable glory, and then put the question, 'Who art Thou and who am I?' We must speak with St. Augustine, 'Could I but know Thee, I should know myself'.

Not only the understanding of human nature in general but also the knowledge of the self must take "departure from the dialogic situation between subject and object: interpreting his object references as acts of response." By acts of response von Hildebrand here means the acts of response to value. Any value free or neutral perspective in dealing with man or with our own being renders any true self-knowledge impossible. Von Hildebrand's entire philosophy of the person is grounded in the recognition of man's destiny and calling to respond to the world of values and ultimately to God, the fullness of all good and value. Man's metaphysical condition is dialogic: he is called to respond to a call that issues from a transcendent dimension.

In a dialogue, the person responds to something addressed to him. We best understand the significance of this by contrasting it with a cause-effect relationship or with a simple reaction. The non-intentional scream of pain is simply a reaction to some experienced bodily pain. And the non-intentional pain is in turn the effect of some cause that need not be known for the pain to

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12 TC, 46.
be experienced. The scream, articulated as "A-a-a-h" or "I-i-i-h" stands in no intelligible connection to the pain. The content of the scream does not co-respond to the pain. Similarly, there is no intelligible co-respondence between the pain and its cause since in the first place, the cause need not be known for the pain to be experienced, and second, even if it were known, there is no overriding reason why any particular cause should cause that pain rather than not cause it. There is no intelligible reason why the bodily pain in its qualitative content would be a fitting consequence of the cause.

In the intentional response, the content of the response stands in a fitting relation to the object and its content. There is an intelligible correspondence between the two. Even a simple exchange of greetings such as "How are you?" and "I'm fine, thank you!" shows an intelligible connection. This is even more evident in the response of joy at the return of a friend or that of sorrow at his loss. In each case the response fits, it is adequate. In this context we must restrict ourselves to the following observations: First, the content of the response is not the causal effect of the object; second the content of the intentional response presupposes knowledge of the object to which it is a response; and third, the content of the intentional responses as act is in some real sense part of my being. In conviction or doubt, in joy or sadness, in hope or despair, it is I that am convinced, doubting, etc.

It must be stressed that for von Hildebrand, the condition for true self-knowledge is not simply the intentional response. It must be a response to value, which in the above quoted context is opposed to the neutral or value free perspective. Only the adequate response to value brings into existence in my being a new content or state of being which renders my own self-experience more "substantial" and "concrete."

b) Von Hildebrand's distinction between value and the subjectively satisfying as motivating objects

One of von Hildebrand's major contributions to philosophy is the systematic distinction, particularly in the third chapter of his Ethics and elsewhere, between objective value and the condition
of inner satisfaction as distinct motives for personal acts of affectivity or volition. Certain things acquire significance or are seen as important only because of the satisfaction they provide to a particular individual, - and this regardless of the intrinsic importance or value that they may possess in themselves.\textsuperscript{13} In this context I restrict myself to the following two marks distinguishing value from satisfaction as motivations.

The appeal of satisfaction presents itself as something intrusive and \textit{obtrusive}, insinuating itself into my consciousness. As appeal it already stands in a certain \textit{opposition to my free personal center}, tempting me to yield and let myself go. And it tends to \textit{lull} me into a forgetfulness of my self. We see here the negative principle of self-forgetfulness. The appeal of objective value, on the contrary, has a \textit{sovereign} character, it does not intrude but addresses itself to my free personal center from a distance, as it were, and indeed, by making it clear that the response \textit{ought} to be given, makes me aware that it is my responsibility to give that response. Already on the level of the appeal, therefore, the person becomes aware of himself as possessing a center of responsibility. And this, on the level of the response, implies a self-submission, rather than a yielding.

c) The negative principle of self-forgetfulness

In terms of our problematic, when an object confronts us and is clearly seen to possess an objective value intrinsic to its own being, the individual does not have the psychological occasion or possibility of regarding it as something that belongs to him or to his being. Despite any desire for union that may be engendered by the object, despite an intimate participation in the object in the Augustinian \textit{frui}, there remains a clear consciousness of the \textit{ontological} non-identity between subject and object. The sovereign nature of the call to our free center, the obligatory and normative nature of the call, the demand for submission, all of this serves to heighten our sense of identity as a \textit{subject to whom} a call is addressed and \textit{from whom} a response is demanded. It is thus in the confrontation with objective values that the individual gets an answer to the implicit question "Who am I"?

The situation is radically different in the case of motivation by satisfaction. As von Hildebrand notes, the response to the motive of satisfaction implies a subordination of the object to my desire for satisfaction. It is made to conform to me. There is a total lack of that sovereign distance which exists between the objective value and the subject. And, most importantly for our concern, the datum of experience shows that there is a rather diffused and unclear sense of the self in its free personal center. The anticipated satisfaction occupies the center of consciousness. The subject of that consciousness, however, is only barely and sufficiently distinct enough to say "mine" of that anticipated satisfaction. The ego fades in ever weakening contours in the consciousness of anticipated satisfaction.\textsuperscript{14}

Now, one could object that even though there is a difference in the strength and clarity of a self-consciousness, this does not as such imply a cessation of a consciousness of self, of the subject pole of any experience. To handle this objection, we must elaborate on the psychological implication of motivation by satisfaction.

d) Satisfaction as the negative principle of need

Value, as motivation, is a positive existential principle. When the individual is motivated by value, he is always motivated by something that is, by an actually existing value. Even when he is motivated to correct or abolish a disvalue, this is always against the background of an actual value. This seems evident in the sphere of moral and morally relevant values. This is significant for a truly personalistic vision of man for it implies the possibility of a priority of value and being in personal motivation. In this sense an "end" as motive would not be simply something that acquires actuality through personal activity. Value, as motivation, always implies the fundamental priority of an already actual and existing value.

When the individual's own satisfaction becomes the motivation, apart from the question of legitimacy, we are faced with something that is existentially negative. Now it is an inner lack, an inner emptiness that becomes the principle. It must be

\textsuperscript{14} The above is precisely the state of affairs to which St. Augustine refers to in the passage quoted in note 3 above.
granted that the satisfaction is seen as a positive importance. But it can function as positive only against the experience of lack as a background. Whereas the delight or happiness engendered by an objective value is experienced as something positive against the background of the objective value, the pleasure or delight of satisfaction as motivating can be experienced only to the extent that it fills a lived or felt lack. When the lack is filled, a continuation of the process which previously satisfied produces boredom, nausea and exhaustion. It can even be experienced as a hostile intrusion. On the psychological level it is akin to the experience of suffocation or "shortness of breath" in which my existence is at stake.

The focus on satisfaction as primary and sole existential motive clarifies the primacy of "nothingness" and negativity in explaining human existence and the interpretation of consciousness as essentially "empty" on the part of existentialists such as Sartre and Heidegger.

e) Von Hildebrand and lateral consciousness

The problem of self-consciousness, as we see it in the philosophical tradition, has for the most part been formulated in terms of the subject-object relationship. Thus knowledge is always the knowledge of an object. If the individual is to know himself he would have to know himself as an object. Hence, either the individual knows himself in part, not knowing the part that knows, or he does not know himself at all, or he knows himself as reflected in a mirror. The alternative to this was the interpretation of knowledge in general as essentially self-knowledge. Thus, everything that a knower knows, included the so-called objects of the world, is identical with himself.

St. Augustine rejects the notions that the self knows itself as in a mirror,\(^\text{15}\) or that only one part of it knows another. The soul knows itself by a kind of "inward presence" - "for there is nothing more present to itself than itself."\(^\text{16}\) Von Hildebrand develops this notion of "inward presence" in his Lectures on Epistemology and in the Transformation in Christ where we read:

\(^{15}\) De Trin., X.ii.
\(^{16}\) De Trin., X.x.
The way in which we become conscious of a mental act is intrinsically different from the way in which we become conscious of an object; to the latter only does the phrase "conscious of something" properly apply. Our mental movements unfold along two fundamental dimensions: one is the "intentional direction" to an object, an object we grasp meaningfully, an object which confronts us and reveals its character and qualities to us. This is had when we look at a house, for example. On the other hand there is the consciousness of a cognitive or emotional act which is in no way our object but which takes place inside us, or in which we manifest ourselves - for instance, the act of rejoicing in something. To be sure, our own attitude can be made an object subsequently, it can be apprehended in reflection.\(^{17}\)

While the person is turned to an object in front of him in "frontal consciousness" he is aware of his own being and his acts in a "lateral" fashion. His being and acts are never given as objects in front of him, but are rather "present" interiorly on the side of the subject, laterally, as it were. Thus, self-consciousness or awareness of one's self and one's own acts in the present moment is not the result or a "reflexion", namely, a subsequent turning back upon them, or a reflection, namely seeing them reflected in something else.

In terms of our problematic, the significance of this is as follows: in every act in which we deal with or are concerned with some object in front of us, we are co-given to ourselves as present in our acts and as performing them. This is a metaphysical property of every conscious, intentional act. Thus, whether the person is motivated by value or simply by his own satisfaction, he will be laterally aware that he is being motivated and that he is responding in one fashion or another. Nevertheless, the degree of clarity, or, if you will, the gravity of his self-presence will differ fundamentally in each case of motivation.

The above metaphysical property of lateral self presence which belongs to every conscious act has a cognitive function. It implies a "having" or "possession" in the weaker sense mentioned\(^{17}\). TC, 55.
above. Whether I love or whether I hate, in each case I know immediately in that same moment, that I hate, that the love or hatred is in each case my own.

Now, the experience of such responses as hate, envy, avarice, lust and the like, - all of which are motivated by specific forms of satisfaction, - indicates that we are given to ourselves as driven, eaten, consumed, in one word, as possessed by the dynamism of our own acts. We recognize this clearly, even if only after the fact, when the passion has subsided. The marks of such passion is not simply that we are lost to the world. No, we are lost to ourselves. When a person is completely absorbed by a high objective value, he is also lost to the world, but he has a clear consciousness of himself. This is possible precisely because he has possession of himself in the stronger sense of the word.

f) Self-possession in the strong sense of the word

As already noted, von Hildebrand affirms that every response to value implies an active submission, a self-donation in which the subject, through the content of his acts, conforms to the content of the specific value or objective obligation. The affective and especially the volitional responses to value come into existence not because of some dynamism of man's nature, but because they are made by the free personal center of man. In every spontaneous intentional response, especially in affective spontaneity and above all in volitional spontaneity, the person takes his being in hand and, in some sense, exercises a real sovereignty and dominion over his own being. He exercises or performs his being in the specific mode of the spontaneous conscious act.

This comes into focus by way of contrast with the yielding which takes place in every response exclusively motivated by satisfaction. The satisfaction, anticipated as a lack, exercises a dynamic attraction which pervades and intrudes into my conscious being. It is a dynamism that tends to overwhelm me. Even though they are metaphysically my own, the acts of yielding to the temptation of satisfaction are not performed by me in the full sense of the word. In yielding, I let go of my being and deliver it to another power that is distinct from and other than my
free personal center.

Every intentional response to value implies an act of conformity, of surrender and subordination to the value.\textsuperscript{19} Whereas the individual can find himself attracted by his own satisfaction, he never finds himself a spectator of a value response that takes place in him. For the value response to occur he must take his being into his own hands; it must be a free response of his being. Here, the conformity is an active "shaping" or "forming" of my act so that the act, and through it my being, enter into a fitting relationship to the intelligible normative and value content of the being that confronts me.

The depth of von Hildebrand's penetration into the reality of the human person is particularly clear in his perception of the fact that the person can be interiorly divided, that side by side with a value responding center in the person there can exist centers of pride and concupiscence.\textsuperscript{20} Thus a man can sorrow over the pain suffered by a friend but rejoice at the suffering of a neighbor he dislikes. Although the first is a response to value it has a certain accidental and contingent character because it is a function of his personality as it happens to be at that time. Thus the response is not yet fully valid because it is not a response of his entire being, since a part of his being is still "possessed" by a proud or concupiscent dynamism within him. In this instance the response to value would become fully his own if it were sanctioned by the individual. And this means also, that any immoral response motivated by satisfaction would have to be disavowed. In sanction the person takes full possession of any morally relevant value responses; in disavowal he separates and as it were "decapitates" any morally negative responses that may proceed from the centers of pride and concupiscence in him. But the full integration of the person in his morally relevant value response means that in sanction and disavowal the person takes full and complete possession of his being: his entire being comes under his power; he fully goes along with the adequate value response; or, as the case may be, he takes a decisive distance from a

\textsuperscript{18} Hence, St Augustine's \textit{perdit securitatem}, quoted in note 9 above, clearly applies to this state of affairs.

\textsuperscript{19} TC, 482; cf. note 7 above.

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. E, Ch. 31-2.

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. TC, 62 ff.; E, 321 ff.
morally negative response.

It should be clear that every value response, in as much as it is an active self-conforming and self-surrender to value, implies not only an awareness of oneself as agent and subject but also an active self-possession in the performance of that response. This is again true on a higher level in the case of the response to morally relevant values. Here much more of my being is at stake. My responsibility and freedom are engaged in a fundamental fashion by the sphere of moral and morally relevant values. That is why, as long as I am a divided personality, with centers of pride and concupiscence existing in me despite a general will to be morally good, I am not yet fully in possession of myself. Hence, every response to morally relevant values demands a sanction from my deepest center; and every morally negative response demands a disavowal from that deepest center. It is on that depth level that the person achieves an inner integrity and self-possession, when every attempt of a still autonomous center of pride or concupiscence to move my being is negated by the will.

g) A pseudo self-possession in the strong sense

Self-possession in the strong sense, as opposed to a basically cognitive having of the self, implies that the person can take his being "into his own hands" and turn it into a specific direction. It is the capacity to take a position or stance toward a motive. Above we saw that it can be realized only in the response to value. There is, however, another kind of self-possession in the strong sense which has a dialectical character: it becomes impotent in its very exercise. It occurs when man does not simply yield to the attraction of the satisfying but actively and explicitly commits himself to it.

Let us compare two men motivated by the satisfaction of lust. One simply yields to the temptation. The other makes a deliberate decision to pursue the satisfaction. In the latter case we clearly see that the individual took his being in his own hands, as it were, and turned it in a specific direction. Notwithstanding the attractiveness of lust to both men, the second man projects himself deliberately toward the satisfaction of lust. It is also clear that the second individual exercised a power and sovereignty over his being that the first man did not.
We can speak of a certain superiority of the second man: he took his being into his own hands and therefore actualized a power that is uniquely personal. The first man is more like an animal in unreflected and unmediated solidarity with his drives and urges. Nevertheless, the superior man's self-possession is in fact dialectical: it turns into its own negation. Faced with the temptation of lust, he deliberately commits his being to satisfaction. The moment he does so he loses possession of himself. The fact that he deliberately commits himself does not change the metaphysical status of the motive in its essential nature of being something that "drives" or "moves" the person from outside his center and therefore something to which he yields. This kind of "superior" type may possess more self-control than the man who simply yields; indeed he may possess the power of retrieving his being and turning in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, as long as that power is not used, he is in effect possessed by the motive to which he committed himself.

Whereas the weak type may experience his yielding as a yielding and as "being possessed" by his desire, the "superior" type will in one sense experience himself as the one in charge. His commitment and the dynamism of his pursuit are his project. The power of the dynamism will in one sense be experienced as an abundant vitality, not as something alien to the individual. And yet, once the decision has been made, the continued projection of the individual no longer depends on him. This will be the case regardless of the power of the will to execute behavior in pursuit of his goal. In contrast, in order to maintain a commitment to value, an exercise of the power of self-possession and self-commitment is constantly necessary. The continuation of a commitment to satisfaction demands nothing more of the individual. Precisely in virtue of its metaphysical property of being a dynamism that overwhelms the person, satisfaction, as a motive, is antithetical and hostile to any self-possession. Thus the more conscious and deliberate is the commitment to satisfaction, the deeper and more radical is the individual's loss of self-possession.

The psychological experience of the loss of self-possession in the above described situation is a necessary consequence. It
may not be as straightforward as in the case of the weak type that has yielded and is now a helpless *slave* of his passions. Indeed, the weak type may still have a fundamental intention and desire for conversion, he may "will that which he cannot" and in that sense retain a deeper self-possession. The superior type's loss of self-possession occurs on a deeper level and may be masked by his mastery of the peripheral sphere of behavior.

h) Lateral consciousness and self-possession

Let us recall that in lateral consciousness the person is capable of a self-possession in the weaker sense in every conscious act. That is, in every act that he performs he is aware that it is his *own*, that he is the subject of his acts. We recall that this is the metaphysical property of every conscious act. Now, in the pseudo self-possession described above, the individual can retain a certain clarity of consciousness which includes his own lateral self-awareness. This may be contrasted to the weak individual described above who has yielded to the desire for satisfaction and who may enter into a narcotic haze in which he is barely aware of himself and his own acts. In both cases, the metaphysical property of all conscious experiences accounts for the fact that the person is given to himself as his "own." The difference in our examples is only one of the degree of givenness. This formal clarity of the sense of his "own" being and acts on the part of the individual who deliberately commits himself to satisfaction may be taken by him as evidence of his "self"-identity. In fact we are confronted with a paradox: whatever the sharpness and clarity of this individual's lateral consciousness, the "self" he experiences is something *indefinite* and *indeterminate*. 
4. Heidegger's Vision of Man

Heidegger's *Being and Time* focuses on man, which he designates as *Dasein*, in order to understand Being, or *Sein*. For Heidegger, the key to the understanding of being is to be found in man's understanding of his own Being. The following opening passage of Part One, Division One, sets Heidegger's theme but also foreshadows a fundamental error:

> We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed. The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine*. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves towards their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. *Being* is that which is an issue for every such entity.\(^{22}\)

With the words "in each case mine," Heidegger strikes the fundamental note of his whole philosophical corpus. In the work translated as *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger asserts what has also been the central theme in *Being and Time*: "As selfhood, the Dasein is for the sake of itself."\(^{23}\) Heidegger explicitly emphasizes that the being that exists for its own sake, is "*in each case mine.*" This does not simply mean that like every being that exists it is identical with itself, nor even that it is simply and merely conscious of this selfsameness. Rather, *Dasein* has a peculiar selfsameness with itself in its selfsameness. It is in such a way that it is in a certain way *its own*, it has itself, and only on that account can it lose itself. Because selfhood belongs to existence, as in some manner "being-one's own," the existent *Dasein* can *choose itself on purpose* and determine its existence primarily and chiefly starting from that choice; that is, it can exist authentically.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{22}\) Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr.: John Macquarrie and Edward Robins (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 67; hereafter identified as: BT. It is significant that even though Heidegger speaks of men as "being delivered over to their own Being," he never asks the question of who or what does the delivering. The basic metaphysical question, namely, What is the origin or cause of man's being? remains unasked in Heidegger. Similarly, the metaphysical category of finality is not operative. The question, Why does man have this capacity to be "his own"? remains unanswered in any real sense other than in the affirmation that man has his being in order to be his own. Since man's project of being his own is ultimately impossible, the explanatory power of this affirmation is ultimately anti-metaphysical and anti-rational since it affirms an impossibility as the ratio of man's existence.

\(^{23}\) Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr.: Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); pp. 170 ff., 294 ff. Hereafter identified as: BP.

\(^{24}\) BP, 170.
To exist authentically is to exist as "one's own." It is self-possession that is thematic. The German *Eigentlichkeit*, translated as authenticity, is literally a "sich zu eigen machen," a making oneself one's own or a self-appropriation. In the following we shall briefly consider the type of self-possession and its implications.

a) Heidegger's "authenticity" as a pseudo self-possession

Heidegger is not simply talking of the weak self-possession of lateral consciousness. We shall see below that for him even in lateral consciousness the self finds itself in the things of the world. The fact that Heidegger talks of it as a special kind of having, consisting of choice and decision, indicates that we are dealing with self-possession in the strong sense. However, it is a pseudo self-possession because *Dasein* does not take its being into its own hands in view of a response to a transcendent norm.

That it is a matter of what we have called pseudo self-possession can be shown by the fact that Heidegger rejects value as the object of a self-transcending response and by the fact that for Heidegger the consciousness of self-identity is always a self-identification with the world, namely, a loss and forgetfulness of self.

b) Heidegger's lateral consciousness contains a loss of self-identity

The question of how my being is my own forces one to ask the question, as Heidegger maintains, in what way is the self given to itself? It is significant that Heidegger rejects the interpretation of self-consciousness as a turning back upon oneself or as a reflection:

We say that the Dasein does not first need to turn back upon itself as though, keeping itself behind its own back, it were at first standing in front of things and staring rigidly at them. Instead it never finds itself otherwise than in the things themselves, and in fact in those things that daily surround it. It finds itself primarily and constantly in things because tending them, distressed by them, it always in some way or other rests in things. Each one of us is what he pursues and
For Heidegger, self-consciousness is not to be understood as the consciousness that a *subject* has of its own being. Rather, it is more fundamental than that and consists of self-direction toward the world and the things in it. Thus, the self is not given as a definite and concrete being, present to itself "on this side" of consciousness in contrast to everything that stands over against it. Much rather, the self is what he *understands* himself to be, that is, what he interprets himself to be in terms of the beings that surround him.

Recalling our previous analysis, the self is given to the subject laterally in every act of consciousness. Nevertheless, the sense of identity may be so weak, - and this because the individual does not have to take his being so as to conform it to an objective order, - that the individual performs a psychological identification with the external world. This is in effect what we have in Heidegger. The explicit decision of *Dasein* to commit itself to its own Being does not change this basic lack of identity, even if, in a formal way, there may be a great clarity of consciousness that it is *my* decision, that it is *my* being that is committed to itself and that it acts primarily for its own sake.

c) Heidegger's rejection of objective value and of man's dialogical situation

In *Being and Time* Heidegger rejects value as something derivative and secondary. It is something that is added to things which are simply regarded as objects or present at hand. The more original understanding of being is one in terms of their *readiness-to-hand*, their "Zuhandensein." Thus, man's original "finding" or "understanding" of himself is always in terms of the word as a complex of *instrumentality* which, as a whole, points back to man's being as that for the sake of which this instrumental complex exists.

Again, in terms of our analysis, the reduction of all beings in the world to the status of an instrument or "Zeug" makes a dialogical relation with these beings impossible. There is no
question of the person *conforming and submitting* himself to an instrument. The basic attitude in this instance is one of mastery and exercise of power of the tool and the product.

The importance of the instrumentalization of the world in Heidegger's thought should not be underestimated. In speaking of man's relation to the entity in the world, Heidegger writes:

... the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become - and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is - equipment.\(^{27}\)

In the activity of work, production and creation, man is not a spectator who simply observes and perceives what is present to him, and what in a real sense is already finished. Man, for Heidegger, is essentially a worker and hence the category of *techne* has a primary place in the interpretation of man. In work the relation to the transcendent order is one of efficacy. But *efficacy* is a function of power. It is not an accident that in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger speaks of man in terms of power:

... he found his way into the overpowering and therein first found himself: the violent one, the wielder of power. ...[T]he "himself" means at once he who breaks out and breaks up, he who captures and subjugates.\(^{28}\)

Man finds himself, that is, comes to know himself or to have himself, in the process of subjugating and overpowering. Here again we are dealing with a pseudo self-possession grounded in a conscious and explicit act which is the antithesis of a value response which presupposes that the person actively conform and submit himself. The adequate word addressed to value is a new content and state of being on the side of the subject. It presupposes that the individual possess himself in the act of submission. In contrast, the dynamism of subjugation and overpowering is something that itself overpowers the individual.

d) Pseudo-subjection

In discussing Kant's notion of the moral personality,
Heidegger makes a remark which reflects his own position:

In subjecting myself to the law, I subject myself to myself as pure reason; but that is to say that in this subjection to myself I raise myself to myself as the free, self-determining being. This submissive self-elevation of myself to myself, reveals, discloses as such, me to myself in my dignity. Speaking negatively, in the respect for the law that I give to myself as a free being I cannot have disrespect to myself. Respect is the mode of the ego's being-with-itself according to which it does not disparage the hero in its soul. The moral feeling, as respect for the law is nothing but the self's being responsible to itself and for itself. This moral feeling is a distinctive way in which the ego understands itself as ego directly, purely and free of all sensuous determination.\textsuperscript{29}

Manifestly, it is again a question of self-consciousness and self-possession. The self knows itself directly and purely in its self-subjection to itself, but this implies that it knows itself as also taking possession of itself. The fundamental question here is: Why does the self "subject itself to itself"? Why does it determine itself and what does it determine itself to be?

A form of subjection to oneself as self-determination is meaningful when the individual takes possession of himself - i.e. subjects himself to himself - in order to conform to a transcendent norm. But if all objective values are rejected, what possible motive does there remain for wanting to take possession of one's being? The only answer lies in the desire to be master, to exercise power.

e) The negative principle of need and negation

Several things are implied here. First, the actualization of power is something that is pursued as what is yet to be realized, as what is not yet. Second, in the contingent being that is man, the desire for the satisfaction of wielding power necessarily implies the wielding of power over and against what is other than one's personal center.

With regard to the first point, we recall that subjective satisfaction can become a motive only when it is anticipated...
against the background of an experienced inner lack. This means that in the case of a will to power not only must the satisfaction be lacking, but that the power actually possessed or wielded must be experienced as insufficient. We can put it in another way by saying that the satisfaction of power can be a motive only against the background of an experienced lack of power or impotence.

With regard to the second point, a true power and sovereignty over one's own being is metaphysically possible only as a moment in the free submission and conformity to an objective order of values. With the rejection of an objective and normative order of value, and particularly in the commitment to the satisfaction of power, the individual's free decision consists of a letting go, a release of his own being. At that moment, the individual is possessed by the dynamism and power of the desire for satisfaction. Ontologically that desire is his "own" and it is experienced as such in lateral consciousness. Nevertheless, the individual no longer has any power over the core and center of his being. In this respect, he is truly impotent and experiences himself as powerless. The experience of power is then possible only in its exercise over beings that are outside of and other than his free personal center.

One of the ways that this power can be experienced is through creative and productive work. According to Heidegger it is such work that brings the world to be. But another, more fundamental experience of power demands the negation of all being that transcends the individual. The very existence and autonomy of any transcendent being is a counter power and accusation of impotence. Thus, Heidegger holds that knowledge, in the authentic sense of techne, "effects what first gives the datum its relative justification, its potential determinateness." The world depends on man and comes to be through man. It is thus radically subject to him. But even these dependent

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30 IM, 62, 158 ff.
31 IM, 159.
32 Cf. Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr.: David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 147: "Believe me, I too am a man of power ... but my power is not that of a ruler or a conqueror, for the only power I have is the power to hold in check. Nor is my power of wide extent, for I have power only over myself, and I do not even have this power unless I exercise it at every moment." Kierkegaard is here criticizing the "world historical" personality who seeks to produce effects outside of himself, in the world, and thereby leave his mark in history. As a consequence he becomes like all historical personalities: dead. This aspect of Kierkegaard's
creations of man have acquired some measure of independence. Thus, the radical negation of man, his non-being in death becomes, as Heidegger says, "the supreme victory over being." It is in death and nothingness that man finds his completion and satisfaction.

We can see that this is so because his own desire for the satisfaction for power is experienced as an alien and overpowering force that now possesses the self that has yielded to it. Prisoner of his own passion, impotent in the face of this dynamism to capture, subjugate and create a world, the self at its deepest level is afflicted. It suffers the need to reassert itself. Its only solution and final victory is death and annihilation. In death it snatches its being from the overpowering passion for power and renders it impotent.

5. Conclusion: Loss of being and surrender of self

Heidegger's pursuit of radical authenticity, that is, the full appropriation of one's being as one's own necessarily leads to nihilism, a definitive loss of self. We have here a literally correct though fundamentally perverted application of Christ's teaching on the saving and loss of one's life. Heidegger is in effect saying that one must literally loose his life in order to possess it. But unlike Christ, by loss he does not mean self abandonment in self-donation to another, he literally means self-annihilation.

Heidegger is forced into this position by the psychological condition of pseudo self-possession described above. The end pursued is a self-possession in the strong sense. But because it is sought in the satisfaction of power, the individual becomes a slave of the desire for power, a desire that is his "own" only to the extent that he yielded to it. But it is precisely because he yielded to it that he experiences himself as impotent - the very opposite of what he wills. Radical consistency, that is the overcoming of this impotence, is achieved in self-annihilation.

The whole Heideggerian corpus is in effect a description of man's project to appropriate himself, to make his being his own in the strong sense. Submission to a transcendent order has no

analysis is a devastating critique of Heidegger's notion of man as historical being.
place in this project, which therefore necessarily ends in its dialectical opposite. Heidegger's theoretical project of the destruction of metaphysics is simply a reflection of the existential rejection of an autonomous order of being that transcends man and demands submission from him. It implies clearly a destruction of rational thought, immobilizing it with a series of contradictions such as that Being is Nothingness.

Christ's call for a surrender of one's being is not a contradiction of life and existence. It is much rather an affirmation of them. It is not a contradiction because it presupposes two dimensions that transcend the person: first, on the natural level, an order of being that is endowed with value and transcends the individual and second, a supernatural order of being that transcends the natural. The natural order and its value already calls for a submission of man. The supernatural order in turn demands a submission which may even demand a renunciation of fulfillment on the natural level. And, as we have seen, the response to value, whether natural or supernatural, involves a true possession of the self, indeed, a full exercise of one's personal being. And in each case, the loss of self is a rising above oneself into the transcendent order, natural or supernatural, not an ontological annihilation or metaphysical loss of self-possession.

Von Hildebrand concludes his work, Transformation in Christ, with a chapter on the "True Surrender of Self." In speaking of the loss of oneself to which we are all called, he says that it implies more than the surrender in all response to values:

We must, in a stricter sense "die unto ourselves" and "become empty" so that Christ may unfold his holy life within us. Likewise, our surrender to Christ must far exceed all our other responses to value: it must be an integral surrender of self, such as is possible and proper in relation with the absolute Lord only... 33

The capacity of surrender to objective value even on the natural level is a natural revelation to man that he has been
destined for self-donation to an other, a self-donation which cannot occur unless the being that he gives is "in each case his own." And the capacity for self-possession itself manifests to man that his being has been not so much delivered to him as given to him by way of a gift to be \textit{received} and rendered in return.

On the natural level, there is no being, even another person, with regard to whom the act of self-donation can be performed in full and integral actuality. Even though man is finite, no other finite being, be it even a person like himself, "suffices" as an object of integral self-donation. Any such complete donation to the natural level, a radical exercise of the capacity to be fully my own is impossible. This occurs only when I can say "Thine" to the Absolute. And only then is man raised above himself. Only then does he achieve his true dignity. Otherwise, he slips out of his own grasp and falls below himself into the abyss, the \textit{capax Dei} that remains empty.