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Heidegger's Philosophical Anthropology of Moods

This paper concerns the account of Dasein's existence that Heidegger gives us in *Being and Time*, and exactly what kind of account it is. I will argue that, despite his emphatic insistence to the contrary, it should be read as a philosophical anthropology because it gives an account of human existence and its structures. Heidegger's analytic of Dasein is at its most productive and interesting when understood this way, and the reasons he gives for its being essentially different from philosophical anthropology are unconvincing. Heidegger took great pains to distance his work from philosophical anthropology, repeatedly claiming in numerous texts throughout his career that to understand it as such is a mistake. It is not a mistake: his 'analytic of Dasein' has great potential to benefit the philosophical-anthropological project and constitutes a powerful attempt to describe human existence and account for how it is structured. This can be evidenced in many ways, given the breadth and depth of *Being and Time*, but here I will focus on its analysis of moods.

To begin with, however, I will have to discuss anthropology and explain how philosophical anthropology differs from it. I claim that anthropology's general concern is with giving accounts of specific human societies and understanding human differences. A noble project to be sure, but not the project of the philosophical anthropologist. Where anthropology is preoccupied with specificity and difference, philosophical anthropology is concerned with commonality, with what is universal, necessary and constitutive for human existence in general. Anthropologists pursue questions about, for example, what Balinese people and Balinese society are like,¹ or what primitive societies are like and what concepts should be used to describe them.² Philosophical anthropology takes place at a more abstract level, pondering *what being a human is like*, and what is involved in

¹ As Clifford Geertz famously does, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973).

² There are numerous examples of such research. Some examples would be Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and Pierre Clastres' *Society Against the State* (1972). An example of the more conceptual reflection can be found in Edward Dozier, *The Concepts of "Primitive" and "Native" in Anthropology* (1955).

living a human existence. This discussion will lead me onto Heidegger's conception of his project, and how he frames it as a critique of and distancing from both anthropology and philosophical anthropology.

Heidegger claims he is giving an account of *Dasein* and that, because his project is motivated by more fundamental ideas and concerned with a different topic, his project cannot be philosophical anthropology. It is rather a "fundamental ontology," concerned with *Being in general*, not with any particular type or group of particular beings, like "human beings". Philosophical anthropology, in his terms, would amount to a "regional ontology," accounting for this specific region of beings, not Being in general.³ But the method Heidegger uses for his investigation raises serious questions about whether this is really the case. As we will see, central to Heidegger's proposed method for answering the question of the meaning of Being is the giving of an account of the existence of the only entity that could ask, understand and answer this question. If we want to answer the question of Being, some kind of account is needed of the questioner's kind of existence and how this existence gives rise to its ability to ask, understand and answer questions. Only then could we really know what answering this question would consist in, since it is only through and out of this kind of existence that the question could even potentially be answered. The nature and structure of this existence, therefore, is something should be thoroughly clarified beforehand.

The entity in question, Heidegger famously calls *Dasein* – not "the human being". This is because even though human beings are *Dasein*, being *Dasein* is not necessarily limited to human beings – there may be other entities that could understand, ask and answer the question of Being, whose existence may be bound by similar structures to ours. According to Heidegger, when he analyses *Dasein*'s existence, this means he is engaged in something more fundamental than and essentially different to philosophical anthropology, because he is precisely not giving an account of human existence, but one of *Dasein*. Crucially, though, *anything that truly applies to Dasein applies truly to human beings, because human beings are Dasein*. To give an account of *Dasein*, therefore, just is to give one of human existence, and so at the very least involves and produces a kind of philosophical anthropology.

Examining Heidegger's account of *Dasein*'s moods is a potential way (of which there are many) that we might see this to be the case. Heidegger gives an interesting analysis of moods that perhaps improves on some previous treatments of the affective dimension of human beings, and perhaps manages to state true things about this dimension. Heidegger casts moods as "fundamentally disclosive", as being integrally involved with our making sense of the world

³ Heidegger capitalizes 'Being' when he is referring to being in general. Since this may be of help in understanding some passages, I will sometimes do the same.

and our disclosure of the meaning of things in it. They don't just reveal 'how we are doing', they play a part in the disclosure of various important aspects of our existence. They are part of the process by which we disclose of objects as meaningful, it is through them that insights about our being as a whole can be disclosed to us, and they are also revealing of an aspect of our condition that Heidegger calls "thrownness". Now, we do not have to agree with everything Heidegger says about moods, and my sketch of his account of them will be limited. But we do not have to examine what he says in too much detail to realise that his work constitutes an account of human existence, even if this is not all that it does. If Heidegger managed to say anything true of Dasein, he managed to say something true of humans. His account is therefore (at least partially) a philosophical anthropology, and is especially productive when read as one.

I. ANTHROPOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Before we can get to why Heidegger's work should be understood as a philosophical anthropology, we have to understand what this is and how it differs from "regular" anthropology. In a 1929 text, Heidegger gives what I think is a fair definition of anthropology:

Anthropology means the science of man. It embraces all that is knowable relative to the nature of man. [...] Within the domain of anthropology [...] falls not only man's human qualities which, because they are at hand, are discernible and distinguish this determinate species from animals and plants, but also his latent abilities, the differences according to character, race and sex. (Heidegger 1973. 146.)

Anthropology is the academic discipline which studies human beings from various perspectives and aims for scientific rigour in doing so. Because human beings have many different aspects, they offer many different phenomena worthy of study, and anthropology not only studies how human beings are distinct from animals, but also how they are distinct from one another along biological, societal, racial and sexual lines. Anthropology scientifically studies human beings from various perspectives which adopt different practises with varying scopes of enquiry. Over time, the discipline has broken down into (roughly) four main categories: cultural, social, linguistic and biological. I will give a brief sketch of these now, and it will necessarily be limited. However, it will be enough to notice anthropology's salient focusses and how the discipline differs from philosophical anthropology.

Cultural anthropology analyses particular cultures, usually on their own terms and without necessarily comparing them to others. A cultural anthropologist might examine historical evidence in order to compile a theory about, for ex-

ample, what ancient Egyptian culture was like, or the culture of Renaissance France. Social anthropologists attempt something similar, but tend to avoid the term 'culture' because the object of their study is better captured as the analysis and comparison of *social relations* around the world. Where cultural anthropologists may be interested in a particular culture in general, social anthropology focusses on the social relations in a given society – so while the topics that might interest social and cultural anthropologists can be very similar, the approach they take is slightly different, as are the conceptual lenses they use. Linguistic anthropology analyses and compares human language and catalogues information about them across the world and throughout history. Biological anthropology analyses the biological basis of human beings, either in terms of its evolutionary history or its modern manifestations.⁴

With this admittedly cursory glance at anthropology in hand, I think we can notice something about its salient focus – in its analysis of human beings, anthropology is concerned with *specificity* and *difference*. Anthropological studies are almost always concerned with giving accounts of specific, particular societies at specific points in history, or with comparing societies and their structures. Be it through historical analyses, biological investigation or ethnographic research which describes first-hand experiences, anthropologists attempt to understand human societies in their historical specificity, and has amassed a wealth of information to this end. As we understand more and more about what particular human societies are like, we naturally understand more about how they compare to one another and what the differences are between them. The preoccupation with human differences has not gone unnoticed by certain anthropologists. Conrad Phillip Kottak, for instance, named one of his books *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity*. (Kottak 1997) Ruth Benedict, in her study on Japanese culture, wrote that the “tough-minded” anthropologist’s “goal is a world made safe for human differences” (Benedict 2005. 15). Clyde Kluckhohn wrote similarly: “anthropology provides a scientific basis for dealing with the crucial dilemma of the world today: how can peoples of different appearances, mutually unintelligible languages and dissimilar ways of life get along peaceably together?” (Kluckhohn 1949. 1). By understanding what specific societies are like, we can also get an understanding of how these societies and peoples differ from one another, and understanding human differences is crucial to being able to live peacefully in spite of them.

It is on this point of specificity and differences that we can delineate the project of philosophical anthropology, which I understand to be the other side of anthropology's coin. Rather than focussing on specific societies and human

⁴ I have not mentioned archaeology here, although it is sometimes said to be a kind of anthropology. Certainly it is involved in the investigation of human cultures and often provides historical evidence for anthropologists to use in their investigations.

differences, philosophical anthropology attempts to find commonality in all instances of the human experience, what is universal, necessary and constitutive for human existence regardless of which society a person lives in. Naturally, this inquiry can take many forms. Philosophical anthropologists aim to specify and elucidate the structures of human existence, which often takes the form of searching for essential and unique features of human beings, or non-essential and non-unique ones that are just particularly important. Their analysis, therefore, could potentially take place from almost any perspective within philosophy: metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, political philosophy, and so on – all of these areas of inquiry could involve or lead to the giving of some kind of account of human existence, and so could be philosophical-anthropological in nature, even if this is not what they are concerned with doing all the time. Whatever method taken, or perspective inquired from, philosophical anthropology gives an account of the universal, necessary and constitutive structures of human existence, considering what it is like to live a human life. Heidegger therefore defines it also quite adequately when he says that philosophical anthropology is “an essential consideration of the human being [...] thereby to work out the specific, essential composition of this determinate region of beings. Philosophical anthropology therefore becomes a regional ontology of human beings” (Heidegger 1973. 148). However, for technical reasons related to his own project, this is exactly what he wants to distinguish himself from, and it is in this notion of a “regional ontology” and his delineation of his own project as “fundamental ontology” that we can see why.

II. WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY?

Heidegger argued that his project is one of “fundamental ontology”, which makes it essentially different to philosophical anthropology because fundamental ontology is singularly concerned with *the question of the meaning of Being*. This question was the heart and soul of Heidegger’s entire career and he was convinced that his project, being motivated and oriented in this way, meant that he could not be doing philosophical anthropology – he was, by his own estimation, engaged in something different and far more fundamental. He had no time for those who misunderstood this, especially in his infamous private “black notebooks” where he wrote, for example, that “if the question of being had been grasped, even if only in a crude way [...] then *Being and Time* could not have been misinterpreted and misused as an anthropology” (Heidegger 2016. 16). He goes even further elsewhere: “anthropology is the preventive measure instituted by modern humanity in consequence of which the human being arrives at not wanting to know who he is” (Heidegger 2017a. 18). Heidegger even calls a writer who was influenced by his work (Otto Bollnow) a “philistine” for

“tak[ing] it as settled that *Being and Time* is a philosophical anthropology” (Heidegger 2017b. 170). These are just a selection of many examples, public and private, of Heidegger making such criticisms: it was a persistent problem for him that people “misunderstood” his work in this way, and one he could not have been clearer about wanting to repudiate.

Perhaps in the context of his career, and the project of *Being and Time*, Heidegger's exasperation is somehow understandable. After all, it goes to the very heart of his work and the kind of sweeping criticisms he constantly made about basically every significant philosopher of the Western tradition except himself. Those familiar with Heidegger will no doubt have examples of this in mind: he often, repeatedly claimed that philosophers, from Plato to Aristotle, Descartes to Kant, Hegel and beyond, had all been somehow mistaken, however valiant their efforts. Why? Because they failed to adequately address the question of the meaning of Being – the most important question of them all. Heidegger often referred to it as the “grounding-question”, such as here, where he is also talking about misinterpreting his work as anthropology: “this misinterpretation is basically excluded [...] if from the beginning we hold on to the grounding-question of the meaning of being as the only question” (Heidegger 1999. 60).

But why is this question so important? Being is fundamental to everything we do, every sentence that we speak, everything that *is*, but “we do not *know* what ‘Being’ means. [...] we keep within an understanding of the ‘is’, though we are unable to fix conceptually what that ‘is’ signifies” (Heidegger 1962. 25). But without a proper understanding of the meaning of Being, how can we do philosophy? Not knowing what Being means will necessarily have an impact on philosophers (or indeed anyone) and their conception of anything because “basic concepts determine the way in which we get an understanding beforehand of subject-matter [...] [and] all positive investigation is guided by this understanding” (Heidegger 1962. 30). The concepts a subject works with guides how inquiry within it takes place and provides a framework for it. In philosophy, terms like ‘mind’ and ‘body’, and our understanding of them, provide a realm in which certain questioning and inquiry can take place. But ‘Being’, the most fundamental and universal concept, is implicated in every other – and we have no idea what it means. Just as you cannot teach a class without doing the necessary preparation, philosophers cannot expect to talk coherently about the nature of the mind, knowledge, goodness, truth, beauty or reality without working out or solving the question of the meaning of Being. In a nutshell, Heidegger's critique of the history of philosophy is that philosophers have been trying to run before they can walk. They have not done the requisite preparatory work, and their level of analysis was not fundamental enough for doing the things they wanted to do.

In the introduction to *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962. 21–63), Heidegger lays out the first step in his program for overcoming this error – an “analytic” of

the being of what he calls *Dasein*. When we think about what Being is, we realise that Being is always the being *of* an entity – nothing can be if it has no Being. So if we are to find out what Being is, we should look to entities and analyse them. But not just any entity will do: it's hard to imagine what a rock or a table could tell us about the meaning of Being, beyond the fact that for something to exist it must have Being. But there is a special type of entity that would give us a better clue, “an entity which does not just occur among other entities” (Heidegger 1962. 32) like tables or rocks do, but which has a different, unique kind of Being that other entities do not. This type of entity does not just exist, but has a relationship of concern towards its existence. Its being “is an *issue* for it” (Heidegger 1962. 32), something that concerns it, something it must deal with. It is the only entity that we know of that can raise the question of the meaning of Being, and which has “certain ways of behaving that are constitutive for our inquiry” (BT 26) into it. To inquire into anything, there must be an inquirer that is capable of certain things, like “looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing” (Heidegger 1962. 26) – but surely also asking and answering questions. The entity that Heidegger is describing, “those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves” (Heidegger 1962. 26–27) he calls *Dasein*. The question of the meaning of Being, the inquiry into it and the potential answering of it, is something that arises from and is made possible by the Being of *Dasein*. In pursuing this question, therefore, it is fundamental that we know what this being consists in such that we can, from out of this being, ask, understand and perhaps answer our guiding question. In short, “to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being” (Heidegger 1962. 27). To understand the question of the meaning of Being, we must first understand ourselves.⁵

The failure to conduct the right kind of analysis of our way of Being, specifically to prepare for the grounding-question, is what philosophers have neglected to do historically. According to Heidegger, this is the requisite preparatory work they have not done. He even at times calls his proposed analytic a “preparatory fundamental analysis” (Heidegger 1962. 65) of *Dasein*. ‘Preparatory’ not just because it prepares us for answering the grounding-question, or because the analysis will later be deepened in terms of time (Heidegger 1962. Division 2), but because once complete, this ontological analysis will prepare us for conduct-

⁵ It is worth noticing (though not directly relevant) just how Kantian a move this is, recalling Kant's list of the four questions that unite philosophy. “What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope?” (Kant 1998. 677.) Kant's insight is that these questions imply a fourth that must be answered first: what is the human being? What is the nature of the being doing the knowing, acting and hoping? This leads Kant to conceive of philosophy anthropologically, and of its most fundamental questions as anthropological in nature. Heidegger makes exactly the same move with respect to the question of Being and *Dasein*.

ing philosophy in an appropriate, grounded fashion. To this end, Heidegger will concertedly avoid traditional philosophical vocabulary. Terms like 'subject', 'consciousness', 'mind', 'person' or 'human being' have little to no place in the analytic of Dasein, except to be criticised. Dasein, on Heidegger's account, is conceived essentially differently and in a new way from previous philosophical conceptions of the human being, and the introduction of 'Dasein' as a term also functions as a kind of cleansing of the philosophical palate, freeing us from any preconceptions of the entity to be analysed.

Heidegger's conception of his project, and the way he carries it out, involves a clear division: anthropology studies human beings, fundamental ontology studies Dasein. The focus, method, subject and scope of these inquiries, according to Heidegger, are so different and removed from one another that to study Dasein is to do something essentially different from simply studying human beings. Fundamental ontology, therefore, is not philosophical anthropology. In what follows, I will take a specific aspect of the analytic of Dasein – its account of moods – and show that the division Heidegger draws between his project and philosophical anthropology does not hold.

III. HEIDEGGER'S ACCOUNT OF MOODS

It is always worth bearing in mind when discussing the analytic of Dasein that its analysis is a phenomenological one: it tries to describe what it is like to experience being Dasein and elucidate the structures necessary for this kind of experience to arise. It is a constant invitation to compare its analysis with one's own experience – and moods are a particularly important part of our experience of our existence. From how Heidegger discusses moods, I think it is clear that what he is talking about would include what we might normally call emotions. Some of the moods he discusses include fear (Heidegger 1962. §30), which he conceives as having many variations that can be identified with other emotional states, like dread, terror, timidity and shyness (Heidegger 1962. 182). He famously discusses anxiety, in *Being and Time* and *What is Metaphysics?* especially, where he also mentions joy as another example of mood (Heidegger 1998. 87). In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, he analyses boredom as a particularly important mood akin to anxiety. Our focus here will be on the general account Heidegger gives of moods in *Being and Time*, but it is worth bearing in mind that his use of 'mood' is very broad, and encompasses a large variety of affective phenomena and, based on the moods he explicitly discusses, would quite plausibly include what we normally call 'emotions'. But given that Heidegger speaks of moods as affective states we can find ourselves in that determine our way of being disposed to the world at a given time, 'mood' is quite an apt word for what he is talking about.

Heidegger's analysis of moods speaks about them in terms of *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*, which I have opted to translate as 'disposedness' and 'mood', respectively.⁶ They are intimately related, and defined in terms of each other as follows:

What we indicate *ontologically* by the term '*disposedness*' is *ontically* the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our *mood*, our being-attuned. [...] it is necessary to see this phenomenon as a fundamental *existentiale* (Heidegger 1962. 172).

Disposedness and mood, in Heidegger's framework, are examples of what he calls *existentiale* structures. These are phenomena of Dasein's existence that are universal, necessary and constitutive for it: they are present in every instance of Dasein, and play a part in making its existence the way it is. If they were to be taken out of Dasein's existence, it would be a different entity entirely. 'Disposedness' refers to Dasein's capacity to be disposed, or 'attuned' some way towards its existence, in such a way that its existence and the things in it matter to it. Dasein is *always* disposed like this in some way towards its existence, and there are many ways we can be so disposed. The different ways Dasein can be disposed to its existence, the various possible manifestations of disposedness, Heidegger identifies as moods. In saying that moods are an *existentiale* structure, Heidegger is simply saying that all Daseins have moods, that moods play a part in structuring every Dasein's existence, and if we took away our moods we would no longer be the same entity. Without moods, our experience would be fundamentally different. Moods, being the manifestations of our disposedness, are what allow us to be disposed to the world and our existence in various ways. But how exactly is it that moods work, and how do they let us be disposed in different ways to our existence? Following Heidegger's answer to this question will allow us to view, in detail, Heidegger's most important claims about moods, and how they can be understood as contributing to the project of philosophical anthropology.

The aspects of Heidegger's account I will be focussing on are the following:

- (1) Moods are *fundamentally disclosive*.
- (2) Moods disclose our *thrownness*.
- (3) Certain moods disclose our being-in-the-world as a whole.⁷

⁶ There is debate over how these terms (especially *Befindlichkeit*) should be translated, but I will not go into that here. Debating the translation of these terms is not necessary to understand the general claims Heidegger makes about the phenomena he is discussing, and would distract from the point. For an indication of the depth of disagreement on this, William Blattner has provided a helpful compilation of various ways that Heidegger's terms have been translated (<https://faculty.georgetown.edu/blattnew/heid/Heidegger-jargon.html>).

⁷ Heidegger also claims that moods let things matter to us, but since this is perhaps unconvincing, not as interesting as the first three claims and not necessary to consider for the purpose of my argument, I will leave it aside.

Heidegger casts moods as fundamentally disclosive, meaning that their basic function is to disclose things, to reveal information to us about the world and things in it, and this process happens on a more fundamental level than cognition, reason and knowing.⁸ A simple way to understand how moods can be fundamentally disclosive is to consider perhaps the most intuitive thing that moods reveal to us, expressed by Heidegger as follows: “a mood makes manifest ‘how one is, and how one is faring’.” (Heidegger 1962. 173) Moods are states we find ourselves in that let us know how we are doing, what our general affective state is – ‘I am happy’, ‘I am bored’, etc. and the mood I am in determines how I experience my existence and the things I encounter in it, at that time. Moods give us an emotional context through which to experience our existence, affecting our perception of the things in it. If I am happy, I will be more likely to experience certain things (or people) as joyful, or uplifting, rather than as annoying, or angering. In their disclosure of ‘how we are doing’, moods provide an affective setting for our experience to take place in, which alters our experience of our world depending on what mood we are in, and constitutes an integral part of our making sense of our environment.

This is where the idea of “fundamental disclosure” really comes into play, because moods do not just disclose “how we are doing” – *everything* in our experience is disclosed to us through some mood or another since we are never un-mooded, and this disclosure takes place on a more fundamental level than reason, cognition and knowing. These things have often been taken to be the primary way we engage with and relate to the world, but on Heidegger’s account moods operate “prior” to these things and “beyond their range of disclosure” (Heidegger 1962. 175). This is because even before we can reason, deduce, know (etc.), we have moods, and we still make some kind of meaningful sense of our world, we just do so in a non-linguistic and pre-reflective way. Babies, even though they cannot talk, or think philosophically, still make some kind of sense of the things around them, and things are still disclosed as having some sort of significance, even if this significance is diminished in comparison to what it might be for an adult. Babies still have moods, and these moods still disclose things as significant to them, even if the level of disclosure only occurs in terms of pleasantness or unpleasantness, or of liking or disliking a particular toy, thing, or food, etc. But this is true of all moods no matter what age we are – they dis-

⁸ This is perhaps beside the point here, but this is much that could be said about how Heidegger’s account of moods overturns some traditional conceptions of human affectivity, where moods are understood as “internal, subjective mental states [...] caused by one’s external situation” (Elpidorou–Freeman 2015. 664). Furthermore, Heidegger’s account of moods is a fundamental rejection of a certain way of conceiving our connection to the world that many philosophers have adopted over the centuries, where the primary way we connect with our world is through reason, rationality and knowing. For Heidegger, these things are made possible by a more fundamental and pre-reflective engagement with our environment, of which moods are an integral part.

close things to us, and do so on a level different to that of rational disclosure. Think again of how moods disclose ‘how we are doing’ – this is not something we reason ourselves into, or find out by way of thinking. It is something that is revealed to us experientially, non-linguistically, and unreflectively – we find ourselves in a state. This is what Heidegger means when he says that moods are fundamentally disclosive: they reveal information to us about ourselves, our worlds and the things in them on an existentially prior level to rationality, and play a part in enabling rationality. Without the pre-reflective familiarity with the world that we have before we can reason, reason would not be possible. Moods are an integral part of our most fundamental way of making sense of the world, and play an important role in how things are disclosed to us as meaningful in the first place. We perceive and understand things, they have a certain place in our world, and moods partly constitute the process by which we apprehend them, and disclose them as meaningful.

But moods disclose other things apart from our general affective state, or things in the world. They are also said by Heidegger to “disclose Dasein in its thrownness” (Heidegger 1962. 175) and, in certain cases, disclose insight about our being-in-the-world as such. Heidegger’s notion of ‘thrownness’ is perhaps best approached with a quote from Kierkegaard, talking about life: “no one asks when one wants to come in; no one asks when one wants to go out” (Kierkegaard 1987. 26). Our existence is something that is forced upon us, unchosen, but we have to deal with it – we are “thrown” into the world and burdened with the responsibility of existing. We do not decide to be born, and our lives are tinged by the fact that we know we will one day die – how our existence begins and ends is something we have no control over, and this is also the case with many things along the way. This renders our existence, in some sense, quite strange, difficult, or even absurd, and it is this unchosen, disquieting aspect of our predicament that Heidegger refers to as Dasein’s “thrownness [...] [which] is meant to suggest the facticity of its being delivered over” (Heidegger 1962. 174) to its existence.

Interestingly, Heidegger claims that it is through moods that our thrownness is revealed to us, and gives at least two reasons for this. We have already seen how moods are a constitutive part of how we make sense of the world in our most primal way. The mood is what “brings Dasein before the ‘that-it-is of its ‘there’” (Heidegger 1962. 175), allowing us to make sense of the world and the things in it. If our thrownness is something that is disclosed to us, moods must therefore play a part in its disclosure by definition – if thrownness is a part of our existence that we can encounter and make meaningful sense of, our moods must at least partially constitute the process of its disclosure to us. The second reason we can draw from Heidegger as to why moods disclose thrownness has more to do with the experience of being in a mood: there is a similarity between thrownness and moods as we experience them. Just as we do not choose to be

thrown into the world, we do not really choose to be in a particular mood or another: “a mood assails us” (Heidegger 1962. 176). I do not choose to enter a bad mood, nor do I choose to be in a happy one – there is no switch that we can turn on and off when it comes to our mood. We can do certain things that might affect it, such as putting on a depressing film, or eating a delicious meal, but we cannot directly choose to change our mood, and force our body and mind to adapt to our preferred mood, or preferred degree of mood. Even if I know that putting on Roman Polanski’s *The Pianist* will make me sad, I have no control over how sad I will be, or which particular variety or degree of sadness I will feel – this is beyond my control, and I am ‘thrown’ into it, like I am thrown into my existence.

In certain special cases of mood, existential insights about our being-in-the-world as such are disclosed to us. Heidegger famously identified anxiety (*Angst*) as an example of this.⁹ Rather than disclosing particular items or sets of items in the world, anxiety (or at least a specific variety of it) is a rare case of mood that can disclose the totality of our world to us. This is because the experience involved in them is one of a total change of the structure of our world as we normally experience it. Normally, our worlds and everything in them are invested with and seen in the light of significance, with our moods disclosing the objects in them as significant in a particular way. When afraid, for example, we are always afraid of particular things. These things are disclosed as having a meaning, and being worthy of fear. But “that in the face of which one is anxious is completely indefinite”, not *an object* at all but “*the world as such*” (Heidegger 1962. 231). Heideggerian anxiety is a phenomenon where we completely withdraw from our usual world. We become so paralysed by the weight of our anxiety that we temporarily fail to make sense of the world as we normally do - things become *insignificant* to us. In such a state, we view the world from a completely different perspective, which tells us what it is otherwise always like to be in one. Elsewhere, Heidegger calls this a ‘telling refusal’ (Heidegger 1995. 137) – in temporarily and totally refusing itself, the nature of the world announces itself more forcefully.

This is why anxiety is an encounter with “Dasein’s *innermost freedom*” (Heidegger 1995. 136). What we are anxious about in such states is not a particular thing, or set of things, but the weight of our freedom as such. We become so overwhelmed by our possibilities that we are left dumbstruck, paralysed before our world and our freedom. But in such a state, where the usual character of the world – as structured by significance – announces itself, we are afforded a unique insight into our role within it. We are the beings that are responsible for the creation, maintenance and inhabiting of the very significance of our worlds. Who wouldn’t feel anxious upon realising this for the first time? It is an unsettling experience, but one that forcibly confronts Dasein with its “*Being-free* for

⁹ Less famously but just as interestingly, he also identifies boredom as one, but I will focus on anxiety here for considerations of space.

the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself” (Heidegger 1962. 232). Anxiety functions as a powerful existential catalyst for being able authentically seize hold of our lives, and appreciate more forcefully and authentically our role as free creators and keepers of significance.

IV. HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF MOODS

We have now seen some of the most important claims Heidegger makes about Dasein's moods, which puts us in a good position to question Heidegger's claim that his work is not philosophical anthropology. What is important to bear in mind is Heidegger's conception of his own project as an analysis of Dasein, and the incontestable fact that human existence is a case of Dasein. When Heidegger analyses Dasein, he is doing so from his own perspective of his existence as a human being. The structures he identifies are ones that structure his own existence and human existence in general. He may be analysing human beings only insofar as they are cases of Dasein, but this is nonetheless true. *Anything that applies truly to Dasein applies truly to human beings, because human beings are Dasein.* There is nothing that can be said truly of Dasein's existence that is not true of human existence, and discovering true things about the nature and structure of human existence is precisely the aim of a philosophical anthropology. If Heidegger is successful in disclosing anything true about Dasein at any point, he has engaged in philosophical anthropology, even if he is not keen on admitting it.

With this in mind, let's consider some of the claims Heidegger makes about moods. This list is not exhaustive, and there is room for debate about whether or not these are all separate claims, but it is sufficient for our current purposes.

- (1) Moods are *fundamentally disclosive*: they are part of the process through which we make sense of the world and disclose the things in it as meaningful on a pre-rational, pre-linguistic level.
- (2) Moods disclose 'how we are doing', providing an affective context to experience our existence through at a particular time, and be disposed a certain way towards it.
- (3) Without the fundamental disclosure of moods, the forms of disclosure associated with reasoning and knowing would not be possible.
- (4) Moods constitute the different ways we can be disposed to our existence.
- (5) Moods disclose our 'thrownness'.
- (6) Certain varieties of mood, like anxiety and boredom, reveal information not about specific things in the world, but about our being-in-the-world as such, thereby conveying insights to us about what it means to be the kind of entity we are.
- (7) These insights concern our freedom and role in the creation and maintenance of the significance of our worlds.

These are claims that, if true, would apply generally to human beings and their experience of moods, stating true things about the nature and structure of human existence – they therefore would be appropriately classed as philosophical-anthropological. Perhaps they are not all true, but even if they are not, Heidegger's work still gives us (at the very least) an attempt at philosophical anthropology, because he is reflecting on his experience and attempting to deduce general truths about it that would apply to all human beings. These are all claims that speak to what it is like to be a human being, to experience the kind of existence human beings have, and would contribute to an understanding of the structures of human existence.

We do not necessarily need these claims to be true to make the argument that Heidegger is doing a kind of philosophical anthropology, we just need to examine the kind of claims he is making and what kind of project he is engaged in. Based on what I have said, I think it is evident that Heidegger is mistaken to be distancing himself so sharply from philosophical anthropology, given the powerful potential his work has for contributing to it, and for benefitting our understanding of the human experience. But the stronger argument is certainly possible to make: Heidegger does manage to state true things about moods, and therefore manages to successfully contribute to philosophical anthropology. I will focus on one in closing my argument. Surely one of the achievements of *Being and Time* (and one of the things it spends most of its time doing) is showing that our most basic way of engaging with the world is not one of knowing, reasoning or rationality. We in fact have a deeper, pre-reflective, more primal way of being in the world that makes these former ways of being possible. Moods would quite plausibly be an integral part of this primal sense-making process, and a constitutive structure for the way we exist. There is therefore much value in Heidegger's working-out of the idea that moods are 'fundamentally disclosive', and perhaps a lot of truth. But if there is, it is truth that contributes to philosophical anthropology, and Heidegger's analysis of Dasein as a whole should be read as such a contribution. It is at its most productive when understood this way, and he gave us no convincing reasons for its essentially differing from philosophical anthropology.

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