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Anxiety's ambiguity: an investigation into the meaning of anxiety in existentialist philosophy and literature

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An Investigation into the Meaning of Anxiety in Existentialist Philosophy and Literature

Stuart Roy Hanscomb

Abstract

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An Investigation into the Meaning of Anxiety in Existentialist Philosophy and Literature

Stuart Hanscomb

The dissertation has two primary aims: 1) To investigate the significance and role of anxiety in the work of existentialist writers; 2) To synthesize a unified account of its meaning within this tradition. There are seven substantial chapters, the first concerning the divergence between clinical anxiety and the existential version using the fear-anxiety distinction as a foil. Existential anxiety is then defined in terms of anxiety A (before the world as contingent), anxiety B (before the self as free), and urangst (an unappropriable disquiet caused by the incommensurability of anxieties A and B). Chapter 2 concerns Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*. His emphasis on choice, guilt and ambiguity lay the foundations for existentialism , but the suggestion that anxiety can be overcome in faith distances him from later existentialists. Chapter 3 reads Heidegger as secularizing Kierkegaard's ideas. Here we find the origins of the anxiety A/B structure, but I find that his attempt to define an 'authentic' comportment which embraces these two sources fails. In Chapter 4 Sartre's anxiety before the 'nothingness' of a self responsible for creating values is discussed and found wanting. However, his ideas on bad faith and authenticity seem to be more alive to the ambiguity of existence that anxiety reveals. The relation between anxiety and death is a primary concern of Chapter 5 (on Tillich). I contend that death is important (though not in the way Tillich thinks it is), but that otherwise he underplays urangst and the dynamism required in an authentic response to anxiety. The complexities of this process are further explored in Chapter 6 with respect to Rorty's version of 'irony'; and in the final chapter where two novels (Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Camus' *The Fall*) are read as demonstrating the subjective dynamics of authenticity in terms of the anxiety structure that has been developed.

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(The painting on the acknowledgements page is *The Wayfarer* by Bosch)

Acknowledgements

In a word, human life is more governed by fortune than by reason; is to be regarded more as a dull pastime than a serious occupation; and is more influenced by particular humour, than by general principles. Shall we engage ourselves in it with passion and anxiety? It is not worthy of so much concern. Shall we be indifferent about what happens? We shall lose all the pleasures of the game by our phlegm and carelessness. While we are reasoning concerning life, life is gone; and death, though perhaps they receive him differently, yet treats alike the fool and the philosopher.—David Hume (*Essays Moral, Political and Literary*)

Abbreviations

Kierkegaard
COA   *The Concept of Anxiety*. Princeton, 1980
CUP   *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Princeton, 1992
E/O   *Either/Or*. Penguin, 1992 (although, where stated, I use the Princeton (1987) edition)
FT   *Fear and Trembling*. Penguin, 1985
REP   *Repetition*. Princeton, 1983
SUD   *The Sickness Unto Death*. Penguin, 1989

Heidegger
BT   *Being and Time*. Blackwell, 1990
WIM   *What is Metaphysics*. In Kaufmann (ed.) *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*.
       Meridian, 1975; or in *Basic Writings of Martin Heidegger*. Routledge, 1993.

Sartre
BN   *Being and Nothingness*. Washington Square Press, 1966 (except, where stated,
       Routledge, 1969 edition)
NE   *Notebooks for an Ethics*. University of Chicago Press, 1992
WD   *War Diaries*. Verso, 1985

Tillich
CTB   *The Courage to Be*. Collins (Fontana), 1962

Rorty
CIS   *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge, 1989
EHO   *Essays on Heidegger and Others*. Cambridge, 1991

Conrad
HOD   *Heart of Darkness*. Dent, 1974 (except, where stated, Penguin (1973) edition)

Nagel
VFN   *The View from Nowhere*. Oxford, 1986

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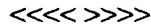
Life seems to me essentially passion, conflict, rage; moments of peace are brief and destroy themselves.—Bertrand Russell (*The Essence of Religion*)

K. was haunted by the feeling that he was losing himself or wandering into strange country, farther than ever man had wandered before, a country so strange that not even the air had anything in common with his native air, where one might die of strangeness, and yet whose enchantment was such that one could only go on and lose oneself further.—Kafka (*The Castle*)

Our birth ... is the basis of our activity and individuality, and our passivity or generality—that inner weakness which prevents us from ever achieving the density of an absolute individual. We are not in some incomprehensible way an activity joined to a passivity ... but wholly active and wholly passive, because we are the upsurge of time.—Merleau-Ponty (*The Phenomenology of Perception*)

The search for unity is deeply natural, but like so many other things which are deeply natural may be capable of producing nothing but a variety of illusions.—Iris Murdoch (*The Sovereignty of Good*)

We live in a world of at least two sides. We live in a world of opposites, and to reconcile these two opposing things is the trick. The more darkness you can gather up, the more light you can see.—David Lynch (*Lynch on Lynch*)

When the old campaigner approached the end, had fought the good fight, and kept his faith, the heart was still young enough not to have forgotten the fear and trembling that disciplined his youth and which, although the grown man had mastered it, no man altogether outgrows—Kierkegaard (*Fear and Trembling*)

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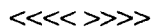
Preamble

'There must be some way out of here / Said the joker to the thief'—Bob Dylan (*All Along the Watchtower*)

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My task here is essentially two-fold: firstly to critically examine the philosophical literature on anxiety in the work of writers in the existentialist tradition; and secondly, by distilling essential structures and features from these and adding more recent ideas and commentaries, to formulate, as far as I can, a unified account of the overall meaning and significance of existential anxiety.

These aims are not confined to separate sections, but instead coexist over the course of seven main chapters. As I progress with my critique the idea is to gradually extract what I see as the essentials of existential anxiety and develop them into a basic structure. My reading of the seven principle philosophers and novelists does not become less faithful, but perhaps becomes more selective as this structure attains a more pronounced form. Chapter 1—in some respects a second and more substantial introduction—orients existential anxiety in relation to everyday and psychological meanings of the word and uses fear as a foil for highlighting its uniqueness. Historical and conceptual foundations are more rigorously laid in the Chapter 2 (on Kierkegaard) and this is built on in Chapters 3 and 4 (on Heidegger and Sartre)—these three long sections forming the dissertation's core. Chapter 5's reading of Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be* is as much designed as a catalyst for illuminating the structure of this core as it is to examine Tillich's ideas, and from this a more explicit formulation of the anxiety's meaning takes place in Chapters 6 and 7 (featuring Rorty, Conrad and Camus).

Of these seven writers—Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Tillich, Rorty, Conrad and Camus—only the first four examine anxiety *by name*. It receives such attention from Camus only occasionally and Rorty and Conrad rarely, if ever, mention it; but, as I hope to show, in line with the emerging results of my investigation, for all three its presence and significance is important if not pivotal. Something similar can be said about Nietzsche who, though he does not have a section to himself, makes an appearance by proxy in *The Ironic Remedy*. A related factor to be considered is the presence of anxiety in their work—perhaps in terms of what has been left out or assumptions not

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open for discussion—that is not itself part of the content. I am not referring here to any deliberate, indirect method of communication, but rather to a (possibly necessary) lack of completeness or rigour determined by conscious or unconscious choices of direction, mood, form and content that insure that *something* must be left unsaid. This is particularly true when attempts are made to detail and recommend, upon nihilistic foundations, ways of existing which acknowledge anxiety's revelations.

In each chapter, to a greater or lesser extent, the work of these writers will determine the form and content of my critique, but with regard to my own developing synthesis perhaps the best way to explain my concerns is to list what I consider to be the most pressing questions about the nature of existential anxiety. Roughly these can be summarized as follows: What kind of thing is anxiety?; What is it to *know* oneself as anxious?; How is anxiety experienced?; What are its causes or origins (i.e. what is it about ourselves and what is it about the world that makes anxiety possible)?; How do we tend to respond to it?; How *should* we respond to it? Can it be overcome or transcended?; What is its relation to other affects and concepts such as fear, despair and alienation?, and, relatedly, Why is it so important to the existentialists?

One way to understand what anxiety is is to understand the process of uncovering its significance for the individual, and in this way the first two questions are closely allied. (In truth, all the subsequent questions are important for answering the first, just as each is to some extent linked to and embellished by the others.) Each writer that I look at has his own answers, and part of my task is to unravel what anxiety means for them in the context of their thought. Superficially, and sometimes at a more crucial level the meaning of anxiety tends to be dictated by what a writer sees as intrinsic to human existence. Looked at in this way it can become a gap-filler—a term obscure and flexible enough to smooth over categorial disjunctions and empirical rough edges in theories and systems. (Although at its best it can be a powerful means of illuminating a thinker's central ideas on our condition.) This is of course not to show anything more than that in a particular tradition anxiety is there merely as a tool to this end; it is not to say that anything of its kind actually exists, or that if it does that it responds to or reveals anything of particular importance about the world or ourselves.

When I began writing this I was not that confident that there was anything other than a tool; one ready to be unearthed and demystified. I thought anxiety might well be either misused in the way mentioned, or a name applied without rigour to a mishmash of feelings about and responses to existentialist concepts like alienation, absurdity, death and guilt. But it turns out (if I am right) that something quite distinctive does emerge from the tradition. Anxiety is not just something identified by the role it plays, but by *what it is*.

But what *kind* of thing is it? If it is an *emotion* that emerges—something with a distinctive 'feel' or something we palpably 'undergo'—then it is one of enormous complexity and shades. It seems however inadequate to describe it in this way, not least because there is little else that goes by that name that is analogous (As far as I am aware, as I shall say more about shortly, the only analogous (alleged) emotion is love). As Chapter 1 stresses, the anxiety most existentialists are concerned with is phenomenologically unlike 'worry' or 'fear' or 'panic'. It is perhaps more readily describable as 'unease', but it we look for the source of this unease the search quickly becomes ontological rather than emotional and what is more, continually escapes us. If we look hard enough it might become apparent (or meaningful) in rare moments that it is anxiety itself which drives this search and so to hold on to it is the equivalent of looking in two directions at once. Anxiety is pervasive and takes on many forms (see particularly Chapter 7), some of which are too intense to count as 'unease', but its conceptual and experiential slipperiness makes it very hard to define. It is this which prompted Kierkegaard to write about his use of the term;

If science has any other psychological intermediate term that has the dogmatic, the ethical and the psychological advantages that anxiety possesses, then that should be preferred.[1]

This looks an innocent enough statement (particularly among the convolutions of *The Concept of Anxiety*) but in truth says a great deal about the difficulty of pinning the concept down. It is not precisely a familiar, everyday experience even though it perhaps potentially is. For Sartre (for example) anxiety is mostly manifest in comportments which are designed to escape it, and that it can be so indirectly expressed is again revealing. In Chapter 1 I outline some psychological and psychoanalytic descriptions of the experience of anxiety, but as I discuss in detail, their relation to existential anxiety is complex and they perhaps only serve as an analogy. One reason for this is that the origins of existential anxiety are not just different from everyday and pathological anxiety,

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[1] *The Concept of Anxiety* (Princeton, 1980), p.77

but *categorially* different. Much of this chapter is spent prising anxiety in philosophy away from anxiety in psychology, something that would have been a less demanding task if it were not for some damaging category-blurring instituted by certain existential psychologists. Existential anxiety, as we shall see, is bound up with conceptions of ethics and the self which are intrinsically philosophical, and part of what is so interesting about it is that through it our basic ontology is enmeshed with an intensely personal concern for self.

As seems to be quite well known, another reason why anxiety is unlike your average emotion is its lack of an object. In a certain sense this lack is overestimated and has led to definitions and applications that are seriously confused or tangential,[2] but if correctly located its non-intentionality is indeed crucial. It surprised me, however, just how long it took me to locate it: many commentators have associated it with intangibles like nothingness (contingency) and possibility (freedom, choice), but there is still something essentially object-like about these (e.g. we are anxious because our values and choices have no a priori or teleological justification, or because there is 'nothing' stopping us from doing what we have avowed not to do). We shall see that, used properly, contingency and freedom—an awareness of an objective lack of meaning which runs counter to our desire for completion, and a concern for our self actualization and creation— represent polarities that are vital to the picture of anxiety as I compose it, but required to locate the *necessary* objectlessness that makes anxiety truly unique is a structure that indicates the central incommensurability or paradox of the human condition. I have read most of my authors as, in one way or another, displaying this paradox, but I believe that Kierkegaard does it best and most of what has subsequently been said (and is interesting) about anxiety owes a massive debt to him. Of more recent writers I have found that Thomas Nagel's work on 'absurdity' and 'the meaning of life' (which incorporates his central idea about our ability to take up two incommensurable points of view)[3] to be a clear statement of the structure from which anxiety gains its significance. In Chapter 5 I use Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be* to illuminate some central ideas and themes that have arisen from the core chapters on Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre, and at the same time summarize, with help from Nagel, anxiety's origins and the details of the 'anxiety structure'.

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[2] See, especially, Chapter 1 with regard to psychology, Chapter 4 on Sartre and freedom, and Chapter 5 on Tillich and death.
[3] See *Mortal Questions* and *The View from Nowhere*

Anxiety's knowledge is to know *us* in the most basic sense, and if this knowledge is uncapturable or irreducible then so are we. Another question I started off with, however, was whether anxiety could in some sense be overcome or transcended. This can happen in two ways: either it is lost altogether in a radical alteration in what we are or the way we view ourselves, or it is more subtly transformed or mastered. My answer, as worked out and incorporated in most of the chapters, is a version of the latter, but one which never lets go of the central incommensurability of our condition. Without God I do not see how we can let go of this, and even Kierkegaard seems unsure (see Chapter 2). For him faith and anxiety sometimes seem necessarily entangled, at other times not, but whereas he says 'today nobody will stop with faith; they all go further',[4] I am inclined to say that we can go no further than anxiety. Unlike faith though, anxiety is no kind of *telos*—it not only does not signify rest or completion, it signifies its opposite, continual movement.

That we do all want to go further is of course vital. We want to go further *and* still be who we are—we want the impossible, in Sartre's words, to be God. The consequences of anxiety—our response to it—forms an important part of the dissertation; both in terms of patterns of escaping it,[5] and modes of existing which authentically face up to it. As it turns out, the boundary between escape and confrontation or acceptance is blurred and for this reason a lot of space is devoted to defining just what authenticity in the face of anxiety looks and feels like. Conclusions to this question are reached in Chapters 6 and 7.

Other key concepts in the existentialist tradition—alienation, death, guilt, absurdity, and so on—also find themselves illuminated and reassessed as a result of prodding and dissecting anxiety. A study of anxiety will inevitably cast a light on these, but it is a light which I think is especially stark and revealing, and indeed one reason why anxiety is given such prominence by certain writers is that to understand our anxiety *is* to assume a position or an attitude that most clearly reveals the essentials of our condition. The claim (of some) is that to look at the world and ourselves in the light of anxiety is like emerging from Plato's cave. What is revealed is though, even once one has (to whatever extent this is possible) adapted, far more unsettling.[6] Things are transient and

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[4] *Fear and Trembling* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.42

[5] Particularly Heidegger's 'they' in Chapter 3, Sartre's 'bad faith' in Chapter 4, and neurotic retreat in Chapter 5.

[6] Plato says '[the good] is that which every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does all that it does, with some intuition of its nature, and yet also baffled' (*Republic*, 505, cited in Murdoch *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Ark, 1985) p.98). Anxiety is certainly 'pursued', or ought to be pursued, but in such a

contingent not because they are mere shadows but because *that's how they are*; and we are alone and responsible for ourselves not just in moments of despair or *Grenzsituationen*[7] (revealing of our trixotrophy) but because *that's how we are*. Alienation is in many ways the first and last word in existentialism[8] and anxiety can be fruitfully seen as the messenger or signifier of a sense of separation from the world, other people and our self that is both desired and rejected. Anxiety's relation to death is complex (and is dealt with in depth in chapters 3 and 5); so too with guilt, although I have found that the relation is neater and of significantly greater importance (see Chapters 2 and 7 in particular). As for absurdity, the anxiety structure follows closely the features of existence which inspire Nagel (see above) to his conclusions on this issue, but I diverge from him (and Cooper) in considering a version of absurdity found in Dostoyevsky (and implicitly at times in Conrad) and formularized (as much as it can be) by Camus' Sisyphus and Sartre's summation of us as a 'useless passion'. As with authenticity and alienation, absurdity features throughout the dissertation, although more intensively in chapters 4 to 6.

Why then is anxiety so important to the existentialists? To a degree this has been suggested by what has so far been said, but it is still important to ask why this and not, say, love, despair, boredom or joy? Many of these have been claimed as fundamental—love and joy for example as means of overcoming alienation that are more than mere 'coping strategies'.[9] As I have indicated, categorially speaking perhaps love has more in common with anxiety than anything else. The work of Martha Nussbaum has helped convince me of this,[10] and one of her influences, Iris Murdoch, describes love as 'the tension between the imperfect soul and the magnetic perfection which is conceived of as lying beyond it.'[11] The 'magnetic perfection' is the Good, which despite its mysterious, indefinable nature is (even, I think, in terms of Murdoch's dedivinized definition)

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way that the sense of 'bafflement' is predominant and is more than intellectual. Anxiety is existential bafflement and, as I argue at length, ambiguous at its core.

[7] 'Limit situations'. Jaspers' term for experiences in which we are exposed to the boundaries of our being through (e.g.) suffering or being forced to radically reassess our world-view. (See Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.22)

[8] This is David Cooper's thesis in his 'reconstruction' although he is more optimistic about overcoming it than I am. (See *Existentialism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), especially Ch.2)

[9] For example Ricoeur's reference to joy in *Fallible Man* (and Marcel (e.g. *Being and Having*) and Scheler's championing of love as the fundamental affect or mode of engagement (see *The Nature of Sympathy*)

[10] See, for example, *Love's Knowledge*. One of her claims, reminiscent of anxiety, is that love has its own peculiar knowledge—it is something revealing, and in which we dwell, as well as being something triggered by a prior reflective understanding of the world.

[11] *The Sovereignty of Good*, pp.102-3

without an equivalent in the anxiety structure. The nearest the structure comes is the objective view of ourselves as utter contingencies without a purpose and without any possibility of completion, and this of course offers anything but the unity which Murdoch is driving at.[12] But to describe anxiety as a 'tension' between an acute awareness of one's self and its desires and an acute awareness of this objective contingency is accurate. Love, as Nussbaum has pointed out, necessarily involves suffering and loneliness as well as joy; and arguably the most intense sense of being alive we can experience as well as the most intense sense of alienation is facilitated by an engagement with our anxiety. Both are all-pervasive forms of attunement or modes of existence, and neither is easily definable in terms of its phenomenology, their objects or causes or their behavioural characteristics. My feeling is that there is a lot of work that could be done on the relation between these love and anxiety, but little space can be afforded this issue in these pages.

One way of reading Kierkegaard is to say that anxiety gives way to and is the necessary precursor of love, but for most existentialist thinkers anxiety remains dominant. Does this reflect an inherent morbidity in existentialist philosophers? In a sense yes, but I would argue that if you are dealing so closely with the essentials of human existence a degree of morbidity is inevitable. I do not think this is circular, but would claim that even if pessimism motivated the investigation its findings are not merely self-fulfilling but rather unavoidable. In a very real sense human existence is tragic—not just, as Unamuno would have it, because we are mortal,[13] but because what we essentially desire is not only unattainable but logically impossible (and even the formal recognition of this impossibility does not quench the desire). This is not to say that a philosophy centred on anxiety deals in out and out pessimism or despair; an interesting feature of all the writers considered (with the possible exception of Rorty) is the lengths they go to to explain or justify their continued engagement with and (often) love of life *despite* its tragic underpinnings.[14] This duality is not just what is apparent, but as far as I can see, the reality of the situation. Anxiety exists—is considered to be important—because it reflects this ambiguity.

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[12] Medard Boss is wrong when he says; 'If one keeps oneself ... exposed to the full and undissembled essence of anxiety, it is precisely anxiety that opens to man that dimension of freedom into which alone the experience of love and trust can unfold.' (*Anxiety, Guilt and Psychotherapeutic Liberation*, Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol.2, No.3, 1962, p.186)

[13] See *Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover, 1954)

[14] Commenting on Luther, Charles Taylor says that quite often 'the recognition of my helplessness and my lowliness, and the sense of my salvation, are closely bound together.' (*Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p.443

Joy and other affects or moods may be important, but anxiety is more expansive and categorially more flexible.[15] The truth of the original Kierkegaard quote is that in this way it is a philosophical invention, or at least, only philosophy (or a philosophical theology) could have given it a name and attached an idea to it. (So in a sense the name need not have been 'anxiety', but I cannot, as I shall shortly explain, think of better candidate.) Often attempts to usurp anxiety as the *Grundbefindlickheit* do not recognize this. Despair may be suitable for a consideration of contingency alone, and joy of our self-creation alone, but neither indicate our recognition of ambiguity, and, as alluded to, it takes some strenuous analysis just to pin down that it is *precisely this* that is unique about anxiety.

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Before moving on to the main body of the dissertation I will briefly say something about my choice of the word anxiety over the most commonly used alternatives 'dread', '*angst*', and 'anguish'. Walter Lowrie originally translated the (19th Century) Danish *Angest* in Kierkegaard's work as 'dread'. This is commonly seen as inappropriate and has been replaced, usually by 'anxiety' and occasionally by 'anguish' (e.g. in Hannay's translation of *Fear and Trembling*). I agree that anxiety is better, dread being too dark. In *Begrebet Angst* the individual is enticed and intrigued by the experience as well as having a sense of foreboding, and it is vital to convey this ambiguity. Roger Poole criticises Reidar Thomte, the translator of the current Princeton edition, saying 'anxiety is, of course, only one of the many possible modes of dread, which is by far the richer concept.'[16] But what criterion he uses to assign richness to either term in the existential context I have no idea. The whole point of *Begrebet Angst* is to identify the complexities of (what Kierkegaard takes to be) a *unified* concept, and so, particularly in light of those lines from p.77, it does not matter what term is used. If Poole's complaint has any force it is that the term or translation chosen should be best suited for the times so that the reader is not misdirected or wrongly influenced from the start.

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[15] Unamuno is making this sort of point when he says, 'Anxiety is something far deeper, more intimate, and more spiritual than suffering. We are want to feel the touch of anxiety even in the midst of that which we call happiness, and even because of this happiness itself, to which we cannot resign ourselves and before which we tremble.' (op cit, p.205)
[16] *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1993) p.92

The main worry with using 'anxiety' is that it does not abet the process of distinguishing what the existentialists mean from its everyday meaning and from its psychological meaning. In Chapter 1 I go to some lengths to sharpen this distinction, but it should not be forgotten that a link between everyday and scientific notions like anxiety and melancholy were the sustenance for Kierkegaard's initiation of a philosophy that prioritizes the concrete over the abstract. With Heidegger, Sartre and Tillich also, anxiety provides the link between the ontic (in terms of scientific, or common-sense entities) and the ontological, and so in this respect to use the word that would feature in such discourse is not misleading. However, as I will often repeat, part of the reason why we experience anxiety *in a peculiarly existential way* is precisely because there is no smooth transition, no common point of view or single category that covers our relation to both the ontic and to the ontological.

Mainly for this reason 'anxiety' is not ideal, but like Robinson and Macquarrie (as influenced by Tillich[17]), Thomte and many others, I prefer it to the most viable alternative '*Angst*'. Other than the convenience of following in the tradition of what are perhaps the principal texts of the dissertation,[18] my reason for this is the way 'angst' has been somewhat trivialized in the English language in recent times. Examples of this are the term 'teenage angst' and the letters page of the *NME* (simply *Angst*), and no doubt this reflects, or is reflected in, a process whereby certain writers and philosophers have come to regard the term as epitomizing what is most repellent about what they see as an emotive and popularist Continental trend. I suppose I could join a rearguard action against the abuse of this word, but in some ways it is easier to allow 'angst' to take on its own generalized identity and try to re-establish the credibility of the concept using my preferred translation.

In the English editions of *Being and Nothingness*[19] Hazel Barnes translates the French *angoisse* as 'anguish' (as do most other translators of Sartre, although in David Pellaur's *Notebooks for an Ethics* it is translated as 'anxiety'[20]). My reason for disliking this is similar to that in the case of 'dread'—it is a word too closely linked to ideas like 'grief' and 'sorrow' and as such tends to paint

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[17] See *An Existential Theology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) p.65
[18] i.e. *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Being and Time* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990). I am aware that Joan Stambaugh's recent translation of *Being and Time* (Albany: SUNY, 1997) just leaves the German *Angst*, but I have worked with the original Robinson and Macquarrie translation.
[19] New York, Washington Square, 1966, and London, Routledge, 1969
[20] Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992

too gloomy and unambiguous a picture of what the existentialists are trying to convey. 'Anguish' has, to my ears, retained more pronounced traces of its etymology—the Latin *'angere'* and the Latin *'ancho'* meaning to choke or squeeze[21]—than its competitors.

Generally then, of the four alternatives that have presented themselves I see 'anxiety' and *'Angst'* as the best in place of the more obviously misleading 'dread' and 'anguish'. My reasons for choosing 'anxiety' spring from the convenience of consistency with principle texts and some unfortunate connotations of the word 'angst' in some areas of English usage. Adopting something new seems needlessly radical, and short of *inventing* a word, the options that one might choose from—'disquiet', 'unease' etc.—though less confusing than 'anxiety' is some respects, offer only the lighter end of a spectrum that has the more tenebrous 'dread' and 'anguish' at the other.[22] Of course, an easy way round this whole issue is to insist that where I say 'anxiety' this (except at certain points where I am making reference to psychological and everyday meanings of the word) is short-hand for 'existential anxiety', and if you are wondering about the meaning of *this* then, well, read on.

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[21] My sources here are Freud's principle translator Alix Strachey (see *Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. III (London, Hogarth), p.116, and Medard Boss (op cit).

[22] Where translators have used alternatives (such as Hazel Barnes) I substitute them for anxiety, generally without notifying the reader.

1

Even in the quietest moments: Philosophy, psychology, and a reassessment of the anxiety—fear relation

'The ability to withstand anxiety is heroic. Probably the only genuine heroism given to man.'—Ernest Becker (*The Birth and Death of Meaning*)

'Anxiety is the general current coin for which all the affects are exchanged'—Freud (*General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*)

'Its sound is plaintive ... But its complexity permits it to have overtones at various levels. Of an absolute evenness, both muffled and shrill, it fills the night and the ears as if it came from nowhere'
—Alain Robbe-Grillet (*Jealousy*)

'There's too much confusion/I can't get no relief'—Bob Dylan (op cit)

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In both psychology and philosophy most who have written on anxiety begin by discussing the distinction between anxiety and fear. The terms are often interchangeable in everyday language, but clearly any approach which singles out anxiety as worthy of attention has something more in mind than what is suggested by a vocabulary which blurs usage and definition. That there is a relation is of course significant, and for a couple of reasons a comparison with fear is a good place to start an analysis of anxiety. Firstly (and obviously) it serves as a template for identifying fear-like elements of anxiety; and secondly it can serve as a foil for isolating those aspects of anxiety that make it a broader and categorially richer concept than fear and other related affects.

My intention here is primarily to detect the distinctions that are commonly seen by psychologists and psychiatrists, and then to develop this towards the more distinctive role anxiety plays in existential philosophy. This latter move will hopefully do more than just refine anxiety into an affect, though more subtle and complex, essentially of a similar kind to fear. Instead it will be placed on a new categorial footing which will consolidate the unique status certain writers have conferred upon it. The price paid is perhaps an irremediable remoteness from our everyday and

clinical understanding of anxiety, and indeed this is where the main body of the thesis keeps us, but I shall nonetheless stick roughly to a psychological template in this chapter's investigation. This will consist of a comparison of anxiety and fear in terms of the *experience, causes, origins* and *consequences* with which they are associated.

I

My aim then is to generate a greater understanding of the type of circumstances in which it is entirely inappropriate to substitute the word 'fear' for the word 'anxiety', but before proceeding with this I will briefly discuss some of the differing meanings of 'anxiety'. I think it is accurate to say that these fall into three fairly distinct (though by no means exclusive) categories; the everyday, the psychological or clinical, and the existential. The everyday sense of anxiety might also be referred to as 'worry' or perhaps 'concern'. It implies a state of limbo in a person who is unaware of the outcome of a particular event that is important to them. This could be something they are actively engaged in (like sitting an exam), or something outside of their control (like awaiting exam results). In a related sense it can also refer to the tension or frustration someone feels when, for instance, they are impatient to reach a particular target or conclusion (e.g. one might be anxious to finish a meeting so as to get outside for a cigarette). Where it meets existential anxiety (particularly, as we shall see, in Sartre's philosophy) is in the realm of (important) decision making and moral dilemmas. The everyday meaning stretches to include the individual's sense of responsibility for themselves and others, and therefore a slightly different kind of uncertainty or indefiniteness is introduced. As indicated in the Preamble, common parlance sometimes knows this as 'angst'.

Psychology and psychiatry are certainly interested in everyday and existential anxiety (which are sometimes lumped together as 'normal' anxiety), but there is naturally an emphasis on abnormal or clinical anxiety with a view to prevention and cure. Abnormal anxiety might be described (e.g. behaviourally) as a level of anxiety that impairs the life of an individual rather than being accepted as part of a robust, healthy concern for self and others, but it might also be said that abnormal anxiety is qualitatively distinct from its normal counterpart. Psychology, at a theoretical level, will tend to seek this distinction: Rollo May defines the abnormal variant as;

disproportionate to the threat or object; as involving the unconscious in terms of repression and "intrapsychic conflict", and as requiring neurotic defence mechanisms as a means of coping with it.[1]

Karen Horney identifies what she calls '*urangst*' (literally 'original anxiety') as 'the expression of existing human helplessness in the face of existing human dangers—illness, ... death, powers of nature', and contrasts it with the abnormal (what she calls 'basic') anxiety where 'the helplessness is largely provoked by repressed hostility'.[2] 'Hostility' could be exchanged for 'libido', 'sense of inferiority', 'guilt' or some other *fundamentale* depending on the theorist or school of thought in question, but in essence what we have here is a typical account of the difference between normal and abnormal anxiety. The abnormal variety is caused by processes that to a significant extent by-pass the will or ego, and although the objects of the anxiety might be the same as the objects of its normal counterpart, the anxiety itself is not directly linked to these objects. The result is a kind of anxiety ('signal anxiety' in Freudian terminology) that has no obvious origin or cause, or if attached to an object at all it is one that is displaced (as in phobias). With normal anxiety the sense of helplessness is subjectively related to the set of circumstances which are straightforwardly its cause (even if these are themselves unsure, ambiguous etc.).

As suggested, what psychology might refer to as normal anxiety is not necessarily what is meant in the everyday use of the word. The often nugatory and transient nature of everyday anxiety makes it of interest to psychologists if it can be shown to have an abnormal aetiology, but otherwise the definition of normal anxiety has pertained more to the degree of realism of people's reaction towards the same factors that generate abnormal (neurotic) anxiety (such as traumas and conflicts), as well as the basic features of existence and helplessness that Horney's *urangst* refers to. There is then a substantial cross-over among the normal and abnormal varieties that interests psychology, and certain psychologists have had to reach over into other disciplines—especially existential philosophy—to augment their theories.[3] Concepts such as 'repression' and 'illness' do not always seem applicable to the phenomenology of anxiety (and the general relation of its normal and abnormal varients), and many acknowledge that the picture is not complete unless a more abstract, ontological facet is recognized. In the words of Rollo May, 'there is a richness to the word

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[1] *The Meaning of Anxiety* (Norton, 1977), p.210
[2] *New ways in Psychoanalysis* (Norton, 1966), p.203n
[3] Prominent figures have included Medard Boss, Ludwig Binswanger, Leslie Farber, Victor Frankl, and R.D. Laing. The principle vehicle for many of these theorists' views has been the American journal *The Review of Existential Psychology and Psychotherapy.*

"anxiety" which, even though it presents problems for psychologists, is central in literature, art and philosophy."[4] However, the complexity of the normal/abnormal division is added to by the existential dimension which places the causes and origins of anxiety not just in the moral category of painful conflicts and *particular* threats to one's self and what one considers to be of worth, but also in the realm of certain basic features of human existence—finitude, guilt, freedom, responsibility, contingency and so on which should be accepted and lived with rather than overcome or even 'coped' with. The concerns and parameters of the two areas are not without connections—for example existential anxiety is the cause of certain, what can be called, 'neurotic' attitudes towards life—but in this chapter, and in other parts of the thesis, I want to do some categorial tidying up with respect to these different meanings and uses of anxiety. This roughly equates to drawing firmer lines between the ontological and the empirical than certain writers (e.g. May and Tillich) have tended to do, and the anxiety-fear distinction should prove a useful forum for achieving this.

Along these lines an on-going division will emerge in this chapter whereby it will become apparent that certain descriptions of anxiety treat it as essentially a response to something threatening, and others treat it as something more positive both in terms of its origins and consequences and in terms of the subjective experience. Links are made with a sharpened sense of reality and with creativity (and even pleasure). Psychologists will often fall into the first camp and philosophers into the second, and although the full implications of this division will not become apparent until things progress, one upshot worth mentioning here is that psychological definitions will tend to suggest (if unwittingly) that anxiety is almost a *variety* of fear, whereas philosophical definitions are more likely to avoid this and class anxiety as something quite different.

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[4] op cit, p.113

II

'I came to a puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing , I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather, I was wafted down tunnels. Then very gingerly, I pushed my foot across. I laid my hand against a brick wall. I returned very painfully, drawing myself back into my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle. This is life then to which I am committed.'—Virginia Woolf (*The Waves*)

In this section I will, as stated, analyse the fear-anxiety distinction in terms of subjective experience, causes, origins and consequences.

A. The Experience

The psychologist Leslie Farber has said that the 'experience of anxiety has been relatively neglected in favour of its causes and, more especially, its consequences'[5] and possibly this is the case in psychology, but if one looks at the phenomenology of Heidegger and Sartre, and scratches the surface of some (in particular Twentieth Century) literature the balance is redressed somewhat. In a sense though there is less that *can* be said about the experience in itself. Theories of sources and consequences lend themselves to objective analysis and debate more readily than the described experience, and part of the reason for this is that reference to surrounding causes and consequences seems an inextricable part of such descriptions. In a similar vein, when distinguishing anxiety and fear, relying on the experience will tend to be inconclusive. Even where the subject describes what is felt as 'anxiety' or 'fear' their choice of vocabulary is always likely to have been affected by received ideas of what each is. The breadth and intricacy of our vocabulary and our understanding of our general environment[6] will condition the content and significance we ascribe to our moods and emotions,[7] and these preconditions are in turn likely to have been influenced by the theories and

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[5] *Will and Anxiety*, Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol. IV, No.3, 1964, p.201

[6] What Heidegger calls the 'situation'—an awareness of which will reveal the authentic possibilities our personal and cultural circumstances make available.

[7] Stephen Mulhall makes this point in his paper *Can there Be an Epistemology of Moods*. He says 'the significance of the situation in which an individual finds herself, and the import and nature of their emotions, is determined by the range and structure of the vocabulary available to her for their characterization. She cannot feel shame if she lacks a vocabulary in which the circle of situation, feeling and goal characteristic of shame is available; and the precise significance of that feeling will alter according to the semantic field in which that vocabulary is embedded.'(Verstehen *and Humane Understanding*, Anthony O'Hear Ed. (Cambridge, 1996), p.196)

language of those I am here attempting to reassess.[8] Also, many experiences will contain elements of both states of mind, but there are occasions where the terminology used will not be subtle enough to allow for this to show. As such, we need to consider surrounding factors (i.e. origins and consequences) carefully in order to derive a clear picture of what we are dealing with in any particular case.

The 'diagnostic and statistical model' (DSM III) of the American Psychiatric Association describes neurotic anxiety as directly experienced in the form of 'panic attacks' at one end of the spectrum and 'free-floating' anxiety (also known as 'Generalized Anxiety Disorder') at the other; and indirectly experienced in the form of phobias, obsessions and compulsions.[9] Some theories that lie behind this classification will be dealt with when we look at causes and objects, but in this section it will become apparent that what psychology defines as anxiety is not necessarily what the subject might describe as such, and this will begin to explain the divergence between psychological and existential ideas on the fear-anxiety distinction. For the time being though I shall borrow this framework and provide some examples of firstly panic attacks and then free-floating anxiety.

Freud says;

anxiousness—which though mostly latent as regards consciousness, is constantly lurking in the background ... can suddenly break through into consciousness without being aroused by a train of ideas, and thus provoke an anxiety attack.

This can consist of the raw experience of anxiety by itself, but more commonly;

is accompanied by the interpretation that is nearest to hand, as such as the idea of the extinction of life, or of a stroke, or of a threat of madness ...[10]

An example of this kind comes from J.D.Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* where the young hero (Holden Cauldfield), physically and emotionally exhausted, reaches the end of his tether;

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[8] For example many writers, as we shall see, are content to stick with (say) Kierkegaard's two line summary of the fear/anxiety distinction (that fear has a definite object and anxiety does not (see COA, p.42)) seemingly without giving it much further thought.

[9] The actual breakdown is under the heading *Anxiety Disorders* and runs as follows: A. Phobic Disorders; B. Anxiety State: panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder; C. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. (Source: *Abnormal Psychology*, Davison and Neale (Wiley, 1986)). 1995's DSM IV (American Psychiatric Association) adds several more types of disorder to the list (e.g. 'Acute Stress Disorder' and 'Panic Disorder with Agoraphobia'), but for my purposes a more streamlined classification is sufficient.

[10] *Complete Psychological Works* (Hogarth Press, 1953-1964),Vol III, pp.93-4

I kept walking and walking up fifth avenue ... Then all of a sudden, something very spooky started happening. Every time I came to the end of the block and stepped off the ... kerb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down and nobody'd ever see me again. Boy, it did scare me ... I started sweating like a bastard. Then I started doing something else. Every time I'd get to the end of a block I'd make believe I was talking to my [dead] brother Allie. I'd say to him, 'Allie, don't let me disappear ... And then, when I'd reach the other side of the street without disappearing, I'd *thank* him. Then it would start all over again as soon as I got to the next corner.[11]

The feeling of being confronted by oblivion—of having no platform and no handrail to grasp hold of—activates the vertigo metaphor. For support Cauldfield has to reach beyond the immediate physical world and a sense of self he can no longer rely on towards the image or memory of his dead brother (who is one of the few people he has loved and respected). Only this way (or at least, so it feels) can he prevent complete mental collapse.

A psychiatric textbook illustrates a panic attack with an autobiographical passage from Rilke;

Why should I pretend that these nights have never been, when in fear of death I sat up, clinging to the fact that the mere act of sitting was at any rate a part of life: that the dead did not sit ... one wakes up panting ... higher it mounts, here it passes out over you, rising higher than your breath, to which you flee as your last stand ... your heart drives you out of yourself, your heart pursues you, and you are almost frantic ... your slight surface hardness and adaptability go for nothing.[12]

Rationally speaking "I sit therefore I live" is pretty conclusive, and I am told that those who have become accustomed to these attacks support an underlying realization that they are in fact not going to die. Panic attacks for someone who has not experienced them are very hard to understand, and equally this apparent contradiction can only really make sense (if that's the word) in the context of such a particular and intense experience.

Lectures VI and VII of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* present us with a catalogue of instances of panic, despair, anxiety and fear (although James is not interested in making distinctions within this vocabulary). One such example, probably James's own,[13] runs as follows;

I went one evening into a dressing-room in the twilight to procure some article that was there; when suddenly there fell upon me without any warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence. Simultaneously there arose in my mind the image of an epileptic patient whom I had

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[11] *The Catcher in the Rye* (Penguin, 1958), p.204
[12] Cited in Henderson and Gillespie, *Textbook of Psychiatry* (OUP, 1962), p.139
[13] My source being Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* (Picador, 1978), see p.121

seen in the asylum, a black-haired youth with greenish skin, entirely idiotic, who used to sit all day on one of the benches ... with his knees drawn up against his chin, and the coarse grey undershirt, which was his only garment, drawn over them enclosing his entire figure ... This image and my fear entered into a species of combination with each other. *That shape am I*, I felt, potentially. Nothing I possess can defend me against that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him. There was such a horror of him, and such a perception of my own merely momentary discrepancy from him, that it was as if something hitherto solid within my breast gave way entirely, and I became a mass of quivering fear.[14]

Here an unspecified 'fear' finds itself a home—in this case in the image of the epileptic. This process was later identified by Freud and has parallels in existentialist literature.[15] Initially at least a defining aspect of the anxiety experience is the inability to attach it to a specific object or cause. The result of this non-intentionality is a sense of helplessness and bewilderment as we feel both 'dizzy' and threatened. Anxiety in the form of, or which induces, panic but that does not attach itself to specifics is described by Hermann Hesse who writes;

At times ... a momentary drop in life's mood ... a sleepless night, will bring [an individual] face to face with the inexorable and for a while make all order, all comfort, all safety, all faith, all knowledge doubtful.[16]

Loss of 'safety' or 'faith' is not itself an object or a cause of the anxiety, but no more than a attempt to describe an experience that is subjectively rootless. Hesse is echoing Heidegger who stresses the sense of groundlessness and uncanniness (*unheimlichkeit*) in his version of anxiety: 'That which threatens' he says '... is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath, and yet it is nowhere.'[17] We have a sense of not being at home in the world, 'everyday familiarity collapses'[18] and we find ourselves without moorings. For him though this is more than a passing pathology, it indicates the broader existential significance of an anxiety 'always latent' in the world—the anxiety this dissertation is primarily concerned with. This 'shock' characteristic of the anxiety experience is described by clinical theorists, existentialists and those (like James) who straddle both camps. As such, distinctions are revealed by reference to cause and origin, and I suspect that Heidegger's uncanniness is more of an analogy than he sometimes cares to admit.

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[14] *Varieties of Religious Experience* (Penguin, 1985), p.160
[15] For example Tillich who identifies our need to transform anxiety into fear in order to be able to confront it with courage (cf. D. In this section, and Chapter 5)
[16] *My Belief* (Triad/Paladin,1989), p.253
[17] BT, p.231
[18] ibid, p.233. DSM IV lists among the criteria for diagnosing a panic attack 'sensations of shortness of breath', 'trembling or shaking', 'feeling dizzy, unsteady, lightheaded, or faint', 'derealization (feelings of unreality) or depersonalization (being detached from oneself)', and 'fear of dying' (p.405).

In other clinical descriptions of anxiety we find a similar experience in the form of a pervasive 'free-floating' affliction. The passage I quoted from James continues with a description of the aftermath of this attack;

After this the universe was changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread in the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before ...[19]

In this case the pervading sense of dread did eventually disappear, but in other clinical cases the anxiety seems to be almost a permanent character trait described as 'strung up, on edge, constantly expecting trouble or calamity: there is a restlessness, impaired concentration, absentmindedness and forgetfulness in day-to-day affairs, jumpiness, irritability and intermittently depression of spirits.'[20] This type of anxiety is not a one-off, not even an occasional affliction but a continuous rumble like the ticking-over of an engine that has its idling speed set too high. Whether or not though the ticking can be subdued without some impairment of the person's sense of reality (e.g. by using drugs) is another issue. Clinically speaking such a person is dysfunctional and when faced with symptoms of this kind the relation to existential anxiety is perhaps only metaphorical. Anxiety for Heidegger and Sartre is always there, always 'latent' in the world, but this tends to be manifest in broad forms of behaviour (such as Sartre's 'bad faith') that is identified objectively rather than by the person themselves. The method of postponement of existential anxiety is self-deception rather than medication, whereas the psychological version, as we shall see, is more likely to identify self-deception as the cause of anxiety in the first place.

Here the clinical-existential division might be characterized as the distinction between the unexpressed (repressed, unresolved) and the inexpressible or unresolvable. 'It is not a distortion, but the expression of man's basic nature to be anxious' says Paul Tillich,[21] and the pertinent question is not "How should it be cured?" but "How should we live with it?". It must be recognized that there are types of anxiety that are simply in need of a cure—where the cause is not a necessary feature of existence that, if we are to be authentic, demands a certain response—and types of anxiety that are to all effects regarded as healthy despite their unsettling or even petrifying nature. It is this kind to which Kierkegaard addresses his remark 'an attempt should be made to point out the subjective predisposition and [anxiety] not as something unsound and sickly, but as an aspect

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[19] op cit, p.160
[20] Henderson and Gillespie, op cit. (and see DSM IV, pp.447-8)
[21] Cited in William Lynch *Images of Hope* (Mentor-Omega, 1966), p.47

of normal constitution';[22] and of course this kind to which the majority of this thesis is addressed. For the time being though I shall concentrate on identifying characteristics of the experience of panic attacks and free-floating anxiety that qualify them as examples of anxiety rather than fear.

Nearly every commentator, from the most traditional psychoanalysts to existential philosophers, agree that the experience of anxiety involves an element of indefiniteness (is non-intentional) whereas with fear the subject knows what he is afraid of. For Freud '[anxiety] has a quality of indefiniteness and lack of object. In precise speech we use the word "fear" rather than "anxiety" if it has found an object.'[23] He echoed Kierkegaard who wrote 'I must point out that [anxiety] is altogether different from fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite.'[24] Karen Horney says 'what characterizes anxiety in contradistinction to fear is ... a quality of diffuseness and uncertainty'[25]; for Tillich 'fear as opposed to anxiety has a definite object ... which can be faced, analysed, attacked, endured'[26]; and at least initially for Heidegger 'that in the face of which one has anxiety is completely indefinite.'[27] If we look at just what is meant by this 'indefiniteness' we find a number of implications which, for my purposes, fall broadly into two categories. For philosophers the suggestion, which I shall expand on shortly, is often (though not always) that what is indefinite is *necessarily* so, and the indefiniteness that psychologists tend to refer to concerns something repressed and potentially uncoverable and therefore made definite, or follows Freud's later line that 'anxiety has an unmistakable relation to expectation.'[28] In the latter case the subject is in a situation whereby they do not know what the outcome of an event might be, or indeed whether that event is occurring in the first place. As such the indefiniteness refers to a future state of affairs that might in some way be harmful to us, and the anxiety is a precursor to fear or some other response that occurs once the circumstances take on a definite meaning. Briefly pre-empting my discussion of anxiety's origins, what Freud, Horney and others are talking about always involves something threatening. Anxiety is a warning of *possible* danger, and as such fear and anxiety are seen as commensurable experiences often distinguished only by a time lag that makes the indefinite definite.

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[22] *Journals and Paper* (Indiana University Press, 1967), p.628-9
[23] *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (Hogarth Press, 1971), p.79
[24] COA, p.42
[25] Horney, op cit, p.194
[26] *The Courage to Be* (Collins (Fontana Library), 1962), p.34
[27] Heidegger, op cit, p.231
[28] Freud, op cit, p.79

Rollo May says that 'helplessness inheres in the very nature of anxiety',[29] and a feeling of helplessness is certainly engendered by indefinite circumstances. With the type of temporal indefiniteness Freud speaks of we are led to assume that the reason a threatening event causes anxiety rather than fear is the fact that we can do nothing about it in the present.[30] Existential philosophy will, like psychology, tend to stress the feeling of helplessness in anxiety, but unlike psychology does not make the link with possible future threats. For Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and Tillich the cause of anxiety is already in a sense 'present' but still not definite. As I will attempt to explain in the thesis, our condition is such that the roots of existential anxiety cannot be *existentially*[31] pinned down by the individual. There are certainly causes or objects which go to make up the anxiety structure that can be located, but by themselves the anxiety (or fear) they engender is not existential. Existential anxiety is not successfully confronted (as one might confront an object) by transforming it into fear (although it can perhaps be successfully 'lived through' or 'lived with') because it is always, in a sense, beyond our grasp. As such it tends to be explained in (at least superficially) paradoxical terms—'is so close ... and yet is nowhere' etc.

With free-floating anxiety indefiniteness of object or origin can be seen as the defining characteristic of the experience. There is no suggestion of a possible object or an expected threat —it is simply *there*. In the examples of panic attacks something fairly definite does occur in the mind of the subject: for Cauldfield it is that he will not reach the other side of the road; Rilke states clearly that he fears death, and in James' case, as noted, the danger of becoming like the epileptic ('that shape am I ... potentially') becomes the focus of his dread. Only superficially however are these merely examples of fear. In fear the object or imagined object precedes the fearful reaction whereas with panic attacks the anxiety is projected onto particular objects in order for the person to defer an engulfing sense of helplessness.

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[29] op cit, p.163

[30] For example, Karen Horney instances the anxiety-fear distinction by describing the difference between someone who gets up to investigate a sound in the house at night and someone who cowers in their room. The former, proactive person has fear, the latter has anxiety. (See Horney, op cit, p.195)

[31] In this sense of being *lived* rather than just grasped intellectually.

Before I move on to discuss anxiety's causes and origins in greater detail I will mention a further aspect of it which, though rarely featuring in the work of psychologists, is sometimes highlighted in existentialist philosophy—namely a positive, even pleasurable experience. Kierkegaard remarks that in the early stages of our journey through anxiety there is a 'pleasing anxiousness'[32] which tempts us to explore the full significance of its revelations. In the next chapter I will explain how an ambiguous love-fear experience is crucial to Kierkegaard's specific application of anxiety. In Heidegger this is perhaps more explicit and we find in the advanced stages of the anxiety experience a 'sober joy' and a 'spell-bound peace'.[33] Unlike Kierkegaard, one gets the impression that for Heidegger the positive side of anxiety is something that has to be worked towards and comes with a maturity in which one has learned to understand and live with the more 'altered state' elements of the phenomenon.

Can it be claimed that a positive experience is associated with fear? It is certainly the case that there is pleasure in the squirmy fear some of us seek in watching horror movies, but I think it is fair to say that this kind of aesthetic fear is not the same thing as the fear instilled in us by threats regarded as real. It might also be argued that sensation-seekers—drivers of fast cars, skydivers etc.—derive pleasure from the fear of the catastrophe they are risking. I would say however that the pleasure in these instances does not so much reside in the fear itself, but rather *alongside* it. These kind of activities inspire both fear *and* pleasure in the individual so that they are themselves ambiguous, but all the while the polarities of experience they contain remain exclusive. That in existential anxiety there is the possibility of both a pleasing and a displeasing experience indicates not just a more complex emotion or state of mind, and not a fusion (or confusion) of two or more emotions, but the requirement of a different category altogether. If not true for all existentialists (it might not be for Tillich), the work that is asked of it by some (especially Kierkegaard and Heidegger) seems to necessitate this. Anxiety of this kind lends itself to interpretation in a way that fear's immediacy does not; it can be modulated and nurtured in a way that retains its revelatory force and does not imply denial.

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[32] COA, p.42

[33] *What is Metaphysics* (WIM) (in Kaufmann (ed.) *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (Meridian, 1975), p.250. Here the engulfing sense of helplessness is transformed into a kind of acceptance and relinquishing of self (see Chapter 3 for more on this).

B. Causes

'Life forms a surface that pretends to be the way it is, but under its skin things are thrusting and jostling'
—Robert Musil (*The Man Without Qualities*)

Most emotions are said to have an object but for all the kinds of anxiety I have mentioned this is usually not the case. We can however speak of its 'causes' and 'origins'. The former are more specific and as we shall see tend to be linked to a particular model of the psyche; the latter are more plastic and offers the opportunity to point to something non-object like in the world or in ourselves which is subject to interpretation and thus not a straight forward causal agent. If anxiety has causes the suggestion is that the experience derives from a source that by-passes the will. If this approach typifies early Freudian theory and much subsequent psychology and psychiatry, then unsurprisingly existentialist philosophers and psychologists will focus on perception and interpretation—either as a rival theory to the early Freudian model, or as a corollary to their different kind of anxiety.

Returning to the psychopathological classifications of anxiety in which it is manifest as panic attacks, phobias and a free-floating condition, we have to look to the unconscious to understand why these are regarded as instances of abnormal anxiety rather than simple fears. I will use an extended analogy to help explain the classic psychoanalytic theory of anxiety, taking the topography of a landscape to be the conscious mind, the rain to be the emotional input from the psychological environment—sexual excitation, feelings of hostility etc.—and then considering what happens when the rain hits the ground. There are three possibilities: either it can evaporate (as less gravitous input might); it can be channelled, via rivers and streams, into lakes and seas (i.e. stay on the surface); or it can permeate the soil and rock and collect underground. The healthy way of dealing with emotional input is to preserve its full impact in the conscious or pre-conscious mind and channel it productively and creatively to a conclusion,[34] whilst the unhealthy way is to let it pass straight through to the unconscious. In this analogy underground reservoirs form from the water that trickles through the sub-soil and these then affect the surface landscape in a number of ways. One possibility is the continual dampening or soaking of the exposed ground, perhaps to the point of forming bogs and marshes. A second possibility is that the water will find its way to the

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[34] This process is structurally similar to what Tillich (see Ch.5) sees as the necessary transformation of anxiety into specific fears. The anxiety is not repressed as such, but to deal with it at all we must give it contours and classifications rather than let it engulf the whole surface of the landscape.

surface at specific points—natural fault lines, or where erosion has caused the surface to collapse—in the form of well-springs. A third possibility is that the water remains for the most part unnoticed but continually rising until it reaches a point where, for a short period of time at least, it entirely floods the landscape.

The creation of soaked but not flooded soil represents the free-floating manifestation of anxiety; the well-springs represent specific phobias,[35] and the occasional but catastrophic flooding represents panic attacks. In Freud's original theory of anxiety he saw these processes purely as a transference of sexual excitation that had little or nothing to do with our perceptions and emotional responses to the world. He wrote: 'The mechanism of anxiety neurosis is to be looked for in a deflection of somatic sexual excitation from the psychical sphere, and in a consequent abnormal employment of that excitation.'[36] In cases of, for instance, *coitus interuptus*, where the build-up of sexual excitation is not 'unloaded' in the normal way, the energy is channelled into the unconscious where it makes its presence felt through one or other of the manifestations of anxiety. In this sense the anxiety is generated *from within* and there is no possibility of it being a ego-centred reaction to external circumstances. A progression from this theory would involve certain 'threats' from the environment, or threats emanating from the unacceptability of one's own impulses buried in the unconscious since infancy (like the case of 'Little Hans'). As we shall see, it could be claimed that these threats, impulses, and the resulting conflicts are themselves conscious objects of anxiety, but in the circumstances where they have passed 'underground' the anxiety is a later manifestation that has a direct causal link only to the repressed contents of the unconscious which must be understood to have a life of their own, exclusive of the will. This being the case, the cause of anxiety has little to do with the type of causes or origins of fear. The experience of helplessness, of being unable to identify the source of one's dread or unease is there in abundance. We are very much assailed by an 'alien power', and yet one whose origin is within ourselves.

In Kierkegaard's COA (at least structurally speaking) we find a similar state of affairs in his discussion of 'dreaming spirit' in the early stages of anxiety,[37] but his ideas on did not stop here and he offers an account of a different form of anxiety in the latter half of COA in which the objects (good and evil) are conscious but the self attempts to deny them. Later in his career Freud

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[35] Rollo May describes phobias as 'a crystallisation of anxiety around some external event' (op cit, p.115)
[36] *Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. III, p.108
[37] See Chapter 2, Section II for a more detailed discussion of this.

made major alterations in his theory that in some important ways resemble the division in COA. As it stands though, this type of causal theory can at best only be seen as referring to something very specific that may only touch on the broader concept that writers like Heidegger and Sartre are interested in, and at worst (and I think more realistically), it only gives us half the story that it is itself trying to tell. Other questions seem unavoidable such as, in the psychoanalytic case, why and what type of things are repressed or transferred in the first place? By itself this type of theory cannot explain so-called 'normal' anxiety, the type that is linked to perceived events that are coherently adjudged ambiguous or threatening. The temptation is to suggest that entirely different processes are at work, but there is evidence (that we shall come on to) that the similarities in the nature of the experience, somatic reactions and so on are not coincidental. For Kierkegaard, and for the later Freud, the issue was to push further and discover *how the self interprets itself* in order for it to be anxious in the way described, and also what might become of the anxiety once its causes become apparent to the individual.

Inherent in this early stage is conflict—'a desire for what one fears'[38]—where we at once want to flee this alien power, as well as to explore its possibilities. The conflict continues in the form of good and evil once spirit is fully awakened; and similarly in psychoanalysis when a patient becomes conscious of what was repressed, very often the conflict that was the reason for the repression in the first place regains prominence and can now be worked through with the analyst by the process of 'transference'.[39] Rollo May says that 'neurotic anxiety always involves inner conflict'[40] and of course the aim is to cure this, but it is not so clear that the existential variety of anxiety is necessarily so bound up with conflict, or at least not with resolvable conflict. For the non-religious philosophies of Heidegger and Sartre you feel that some given, value-charged parameters might be quite welcoming and something towards a cure for the anxiety they describe before their respective versions of nothingness. Without the possibility of a resting place the status of the conflict becomes ambiguous, and even if we incorporate a developmental model (which is central to Kierkegaard but largely ignored by these two) a point will still be reached where no

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[38] COA, p.44. Herman Hesse in *The Glass Bead Game* (Penguin, 1972) describes an instance of anxiety as 'this half-thrilling, half-warning sensation of slight uneasiness, of eager curiosity and pleasure warring with fear.' (p.420)
[39] A vital feature of the therapeutic process where the analysand transfers repressed feelings (often of hostility) into his relationship with the analyst.
[40] op cit, p.226.

authentic measure can prevent conflict becoming an issue of antinomies rather than an issue of resolving frictions caused by, say, an old self running up against a new self.

One thing we can be sure of though is that to whatever extent conflict resides in the aetiology of anxiety, it is certainly more involved with this state of mind than it is with fear. I spoke about the indefiniteness of anxiety's source, and how this gives rise to a certain ambiguity and sense of confusion that could be said to be a precursor to fear. When, however, there is a more definite sense of being pulled in two or more directions at once, anxiety is the enveloping and foremost state of mind. More importantly, it is a self-contained phenomenon that does not have to be allied to a broader mood of fear, or aim, specifically, to prepare us for fearful situations.

C. Origins

'there is one matter on which all seem agreed: whereas the nature and origins of anxiety are obscure, the nature and origins of fear are simple and readily intelligible'—John Bowlby (*Separation*)

One often stated, or at least implied, origin of anxiety is the possibility of profound loss. A notable example is found in Freud whose later and significantly altered theory of neurotic anxiety makes this idea central and marginalizes the automatic 'energy transference' process. This fundamental change in his thinking is succinctly put when he writes with respect to two cases of 'animal phobias', that 'it was anxiety which produced repression and not, as I formerly believed, repression which produced anxiety.'[41] In the same work he tells us that 'we may legitimately hold firmly to the idea that the ego is the actual seat of anxiety and give up our earlier view that the cathectic energy of the repressed impulse is automatically turned into anxiety.'[42] The situation now becomes one where we perceive something that makes us anxious and the process of repression follows from this.[43] The question that now arises is *what* is it that makes us anxious in the first place? Freud's broad answer is, fairly predictably, 'danger', and this is defined, again predictably enough, as the possibility of losing something that is of basic importance to us. He describes different stages of development as having different overriding dangers: first of all separation from the mother (and the danger of unfulfilled needs that this entails); then (and I really have to quote this) 'the danger of

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[41] *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, p.22
[42] ibid, p.7
[43] Freud does not, however, entirely give up his earlier theory and suggests that we arrive at a situation where we have two types of anxiety that are differentiated by their source.

being separated from one's genitals'[44]—better known as the 'castration complex'—which of course can be a symbolic danger as well (e.g. loss of power, sexual identity etc.); and finally the loss of the love and consent of the super-ego (the danger of non-acceptance by others[45]). In his *New Introductory Lectures* Freud concluded his theory of anxiety telling us that there is a 'two-fold origin of anxiety—one as a consequence of the traumatic moment and the other as a signal threatening the repetition of such a moment.'[46] The first origin differs from fear, I take it, because it is not an isolated incident but rather makes apparent the wider and continuing possibility of the loss of something of profound importance. In the second we find a certain type of apprehension that recognizes the specific danger signs (or what it takes to be them) and either resigns itself to helplessness or initiates avoidance behaviour. Kresten Nordenstoft summarizes Freud's later theory of anxiety neurosis in the following way;

'anticipation of danger (signal anxiety) > reaction (repression of instinctual impulse) > neurosis'[47]

But he goes on to say that 'signal anxiety is an innate potential of experience, which *can* but does not always need to lead to pathogenic repressions.'[48] A development of this linked anxiety to other symptoms and 'anxiety is inserted as a sort of middle term between repression and the formation of symptoms.'[49] The anxiety is itself repressed or channelled; Freud says, 'in general symptoms are only formed to escape an otherwise unavoidable generating of anxiety. If we adopt this view, anxiety is placed, as it were, in the very centre of our interest in the problem of neurosis.'[50] With this model then, anxiety need not be repressed and we find common ground between the origins of normal and abnormal anxiety.

Signal anxiety can be seen as that which precedes fear, and though vaguer with respect to its object, is much like a weakened version of it. Facilitating this, however, there must be a constant 'readiness to receive the signal' and this state has been linked to basic alertness in animals who are constantly on the look out for predators. In animals it is generally instinctive, but with signal anxiety danger has been acknowledged to exist in the world and a constant vigil is required (or felt

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[44] op cit, p.53
[45] Also known as 'conscience' or 'moral' anxiety (*Gewissensangst*).
[46] *New Introductory Lectures* (Penguin, 1991), p.127
[47] *Kierkegaard's Psychology* (Duquesne University Press, 1978), p.151
[48] ibid
[49] op cit, p.146
[50] ibid (taken from *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*)

to be required) to combat its existence. A good example is found in Jean Genet's *Thief's Journal* where he explains;

Having already been convicted of theft, I can be convicted again without proof, merely upon a casual accusation, just on suspicion ... I am in danger not only when I steal, but every moment of my life because I have stolen. My life is clouded by a vague anxiety which both weighs upon it and lightens it. To preserve the limpidity and keenness of my gaze, my consciousness must be sensitive to every act so that I can quickly correct it and change its meaning. This anxiety keeps me on the alert. But the anxiety which is a kind of dizziness, also sweeps me along, makes my head buzz and lets me trip and fall in an element of darkness where I lie low if I hear the ground beneath the leaves resounding with a hoof.[51]

And a similar condition is described in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* which also serves to illustrate the complexity and ambiguity that the experience of anxiety can involve;

My blood boiled within me. I was conscious of a kind of rapture for which I could not account. I was solemn, yet full of rapid emotion, burning with indignation and energy. In the very tempest and hurricane of the passions, I seemed to enjoy the most soul-ravishing calm. I cannot better express the then state of my mind, than by saying, I was never so perfectly alive at that moment.[52]

Anxiety in this model is not so much a precursor to fear as 'fear ticking over', ready to power into life. Generally speaking, if loss of *something* (with the *something* as the object, not the idea of loss itself, or more basic aspects of being human that make loss a continual, necessary possibility in the first place) is the fundamental origin of anxiety then the fear-anxiety distinction becomes fuzzy. The root of fear is that certain *things* can be lost—the love and respect of others, our life (even our genitals)—and there will often be little difference between saying that we *fear* something and that we are *anxious* (about something). The impact of Freud's altered theory on the distinction between normal and abnormal anxiety is that whereas before normal anxiety could be said to be generated by external sources, and abnormal by an inner transference, now most sources of anxiety must be seen as external—i.e. interpreted by the ego (including impulses from the id) and other reasons are required for explaining what is repressed and what is not. The effect, certainly in terms of the origins of anxiety is, as with anxiety and fear, a blurring of the normal-abnormal distinction.

If the loss that is threatened represents something that is profound and not altogether tangible then we are, to some extent, moving back towards a more distinct meaning of anxiety. This theme is taken up by Karen Horney and Rollo May who, after Goldstein, see anxiety as related specifically

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[51] pp. 175-6 (Penguin, 1967)
[52] pp.129-30 (OUP, 1982)

to the core of the self. May's concluding definition of anxiety is, 'the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value that the individual views as essential to his existence as a personality.'[53] This value could be anything from God to Freud's 'castration complex', and this is how May attempts the bridge the psychology-philosophy divide—by placing our relation to anxiety's objects in the common sphere of 'possible objects of devastating loss'—but, for reasons I will come on to, I do not think this is the correct approach.

Both May and Horney would still agree that objects of anxiety, as opposed to objects of fear, are characterized by their 'diffuse and uncertain' nature. From what has been said, our search for the unique in anxiety can go in two directions here; one which lands us with a definition of anxiety that in most essentials is very similar to fear; or one that, from the psychological criteria at least, leads to contradictions. As previously intimated, the first option is that the uncertainty spoken of is a function of time: the threatening circumstances may prove to be actualized or not, and that the *possibility* of profound loss and associated helplessness is enough to cue the anxiety. The second option is that the uncertain object is the type of thing, situation, process etc. that is, as spoken about, though necessarily constantly with us, ungraspable and beyond our powers of mastery. This being the case, the contradiction seems to arise as to how this could be apprehended as a 'threat to some value the individual holds essential to his existence.' If the origin is *so* big, so strange and ineffable, its connection with what is necessarily threatening is weakened. Admittedly this type of thing may inspire anxiety, but not merely anxiety about the destruction or insignification of something extant, but also surely anxiety about the positive possibilities of creation, change and growth with respect to individual potentiality.[54] Essential to the experience of uncanniness is the realization that *things are not as we thought they were* and this, in the short term, arouses a panicky fear of profound loss but this is not to say what is revealed is necessarily threatening once we have acclimatised. As we shall see, central to anxiety as existentialists view it are both the awareness of the ungroundedness (and thus vulnerability) of our values, *and* the desire to create and fulfill ourselves as a distinct personality and be in some sense 'actualized'. In an atheistic environment each of these concerns necessitate the existence of the other, but at the same time each in some sense undermines the other and it is this essentially ambiguous structure that (as I shall defend at length in this dissertation) is the origin of existential anxiety.

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[53] op cit, p.205
[54] May sees creativity as the 'flip-side' of anxiety, not as part of it.

I think it is fair to say that psychology on the whole is content to stick with the first of these options, and the contradiction I speak of is perhaps not an issue for it. It finds itself, however, with a definition of anxiety that is more like a variety of fear than something fundamentally distinct, and as such—especially in the case of existential psychology which is directly attempting to bring philosophy to the couch—I believe does not do the concept complete justice.

D. Origins (II)

At this point we are ready to expand the concept of anxiety and explore its existential regions. By so doing I hope to leave behind the notion of anxiety as simply a response to something threatening and show how it can be seen to correspond to wider aspects of the self and the world.

For a clear understanding of the nature of existential anxiety we need to further clarify its twin sources as alluded to in the last section—the self and the world. One psychologist who seems to have correctly diagnosed this is Otto Rank. For him the neurotic is someone whose 'illusion has failed him', for, like most people;

> he perceives himself as bad, guilt laden, inferior, as a small, weak, helpless creature, which is the truth about mankind ... All other is illusion, deception, but necessary deception in order to be able to bear oneself and thereby life.[55]

Rank is driving at a situation where the individual can focus on one of two features of existence. One is an objective world in which the individual is without significance. This can be in the relative sense of being insignificant in comparison to the planet at large and human history; or it can be in the absolute or metaphysical sense of the essential contingency of all meaning whether it be personally significant or not. For my purposes at the moment I will not draw a distinction here— the key features both perspectives share is a sense of loneliness and helplessness. The second feature of existence is the demands we make on ourselves to be true to ourselves, fulfill our potential, 'be all that we can be' etc. Rank's point—and I agree—is that to maintain this sense of optimism and meaning we must live as if this project has ultimate (or at least far greater)

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[55] Cited in Earnest Becker's *The Denial of Death*, p.188. Rank says that 'the need for legitimate foolishness' (i.e.'creative expression') must be recognized if we are to overcome neurosis in the modern age (see *Beyond Psychology* (Dover, 1958), p.49).

significance. The world we create for ourselves that embodies this meaningfulness he describes as 'illusion', but it is a necessary and healthy illusion.

Of course, if an illusion moves too far from 'reality' it is as likely to fail as if it gets too close, and so a precarious equilibrium is required (the very equilibrium that, as we shall see, seems so closely tied to existential authenticity[56]). Related to this tension is what Rank calls 'life fear' and 'death fear': 'whereas life fear is anxiety at going forward, becoming an individual, the death fear is anxiety at going backwards, losing individuality. Between these two fear possibilities the individual is thrown back and forth all his life.'[57] 'Life fear' is seemingly associated with the risks involved in developing ourselves and to a certain extent the choice of our illusion; and 'death fear' is associated with the danger of being swallowed up in an illusion-less reality where our individuality counts for nothing.[58]

A similar structure exists in much of the philosophical anxiety literature. In *The Courage to be* Tillich speaks of the anxieties of 'fate and death', of 'emptiness and meaninglessness', and of 'guilt and condemnation'. In Chapter 5 my reading of him places the third kind of anxiety in the realm of 'life fear' and the second in the realm of 'death fear' (but not the anxiety of death itself which I shall argue requires a separate category). Heidegger contrasts that which we have anxiety 'in the face of' (contingency, the loss of stable meanings); and that which we have anxiety 'about' (our own potentiality and authenticity)—what Sartre refers to as his 'double perpetual nihilation.'[59] Both Tillich and Heidegger stress our helplessness and essential non-involvement in a world stripped of meaning. Tillich says 'it is impossible for a finite being to stand naked anxiety for more than a flash of time',[60] and Heidegger tells us;

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[56] See especially Chapters 3, 4, 6 and 7

[57] Cited in May (op cit) p.130. Rank does not appear himself to differentiate between fear and anxiety, but we can nonetheless use his raw material, if not his language.

[58] A couple of passages about anxiety by a zoologist (Bergounioux) and a palaeontologist (Dobzhansky) respectively, and quoted by Erich Fromm, serve to illustrate this dual origin: 1.'Man detaches himself from his surroundings; he feels alone, abandoned, ignorant of everything except that he knows nothing. His first feeling thus was existential anxiety, which may even have taken him to the limits of despair.' 2.'Self-awareness and foresight brought ... the awesome gifts of freedom and responsibility ... but the joy is tempered ... Man knows that he is accountable for his acts: he has acquired the knowledge of good and evil. This is the dreadful load to carry. No other animal has to withstand anything like it.' (*The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (Fawcett, 1973), p.309)

[59] BN, p.51

[60] op cit, p.36

Anxiety is anxious in the face of the "nothing" of the world; but this does not mean that in anxiety we experience something like the absence of what is present-at-hand within-the-world. The present-at-hand must be encountered in just such a way that it does not have any involvement whatsoever, but can show itself in an empty mercilessness.[61]

In both cases we find the key to their ideas on the relation between anxiety and fear. For Tillich the 'horror' of naked anxiety is 'ordinarily avoided by the transformation of anxiety into fear of something, no matter what'[62] (although he accepts that 'ultimately all attempts to turn anxiety into fear are vain'). An example of this is the passage from William James cited earlier where a non-specific attack of anxiety is attached the image of an epileptic he had encountered at the asylum. An object of fear is seen as something we can cope with, enter into, engage with, understand, and be *courageous* in the face of; but anxiety—signifying non-being—is essentially beyond all these possibilities. It inexorably retreats from our grasp and yet is all-pervading and over-powering in its indifference. For Heidegger the 'nothing' is not threatening in quite the same way, but one of our basic modes of being-in-the-world is that of fleeing the sense of uncanniness it creates. We retreat into a world of permanent, objectified meanings and in so doing expose ourselves to anxiety's 'kindred phenomenon' fear. We are anxious before the world 'as such', but we fear objects within the world, and fear becomes, for Heidegger, an adulteration of our basic anxiety before our Being. In his words; 'fear is anxiety fallen into the world, inauthentic and as such hidden from itself.'[63]

If Heidegger's and Tillich's anxiety-structures were identical I would accept this as it stands, but the role anxiety plays in Heidegger's philosophy is more complex and so therefore is the anxiety-fear relation. He accepts that in a certain sense we *must* be involved with our everyday pursuits and this necessitates the creation of personal structures within which certain things matter more than others. The relation between these commitments and our uncanniness is not easily mapped and requires a close inspection of his notions of 'authenticity', 'resoluteness' and 'care', but in doing justice to this complexity I do not think fear can be consumed under anxiety in quite the way he thinks it can. If part of our authentic being is to be committed then surely we must in some sense, in some 'mood' (even, perhaps, within the authentic auspices of the broader mood of anxiety) *fear*

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[61] BT, p. 234 (By 'present-at -hand' Heidegger means, roughly, an objective and analytical rather than an engaged and practical relation to objects in the world.)
[62] op cit, p.37
[63] op cit, p.234

the loss of certain people, objects and meanings.[64] Fear can of course be a displacement of anxiety (like a phobia)—a means of forgetting ourselves, of wrapping ourselves in a concern for the ontic and thereby denying the ontological—but it can, accepting its relativity, also have a claim to an authenticity or appropriateness in its own right. This type of criticism (as we shall see in Chapter 3) can, I think, be levelled at Heidegger's treatment of several of the central concepts of BT—death and guilt for instance—and anxiety, as I see it, needs unravelling with this in mind.

The idea that all emotions (except anxiety) are self-deceptive is echoed by Sartre's *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*[65] and its inherent weaknesses seem to arise from the same tendency to lump emotions that are a means of escaping reality or responsibility (like the girl who breaks down in the confession) together with more honest responses to circumstances. Is running away in fear from a charging bull really a 'magical' transformation that makes the world seem easier to deal with, or is it perhaps a *real* and effective transformation of *real* circumstances?

On the whole Sartre's concept of anxiety is very much centred on our 'life fear'. With him the anxiety-fear relation is effectively the reversal of Tillich's and is summed-up as follows;

Situations will be apprehended through a feeling of fear or of anxiety according to whether we envisage the situation as acting on the man or the man acting on the situation.

And,

Anxiety is distinguished from fear in that fear is fear of being in the world whereas anxiety is anxiety before myself.[66]

For Tillich it is necessary to turn anxiety into fear in order to be 'involved' and be able to cope with non-being, but for Sartre it is anxiety that places the individual at the helm and fear that reduces him to an object in a causal chain (thus obviating responsibility). Sartre ideally wants to place the human being beyond such causality—to insist on a central and intrinsic freedom—and

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[64] The 'care structure' is, after all, where 'the Being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in (the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within the world)' (BT, p.237)
[65] Citadel Press, 1993
[66] BN, p.65. Simone deBeauvoir's views are much the same; she says in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Citadel, 1994) for example, 'It is in a state of fear that the serious man feels this dependence upon the object ... He escapes the anxiety of freedom only to fall into a state of preoccupation, of worry.' (pp.51-2) ('Serious men' is a pejorative term for those who live as if values and their selves are determined by factors other than their freedom.)

anxiety is the awareness of freedom and nothingness that signifies this, both for the purposes of his theory, and in terms of the conduct of the individual concerned. Why this seemingly contradictory state of affairs? For both Tillich and Sartre the idea of 'negation' is important, but it is used in very different ways. Tillich's 'non-being' is located firmly in the context of an infinity in which the individual is of no significance—a reality before which we stand passive and helpless; and Sartre's 'nothing' is something that 'slips in' between our present and our past and our present and our future—between reflection, its precedents and our actions—the result being a 'specific consciousness of freedom' that is anxiety.[67]

The full meaning of existential anxiety, I believe, requires both these features and it is their co-existence that creates the feeling of indefiniteness, ambiguity and conflict that typifies the anxiety experience. The individual is denied a resting place, an essence; anxiety destabilizes us by revealing our uncanniness and is in turn caused by our reflective apprehension of this uncanniness. Humans need meanings, and these require a stable platform (however temporary) so that uncanniness—pure nothingness, pure freedom—cannot endure. Then, even if we make the authentic move of individual responsibility and self-creativity and assume the anxiety associated with this, uncanniness will readily attack even *this* foundation and so the process goes on. Of course, if we inauthentically flee uncanniness and replace it with fear we will, for a while, be less prone to destabilization, but in one way or another our essential anxiety will take 'revenge'—not directly in the mode of panic attacks or free floating anxiety, but in what Sartre calls 'patterns of bad faith'—forms of life driven by self-deception in which the individual ensures minimum exposure to his ambiguous freedom. A question that will be addressed in several places throughout the dissertation concerns the difficulty of identifying the difference between an authentic response to anxiety (that must create boundaries or 'illusions' or sorts) and an inauthentic response. Where does self-creation and its requisite commitment become bad faith?

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To summarize the last three headings: my analysis has divided the types of indefiniteness in the causes and origins of normal/abnormal and existential anxiety into three kinds. Firstly the kind that can in principle be made definite and in so doing extinguish the anxiety (by solving the conflict or

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[67] op cit, p.70

waiting for events to unfold) but if repressed can cause an unlocalized sense of disquiet or panic. Where this occurs it is not important what is repressed, and the condition is potentially curable. Secondly, certain objects or situations create anxiety rather than fear, not because they await future resolution or because they are repressed (although of course they can be) but because of the kind of thing they are. Examples are the relativity of our values, our finitude, and our historical and cultural determinacy—concepts of deep significance to the self that by virtue of embodying non-being are threatening and alien, but which are part of *what we are* rather than something that might *happen* to us—and here we can roughly locate the cross-over between psychology and philosophy. Such things are abstract rather than thing-like but this is not necessarily why they inspire anxiety instead of fear; rather their relation to anxiety is located primarily by the *experience* which is palpable but dissimilar to our reaction to dangers which, to use Tillich's language, exist in the realm of 'being' rather than 'non-being'. No matter how we attempt to confront these truths, the anxiety they generate, though we can 'authentically' re-orient ourselves towards it so that it no longer threatens in quite the same way, cannot be 'cured'.

Thirdly we come to what I see as the essential locus of existential anxiety. Though not wanting to pre-empt forthcoming discussions too much, I will explain briefly that this origin is *necessarily* obscure because of the structure of human existence—essentially the conflict between the subjective and the objective points of view which constitute our awareness (which is in turn conditioned by our need for personal significance and fixed meanings). Like the duck-rabbit image and like Nagel's 'clash of perspectives' (in VFN), we can *potentially* take up either point of view on ourselves and the world, but only *one* of these points of view at any one time. But the other point of view is always, in a sense intuited[68] (but, because it is contradictory, can never be fully understood) by its counterpart, and the anxiety is caused by this implication (or perhaps *is* this implication). In being both subjective and objective the human condition can be seen as essentially *ambiguous*, but the experience, crucially, involves *conflict*. On a purely moral plain conflict will of course arouse anxiety: in the case of a dilemma, even once a choice has been made that which we have chosen to forgo does not automatically become wrong or alien but will continue to make its (justifiable) presence felt in the form of anxiety or guilt. This is not *precisely* existential anxiety, but it is close (and it most certainly engenders it). Its relation to the structure I have just briefly outlined will be developed in later chapters.

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[68] Perhaps like the nagging feeling we sometimes get when we've forgotten something important.

E. Consequences

In discussing the experience and origins of anxiety and fear something has already been said about their consequences—our reactions to them and ways of dealing with them—and this I will summarize and expand on where necessary.

Typically our reaction to that which endangers us is characterized as 'fright, fight, flight'. Once the threat is perceived we ready ourselves to either confront it or escape it. The assumption is (unless you're Sartre) that whatever it is can be legitimately, and for the time being at least, conclusively dealt with in this manner. With the causes of both clinical and existential anxiety, although the process is often very similar, these responses are not generally seen as appropriate or in any way conclusive. As I have already mentioned, the appropriate response to anxiety caused by repression is to uncover what is repressed and then deal with it on its own terms. It may or may not be resolvable, and if not may fit into the structure of existential anxiety. If so the correct response here is generally seen as a form of openness or acceptance, and sometimes—for example in the case of Unamuno, Camus and Tillich—to fight it, but as explained it is in a sense impossible to be open to or to fight 'non-being' and so what arises is the complex task of disentangling authentic and inauthentic responses to anxiety. That there are these contrasting recommendations says a lot itself—both seem valid and yet neither is enough—and this state of affairs relates to the sense in which we *are* anxiety. Just how we are supposed to organize things so that we respond authentically to our essential ambiguity is far from clear, and is of course the task Heidegger, Sartre and others set for themselves. One writer whose version of anxiety does not necessitate fist-shaking or acceptance is Kierkegaard. For him anxiety seems to represent a journey—a 'passing through'—which if embarked on in the right way (albeit a way which seems virtually impossible) can result in transcending anxiety by virtue of a 'transparent' relationship with God. (Although it is open to some doubt as to whether faith really is for Kierkegaard a 'resting place' in this sense. I shall discuss this at the end of Chapter 2.)

Far easier to explain is the inauthentic response to anxiety—escape. Sartre says that bad faith is the expression of 'I am anxiety in order to flee it'[69] but given that for him we *are* anxiety this is an impossibility. We engineer the illusion of escape however and this can take many forms:

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[69] BN, p.83

Kierkegaard and Heidegger speak of exhaustive activity and chatter; Nietzsche, Ortega and Rorty (among others) of the formation of an identity with mass of humanity, social groups, moral codes, religious dogma and so on. Tillich and more psychologically orientated theorists speak of neurotic rigidity, an extreme example of which is the fantasy world of R.D. Laing's schizoid personality where a secure inner world is created and disassociated from the social persona. The result is that what they regard as their real self becomes increasingly divorced from reality to the point of schizophrenic breakdown. For the existentialist all these attempts fail, partly because all will compromise our essential humanity (the very humanity we are trying to discover and preserve or discover in the first place) which is revealed only through an authentic relationship with our anxiety (whatever that might be); and partly because anxiety will never disappear and will drive us deeper into bad faith or neurosis to the point where we either give in to its demands or disintegrate into something less than human.

III

'I was silent for a long while, for my mind seemed to want to open itself to something—I felt the pressure of some truth working there in its depths'—Doris Lessing (*The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*)

Before finishing this chapter and moving on to look in detail at the role anxiety plays in the philosophy and literature of specific writers, I will introduce my own jargon and provide a breakdown of what I see as the basic kinds of experience and the basic elements of existence that form the anatomy of existential anxiety.

For the present my definitions will be rough, and as the story unfolds from Kierkegaard through to Rorty, Conrad and Camus details will reveal themselves and our understanding will alter, or thicken accordingly. The picture involves three key elements, 'Anxiety A', 'Anxiety B' and 'urangst', but before describing these I will mention a fourth form of anxiety that needs to be mentioned even though it sits outside of the structure I want to develop—namely 'death anxiety'. This is a unique experience, distinct from fear. It is clearly bound up with an attachment to being, but is something other than the sense of meaninglessness, despair, sadness or disappointment. Rather it is the 'nameless dread' that Tillich speaks of; I hold to the oddness of the Lucretian paradox—it makes no sense to 'fear' death, and yet we do, sort of. I think Tillich is right in saying

it is not fear exactly but something else—anxiety (or 'death anxiety' in my terminology)—because the lack of object, and more importantly the lack of some*one* to be afraid, give rise to something utterly dreadful but also uncanny. Like Heidegger's description of the initial experience of anxiety we are rendered speechless—sad, forlorn, frightened, lonely, but something else as well (or something *less*) that places this experience in a category of its own. As I see it this is Tillich's major contribution to the anxiety literature and I will develop this in Chapter 5.

Death is central to Heidegger's ideas on anxiety and authenticity but his approach is different to Tillich's in that its significance is wrapped up in our encountering ourselves as existentially isolated and responsible individuals rather than with non-being *as such*. To be anxious about our death is to incorporate its inevitability into our lives and live 'towards it', rather than to treat it as if it is an object to be feared and avoided (i.e. not allowed to permeate our reflections, projects etc.) . He says,

Anxiety in the face of death must not be confused with fear in the face of one's demise. This anxiety is not an accidental or random mood of 'weakness' in some individual; but as a basic state-of-mind of Dasein, it amounts to the fact that Dasein exists as thrown being *towards* its end.[70]

I am not convinced however by the status Heidegger affords death. Whereas Tillich seems to touch on a unique experience, for Heidegger it is seemingly one among several potential sources of existential shock that serve to call us back to our peculiar form of being. I will argue this further in Chapter 3.

The elements of the existential anxiety I am primarily interested in are the following:

1. *Anxiety A*. This is closer to Tillich's notion of anxiety as I have so far explained it (although distinct from the 'death anxiety' I ascribe to him). The experience associated with it is one of helplessness, uncanniness (separation from what one took to be one's self and one's world) or perhaps paralysis. As with a panic attack, at its extreme it is akin to a state of shock ('existential shock'); the individual, losing all sense of the significance of self and of objects in the world, is left detached and floating and with a profound sense of vertigo. The origins of anxiety A are whatever causes this experience: infinity, meaninglessness, contingency, nothingness—are various terms

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[70] op cit, p.295

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employed by existentialists either to signify the object of anxiety or, more weakly, as the necessary conditions of existence that must prevail in order for anxiety A to be a possibility. The consequence is either the adoption of a form of authenticity which acknowledges whatever gives rise to anxiety A; or it is to flee what are, at least ostensibly, these unpleasant or unsettling revelations by way of the various form of rigidity and neurosis that are associated with bad faith. The problem is of course *how* to be a self and yet acknowledge one's contingency, and typically versions of authenticity skewed towards anxiety A will recommend a kind of 'openness' to the world or to being.

2. *Anxiety B*. This is closer to Sartre's anxiety as I have presented it in this chapter. The experience is of the trepidation, guilt and uncanniness (in terms of the degree to which we *become* and are therefore entirely responsible for our values) that are associated with a strong sense of individual responsibility—i.e. they are experienced within parameters that make this meaningful (broadly concern for self or an ethic of self-actualization) and so the type of separation involved is incommensurable with that involved in anxiety A. Whereas anxiety A undermines one's sense of self (or of the self as we once regarded it), anxiety B accentuates it. The cause is the idea that we are free and responsible for choosing or creating ourselves. To blame circumstances, others, society, history, biology etc. is only to make excuses, to flee what we know to be down to us alone. Forms of authenticity that arise from considerations of anxiety B will, like Nietzsche's 'strong poet', tend to stress passionate commitment to life (self and world) as it presents itself with the overall aim of the creation of a unique individuality. Anxiety B is closely linked to what might be called a straightforward 'moral anxiety' (or conscience) except that it is orientated towards self rather than others, and is (crucially) imbued with 'urangst'.

3. *Urangst*.[71] Urangst is the inexpressible 'shadow' of the conflicts anxieties A and B implicitly harbour, and here we find the source of existential anxiety's unique quality. The experience is *necessarily* non-intentional; there is the confusion, indefiniteness and so on so typically described in psychological literature, but this is not caused by an uncertain outcome or by an explicit conflict or confusion but by a necessarily slippery structure. It is the structure of the human condition as described with its ability to assume conflicting or incommensurable objective and subjective points

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[71] Although this is not a word in the English language I am going to take something of a liberty and refrain from italicizing or capitalizing it.

of view, combined with an inherent need for ultimate significance which demands, unreasonably, that the incommensurable be commensurable—Sartre's 'desire to be God'.[72] In the fashion of the Chinese *yin and yang* each point of view contains the seed of the other (roughly, abstracted from the concerns of anxiety B we would not be made anxious about (our) contingency; and we only have the freedom to create ourselves at the price of ontological homelessness).[73] To flee urangst involves a double movement—firstly a settling in the realm of the concerns of anxiety A or B, and secondly a fleeing of *their* demands in the ways outlined. To acknowledge or appropriate it might involve what I call a 'mode of authenticity' which somehow includes both points of view (although I doubt this is possible without compromise), or one which is able to move between them with grace or perhaps 'style'. I will say a lot more about these possibilities in chapters 6 and 7. In a way urangst brings us back to the energy transference of Freud's early thought: the opposing perspective is not necessarily deliberately repressed (i.e. this is not necessarily self-deception), but is almost an automatic process that takes place whereby it is forced into the background and makes its presence felt through anxiety.

This rough outline of urangst paves the way for a working definition of anxiety's central revelation. To do this I will quote Stephen Mulhall who says, with specific reference to Heidegger, 'the world must be thought of as both intimately related to us and yet separate from us.'[74] For the moment this is very simple, perhaps platitudinous, but I hope that this dissertation will show that though in a sense we can't advance past this, anxiety is of importance to philosophy because to study it is to understand the *ways* in which this simple, but fundamental truth is important to us. The point is that such a formula cannot reveal its full significance in a purely intellectual way. Rather, it is anxiety that uncovers this; an anxiety that is in turn caused by this significance, and part of the problem of explaining urangst is this interdependence (which is itself intrinsically linked to our ambiguous condition). To understand certain truths about existence it is necessary to

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[72] The problem with reason according to Unamuno, is that 'it refuses to even recognize the problem as our vital desire presents it to us.' (*Tragic Sense of Life*, p.109)

[73] In *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (CUP) (Princeton, 1992) Kierkegaard says, 'For the existing spirit *qua* existing spirit, the question about truth persists, because the abstract answer is only for that *abstraction* which an existing spirit becomes by abstracting from himself *qua* existing, which he can do only momentarily, although at such a moment he still pays the debt to existence by existing nevertheless.' (pp. 190-1)

[74] op cit, p.205. This aligns with Nagel's central thesis in VFN. He says (for example); 'The objective self is dragged along by the unavoidable engagement of a whole person in the living of a life whose form it recognizes as arbitrary. It generates a demand for justification which is at the same time unsatisfiable, because the only available justification depends on the view from inside.' (pp.216-7)

understand the way the circumstances that give rise to them are interpreted from the point of view of the individual human being as well as understanding their objective formulation. However, as Thomas Nagel has so well shown, both aspects must also take the other into consideration and it seems that in no sense are we afforded a clear and stable picture of the meaning of Heidegger's (or Mulhall's) insight. And yet the urge to do this is unquenchable; to some extent it is what I am giving in to by writing philosophy, and the peculiar upshot of this is that this too must be a partial expression of that insight; one that is shadowed by urangst's presence.

The following six chapters trace the unfolding of this anxiety structure beginning with Kierkegaard's COA whilst explicating the significance of anxiety in terms of each writer's idiosyncratic concerns.

2

Infinity's Messenger: Kierkegaard's *Psychologically Orienting Deliberation*

'Action—something that commits one and that one never wholly understands'—Sartre (*Iron in the Soul*)

'The Protestant God always seems to isolate His children in the terrible double bind of two great injunctions.'—Harold Bloom (*The Anxiety of Influence*)

'*The Soul.* Seek out reality, leave things that seem / *The Heart.* What, be a singer born and lack a theme? / *The Soul.* Isaiah's coal, what more can man desire? / *The Heart.* Struck dumb in the simplicity of fire! / *The Soul.* Look on that fire, salvation walks within. / *The Heart.* What theme had Homer but original sin?'—Yeats (*Vacillation*)

'Businessmen they drink my wine / Ploughmen dig my earth / But none of them along the line / Know what any of it is worth'—Bob Dylan (op cit)

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Anxiety, in Kierkegaard's writing, is idiosyncratically adapted to his religious agenda but, like much of his work, has a wider relevance in terms of its existential, psychological and ethical insights. He is acutely aware that what it reveals is contingent upon the individual's self-understanding, but also that that self-understanding is itself a function of anxiety and our primary response to it. Anxiety portends to what is beyond the individual, enticing him forward into fuller awareness, and the foreshadowed but essentially mysterious realm is a source of excitement and possibility as well as unease and weightiness, of wonderment as well as fear. His final illumination is religious (faith), but structurally speaking anxiety's revelations are akin to, and of course heavily influenced the non-religious, phenomenological applications of Heidegger and Sartre.

Kierkegaard's analysis of the concept can be seen as a progression towards a position where, in close proximity to its objects and causes, anxiety comes to represent not alienation, fragmentation and non-coincidence, but a sense of at-homeness. It is indicative of what we are (or are not), but

also guides us towards a transcendence of our original self: it is something we *grow in to* and inhabit by confronting our fear and disquiet and gaining a sense of belonging. He writes;

this is an adventure that every human being must go through—to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety [in full consciousness, as something intentional] or by succumbing in anxiety. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate.[1]

I see Kierkegaard as having taken a psychological concept and, with religious leverage, turned it into an existential one. He is responsible for categorially uprooting it; for making it more than a state of mind, more than an objective label for the human condition, and more than a collection of facts concerning our freedom, responsibility, individuality and so on. It is all of these but it is also, crucially, the sense of ambiguity created by their co-significance to an individual existence.

In this chapter I shall present my analysis broadly in terms of the structure of *The Concept of Anxiety* (COA) and by so doing highlight the various roles Kierkegaard assigns this 'psychological intermediate term'. He addresses anxiety as the psychological concept corresponding to original (or 'hereditary') sin. In his journals in 1842 he wrote 'the nature of original sin has often been explained, and still a primary category has been lacking—it is anxiety, this is the essential determinant.'[2] Just as concepts like 'sin' and 'guilt' are important in Kierkegaard's philosophy, so anxiety's role is central. To understand what this role is takes us a long way to understanding what Kierkegaard is trying to do in his writing.

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I

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COA contains a short preface in which Vigilius Haufniensis[3] introduces himself, emphasizing his humility, his status as a layman (who is, though, well acquainted with the literature) and correspondingly a dig at the academics of his day. This is followed by a dense introduction concerned with the relation of sin to science, ethics and dogmatics, and five headed sections dealing with anxiety itself. Sections I - III have much in common with more modern depth psychology

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[1] COA, p.155.

[2] *Journals and Papers*, p.39. The Danish for original sin is *Arvesynd* which literally means 'inherited sin'— something which, as we shall see, throws extra confusion on the matter at hand.

[3] Kierkegaard's pseudonym. I shall refer to the author as Kierkegaard in future as in this work, more than in most of his pseudonymous works up to 1845, the communication is quite direct.

where the significance of the anxiety experience is unclear to the subject; and IV - V are more existential—the self has been more firmly established and self-deception is the primary cause of hidden significance. Largely because of his religiousness Kierkegaard is one of the few writers on anxiety whose theory does not fit particularly tidily into the types of anxiety outlined at the end of the last chapter, but the precise nature of the unusual relation these two phases have in Kierkegaard's thought will become clear as this chapter progresses (and they are nonetheless certainly not entirely removed from the secular existential model so far sketched). *The Sickness Unto Death* (SUD), a later psychological work on 'despair', is structured in a similar way. The first division deals with a form of this 'sickness' found in a self that has, so to speak, not yet discovered itself as a self. Objectively Kierkegaard describes their condition as despair, but subjectively the person can be more or less oblivious to their condition and even feel quite content. In the second division the self is aware of *what* it is and thus what it should do, but is unwilling to take this upon itself as a task. The resultant despair is termed a 'defiance' of God (i.e. sin) which most commonly motivates an escape into various forms of self-deception. In both psychological works Kierkegaard uses the same term to describe significantly different subjective experiences. This is common to many writers on anxiety and can create a good deal of confusion in any attempts to describe it anatomically. As *this* work progresses we shall become wise to this and both in this and other chapters the task remains to explain the connections between these two kinds of experience.

The introduction to COA is concerned primarily with finding the 'correct' mood in which to address the concept of sin. It is, says Kierkegaard, 'no subject for psychological concern'[4]—i.e. it is not a subject for science. Psychology's mood is one of passivity—'antipathetic curiosity'—a disinterestedness that would tend to define sin as a natural 'state' of an individual, or as something to be cured rather than as something to be overcome by his own efforts. That it *is* something that can be overcome and yet has all the appearances of a 'state' is vital for Kierkegaard as this provides the basis of the paradox that makes the correct mood for dealing with sin 'inwardness' or 'subjectivity' (or 'earnestness' as he refers to it at this juncture). Sin should not be described as a 'disease' or 'abnormality' but 'is the subject of the sermon, in which the single individual speaks as the single individual to the single individual.'[5] 'Sin', confirms Kresten Nordentoft, 'cannot be substantiated psychologically in any unobjectionable fashion. It can only be substantiated by means

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[4] COA, p.14
[5] ibid, p.16

of the Gospel message, i.e., it is not substantiated.[6] The closest we can get to describing sin psychologically is in terms of anxiety, a concept, as we have seen, that is flexible enough (or perhaps *ambiguous* enough) to mould itself around ethical and dogmatic considerations without obliterating them by its misplaced 'modulation'. Even a description of anxiety, however, stops short of explaining sin, and from this point communication (as it must be when the individual is addressed *as* an individual, i.e. in terms of his inwardness) becomes *indirect*. 'That which can be the concern of psychology', Kierkegaard says, 'is not that sin comes into existence, but how it can come into existence.'[7] This, then, is the direct concern of COA, and allied to this project is the constant exposure of its own limitations. Relatedly there are constant allusions to dogmatics and inwardness which serve as reminders of Kierkegaard's broader concern and the difficulties inherent in communicating these.

As well as being inaccessible to science, sin has no part to play in ethics, or at least not in the 'universal' Hegelian ethic. The ideal of 'absolute mind', of the coincidence of the subjective and the objective where the individual's ideals conform without remainder to the wider social structure leaves sin either as redundant or as inescapable. Redundant because if actuality conforms to a logical system (an ideality) evil plays a necessary part in the *position, negation, mediation* process and the individual cannot be condemned for doing wrong in an absolute sense. Actions are always judged in terms of the wider scheme and not in terms of the individual's status as ultimately responsible for himself.[8] In COA Kierkegaard says, '[ethics and logic] fit nowhere if they are supposed to fit both. If ethics has no other transcendence, it is essentially logic. If logic is to have as much transcendence as common propriety requires of ethics it is no longer logic.'[9] And in *Fear and Trembling* (FT) he had said 'an ethics that ignores sin is an altogether futile discipline, but once it postulates sin it has *eo ipso* gone beyond itself.'[10] From the point of view of the individual, the ideal of *his* 'inner' coinciding with the 'outer' is an impossible task without some form of transcendence. He may play his part in the wider identity, but for there to be the possibility of a

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[6] *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, p.173
[7] COA, p.22
[8] In his *Philosophy of Right* (Clarendon, 1952) Hegel says, 'since the laws and institutions of the ethical order make up the concept of freedom, they are the ... universal essence of individuals, who are thus related to them as accidents only. Whether the individual exists or not is all one to the objective ethical order. It alone is permanent and is the power regulating the life of individuals. Thus the ethical order ... [is] in contrast with ... the empty business of individuals [which] is only a game of see-saw.' (p.109)
[9] COA, pp.13-14
[10] FT, p.124

true ethic where sin and evil are real possibilities the individual must *himself* fulfill an ideal, take *himself* beyond guilt, and this the system makes impossible as the individual is rendered unaccountable *as* an individual. The situation Kierkegaard is levelling his criticism at is, I think, reflected in the recurring deterministic attitude that sees unethical or inauthentic behaviour as not the fault of the individual but of his social background and upbringing. If society alone is blamed for a person's self-destructiveness and anti-social behaviour then that person, no longer culpable for his action, becomes something less than an individual.[11] It can be argued that pragmatically it is better to treat people as responsible even though we may not necessarily believe this to be the case, but Kierkegaard would want to remedy it by giving the person—what they make of themselves— absolute significance before God (and in that way defining individuality). This relation transcends the 'universal' without (as he sees it) negating it.

Sin, for Kierkegaard, is not opposed to virtue but to faith, and both sin and faith fall into the (dogmatic) category of the individual's personal accountability to God. Ethics is not trivialized or subsumed under the religious but exists in a separate category that, *for the individual*, is given absolute significance in terms of *his* life by the religious. Ethics is the category within which the individual can discover himself and engage in his finite existence. In this sense it is contingent, but so is the individual in as much as he is a finite being amongst other finite beings. The key difference between Kierkegaard and the Hegelians on this matter is that Kierkegaard provides (or attempts to provide) a justification for ethics that is non-circular—that plays on the nature of man as a 'synthesis' of the finite and the infinite, giving ethics, firstly, a central role in a movement towards the infinite as found in a promotion of individuality rather than a relegation of it; and secondly as retaining its significance even after a leap into the religious through the mysterious notion of 'repetition'.[12] 'Absolute Mind', for the *existing* individual, is an unattainable ideal and if

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[11] Implicit in this is the Socratic idea that to do wrong is to be in error. Simone deBeauvoir echoes Kierkegaard's thinking when she says that 'existentialism alone gives ... a real role to evil.' (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*, p.34)

[12] Something central to his philosophy: the theme of *Fear and Trembling* (FT) and (unsurprisingly) *Repetition* (REP) but implicitly or explicitly cropping up in other works as well. The idea is that unlike the Platonic 'recollection' we do not, as it were, *discover* the essence of our self or the world but rather 'enter eternity forwards' (COA, p. 90n.) in an existential relation (a discovery would imply self-coincidence or an essence that does not involve a personal relation to something necessarily beyond the self (i.e. God)). Kierkegaard wants for our ethical sense of self to remain in tact, and yet experience reality in its immediacy. In his journals he says that 'repetition occurs' when 'ideality and reality touch each other' (p.171); what was there before remains but is revitalized by its relation to the absolute—described in CUP as like a change to a different musical key. What for the aesthetic character is fragmented and the

this constitutes sin then a single person will always be in sin, again nullifying the concept. If sin is understood as escapable only by letting oneself be consumed by the *Sittlichkeit*, then for Kierkegaard it is simply *not* sin. For him this makes the existence of a 'second ethics' necessary. The individual, as such, demands a task that he can overcome;

in the struggle to actualize the task of ethics, sin shows itself not as something that belongs only accidentally to the accidental individual, but as something that withdraws deeper and deeper as a deeper and deeper presupposition that goes beyond the individual. Then all is lost for ethics, and ethics has helped to bring about the loss of all.[13]

Instead of becoming sinful as a result of not reaching an ideal, the individual sees the ideal as a task in order to remedy his sinfulness which he (albeit ambiguously) is responsible for in the first place. To counter Hegel's destruction of ethics the individual must first *do* something or undergo something that makes him sinful (in a subjectively meaningful sense—i.e. as an actuality) and he must then be able to do something to remedy (or transcend) this state of affairs. For Kierkegaard sin is an actuality that we can strive to transcend, not an abstract condition impossible to transcend; but how is he to avoid a repetition of Hegel whereby sin is there as a state from the beginning and is equally inescapable? The answer is twofold: Firstly the dogmatic notions of 'hereditary sin', 'guilt' and 'forgiveness'. These are described as 'dogmatic' because they are explainable only in terms of themselves (i.e. not explainable at all)—they are presupposed. They constitute the beginning of the individual's task (and indeed the end, though this is not the topic of COA). Secondly, for sin to become actual or meaningful requires a movement (or 'leap') of 'inwardness' whereby the individual *becomes* sinful (even though sin, prior to this, does not as far as the individual is concerned, exist).

In 'inwardness' ethics is repeated—the individual is again presented with a task. 'Here again ethics finds its place' says Kierkegaard, in its demanding of the individual a 'penetrating consciousness of actuality'.[14] In a footnote concerning FT and REP he explains how by means of transcendence ethics is reborn;

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ethical character habit and routine is now given ultimate coherence and meaning (an 'acquired originality') through an immanent religious undergirding.

[13] COA, p.19

[14] ibid, p.20

Either all of existence comes to an end with the demands of ethics, or the condition is provided and the whole of life and of existence begins anew, not through an immanent continuity with the former existence, which is a contradiction, but through a transcendence.[15]

What provides the condition then is the task of subjectivity allied to a presupposed dogmatics that is (in itself and in terms of its relation to our subjectivity) fundamentally paradoxical. The study of anxiety, in the scientific mood, takes the reader to the boundary of inwardness and dogmatics, and the appropriation of (a paradoxical) dogmatics is the profoundest form of 'inwardness'. In summary, the task of COA is to explain the 'pivotal' role anxiety plays in the relation of sinfulness to the individual existence, and, in order to do this it must reposition ethics with respect to religiousness. This is achieved by describing the leap into the ethical sphere as one conditioned by guilt and sinfulness and thus implementing the 'second ethic' of inwardness over the 'universal' ethic. The scene is now set, the categories laid down and correctly positioned, for the further leap between the ethical and the religious and the intensifying of inwardness that this entails. As Climacus comments in CUP, 'perhaps [Haufniensis] thought at this point a communication of knowledge might be necessary before a transition could be made to inward deepening.'[16]

II

The Concept of Anxiety is interested in the psychological conditions associated with the aesthetic existence, ethico-religious inward deepening, and the possibility of faith. This association is not merely a case of the individual realizing something about themselves (finitude, despair etc.) and becoming anxious, but of the anxiety itself producing a certain awareness and certain responses. It is anxiety, responded to in the correct way (as Kierkegaard would have it) that initiates and motivates the process of 'becoming'.[17] If it is responded to in the wrong way the self either

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[15] ibid, p.17

[16] CUP, p.270

[17] 'Becoming', an ethico-religious term for Kierkegaard that has become very important for later existentialists, is a central feature of the attainment of selfhood. It is perhaps best explained in terms of its relative and absolute components. Relatively speaking it refers to something like self-discovery. In E/O the Judge describes the individual as having 'these talents, these passions, these habits, who is under these influences ... Here then he has himself as a task ... to order, cultivate, temper, enkindle, repress, in short, to bring about a proportionality in the soul, a harmony ...' (cited in Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation* (SUNY, 1991) p.99). Implicit in this, however, is the idea that as a task we can never be completed: 'In knowing himself the individual is not complete' the Judge goes on to say (E/O, p.549). As existential creatures there is no essence or formula, and no ideal or social role that equates to self— summed-up by Sartre's comment in BN (Routledge) that 'human reality is a perpetual surpassing towards

stagnates in its immediacy, or makes a movement that is self-defeating. All movements are, as far as Kierkegaard is concerned, self-defeating (whether the individual is aware of this at the time or not) if they are not directed towards his version of faith. In this way anxiety can be seen as the *signifier of the infinite* and thus of our relation to the infinite. As we shall see later, in the work of Heidegger, Tillich and finally Camus, anxiety manifests itself as guilt at a certain stage and this motivates and signifies in a similar fashion. Despair is the underlying state that anxiety (again, whether the subject knows it or not) indicates the individual's potentiality to overcome. Anxiety, guilt and despair constitute for Kierkegaard the mediators (concrete and subjective, not abstract, public and rational) via which the self moves from one stage to another in a process of increasing inwardness. The movement is not immanent but involves a process of 'leaps' conditioned by our relation to the infinite. The existence of these 'intermediate terms' and our relation to them is largely the subject matter of psychology, and what they signify is a matter for ethics and dogmatics. In the course of this investigation I shall, on occasion, be looking at some non-dogmatic interpretations of what a Kierkegaardian-type anxiety might signify as well as Kierkegaard's specific use of the concept.

Kierkegaard's analysis can be usefully broken down into five sections—'pre-leap anxiety', the 'qualitative leap', 'post-leap anxiety', 'anxiety disguised and misinterpreted', and 'anxiety as educator', and this is how I shall order my investigation.

A. Pre-leap Anxiety

Kierkegaard begins by asking about the origins of sin. As stated, it is important for him that sin cannot be explained—that it remains tied to dogma. To offer an ethical or psychological description that explains everything would necessarily make it the *wrong* description and would indicate that the analysis is being carried out in the wrong mood. 'Sin', he says, 'comes into the world by a sin.'[18] Sin, as such, is *prior* to the first sin being committed, and yet comes into

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a coincidence with itself which is never given.' (p.89 (Routledge)) At best there is a *way* of being which implicitly becomes our task, and this is achieved, somewhat paradoxically, by choosing ideals or 'ground projects' (Bernard William's term) and thereby choosing our relative self in an absolutist fashion. Key to this, however, is the realization that self-coincidence is impossible without God, and as such the only absolute project, or absolute task of becoming is faith and repetition.

[18] COA, p.32

existence only as a result of its being committed. Here then is the paradox, the dogma. Psychologically the closest we can get to it is to say that it is somehow latent or innate in the individual and only by actualizing it does it truly become what it is. This is close to Kierkegaard's psychological description which focuses on sexuality, but he is keen to stress that sexuality is not *itself* sinfulness—sinfulness is a category apart.

To reinforce the fact that sin cannot be explained entirely in terms of what is innate, Kierkegaard emphasises that each individual sins in the same way that Adam sinned. We do not directly *inherit* sinfulness, but must, by our own doing, *become* sinful. 'How sin came into the world' he insists 'each man understands solely by himself. If he would learn it from another he would *eo ipso* misunderstand it.'[19] And in CUP he confirms that;

> Development of the spirit is self-activity; the spiritually developed individual takes his development along with him in death. If a succeeding individual is to attain it it must occur through his self-activity; therefore he must skip nothing.[20]

If this was not the case Adam would be qualitatively different from every subsequent person in which case we must ask how he could be the origin of the race. There is, however, a quantitative difference between Adam and subsequent generations, and indeed from generation to generation— 'at every moment' we are told 'the individual is both himself and the race.'[21] By this Kierkegaard is implying that though each of us enters into sin as an individual in the same way that Adam did, we are also the product of a whole history of sinfulness (which imbues our culture) and will in turn create future generations. It is still important though to realize that it is not just in our subjective relation to sin that we are the same as Adam; we relate to God not just as an individual but as a member of the human race. As such *sin is a condition of humanity and is thus greater and beyond the individual*, and similarly it is in part beyond Adam even though for him there is no race to speak of. How *this* coheres with the relation of sin to individuality COA attempts to explain—that is, as far as a psychological description *can* explain it. Pregnant in this comment is also the notion '*Unum noris, omnes*' ['If you know one you know them all'].[22] To come to know oneself subjectively is to come to know others, for in this respect (anxiety, despair, guilt, inwardness etc.)

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[19] op cit, p.51
[20] CUP, p.345
[21] COA, p.28
[22] 'One of Kierkegaard's favourite expressions' according to Nordentoft (op cit, p.6). It is found in COA, CUP and elsewhere.

all men are the same. In subsequent generations we create the potential for selves and therefore for sin, but each individual must actualize this as if he were the first sinner.

'Innocence', says Kierkegaard, 'is by no means the pure being of the immediate, but it *is* ignorance.'[23] It is lost, not in a way explicable in terms of what has preceded it, but by means of a 'leap' into an unknown (which both tempts us and repels us)—a leap which results in the full realization of what we are. In innocence we are ignorant of the true nature of self; we remain in a state of 'unity' with our 'natural condition'.[24] Psychologically we can and do of course attain a sense of self as distinct from its surroundings without any need for a leap (except perhaps Piaget-style cognitive leaps), but Kierkegaard is interested in how we come to place ourself as a self in relation to the *infinite*. An advanced pre-leap (aesthetic) individual may have an acute awareness of self in many respects, but as far as the infinite is concerned this has nothing to do with him. To be placed in the context of a self which does have a relation to the infinite is to be, or *become*, guilty. How though is this innocence lost? This, for Kierkegaard, cannot be explained in terms of *concupiscentia* [inordinate desire] for a couple of reasons. Firstly, how can there be genuine desire when the subject does not (cannot) know what it is they desire (and if they do know this they would already be in the state of sin). Secondly, this cannot explain the ambiguity associated with pre-leap anxiety (assuming of course that Kierkegaard's phenomenological analysis of this is correct); 'the psychological explanation', we should remember, 'must not talk around the point but must remain in its elastic ambiguity, from which guilt breaks forth in the qualitative leap.'[25] The term that best describes the psychology surrounding the loss of innocence is 'anxiety'—a state of mind with (at this stage) no object, but animated by a vague sense of self as a *potential*.

The object of anxiety is, to begin with, then, 'nothing';

But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that it is at the same time anxiety. Dreamily the spirit projects its own actuality, but this actuality is nothing, and innocence always sees nothing outside itself.[26]

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[23] COA, p.37

[24] These ideas are borrowed from Karl Rosenkrantz's *Psychologie oder die Wissenschaft vom Subjektiven Geist* (published 1837) where he talks about the formation of personal identity in the child from separation from the mother to the development of reason and finally '"the necessarily occurring bipartition" of the spiritual and the corporeal' (Nordentoft, op cit, p.21). Kierkegaard is most concerned with the development of this latter form of self-awareness.

[25] COA, p.41

[26] ibid

This nothing is a curiosity for the innocent individual, not an idle one but a presentiment of what he might become. In his journals Kierkegaard writes that 'all presentiment is murky and rises all at once in the consciousness or so gradually fills the soul with anxiety that it does not arise as a conclusion from given promises but always manifests itself as an undefined something.'[27] This kind of anxiety is representative of the aesthetic stage. The aesthete is not considered to be fully a self by Kierkegaard and his anxiety (at least in the early stages) is a projection of his potential self. The subject is of course not aware of the cause of his anxiety—its content is opaque and ambiguous and his reaction to it reflects this. This corresponds to the first of the 'immediate erotic stages' in E/O where the 'desire possesses what will become the object of its desire but possesses it without having desired it and thus does not possess it.'[28] Subject and object have not been separated, but this separation is foreshadowed—'when desire has not awakened, that which is desired fascinates and captivates—indeed almost causes anxiety.'[29] Vigilius would say that it most definitely causes anxiety, perhaps the 'pleasing' or 'strange' variety.[30] Anxiety's ambiguity is summed-up in the oft-quoted description of it as '*a sympathetic antipathy* and an *antipathetic sympathy*'[31]—the individual both fears it as something unknown and alien to him, and is enticed by it as something intriguing—the suggestion of a new realm of gratification and adventure. Kierkegaard says 'flee away from anxiety he cannot because he loves it; really love it he cannot, for he flees from it.'[32] The individual, at this stage not being qualified as a self (as 'spirit'), does not have the faculty of full self-consciousness that can make sense of this presentiment. The 'nothing' of anxiety remains, projected, but for the time being cannot be appropriated. The 'nothing' represents, in Alastair Hannay's words, 'the, so far, phenomenologically empty spiritual category.'[33] Doris Lessing describes a similar phenomenon (in somewhat Jungian terminology) in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*. She says;

There are lots of things in our ordinary life that are shadows. Like coincidences or dreaming, the kind of things that are at an angle to ordinary life ... The important thing is this—to remember that some things reach out to us from that level of living, to here. Anxiety is one ... THEY say "an anxiety state", as they

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[27] *Journals and Papers*, p.628
[28] E/O (Princeton, 1987), pp.75-6
[29] ibid, p.76
[30] See COA, p.42
[31] ibid, p.42
[32] ibid, p.44.
[33] *Kierkegaard* (RKP, 1982), p.180

say paranoia, but all these things, they have a meaning, they are reflections from that other part of ourselves, and that part of ourselves knows things we don't know.[34]

The second 'immediate erotic stage' seems to coincide with a strengthening of the voice of that 'other part of ourselves'. Anxiety's object changes from 'nothing' to the 'possibility of possibility'. Kierkegaard describes this in terms of the effect God's prohibition has on Adam. It does not awaken him to good and evil as such—he is still essentially ignorant of these—but to his 'being able'; to his (negative) freedom. This is described as a 'higher form of ignorance' where 'ignorance is brought to its uttermost.'[35] In E/O we see that the desire is now separated from its object but that as the object is not clearly defined, the desire is really not a desire. It is presented as a multiplicity of objects but does not know what it is about them that it wants. Still, a change has occurred—'the dream is over'—awakened by a 'jolt', but this is nothing compared to the jolt which, potentially, awaits the aesthetic individual on the verge of the 'qualitative leap'.

B. The Qualitative Leap

Don Giovanni himself is said to represent the third stage of the 'immediate erotic' where both desire and its object have come into focus. There is however still a lack of self-awareness about him: he seeks to seduce women purely in order to gratify his desire, not with any higher, or even ulterior, purpose in mind. He is not reflective and calculating in the way Johannes the seducer is, and he does not feel guilt—not because he chooses not to, but because guilt is a category of spirit and not currently applicable to him. The finite/infinite distinction has not been made, although for Kierkegaard Giovanni is teetering on the edge of becoming a self in this respect. He describes him as 'a picture that is continually coming into view but does not attain form and consistency, an individual who is continually being formed but is never finished ...'[36] As such 'Don Giovanni's life is not despair; it is, however, the full force of the sensuous, which is born in anxiety; and Don Giovanni is this anxiety ...'[37]

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[34] *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (Panther, 1972), p.247
[35] COA, p.45
[36] E/O (Princeton), p.92
[37] ibid, p.129. These are A's words, the Judge would say that he is in despair even though he does not feel this subjectively. Note also that 'A's understanding of anxiety is going to be limited to the pre-leap variety and so he is lacking the complete picture as Kierkegaard sees it.

By means of a leap the self becomes a self and this becoming is conditioned by a self-awareness that exists only *after* the leap. A qualitative leap is required by Kierkegaard in order to emphasize the inherent absurdity of this idea—an absurdity that amounts to a further formulation of the idea that sin presupposes itself. The significance of this will become clear as I describe (or rather *locate*) the qualitative leap, and this can be done in terms of three factors; its relation with the infinite, as an 'existential shift', and as the individual's subjective sense of guilt.

Objectively, what occurs in the qualitative leap is the individual's qualification as a self. By this Kierkegaard means that the essential qualities of a self have been posited, although to *want* to be a self and thus *accept* the nature of self in the full sense of the word is still a long way off. A self is 'a relation which relates to itself'; human being is a synthesis of the physical and the 'psychical' (of the finite and the infinite, the necessary and the possible, and the temporal and the eternal). Until such a being becomes aware of 'spirit' (i.e. itself) as the synthesising or mediating factor it sees the physical-psychical relation as a *negative* relation—one that has no further transcendental significance or substance. Once spirit comes into play the synthesis becomes *positive*, more than the sum of 1+1—one that amounts to a relation that has a concrete and potentially free perspective on itself. The factors in the synthesis are not negated as a result of the synthesis, but are transcended and *repeated* (viewed in a significantly different way but somehow retained). The infinity that is posited by the leap becomes meaningful to the individual as necessarily relating to him as an individual. Of course, being an individual he can choose to ignore it, but choosing to accept and appropriate it is (largely) itself what makes the experience of individuality *as* individuality meaningful.

For Kierkegaard the infinite takes the form of God, and if not necessarily the Christian God at this juncture, it is something that we are in some way *answerable* to. Not until this occurs are there concrete grounds for actively seeking to abandon the temporal elements of the synthesis. Once it does occur, spirit has this as a 'task'. The contrast between existence and being-in-itself becomes not just a matter of fact, but a matter of incompleteness—an existential awareness of one's imperfection. Spirit is nicely defined by Hannay *as* this awareness.[38] Self as spirit becomes a task of self-actualization and any such task must be *chosen*. Paradoxically, in the qualitative leap we choose ourselves, in the light of good and evil, *as guilty*. In E/O Kierkegaard says, 'in choosing

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[38] Hannay op cit, p.179

absolutely ... I choose despair, and in despair I choose the absolute, for I myself am the absolute, I posit the absolute and am myself the absolute.'[39]

The qualitative leap involves something like a Gestalt (or perhaps paradigm) shift in that the world and the individual's place in it is significantly redefined—I shall refer to this as an 'existential shift'. Categories apply to it that, from the subjective point of view, once never existed. The shift involves a 'becoming inward' in itself, and the beginning of (or *potentially* the beginning of) a profound deepening of selfhood. In CUP Kierkegaard says about sin that 'the individual existing human being has to feel himself a sinner (not objectively, which is nonsense, but subjectively, and this is the deepest pain).'[40] This shift amounts to the movement from the aesthetic *or* perhaps a (levelled) adherence to the universal ethic, to the 'second ethic'.

The relation between this leap and the one made by Abraham in FT is ambiguous, especially as Kierkegaard says, commenting on COA in CUP, that;

Just as "fear and trembling" is the state of the teleologically suspended person when God tempts him, so also is anxiety the teleologically suspended person's state of mind in that desperate exemption from fulfilling the ethical.[41]

By the ethical Kierkegaard here means oneself defined in terms of a social ethic—the kind that can legitimately be read as merely an *option* in E/O. There is some confusion here because the language Judge William uses is that of someone who has made the leap; he speaks of 'choosing good and evil', and 'choosing oneself' and about guilt and despair. The leap in COA is mostly written as if it is about a leap from the aesthetic to the ethical, but given this comment in CUP are we to assume that there is another leap into religiousness, as was taken by Abraham, of a similar kind to this first leap, or are we to assume that this was Abraham's first leap? If the former is the case then Judge William is perhaps ripe for an Abraham-type experience, and if the latter is the case then we must assume it is possible to be in the ethical without having made a leap. I can only see this as amounting to the inauthentic ethical behaviour displayed by many of Conrad's characters—the type that essentially lack inwardness.[42] Another alternative might be that the Judge is commensurable with Abraham in that they have both made a leap into inwardness (or the

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[39] E/O, p.515

[40] CUP, p.224.

[41] ibid, p.269

[42] For example the eponymous Nostromo, and Kurtz prior to his experience in the Congo (see Chapter 7).

'second ethic') but in different directions. On a certain level this works: if actualizing oneself involves being answerable to (and appropriating) an ideal we can say that both have done this, the only difference being that the Judge's ideal is, say, duty, and Abraham's ideal (allowing for a secular spin[43]) is selfless love. A stricter interpretation of what Kierkegaard actually wants to say does not back this up though—it is clear that he places an 'absolute' relation with 'the absolute' in a different and *higher* category to the ideal of duty.

We are, then, led to the two-leap option, the ethical-religious leap perhaps being less of a shift than the first in that the self has already been established. (And well and truly if we accept the self-actualization version of the ethical over the Hegelian.) As such there is more control—a more palpable sense of choice and the *significance* of choice (i.e. risk and despair) with the religious leap than with the qualitative leap. There is however a deepening of inwardness—the self now having the absolute as its measure—and the possibility of repetition being established. Although there are secular equivalents to these leaps (for example, see Chapter 7) it is important to remember that for Kierkegaard both of them are ultimately movements towards faith. As such they are imbued with religiousness so that even the first leap is more than appropriating merely ethical standards, but standards that are undergirded by God. Similarly, in the Kierkegaardian context, anxiety, guilt and despair are, independent of the subject's interpretation of them, intrinsically religiously orientated. 'Sin' says Kierkegaard '... is the crucial point of departure for the religious existence ... is ... the beginning of the religious order of things.'[44] Because of this the ethical becomes an absolute within which an individual can find himself and to some extent actualize himself. It is not though an 'absolute relation to the absolute' which must be something directly personal to the individual and is found in the leap into Religiousness.

Johannes de Silentio does not say much about this religious leap in FT—to him it represents a paradox (and so we assume he inhabits the ethical realm). What he is clear about is that there is anxiety involved. Abraham of course *fears* losing Isaac and *fears* God, but his anxiety comes from the projected realm of faith he steps into as a result of being willing to obey God's command. Anxiety, as the signifier of the infinite, must be seen as enticing him into this relation, but at the same time he is anxious because he is stepping outside of what is familiar, outside of *himself*. One

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[43] As Edward Mooney does so well in *Knights of Faith and Resignation*.
[44] CUP, p.268

thing that is sure is that whatever happens on Moriah his world will not be the same, as indeed the qualitative leap in COA is non-reversible.[45] The anxiety he feels is akin to separation anxiety and there is a thick seam of this running through FT.[46] To regain the world (the currently suspended ethical realm) as something new in repetition means leaving our routine, habits and *duties* behind ('resigning' them). It is these that define the pre-religious self to a great extent (as they do for Judge William) and the leap makes us uncanny or 'dizzy' because we are effectively projecting a *new* self—*incommensurable* with the old self—that we cannot know until we become it. In a qualitative leap we *leap ahead of ourselves*, and there is a period when we are yet to hit the ground. This is the state of suspension so terrifying for the Knight of Faith; he trusts that God will return Isaac, but can have little idea of what form this return will take. Love, even joyousness, must sit beside the terror in order for there to be faith, but we must not forget the intensity and the source of the fear and trembling. The resultant anxious mixture of fear and joy is a highly obscure or rarefied state of mind, one which helps make the case for the incommunicability of the Knight's predicament.

As well as separation this associated anxiety has another feature of anxiety A—powerlessness— 'the ethical', says Kierkegaard, 'is present at every moment with its infinite requirement, but the individual is not capable of fulfilling it ... every moment he continues in this state he is more and more prevented from being able to begin: he relates himself to actuality not as possibility but as impossibility.'[47] For Abraham there is though more control and awareness of conflict that there is for the innocent Adam—he is faced with something approaching a dilemma whereas with the qualitative leap the overriding feeling is one of ambiguity underpinned by what is more clearly a natural progression or growth. To take this view of the aesthetic-ethical leap is to side with the idea that the aesthetic mode of existence can never really be said to be chosen. I shall say more about

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[45] 'An ordeal' says Kierkegaard in CUP, ' ... is a passing through; the person tested comes back again to exist in the ethical, even though he retains an everlasting impression of the terror ... '(p.266) This impression insures the ethical is not the same as it was prior to the ordeal, and, at the very least, gives the individual a 'readiness' for anxiety and repetition. The concept of an ordeal, Constantius says in REP is a '*temporary* category'—it is not a dwelling place for the individual but one that spans and aligns the temporal and the eternal. Significant here is that if the individual knows he is undergoing an ordeal it is no longer in the category of 'ordeal'. Only once he is back in the ethical can the purpose and nature of what he has been through become apparent to him (see REP, pp.209-10). For further comment on this see Chapters 3 and 7.

[46] Edward Mooney (op cit) is good on this aspect of the book.

[47] CUP, pp.266-7.

suspension and separation in relation to guilt shortly, and in the final section I will resume the issue of the specific relation between anxiety and faith.

As a result of the qualitative leap the individual comes to see himself as *guilty* through having sinned. 'Guilt' Kierkegaard says, 'is the second thing anxiety discovers'[48] after possibility (or freedom). Here we return to the issue briefly touched on at the beginning of this chapter: to have the ethical weight required it is not enough for the individual to regard themselves as born into a state of sin with no hope of redemption. Rather, they must undergo the inward sense of *committing* a sin, and then be able to seek forgiveness. COA is concerned with the former issue and it is in the throws of the qualitative leap that the individual becomes guilty. As stated, because of the dialectical inconsistency of this Kierkegaard must rely on the irreducibility of both inwardness and religious dogma. Psychology can only take us so far, and even then must rely on the flexibility of the concept of anxiety. If he can maintain that anxiety is so closely linked to inwardness and faith then its immediacy can indeed override problems brought forth by reflection. The individual, in anxiety, somehow chooses itself as a self; that is, it chooses to posit the opposition between the finite and the infinite (etc.) and break its unity with the world and God. In so doing it chooses free will; it chooses the adventure of the finite—notably *sensuousness* and sexuality. It is, Kierkegaard says, 'the first deep plunge into existence'[49]—the point where the individual's absolute distance from God starts to become meaningful to that individual. Because it has so chosen it sees that it is guilty before God for having made a leap *away* from the infinite. The inconsistency here lies with the fact that, firstly, the individual cannot know what he is choosing until he has chosen it ('sin came into the world by a sin' etc.), and secondly, in order to become a complete individual we *must* become guilty and let anxiety take us into and through this condition. In Hegelian terms innocence is the position, guilt the negation, and faith the mediation. The first of these is partially dealt with by the presentiments of pre-leap anxiety, but the second must remain objectively inconsistent. In this respect the sense of guilt amounts not to a rational realization of having done something wrong, but to an unambiguous *inward* sense of being guilty, the objective rationality of its source not mattering.

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[48] COA, p.161

[49] CUP, cited in David Law, *Kierkegaard as Negative Theologian* (Clarendon, 1993), p.133

This situation influences the kind of guilt common to the existential tradition, and common to which is an ambiguity resulting from a conflict between the psychological and the ontological. Kresten Nordentoft suggests—'it looks like Kierkegaard wants to have his cake and eat it too',[50] but says later;

Guilt ... is not due to the fact that the individual wills what is wrong, but it comes into being in the attempt to take the task of existence seriously, or rather: it is *discovered* in this attempt. For the guilt which is discovered by this means is naturally also present where it has not been discovered. But this fundamental (ontological) guilt is thus not due in the literal (psychological) sense to the individual himself. And to this extent it seems reasonable enough that "the existing individual should be able to place the guilt upon existence or upon whomever has placed him in existence, and thus be without guilt" [CUP]. For the existing individual who has discovered the totality of guilt, however, there is no doubt that he is guilty, and even the attempt to cast off guilt from himself would only be a new proof of its reality.[51]

As Nordentoft points out, Kierkegaard is looking for guilt to be opaque just as inwardness is opaque. If its existence is logically explainable it is precisely not the kind of guilt he is referring to—or rather it is not real guilt at all, but something dictated by the requirements of an impersonal system and superficially taken on board by its adherents. He wants it both to be broad enough to have ontological significance, and specific enough to account for an inward sense of ethical (or psychological) guilt.

As in Abraham's leap, in the qualitative leap the individual is rendered powerless and it is in this powerlessness that he 'succumbs'. When describing anxiety from the subjective point of view Kierkegaard says in a very important passage;

Anxiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness. Further than this psychology cannot and will not go. In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again arises, sees that it is guilty. He who becomes guilty in anxiety becomes as ambiguously guilty as it is possible to become.[52]

I take this last sentence to mean, not necessarily that this notion of guilt is inconsistent in the way described, but that although the individual indeed *feels* guilty they are not entirely sure why. The distinction between the finite and the infinite has been posited but it is not yet sharp, and only an

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[50] Nordentoft, op cit, p.169
[51] op cit, p.171
[52] COA, p.61

increased inwardness, driven by this guilt, can hone the individual's understanding. A broader picture of individual development might include numerous stages and leaps representing different aspects of self-awareness (conceptual, moral, social, sexual etc.). The relation between these would be complex with aspects coming in and out of focus at different times and the attendant guilt would, correspondingly, be even more ambiguous. It seems pertinent to consider that the line between anxiety and guilt would be indistinct for a period extending well beyond the qualitative leap.

Putting aside the paradoxical nature of guilt for the moment, let us look closer at the cause of this dizziness. Anxiety is a 'sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy'—we at once feel attracted to what it offers and repelled by it. The result is that in a sense we dabble with anxiety, or more objectively speaking, dabble with the infinite—we posit the possibility and yet we do not (cannot) become it. In his unpublished *Work on Adler* Kierkegaard describes dizziness as;

the boundlessness of the senses. The infinite is the ground of dizziness, but it is also a temptation to abandon to it ... The dialectics of dizziness is thus in itself the contradiction of willing what one does not will, what one shudders at, whereas this shudder nevertheless frightens, only ... temptingly.[53]

All the while, it seems, anxiety is directing operations—at once 'on the ground' but representing what is above. In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* Kundera says 'anyone whose goal is "something higher" must expect one day to suffer vertigo.' As such Abraham's suspension is a form of vertigo. 'What is vertigo?' Kundera asks, 'Fear of falling? Then why do we feel it even when the observation tower comes equipped with a sturdy handrail? No, vertigo is something other than the fear of falling. It is the voice of the emptiness below us which tempts and lures us, it is the desire to fall ...'[54] Abraham's desire to fall is the temptation of the ethical, and it is a temptation he overcomes—an ordeal he passes through successfully. This is not the case in the qualitative leap: the infinite is posited in anxiety but the individual cannot resist the temptation to fall, to '[lay] hold of finiteness to support itself.'[55] Kundera adds, 'we might also call vertigo the intoxication of the weak.'[56] From the individual's point of view, he has succumbed to anxiety's intoxicating effects, and he is guilty of the weakness which precipitated this.

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[53] Cited in Ferguson, H, *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity* (Routledge, 1995), p.135
[54] Kundera, op cit, pp.59-60
[55] COA, p.61
[56] Kundera, op cit, p.76

As we have seen though, the suspended, anxious individual not only has no real option (the finite/infinite distinction is ambiguous) other than to respond to his instinct for security, but he does not know that to do this is to sin, for he does not know what a sin is. Only in this 'laying hold of the finite' does the infinite become meaningful, and only then can the individual understand the distinction between good and evil. In turn, through exposure to the 'heights' of the infinite we are driven further into the depths of the finite: our eternal longing is countered, perhaps anchored, by our instinctive earthly nature. Sensual pleasure attains form and depth *because* the infinite is finally revealed in all its beauty and terror. It threatens to liberate but at the same time destroy, and the immediate requirement is the protection of identity, to sink roots deeper into the finite so as not to be swept up onto the eternal. 'Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works', says Vanessa Rumble, 'present the subject as *both* an unassailable Socratic Someone and a divinely ravished No-one. *Both* alternatives betray the all-too-human desire for an ascertainable identity ...'[57] Without anxiety none of this would have happened—freedom, the infinite, and ultimately the *self*—would not have been posited as an actuality, hence Kierkegaard's remark that 'anxiety ... is the pivot upon which everything turns.'[58] In a complex relation to itself the will 'is not free in itself, but entangled.'[59] 'He who becomes guilty through anxiety', we are told, 'is indeed innocent, for it was not he himself, but anxiety, a foreign power, that laid hold of him.'[60] In a sense it was not the self (the pre-leap self) that made a choice, but at the same time it is precisely *the self* because self in its greater potential is defined in terms of its future—as a *becoming*. Anxiety, as the arbiter of that becoming, 'does not tempt like a choice, but ensnaringly disquiets.'[61] Having become a self the individual does not want to return to its pre-leap condition (its 'antipathetic sympathy' still holds), and this only enhances the sense of having opted for this condition. Guilt, in this way, is the price paid for stumbling across an unearned, but implicitly approved of state of being.

All of this still leaves guilt in the same paradoxical position, as Kierkegaard would want it, but a few attempts have been made to make it more coherent. I will briefly run through some of these in order, firstly, to further reinforce the fact that guilt remains a paradox (or must be described as

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[57] op cit, p.311
[58] COA, p.43
[59] ibid, p.49
[60] ibid, p.43
[61] ibid, p.61

something different from the typical ethical/psychological version), and because some of them have existential-ethical interest in their own right.

Firstly, Alastair Hannay attempts to solve the problem by;

distinguishing between the emergence in consciousness of the ethical as such, and with it an awareness of the imperfection of the natural man (Kierkegaard does not appear to contemplate an intermediate stage in which ethical language is constituted but where the self refuses to admit its genuinely referential status), and the failure to respond positively to this awareness.[62]

He seems to be suggesting one of two things here—neither of which resolves the paradox. Firstly, as the onus is put on the individual's denial of its own basic imperfection we could accuse Hannay of replacing anxiety with another, less ambiguous intermediate term, namely repression. This, as we shall see, has some relevance to certain advanced states of pre-leap anxiety where the individual can be described as 'blocking' their 'natural' inclination (countering Hannay's point that Kierkegaard does not consider such a stage), but the smoother transition to the ethical described in the earlier parts of COA does not appear to involve this kind of psychical defence. What's more, and this is the second point, no intra-leap individual can be described as unambiguously guilty as they cannot have known either the nature, or the result, of activities that relate to the self as a synthesis, even if that activity is some kind of repression.

A similar point about repression can be made with regard to some of Nordentoft's comments on anxiety. He is right to point to similarities between Kierkegaard's and Freud's ideas on anxiety— for both it is the cause of repression or suppression—only *what* is repressed is altered. With Kierkegaard it is the demands of spirit and with Freud it is past conflicts, sexual traumas and so on (although these are certainly not poles apart). The degree to which a person suppresses something and can be seen as guilty in the unambiguous sense depends on their grasp of it in the first place. The process of self-deception is a mysterious one in that it involves knowing and not knowing something all at once; clearly, the weaker the original grasp we have of it, the easier it is to suppress, to the point where we can happily declare that we were *never* aware of what we are now avoiding. In the post-leap state, where the individual is aware of the meaning of good and evil, guilt in this respect will exist in shades of grey, but that there is guilt is not really in question.

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[62] op cit, p.168

In many places Kierkegaard has excellent descriptions of the process of self-deception, but these have greater relevance to later hindrances to the development of self in the face of anxiety than to the guilt associated with the qualitative leap.[63] Anxiety's 'laying hold of finiteness' is, as suggested, more reflexive and perhaps has more in common with the repression that goes on in childhood than with more 'mature' forms of duplicity. As far as guilt is concerned then, we are left with the same ambiguousness as before.

A writer who has placed emphasis on guilt as an appropriation of our (pre-leap or childhood) past—i.e. as something we are not directly responsible for, and yet willingly accept as part of ourselves—is Edward Mooney. In this way, and in contrast to Nordentoft, he sides with the necessity part of the paradox (and the ontological guilt associated with this) rather than the 'choosing' side (and the ethical/psychological guilt associated with this), and in so doing attempts to understand the phenomenological transformation of this into 'guilt feelings'. Mooney says;

> By the time we are capable of reflective self-criticism, our characters are both partially formed and more or less stained. Looking back, it will appear that we have done wrong, even though at the time of the doing, as children, we were not fully responsible. Further we will seem already joined to a wider circle of humanity, starting with family but stretching further outwards. We feel more or less proud—and stained—by multiple accidents of birth, race, gender, fortune or rationality. And we may already have confronted dilemmas, settings we cannot escape without doing some wrong. To the extent we are sensitively reflective, we find ourselves burdened by ineradicable fault, by responsibility we can neither evade nor discharge ... [S]in uncovers a personal fault or defect, incurred often unknowingly ... for which one feels intimate and proper responsibility—a retrospective responsibility so well entrenched that it seems virtually inconceivable that one could extract either the fault or the weight of accountability for it by one's own strength unaided ...[64]

The end of this passage refers to Abraham's position as one where he must rely on the strength of God (the 'absurd') to unburden him, to offer forgiveness. This, as we shall see is where the last section of COA is sign-posting the reader. Along with the valid point that we not only take up wrongful deeds from our past, but also what is accidentally beneficial to us, Mooney's psychological/existential/ethical description is a useful (secular) way of getting to grips with the guilt engendered by the qualitative leap (or something like it). It is a viable description of how a sense of what we are *now* becomes fundamentally linked to a sense of responsibility for the way the world we find ourselves cast into has shaped us. After all, if we do not appropriate these elements

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[63] See, for example, SUD, pp. 126-7
[64] Mooney, op cit, pp.121-2

of our past where lies our (finite) essence? If, as Ortega says, the essence of man is his history,[65] it seems we either take on board, to one degree or another, *all* aspects of that history, or we must reject the notion outright and along with it any earthly sense of heritage and belonging. Usually the desire to have a substantial self overrides the desire to be guilt-free. If to have a self is to have a past, and to have a past which is our *own* is to have one we are responsible for creating, then to have a self must involve a sense of guilt about what we feel to be negative elements of that past. But there still remains a gap between this condition and the required link between our ontology (finite, free etc.) and psychological guilt. In this sense the single individual represents the whole race before God, but he still, by all 'common propriety', has not *committed* an offence.

Involved in all this is the issue of truth as subjectivity (the product of choice, commitment, appropriation and, broadly, the involvement of the whole self (as a task) in the understanding of something[66]). If this is the only way we can be 'in' the truth in some palpable and direct way, then the best grasp we can have of other possible truths is that they too could have been subjectively true if we had committed to them. What is revealed is firstly that this must be the way things are— our sense of reality is in this way limited; and secondly that there are other alternatives that we could equally have chosen. Both of these amount to no more than the way we are in our finite nature, and yet generate what can be, and often is, described as guilt. As stated, this was taken up by Heidegger, and in chapter 7 I will expand further on what I see as the significance of guilt in relation to anxiety and in the general existential sense that these commentators are trying to make sense of here.

This though is not exactly what Kierkegaard means: his relation to guilt is religious as well as existential and probably the best analogy for Kierkegaardian guilt places it in the realm of an individual's personal relation to someone they hold in great esteem. An obvious example is the father-son relationship where despite being a difficult child and rebellious adolescent and seemingly always in a position of relative naiveté, the young adult is still loved by his father, and was always loved by him. "How" the young man questions "can he still love me?" This lack of understanding

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[65] 'Man, in a word, has no nature: what he has is—history. Expressed differently: what nature is to things, history ... is to man.' (In Kaufmann (ed.) *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, p.157)

[66] 'There are two senses of 'knowing what a word means', one connected with ordinary language and the other very much less so. Knowledge of a value concept is something to be understood, as it were, in depth, and not in terms of switching on to some given impersonal network.' (Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, p.29)

further engenders love and respect, but also a greater sense of not being worthy. Firstly he was this difficult, ignorant youth, not, in his own eyes, worthy (but nonetheless needy) of love; but secondly and more importantly, how great a man must his father be that he can find it in him to still love. This child has sinned against the father but not vice versa, and the father has still accepted him (and still accepts him). Perhaps this is closer to the guilt brought forth by the qualitative leap. The love an individual *needs* is given to him by, and thus brings him into relation with, a power infinitely greater than himself who could just as easily despise or destroy him. The relationship is profoundly imbalanced (hence the 'fear and trembling' of the religious leap (that, as far as I can see, overcomes guilt)) and yet it is a relationship in which both sides willingly engage. The inequality cannot be changed or corrected but only *accepted* through repentance and forgiveness. This explanation conforms with the Protestant position that 'he who is unjust is just' about which Paul Tillich says 'one could say that the courage to be is the courage to accept oneself as accepted in spite of being unacceptable.'[67] Once again this does not solve the paradox of guilt—we do not choose to be in the position of the young adult, answerable to and dependent upon his father, and the child does not know that its behaviour is wrong—but the content of this scenario is certainly closer to Kierkegaard's set-up (and Protestantism in general) than the more archetypal psychoanalytic and existential models. The issue of just why Kierkegaard places so much emphasis on guilt is an important one to which I shall suggest a 'structural' answer in the next section.

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Guilt is then the major subjective element involved in 'situating' the qualitative leap, but there is another factor that has some bearing on both this and pre-leap anxiety. Kierkegaard calls this 'objective anxiety' and it derives from the equation of sin and sensuousness that is at large in the world since Adam's first sin. As pointed out, sin is *not* sexuality or sensuousness, but objectively this is how it is comprehended. Not until the individual has become sinful subjectively is he able to make this distinction. As the generations pass and humanity becomes less naive, generally speaking (for this depends on the culture in question as well as the reflectiveness of the individual in question) the object of pre-leap anxiety becomes 'more and more a something'.[68] Of course, if it becomes a proper 'something' 'we have no leap but a quantitative transition'[69] and the concept of

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[67] CTB, p.160
[68] COA, p.61
[69] ibid, p.77

the individual and of the sin would be annulled, but still, anxiety does become a 'complex of presentiments, which, reflecting themselves in themselves, come nearer and nearer to the individual ...[and] communicate vigorously with the ignorance of innocence.'[70] 'Dreaming spirit', in future generations, is presented with objective reflections of its potentially awakened state that modify its subjective anxiety, and if not hasten the qualitative leap, then certainly swathe it in a greater amount of anxiety. 'At the maximum' Kierkegaard says *anxiety about sin produces sin*;[71] objectively sin is identified with sexuality and sensuousness and the objective anxiety of the individual, seeing these as determined by its heritage, will play a role in triggering the qualitative leap into sin.

In *The Seducer's Diary* Johannes can be seen to bring to fruition Cordelia's leap into sin, at which point he backs away and lets her chase him. Prior to this he plays with her in such a way that she is brought to the point of the Fall but does not topple over. He maintains her unity, or innocence, but slowly nurtures it towards the qualitative leap. To begin with he sends her notes that 'give distant and vague hints of the highest',[72] and gradually brings her to a 'peak' where 'only unrest and anxiety can hold her steady and prevent her from falling over'.[73] At this point Johannes correctly predicts, 'she herself will become the tempter who seduces me into going beyond the boundaries of the normal ...'[74] On this Nordentoft says, 'Johannes' insight into anxiety is the secret of his seducers art'[75] He realizes that implicit in love is 'the deep anxiety- filled night, from which the flower of love springs forth. Thus does the *nymphaea alba* [white water lily] repose with her cup upon the surface of the water, while thought is filled with anxiety at plunging down into the deep darkness where it has its root.'[76] These days one can imagine this kind of seduction having less intense results than it appears to for Cordelia—the seducer would have less room to manoeuvre in. A passage in David Lodge's recent novel *Therapy* (a work heavily involving Kierkegaard's ideas and style) sums this up well. The story's lead character and narrator is reminiscing about the girl (Maureen) he dated as a teenager in the 1950s. He describes her as 'tender and yielding in my

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[70] ibid, pp.61-2
[71] ibid, p.73
[72] E/O, p.332
[73] ibid, p.358
[74] ibid
[75] op cit, p.39
[76] Cited in Nordentoft, p.39

arms, wanting to be loved, loving to be caressed, but quite without sexual self-consciousness' and continues;

> ... I suppose Maureen must have experienced her own symptoms of sexual arousal, but I doubt whether she recognized them as such ... [S]he loved to be kissed and cuddled. She purred in my arms like a kitten. Such sensuality and innocence could hardly co-exist nowadays, I believe, when teenagers are exposed to so much sexual information and imagery. Never mind the soft porn videos and magazines available ... your average 15-certificate movie contains scenes and language that would have had half the audience ejaculating into their trousers forty years ago, and have sent the makers and distributors to gaol. No wonder kids today want to have sex as soon as they're able.[77]

It should be noted here that though increasing exposure to sexuality is related to the qualitative leap, becoming sexually active does not necessarily coincide with the leap as Kierkegaard describes it. A confusion arises in that *The Seducer's Diary* appears to be talking about the qualitative leap and yet Johannes, who understands sexual desire well enough to induce it in Cordelia and has himself made this leap, is an aesthetic character. Whatever leap he has made must then be considered by Kierkegaard as abortive, that is, as arising from a 'misdefining' of anxiety. His perspective is essentially objective and detached and he must be seen as not fully understanding the significance of sexuality in terms of sin and the ethical. Though sexuality is posited, as Kierkegaard insists, it is not the same thing as sin and can thus be understood by certain people (perhaps most of us these days, and as Johannes does) in a way that makes it extrinsic to notions of finitude and guilt. It seems important that nowadays the link between sex, pregnancy and families is far weaker than it was. In the bourgeois Copenhagen of the times the link was so close that to indulge in sex was tantamount to taking on the responsibilities of marriage, children and generally the next generation. As such it was a strongly 'ethical' pursuit rather than recreational and we can understand better why the leap into sexual awareness and the leap into the ethical were socially fashioned to coincide. This aside, more will be said about 'abortive leaps' towards the end of the chapter.

C. Post-leap Anxiety

Once good and evil have made their appearance anxiety does not disappear but continues in a somewhat altered fashion. Most importantly the object of this state becomes 'a determinate something ... because the distinction between good and evil has been posited *in concreto*—and

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[77] Lodge, D. *Therapy* (Penguin, 1995), pp.241-2

anxiety therefore loses its dialectical ambiguity.'[78] In terms of the anatomy of anxiety as described in Chapter 1, this should qualify post-leap anxiety as anxiety B. Self-actualization (and thus self-awareness) still has some distance to go in order to be fulfilled in Kierkegaard's eyes, and thus the *possibilities* that remain ahead of it are presumably still imbued with the ambiguity or 'nothing' associated with urangst. Moreover, anxiety A should also be present in the post-leap state. The suggestion is that through faith we can bridge the gap between the finite and the infinite, but this is not of course a certainty in any rational sense, and the possibility of nothingness instead of God, emptiness instead of meaning, death instead of eternity cannot have been extinguished. The way Kierkegaard writes however does not seem to deal with this, and the tendency is to run anxieties A and B together: we can come to terms with the infinite through our own efforts at inward deepening which will ideally come to fruition in a faith in God's reciprocity. The stress is on the individual as responsible (anxiety B), but responsible not just for his self-actualization and relation to others, but also partly for his relation to the infinite (anxiety A). In the same way that faith is presupposed, so guilt is, and this plays a similar role in that it spans both kinds of anxiety but without itself being chosen and thus deferring the primary existential condition. The existence of guilt might be partially explained (in a Nietzschean sense) in terms of its being chosen by the individual for this very reason—i.e. to disburden them of their existentiality—but as it can only be replaced by something which plays a similar role, i.e. faith, then this would not fit Kierkegaard's individualist agenda. I will return to these issues briefly at the end of this chapter, and further question the role of guilt and the possible reversibility of the qualitative leap (which Kierkegaard does not question) in Chapter 7.

I think it is true to say that repeated confrontations with the possibilities of self are less dramatic than the qualitative leap or the Abraham-type leap. The distinction between good and evil has been made, but even so, this is at times inevitably lost as a concrete, *existential* awareness. This is partly because of the near impossibility of maintaining the energy required to 'think' one's infinite self constantly, and partly because of the related processes of self-deception which facilitate the avoidance of the reality of ourselves as revealed in anxiety. Repeating this anxious awareness is for Kierkegaard not a question of our degree of attention to it, but always involves further leaps.

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[78] COA, pp.111-2

Remember that for Kierkegaard 'the individual existing human being has to feel himself a sinner.'[79] Thus in COA he says;

The history of the individual life proceeds in a movement from state to state. Every state is posited by a leap. As sin entered into the world, so it continues to enter into the world if it is not halted. Nevertheless, every such repetition is not a simple consequence but a new leap. Every such leap is preceded by a state as the closest psychological approximation.[80]

Still, we can only suppose that the relation of these states to the individual's awareness is more akin to Freud's pre-conscious than to his unconscious. In the former case the contents of consciousness are readily available to the individual, but not spelt-out, whereas in the latter they are repressed and cannot be retrieved (directly) by an act of will. The relation between post-leap awareness and the will is more liquid; not divided by ignorance of undiscovered territory, but by the devices of self-deception and the brute reality of human weakness. As such the post-leap state is a legitimate topic for psychology, and anxiety, as the signifier of the infinite, manifests itself in terms of the proximity of the possibility of good and evil. It is this we shall concentrate on now, and return to the issue of leaps and anxiety A in the final section.

The relative status of self is such that, if directed towards (desirous of) the good it is anxious about evil; and if directed towards evil it is anxious about the good (God cannot be evil, but man is always in a position, no matter what he is currently directed towards, where good and evil remain possibilities). This is Kierkegaard's understanding of the post-leap ethical individual placed within the framework of sin and faith. The attendant anxiety is, as we shall see, similar to that which Sartre speaks of: the parameters of good/evil, authentic/inauthentic etc. are chosen (or appropriated) by the individual and then anxiety is directed not at what the nature and status of these parameters signify so much as his performance in measuring-up to them. Similarly, Judge William says;

The question here is, under what categories one wants to contemplate the entire world and would oneself live. That someone who chooses good and evil chooses the good is indeed true ... but the good here is wholly abstract; choosing the ethical merely posits it, and from that it does not follow that the chooser cannot choose evil again, notwithstanding he chose the good.[81]

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[79] CUP, p.224
[80] COA, p.113
[81] E/O, pp.486-7

The choice of the ethical is the choice of ourselves, but there now exists the freedom to defy that self and turn against the movement of inwardness. The individual is aware of this as a continuing possibility, just as Sartre's gambler is supported by 'nothing' beyond himself. Here the structural similarity with Freud's evolving theory anxiety becomes apparent: in the first theory consciousness plays no part in the generation of anxiety, instead it is produced purely somatically as a result of inhibited sexual functions. The body is trying to tell the individual something, whereas in Kierkegaard latent spiritual potential is trying to manifest itself as a matured self-consciousness.[82] In the later theory, where the individual consciously apprehends something threatening and this triggers the anxiety, the object can be itself the direct cause of the anxiety (in which case it is akin to fear) or can trigger off (signal) anxiety associated with something repressed (as in phobias). In anxiety over good and evil the individual is *aware* of the possibility of good and of the possibility of evil and this causes the anxiety. Something like repression plays a role in Kierkegaard's description and about this I shall say more shortly.

On the question of what 'good' is, Kierkegaard says in a footnote 'the good cannot be defined at all' and then says 'the good is freedom',[83] where I think 'freedom' is interchangeable with 'spirit'. He qualifies this by saying that freedom's relation to good and evil is only meaningful in the concrete sense—i.e. it must be *in* the good or *in* evil and cannot hover abstractly between the two. As such, 'spirit's' perspective is from one or the other position, in sight of, and in anxiety about its opposite. Generally the good as freedom or spirit amounts to self-knowledge which encompasses all that has been said about inwardness, and evil the deliberate avoidance of this, typically taking the form of the blocking or stagnation of a self-deceiving self which should be moving towards the infinite.

In its anxiety about evil—about the fact that it has been qualified in terms of sin—'spirit' cannot find rest; it is an 'unwarranted actuality'. It eddies around and, as far as Kierkegaard is concerned, has three options: It can save itself in faith; it can identify itself with evil; or, being directed towards the good, it can find some or other form of self-deception ('ingenious sophistry') in which to find short-term or 'spiritless' repose. The first two we shall come to in this and later sections,

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[82] Nordentoft translates Judge William's 'the spirit does not let itself be mocked; it revenges itself upon you; it binds you in chains of melancholia' (op cit, p.114) into the Freudian 'the flesh does not permit itself to be mocked' (ibid, e.g. p.145).

[83] COA, p.111

but for the moment we will concentrate on the third which Kierkegaard sees as the most common response to spirit's anxiety about evil.

He describes three forms that this self-deception or repression might take. One alters sin's actuality to a possibility and thus is (or mimics) the reverse action of the qualitative leap. This way it creates the illusion that it has not made the movement from innocence to sin. This is perhaps similar to Sartre's example of the 'pederast' in BN who refuses to accept that he *is* a pederast on the basis of his past actions. In bad faith he uses the sophistry that as a *pour-soi* he cannot possibly *be* anything, deflecting attention from the fact that we must, within a freely chosen moral community and language, accept responsibility for our actions (or else suffer the full consequences of opting out of that community). In *this* context he is indeed a pederast, not merely a freedom that has no connection with past activities. The second involves quantifying sin. Anxiety 'flirts' with movements towards and away from sin which give it the idea that it is not sinful *as such*, but only to a certain degree. 'No matter how deep an individual has sunk', says Kierkegaard, 'he can sink deeper, and this "can" is the object of anxiety.'[84] Spirit 'relaxes' to a certain extent because sin is no longer seen as a state, but as a 'quantitative determinant': 'anxiety is directed towards the further possibility of sin'[85] and not at its qualitative condition of sin. In this way anxiety lessens from the point of view of the subject, whereas in the first form of self-deception it is maintained at least to the extent of its advanced pre-leap variant. Anxiety is 'at its highest' however in the third kind of anxiety over evil where sin is regarded by the individual as an actuality, but repentance is seen as impotent in the face of it: 'repentance cannot cancel sin, it can only sorrow over it. Sin advances in its consequences; repentance follows it step by step, but always a moment too late.'[86] The individual is effectively trapped in his guilt, helpless like a spectator, moving further into a sinful existence. Anxiety is maintained at a peak, constantly predicting punishment but not forgiveness. The result is unsurprisingly a kind of madness which in modern psychiatric terms might be classed as neurotic guilt or depression. The self sees no way out of the self it discovers itself to be; feels, if you like, condemned, or 'conquered' by its sinfulness. Kierkegaard says, 'the phenomenon may appear in connection with the sensuous in man (addiction to drink, to opium, or

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[84] ibid, p.113
[85] op cit, p.115
[86] ibid. This equates with the 'weak' notion of offence in SUD where the individual is 'wanting in despair to be [himself], a sinner, in a way in which there is no forgiveness.'(p.146) It is a non-acceptance of Christ as a measure of oneself—that God 'let himself be born, ... suffered and died' (p.147) in order to forgive man's sins etc.

to debauchery etc.) as well as in connection with the higher (pride, vanity, wrath, hatred, defiance ... etc.).'[87] It would be like a cosmic version of drinking to forget.

To be in anxiety about the good (the 'demonic') the individual must, by some means, have come to identify himself with evil. This is a state relatively easy to understand in a localized sense—most of us harbour unpleasant aspects of ourselves that we are happier to (or find it easier to) define as intrinsically bad or selfish rather than expose to the scrutiny of the good and thus the requirement for painful self-analysis and change. 'There are traces of it in every man' says Kierkegaard,[88] and later he describes its presence in us as 'like a spot on the sun or like the little white dot on the corn.'[89]

For the entire person to be characterized as demonic is somewhat harder to understand. Kierkegaard tells us that such a person wants to box himself up in what he calls 'inclosing reserve', because to make any contact with others (perhaps not literally, but certainly to expose anything of his orientation and motivations) is immediately to be exposed to the good, which is the cause of his anxiety. In E/O it is made apparent that the ethical existence is fundamentally linked to the disclosure of one's aims, motivations and so on. In FT the story of the Merman (from Anderson's *Agnete and the Merman*) is an example of the demonic.[90] He has no absolute relation to the absolute but is *alone,* and in order to break out of his 'muteness' he must confess his sins and so return to the ethical. Not until someone is understood can they be forgiven, and in this respect we can understand why a criminal who admits guilt is treated with more leniency than one who stubbornly refuses to; we cannot understand the inclosed person and thus they remain a greater threat. The contrasting position of the Knight of Faith—one whose temporary silence has an altogether different motivation—is nicely summed-up in the following passage from FT;

Faith's knight knows ... that it is glorious to belong to the universal. He knows it is beautiful and benign to be the particular who translates himself into the universal, the one who ... makes a clear and elegant edition of himself, as immaculate as possible, and readable for all ... But he also knows that higher up there winds a lonely path, narrow and steep; he knows it is terrible to be born in solitude outside the universal, to walk without meeting a single traveller.[91]

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[87] ibid, p.116
[88] ibid, p.122
[89] ibid, p.135
[90] Another example is Tolkein's Gollum in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*.
[91] FT, p.103

The ethical tempts the Knight of Faith with security, but repulses the demonic individual. Their denial of the good, of their ethical self, results in an ugly distortion of repetition that Kierkegaard refers to as 'suddenness'. The good, he says, 'signifies continuity'[92]—i.e. a wholeness and coherence of self that makes communication and relations with others possible. The demonic cannot help but have contact with others (hence the anxiety) but there is no cohesion to this. Actions are unpredictable, and as the individual is effectively cut-off from himself they are as unfathomable to him as they are to everyone else.[93] Perhaps the paradigm of continuity is FTs 'shop keeper', and below this sit the rest of us, for as Kierkegaard rightly says, 'every individual has a little of this suddenness.'[94]

Like the person in self-deception, the demonic is 'his own worst enemy' in Kierkegaard's eyes. The only way he can protect his evil identity is by 'making his sin into a personal strength, and inventing the 'sin' of being or doing or welcoming good.'[95] The motivation behind this is, broadly, to avoid the trial of becoming more inward and to avoid facing up to the truth behind 'despair'— that we are contingent and can only transcend this by repenting before God and receiving forgiveness 'on the strength of the absurd'. The modern psychiatric equivalent to this kind of defence Nordentoft identifies as the phenomenon of 'resistance'—an unwillingness to be cured. In this, the analysand 'breaks "the fundamental rule of analysis" which requires complete honesty.'[96] Kierkegaard is here attempting an analysis of resistance, of the individual's 'motives to persist in the neurosis and to oppose recovery.'[97] Roughly, the motive of the analysand is that he does not want to face what he must face if the analysis is to be successful, so unconsciously he attempts to scupper the process by lying. He is, Nordentoft goes on to say;

aware of the situation and of his own critical condition. He comes to the analyst with his sickness and with the express wish to be healed. When he then defends himself ... in the analytic situation, it is an unconscious defence quite clearly directed against an anticipated conflict or an anxiety-laden possibility— namely, that which threatens when the old defence is analysed away.[98]

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[92] COA, p.130
[93] Kierkegaard's imagery is brilliant here: 'The continuity that inclosing reserve has can best be compared with the dizziness a spinning top must have, which constantly revolves upon its own pivot.' (COA, p.130)
[94] ibid
[95] Hannay, op cit, p.189
[96] op cit, p.178
[97] ibid
[98] ibid, p.179

A pernicious regress looms at this point whereby there will be resistance against the discovery of resistance and so on.

Returning to what Kierkegaard would see as the motivation behind 'anxiety about the good', Nordentoft says (rightly I think) that this is the same as 'despair of the eternal' in SUD, which is despair of what 'rightly understood, releases one from [despair]: of the eternal, of one's salvation, of one's own strength, etc.'[99] Kierkegaard suggests that this kind of despair must be unconscious (or repressed), for if the despairer was clearly aware of what was causing his despair he would no longer be in despair. He says;

> this is the obscurity which ... allows a person to see and know with such passionate clarity what he despairs *over* [misfortune, the earthly etc.], while what he despairs *of* escapes him. The condition for his being healed is always the conversion of the *of*, and purely philosophically it could be a subtle question whether it is possible both to be in despair and to be quite clear about what one despairs *of*.[100]

The contents of the '*of*', in a grand form of self-deception, are seen as threatening to the isolated and self-protective individual's sense of identity which, in this inclosed state, he will cling on to, forever losing sight of his infinite possibility. A similar explanation for the demonic (or Freud's 'deconstruction instinct' perhaps) is found in Dostoyevsky who says in *Notes from Underground*;

> Doesn't [man's] passionate love for destruction and chaos ... arise from his instinctive fear of attaining his goal and completing the building he is erecting ... Perhaps man's sole purpose in this world consists in this uninterrupted process of attainment, or in other words in living, and not specifically in the goal, which of course must be something like twice two is four, that is, a formula; but after all, twice two is four is not life, ... but the beginning of death.[101]

To find completion is seen as surrendering a part of ourselves (our will) that is basic to individual identity. The demonic, the urge to destroy, is then a primal drive towards its retainment for if knowledge, or the self, is completed it is lost to a greater power. That power—pure rationality for Dostoyevsky—may be threatening in this way, but of course in a different sense it is also Kierkegaard's enemy and he would want to claim that only our volition and passion can lead to the God-relation. In this sense that which he, Dostoyevsky, and many other existentialists see as intrinsically human is retained and heightened as a result of self-discovery within a higher power, and it is only an aesthetic temptation to not be willing to pass through rationality (and the ethical)

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[99] SUD, p.92n
[100] ibid
[101] *Notes from Underground* (Penguin, 1972), p.40

and out the other side. Whether all this amounts to the end of anxiety is a question I will address shortly.

D. Anxiety disguised or misinterpreted

We saw in the case of objective anxiety that in a culture where man is qualified as spirit, an individual, even though they have not made the qualitative leap themselves, can be described as 'anxious'. Kierkegaard distinguishes between the anxiety of pagans and that of 'paganism within Christianity'. In the former case, as we shall see, anxiety is truly a 'nothing' that is interpreted (or *mis*interpreted as Kierkegaard would have it) not as 'spirit' but as 'fate'. For the pagan Christian the 'spirit' and its anxiety is effectively repressed and a state of 'spiritlessness' is achieved. In this way spirit is not (innocently) misinterpreted but is 'disguised'.

The major difference, as far as I can see, between the pagan and the spiritless person is that the latter uses the language of spirit, but in such a way that it has no relation to inwardness;

Spiritlessness can say exactly the same thing that the richest man has said, but it does not say it by virtue of spirit. Man qualified as spiritless has become a talking machine, and there is nothing to prevent him from repeating by rote a philosophical rigmarole, a confession of faith, or a political recitative ... There is only one proof of spirit, and that is the spirit's proof within oneself.[102]

The last sentence of this passage is a clue to the nature of the anxiety of spiritlessness. The culture and language of such a person has awakened spirit in him to the extent that anxiety is there but 'is hidden and disguised',[103] buried, we assume, quite deeply, because in his day to day existence he does not feel anxious. Nevertheless, 'anxiety ... is waiting' because '... there is a creditor who never comes off badly, namely spirit.'[104] This apparently blissful existence is that of 'levelling', but it is an existence, as described in *The Present Age*, unconsciously geared towards keeping anxiety covered up. One way to do this is to talk the language of spirit, and thus superficially appease one's conscience, but the long-term effects will, Kierkegaard believes, be much worse. He compares the consequences with an unwillingness to face death 'in its true form'. To do this is terrifying, but to ignore death, and so have it creep up on us in disguise 'in order to mock the men

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[102] COA, p.95
[103] ibid, p.96
[104] ibid

who fancy they can mock death' is to be 'seized by a profound terror.'[105] In psychological language, if one does not face one's fears but represses them, they are transformed into anxiety which then manifests itself in the form of phobias, panic attacks, free-floating anxiety, and so on—forms of fear in which the object is missing or profoundly distorted as anxiety seeps or pours its way back into consciousness.

Anxiety interpreted as 'fate' or 'guilt', is not, I do not think, a case of repression, of somehow recoiling from the 'leap' and from ourselves, but (and here I agree with Hannay) of misinterpreting what it signifies. This could be a result of the relevant individual's objective historical situation— anxiety defined as 'fate' is associated with paganism (e.g. Greek philosophy) and defined as 'guilt' is associated with Judaism—but, as in the case of the 'immediate genius' *within* Christianity, it could be a result of the individual's idiosyncratic attunement. The assumption is that anxiety signifies to the individual something beyond the self as it is currently understood. In his pre-leap state this appears as a 'nothing' but a 'nothing' with latent meaning that must either be suppressed or be given some kind of content. The common response is spiritlessness, but if it is confronted then it takes the form of something beyond the individual that the individual in some way or other relates to. Someone that Kierkegaard calls the 'immediate genius' (i.e. someone who braves anxiety and is outwardly directed) interprets it as fate—an impersonal, meaningless necessity. To consult with fate (look for coincidences etc.) seems inherently irrational but Kierkegaard portrays such a genius as being beyond the universal —'he would not be striving with men but with the profoundest mysteries of existence'[106]—and fate *is* this mystery to him;

Not until sin is reached is providence posited. Therefore the genius has an enormous struggle to reach providence. If he does not reach it, truly he becomes a subject for the study of fate.[107]

The genius who looks inward Kierkegaard calls the 'religious genius' and he is associated with defining anxiety as guilt. Guilt for Kierkegaard is the opposite of freedom and if we take freedom to be self-knowledge or self-mastery (culminating in understanding and accepting oneself as 'transparently grounded in God'[108]) then such a genius struggles with this in order to avoid the possibility of becoming guilty. The problem is that without a leap of some kind the true content of

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[105] ibid
[106] COA, p.102
[107] ibid, p.99
[108] see SUD

self never becomes apparent and neither freedom nor guilt are fulfilled, always remaining possibilities. In the qualitative leap the individual is qualified as spirit and thus sees himself *as* guilty, but the actuality is not there when anxiety is *itself* defined as guilt; 'the relation of freedom to guilt is anxiety, because freedom and guilt are still only possibilities.'[109]

The upshot for both the immediate and religious geniuses is that anxiety never truly comes into focus and the qualitative leap, whereby the object of anxiety becomes a 'something', is never made. For Kierkegaard these advanced pre-leap states can be seen as the result of 'abortive' leaps (Hannay's expression) in that they take the individual in a direction that will not lead to a clear understanding of himself in faith. A fairly obvious question here is *what makes Kierkegaard's specific interpretation correct?* His reply would be "because otherwise all is lost, all is meaningless", but this calls into question the element of *risk* in accepting this interpretation. As Unamuno says in *The Tragic Sense of Life*, '[t]o believe in God is, in the first instance ... to wish that there may be a God, to be unable to live without him.'[110] If this is the case, as it appears to be with Kierkegaard, all he is risking is his despair which is no risk at all (unless we accept (and I do not think we can) self-deception as a serious (chosen) option—e.g. to pretend, until death, that the universal is enough). Here the conflict interpretation vs. the progressive/educative interpretation of anxiety makes an appearance again, and again my feeling is that for Kierkegaard the man (and as far as he is concerned therefore for all others) there is, in self-deception, only an *apparent* conflict between the truth and the will and thus only an *apparent* risk. Technically his interpretation cannot be correct or incorrect and only inward deepening can provide the passion required to turn what is objective (dogma in this case) into truth, and here, *for us*, lies the risk. But Kierkegaard, we presume, has this passion and as such rarely writes as if everything might be "lost" and "meaningless". For him we either accept our relation to God and go all-out for faith, or we sink in nihilism and/or flee into self-deception.

From the point of view of an individual who does not have faith, or is not (or apparently not) 'unable to live without God', the following question of Hannay's is, however, germane. He asks;

Can the failure to grow spiritually, and even the ultimate illusoriness of the whole notion of spiritual growth, be objects of Kierkegaardian anxiety?[111]

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[109] COA, p.109

[110] p.169

[111] op cit, p.187

And answers 'yes' to both questions. The former is what the pagan and the Jew (and the related geniuses) fear, and the latter must be a possibility or else faith would not be faith (i.e. it would involve no risk). From the subjective point of view pre-leap anxiety could signify many things— many possible directions of a nihilistic kind as well as a spiritual kind. That there are many options and little or no guidance is itself a profound source of anxiety and this matter is explored in later chapters. Where Kierkegaard says 'if at the beginning of his education [the individual] misunderstands anxiety, so that it does not lead him to faith, but away from faith, then he is lost',[112] a more secular response might be that the only misunderstanding of anxiety is to regard it as something to flee from rather than journey into. I think it is possible to accept the qualification of the self as comprising conflicting elements with no rational process of unifying them, and I think it is possible to accept Kierkegaard's implied growth pattern in principle, but this does not have to be a movement towards faith. In Chapter 7 I consider the possibility of a leap of a different sort (a 'leap of irony') whereby a degree of self-mastery is found not in faith but in the realization of ourselves as a contingency with no God or immutable ideal to answer to or move towards. As we shall see, this brings into question certain features of the qualitative leap such as its non-reversibility and its relation to guilt which Kierkegaard is able to side-step with subjectivity and dogmatics. In short, if we remove the Christian framework many more questions arise concerning pre/post-leap anxiety, anxieties A and B, and the relationship between them, than Kierkegaard is willing to ask.

To finish this chapter I shall take a look at the last section of COA—*Anxiety as Saving Through Faith*—which will serve for us, as it does for Kierkegaard, as a summary and conclusion of the role anxiety plays in his philosophy. Here I will question further the significance and source of the underlying assumptions.

E. Anxiety as Educator

Concluding his book on Kierkegaard's ethics George Stack says;

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[112] COA, p.159

If the cynic asks, why ought I to exist?, Kierkegaard would probably answer: because it is never possible, so long as one lives, to obliterate the inchoate realization that you *can* exist—to deny completely your subjective knowledge of your potentiality-for-becoming-a-self.[113]

It is not clear that this is correct; Kierkegaard would say that so long as anxiety is correctly understood then we can indeed always exist, but he also says (if we recall);

This is an adventure that every human being must go through—to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by succumbing in anxiety. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate.[114]

But the possibility continually exists that we become anxious in the *wrong* way. 'I will not deny' he says 'that whoever is educated by [anxiety] is exposed to danger ... namely suicide. If at the beginning of his education he misunderstands the anxiety, so that it does not lead him to faith but away from faith, then he is lost.'[115] Reckoning with oneself in terms of the infinite can lead to salvation but also to the ultimate defeat. If one is no longer tied by, no longer *anxious* about the finite (which is Kierkegaard's aim) then to run aground in the realm of the 'possible' may leave no other option other than suicide (or at least spiritual suicide). Anxiety, until we have fulfilled the seemingly impossible demands of faith at least, is inescapable: if we are not going to flee it we must be educated in the right way of approaching it, and this, I take it, is all part of Kierkegaard's mission as a writer.

What then does Kierkegaard see as the educative possibilities of anxiety? Most have so far been encountered, but it is useful to summarize and tie-up the loose ends. Broadly, anxiety can be seen as a spiritual journey or trial which, if completed successfully, brings the inward traveller to faith.[116] Here, perhaps more than anywhere in COA, Kierkegaard stresses the suffering associated with this journey in a way that brings FT to mind. 'No Grand Inquisitor' he says 'has such dreadful torments in readiness as anxiety has',[117] and in his journals he says 'anxiety is the most

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[113] *Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics* (University of Alabama Press, University, Alabama, 1977), p.178
[114] COA, p.155
[115] ibid, p.159
[116] There is a strong link between anxiety's journey and the classic 'hero quest' myth which applies not just to Kierkegaard but other writers on anxiety as well. A good reference for this is Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Paladin, 1988) in which he points out that the enticement > journey into the unknown (the uncanny) > despair > discovery and/or capture of a prize or enlightenment > return to the world type story typified by Odysseus and Jonah can be found in most or all of the world's mythologies.
[117] COA, p.155

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terrible kind of spiritual trial.'[118] The task is to satisfy the self's desire for actuality and for ideality. As a 'becoming' the self can never be actual: in SUD he says;

The self ... at every moment that it exists is in becoming, because the self ... does not actually exist; it is only that which is to come into being. To the extent, then, that the self does not become itself, it is not itself; but not to be oneself is precisely despair.[119]

Ideality cannot be attained because of the demands of the actual. Truth as subjectivity is precisely 'untruth'; objectivity is required but only God can know the truth objectively. Faith, then, is the paradoxical state whereby through inwardness objective truth is known concretely (i.e. God incarnate). To put this in other words, the task is to overcome despair and the only way to achieve this is through faith.

Despair is described by Kierkegaard as 'the corridor to faith'.[120] It is that which *pushes* us towards faith. Anxiety on the other hand, as the signifier of the infinite, exposes us to freedom and possibility and can be seen as that which *pulls* us towards faith. Without anxiety, despair could easily lead to suicide or an 'abortive' leap of some kind, but for Kierkegaard anxiety has this specific relation with faith and the infinite. In Hannay's words, 'despair is the inherently morbid and, to the enlightened observer, predictably unstable condition (or set of conditions) in which the self fails to exploit the unique educative possibilities offered by anxiety.'[121] In COA Kierkegaard uses a Hegelian definition of faith—'the inner certainty that anticipates infinity'[122]—and this is far more precisely defined in SUD as 'the self in being itself and in wanting to be itself is grounded transparently in God.'[123] To want to be a self-sufficient 'in-itself-for-itself' is to be in despair because this conflicts with our ontology: we are necessarily an unhappy synthesis of the finite and the infinite until we become absolute by virtue of our ('lowly') relation to God. 'Having a self' says Kierkegaard 'is the greatest concession that has been made to man, but also eternity's claim upon him.'[124] To refuse this claim is to sin, and sin, as we have seen, is not the opposite of virtue but of faith.

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[118] Cited in COA, p.172
[119] Cited in Nordentoft, op cit, pp.97-8
[120] SUD, p.98
[121] op cit, p.166
[122] COA, p.157
[123] SUD, p.114
[124] ibid, p.51

Repetition is an aim of inwardness and faith and therefore of anxiety. The most acute anxiety, the trial, is a separation from that which defines one's finite self and offers security therein, but it is this we must confront in order to truly feel at home: 'he who sank in possibility—his eye became dizzy, his eye became confused, so he could not grasp the measuring stick that Tom, Dick and Harry hold out as a saving straw to one sinking.'[125] Anxiety at its extreme point plunges the individual into an uncanny isolation, but such a high price must be paid for the infinite where;

> only the one who works gets bread, and only the one who knows anxiety finds rest, only one who descends to the underworld saves the loved one, only one who draws the knife gets Isaac. He who will not work does not get bread, but will be deluded, as the gods deluded Orpheus ...[126]

Not until the individual has *resigned* the infinite and stopped being anxious over it can he win it back in repetition. Only with his sights on the infinite can the temporal become the eternal.

But for Kierkegaard separation anxiety works both ways. *Because* of anxiety we do not feel at home in the realm of the finite, in the company of others even ('dependence upon God is the only independence'[127]). In his journals he says 'presentiment is the home-sickness of earthly life for the higher, for the perspicuity which man must have had in his paradisic life';[128] and confirms that 'this anxiety in the world is the only proof of our heterogeneity. If we lacked nothing ... no homesickness would come over us.'[129] When he says that anxiety is 'nothing but impatience'[130] he means impatience for the infinite, to be *at home again*. This home is a repetition of our original state of innocence and ignorance of duality: 'it requires no art to be ignorant' he says, but to *become* ignorant, and by becoming so, to be ignorant, that is the art.'[131]

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[125] COA, p.158

[126] FT, p.57

[127] From *The Gospel of Suffering* cited in Nordentoft, op cit, p.89

[128] *Journals and* Papers, p.38

[129] ibid, p.39

[130] ibid, p.41

[131] *Christian Discourses*, p.29. Earlier on though it is not clear if he thought this acquired ignorance can be sustained: in CUP he says; '[a]n existing person cannot be in two places at the same time, cannot be subject-object. When he is closest to ... [this], he is in passion; but passion is only momentary, and passion is the highest pitch of subjectivity.' (p.199) The beginning of this is similar to Nagel's message in VFN, and in later chapters (5-7) I shall discuss what seems to be the necessary oscillation between (roughly) the subjective and the objective perspectives involved in authentic existence.

Our education in the infinite is the task of anxiety and Kierkegaard describes it as being 'educated by possibility'.[132] Human being cannot be everything and cannot be in the truth, but must choose and as such leap beyond reason and what is to hand. Possibility is the 'weightiest of all categories'[133] because it brings human desires face to face with limitless good and limitless evil;

in possibility all things are equally possible, and whoever has been brought up by possibility has grasped the terrible as well as the joyful ... when a person graduates from the school of possibility ... he knows better than a child knows his ABC's that he can demand absolutely nothing of life and that the terrible, perdition, and annihilation live next door to every man ...[134]

Anxiety schools us in possibility, and part of this process is its constant hounding out of any attempts to escape into self-deception. 'No discerning judge' we are told 'understands how to interrogate and examine the accused as does anxiety.'[135] Kierkegaard sometimes makes it sound like a kind of spiritual enema—'anxiety enters [the individual's] soul and searches out everything and anxiously torments everything finite and petty out of him, and then leads him where he wants to go.'[136] As we have seen, once purged of finite attachments and self-deception the individual in as much as he *is* anxiety will move towards faith, and only further 'weak' moments will deter him from that path. In his journals Kierkegaard writes 'when the believer has faith, the absurd is not absurd—faith transforms it, but in every weak moment ... it is again more or less absurd to him.'[137] In these moments doubt and the finite ground us and anxiety is avoided and distorted rather than understood in the context of infinity. As discussed, a secular interpretation of anxiety would agree with the purging but not necessarily with the clarity of direction this results in. Questions of the nature of an existing self and how this is best fulfilled are left unanswered and potentially unanswerable. For Kierkegaard of course there is no rational *certainty* offered by anxiety—anxiety does not speak this language—but his approach seems to assume that the infinite is there to be found if we respond to anxiety in the correct way. This involves, for the individual, the torments described and a constant letting-go of ourselves, but a *meaningful* potentiality is assumed, if only on the strength of Christian dogma.

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[132] COA, p.156
[133] ibid
[134] ibid
[135] ibid
[136] ibid, p.159
[137] Cited in Mooney, op cit, p.131

The journey of anxiety is indeed not fully understandable to the non-initiate, and its goal is not transparent to thought, but the *structure* of Kierkegaard's movement towards self is fairly well determined. This likeness to Hegel is summed up by Hannay in the following way;

Although [Kierkegaard's] description of anxiety and despair can indeed often be construed phenomenologically, they are nevertheless liberally supplemented by descriptions specifying or hinting at a divine destiny, as of the abyss of ignorance into which freedom or spirit inexorably draws the self were the gateway to a goal whose nature has been fixed in advance of an analysis of the situation of individual existence.[138]

This is mitigated by the necessarily unique relation each individual has with the absolute, but Kierkegaard's emphasis on *Unum noris, omnes* certainly suggests that we all share a common route through anxiety and out of despair. There is a question mark, however, concerning the level at which this dictum applies. If COA is read, not as an objective account of the significance of anxiety, but as the *expression* of Kierkegaard's particular existential commitment then the mood is slightly altered. We are warned from the start about confusing our scientific categories with subjectivity and dogmatics and the full implications of anxiety clearly stretch beyond science. Once in the subjective and dogmatic realms, commitment, risk, inwardness etc. take precedence and the direct style of COA is, as previously suggested, inefficacious. Its scientific mood is suitable for presenting the case for the full significance of anxiety only once assumptions and commitments have been made within these incommensurable moods. If this is so, then the Hegelian style of the book may be a pointer (in the form of a dig at Hegel) to its own embodiment of a category mistake of which Kierkegaard is surely well aware (possibly explaining the use of a pseudonym). The empirical evidence, the phenomenological descriptions of anxiety, has only a speculative connection with the nature of God and faith, but Kierkegaard writes as if one is not only evidence for the other, but is an *explication* of the other. This does not reduce the whole work to a parody, or merely a comment on the impossibility of meaning (as Roger Poole would have it), it just means that *for Kierkegaard* this is the context in which anxiety should be understood in light of his own prior and largely (directly) incommunicable commitment to Christianity. As I hope I have shown, even if we subtract the dogma, COA is full of accurate and useful insights into the nature of anxiety.

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[138] op cit, p.175

For Heidegger and others anxiety does not necessarily signify a 'resting place' in the infinite. It can purge us, tell us what we are not, but this is not the same as telling us that we are free to be what we want to be or that we can become that which can be what it wants to be without repressing aspects of ourselves. Without the Christian structure anxiety is, at its furthest point, blind, and in telling us that anxiety teaches that we can 'demand absolutely nothing of life' it might appear that Kierkegaard would basically agree with this. Further evidence is found in the journals where he says that 'deep within every human being there still lives the anxiety over the possibility of being alone in the world ...'[139] However, as C. Stephen Evans points out, he often sounds as if knowledge of God's existence is innate and unquestionable except for someone in self-deception. Evans says;

in a draft version of *Philosophical Fragments*, it is said that there has never been a genuine atheist, only people who did not wish to "let what they knew, that God existed, get power over their minds.[140]

COA is seemingly built on a similar premise.[141] What is perhaps unsaid in COA is the very anxiety that preceded its creation. If not then Kierkegaard's emphasis on risk is somehow nullified. The ultimate risk must be the belief in God's existence, or at least in the *type* of being that he is (i.e. one that has forgiven). If this is taken as established then there is indeed hardship in reaching a position of faith, but surely it is not a risky endeavour—the hard work and sacrifice can always be seen as teleologically significant. As such, it makes sense to assume that the whole of COA was written against a background mood of risk and anxiety. This, as will become clearer, would have consisted of anxieties A and B and a (chosen) state of mind that attempts to cope with the paradox inherent in their co-existence. Kierkegaard instead appears to begin with such a state of mind as a given, and this he calls Christianity or faith. As such it is not chosen, and as such the separate anxieties that for the secular existentialist should precede it and make it necessary are not posited. To subscribe to any metaphysics not reliant upon an infinite being to whom we are answerable generates this basic duality without any in-built possibility of salvation through discovery (of God, our infinite nature etc.). This creates more diverse possibilities in response to anxieties A and B and its own embodiment of groundlessness engenders greater uncanniness than a religious

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[139] In COA, p.171

[140] Evans, C.S. 'Kierkegaard's View of the Unconscious' (in Matustik and Westphal (ed.) *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, Indiana University Press, 1995), p.90

[141] Although I have already quoted a passage where he says that 'man as such does not know about the religious in the Christian sense' (see p.44n). This suggests that we have a given or innate sense of the infinite (a 'maker's mark') but not necessarily of the Christian God. If so then clearly a choice of interpretation is required.

alternative. It does not, if you listen hard enough, say "faith or despair", but at *most* says "choose resolutely or be less than authentic"—a dictum imbued with a pointing backwards to its beginnings and not, as in the Christian alternative, fairly forcibly forwards into the actualization of a God-relation.

As suggested, the difference can be seen as resulting from a blurring of anxieties A and B. For Kierkegaard we are not paralysed in anxiety before the ultimate emptiness and meaninglessness of self, but only by an obscurity and ambiguity as to what constitutes the self. As we shall see in the following chapters, it can be argued that the structure of existence for the secular existentialist is founded on the conflict between an anxiety 'in the face of' our fundamental ontology and an anxiety 'about' ourselves as responsible, 'inward' beings. The conflict exists because the former, as Tillich shows, continually threatens to undermine the latter, but in Kierkegaard's system this conflict only occurs in self-deception (despair). For him the inward being taken to its passionate limits *is* the being which coincides with itself as 'grounded transparently in God'. As such there is only one *kind* of anxiety which can be said to be directed both at the self and at the infinite because the infinite is what the self can and should become: for Kierkegaard the infinite is, oddly, *personalized*.

On the question of whether anxiety can be overcome, Kierkegaard, in his later *Christian Discourses* explicitly says that it can, but qualifies this;

the salvation is *commanded*, namely to be without anxiety ... To be without anxiety ... that is a difficult gait to go, almost like walking on water; but if thou art able to believe, it can nevertheless be done.[142]

This then is the ideal, and this indicates Kierkegaard's firm rejection of the finite. Other writers, in particular Heidegger (as we shall see in the next chapter), do not see an overcoming of anxiety even as an ideal (whether a possibility or not) and this is indicative of a basic acceptance of some or other form of a limited, finite existence which can be construed as authentic. The experience of anxiety changes in certain ways (even to the point where it becomes 'joyful' or 'peaceful') but key elements remain (or are claimed to remain) which justify (or attempt to justify) anxiety as the perennial and defining mood of human existence.

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[142] *Christian Discourses* (OUP, 1939), p.24

3

The Sense of Nothing: Heidegger

'Sense experience is to objects what moods are to the world'—Stanley Cavell[1]

'Innumerable 'lookings' have discovered and explored a world which is now ... *compulsively* present to the will in a particular situation, and the will is dismayed by the feeling that it ought now to be everything and in fact is not.'—Iris Murdoch (*The Sovereignty of Good*)

'No reason to get excited / The thief he kindly spoke / But there are many here among us / Who feel that life is but a joke'—Bob Dylan (op cit)

<<<<Φ>>>>

In Heidegger's philosophy anxiety plays its most prominent role in the early work, particularly *Being and Time* (BT) and the essay *What is Metaphysics?* (WIM), and it is these that I shall concern myself with. My aim, firstly, is to summarily locate anxiety in the schema of BT and thus orient it with respect to the general project of Heidegger's early philosophy. Secondly, I will present a detailed sketch of the *process* of anxiety itself; an unpacking of its components, including a close look at way of being that Heidegger calls 'falling'. Thirdly, I want to compare two conflicting readings of what the revelations of anxiety mean for Heideggerian authenticity; and fourthly I shall offer my own interpretation of how the discoveries of Division I of BT might relate to the issue of an authentic existence as explored in Division II. Amongst all this I want to lend support to the views of those commentators who think that Heidegger owes a largely unacknowledged debt to Kierkegaard (although I do not think this debt is always given the correct emphasis).[2] This issue will not form a section of its own, but rather crop-up where relevant as indeed Kierkegaard's influence crops-up across the breadth of BT.

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[1] Cited in S. Mulhall's *Can there be an Epistemology of Moods?*

[2] As far as I am aware, the only references to Kierkegaard in BT (Blackwell, 1990) are in notes on pages 278, 235 and 388.

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Heidegger's mission statement for BT is, to say the least, ambitious: 'Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of *being* and to do so concretely'.[3] By this he does not mean the *definition* of being but something like the *significance* of being; as existing beings we want to know what significance being *itself* has for us. The being of Dasein is 'being-in-the-world' [*in-der-Welt-sein*]. This refers not to our spatial locality but to our essentially mutually defining relationship with entities in the world, other people and cultural significations. We arise *out* of and attain identity in terms of our language and the way our surroundings have been interpreted. There is a strong vein of pragmatism running through BT: the world is primarily encountered not in theoretical terms (as 'present-at-hand' in Heidegger's language) but as equipment which is 'ready-to-hand'. The world has primordial significance in terms of what we require from it and not in terms of a detached, theoretical perspective. This is in turn significant in terms of the broad network of meanings that is, for Heidegger, 'the world'. The relationship is reciprocal in that, as intentional, consciousness is reliant upon this world to give it content, but this content does not consist of essences discoverable by 'eidetic reduction'. The network of meanings that is 'the world' is the product of Dasein's cultural and historical interpretations and has no essence or absolute status beyond this. These interpretations are the result, primarily, of encountering objects as 'ready-to-hand' and the theoretical stance becomes important only when this fails us. If Husserl rejected Descartes' position by identifying consciousness as intentional and not a substantial, independent entity possessing God-given knowledge, then Heidegger rejected Husserl's emphasis on its ability to 'bracket' the nexus of meanings and practical relations in order to identify the specific contents of one's consciousness as meaningful *in themselves*. For Heidegger the self and the world, imbued as they are with meaning, are contingencies to the core.

If then Heidegger wants to investigate 'the meaning of being' this immediately raises the problem of how we are able to step beyond the particular set of interpretations that have formed us and our thinking and pass comment on being. If the tools of our analysis are themselves a product of our particular, contingent form of being then in what way, if any, can we use them to successfully

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[3] BT, p.19. I am using the Robinson and Macquarrie translation throughout although, like Stambaugh's translation (SUNY, 1997), I do not use the capital 'B' in the translation of *Sein*. Similarly I do not use capitalize 'nothing' where both the translations of WIM that I use have done so.

uncover the meaning of being in itself? Heidegger attempts to avoid a vicious circularity by investigating not the contents of consciousness as a Husserlian phenomenological analysis would do, but *human existence* in its entirety. In light of this, expressions like 'man' or 'human being' carry too many preconceptions and so for the purposes of his enquiry Heidegger speaks of *'Dasein'* (being there). So, by means of an ontological investigation of Dasein's being, Heidegger is attempting to work out the meaning of being in general, but how is this able to happen? Uncontroversially Heidegger says that 'Dasein ... is ... distinguished by the fact that, in its very being, that being is an issue for it'; and 'Understanding of being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's being.'[4] More interestingly, however, he claims that we have a 'pre-ontological awareness of being'—one that is categorially more basic than the type of understanding and interpretation that confines us to a contingent perspective. This awareness is ingrained in these forms of interpretation, in our cultural practices, in what is seen as useful and important—in what Heidegger calls our 'average everydayness'. If we care to turn our ontological gaze upon ourselves then our being is there to be uncovered and , so the claim goes, in uncovering the being of a being for whom being is a basic issue, the meaning of being itself is revealed.

What though is Dasein's kind of being? Heidegger says that it is *existence* (*'The essence of Dasein lies in its existence'*[5]). By this he means that Dasein does not have properties as, for example, a tree has the property of being made of wood, but rather has *possibilities*. In Hubert Dreyfus' words (after Charles Taylor) 'Dasein is interpretation all the way down'[6]—there is no content of life that is essentially *us*, rather we must choose from various possible contents and, to be true to our kind of being is to somehow maintain this awareness whilst living the content a life *must have* and which to a great extent is given by its history. As introduced to us by Kierkegaard, the existential nature of human beings or Dasein is such that to be authentic in one way or another, the kind of being that we essentially are must be appropriated or accepted. Despite his attempts to avoid circularity, the difficulties associated with this position—one where this very acceptance is infused with contingent interpretations—are considerable and constantly hound Heidegger's analysis.

To begin with, if Heidegger is to investigate being via the being for whom being is an issue he must begin with Dasein *as it presents itself.* 'In this everydayness', he says, 'there are certain structures

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[4] op cit, p.32
[5] ibid, p.67
[6] *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Being and Time Division I* (MIT Press, 1991), p.25

which we shall exhibit—not just any accidental structures, but essential ones.'[7] But, if an interpretation is then offered of Dasein in its 'average everdayness', by what standard are we to judge this interpretation? Existentially speaking it has been suggested that much of the power of BT derives from its being a 'hermeneutics of suspicion'.[8] The suspicion is that we are not facing up to our being because we find it uncomfortable or unpleasant in some way. A correct interpretation will elicit a reluctant admittance or perhaps a (predicted) strengthening of defensive measures. (In psychoanalysis, another 'hermeneutic of suspicion', the vehemence of denial is taken as an indication of recognition on the part of the patient.) As pre-ontological beings Heidegger's suspicion is that we are for the most part attempting to escape our essence as existence but that if faced with a correct interpretation of this state of affairs we can, in some way, be shown to acknowledge it. To ask, in a straight-forward manner, "what is the meaning of being?" is liable to generate an answer suited to this general 'flight' from being. 'Is' is predefined, particularly in the sense of it referring to the ontic rather than the ontological.[9] A further suspicion about fleeing, indicated by (what Heidegger saw as) philosophy's recent lack of attention to the question of being, regards our tendency to see ourselves as thing-like. Given the opportunity, this way of understanding will also infect an investigation into being itself and so Heidegger's methodology attempts to pre-empt this kind of subversion by directing its efforts at uncovering whatever it is average everydayness is occupied with covering-up.

That a hermeneutics of suspicion does not entirely solve Heidegger's methodological problems has been pointed out by Dreyfus[10] and Hodge[11] among others. The thesis of BT is that temporality is 'the meaning of the being of that entity which we call "Dasein"'[12] but what is to say that this is *the* interpretation of Dasein, that there are not still other factors that offer further or even greater illumination of the meaning of being? If there are, then the being that is revealed in the analysis of Dasein as essentially temporal is not going to be the complete picture, a greater illumination of being might be revealed by a differently-skewed suspicion. The issue of love and authentic relations with others, for instance, is not something that Heidegger pays much attention to, and although in a

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[7] BT, p.38
[8] Paul Ricoeur's term, cited in Dreyfus, op cit, p.37
[9] i.e. to the nature of things rather than the nature of the being which gives rise to the possibility of thing-ness in the first place.
[10] op cit
[11] Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics* (Routledge, 1995)
[12] Heidegger, op cit, p.38

sense I think his emphasis on temporality is correct in as much as it is basic, the mistake he makes is in attempting to capture our subjective response to this in a systematic philosophy—something he perhaps remedied in his later work.

As I see it, Heidegger's use of anxiety is a central part of this attempt to offer a final meaning of being and part of my purpose in what follows is to ask whether or not he succeeds. Another way of putting this is to ask whether his analysis of Dasein offers a singular and concrete *way of being* that makes it possible to exist in the full illumination of being itself. As I shall go on to explain, anxiety can be seen as functioning for Heidegger in such a way as to provide an escape clause, a way of completing his analysis that relies on a profound experience that is potentially available to all of us. Justification is sought for the substantive power of the hermeneutic circle by appeal to a primordial experience in which we encounter being in its most primitive significance, the result of which is a radical (but predictable) alteration in our mode of existence. It can still be claimed of course that there are experiences other than anxiety that are equally basic, and other ways of existentially acknowledging these experiences, but as I shall go on to explain in more detail, anxiety should not be seen as a particular experience with a limited epistemic or emotional potential, but as a categorially unique *way* of experiencing all kinds of moods and a *way* of acknowledging them.

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The 'da' of Da-sein—the *being-in* of being-in-the-world—is described by Heidegger as the way in which we 'illuminate' the world, and 'by its very nature, Dasein brings its "there" along with it ... Dasein *is its disclosedness*.'[13] We are then our own illumination of the world—to be compared less with a source of light ... than with the light itself'[14]—and this process has, depending on your reading, two, three or four essential components. One of these is *Befindlichkeit*; variously translated as 'state-of-mind', 'affectedness', 'mood', 'frame of mind', and 'situatedness'—none of which is accurate, either swaying too much towards the subjective and psychological or too much towards impersonal objectivity. The literal translation is 'how one finds oneself' (a form of greeting in German) which is deliberately ambiguized by Heidegger to give emphasis to the way we always encounter ourselves as already *in* the world with a particular comportment towards it.

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[13] BT, p.171
[14] Cooper, D.E. *Heidegger* (Claridge Press, 1996), p.27

Befindlichkeit provides the background for intentionality in that it is on its terms that particular things show up as significant. Before we can find some*thing* fearful we must already have provided the context of fearfulness by the mood of fear. An analogy might be to see a particular mood as the colour of a projection screen. The prominence of what is then projected upon the screen will depend upon that colour so that on a red screen black objects will be more distinct than orange ones and so on. An object that is both black and orange will gain a different aspect than if it were projected upon a blue screen. This analogy is imperfect in that a mood does not merely illuminate in terms of what we perceive, but in terms of what *matters*. Indeed, how something is perceived is indelibly influenced by its practical significance; with respect to fear Heidegger says 'pure beholding could never discover anything like that which is threatening'.[15] By 'pure beholding' Heidegger means an ideal kind of theoretical understanding; the kind that, if there were any, would apply to objects free from interpretation. For Heidegger even the practice of scientific experimentation is not mood independent.[16]

Whether we are aware of it or not we are always 'in' a mood, always comporting ourselves towards the world in one way or another. Heidegger acknowledges the existence of the 'pallid, evenly balanced lack of mood' but this he says is itself 'far from nothing at all.'[17] In such a state, he continues, 'Dasein grows tired [*uberdrussig*] of itself. Being has become manifest as a burden.'[18] We are in a mood, in other words, but its burdensome nature encourages us to flee it, and flight in this instance takes the form of a kind of denial. As with all forms of disclosure, Dasein is then (potentially) revealed to itself in a particular way by its moods. We have a (pre-ontological) awareness that mood signifies that we are the arbiters of being—something that brings with it (and is revealed in) relentless anxiety. In a fundamental way it signifies, in David Cooper's words, that 'the world ... is indelibly human; and humans are indelibly worldly.'[19] It is, Heidegger says, 'a primordial kind of being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself prior to all cognition and volition, and beyond their range of disclosure.'[20] To 'lack' mood is not to be free of this (which is

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[15] BT, p.177

[16] In a footnote in COA Kierkegaard says; 'That science, just as much as poetry and art, presupposes a mood in the creator as well as the observer, and that an error in the modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the development of thought, have been entirely forgotten in our time ...' (p.14)

[17] BT, p.173

[18] ibid

[19] *Existentialism* (Blackwell, 1990), p.81

[20] BT, p.175. For my purposes mood can be taken as a particular example of *Befindlichkeit* such as a peaceful mood, a bored mood etc.

impossible) but to attempt to deny it. The moods that are easiest to ignore are those which belong to our culture and are thus the most pervasive and the most easily misunderstood as 'the way the world is and must be'.[21] As we shall see when we come to discuss anxiety, there is perhaps a certain mood in which the very fact that Dasein is subject to moods becomes not just an implicit awareness but the primary revelation of that mood. For the moment it is important to realize that for Heidegger not only are moods unavoidable, but that for the most part it is beyond our ability to change from one mood to another. In terms strongly reminiscent of Kierkegaard he says 'a mood assails us', and continues, 'it comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside' but arises out of being-in-the-world, as a way of such being.'[22]

A further important aspect of *Befindlichkeit* is its capacity to expose Dasein to itself in its 'thrownness' [*Gerworfenheit*]. Thrownness is our condition of finding ourselves already 'in-the-world' and predefined in terms of that world. We are not self-creating, but rather hit the ground running *among* and *as* a set of contingencies. Slightly ambiguously Heidegger says that in a mood;

Dasein is always brought before itself, and has already found itself, not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has.[23]

I say this is ambiguous because even though Dasein can potentially confront itself in its thrownness by encountering the significance of mood it does not do this. Heidegger goes on to say;

The way in which the mood discloses is not one in which we look at thrownness, but one in which we turn towards or turn away. For the most part the mood does not turn towards the burdensome character of Dasein which is manifest in it.[24]

What matters is not mood surely, but the manner in which it is encountered. The importance of mood in terms of revealing how Dasein is is that it is a simple and fundamental structure of our being-in which when exposed for what it is manages to reveal the very essence of Dasein's special kind of being. When Heidegger says 'even in the most indifferent and inoffensive everydayness the being of Dasein can burst forth as a naked 'that it is and has to be''[25] he is, I think, referring to a change of perspective upon that mood from its being an unstated background for intentionality to

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[21] Later on I shall discuss what appears to be a significant incommensurability between the mood or a culture or an age, and the changing moods of an individual Dasein.
[22] BT, p.176
[23] ibid, p.174
[24] ibid
[25] ibid, p.173

itself being the object of concern. To briefly pre-empt myself, as an object of concern mood reveals our essential ambiguity in terms of our essential attachment to and alienation from the world. On the one hand the world must be encountered within a mood and is in this sense human, but on the other hand these moods are not the property or the power of an individual Dasein. A corollary to this is the realization that our mood-based existence disallows a certain substantial notion of transcendence—if the world is indelibly human there is no room for anything extra-human, for anything God-like. What does *this* perspective amount to though? Can we talk of a mood that highlights the very nature of mood? And if so does this mood become its own mood or is it something that somehow subverts the original mood? Indeed, can it in any sense, perhaps for the briefest moment, leave us mood*less*? These particular questions are central for understanding the nature of anxiety as Heidegger employs it but, as I shall be looking at anxiety in depth shortly, I shall leave them to simmer for the time being.

A second basic way in which the world is revealed Heidegger calls 'understanding' [*Verstehen*]. To extend my projection screen analogy, understanding refers to the totality of that which shows up against the background of mood—roughly, a pragmatic intentionality. In the mood of fear, for instance, a particular scenario such as the sound of footsteps at night in what you took to be an empty house will be understood in a general sense as threatening, and within this certain possibilities will present themselves. If the 'for-the-sake-of-which' (as Heidegger puts it) is to avoid or destroy the threat then Dasein must choose from the options it sees as helping to achieve this goal such as calling the police, in which case the phone is interpreted as the way out of a situation understood as threatening etc.

Existentially speaking, if we recall that Dasein's essence is existence, Dasein *becomes* its possibilities and these possibilities are projected in understanding (remembering of course that Dasein is always projecting *from* the position of a previous possibility, not some fixed projection room and that it can only project within the limited realm illuminated by itself as mood);

Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting. As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities.[26]

Dasein is constantly 'more' than it factually is, it is always *ahead* of itself, but equally, because this *is* Dasein's constitution it is 'never more than it factually is'.[27]

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[26] op cit, p.185

Both *Befindlichkeit* and understanding are unambiguously part of the essential structure of Dasein's being-in, but the status of the other two features—'discourse' and 'falling' is less clearly defined. I will not say much about discourse [*Rede*] except that although in Division I of BT it is apparently on an equal footing with *Befindlichkeit* and understanding ('*Discourse is existentially equiprimordial with Befindlichkeit and understanding*'[28]), Heidegger later says 'when the "there" has been completely disclosed, its disclosedness is constituted by understanding, *Befindlichkeit* and falling; and this disclosedness becomes Articulated by discourse.'[29] Unfortunately this statement forms part of a further confusion regarding the status of the concept of 'falling' [*Verfallen*].

In Division I 'falling' is referred to as 'a basic kind of being of the "there"',[30] specifically the 'everyday' kind of being. As far as this goes it is clear that falling is not a mode of being-in on all fours with *Befindlichkeit* and understanding; it is less a structural mode in which the world is disclosed as a prevalent species of disclosure. Heidegger, however, seems to sway between this interpretation and one where falling becomes an essential constituent of our being-in-the-world. The reason why this might be the case will be explored more fully in the next section, but for the moment I shall describe what is going on in falling and further draw-out its ambiguity.

Falling can be read as a way of being-in which we become absorbed into the pursuits of the 'they' [*Das Man*].[31] By the 'they' Heidegger does not mean anything like an uneducated or non-intellectual mass. He would appear to condemn this kind of generalization when he says;

we take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back ... [32]

It would however seem that his claim 'our interpretation is purely ontological ... and is far removed from any moralizing critique'[33] is incompatible with much of what he says about the 'they'.

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[27] op cit. It is necessary to recognize the difference between *factually* and *factically*—the latter refers to Dasein's ontology, the former to its ontic status at a particular time. So, factically speaking I am thrown and contingent, and factually I am a Ph.D. student.
[28] ibid, p.203
[29] ibid, p.400
[30] ibid, p.172
[31] Also translated as the 'one' (e.g. Dreyfus) and the 'anyone' (e.g. Guignon and Golomb)
[32] op cit, p.164
[33] ibid, p.211

To live inauthentically is to live in a way defined by amorphous public opinions and standards and not to acknowledge, firstly the essential contingency of these measures, and secondly one's singularity or individuality. One's 'they-self' is characterized by 'distantiality' (defining oneself by means of comparison with others), and 'averageness' (a suppression of qualitative distinctions not sanctioned by the rigidity enforced by 'distantiality'[34]); which reveal our appetite for 'levelling-down' the possibilities open to us so as not to have to face the unsettling demands of authenticity. All this amounts to what Heidegger calls 'publicness' [*offentlichkeit*], a conspiratorially self-deceiving mode of existing that acts like a thick fog, obscuring Dasein's basic ontology. Part of the temptation of 'publicness' is that 'the particular Dasein ... is *disburdened* by the "they"', it is deprived of its 'answerability'.[35] Just what it is disburdened of will become more apparent as this chapter progresses, but generally this sort of insight is of course not new to Heidegger. He clearly owes a substantial debt to Kierkegaard's *The Present Age* for his analysis of 'publicness'.[36] With respect to disburdening I think we find a close link with Kierkegaard's comments on the tendency to act on unappropriated 'principles'. A principle provides someone with a painless response to a situation that would otherwise call for personal responsibility and strength of will; 'we demolish "on principle" what we ourselves admire—what nonsense ... Meanwhile modesty or repentance or responsibility have a hard time getting hold of such behaviour, for after all it was done on principle.'[37]

If the anxiety associated with authenticity is a primary motivation to become 'levelled' then indolence is as great, and one equally well documented. In *Schopenhauer as Educator* Nietzsche says, 'men are even lazier than they are timorous, and what they fear most is the troubles with which any unconditional honesty and nudity would burden them.'[38] In his sections on the 'they' (particularly his emphasis on 'disburdening') Heidegger seems to be highlighting this tendency among Daseins and this supports the claim that falling is not (simply) part of a structural account of being-in-the-world but a psychological account of *why*, in terms of our reaction to and interpretation of our being, most of us spend most of our lives as 'they-selves'.

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[34] In Kierkegaard's words the self is 'ground smooth as a pebble' by 'the others' (SUD, p.64)
[35] op cit, p.165
[36] For example, see Harrison Hall's *Love and Death: Kierkegaard and Heidegger on Authentic and Inauthentic Human Existence* (Inquiry, 27, 1984), for an interesting discussion of this.
[37] *The Present Age*, p.102
[38] In Kaufmann, op cit, p.122

The type of understanding that goes on in 'publicness' is worth explaining in that it seems to further bring home the gravity that sustains the 'fall'. 'Idle talk' [*Gerede*] generates what is called 'average intelligibility' as against 'primordial understanding'. In it our entire field of understanding is defined in terms of opinion and loses contact with the appropriative possibilities of first-hand experience. This field then takes on a life of its own, self-generated by opinions formed through other opinions and creating the illusion of genuine understanding. This process shores-up the whole structure so that it can ascend to greater heights of inauthenticity; the 'self-certainty of the 'they'' says Heidegger, is 'tranquillizing'.[39] As with Kierkegaard's suspicion of 'principles' 'idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own.'[40] And,

because this discoursing has lost its primary relationship-to-being towards the entity talked about ... it does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping*.[41]

Sustaining this ever rising and enlarging bubble of gossip is what Heidegger calls 'curiosity' [*Neugier*]. Here the levelling-down of qualitative differences is most apparent and the 'curious' person shares characteristics with someone in Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage;

Curiosity is characterized by a specific way of *not tarrying* alongside what is closest ... [it] seeks restlessness and the excitement of continual novelty and changing encounters. In not tarrying, curiosity is concerned with the constant possibility of distraction.[42]

The third aspect of the way the world is disclosed to the 'they' is 'ambiguity' [*Zweideutigkeit*]. Ambiguity, I take it, is the ideal tool for sustaining self-deception. The 'they' only hear what they want to hear, see what they want to see etc. and so long as their understanding is ambiguous enough then 'averageness'—a common, anodyne currency of comprehension—can always be found.

ambiguity is always tossing to curiosity that which it seeks; and it gives idle talk the semblance of having everything decided in it.[43]

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[39] BT, p.222
[40] ibid, p.213
[41] ibid, p.212
[42] ibid, p.216
[43] ibid, p.219

By such means the stability of the 'they' is maintained, but this is not the healthy, authentic stability characterized by what Heidegger later refers to as 'steadiness' and 'steadfastness'. Rather it is a stability held together by fear and indolence where nothing of any consequence happens and indeed there is seemingly no true bond between its members;

Being-with-one-another in the "they" is by no means an indifferent side-by-side-ness in which everything has been settled, but rather an intent, ambiguous watching of one another, a secret and reciprocal listening in. Under the mask of "for-one-another", an "against-one-another" is in play.[44]

Passages like this last one make falling sound like a psychological account of the way in which we *tend* to behave most of the time. Heidegger clearly wants for there to be more than this though; he wants falling, or some aspects of falling, to be intrinsic to our ontology. Notoriously there are contradictory remarks to be found in BT which suggest both that falling is structural (ontological) and that it is motivated (psychological). He says at one stage 'authentic being-one's-self ... is an existentiell modification of the "they"',[45] but then later on, 'from an existential-ontological point of view, the "not-at-home" [in the 'they-world'] must be conceived as the primordial phenomenon',[46] and as if to drive-home this ambiguity later still we are told that 'proximally and for the most part Dasein is *not* itself but is lost in the 'they-self' which is an existentiell modification of the authentic self.'[47]

To a great extent I think this problem can be sorted out by dropping the ontological use of falling and replacing it with thrownness. It can, I think, be acknowledged that as thrown we must inherit certain ways of interpreting the world which are common (at least) to our culture and our epoch. In amongst Heidegger's seemingly derogatory comments on 'they'-behaviour he says, more neutrally;

The dominance of the public way in which things have been interpreted has already been decisive even for the possibility of having a mood—that is, for the basic way in which Dasein lets the world "matter" to it. The "they" prescribes one's *Befindlichkeit* and determines what and how one 'sees'.[48]

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[44] op cit
[45] ibid, p.168
[46] ibid, p.234
[47] ibid, p.365. By 'existentiell' Heidegger means the concrete possibilities available to a particular *Dasein* as contrasted with 'existential' which refers to the broader structure of being within which existentiell possibilities are illuminated (e.g. thrownness and intentionality).
[48] ibid, p.213. By 'sees' (sight) he means the totality of our understanding or vision rather than literally what we perceive.

If in this respect we are determined in our understanding of the world, he seems also to mean that *within* this we tend to fall into an 'average' way of being in which we are deliberately avoiding something—in part the very fact that we are thrown and contingent. As the next section will reinforce, it is easy to see why we should want to 'flee' into the 'they', and *this* motivation is undoubtedly abetted by the established tendency of most others to do the same thing. The slope has been greased so to speak; as John Richardson remarks,

we may capture this point by imagining [the] continuum to have an inherent tilt, so that we tend to slide from the position of authenticity towards that of inauthenticity.[49]

This hazard is suggested in Strindberg's *The Dance of Death* where Allan, describing something like a 'they' says that ' just like the cuttlefish down by the jetty ... [t]hey don't bite, but they stir up an eddy that sucks one in.'[50] This though is very different from saying that we *must* be fallen if it implies that we must be inauthentic. This is clearly not what Heidegger wants to say as most of Division II of BT deals with the way in which we can attempt to be authentic, but why the ambiguity? A clue is found, I think, in his (ostensibly at least) anomalous emphasis on guilt. As I shall look at this is more depth in the next section, for the moment it suffices to say that there is more than a nominal correspondence with the Christian fall and in particular Kierkegaard's analysis of it in COA. For Heidegger it is somehow not enough that we are thrown into the world and have to get on with it; he wants to provoke a sense of *lack* to which there is no positive response, only a specific (ontological) kind of guilt.

II

For my purposes the central issue is, if falling is structured, what are we *falling away* from? And if it is motivated, what are we *fleeing* from? If there are simultaneous psychological and ontological processes at work, is there a phenomenon broad enough to explain both? The simple answer to all these questions is 'anxiety'. I will say in advance that I think there *are* simultaneous processes at work, and in a manner reminiscent of Kierkegaard's now familiar remark that 'if science has any other psychological intermediate term that has the dogmatic, the ethical and the psychological

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[49] *Existential Epistemology* (Clarendon, 1991), p.44
[50] *Five Plays of Strindberg* (Anchor, 1960), p.195

advantages that anxiety possesses, then that should be preferred',[51] Heidegger chooses anxiety not primarily because it is something we can all recognize in everyday life *as* having the felt quality and revelations that he ascribes to it, but because, for reasons already outlined,[52] it is the best available candidate. He is looking for a way of uncovering Dasein's fundamental ontology that is basic and therefore simple, and yet fertile in its powers of illumination. The 'existential analytic', he says, '... must seek for one of the most *far-reaching* and *most primordial* possibilities of disclosure—one that lies in Dasein itself.' He asks, 'is there in Dasein an understanding *Befindlichkeit* in which Dasein has been disclosed to itself in some distinctive way?' and responds, 'as a *Befindlichkeit* which will satisfy these methodological requirements, the phenomenon of *anxiety* will be made basic for our analysis.'[53]

Anxiety is referred to as a *Grundbefindlichkeit* or 'basic mood' in which Dasein is revealed to Dasein *as* Dasein in a fundamental and complete sense. It is this realization that Dasein in its fallen state is falling away or fleeing from and the task is now to consider how and why this happens. The 'how' of anxiety, its mechanics, can be described in terms of three aspects. Heidegger's description of what I take to be the 'onset' of anxiety sounds very similar to an anxiety attack (in the psychopathological sense) as described in the opening chapter. As has become familiar, anxiety is distinguished from fear in that we fear some*thing* whereas anxiety has no object: 'that in the face of which one is anxious is completely indefinite.'[54] There is an overwhelming sense of danger but, initially at least, no way of locating this threat; 'it threatens from 'nowhere'' says Heidegger, 'but it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath.'[55] The suggestion at this stage, and later on, is that in fleeing anxiety we turn towards things in the world and thus the possibility of fear. In WIM he says 'because fear possesses this trait of being "fear in the face of" and "fear for", he who fears and is afraid is captive to the mood in which he finds himself.'[56] In anxiety however;

The indeterminateness of that in the face of which and for which we become anxious is no mere lack of determination but rather the essential impossibility of determining it. In a familiar phrase this indeterminateness comes to the fore.[57]

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[51] COA, p.77
[52] See *Preamble*.
[53] BT, pp. 226-7. I will later mention how anxiety is better understood as an 'understanding *Befindlichkeit*' than just a *Befindlichkeit*.
[54] ibid, p.231
[55] ibid
[56] (Routledge), p.100
[57] ibid, pp.100-101

The inadequacy of the idea that fear is an ontic version of anxiety was explored earlier on,[58] the general point being that anxiety as Heidegger describes it is too complex to be merely the ontological equivalent of fear and that fear is itself too complex to be explained simply in terms of a turning away from the revelations of anxiety.

Still, the scene is set for anxiety to develop into something more distinctly Heideggerian and the account begins to part company with the more typical psychological description. 'That in the face of which one has anxiety', says Heidegger, 'is being-in-the-world as such'.[59] In other words the cause of the anxiety is not some *thing* in the world, but the lack of significance that things in the world suddenly attain. 'Everyday familiarity collapses'[60] and Dasein is left floating as those things that once anchored it to the world slips from its grasp. At this point anxiety is a non-intentional (or perhaps 'non-comportmental') state—it is not anxiety *about* anything but the revelation of the status of things in general.[61] If Dasein is to be revealed to itself in its fullness it must not rely upon the contingent significance of things to facilitate this revelation (which would then be partial or finite) but upon 'being-as-a-whole'. This is also revealed by moods like boredom and joy, but, as we shall see, anxiety is special in that it reveals the 'nothing' that 'nihilates' and therefore *relativizes* being-as-a-whole. In this respect anxiety can be seen as a meta-mood that reveals the nature of mood itself. If moods like boredom and joy potentially reveal being-as-a-whole—i.e. illuminate the significance of beings as essentially dependent upon Dasein's mode of encountering them as a totality—then anxiety goes a stage further and reveals the nothing that gives rise to the possibility of a totality in the first place. As such, if Dasein can be fully engaged in the world in anxiety (which is questionable, but more of this later) then we must assume that other moods can themselves be anxiety-laden (anxious boredom, anxious joy etc.).

If we imagine qualitative distinctions—an idea of what is important—as the rough edges and contours that help a climber maintain a grip on a rock face, then anxiety smoothes them off and the climber falls. Dasein loses its grip on its existence *in the world*, but instead of falling find itself, or

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[58] See Chapter 1

[59] BT, p.230

[60] ibid, p.233

[61] 'Dasein itself ... gets its ontological understanding of itself in the first instance from those entities which it itself is *not* but which it encounters 'within' its world, and from the being which they possess.' (ibid, p.85)

'hovers' in the zero-gravity of anxiety. 'In the slipping away of being' Heidegger says, 'only this "no hold on things" comes over us and remains.'[62] The expression Heidegger uses for this condition is 'uncanniness', the German *unheimlichkeit* meaning literally 'not-at-home-ness'.[63] David Cooper describes it well when he says that 'instead as serving as a discreet backdrop to our dealings with things, the world now gets thematized as a world ... [which is] recognized in its 'worldly' character as the 'relational totality' which, for the most part, stands unobtrusively as the backdrop to our dealings and perceptions.'[64] As pre-ontological and pre-linguistic a 'mood' like anxiety is the ideal revelatory tool for Heidegger. If things in the world gain significance and 'thing-ness' through their relation to a greater network of meaning defined in terms of the language and categories it employs, then a loss of the totality of significance amounts to a failure of language to grasp the basis of being and thus Dasein's being. This is what Heidegger calls metaphysics—Dasein's 'basic occurrence'.[65] That the words that we use are contingent cannot be meaningfully expressed by these words because this idea itself becomes contingent upon *its* mode of expression. The fixedness of categories keeps in abeyance their contingent background, but 'once the background *qua* background obtrudes, language itself begins to 'swim''.[66] 'Anxiety' we are told 'robs us of speech.'[67] This is something that must be lived rather than thought in order to make its full revelatory impact, and Heidegger's emphasis on anxiety is his acknowledgement of that 'livedness'.

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[62]WIM (Routledge), p.101. A further analogy might be the kind of nightmare where you are attempting to run up stairs but cannot make any progress and sink into them as if they were made of marshmallow.

[63]Freud's essay The Uncanny (*The Complete Psychological Works*: Vol. XVII) is interesting in that he stresses the ambiguity of the term inherent in its etymology. In contrast to Jentsch's theory that a sense of the uncanny is inspired by what is unknown, Freud proposes that 'the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads us back to what is known of old and long familiar' (p.220). In support of this he points to a convergence in the meanings of the words *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. The former generally means 'familiar and agreeable' but can also mean 'concealed, kept from sight'. In this case, though not commonly, *unheimlich* comes to mean 'unconcealed'. Freud's thesis is that we find something uncanny when it reminds us of some or other repressed fear or impulse; i.e. something that we know and yet find unpleasant and have buried in the unconscious. The uncanny is, he says, 'in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old established in the mind and which has become alienated from it through the process of repression' (241). Similarly with Heidegger what appears familiar is really a concealing of a more primordial truth about our contingency and state of not belonging in the world in the way we thought we did; one that we are aware of pre-ontologically. As such uncanniness is distinguished from other forms of fear and plays a central role in defining what is unique about anxiety.

[64] *Ineffability*, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplt.Vol LXV,1991

[65] WIM (Routledge), p.109

[66] Cooper, op cit, p.14

[67] Heidegger, op cit, p.101

In anxiety, then, our 'dealings and perceptions' are starkly revealed as contingencies. An example of culture shock from Douglas Adams serves as an illustration;

Assumptions are the things you do not know you are making, which is why it is so disorientating the first time you take the plug out of the wash basin in Australia and see the water spiralling down the hole the other way round ... In New Zealand even the telephone dials are numbered anticlockwise. This has nothing to do with the laws of physics—they just do it differently there. *The shock is that it had never occurred to you that there was any other way of doing it.* In fact you had never even thought about it at all, and suddenly here it is—different. The ground slips.[68]

Dasein encounters culture shock on an infinite scale (Tillich later calls this 'existential shock')—it finds itself no longer firmly entrenched in a world, the basic contingency of which is now all that is in evidence. The realization that we are thrown means that the understanding, language and interpretation we have, and must have, is *not our own*, and by extension, the self we have up to now taken as absolute (perhaps amongst *other* contingencies) is also seen as something that could have been otherwise (or even not at all). In WIM Heidegger says, 'it is not "you" or "I" that has this uncanny feeling, but "one". In the trepidation of this suspense where there is nothing to hold on to, pure *Da-sein* is all that remains.'[69] All this is revealed in the mood of anxiety that can be said to assail us, altering our way of interpreting the world, and if there is a psychological corollary it is the separation anxiety caused by the shock of suddenly being denuded of all that we thought was safe and secure. This, initially at least, is an uncomfortable or even panicky feeling; a sense of paralysis. We are told, 'this withdrawal of what-is-in-totality ... is what oppresses us.' In the throws of anxiety, pure Da-sein may feel paralysed and helpless (as Dreyfus claims) and this is certainly one response to what, in essence, is the kind of existence that can *only be* and not *do*. This sounds similar to Hume's account in the *Treatise* of losing our 'natural beliefs' about which John Gaskin has said;

If, in a moment of 'philosophical melancholy and delirium', one loses these beliefs then one can only remain in a state of paralysed non-communication with the world, 'utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty'.[70]

The difference is that in anxiety it is meaning rather than belief that is lost, but the relation is close. I get the impression though that the more meditative, peaceful version of anxiety that Heidegger

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[68] *Last Chance to See* (Pan, 1991), p.136 (my italics)
[69] p. 249 (Meridian)
[70] *Hume's Philosophy of Religion* (MacMillan, 1978), p.133

occasionally speaks of amounts to a more positive (or mature) response to the sense of Da-sein as 'nothing' or pure being than a panic-laden paralysis.[71]

What I see as the third facet of anxiety (one that is primarily distinguished from the others in terms of its origin, the first two being distinct in terms of the experience they are associated with) carries with it a slightly different version of uncanniness. As well as that 'in the face of which' Dasein is anxious, it is also anxious 'about' something, specifically its 'authentic potentiality for being-in-the-world'. 'Anxiety', says Heidegger, 'individualizes [*vereinzelt*] Dasein for its ownmost being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities.'[72] This process seems to occur in two phases, firstly Dasein is singularized as it confronts its 'nullities', and secondly it is individualized as it extracts itself from the 'average' interpretation of the 'they'. The first of these overlaps with the uncanniness described as the second aspect of anxiety. The nullities are 'thrownness' (as revealed in guilt) and death. Thrownness has already been described, but it is worth dwelling on what Heidegger means by guilt. He goes to great lengths to distinguish an ontological form of guilt from an everyday ethical one and even claims that the latter is entirely dependent upon the former.[73] Guilt in the Heideggerian sense has two distinct features: firstly we are guilty of not being our own creators, of being contingent;

In being a basis—that is, existing as thrown—Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities. It is never existent *before* its basis, but only *from* it and *as this basis*. Thus "being-a-basis" means *never* to have power over one's ownmost being from the ground up ... [Dasein] has been *released* from its basis *not through* itself but *to* itself ...[74]

Secondly, a result of our contingency, existentially speaking, is that though we are free and can thus 'project' ourselves upon possibilities, we are always foregoing other, equally valid possibilities: 'freedom ... *is* only in the choice of one possibility ... in tolerating one's not having

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[71] Pure Dasein, one could argue, would not encounter or 'face' anything but would simply *be*. Only the Dasein which still understands and interprets (that is to some extent identifiable in terms of entities in the world) can be anxious in the way Heidegger describes in BT. I shall further draw-out this distinction towards the end of this section.

[72] BT, p.232

[73] Which, for similar reasons to my rejection of Heidegger's relation between fear and anxiety, I do not agree with (see BT p.332 in particular). This is a point Sartre makes in BN—'The intuition of our contingency is not identical with a feeling of guilt.' (p.128)

[74] BT, p.330

chosen the others and not being able to choose them.'[75] The upshot of all this is that Dasein *as* Dasein *is* guilty—not in terms of anything it has done, but simply in terms of what it is. Clearly this situation is close to Kierkegaard's ambiguous guilt in COA, and the same paradox is attached. As with Kierkegaard I think there is something important about this kind of guilt and that it is not just an invention (or in Heidegger's case, a hangover from Christianity) the author finds convenient to appropriate. Involved in Heidegger's anxiety structure is a genuine subjective sense of guilt that is not objectively coherent, but whereas the father-son analogy is the most illuminating in Kierkegaard's case, something else is required for the German—something, as I shall expand on shortly, closer to Mooney's ideas about the individual's appropriation of an impersonal history.

The other 'nullity', death, tends to be given greater emphasis by commentators than guilt but Heidegger does refer to them as 'equiprimordial'.[76] Death is fundamental to Dasein in that it offers its other (negative) defining characteristic. When confronted in anxiety death sets the limits on Dasein's possibilities. Basic to Dasein is its self-projection into the future, but in anxiety the realization that at some point there will be no future—no 'in-order-to' by which to locate present possibilities and past decisions—is foremost. Even though the time and circumstances of its occurrence remains indefinite, an anxious appropriation of death makes us aware that it *is* going to occur and that it *is* going to put an end to whatever possibilities we may decide to actualize. In Jacob Golomb's words, 'one way to explore what it means to be is to investigate what it means *not* to be ... Each time we entertain the possibility of dying we undertake an assessment of our being. In our anticipation we define our existence.'[77] An inauthentic fleeing from death would tend to result in a sense of thinking it is "someone else's problem"[78] which in turn will cast an inauthentic light upon just what (*existentiell*) possibilities are open to us. I think it is accurate to say that when young there is a tendency to view death as a *thing* (obscure and distant as it may be), like a bogeyman that as we get older will grow ever larger and become ever more frightening. If this is how we do grow up then to attempt to flee death might seem an appropriate response, like fleeing a

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[75] op cit, p.331. With respect to what the artist must forgo when he represents the world, Degas once said 'a picture must be painted with the same feeling as with which a criminal commits his crime.' (Cited in Rollo May's *The Meaning of Anxiety*, p.44)

[76] ibid, p.354 (for example)

[77] *In Search of Authenticity* (Routledge, 1995), pp.106-7. Paul Auster makes a similar point; 'The circumstances under which lives shift course are so various that it would seem impossible to say anything about a man until he is dead. Not only is death the one true arbiter of happiness ... it is the only measurement by which we can judge life itself.' (*The New York Trilogy*, Penguin, 1990)

[78] 'Dying' is levelled off to an occurrence which ... belongs to nobody in particular' (BT, p.297)

smoking volcano or indeed a bogeyman. For Heidegger however an authentic attitude to death will alter it from something that threatens in the form of an independent entity—something "added on"—to a way of being that, as we get older, becomes an indelible part of our way of life.[79] Authentically we acknowledge in anxiety that we are 'being-towards-death' and respond appropriately, an attitude Heidegger calls 'anticipation' whereby 'In the anticipatory revealing of the potentiality for being, Dasein discloses itself to itself as regards its uttermost possibility.'[80]

Part of the appropriate response to an anxious awareness of death is to be *individualized*. In a sense every possibility Dasein takes up in its life is something that someone else might take up and equally something that particular Dasein might *not* have taken up. No one, on the other hand, can die in the place of a particular Dasein. *This* awareness is seen as crucial in Dasein's discovery of itself as not-at-home amongst the 'they': we can trundle along the tracks of the 'they' until the last when 'they' continue as they ever were but we die alone. Death, says Heidegger;

does not just 'belong' to one's own Dasein in an undifferentiated way; death *lays claim* to it as an *individual* Dasein. The non-relational character of death, as understood in anticipation, individualizes Dasein down to itself ... [authentic Dasein] is thus forced by that very anticipation into the possibility of taking over from itself its ownmost being.[81]

Exactly what Heidegger means here though I am not too clear about. In a sense only we can die *our* death, but in another sense *everyone* dies and so death itself does not signify anything special about our existence. Concerning the idea that the universe would be the same were we not born, which parallels the feeling we have that it will not be altered once we are dead, Nagel says;

When I do get my mind properly round this idea, it produces a sinking feeling which reveals that a powerful but unnoticed support has been removed from my world ... If you concentrate hard on the thought that you might never have been born ... I believe you too will find that this perfectly clear and straightforward truth produces a positively uncanny sensation.[82]

What Heidegger must want to say is that a prior or latent sense of our individuality is illuminated by the consideration of our death: as Golomb points out, death is not the only route to authenticity but it is perhaps the most efficacious. He goes on to say that death is 'uniquely mine' because such strength is required to face up to the intense anxiety associated with it that if we succeed we

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[79] An echo of Kierkegaard's remarks on death in CUP (see pp. 165-70)
[80] BT, p.307
[81] ibid, p308.
[82] VFN, pp.211-12

'emerge' resolute or 'in firm possession of ourselves.'[83] My next question would be "in firm possession of ourselves as what?" If we are to be confirmed as individuals this must be validated by our ontology (as revealed in the prospect of our demise) but surely death would equally undermine any sense of uniqueness we potentially might have. It makes apparent our basic contingency and therefore the somewhat illusory status of the meaningfulness of individuality. What Heidegger requires is a prior ethical anxiety that paves the way for our establishment as individuals in the face of ourselves as a nullity. An individual is an individual in as much as he differs from other people and is thus 'subject to a life', and he is a *singularity* from an ontological point of view. In the latter sense alone the notion of individuality does not seem to make sense until combined with the former sense. If this is what Heidegger wants to say he must, I feel, sacrifice the purely ontological character he ascribes to BT. To explain individuality would require a developmental (psychological) and ethical inquiry (including an analysis of how a particular culture identifies the notion of individuality and its historical basis) not just an inquiry in the mode of fundamental ontology; Dasein's attitude to death, and therefore temporality would be revealed as a non-essential structure. This kind of problem I see as occurring throughout BT and accordingly I shall return to it again later in the chapter.

In understanding itself as a nullity, Dasein also realizes its 'existential' character as earlier described. As a projection it must project itself upon certain possibilities *in-the-world*, none of which defines Dasein concretely in a complete sense. Dasein becomes an empty category of possibility in a way perhaps more famously characterized by Sartre in his chapter on bad faith. To exist we must *be* what we are which is essentially *nothing*. 'Anxiety' Heidegger says 'individualizes Dasein for its ownmost being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities.'[84] In WIM he seems to be making the same point when he says, 'only

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[83] Golomb, op cit, p.110. Returning to Auster, two passages in *The New York Trilogy* serve to sum-up these contrasting interpretations of death: 1) 'I couldn't find myself anymore. The sensation of life had dribbled out of me, and in its place there was a miraculous euphoria, a sweet poison rushing through my blood, the undeniable odor of nothingness. This is the moment of my death, I said to myself, this is when I die.' (p.352) 2) 'I did not die there, but I came close, and there was a moment, perhaps there were several moments, when I tasted death, when I saw myself dead. There is no cure for such an encounter. Once it happens, it goes on happening; you live with it for the rest of your life.' (p. 356)

[84] BT, p.232. It should be noted that in these kinds of passages it becomes apparent that there is a distinctive form of understanding that accompanies the mood of anxiety—Heidegger says, 'neither of these moods, fear and anxiety, ever 'occurs' just isolated in the 'stream of experience'; each of them determines an understanding, or determines itself in terms of one.' (BT, p.395) As I will discuss shortly, this has an important bearing on the content and significance of anxiety's revelations.

on the basis of the original manifestness of nothing can our human *Da-sein* advance towards and enter into what-is. But insofar as Dasein naturally relates to what-is, as that which is not and which itself is, Da-sein *qua Da-sein* always proceeds from nothing as manifest.'[85]

In the second phase of the individualizing aspect of anxiety Dasein is confronted with the uncanniness generated by being absorbed in the 'they'. The presupposition, clearly enough, is that despite being thrown there is a way of taking up possibilities in the world whereby Dasein can maintain a grip on its essential nullity. What exactly this might amount to will be discussed in the next section, but the general point here is that the revelations of anxiety concerning our ontology have the effect of plucking us out of our complacent 'average' understanding of the world and putting us on an alternative footing. Uncanniness now refers, not to Dasein's general state of contingency, but to an awareness of the inauthenticity of the publicness that surrounds it; a public that has *un-dis-covered* itself as a nullity. 'As Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the world', but as Dasein is *necessarily* in-the-world it must somehow be 'individualized *as* being-in-the-world.'[86]

It is probably apparent by now that these two aspects of uncanniness relate to the ambiguities associated with death and falling. On the one hand Heidegger is saying that Dasein's uncanniness results from its 'null-basis', of its having no form of life that it can possibly *be* through and through, and thus the impossibility of it feeling (authentically) at home in the world. On the other, uncanniness is the sense of not being at home amongst the inauthentic pursuits of the 'they'. The first would appear to be a reaction to our condition of 'thrownness', the second to our condition of absorption in 'average everydayness'. The first we can do nothing about altering but we can perhaps adopt a way of life that somehow acknowledges it; the second we surely *can* do something about. In terms of Heidegger's ideas on authenticity we might be looking for a response that deals with the first form of uncanniness and a separate response that deals with the second, and we might only find one of these; or we might be looking for a response that attempts to deal with both. By way of pre-empting future discussion I will suggest that in terms of the first we might be looking for a passive 'openness' to being-in-the-world, and in terms of the second an active rebellion against certain modes of being.

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[85] p.251 (Meridian)
[86] BT, p.233

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In the meantime I will represent what I take to be the process of anxiety in BT in the form of a diagram.

Figure 1

C → uncanniness (Dasein as nullity/individualized)

E

—— x

being-in-the-world   B   inauthentic   A   D   authentic
obtrudes   falling   falling

Anxiety (call of conscience)
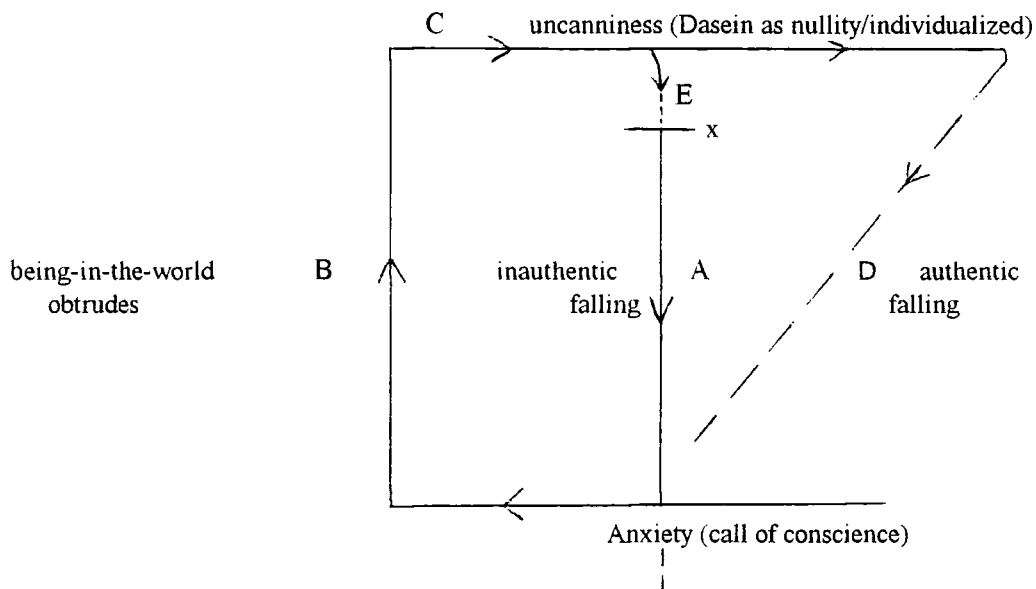
Inauthentic Dasein falls along axis A, is assailed by anxiety and is brought before its uncanniness at C. At this point Dasein is confronted with the option of choosing its 'ownmost possibility' as revealed in anxiety, or fleeing back into the ambiguity of the 'they'. If authenticity is chosen the oblique line D represents the 'inherent tilt' back towards inauthenticity caused by the gravity of the 'they-world'.

This rather simple diagram leaves a lot of questions unanswered but I think it is not an unfair representation of what Heidegger has in mind, at least in Division I of BT. I shall, however, attempt to shore-up its structure by again raising the issue of the thrown/falling distinction, this time concentrating on guilt and conscience. A highly pertinent question is, where does Dasein fall *from* exactly? Heidegger, at times, seems to be saying that we fall from 'x'—i.e. we are thrown into an average way of understanding and, initially at least, know no better. This, as pointed out, is ambiguous and becomes increasingly so when clouded by Heidegger's emphasis on the 'call of conscience'. The general picture is of Dasein, absorbed in the 'they-world', suddenly struck dumb

by a kind of ontological calling. The call, though, does not *say* anything as such, for if it did it would be lost amidst the 'hubbub' of 'idle talk'. For it to be effective the call must say nothing that can be made ambiguous in chatter; 'it gives the ... curious ear nothing to hear which might be passed along in further retelling and talked about in public.'[87] The image is of an 'abrupt' shutting-up ('reticence') not unlike Sartre's attack of 'nausea' and much of the 'they's' motivation towards idle talk is to keep the call at arms length like Kierkegaard's 'Sectarians' in FT who 'deafen each other with their clang and chatter, hold anxiety at bay with their shrieks';[88] and as he puts it in *The Present Age*, 'chattering dreads the moment of silence'.[89]

The call of conscience brings Dasein before its anxiety and all that is revealed there-in, but, we are inclined to ask further, who does the calling? Heidegger tells us 'the call of conscience comes *from* me and yet from *beyond me*',[90] suggesting that it is some sort of pre-ontological authentic awareness. This is further supported when he proposes 'what if this Dasein which finds itself in the very depths of uncanniness, should be the caller of the call of conscience?'[91] And what Dasein is called 'back' to is its special kind of being which Heidegger calls 'care' [*Sorge*]. Care encompasses all that has so far been said about Dasein as revealed in anxiety, and importantly, if I am reading Heidegger correctly, it accounts for both the concrete nature of its thrownness (the *existentiell* possibilities it must work with as thrown into a particular environment alongside particular people) and the fact that it is always projecting itself without recourse to a positive constitution (i.e. is *existential*).

If care is that which we are called 'back' to in the 'call of conscience' it may appear curious as to why Heidegger wants to refer to us as 'guilty' (guilt is an intrinsic constituent of care). My feeling is that care will not be coherent unless Heidegger can adequately bridge the gap between the *existentiell* and the existential, and guilt is a raw material of that bridge. If Dasein originally falls from 'x', is assailed by anxiety and brought before uncanniness, there should certainly be no sense of guilt in the more orthodox meaning of the word.[92] Subsequently however, whether Dasein falls

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[87] op cit, p.322
[88] p.107
[89] *Two Ages*, p.98. And in SUD he says 'from man man learns to speak, from the Gods to keep silent.'(p.161)
[90] BT, p.320
[91] ibid, p.321
[92] And even if, as some have suggested (e.g. Guignon), Heidegger is referring to our indebtedness to our heritage it is not clear why the *individual* should feel that he owes anyone anything. His history, even his

from uncanniness, or slides from authenticity back to inauthenticity, it has most certainly fled, or fallen away from anxiety and thus *subsequent* anxiety could be referred to as the 'call of conscience' in a more orthodox sense. The non-naive 'they-self' is now aware of the meaning of authenticity and can be seen as guilty of evading it.

As suggested in the last chapter there is a sense whereby we do appropriate our past actions even if we might not otherwise be regarded as being responsible for them. By so doing we give ourselves continuity through and within our *personal* history, but unlike the more straight-forward ethical guilt we must choose to do this. Such guilt, authentically chosen, must be unsettled by anxiety and not be assumed to be necessary to what we are. Even this though is not what Heidegger strictly means by guilt, but if we superimpose Kierkegaard's description of the Fall as discussed in the last chapter I suggest we get slightly closer to Heidegger's meaning. Kierkegaard is using the more orthodox sense of guilt when he talks about the 'qualitative leap', but he admits that though the person who makes the leap comes to see themselves as guilty this is in a highly ambiguous fashion; their action (or inaction) is crossed with their basic guilt before God's perfection. As mentioned, Heidegger goes to great lengths to deny an ethical content to BT but I think that in this instance he may be using a sense of guilt associated with an ethic of authenticity, or alternatively he is treating *Sein*, or *Sorge*, in a way that reinforces Golomb's claim of 'theological undertones' in his work,[93] and Kaufmann's claim that they are an example of Nietzsche's 'shadow of God'.[94] (I suspect there are elements of both—a claim I will fill-out when I later go into greater detail about resoluteness and authenticity.) In a highly Kierkegaardian way he says at one point that 'the caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it is something like an *alien* voice';[95] that, guilt is 'asleep' (like Kierkegaard's 'slumbering spirit'), and that '*being*-guilty is more primordial than any *knowledge* about it.'[96]

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parents, did not set out to produce *him*. If he is speaking merely as a voice of a particular tradition then there is a kind of indebtedness, but surely only an individual can truly be indebted, and it is just this angle on things that precludes individuality.

[93] Golomb, op cit, p.123
[94] *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (Princeton, 1980), p.364
[95] BT, p.321
[96] ibid, p.332. In WIM he says of non-anxious Dasein 'anxiety is there, but sleeping. All *Da-sein* quivers with its breathing', and 'it is always on the brink, yet only seldom does it take the leap and drag us with it into the state of suspense.' (Meridian, p.253)

When defining 'care' Heidegger quotes a fable 'in which' he says, 'Dasein's interpretation of itself as care has been embedded';

Once when 'Care' was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. 'Care' asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While 'Care' and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: 'Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since 'Care' first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives.[97]

Care begins to sound very similar to Kierkegaard's 'spirit'—the synthesis of the finite and the infinite that 'relates itself to itself'. As suggested spirit, like care, is prior to the positive synthesis of the finite and the infinite so that even when it does not 'relate to itself' *as* a synthesis its reality is made known via the 'presentiments' of anxiety.[98] The trouble is that God does not belong in Heidegger's philosophy and so anything that resembles him is potentially problematic. There is a danger of care looking like an invention that bridges the gap between our day to day concerns, our concrete possibilities, and our uncanniness—in other words, a false unity. But, Heidegger does say that care is '*not simple* in its structure'[99] and maybe this is a hint at an inherent disjunction or incommensurability in Dasein's existence, one that is exposed by the incoherence (or, more generously, duality) of guilt which in turn resembles the incoherence (duality) in his ideas on death and falling.[100] That we are motivated by guilt, death and our relationship to others is not fully explicable in ontological terms. Relatedly, if authenticity is regarded as the 'primordial phenomenon', at what stage are we supposed to have been authentic? I would suggest that the whole notion of authenticity/inauthenticity only becomes apparent once Dasein has been in-the-world and thus in the *Mitwelt* for some time. Heidegger says that, 'in terms of its *possibility* Dasein *is* already a potentiality-for-being-its-self, but it needs to have this potentiality attested.'[101] Only

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[97] BT, p.242

[98] More specifically, some commentators (e.g. Kresten Nordenstoft (op cit, pp.84-5) and George Stack (op cit)) have aligned Care with Kierkegaard's '*interesse*' or 'concern'.

[99] BT, p.240

[100] And what appears to be an incoherence in the notion of mood. As mentioned, I do not think that the moods of an culture or age are explainable in the same way that the moods of an individual are. To a certain extent we are *never* going to become aware of or be able to do anything about the former kind, except be aware that we *are* situated in one way or another. With the latter kind I would suggest that we do have a degree of control (should we choose to acknowledge this fact) and thus the related anxiety will be different.

[101] BT, p.313

this way, as explained, can individuality possibly be meaningful, *but*, the question still remains as to how Dasein is aware of the possibility of a different mode of existence. My answer is that there does exist something like the 'call of conscience' just as there exists Kierkegaard's 'dreaming spirit', but that this does not call us back to a specific kind of existence but only to our *anxiety*. For Heidegger authenticity involves a 'forerunning' of death and a 'repeating' of our heritage but I do not see that he has any grounds for making such a substantial claim. The call of anxiety, as I shall proceed to explain, must always be interpreted, but at the same time this interpreting must itself be dogged by its own contingency in the way set out by David Cooper. If Care is anything it is perhaps only the sum of two incommensurable perspectives, something which, as Nagel as made apparent, has no unified substance at all.

Jacob Golomb's 'circle of authenticity' is formulated as follows;

(1) 'ownness' of my being-the-world > (2) anxiety in the face of (1) > (3) [authenticity] lost by flight and fall into the [they] > (4) latent anxiety and the feeling of *unheimlichkeit* (5) > individuation > (6) authentic ownness of my being > ... etc.[102]

Mine would start at (4) (which perhaps belies the fact that my dissertation is about anxiety and his book is about authenticity) and I think we would both acknowledge that this circle is not as seamless as Heidegger would have us believe. To expand on this I will redescribe the experience of anxiety adding to it a developmental dimension that I think is necessary for psychological or ethical accuracy, but which of course removes us somewhat from what Heidegger wants to say.

Figure 2

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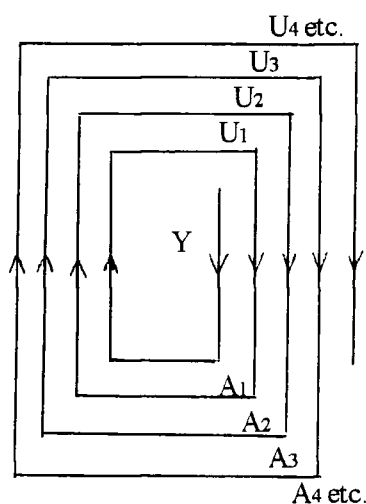
[102] Golomb op cit, p.104 ('ownness' is an alternative (and more literal) translation to 'authenticity')

In this version a true, uncanny awareness of our being is not realized in one leap but is reached after an indefinite number of minor leaps that constitute, or are motivated by, the project of 'self-enlargement'. Point 'Y' could represent a fledgling Dasein—perhaps an adolescent —who first experiences anxiety in the form of a 'world' (a set of principles, sexual awakening, a peer group fashion perhaps) that reaches into and exposes his restrictive family set-up. The uncanniness he experiences (U1) will be relatively mild but qualifies in the sense of being at the beginnings of a wider perspective on existence. In the short term he is thrown into confusion as values once taken as certain lose their weight and become unconvincing, but once established in this perspective he 'falls' once more and lives out his *existentiell* possibilities in a new light. In REP Kierkegaard says that, in search of an identity, the youth goes to the theatre

in order to see and hear himself as a doppelganger, to disperse into all his possible differences from himself, and yet in such a way that every difference is also *one* self ... In such a fantastic self-perception, the individual is not an actual form, but a shadow, or, rather, the actual form is invisibly present, and therefore not satisfied with casting one shadow, but the individual has a multiplicity of shadows ... The personality has not yet been discovered; its energy heralds itself only in the passion of possibility.[103]

Anxiety strikes again at a later date when, for instance, he becomes politicized or finds religion, and so the process continues. At each stage, however, is the possibility of fleeing back to one's prior perspective and no doubt something like this goes on in the oft-seen sclerosis of adulthood. As Heidegger (like Kierkegaard) recognizes, in order to be in the world we must assume a form and this necessitates at least a degree of closedness—'each one of us has some single specialized vocation of his own', says William James, '[a]nd it seems as if energy might be got only by hardening the heart toward everything unlike them.'[104]

If though the spiral is allowed to unfold we can imagine stages where one's fundamental ontology is confronted in an *increasingly meaningful way*. I say 'meaningful' because even when close to the centre of the spiral we can surely *abstractly* understand the logic of our thrown-being-towards-death (each dose of uncanniness can be said to be caused by a pre-ontological awareness of being, but our interpretation of this experience figures in terms of our response to it) but not until we have experienced for ourselves the lack inherent in each prior way of falling can this realization be fully

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[103] Cited in Nordenstoft, op cit, p.34
[104] *On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings* (*Selected Papers on Philosophy* (Dent, 1967)), p.8

appropriated. This much I borrow from Kierkegaard's stages (the experience of the lack is what he calls 'despair') and I wonder if Heidegger is alluding to something similar when he says near the beginning of BT;

The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. The understanding of oneself which leads *along this way* we call *"existentiell"*.[105]

Within this 'spiral of uncanniness' the call of conscience does not, I think, have to be silent but can come from an alternative source and have a significantly alternative message to those already available to the falling Dasein.[106] In the first instance it could be something as simple as peers from a different family background, then perhaps a particular writer, musician or artist who, as it were, 'hits the right note'. A more advanced example is found in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (HOD) where Marlow is thrown into a state of shock and uncanniness by the primitive howls of the tribesmen on the banks of the Congo;

they were not inhuman ... that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to me ... Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you ... could comprehend.[107]

As the novel demonstrates, this is part of a process whereby Marlow is forced to reassess all aspects of existence and his attitude towards it. That there is a distinct process or progression involved is important and would explain why a leap between A1 and U4 is unlikely. Each level is imbued with the possibilities contained in higher levels as well as the 'pure' uncanniness Heidegger seems to be talking about in WIM, and in competition with these uncanniness is always going to be adulterated (creating an unavoidable sense of confusion akin to COA's 'qualitative leap').

A useful analogy is found in Plato's *Phaedo* where he describes a soul that is polluted by 'physical desires and pleasures' to the point where these become 'ingrained in it'.[108] Just as for Plato dialectics is the process whereby the soul is freed from the body, so for the existentialist a correct

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[105] BT, p.33
[106] Charles Guignon seems to agree with this when he says 'if we assume that the primordial roots and sources of our heritage are also embedded in language, then the authentically historical encounter with the world may still be seen as constituted by language.' (op cit, p.143)
[107] *Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether* (Dent, 1974), p.96. Another example would be the laughter in Camus' *The Fall* (see my Ch.7, *Unending Ordeals*).
[108] 81b-c (Translation by Grube (*Five Dialogues*, Hackett, 1981))

response to the 'call' of anxiety is the means of attaining freedom and authenticity. At each level anxiety is the response to a lack, but that lack is quickly filled in by a new perspective. If of course, under the right guidance, the 'lack' was captured and given an ontological significance in the form of WIM's 'nothing' then pure uncanniness might be reached more quickly. Here Plato is useful again with his notion of maieusis: if a pre-ontological awareness exists we can presumably recapture and 'understand' it with greater economy if competently directed. The role of guide in this context is the existential writer or therapist—Golomb believes that much of Nietzsche's philosophy is an attempt to 'entice' us to overcome ourselves partly by overcoming *his* thought. 'His philosophy' says Golomb 'stands and falls neither on its rational validity or invalidity, nor on its truth or falsehood, but on the degree of its allure.'[109] Relatedly he says 'at every stage of his philosophizing Nietzsche is conscious that this stage is actually only a 'step' to overcome and proceed further: 'Those were steps for me, and I have climbed up over them; to that end I had to pass over them. Yet they thought that I wanted to retire on them.''[110]

The fall at each of these levels is akin to one of man's 'four errors' as Nietzsche sees it. Specifically, that he 'continually invented new tables of values and for a time took each of them to be eternal and unconditional.'[111] Maintaining a degree of openness or 'readiness for anxiety' however will result in a process of continual 'overcoming', all the time the air becoming thinner and more rarefied, and allowing uncanniness the space to make its presence existentially meaningful. As this happens the motivation to flee anxiety (i.e. the clarity and significance of the anxiety) is increasing and thus the outer limits are rarely braved.

Closer to the centre of the spiral the response to the call does not have to be 'reticence' but can be some or other form of creative expression. By this I mean something that has a voice, but one which is not readily comprehensible to the 'they' of one's current fall, and indeed, like one of Mooney's interpretations of Abraham's silence,[112] not fully comprehensible to the person in the grip of conscience and the uncanny. I am sure a lot of serious art derives from, and is the vehicle of similar movements towards uncanniness. Within this model it helps to view anxiety, as earlier

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[109] op cit, p.84
[110] ibid, p.85 (the Nietzsche quote is from *Twilight of the Idols*)
[111] From *The Gay Science* (cited by Hollingdale in the introduction to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Penguin, 1969) p.13).
[112] See *Knights of Faith and Resignation*, Ch.9.

suggested, as something different from a mood; as a *way* of facing up to the nature of *Befindlichkeit* and to the status of our 'being-in'. This being the case many moods would be possible responses to anxiety including the 'unshakeable joy' that Heidegger says goes 'along with the sober anxiety which brings us face to face with our individualized potentiality-for-being.'[113]

The possible meaning of a pure experience of uncanniness is given its fullest expression in WIM, and I think David Cooper's situating of the ineffable is a useful reference here. It is not just certain belief systems that are undermined but one's whole 'relational totality'. Its contingency becomes apparent, the 'background' is exposed as a background but of course 'the words we would like to employ for describing these will, like all words, lose their secure moorings. They will not be available for 'committed' description.'[114] In the throws of pure uncanniness everything, including, in a concrete, existential sense, the self, is unstable and insubstantial. The sense of nothing is the exposure to the full weight of the lack of an external telos, of the pervasiveness of chance, that everything could be otherwise. As the wordly self infringes on this experience uncanniness takes on a less pure, more existential (and more typically 'anxious') aspect: the self finds itself an issue for itself again, but despite its authenticity the limits of the 'ethical' or 'inwardness' are increasingly exposed in terms of the impossibility of completion. In my terminology anxiety B gives way to anxiety A and the sense of nothing seems to existentially or experientially engender the realization we must inhabit one realm or the other—there is no faith, no passion that can unify them, but at best a helpless and paralysed holding them before oneself in what must amount to a (necessarily) brief transcendence of our worldly, 'understanding' self. As I shall spell-out in subsequent chapters, from here we can either adopt (choose) a comportment that assumes the weight to anxiety A or anxiety B, or we can opt for something more Zen-like that provides a sense of unity at the cost of the full significance of this antinomy.

This brief transcendence can be expressed as a confrontation with 'nothing' as Heidegger does, or perhaps as an all-encompassing question mark, a *mystery* ('Why something and not nothing?').[115] As indicated, a basically non-intentional state of mind cannot even be expressed in terms of the negation of beings and so 'nothing' must mean something other than this. What this is however,

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[113] BT, p.358.

[114] *Ineffability*, p.14

[115] On art and the mystical iris Murdoch says 'we take a self-forgetful pleasure in the sheer alien pointless independent existence of animals, birds, stones and trees. 'Not how the world is, but that it is is the mystical.' (op cit, p.85)

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formally described as 'the complete negation of the totality of beings'[116] cannot, in itself, be thought. It must be revealed in 'a fundamental experience of the nothing'[117] and this can be understood as a sense of mystery or wonder. He says to this effect 'the indeterminateness of that in the face of which and for which we become anxious is no mere lack of determination but rather the essential impossibility of determining it ... [T]his indetermination comes to the fore.'[118] If it is in anxiety we experience this then this experience is significantly removed from the dizziness and foreboding we have associated with existential anxiety up to this point. In BT anxiety, after the initial onset at least, does have an object or cause. Dasein is reinstated and the objectless disquiet is interpreted as its 'nullities' and here there is a clear connection with the more psychological Kierkegaardian version. Heidegger is consistent however in that anxiety as purely non-intentional, as not experienced in relation to an identifiable individuality, also cannot be disturbing in the same way. The nothing is encountered not as a negation (or potential negation) of beings (or our being), nor as the annihilation of being as a whole, but as what he calls a 'nihilation'. In this, nothing is 'encountered at one with beings as a whole'.[119] Beings remain but we are 'repulsed' by their thing-ness and, devoid of Dasein's projected meanings, 'otherness': 'nihilation' he says '... discloses these beings in their full but heretofore concealed strangeness as what is radically other.'[120] There is clearly a relation to Sartre's 'nausea' here but Da-sein's reaction is not necessarily so negative. A powerful reaction, or one you can assign a word like 'nausea' to, seems unbefitting for such a mysterious or 'wondrous' experience, and Heidegger's 'bewildered calm', where it is not '"you" or "I"' that undergoes it but 'pure Da-sein', does seem more appropriate.

Returning to the uncanny spiral, Heidegger seems to recognize the difficulty of reaching pure uncanniness. He says;

We are so finite that we cannot even bring ourselves originally before the nothing through our own decision and will. So profoundly does finitude entrench itself in existence that our most proper and deepest limitations refuse to yield to our freedom.[121]

In Buddhist practices a person 'fastens upon *tathata* (suchness, is-ness)'[122] as a result of certain practices and a certain way of life, but these do not themselves explicitly lead to enlightenment but

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[116] WIM (Routledge), p.98
[117] ibid
[118] ibid, pp.100-1.
[119] ibid, p.102
[120] ibid, p.103
[121] ibid, p.106

rather facilitate its spontaneous occurrence. For Heidegger finitude 'entrenches itself in experience' in the way that for Plato the demands of the body become 'ingrained in the soul', and part of this entrenchment is the emphasis on controlling and interpreting the world by acts of will. I will say more about the significance if this kind of orientation for Heidegger's authenticity in the next section.

If the spiral of uncanniness has a ceiling of pure uncanniness, experienced as a 'nothing' which reveals itself as an authentic ideal but also our necessary entrenchment, the next question is; "How is Dasein to live so as to authentically appropriate this realization without falling back into one of its old forms of existence (which in terms of courses of action available seem to be the only option open to it)?" In the next section I want to look at two answers to this.

III

What then is Heidegger's authentic mode of being as 'attested to in conscience'? His answer is *'resoluteness'* [Entschlossenheit] *which is defined as a 'reticent self-projection upon one's ownmost being-guilty in which one is ready for anxiety.'* At this stage this is understandable in terms of its constituent parts—guilt, anxiety and so on—but it remains unclear just how resolute Dasein should be in-the-world. This is not something I will explain immediately, but rather let unfold within a couple of interpretations of Heideggerian authenticity.

Dreyfus sees authenticity and resoluteness[123] as incomprehensible as far as Heidegger's description in BT goes, but he does provide a revised account along the lines of Kierkegaard's Religiousness A. Religiousness A, as he describes it, is an attempt to enter into an existence where any project, or way of life, is as good as another. No risk is involved in our choice because we do not stand to lose ourselves if the chosen lifestyle does not work out. This is achieved by 'self-annihilation before God'—effectively an *imitation* of God for whom the world has no qualitative distinctions. For Kierkegaard this mode of existence is incomplete in that it does not recognize the fact that we are a self-relating synthesis of the finite and the infinite (i.e. spirit). Whilst attempting to pay heed to the infinite, as a finite existence we are unfulfilled, and thus as a self we are unfulfilled. Religiousness

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[122] Cooper, op cit, p.12
[123] I shall explain what I think is the distinction between these two terms a bit later.

B more or less reverses this in that the infinite is reached via the inwardness that arises from total commitment in the finite realm, necessarily involving risk. The individual, as spirit, should not be imitating God, but imitating Jesus (or perhaps anyone, as Dreyfus says, with a 'world defining concrete commitment'[124])

In terms of the structural account of falling in Division I of BT, so Dreyfus believes, Religiousness A is not inconsistent with Dasein's essential ontology and he wants to show how resoluteness can be seen as an authentic way of responding to the world in an undifferentiated way. His corrected interpretation of resoluteness emphasises passivity—*Entschlossenheit* is sometimes written *Ent-schlossenheit* by Heidegger when he utilizes its etymological meaning 'not-closedness' (i.e. openness). This gives it an opposite spin to our usual interpretation as concentrated commitment to a particular project. This reading in turn derives from Dreyfus' understanding of anxiety as revealing Dasein's individuality to be 'meaningless'. Ontologically speaking Dasein, as we have seen, is not given any positive content—it is a 'thrown projection'—and Dreyfus' point is that all alternative projections open to Dasein are predefined by history and culture and therefore have no *specific* meaning for any single Dasein. The authentic response to this state of affairs is not to commit to some way of life in order to create a self, for there is no possibility of such a creation: 'The ultimate "choice"' says Dreyfus 'is no choice at all. It is the experience of transformation that comes from Dasein's accepting its powerlessness.'[125] A passage from Sartre seems to express the shift that occurs;

up to that minute, there was still something that could call itself Mathieu, something to which he clung with all his strength. Something, indeed, beyond analysis. Perhaps some ancient habit, perhaps a way of choosing his thoughts in his own likeness, of choosing *himself* from day to day in the likeness of his thoughts ... He relaxed his grip and let it go: all this happened deep in his inmost self, in a region where words possess no meaning. He let go and nothing remained but a look. A new and passionless look, a mere transparency. 'I have lost my soul,' he thought with satisfaction.[126]

Resoluteness becomes an *openness* towards the world that acknowledges the meaninglessness of individuality. The incomprehensibility of Heidegger's account arises for Dreyfus in BT's Division II where the elements of choice and risk in authenticity are given emphasis. What is it about Dasein that tempts it to flee its authenticity: 'Why' he asks 'does even authentic Dasein have a tendency to

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[124] Dreyfus, op cit, p.297. This part of the book (the appendix) is co-authored by Jane Rubin.
[125] ibid, p.319
[126] *The Reprieve* (Penguin, 1986), p.298

flee? *Why, in short, are we the kind of beings that can't face being the kind of being's we are?* The obvious answer would seem to be that human beings seek secure meaning.'[127] But Heidegger does not give Dasein such substantial characterization, and if (as Dreyfus over-emphasises) once the illusion of the they-self has been cleared anxiety is experienced as a 'sober joy' why the tendency to become inauthentic?

In a response to this position Elizabeth Ewing says that Dreyfus is;

concerned about 'who' is left when the 'they' part if the 'they-self' has collapsed, i.e. in what sense there is a self in Dasein distinct from the they-self? This is a legitimate concern and a troublesome ambiguity in Heidegger's text.[128]

Indeed, but she does not see it as one which is fatal for Heidegger's account of authenticity. What he requires is as substantial notion of self that is distinct from that which is defined purely in terms of our culture and history; it is this that Dasein finds burdensome and is tempted by the surrounding 'publicness' to flee. Essential to this self is also the need for 'secure meanings'—something which is undermined by Dasein's potential to create meanings and the contingency of the society which has hitherto provided the illusion of meaning. It is these truths that Dasein wants to escape by fleeing into its 'they-self'.

Ewing says that 'it seems clear that Heidegger wants to maintain that there is always some sort of notion of self in Dasein' but adds '[i]n what way and with what justification Heidegger can make such a claim is the object for another inquiry.'[129] This though seems fundamental to the consistency of Heidegger's account of authenticity, and later on Ewing returns to this when she says that 'Heidegger's analysis runs into the philosophical problem of how to articulate a concept of a continuous self without resorting to an entitative language that Heidegger emphatically rejects.'[130] This strikes me as coming very close to Dreyfus' position. Even if Heidegger is implying a substantial self in Division II what right has he to do this? If he has to lapse into empirical inquiry then he undermines the foundations of BT and it is perhaps those foundations that Dreyfus wants to support by jettisoning his ideas on authenticity. Ewing on the other hand is happier to see this

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[127] Dreyfus, op cit, p.334
[128] Ewing, E. *Authenticity in Heidegger: A Response to Dreyfus* (Inquiry, 38, 1995), p.481
[129] ibid, p.482
[130] ibid, p.486

inconsistency in Heidegger's work than to lose the intelligibility of authenticity, but either way Heidegger is in trouble.[131]

Both these commentators are, I believe, highlighting the disjunction in BT that I have analysed in terms of falling, death and guilt; all of which culminate in a final and damaging assault on the coherence of authenticity/resoluteness and anxiety. My feeling is that Heidegger wants to say what Ewing says he is saying, but of course not at the cost of BT's status as a work of pure ontology. My preferred method of dealing with this is, naturally enough, in terms of my developing picture of existential anxiety which translates Heidegger in the following way:

i) The pure uncanniness experienced by (or as) Da-sein in the encounter with nothing is that which Dreyfus focuses on. In this fleeting state Dasein loses its sense of identity and is paralysed, even though this may be associated with 'sober joy' or 'bewildered calm'. As suggested, this approximates to a palpable experience of the nature of our entrenchment in the world along with a realization of the world's inability to 'complete' an individual Dasein.

ii) A less transcendental state than this is where Dasein retains an identity but only in terms of its 'nullities', death and thrownness. In this condition that which Dasein took to be meaningful is rendered meaningless, but enough of Dasein's sense of individual identity remains to find this disturbing. It is here that fleeing or the temptation to flee is likely to occur, but this can only be made sense of in terms of a substantial concept of self that in a sense *demands* meaning and fulfillment (or actualization). Not to flee is to face up to anxiety A—the demand for authenticity that makes its presence felt in the 'call of conscience'. To respond to both demands Dasein must make what I call a 'first order choice' which concerns the mode of life it takes up within which it can best respond to the demands of the substantial self and the demands of its basic ungroundedness. One option would be the conquering of certain desires as found in asceticism and another would be the enhancement and creation of personality and individuality in the sense I take Nietzsche to be recommending.[132] My point would be that a greater consistency is found in BT if

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[131] I suspect Sartre is making a similar point when, talking about the relation between negation and nothingness he says, 'If I emerge in nothingness *beyond* the world, how can this extra-mundane nothingness furnish a foundation for those little pools of non-being which we encounter each instant in the depth of being.' (BN, p.53)

[132] The former option seems to correspond with Dreyfus' interpretation on the strength of BT's Division I, and the latter with Rorty's as found in EHO and CIS.

we do not read Heidegger as recommending one or the other, but only that we must make a choice along these lines. He is possibly making this point when he says;

> When Dasein brings itself back from the "they", the "they-self" is modified in an existential manner so that it becomes *authentic* being-one's-self. This must be accomplished by *making up for not choosing*. But "making up" for not choosing signifies *choosing to make this choice*—deciding for a potentiality-for-being, and making this decision from one's own self. In choosing to make this choice, Dasein *makes possible*, first and foremost, its authentic potentiality-for-being.[133]

In a sense the content of this choice is not important; Dasein need only choose *resolutely* in order not to sink back into averageness. Still, for the reasons given it only makes sense to speak of 'being-one's-self' if some sort of self exists (at least as an ideal) which we want to actualize (and that this fact remains means the inconsistency which has been outlined remains).

I take the distinction between 'authenticity' and 'resoluteness' to be bound up with the idea of first order choice. To face up to and make this choice is key to authenticity, and to commit to whatever is chosen *in readiness for anxiety* is to be resolute. As such, authenticity is (for Heidegger at least) closely associated with anxiety A; and resoluteness is associated with the co-existence of anxieties A and B. 'Resoluteness' says Heidegger 'appropriates untruth authentically',[134] the untruths being the contingencies of our thrown condition which to a great extent must be lived as if absolute. The relation between the two is reciprocal—one engenders and acts as a reminder of the other. Resoluteness, harbouring urangst, makes us ready for anxiety and the first order choice of authenticity. 'Even resoluteness' we are told 'remains dependent upon the "they" and its world. The understanding of this is one of the things that a resolution discloses, inasmuch as resoluteness is what first gives authentic transparency to Dasein.'[135] And that which preserves authenticity *within* the *that one must choose* part of what is chosen authentically is the attitude of resoluteness.

iii) The third form of anxiety concerns the maintenance of the individuality attested to by this first order choice and this takes the form of responsibility for the chosen conception of self. If commitment wavers Dasein feels guilty in the more orthodox sense of the word and the anxiety associated with this is anxiety B.

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[133] BT, p.313

[134] ibid, p.345

[135] ibid. In other words, resoluteness embodies the realization of its own contingency, and this on occasion engenders a transformation to authenticity and anxiety A's realization of the need for first order choices.

Dasein's authenticity or resoluteness will be measured in terms of the freedom and flexibility of movement it has between anxiety's A and B. It is this realm that I see as ideally embodying 'readiness for anxiety' and the existential notion of individuality. Unfortunately it also embodies a paradox. Individuality is neither wholly contained in our substantial self nor wholly in our basic ontology but in both these two conflicting sources of self. Readiness for anxiety seems crucial in that a reminder of Da-sein's relation to Nothing as encountered in pure uncanniness should maintain Dasein as Dasein-individual, not Dasein-'they-self'. In this respect it plays a role not dissimilar to Kierkegaard's 'repetition', and resoluteness, like faith, is the mode of authenticity that keeps a hold of the fundamental paradox. As with Abraham, it might be seen as an 'ordeal' which for Kierkegaard is a 'passing through; the person tested comes back again to exist in the ethical, even though he retains an everlasting impression of the terror.'[136] In the postscript to WIM Heidegger speaks of the need to 'sacrifice' what is in order to illuminate being. He says,

Sacrifice is a valediction to everything that "is" on the road to the preservation of the favour of being. Sacrifice can be made ready and can be served by doing and working in the midst of what-is, but never consummated there. Its consummation comes from the inwardness out of which historical man by his action—essential thinking is also an act—dedicates the *Da-sein* he has won for himself to the preservation of the dignity of being. The inwardness is the calm that allows nothing to assail man's hidden readiness for the valedictory nature of all sacrifice. Sacrifice is rooted in the nature of the event through which being claims man for the truth of being.[137]

Here there is a Religiousness A type relation between the Da-sein 'historical man' has won for himself and the 'preservation' of being. The direct concerns of one's thrown condition are 'sacrificed' in favour of the a remembering of our ontology. This emphasis on anxiety A becomes, I take it, the role of the philosopher or metaphysician.

Along these lines I think we can see parallels between the three kinds of anxiety found in Heidegger and Kierkegaard's aesthetic/ethical/religious stages. In the first instance where anxiety comes from 'nowhere' we have something like the dreaming spirit where desire for the sensual is there but undifferentiated from its object. Uncanniness might not fascinate in quite the same way but the odd familiarity of the not-at-home presents it as something deeper, perhaps more intriguing and not simply threatening. The first suggestions of freedom then emerge for Kierkegaard in the form of the

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[136] CUP, p.266
[137] p.263 (Meridian)

possibility of possibility and this is similar to our 'understanding' of ourselves as in-the-world *as* a possibility. Anxieties A and B I have argued have an intrinsic ethical element and if these can be inserted into Heidegger's analysis then we have something similar to Kierkegaard's 'second ethic'. Just as Kierkegaard's ethical individual has an implicit awareness of his incompleteness, so the Dasein-individual is, though authentic, imbued with urangst and thus 'readiness for anxiety'. This is concretized by the rare 'moments' in which pure anxiety is experienced in Da-sein's encounter with nothing. Like the Knight of Faith's leap this strips him of his sense of self and the significances he previously attached to the world, and like the 'ordeal' he retains this as his world comes back into focus. If at this point he does not decide to flee the implications of anxiety he will embody these in his shift to resolute/authentic existence—an existence which involves a lived awareness of, or readiness for the experience of nothing, contingency, death, guilt and the precarious status of individuality.

Merleau-Ponty does not ascribe a position quite like this to Heidegger, but, partly in criticism of him seems to sum up what I have been saying;

Our birth ... is the basis both of our activity and individuality, and our passivity or generality—that inner weakness which prevents us from ever achieving the density of the absolute individual. We are not in some incomprehensible way an activity joined to a passivity ... but wholly active and wholly passive, because we are the upsurge of time.[138]

In the next chapter I will attempt to describe Sartre's interpretation and utilization of anxiety in a way that accommodates Kierkegaard and Heidegger more in the spirit of this passage than in the terms he specifically lays down. In so doing I hope to add further flesh to the anxiety structure as defined, implied or inspired in many of its details by Heidegger's secularization of Kierkegaard.

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[138] *The Phenomenology of Perception* (RKP, 1986) p.428

4

Anxious Engagement: Sartre

'Anxiety exists when a man has decided on new values in and through action.'—Sartre (*Notebooks*)

'I must create my own system, or be enslaved by another man's'—William Blake[1]

'You gotta stand for something / Or you're gonna fall for anything'—John C. Mellencamp (*Scarecrow*)

'On Monday and the long week when they must perform again their impersonations ... of adults who are not the world's guests but its hosts'—John Updike (*Couples*)

'But you and I we've been through that / And this is not our fate'—Bob Dylan (op cit)

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In this chapter I will investigate anxiety's role in revealing and responding to the ethically skewed Sartrean versions of freedom and nothingness; its relation to bad faith, and its more explicitly ethical significance in terms of what has been called 'reciprocal freedom' and the possibility of 'authenticity'. What I take to be the sense of ambiguity that dwells in the heart of human existence; that which is essentially revealed in the dynamics of existential anxiety, is not always made explicit by Sartre whose broad emphasis is on commitment and ethical anxiety and who appears to assume a relatively unproblematic relation between ethics and ontology. I hope to show however that, though the point of view and thus the spin is different, the same structure of anxiety that we find in Heidegger is at play. The following chapters (on Tillich and Rorty) will serve to further reinforce this structure, and chapter 7 will concentrate on the way anxiety alters depending on the point of view of one's form of authenticity, which in turn is dependent upon whether anxiety A or anxiety B is considered primary.

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[1] Cited in Rorty, EHO

I

Freedom and *nothingness* are central to Sartre's philosophy and on their phenomenological significance hinges his notion of anxiety. In his *War Diaries* (WD), pre-empting *Being and Nothingness* (BN) he writes;

Anxiety at nothingness, with Heidegger?, Dread of Freedom with Kierkegaard? In my view it is one and the same thing, for freedom is the apparition of nothingness in the world.[2]

If by this he means that for there to be anxiety before freedom there must be nothingness this might be true for Heidegger, but it is not the case for Kierkegaard for whom God is certainly not a nothingness. If however he means (as he sometimes says) that for there to be freedom there must be *nothing* stopping me from doing or not doing something or other then this appears to be true but an inaccurate representation of these other philosophers. It is important not to confound the various meanings of freedom and nothingness as they relate to anxiety, but this is a weakness of Sartre's that, at times, leads him to neglect important aspects of the phenomenon.

In BN he tells us that 'there exists a specific consciousness of freedom, and ... this consciousness is anxiety',[3] but it is important to ask just what this awareness of freedom amounts to and just how it relates to nothingness. Sartre is bringing nothingness into the world through our ability to negate. Whenever we elect to do something we are denying other possibilities, by having expectations we are prone to disappointment and so on. We are armed with a battery of *négatités* —absence, refusal, denial, change and so on—all signifying an intuitive grasp that our being is intrinsically bound-up with non-being. Opposed to Heidegger's overwhelming uncanniness, or 'extra-mundane nothingness' ('nothing'), Sartre refers to 'little pools of non-being which we encounter in the depth of being'[4]. 'Nothingness' he says 'lies coiled in the heart of being like a worm.'[5] He uses the example of arriving at a café in order to meet his friend Pierre. He is a quarter of an hour late and knows that Pierre is punctual and may not have waited. Because of the particular structure of Sartre's consciousness on entering the cafe he is struck, not by the many faces, the activity in the café, but by Pierre's absence. In phenomenological terms the cafe becomes the 'ground' upon

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[2] WD, p.132
[3] BN, pp.70-71
[4] ibid, p.53
[5] ibid, p.56

which Pierre's 'not being there' is the 'figure'. In Sartre's words, 'I myself expected to see Pierre, and my expectation has caused the absence of Pierre to *happen* as a real event concerning the café ... Pierre's absent haunts this café'.[6] This intuitive grasping of absence is contrasted with say, a deduced conclusion of Pierre's absence arrived at by studying each face in a café where he is not expected. In this instance the person does not bring the 'negative judgement' with them, rather it is conditioned by the result of Pierre's simply not being there. A fictional incident which demonstrates how we also bring (or 'secrete') nothingness into the world is found in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Carlson has taken Candy's mangy old dog out to shoot it—a mercy killing which Candy, attached to the animal as he is, reluctantly agrees to. All the farm labourers who live in the barn are aware of this and are anticipating the gun shot;

It was silent outside. Carlson's footsteps died away. The silence came into the room. And the silence lasted.
... It came out of the night and invaded the room.[7]

Sartre's point, that '[m]an is the being through whom nothingness comes into the world'[8], leads him to ask what *kind* of being man must be in order to do this. His answer is that we are *free*, but not until he has spelt out just what this freedom means, can we see how it relates so thoroughly to nothingness. Anxiety, as we have seen, is defined as the awareness of freedom, and so it must also be regarded (as in Heidegger) as the awareness of nothingness or contingency. Iris Murdoch has commented on Sartre's 'stupefying ambiguity in [his] use of the word freedom'[9] and this also applies to his use of the word 'nothingness'. In the remainder of this section and in section II I hope to sort these out in a single raid by focusing on his application of anxiety.

For Sartre, if we recall, the distinction between anxiety and fear runs as follows: 'Situations...will be apprehended through a feeling of fear or of anxiety according to whether we envisage the situation as acting on the man or the man as acting on the situation.'[10] So, I am due to meet a woman on a blind date; I *fear* that she might be unattractive or unpleasant , but I am *anxious* about how I will behave in her presence. In the first instance I am helpless before circumstances, before a chain of events, but in the second kind of apprehension there is no causality as such, only the

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[6] op cit, p.42
[7] *Of Mice and Men / Cannery Row* (Reprint Society, 1947), p.65
[8] BN, p.59
[9] *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (Penguin, 1989), p.103
[10] BN, p.66

nothing that lies between my present self and my future self. *Anxiety replaces causality* as far as my actions are concerned; 'at the heart of consciousness' Sartre says, 'a link is missing—and it's the absence of this link that deprives us of any excuse.'[11] Consciousness is not only cut-off from future events, but also from its past. In a well known example Sartre places himself in the role of a gambler who returns to the table after resolving not to gamble again;

After having patiently built up barriers and walls, after enclosing myself in the magic circle of resolution, I perceive with anxiety that *nothing* prevents me from gambling .[12]

We are presented with a picture of consciousness as disengaged from the world in as much as nothing is necessary,[13] but, as we shall shortly see, necessarily engaged in the world via the meaning we confer upon it in our capacity as the creator of values. Our grounds for existence (if you can call it a 'grounds') is ourself and only ourself.

A slight ambiguity emerges when we compare Sartre's definition of the anxious experience with the subjective experience of anxiety we surmise from his own examples. He says in the WD that 'anxiety at a possible one does not want to realise is, in fact, anxiety at the nothingness which separates one from that possible'.[14] This is, I think, strictly speaking, wrong. You cannot both be anxious in the face of an undesired possible and in the face of nothingness *itself* at the same time. Take the example Sartre uses in BN of the soldier under attack;

The artillery preparation which precedes the attack can provoke fear in the soldier who undergoes the bombardment, but anxiety is born in him when he tries to foresee the conduct with which he will face the bombardment, when he asks himself if he is going to be able to "hold up".[15]

Here I would certainly agree it is the fact that nothingness separates the soldier from his future conduct that enables him to feel anxiety, but the anxiety itself is not directed at this nothingness but at the possibility of acting in a way he would be ashamed of, i.e. in a cowardly way. He is aware that he is free to do something other than what he wants to do, not that he is free *per se*. The anxious soldier is concerned with a pre-established code of conduct (to what degree established by *him* is not important here)—he places value on bravery and the praise this elicits from his

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[11] WD, p.133
[12] BN, p.70
[13] 'I am in anxiety precisely because any conduct on my part is only possible', BN, p.68
[14] WD, p.133
[15] BN, p.65

comrades, and no value on pusillanimity—he is not anxious in the face of the nothingness that underlies his predicament. It might even be more accurate to say that the soldier's feeling is akin to a kind of fear before something unknown and instinctive within him (survival instinct?) that might determine whether or not he is going to be able to 'hold up'. I once heard a bomb disposal expert on duty in Northern Ireland saying the greatest concern he had was the 'fear of fear'—the threat of losing his nerve as if this were something that could *happen* to him. The question of our 'nerve' being under our control or not in such extreme circumstances is more ambiguous and more complex than Sartre suggests.

A further example is found in WD where he admits, with reference to his decision to diet, that;

there's ... an image at the back of my mind which usually makes me stick to these decisions to the bitter end: it's the holy terror I have of all those fellows who decide at three-monthly intervals to stop smoking, keep it up for a day or two with a hell of a struggle, and then give in and start smoking again.[16]

The anxiety here is directed towards not being like these weak-willed people. Sartre is unimpressed by their behaviour and it is this, surely, that is the object of his anxiety rather than the nothingness that makes it possible for them to start smoking again and him to stick to his diet.

My point is that in the type of case Sartre describes there is more than a nothingness that separates us from our conduct, there is also a set of values which direct our behaviour, and in these kinds of instances it is the living up to, or not, of these values that prompts anxiety. If this were not the case we would suffer anxiety over the most trivial actions. Of course, as Sartre goes on to say, the purest form of anxiety is based on the realization that we are responsible for choosing these values in the first place (more of this later), but before moving on it should be acknowledged that when faced with possibilities of one kind or another there may well be an associated anxiety that is a response to nothingness. To illustrate this I will use another of Sartre's examples: he describes a situation where one is walking along a narrow path with no railings by the side of a precipice. The usual reaction is fear in the face of something happening to us that might cause us to fall (slipping on a stone etc.), but there may be a sudden rush of anxiety as we realise there is nothing stopping us from jumping over the edge rather than pressing ourselves against the mountain side. A more urban example, that I am familiar with, is the onset of anxiety that sometimes occurs when walking

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[16] WD, p.124

on a narrow pavement by a busy road. The ease with which I could step into the road, or nudge my companion under a bus creates a distinct sense of vertigo, of all of a sudden feeling, perhaps paradoxically, very insecure. The insecurity is caused, not by the horror of what might happen if I do step into the road so much as the simple fact that there is nothing beyond myself stopping me from doing something like this.

In the earlier two situations Sartre describes, there might well be an element of anxiety before nothingness accompanying the anxiety before the possibility of a 'possible one does not want to realise' (although I very much doubt this in the case of the soldier) but if so this is clearly separate from, and subsidiary to, anxiety about an unwanted outcome. For it to be more than this, I think a far greater degree of detachment is required by the agent. Moments of detachment do occur, such as when walking by the busy road, when there is a glimmer of pure freedom or pure nothingness, but Sartre goes on to suggest (and I agree) that a more profound level of detachment (one that, contrary to so many of his examples, perhaps requires contemplation) is required for anxiety to bring us before the sense of our ontological basis as nothingness and freedom. Along these lines Marcel says of the question 'What am I?'; 'the true question presupposes a certain detachment or separation of myself from what I do and from my manner of sharing in the common life of man.'[17] Anxiety, in one of Sartre's definitions, 'is the reflective apprehension of freedom by itself ... it appears at the moment when I disengage myself from the world where I had been engaged'. In these moments, 'I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself.'[18] I think the best way of understanding this type of statement, however, is not in terms of inventing meanings and values as we might invent a new card game, but in terms of *appropriating* them. If there is a way in which values and value systems can be authentically lived then it is this that should be reflected upon both in terms of what it reveals and in terms of the freedom, commitment and so on that defines the condition of the *for-itself* in the first place. Predictably this combining of commitment and detachment causes problems which I shall further spell-out and discuss later on.

The root of anxiety is for Sartre the fact that there is no objective basis for our values, combined with the fact that we must nonetheless act on what amounts to an unbounded freedom. The

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[17] *Being and Having* (Dacre Press, 1949), p.109
[18] BN, p.78

responsibility for what we are doing falls squarely on our shoulders and is inalienable. If this is what he is saying then, as suggested, we need to identify two different kinds of anxiety. On one level we are anxious before *ourselves*, before the responsibility we have to use our freedom in the right way (such as in the example of the soldier); and on another level we are anxious before the realization that we have chosen what is to be considered *right* in the first place. Putting aside, for the moment, the issue of choosing as meaning appropriating, there is surely more than an a further (meta)ethical anxiety here, but also an ontological anxiety before the *fact* that values are human creations. Values, for Sartre, are not objectively valid, not *necessary*, and this brings us into the realm of anxiety A. The anxiety which faces this is for Heidegger the sense of uncanniness the everyday world assumes as it loses the significance of its categories and the individual confronts the nothing which has been concealed by the *Mitwelt*.

My analysis suggests there is no straightforward way of making the connection between the ontological and the ethical, and both of these elicit their own kind of anxiety. If Sartre does not explicitly acknowledge this it might be because of his insistence on nothingness and freedom being equated. If so, he has two possible ways out: either to find some way in which he acknowledges a separate anxiety before nothingness as distinct from anxiety before freedom, or to exclude the particular awareness of nothingness from the ambit of anxiety. His remarks on Heidegger suggests that he takes the latter option. As we have seen, anxiety for Heidegger has two distinct components; anxiety before the world, and anxiety about oneself as an existing individual with distinct possibilities, the ultimate one being one's death. These roughly match up with the two sources of anxiety we find in Sartre, but for Heidegger it seems possible to experience a sense of uncanniness and detachment without this directly relating to one's responsibility within the world. For Sartre, anxiety only has meaning from an engaged, personal perspective. We become aware of our contingency and freedom when, as in the case of the student in *Existentialism and Humanism*, we are left without support from the world of pre-appointed values. It is this that leads Danto to conclude that anxiety 'must finally mean ... a recognition of freedom as hateful in a situation where there is recourse only to it.'[19]

An example from my own experience is this: I am in a position where I can choose to tolerate or be rudely dismissive towards an irritating but far from malign acquaintance—both actions probably

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[19] *Sartre* (Fontana, 1975), p.133

resulting in far-reaching consequences in terms of my relation to them (for example hurting their feelings or being lumbered with their company, now and in the future, when I do not desire it), but also in terms of my own general attitude towards the world and how I see myself amongst other people. The anxiety experienced can be seen as existential in that there is an implicit sense of helplessness or limitation concerning the inevitability and *tragedy* of having to make such a choice. *I* must choose one way or the other; there are good reasons for taking either approach, but whatever I decide will commit me in a far deeper sense than my sense of freedom would ideally want. The situation has exposed the raw tissue of my nothingness and freedom (and thus my ambiguity) and is as such greater and more portentous than the specific moral issue in question.

For Heidegger, anxiety is not linked to value in this way and can come upon us seemingly at any time. It is a 'mood' in which things in the world lose their significance rather than illuminating the individual's significance as responsible for the values it has chosen. It is not attached to any one event, but spreads itself over the whole, and a sense of this—a 'readiness for anxiety' akin to Kierkegaard's 'repetition'—is maintained as we re-engage with our *existentiell* concerns. It is not obvious that this is the case with Sartre. His student is gazing anxiously upon two conflicting value systems with no meta-system to consult, only his freedom; but the very fact that he is looking in this direction, that he is concerned about the choices available, means that he has already placed some *value* on this freedom—that he is, as an individual among others, *responsible*. To complete the picture the student would feel at this point *uncanny*—less than at home in his value-laden existence which includes his freedom. Though subjectively he is unaware of this (at the moment at least) this sense of uncanniness is essentially a slight hardening and clouding of his otherwise transparent urangst, and *potentially* this could radically reorientate him towards anxiety A. Heidegger takes this step and lets our anxious hero gaze, not at himself as responsible, but at the contingency of the world itself. A clue to Sartre's position on contingency lies in something he says in WD;

An existential grasping of our facticity is Nausea, and the existential apprehension of our freedom is anxiety.[20]

I think the first, disengaging stage of Heidegger's anxiety can also be viewed as a kind of nausea.[21] There is a sense of 'repulsion' towards 'submerging' beings 'which is the action of the nothing that

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[20] p.133

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oppresses Dasein in anxiety.' The 'nihilation' (a kind of de-signifying rather than a 'negation' or an 'annihilation') 'discloses these beings in their full but heretofore concealed strangeness as what is radically other.'[22] The realm beyond human values is cold and alien, it is without meaning, but it can nonetheless be felt to be *there*. As such, for Roquentin, it threatens us;

> Objects ought not to *touch*, since they are not alive. You use them, you put them back in place, you live among them: they are useful, nothing more. But they touch me, it's unbearable. I am afraid of entering in contact with them ...[23]

In the famous passage about the chestnut tree root he says;

> the world of explanation and reason is not that of existence ... That root ... existed in so far that I could not explain it. Knotty, inert, nameless, it fascinated me ... repeatedly brought me back to its own existence ... Each of its qualities escaped from it a little, flow out of it, half solidified, almost became a thing ...[24]

The significance of things in themselves is how they contrast with our nothingness; it is their very *thing-ness* that drives home the insubstantial nature of consciousness and all the anxiety that this entails. A little later, Roquentin's understanding of nausea places it even closer to Heidegger's uncanniness: 'The essential thing' he says 'is contingency. I mean that, by definition, existence is not necessary. To exist is simply *to be there*; what exists appears, lets itself be *encountered*, but you can never *deduce* it.'[25] The emphasis here is slightly different; the gratuitousness of things highlights both the power consciousness has to create meanings, and the ungroundedness of those meanings—a revelation that can be unpacked in terms of anxiety A and anxiety B.

Roquentin suffers a kind of existential fever and the only cure is some or other means of re-engagement—of coming to terms with the contingent nature of values and the contingent nature of his self. He needs, it seems, to reinstitute anxiety (or anxiety B in my terminology). Heidegger, as we have seen, sees something in this kind of disengagement that is not necessarily threatening. Certain passages in WIM indicate that, if approached in the right way, the nihilation of the world can constitute a state of 'peace' or 'calm'. For him we can find a home of sorts in the primacy of

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[21] Although Sartre does say that 'anxiety at the nothingness of the world, anxiety at the origins of the existent—these are derived and secondary'—acknowledging, albeit dismissively, something in what Heidegger claims. (ibid)

[22] WIM (Routledge), p.103

[23] *Nausea* (Penguin, 1965), p.22

[24] ibid, p.186

[25] ibid, p.188

'nothing' but Sartre does not indulge anxiety's obscurity in this way and the unambiguous horror of nausea makes it plain that for him salvation can only lie in a authentic re-entry into the world of 'mundane' commitment. The trouble is, within what I claim must be a double-edged anxiety, it seems all too easy for our awareness of freedom to change its aspect from anxious responsibility to nausea before the facticity of our condition—before the fact that we are 'condemned to freedom'.

Anxiety of this kind is contrasted with the attitude of what Sartre calls the 'serious man'. He is someone who is fully engaged in a world which for him consists of given, *thing-like* rules and values. He is unaware (or contrives to be unaware) of his freedom and the fact that nothing rational or necessary underwrites his commitments. Our freedom is unsettling and we are inclined to flee the responsibility it (for Sartre) necessitates. But our facticity is likewise unwelcoming; it tells us that human reality is the only source of meaning, and how does one 'welcome' oneself? The *Mitwelt* on the other hand offers plenty of opportunity for believing and acting as if there exists an absolute, ultra-human validity, and that there is a necessity in what we do rather than the onus being on the individual—plenty of opportunity in other words to become serious. Bad faith, I shall proceed to explain, can (and probably should) be read as a reaction to both these facets of anxiety.

II

'belief is ... thought at rest'—C.S. Peirce (*How to Make our Ideas Clear*)

As these 'pools of non-being' gradually form 'the craters of the spirit',[26] the question inevitably arises as to how we are to be at once engaged in the world, and yet avoid the 'mood of seriousness'. In BN Sartre creates for us a sense of absurdity—we care both about having values, and about being honest with ourselves about our freedom and the contingency of these values. He has posited, roughly, the realms I have designated as objects of anxiety A and anxiety B, but we are yet to be told how to combine these in an authentic existence.

To tackle this question I want first to review Sartre's idea of 'bad faith'—which I see as more revealing of the anxiety structure than his comments on anxiety itself—and see how a kind of

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[26] Saul Bellow's phrase (see *Dangling Man*)

negative ethic of authenticity emerges from it. Bad faith is not a full denial of anxiety, but an inauthentic attitude towards it. It is important for Sartre that we cannot not be in anxiety; he says, 'It is certain that can not overcome anxiety, for we *are* anxiety.'[27] In other words we *are* freedom, we *are* a nothingness, we are *being-for-itself.* Yet we are also in a sense *being-in-itself* and *being-for others.* The Bad Faith chapter seems to recommend a 'meta-stable' equilibrium between these three modes of existence that is coherent with our short and long term commitments. Underlying these is indeed a choice or a series of choices and thus our freedom, but this then creates the structure around which our attitude to our body, our past, our social roles and so on can be seen as excuse-making or not. For reasons that will become apparent here and in the remainder of the dissertation, this edifice is inherently unstable or even paradoxical; it is shot-through with ambiguity and even though nothingness and responsibility remain the primary phenomenal foci of existential anxiety, it is this ambiguity that is its essential origin.

A fundamental feature of our freedom (the closest it gets to an essence perhaps) is its desire to be fully engaged as a being-in-itself (yet maintaining itself as freedom). Sartre puts it in the following way;

The supreme value towards which consciousness, by its very nature, is constantly transcending itself is the absolute being of the self, with its qualities of identity, purity, permanence.[28]

The concluding message of BN is that we are doomed to frustration, a 'useless passion' who cannot attain this value. Part of our motivation for wanting to attain it as has already been outlined is the for-itself's supposedly complete and inalienable responsibility for its actions, and in this sense flight from freedom is manifest as a craving for *excuses.* Allied to this, in a way that may or may not be a direct consequent (the latter in my interpretation), is our desire, as human beings, not to be the foundation of all values. There is then this duality in the structure of our wanting to escape our anxiety, just as there is ambiguity in the meaning of nothingness and freedom.

Though we cannot escape our freedom, 'it still remains possible for me to maintain various types of conduct with respect to my own anxiety—in particular patterns of flight'.[29] Just as Marcel proposes that 'it may be of my essence to be able not to be what I am; in plain words, to be able to

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[27] BN, p.82
[28] Cited In Murdoch, op cit, p.93
[29] BN, p.78

betray myself',[30] so Sartre speaks specifically of 'distracting' ourselves from anxiety at the nothingness that separates us from future possibilities by regarding them as formal possibilities— *things that may happen*—rather than my *own* possibilities; and from the anxiety with respect to the nothingness that separates us from the past by treating our progress as somehow necessary (e.g. 'continual transformations are conceived as a biological order'[31]). We do not take our being as free, but see freedom as one of our properties—'a matter of envisaging the self as a little God which inhabits me and which possesses my freedom as a metaphysical virtue.'[32] This kind of flight occurs in the *reflective* state of mind.

Escape is achieved in the *immediate* sense by a 'decentring' of consciousness so that we become aware of anxiety indirectly in the form of 'I am anxiety in order to flee it'.[33] Bad faith, as mentioned, it is not a complete dispelling of anxiety but an inauthentic attitude towards it that is, in the short-term at least, an avoidance of its full implications. The falseness of bad faith is that it is a mode of being chosen in anxiety and can therefore never escape anxiety as it is designed to do. The person in bad faith has substituted a self that must flee anxiety for a self that is simply anxious. To do this it must deny its freedom and take up a false attitude towards its being-in-itself and its being-for-others. In other words it must come to regard itself not as that which chooses or 'assumes'[34] itself as a particular thing or role, but as that which *must* be these modes of existence. This denial amounts to self-deception: in Sartre's words, 'in bad faith human reality is constituted as a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is.'[35] Exactly what this means will become clearer shortly.

A famous example from BN is the over-acting café waiter (or the barman in *The Age of Reason*[36]) and the 'dance' of vocational activities in general. In being a waiter, this man is fulfilling a role, playing a game whose rules are dictated by a nameless convention. That most jobs will demand

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[30] *Being and Having*, p.106
[31] BN, p.81. Or an unconscious determinism like Philippe in *Iron in the Soul* (Penguin, 1963) who, with a 'self-important air of destiny' declares 'I suffer from a Oedipus-complex ... I'm a regular case-book type.' (p.149)
[32] ibid
[33] ibid, p.83
[34] 'Assuming' as used by Sartre and Simone deBeauvoir I take as meaning something close to 'appropriating'.
[35] BN, p.107
[36] See p.173

that we behave in certain ways is inevitable, but whether or not we are in bad faith depends on the attitude we take to our position. Bad faith is the attempt to create a solidity and permanence in ourselves through, in this case, the role we play for others. It is to deny, from the waiter's point of view, that, 'there is no common measure' between the being of being a waiter and his being as being-for-itself. The nothingness that lies between myself and this role is, in the immediate, non-reflective sense, filled in;

What I attempt to realise is a being-in-itself of the café waiter, as if it were not just in my power to confer their value and their urgency upon my duties and the rights of my position, as if it were not my lack of free choice to get up each morning at five o'clock or remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired. As if from the very fact that I sustain this role in existence I did not transcend it on every side, as if I did not constitute myself as one *beyond* my condition.[37]

In 'being what he is not' the waiter is constituting himself as an 'in-itself' whose freedom is solidified through a corruption of its 'being-for-others'. In 'not being what he is', he is avoiding the nothingness of the for-itself and its attendant freedom and anxiety. That we must escape *from* something *to* something is of course important; there is no neutral, middle ground from which to take (a purely objective) stock of our situation, and an attempt to do so is liable to fall into the trap of 'sincerity'. As suggested 'meta-stability' is a *kind* of middle ground, but it is thus far unclear what this would amount to. One might think that sincerity is the obvious counter to bad faith, but for Sartre the 'sincere man' is a further product of it. He is a 'judge' or a 'critic' who in criticising himself or others for not facing up to a particular feature of themselves, is creating only a new being-in-itself to replace the one being scrutinized. This view of sincerity as duplicity has a specific application. Take Sartre's first example—that of the homosexual who, racked with guilt, refuses to accept that he is a 'pederast' and disassociates himself from his past actions by virtue of a whole range of excuses. His friend, a sincere man, wants him to admit his guilt, to say, 'I am a pederast'. If this story was about someone who is authentic (in the sense Sartre uses in the NE[38]) we should suppose that the friend wants to make sure the homosexual is being honest about his motivations— to admit, if it is the case, that what prompted him to do these things in the past is likely to be what prompts him to do them again. In this case though, the example is supposed to reveal, not just the

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[37] BN, p.103

[38] Here authenticity seems to be a complex attitude, or set of attitudes, directed towards ourselves as an ambiguous tension between freedom and facticity. What seems to me a good summary is as follows: 'we discover a new tension at the heart of our authenticity: that of being a living absolute that nothing can change during the time that we live and that of being irremediably and necessarily a future past about which a freedom that will be both new and yet me will decide ... And authenticity must precisely lay claim to live this very situation ...' (NE (University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.477)

homosexual but the critic as in bad faith; as someone who *does not* help his friend understand himself in the following way;

To the extent that a pattern of conduct is defined as the conduct of a pederast and to the extent that I have adopted this conduct, I am a pederast. But to the extent that human reality can not be finally defined by patterns of conduct, I am not one.[39]

Rather he is someone who wants to define his friend as a pederast in order to make his freedom a thing and thus make his dealings with him easier to handle ("he's just a pederast").

I will briefly jump ahead of myself here and point out an issue raised by this example. Sartre seems to accept that by virtue of his conduct and the accepted language, this person *is* a pederast. In an ethical sense this is crucial, for if the man were, against all reason, to deny that in this sense he is a pederast he would have to be outlawed from the moral community. The main claim an existentialist would have against him would be one of inconsistency (probably born of self-deception). If, on the one hand, he has chosen to be part of a rule-following community (as we presume he has) he cannot, on the other, opt to step outside of it when it suits him and still expect his wider ethical network to remain intact. The essential problem here is that the irrationality of this action makes it impossible to communicate with him, and communication and understanding are fundamental to a system of praise and blame. What I think this indicates in Sartre's philosophy is the idea of authenticity amounting to something thicker than an awareness of ourselves as free; it also requires a knowledge of a moral, socially-relevant self (being-for-others) which involves preferences we may have that have a bearing on our ethical network. Here it is an issue of authentic commitment to past decisions—a commitment which is necessary if we are to entertain a coherent sense of self-identity over time. As I shall later expand on with regard to Camus' *The Fall*,[40] we do not choose everything about ourselves and thus the first step in developing a freed-up *attitude* towards these aspects is *knowing* and *understanding* them in the fullest sense.

Sartre gives a second example of the pejorative sense of sincerity. This time the sincere man is directing his judgement towards himself—a self he admits to himself is evil. But;

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[39] BN, p.108
[40] See Chapter 7

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the man who confesses that he is evil has exchanged his disturbing "freedom-for-evil" for an inanimate character of evil.[41]

By doing this he has an excuse, he is no longer himself the evil but is able to transcend it. The duplicity here is evident—the man is evil, but only on the grounds that *he* is not evil. This is indeed a means of escaping the anxiety, the responsibility, that accompanies the free choice of evil actions, and if this is how Sartre defines sincerity then the sincere man is indeed in bad faith. He is being what he is not, i.e. a thing that is evil, and not being what he is, a 'freedom-for-evil'; and so Sartre can say that 'the sincere man constitutes himself as what he is *in order not to be it*.[42]

The impossibility of assuming a neutral vantage point on ourselves makes it difficult to pinpoint the locus of a mode of existence free from bad faith. On the one hand we must not lose our grasp on freedom in our representations and projections, and on the other we must take full responsibility for our actions in these modes of being.[43] If the waiter spills soup over Sartre's jacket he would equally be in bad faith if he were to act without concern, disassociating himself from the task of apologising and clearing up the mess on the grounds that a nothingness separates himself from the waiter. The nothingness means he has *chosen* to be a waiter and therefore chosen the responsibilities that go with it. A flavour of absurdity sneaks into the equation here—not because we are a nothingness who must at all times choose himself—but because this choice, whilst grounded in nothingness, forces us to take it seriously (or to choose something else). As Kierkegaard's says, not to take our choices seriously, not to *commit* ourselves, is to commit to not committing ourselves. Seriousness therefore seems unavoidable. This conclusion is what Joseph S. Catalano terms the 'weak notion' of bad faith. Good faith, on this account, only amounts to 'a fleeting realization that we cannot escape bad faith itself',[44] or, 'a fleeting glimpse of the futile character of our condition'.[45] Catalano suggests that there is a stronger sense of bad faith in which

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[41] BN, p.109
[42] ibid
[43] This is nicely put by Tibor Fischer in *The Thought Gang* (Polygon, 1994) when he says, 'Belief causes problems, it reduces your flexibility, but it's a spiritual skeleton—difficult to move without one.'
[44] *Good and bad faith: weak and strong notions*, in K. Hoeller (ed.) *Sartre and Psychology* (Humanities Press, 1993), p.81
[45] ibid, p.79. Sartre actually says very little about good faith but I think Catalano is wrong to use it in the way he does. In BN Sartre says '[t]his which I define as good faith is what Hegel would call the *immediate*. It is simple faith.' i.e. it also moves towards the in-itself, but with no duplicity. I will use the term 'authenticity', more or less as I have been using it up to now—i.e. in terms of a mode of existence which attempts to face up to anxiety in all its aspects. In a footnote Sartre says we can 'radically escape bad faith' and that 'this self-recovery we shall call authenticity.' (p.116). He says no more about it in this work but of course discusses in detail in the NE.

something more constructive can be done with our freedom. I would be inclined to agree, not least because if bad faith is an escape from anxiety—an anxiety that we can still trace back to the soldier during a bombardment—then there must be something meaningful (or personal) that it attaches itself to. If not, then would not bad faith be an escape from our facticity, from nausea? Merleau-Ponty describes freedom in the following way;

It is true that I can at any moment interrupt my projects. But what *is* this power? It is the power to begin something else, for we never remain suspended in nothingness.[46]

Authenticity, in the strong sense, is to be aware of, and not take flight from this 'power' to 'refuse' and 'begin something else'. Just how we are to achieve this whilst never 'suspended in nothingness' is of course a fundamental question and one which the various modes of authenticity must address. In the weak sense, it might be suggested, if there is any sense to be made of authenticity, it must fall at the exact point after we have refused, and before we 'begin again'. This though seems incoherent because it either denies such authenticity any content, or it leads to an infinite regress in which each reflection is parasitic upon a language game or a form of life. My solution would be to accept a form of reflection upon our contingency that, as with Heidegger, dramatically contrasts it with our unreflective day to day comportment. This is to be compared and contrasted with Simone deBeauvoir's 'modern meaning of the festival' which is the ecstatic, subjectively absolute celebration of a successful commitment (a 'victory'). This can be seen as the zenith of anxiety B, the period before it inevitably lapses and urangst (perhaps engendering strong bad faith) makes its presence felt again. In claiming that '[i]n festival, in art, men express their need to feel that they exist absolutely' she has I think captured something crucial to the anxiety dynamic, and importantly she adds that '[o]ne of art's roles is to fix this passionate assertion of existence in a more durable way.'[47] In terms of an authenticity that encompasses both anxiety A and B, however, it is not any purely formal, timeless instant by itself that is important but a reflection upon or insight into contingency closely allied to, or perhaps brought about by our 'power to begin something else' in the context of commitment and a concrete sense of responsibility. In sum I see these instances as occurring in (and as fundamental to) anxiety A and anxiety B; they are an important part of the movement between them, but are not themselves the loci of authenticity.

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[46] *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.452
[47] *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, p.127

The final section of the *Bad Faith* chapter presents an identical structure to what has preceded it, but this time Sartre refers to belief rather than action. The alteration provides our first real clue, in this text at least, of what form authenticity might take if something other than a realization that we are doomed to bad faith. Belief, for Sartre, is haunted by 'non-belief' as soon as it passes beyond its immediate 'simple' phase.[48] Otherwise stated, all our beliefs are precisely not what they are, they are essentially self-denying and always lacking confirmation. We can never fully immerse ourselves, or lose ourselves in our beliefs because we can never eradicate doubt. In the same way that the person in bad faith plays on the ambiguity of being, so he plays on this necessary ambiguity of belief. The homosexual in Sartre's example 'reasons' that because he can never be what he is (the for-itself can never be an in-itself), he can equally be something other than a pederast as much as he can be a pederast. This though is faulty logic because the 'what he is' part refers to a description that *is* befitting of a for-itself (i.e. it does have some meaning and content within the context of action, social responsibility etc.). In the same way, the person in bad faith reasons that any belief he holds is possible because all beliefs are impossible.

The weak version of bad faith lies in the reasoning, or rather *acceptance*, of the impossibility of belief. In this version the person is seemingly not facing up to themselves as a 'futile passion'—as being a *pour-soi* that wants to be an *en-soi-pour-soi*. Sartre says to this effect;

The ideal of good faith (to believe what one believes) is, like that of sincerity (to be what one is), an ideal of being-in-itself.[49]

In authenticity however, unlike sincerity, the person never takes refuge in a false construct of being-in-itself. The problem here though is as stated: authenticity is denied an existence beyond the thinnest imaginable. If it is to be itself it must *believe something*, it must *be something*, for not to do these things is not to exist, and to do these things in authenticity is not to do them which is

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[48] This he describes as good faith, but quickly passes over it in a similar way that Kierkegaard does not find the idea of innocence/ignorance in itself particularly interesting (see COA). On the paradox of how we find ourselves in, and can be seen as guilty of, bad faith in the first place ('a decision made in bad faith' according to Sartre) we find something similar to the murmurs of Kierkegaard's 'dreaming spirit'— 'one *puts oneself* in bad faith as one goes to sleep and one is in bad faith as one dreams' (p.113) This is what Mark Johnston calls 'subintentionality'—referring to mental processes which are purposive but not actively intended. He sees this as ironic '[given] Sartre's ambition to use the paradox of repression to undermine Freudian pessimism about the scope of conscious choice in mental life ...' (*Self-Deception and the Nature of Mind*, in McLaughlin and Oksenberg Rorty eds. *Perspectives on Self Deception* (University of California Press, 1988), p.76)
[49] BN, p.115

impossible. Anxiety amounts, in this case, to an awareness or intimation that we are not and can never be what we would like to be. It becomes a helpless, marginalized awareness that the embodied, existing self that we are is a continuing creation of non-essential beings-in-themselves and beings-for-others.

Catalano's point, however, and this is indeed something implied throughout the chapter, is that there is a concurrent, stronger version of bad faith and authenticity that does leave room for the individual to make a difference. This point is backed-up if we consider the following comments at the end of the chapter. Sartre says;

If bad faith is possible ... it is because consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith. *The origin of the risk* is the fact that the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not what it is.[50]

Earlier on however we were told that;

in bad faith human reality is constituted as a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is.[51]

This version focuses not so much on the attitude of the believer towards the ontological status of his beliefs, but on his attitude towards the *content* of those beliefs. In Catalano's words;

In the strong sense of these terms, [authenticity] and bad faith thus appear as two different ways of coping with the ambiguity that is inherent in every act of belief. [Authenticity] accepts ambiguity and does not use it as an excuse for being uncritical; bad faith uses ambiguity for its own purposes of justifying its uncritical attitudes.[52]

An example of strong bad faith would be the musician who, for cynical reasons, 'sells-out' and begins recording commercial records, but who, avoiding admitting to his greed and lack of artistic integrity argues that all artists have 'sold-out' because just to have recording contract is to be part of the establishment and the world of business. One example Catalano uses is the following;

A soldier may say that his role is to obey orders and that if everyone questioned superiors all the time there would be anarchy. But it is ever an issue of questioning all orders all of the time or is this reasoning used as an excuse to relieve him of the burden of living with the possibility that he may have to question orders sometimes.[53]

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[50] op cit, p.116 (my italics)
[51] ibid, p.107
[52] op cit, p.87
[53] ibid

To bring the discussion into the context of anxiety, I think that if the strong/weak dichotomy is the case (as I think it has to be) then it follows the implied ontological/ethical distinction found in Sartre's application of anxiety. Why should the soldier sometimes question orders?—the example of World War II concentration camps is an obvious one—because some orders would go beyond even the utilitarian and pragmatic ethics of being a soldier. How is the soldier aware of the possibility of defying orders? Because he is aware of his freedom. How can it be that he is free? Because he is a nothingness, a *for-itself*. What though is his anxiety directed at? Surely at the possible result of defying orders, not at the nothingness itself. As stated, he can become anxious before his nothingness in itself, but this, in my terminology, is essentially different from the anxiety in these circumstances, and in Sartre's terminology is either 'secondary' or may slip into a form of nausea. My point is that in anxiety there is no seamless movement between the ethical and the ontological realms—its 'objects' are in one or the other, and if in both then there must be two kinds of anxiety on offer that may or may not be linked by a mode of authenticity. In my terms, we can flee anxiety B and be in bad faith in the strong sense if we neglect our freedom as an individual in a specific situation, but this does not necessarily preclude us from facing up to the content of anxiety A; and we can be in bad faith in the weak sense if we deny the impossibility of belief, deny our 'useless passion' etc. but this does not preclude us from facing our responsibility as an (ethically) free individual.

An absurd predicament remains, exemplified by my description of the waiter's options. Crucially though, the waiter, or whoever, does not become authentic by confronting *just* his contingency or *just* his responsibility. Although aware of the contingency of his role he can (and should) feel anxiety B about his performance, about whether he should be doing this or some other job, about the consequences of not getting up in the morning and so on. He would be in bad faith (in the strong sense) however if he were to avoid this anxiety by claiming to be anxious purely before his nothingness and his freedom and using this as an excuse for neglecting *his* duties/situation as a waiter. Given what I have said about the business of appropriating values so as to make ourselves the basis of them, a thorough commitment is required which involves the risk of losing our grip on our freedom to 'refuse' and 'begin something else'. An awareness of our contingency, even if no longer primary, is necessary for a genuine appreciation of the *nature* of commitment and responsibility. The corollary of this is that ethical responsibility is not a necessary demand of the contingency of our values and nor is it by itself a mode of authenticity.

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My suspicion about the Sartre of BN is that he does not want to admit to strong and weak notions of bad faith in the same way he insists that our freedom as individuals and our nothingness amount to the same thing. My view is that they do not, and one important upshot of this is that the ethical and ontological are kept quite distinct. Authenticity and bad faith in the strong sense imply that a system of values is being adhered to or accepted in some way; even if that system is as thin as a general personal responsibility. Sartre says that, 'the primary meaning of Necessity applied to things is always that of *excuse*[54], but the expression 'excuse' only seems to apply in the case of strong bad faith. To look for an excuse surely means we must be looking for a way of absolving ourselves of a particular responsibility, and to acknowledge responsibility in the first place must mean acknowledging a value system. The soldier wants an excuse not to question orders and so deceives himself that all orders must be followed out of necessity. In this sense he flees the anxiety which arises before the fact that the rules he follows do not always coincide with a broader idea of morality that he subscribes to. A more sophisticated level of excuse reflects that of many of Sartre's own examples; he could 'sincerely' admit to himself that he is weak-willed or a coward and thus cannot help but follow orders. Could he not however, in the form of 'nauseous' honesty, say to himself that he might as well follow orders as not follow orders, for all is contingent and one choice is as good as another? And though this glimpse of nausea might be as fleeting as pure uncanniness, it is no less valid, no less free because it involves facing up to our nothingness. It is quite possible that this itself could be used as an even more sophisticated excuse by the soldier to cover up his cowardice, in which case he is, by *abusing* the ontological status of values, in strong bad faith. For Sartre of course, to remain in nausea and behave like Roquentin, rather than experiencing it fleetingly, is necessarily to be in (weak) bad faith, because to assume a 'disengaged' stance is to be what one is not as much as being a soldier is to be what one is not. In bad faith in the strong sense we flee *freedom as responsibility* (anxiety B). In the weak sense we depart from, or are one removed from the truth of *freedom as facticity* (nausea/anxiety A).

Can there be a sense, I wonder, in which we can, more consciously confront our freedom as facticity in something like strong authenticity? Saul Bellow, a writer profoundly influenced in his

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[54] WD, p.135

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early years by Dostoyevsky and to a lesser but significant extent by Sartre, describes the anguished hero of *Dangling Man*[55] in the following way;

Joseph suffers from a feeling of strangeness, of not quite belonging to the world ... he says all human beings share this to some extent. The child feels that his parents are pretenders; his real father is elsewhere and will someday come to claim him.[56]

I think here we find a more realistic kind of innocence. Joseph enters a period of alienation after giving up work and before being drafted into the army. He finds himself overwhelmed by contingency and nothingness; at a distance from both his city life and the conflict in Europe, he struggles to see where exactly he should locate responsibility.[57] We can perhaps see from the reader's perspective that he would end his agonies by hastening his draft or taking a temporary job, but how is he supposed to know this? He has never found himself in this position before; his instinct, for the time being at least, is in shock, and reason cannot provide a clear-cut answer to his situation (which has no meaningful 'question' as such). He is, in the sense of dealing with his uncanniness, an innocent. As the novel progresses and he learns more about himself, or his *condition*, he moves towards a conclusion of sorts and the closer he gets to this without acknowledging it the more we can legitimately accuse him of bad faith. His conclusion is that he must commit himself to going to war (although this feels as much like a giving in to the weight of history and his 'thrownness' as it does a choice) and there is a final release from the barriers he has been erecting to defend his increasingly fragile sense of self. My interpretation is that Joseph is in good faith so long as he grapples with his newly discovered ontological freedom (or nothingness) without being committed to anything. As soon as he becomes committed to maintaining his ultimately illusory ideal of freedom (freedom from others, political ideals etc.) he is in bad faith, but the slide between these positions is subtle (though inexorable) and, as the novel cleverly shows, wrought with ambiguity.

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[55] His first novel, about a man who is waiting to be drafted to fight in W.W.II and, having given up his job, finds himself struggling to maintain a sense of identity and unable to use his freedom creatively. He becomes alienated from his friends, his family and society at large, and concurrently from his moral and political ideals before finally volunteering for the army and admitting both that his freedom had defeated him and that creativity requires a context of demands and limitations.

[56] *Dangling Man* (Penguin, 1963) p.24

[57] Malcolm Bradbury says of him 'Joseph is a clerkly intelligent man of humanist aspirations, struggling between outward history and inner freedom and finding that there are no laws for their connection—the essential anxiety of contemporary fiction.' (*Saul Bellow* (Methuen, 1982), p.37)

Joseph's situation is similar to that of Camus' Clemence (as I shall later interpret him[58]) in that it mirrors the specific guilt of the artist and no doubt that of the authors in question. Art can itself be a mode of authenticity whereby the artist's confrontation with anxiety A (contingency, death etc.) makes contact with a social and ethical environment through his role as creator, critic and commentator. The ensuing and inevitable guilt brought about by this relationship is that one is at once both insider and outsider—parasitic in one's independence. This 'dark night of the soul' (as it is for Joseph) is a vital stage in self-understanding, and though it perhaps cannot last for long whilst retaining its innocence, it is I think a legitimate form of 'stepping-back'. How, after all, does one learn about the nature of freedom as responsibility and commitment, if not through experiencing all sides of it? More than anything, it is the process of learning that necessitates some kind of bad faith in order to understand bad faith. Bad faith here though can only really have meaning retrospectively, for at the time, in innocence, it is still being learnt about and thus cannot be, as Sartre would have it, truly *'chosen'* in bad faith. It begins to look like a new category is required; one that roughly equates with Kierkegaard's qualitative leap. The key to the situation's authenticity is the complex relation of urangst, the individual's courage before this, and the choice of a 'guide' (which could be an ideal, even one as vague as 'self discovery') to help the individual 'pass through' this kind of anxiety in the right way. Joseph is not really guilty in the ethical sense, and yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, he is by virtue of his embodying (at least potentially) anxieties A and B, ambiguously guilty. His guide is the imaginary 'spirit of alternatives', conversations with whom bring to life some central antinomies and ambiguities. Various 'ideal constructions' from history are considered ('God-man', 'courtly lover' etc.);

'Do you want one of those constructions, Joseph?'
'Doesn't it seem that we need them?'
'I don't know.'
'Can't get along without them?'
'If you see it that way.'
'Apparently we need to give ourselves some exclusive focus, passionate and engulfing.'
'One might say that.'
But what of the gap between the ideal construction and the real world, the truth?'
'Yes ...'
'How are they related?'
'An interesting problem.'[59]

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[58] In *The Fall* (See Chapter 7).
[59] p.116

This category applies to any character who undergoes an 'awakening' of this kind—for example Clemence, or Marlow in HOD. Towards the end of the book, once he has joined the army, Joseph is able to reflect on his alienation. The innocence is now well and truly lost, and to become an outsider again would amount to bad faith. He says;

I had not done well alone. I doubted whether anyone could. To be pushed upon oneself entirely put the very facts of simple existence in doubt ... The next move was the world's. I could not bring myself to regret it.[60]

This resonates with Merleau-Ponty's view that 'freedom modifies [history] only by taking up the meaning which [it] *was offering* at the moment in question, and by a kind of unobtrusive assimilation.'[61] But it also highlights the fact that commitment, at least fleetingly, disburdens us. This I do not regard as strong bad faith, but more like a period swathed in the at-homeness of anxiety B facilitated by the leverage of a period spent in anxiety A. The story is similar for Orestes in *The Flies* except that the circumstances are more demanding than they are for Joseph. His freedom is conditioned in the sense that it is thrust upon him and in the sense that he feels like he has gained an insight into himself (or into freedom perhaps) that *gives* him (rather than his absolutely choosing) a kind of resolute ecstasy. Like Joseph his youth is over: 'freedom crashed down on me, and swept me off my feet',[62] and like Joseph his new life ('a strange life ...') must be partly determined by what the world is offering. Sartre's later views on love also suggest a movement in this direction as they involve a choice *and* a succumbing to the object of love. 'Through this twofold characteristic of love' we are told;

there is a reciprocal contestation: to love is never just to love since it is also to will to love, and willing to love is never pure willing to love since it is to love in spite of oneself, to allow oneself to be overcome by one's love ...[63]

Of course, if one starts to take refuge in the 'world's move', then one is fleeing one's (now acknowledged) freedom to 'refuse' and 'begin something else' and the relatively innocent flow from alienation to commitment is interrupted.

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[60] op cit, p.158
[61] op cit, p.450
[62] p.310
[63] NE, p.477

In the symbolism of the 'hero quest' Joseph might be seen as guilty of 'refusing the call', but I do not think it is as simple as this. If the call is to go to war, then at some stage in the story he might be guilty of this, but I think we can identify another call—something akin to Heidegger's 'silent call of conscience'. If we take this as a primordial inclination to confront our nothingness and contingency in anxiety then I do not see why this should be a straightforward sense of freedom before conflicting moral systems as with Sartre's student. Why should it not involve a journey of its own—one in which all value systems lose their significance and become uncanny? Perhaps the student, when confronting Sartre had embarked on this very journey. He was discovering nothingness and *then* responsibility, and Sartre's advice was his golden fleece in as much as to approach him was the ultimate act of confirmation after a protracted period of ontological and moral disquiet.

For Sartre to claim then that a sense of personal responsibility is *so* closely allied to our ontological understanding of ourselves, is, I think, an exaggeration. An interesting and important role of self-deception is, however, its relevance to the realm of anxiety B (strong bad faith); in many ways, and especially in its relation to individual authenticity, it is the existentialists' strongest claim to an ethical doctrine. This I want to explore a bit further.

III

'He would give up then, and console himself with something she'd said; that you could not love what you fully understood. Love, she maintained, was a process; not a state. Held still, it withered.'—Iain M. Banks
(*Use of Weapons*)

There is a hierarchy in representing responses to anxiety that can be found in the pages of BN, and which is more explicitly echoed in Simone deBeauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity*. If the levelled existence is seen as sub-aesthetic by Kierkegaard, then this lowest rung can be seen as divided by the French pair into the 'sub-man' and the 'serious man'. The former is like a corruption of good faith that takes place prior to a full awareness of what anxiety means. Such people are in flight from its portents and thus, in contrast to nihilists, 'reject existence' *before* having fully existed. The 'sub-man' stagnates in a no-man's-land, 'afraid of engaging himself in a project as he is afraid of being disengaged and thereby being in a state of danger before the future.'[64]

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[64] op cit, p.44

The next rung—'serious men'—seem to come in various forms depending on the lengths they have to go to to deny their anxiety. What they have in common though is a narrow commitment to a set of values they take to be fixed and unquestionable. Sartre says that;

Anxiety is opposed to the mind of the serious man who apprehends values in terms of the world and who resides in the reassuring, materialistic substantiation of values.[65]

A more sophisticated form of seriousness is 'sincerity'. This type has already been described but interestingly more flesh can be added to it by offering Sartre himself (in his early years) as an example. In a passage from his biography we get a clear picture of the way a flight from anxiety can occur in someone who is (intellectually at least) explicitly aware of the importance of not fleeing it;

For a long time, writing was asking death or religion in disguise to tear my life away from chance ... I pulled off this noble achievement at the age of thirty: describing in Nausea—most sincerely, I can assure you—the unjustified, brackish existence of my fellow-creatures and vindicating my own. I *was* Roquentin ... Later on, I cheerfully demonstrated that man is impossible; impossible myself, I differed from others only in this one mandate: I had to illustrate this impossibility, which, suddenly was transfigured and became my most intimate potentiality ... I was restoring with one hand what I destroyed with the other and I took anxiety as the proof of my safety; I was happy.[66]

Although Sartre's self-deceiving motivation is made public, I do not think it seriously detracts from the validity of what he wrote, or from his general application of anxiety. Someone in Sartre's position need not be out to confirm their own being as something solid, but might be helping others (his readers) to come to terms with their fundamental project. A sizeable proportion of existentialism (particularly the work of Kierkegaard)—maybe a defining feature of it— can be usefully described as a kind of therapy; as having the purpose of revealing something to the reader *about himself* that will affect the way he lives his life.

To a degree BN plays this role, and it might be said to become conscious of this fact in the section on *Existential Psychoanalysis*. The key feature of this process that I want to make apparent is that we need help, or a 'guide' as Sartre puts it, to reach a proper understanding (a 'self-evident intuition') of ourselves as wanting to be *en-soi-pour-soi*. Even Bellow's profoundly alienated Joseph has imaginary conversations with the 'spirit of alternatives' which go some way to helping

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[65] BN, p.78
[66] *Words*, p.156

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him understand the nature of his situation. An extension of this is the existentialist ethic of 'reciprocal freedom' which has been illuminatingly unpacked by David Cooper.[67] With reference to Buber, Marcel and some of Sartre's ideas in NE we are reminded that human relations do not have to involve the sado-masochistic objectification described in BN. Instead the suggection is that not only can we be free in the presence of another, but that the relationship itself plays a vital role in facilitating any realistic conception of freedom. Cooper says, 'my view of myself is indelibly coloured by how I take myself to stand in the eyes of others',[68] and thus if we do not encourage authenticity in them their consequent inauthenticity will backfire on us as we are left without a reliable 'guide' or judge for our behaviour.

From here it is a short leap to identifying the necessity of encouraging anxiety A as well as the freedom-related anxiety B in the other. For Unamuno for example;

true charity is a kind of invasion—it consists of putting my spirit into other spirits, in giving them my suffering as the food and consolation of their sufferings, in awakening their unrest with my unrest, in sharpening their hunger for God with my hunger for God. It is not charity to rock and lull our brothers to sleep in the inertia and drowsiness of matter, but rather to awaken them to the uneasiness and torment of spirit.[69]

At one level reciprocal freedom/anxiety is clearly a vital means of maintaining an authentic relation to anxiety B, but as soon as anxiety A is in play it becomes clear that for the individual even a commitment to authentic and reciprocating others cannot bridge the gap between our subjective concern for self and anxiety A's perspectivism. There may be moments when Marcel's ideal of 'possessor and possessed' being 'lost in a living reality'[70] is achieved, but across time the best we can imagine is continual oscillation between alienation and commitment. This is of course made possible by the authentic other, but not *directly* because as their authenticity will involve periods of detachment, (and it is partly these which bring us to our freedom) their commitment to the relationship is inevitably destabilized and the ontological-ethical link is again revealed as disjointed.[71]

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[67] See *Existentialism*, Ch.10

[68] op cit, p.189

[69] *Tragic Sense of Life*, p.282

[70] *Being and Having*, p.166

[71] Paul Auster is insightful as far as this disjunction goes. One of his characters says about his marriage; 'The discovery that two people, through desire, can create a thing more powerful than either of them can create alone. This knowledge changed me ... and actually made me feel more human.' (*New York Trilogy*, p.274). But later confirms; 'we exist for ourselves, perhaps, and at times we can even have a glimmer of

Closely linked to this are the ideas of certain theorists who look to love as the primary affect or mode of being: Max Scheler, for example speaks of love in terms reminiscent of Heidegger's and Sartre's prioritizing of anxiety— it is 'primitive' and 'immediate' and offers an 'evidence of its own'.[72] As I indicated in the *Preamble* I think there might be some fruitful links between love and anxiety, but I do not believe that without its being divinized (as it is by Buber and Marcel) love *can* be as basic. In terms of contingent human relations, no matter how honest they are, we cannot be completed by the other—fulfill our fundamental desire. In Kierkegaard's words, 'one man cannot make another man quite free.'[73]

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who we are, but in the end we can never be sure, and as our lives go on, we become more and more opaque to ourselves, more and more aware of our own incoherence. No one can cross the boundary into another—for the simple reason that no one can gain access to himself.' (ibid, p.292)

[72] *The Nature of Sympathy* (RKP, 1954), p.150

[73] *The Journals*, p.180

5

'The Existential Awareness of Non-being': Tillich's *The Courage to Be*

'[death] is not even such a bad smell, no worse than whiskey vomit, but the reek of our death goes like a shock to some early unevolved ganglion just at the head of the spine, to the home of all wordless, thoughtless fear'—P.J. O'Rourke (*Holidays in Hell*)

'So let us not talk falsely now/The hour is getting late'—Bob Dylan (op cit)

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The Courage to Be (CTB) is principally a work about courage rather than anxiety or fear. As I shall go on to explain, that Tillich should choose to give *this* concept primacy is significant, for he could just as well have started with its 'flip-side'. Courage is shown in the face of fear and fear, for Tillich, is a metamorphosis of anxiety. 'Anxiety' he describes as 'the existential awareness of non-being'[1]: its origin is 'the negation of every object'[2] which represents a constant threat before which we are helpless. 'Naked anxiety' cannot be endured for any length of time and must either result in despair or be transformed into fear. In fear the non-being central to anxiety becomes something 'in the world', something that can be met on our own terms. This transformation is of course not seamless, and anxiety, in one way or another, is always present. Towards the end of the book Tillich posits 'absolute faith' as a religious form of courage which does not overcome nor even fortify itself before anxiety, but 'accepts' non-being as having an essential relation to being.

Tillich's agenda is then not an investigation into the nature of anxiety, but a treatise on how to live with it centred at the concept of courage and culminating in his notion of acceptance. This, however, involves an analysis of anxiety and he goes into some depth about the various manifestations of non-being it is taken as responding to. In the course of this we find a useful introduction to some central issues of existentialism, and though the conclusion of the work is

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[1] *The Courage to Be*, p.44
[2] ibid, p.45

essentially religious, there is a lot that is of relevance to an atheistic approach. He also has some insight into what motivates existential philosophizing and thus into the relationship between psychology and metaphysics. Despite this, he does not, as far as I am concerned, complete the picture as far as anxiety is concerned; or at least he does not *compose* it in the right way. If one reason for this is that this book is primarily about courage, and (possibly) another is his religiousness, then a further one is his misplaced emphasis on death. As I shall shortly explain, anxiety concerning our death can legitimately form a category of its own—a fourth kind of anxiety—but I am not convinced it does the work Tillich wants it to do. In the third section I will realign the types of anxiety, or the primary causes of anxiety he speaks of in terms of the emerging anxiety structure.

I

In CTB Tillich outlines three basic constituents of existence in the threatened negation of which we find the origins of anxiety. The first is our bodily or material existence, negated by death; the second is our 'spiritual' existence, negated by meaninglessness, and the third is our moral existence which is negated by 'condemnation'. The 'foreground' or relativized version of these kinds of non-being are, respectively, 'fate', 'emptiness' and 'guilt'.

The anxiety of death is for Tillich the most basic and most important: '[anxiety] of death' he says 'determines the element of anxiety in every fear'[3]. For this anxiety to be existential it must be realized or grasped in terms of our own lives;

It is not the realization of universal transitoriness, not even the experience of the death of others, but the impression of these events on the always latent awareness of our own having to die, that produces anxiety.[4]

The inevitability of death supposedly causes anxiety, but can this be classed as anxiety A or anxiety B, and moreover, why, in light of the discussion in the Chapter 1, anxiety rather than fear? Is Tillich pointing to anything special about our relationship with our death that has a bearing on the distinctiveness of anxiety? My feeling is that he is, but that a new category of anxiety is

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[3] op cit, pp.46-7
[4] ibid, p.44

required in order to understand this. In the above passage his reference to our 'latent awareness' of death suggests that latency is the issue. So long as we are distracted then 'that we must die' is not an object of our concern but nevertheless impinges on the periphery of consciousness. In this way it is the origin of an 'objectless disquiet', but as already argued, something that attains this status simply because it is not the focus of consciousness or is somehow covered over, is not enough in itself to qualify it as intrinsically anxiety-creating in any unique meaning of the word. If it were, then anything could be the cause of anxiety so long as it were important enough to make its presence felt even when we are concerned with other things. In terms of a psychological or psychopathological definition of anxiety this is true, but if existential anxiety is to have a more specific content, or rather a more specific *kind* of content, then more needs to be said.

As it turns out this is not what Tillich really means when he speaks about the anxiety of death: *that* we must die is purely and simply the origin of anxiety, whether this realization is latent or not. Tillich's answer to why this is anxiety rather than fear is that the simple negation of certain concerns (non-being) cannot provide the object required for a reaction to be classed as fear. If, for example, death meant time spent in Purgatory then he would say that we would rightly fear death, or the consequences of death. But the nothingness that is death, the absence of being and the impossibility of experience, is a cause of anxiety. I think it is clear that we cannot rationally fear *being* dead but only the process of dying and the *loss* of life. If Tillich also agrees with this then his anxiety before death must, as I see it, indicate any one, or any combination, of three possibilities.

The first relates to the unique terror generated by the unimaginableness of death. In a sense this is as incoherent as wondering what it is like to be dead, but it seems to embody an emotional reaction that is utterly pre-rational and cannot be thought away. An example is found in Sartre's *The Wall* where a prisoner in the Spanish Civil War is awaiting execution;

I tell myself there will be nothing afterwards. But I don't understand what it means. Sometimes I almost can ... and then it fades away and I start thinking about the pains again ... I've got to think ... think that I won't see anything anymore and the world will go on for the others. We aren't made to think that ... Believe me: I've already stayed up a whole night waiting for something. But this isn't the same: this will creep up behind us, ... and we won't be able to prepare for it.[5]

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[5] Sartre, *The Wall* (in Kaufmann (ed.) *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*), pp.288-90

'It isn't *natural* to die' he says later on, echoing Yeats' line 'man has invented death'.[6] However non-rational this primordial terror is we cannot deny its existence and maybe this is what Tillich is referring to, but even if he is it is still open to question just what qualifies this as anxiety rather than fear. A quick answer is "nothing that can be defended by what I have said so far in this thesis", but I still think there is a qualitatively distinct experience being described here for which, in light of its profoundly disturbing but ultimately ungraspable and insubstantial nature, the most suitable term is 'anxiety'. In attempting to pin down this sense of dread or 'wordless fear' I find myself slipping into a state of utter forelorness and sadness which is akin to the sense of helplessness and passivity associated with anxiety A.

Related to this distinctive 'death anxiety' is a second possible meaning of death in Tillich's thought. This is concerned with the fact that in our day to day existence most of us are oblivious to the issue of our death. We may automatically, or even in full consciousness of our fragility, be careful crossing the road or make sure we eat healthily, but this is different from a full-blown existential awareness that we will one day no longer exist. Such awareness is of a special kind and the species of realization it produces can be seen as a kind of 'existential shock'. This shock is directed not at death's unimaginable nothingness but the contrast between this realization and the mood of obliviousness in which we usually live our lives. Nagel agrees that from the subjective point of view the nothingness of death is unimaginable—the basis of all subjective experience is of course our experiencing it, or the possibility of our experiencing it, and if this is removed the imagination is left without any kind of handhold. We can however make sense of our death objectively and the occasions when we do this lead to this sense of shock. He says;

The subjective view does not allow for its own annihilation, for it does not conceive of its existence as the realization of a possibility. This is the element of truth in the common falsehood that it is impossible to conceive of one's own death ... My existence seems ... to be a universe of possibilities that stands by itself, and therefore in need of nothing else in order to continue. It comes as a rude shock, then, when this partly buried self-conception collides with the plain fact that TN will die and I with him ... [A]ll along you have been thinking you were safely on the ground and suddenly you look down and notice that you're standing on a narrow girder a thousand feet above the pavement.[7]

It is on these occasions that 'kitsch'—the view of life in which it becomes meaningful, beautiful and benign—'an integral part of the human condition' according to Kundera, and at bottom 'a

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[6] From *Death* (in *Selected Poetry* (Pan, 1974), p.142)
[7] VFN, pp.227-8. (By TN Nagel means himself viewed objectively)

folding screen set up to curtain off death'[8] becomes transparent. The resulting state of mind (perhaps accompanying terror or disgust) is one of 'uncanniness', of feeling alienated from the self we had taken ourselves to be. It is this broader impact that the experience has on our life that brings it closer to anxiety A—the sense of helpless passivity, but at the same time the more Heideggerian realization that our lives can, and perhaps should, be led with this viewpoint in mind. Death is the annihilation of the self as a creation, but the feeling is that it should also be *part* of, or *modulate* that creation. The objective point of view is something *we* can take and so in order to be complete or authentic the fact that we will die should play a role in fashioning what we become.

Related to this point, and again retreading Heidegger's ground, is the point that it is not death *as such* that causes anxiety but the part it plays in revealing the contingency of our existence. This can be the cause of anxiety in that it makes apparent the complete strangeness of the world—the fact that it could all be otherwise.[9] It is this that Tillich describes as the 'anxiety of fate' and is indeed for him closely allied to the anxiety of death. He says;

Fate is the rule of contingency, and anxiety about fate is based on the finite being's awareness of being contingent in every respect, of having no ultimate necessity. Fate is usually identified with necessity in the sense of an inescapable causal determination. Yet it is not causal necessity that makes fate a matter of anxiety but the lack of ultimate necessity, the irrationality, the impenetrable darkness of fate.[10]

This seems closer to the real issues of existential anxiety, but even here the cause of anxiety is 'lack of ultimate necessity' and 'the impenetrable darkness' rather than the way this relates to our particular existence. As far as death is concerned Tillich does not seem to complete the picture in terms of its relation to the anxiety A-anxiety B structure and its inherent ambiguity. If it qualifies as a fourth kind of existential anxiety, as I believe it does, it must pay the price of standing slightly removed from the central concerns of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre; otherwise we can only incorporate it by ignoring some of what he says and reading it as an essentially Heideggerian take on death. I am not happy with this though, and my feeling is that for a less marginalized existential significance to be salvaged from Tillich's 'anxiety of fate and death' it must collapse into, or be defined in terms of, his second type of non-being—meaninglessness.

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[8] Kundera, M. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, p.253

[9] It is this aspect of the revelations of anxiety in Heidegger that Golomb says does not necessarily need to be facilitated by the awareness of our death, even if this is the best candidate. (cf. Chapter 3, section II)

[10] CTB, p.52

A sharpened awareness of contingency can cause anxiety because of its relation to absurdity. Here I am specifically referring to Nagel's use of the term which he sums up as follows;

The things we do or want without reasons, and without requiring reasons—the things that define what is a reason for us and what is not - are the starting points of our skepticism. We see ourselves from outside, and all the contingency and specificity of our aims and pursuits become clear. Yet when we take this view and recognize what we do as arbitrary, it does not disengage us from life, and there lies our absurdity: not in the fact that such an external view can be taken of us, but in the fact that we ourselves can take it, without ceasing to be the person's whose ultimate concerns are so coolly regarded.[11]

Tillich does not acknowledge this situation directly but he certainly employs contingency in his 'anxiety of meaninglessness'. I will say something here about his treatment of this topic and return to it later, in conjunction with Nagel's notion of the absurd, to show how it should play a connecting role between the two other primary sources of anxiety—death and condemnation.

The 'anxiety of meaninglessness' Tillich describes as 'anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings.'[12] The relative version he calls 'emptiness' and this applies to situations where specific pursuits lose their significance and are drained of their meaning. This of course can be indicative of a healthy form of creativity and development so long as we come to see a pursuit as 'empty' only in contrast with another pursuit which then replaces it (as in the uncanny spiral). This is certainly the case if some form of progression is in evidence for this is suggestive of a broader process of self-discovery (or self-creation). If such a progression is lacking then it suggests no such task and the situation can be likened to certain forms of Kierkegaard's aesthetic existence. All that dictates the aesthete's movements from one interest to another are such things as mood and caprice rather than an evolving sense of self. Kierkegaard describes his state of mind (whether he knows it or not) as 'despair' and Tillich follows suit. He says;

one is cut off from creative participation in a sphere of culture, one feels frustrated about something which one has passionately affirmed, one is driven from devotion to one object to devotion to another ... because the meaning of each of them vanishes and the creative eros is transformed into indifference or aversion.[13]

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[11] Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge, 1979), p.15
[12] CTB, p.54
[13] ibid, p.55. In Kierkegaard's higher order aesthete we do not find 'passionate affirmation' but ironic detachment. This mode of existence is seen by Kierkegaard as covertly bringing a higher meaning into existence; irony sits on the borderline between the aesthetic and the ethical.

For Tillich this emptiness is likely to drive the person to seek an ultimate meaning, but he says that 'a spiritual centre cannot be produced intentionally, and the attempt to produce it only produces deeper anxiety.'[14] I think it is certainly true to say that a 'spiritual centre' cannot arise simply because one desperately needs one: towards the end of CTB the suggestion is that such an ultimate meaning can arise through a willed rejection of ultimate meaning, but I take it that this is significantly different from the willed *creation* of such a meaning.[15]

Broadly speaking I think Tillich is right in his outline of the relation between emptiness, meaninglessness and anxiety. Meaninglessness is in a sense a constant threat, but as I shall elaborate on later, it is not clear whether this is a coherent threat in itself or whether it is very much a psychological state attached only to the specific significance of specific pursuits. As Kierkegaard, Sartre and others have said, we can never coincide with our projects, never be 'at home' in them, but does this in itself really point to the possibility of life itself being or becoming meaningless? What exactly this could mean is not at all clear. Nagel's his point about absurdity is that we tend to take our lives seriously even though there is no ultimate significance in what we do. It is not a question of life-saving self-deception, but of the difference between a subjective and an objective point of view, neither of which is more correct or authentic than the other (but each as incorrect as its conflicting view attests). The distinction between the 'moods' of Camus' two books on the absurd is significant. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* he says;

The feeling of the absurd is not the same as the idea of the absurd. The idea is grounded in the feeling that is all, it does not exhaust it.[16]

It is one thing to realize absurdity objectively, but quite another to *feel* it, to embody it subjectively and existentially. This latter state of mind is mysterious, perhaps pathological. Sartre, as mentioned, says about Mersault, 'we can neither understand nor quite judge him'.[17] Significantly he becomes most comprehensible at the end of the novel when he does discover meaning and a reason to live in life's (now objective) meaninglessness. Here objective absurdity is not translated into subjective despair or indifference but into an ultimate meaning of sorts.

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[14] op cit
[15] Either that or he is hinting at revelation.
[16] Cited in Sartre's *Camus' "The Outsider"* (in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*), p.32
[17] ibid

I think we must acknowledge a schism in human existence; we have the need for objective meaning, for this product of our rationality to be satisfied, but the leap from this state of affairs to despair or suicide remains peculiar. That it exists is not in question and here we have a link between the anxieties of death and meaninglessness. Tillich says;

Man's being includes his relation to meanings. He is human only by understanding and shaping reality ... according to meanings and values ... Therefore the threat to his spiritual being is a threat to his whole being. The most revealing expression of this fact is the desire to throw away one's ontic existence rather than stand the despair of emptiness and meaninglessness.[18]

There is then a strong sense in which the anxiety of meaninglessness is more important than the anxiety of death, but of course in a Heideggerian reinterpretation of the anxiety of death the two 'types' of non-being amount to something very similar.[19] Interestingly, an instance of a reversal of this, where death's ever-presence and uncertainty leads to suicide, is cited by the psychiatrist Freda Fromm-Reichmann who describes;

certain emotionally disturbed people to whom [death's] uncertainty is so anxiety provoking and unbearable that they evade its acceptance ... by committing suicide. As if, by their own determination they take the power of decision out of the hands of ... fate, or of nature.[20]

There is a close relation between this and forms of avoiding our passivity before the 'facticity' of anxiety's sources that I shall speak about shortly. With the exception of this kind of case, death is not a constant threat in the same way that meaninglessness is. Even though it could occur at any time we are not going to know much about it if is does come 'out of the blue'. Outside of this it exists quite meaningfully *in the future* (even if I am diagnosed as having terminal cancer tomorrow) whereas meaninglessness is the kind of thing that *imbues* our activities and projects in a pervasive manner. It is this tangible, living, fragility that seems essential to existential anxiety as opposed to a concern for what will or might happen in the future. By making death his locus, Tillich gives anxiety's indefiniteness the wrong spin. A reason why death anxiety is not on all fours with the broader anxiety structure is that its absolute nature does not provide space for its interpretative element. Life is encountered as meaningless *in anxiety* precisely because in another, incommensurable sense we find it meaningful. This ambiguity inheres in Nagel's subjective-objective dichotomy but not in the single-centred vortex that Tillich seems to present us with. A

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[18] CTB, pp.57-8
[19] As such Tillich's comment that 'fate would not produce inescapable anxiety without death behind it' (p.52) must be seen as untrue.
[20] *Psychiatric Aspects of Anxiety* in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (The Modern Library, 1955), p.124

crucial feature of anxiety that Tillich does not consider is that it is not just a reaction to certain features of existence but also a mode of encountering one's self and the world which is fundamentally unstable in terms of its *own* significance. Existentially speaking meaninglessness and death do not merely *arouse* an anxiety before non-being, but embody the urangst which, if we are open to it, constantly informs us that we have not settled on something essential and definitive. All that is definitive is the instability and this is not a nothingness in quite the way Tillich represents it. Whatever basis we reach—even death's non-being—it is always open to further, or alternative interpretation, and the absurdity of the situation arises from the fact that we cannot rise above it because we *are* this interpretation. And in the sense in which we are anxiety, we are anxiety in that we are essentially self-interpreters, not simply because we are threatened by non-being.

In the same way that emptiness is claimed to lead to a confrontation with meaninglessness and potentially suicide, so the anxiety of guilt can drive us towards the third type of non-being—condemnation. To perfect ourselves, to be, in Maslow's words 'all that we can be' is an impossible task and to sink under the weight of this is what Tillich terms moral despair. The guilt he speaks of is a variation of a kind familiar in existential literature; it is not (directly) guilt at having done wrong in the eyes of others or in terms of universal duties, but before oneself in terms of one's own potential and expectations. 'Man's being' Tillich says '... is not only given to him but also demanded of him. He is responsible for it; ... he is required to answer, if he is asked, what he has made of himself. He who asks him is his judge, namely he himself, who, at the same time, stands against him.'[21]

As already shown, the relation between anxiety and guilt is of great importance (and more will be said about it in Chapter 7), but I am not convinced about its 'absolute' correlate 'condemnation'. This could be seen as a complete loss of self-esteem and its consequent depression, but though this of course exists it is not of the same kind as death and meaninglessness. Tillich admits this, saying 'guilt and condemnation are qualitatively not quantitatively infinite'[22] but he does not follow through its full implication. Unlike the other absolute forms of non-being, condemnation is more one-sidedly related to the subjective point of view. We may set certain standards for ourselves and

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[21] CTB, p.58
[22] ibid, p.62

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in not meeting them feel guilty, and perhaps a deepening, downward spiralling guilt will reach a rock-bottom sense of worthlessness. This however is not rationally underpinned in the way that the certainty of death and the absence of absolute meaning is: it makes little or no sense to say that someone is absolutely, objectively worthless. As such there is an ambiguous participation inherent in the individual's relation to guilt and condemnation that does not exist in the other two, and this, I would argue, makes the notion of condemnation either (philosophically) trivial or incoherent.[23]

Of course it is true to say that the impossibility of perfection, our necessarily finite nature, is of a form of non-being that looms over our sense of guilt, but the two (as discussed in relation to Kierkegaard and Heidegger (and later with regard to Camus)) are not commensurable. The impossibility of perfection amounts to the impossibility of self-coincidence and this is representative of the anxiety of meaninglessness rather than condemnation. That we do feel guilty for what we *are*, for our inability to coincide with ourselves, is in a certain sense true, but this is not the same kind of guilt which arises from not living up to standards we set, or not being authentic.[24] This kind we can always do something about by attempting to be more 'true to ourselves' and to continually fail at this might lead to depression. It is more likely, however, to lead to a duplicitous despair designed to cover-up our basic realization that it is up to us and within our power to be honest and resolute with respect to the goals we set ourselves. In terms of the anxiety of guilt this is as far as we can sink, and (religious arguments concerning our imperfection before God aside) to go beyond this is to be threatened (admitting a degree of ambiguity) by the non-being of meaninglessness rather than anything like condemnation.

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[23] Absolute meaninglessness, as already indicated, also does not appear to be the same kind of thing as death. It is however different from condemnation. The extent of this difference, and its broader relation to both these 'absolutes' will be dealt with in section III.

[24] The issue of authenticity is though slightly more complicated as it takes on board the ontological guilt associated with meaninglessness as well as the guilt more closely related to our actions which Tillich is referring to. I shall also say more about this in section III.

II

'Since we are all such absolutists by instinct, what in our quality as students of philosophy ought we to do about this fact? Shall we expose and endorse it? Or shall we treat it as a weakness of our nature from which we must free ourselves if we can? I sincerely believe that the latter course is the only one we can follow as reflective men.'—William James (*The Will to Believe*)

'What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal'—Nietzsche (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*)

'A question with no answer is a barrier that cannot be breached. In other words, it is questions with no answers that set the limits of human possibilities, describe the boundaries of human existence.'—Kundera (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*)

'Who can be the earnest huntsman of himself when he knows he is in turn a quarry?'—Saul Bellow (*Dangling Man*)

Why, in light of Tillich's analysis, should we want to avoid anxiety? Broadly it is because it signifies non-being, the constant threat of the negation of what is central to our self and our world. Why should we want to avoid contemplating or appropriating this threat? Because there is, in essence, nothing we can do about it—no obvious way in which we can *bring it into* or subsume it under our being. We are, in Tillich's words 'separated *from*, while participating *in*' what ultimately concerns us.[25]

Why then should we *not* avoid it? Because we ultimately cannot successfully achieve this, and to attempt to will take its toll on our existence as a whole. Non-being is intrinsic to reality and to try to avoid it would be to shut ourselves off from aspects of ourselves and aspects of the world that have positive as well as negative elements. To shut-out non-being will, in the long-term, fail; in the short-term limit us as human beings. Its long-term failure is closely linked to its stultifying short-term effects in that the anxiety (or perhaps despair) that arises from denying our psychological and ethical potential will awaken us to the anxiety associated with our existential nature.

For Tillich the two alternatives to this avoidance are 'courage' and 'despair'. Despair is for him the result of being defeated by the 'power of non-being';

The pain of despair is that a being is aware of itself as unable to affirm itself because of the power of non-being. Consequently it wants to surrender this awareness and its presupposition, the being which is aware.

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[25] CTB, p.55. Compare Mulhall's remark concerning the revelations of anxiety in Heidegger (see Chapter 1, section III).

It wants to get rid of itself—and it cannot. Despair appears in the form of reduplication, as the desperate attempt to escape despair.[26]

Courage on the other hand 'resists despair by taking anxiety into itself.'[27] It does this by transforming the inexorable otherness of non-being into something that we can deal with on our own terms. Just how this transformation works is not altogether clear, and how it differs from a fleeing from anxiety is likewise not clear.[28] In both cases we are not dealing with 'naked reality' but instead occupying ourselves, or filling ourselves, with being—with things in the world, with our projects and our lives interpreted as a meaningful whole. (The person in despair on the other hand does not have the strength or courage to create such a unity but instead lives a fragmented and unstable existence, prevented from solidifying by continuous intrusions of non-being.[29]) In the case of courage it must be accepted that the self as such is an object of fear and must have some parameters, but for the courage that has properly adapted to anxiety, these parameters must be flexible. As a courageous individual I should not have 'settled down': in Marcel's words, 'I must keep myself at the disposal of the unknown me',[30] and here the vital relation between anxiety and movement is touched on. The issue of having parameters whilst maintaining Merleau-Ponty's 'power to begin something else' is problematic; and similarly how are we to maintain committed concern or fear for the self we currently are whilst accepting the anxiety of non-being? Must this result in either pallid compromise or some form of self-deception?

I shall further deal with this question in the context of an interpretation of Tillich's ideas on anxiety in terms of the structure taking shape in this dissertation. Specifically I want to propose that Tillich's anxiety of fate and death should be seen as representing anxiety A; his anxiety of guilt and condemnation as representing anxiety B; his anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness as that

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[26] op cit, p.61

[27] ibid, p.71

[28] Because of space restrictions I will not go into any detail about Tillich's forms of 'unrealistic self affirmation' or 'neurotic anxiety' but I will point to a likeness in R.D.Laing's idea of 'ontological insecurity'. This is a condition he ascribes to the 'schizoid personality' who because of his fear of being 'dispersed into' or 'engulfed by' the world (note the similarity to nausea) retreats into a constructed 'inner' self which disassociates itself from the outer, ultimately fragile self. This may be an extreme example of what Tillich is talking about (Laing describes it as a fourth type of basic anxiety to be added to Tillich's three), or something qualitatively different (psychosis rather than neurosis), but either way it helps illuminate the process. (See *The Divided Self* and *Self and Other*).

[29] In this respect there is a connection between Tillich's identification of the problem of anxiety with passivity and helplessness and Nietzsche's identification of our basic drive as being towards power.

[30] *Being and Having*, p.52

which acknowledges the conflict between these two (urangst), and his version of faith as the mode of existence which acknowledges this final form of anxiety.

Our relation to the fact of our contingency (and our death) is passive. It indicates our separation and alienation from the world, from others, and from ourselves *in the way in which we had previously been interpreting and appropriating them*. As such a full existential appropriation of this can be paralysing, at least in the short term. The reason why our response to our condition is anxiety rather than fear lies in its relation to the content of anxiety B. As I have indicated, if it were purely the fact of our own death that we confronted in this state the fear-like 'death anxiety'—i.e. something outside the anxiety structure—would seem an accurate term, but this fact and our related contingency make us anxious because they conflict with a quite separate concern. That concern is for our self as situated in the world and as responsible for its own self-creation. This self has certain talents, dispositions, relations with others etc. which to a certain extent are shaped by its actions and its level of commitment to them. We are 'thrown' into a world and an identity not of our choosing, but nonetheless we find ourselves with a substantial self that we cannot help but care about and are in a position to fashion according to our chosen ideals and projects. Within this set-up there is room to succeed or fail to whatever degree in *being* this self and these are the origins of anxiety B. When Tillich says that guilt and condemnation are 'qualitatively not quantitatively infinite' this is what he is driving at. Unlike the anxiety of death we can to an extent control and take responsibility for that which causes the anxiety of guilt: we can never (pathologies like depression aside) sink so low that we cannot, by our own efforts, redeem ourselves and allay this sense of guilt and (what must be the phantom of) condemnation. In an important sense it is our culture, with its standards of moral and personal worth, which provides the hand-holds by which to pull ourselves up, rather than our having to rely on our own boot laces.

One thing, however, that can put in relief, or disturb, the motivation behind the project of selfhood is the contingency revealed in urangst. Here we return again to Nagel's conception of the absurd: we are able to take up an objective view-point where the contingency of our projects and concerns is quite apparent. This is a position that starkly contrasts with our subjective commitment to these projects but it does not nullify them. Of course, if this perspective helps reveal them as misplaced or borne of self-deception then we might resolve to alter them or stop them and 'begin something else', but that they exist and should exist must explicitly or implicitly, and to a greater or lesser

degree, be affirmed. What does happen, however, is that they are given a sense of uprootedness; 'things' in Bernard William's words 'are not quite as they seemed',[31] or, in Nagel's terms, given a different 'flavour'. The key point about this objective perspective though is that it is not something we want to lose, it represents a capacity for rationality and transcendence of the immediate that is intrinsic to our self. As well as being the means by which we assess our projects as a whole, it itself amounts to an faculty significant in its own right—a form of negative freedom, the constant possibility of detaching ourselves from our engagements and possibly 'beginning something else'. Here the issue of authenticity enters the equation. This can be seen as the requirement of fulfilling the revelations and demands of both kinds of anxiety, and it is at this point that the question of meaning enters into things. Meaning is no longer the sole property of moral and personal worth, it is no longer filled up with the task of becoming a self against the background comprised of the values and standards set by history, culture, society and significant others. Our pursuits must now be meaningful in relation to the freedom that is borne of our contingency. This requires (in some form or other) a constant acknowledgement of the *status* of our day to day concerns in terms of their relativity and the fact that we will never *be* the sum of our engagements.

The locus of meaning is thus shifted and destabilized. Our pursuits remain meaningful to us, but in a sense which is not as complete as it once was, and it is this gap which needs bridging. That this is the case is made apparent by the fact that we can determine to live rationally by attempting to live outside of ourselves. If for Mersault existence 'feels' absurd, then for Dostoevsky's anti-hero in *Notes From Underground* it is a more rational understanding of absurdity that motivates him to deny any commitment to the world. In this situation the absurdity is of course not overcome because he must commit to his non-commitment, he must keep a constant check on himself in order not to start taking his engagements with others seriously. His sense of self thus becomes one which is defined in contrast with those who do not recognize absurdity, but his sense of contingency is such that he cannot, in Tillich's language, 'affirm' this whilst maintaining his authenticity. In this way the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness thus represents the disparity between the other two sources of anxiety. The need to actualize ourselves is threatened or contradicted by its lack of a rational foundation, and the requirement of acknowledging this lack is threatened or contradicted by our need to, and the unavoidability of, affirming ourselves in spite of this. In other words, as Sartre says explicitly, we can never *be* this lack; self-affirmation is unavoidable because if we are

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[31] *Morality* (Canto (CUP), 1993), p.37

to acknowledge our contingency we must do so in a particular way—broadly with a sense of anxiety (and the implicit act of choice (and thus the guilt) that this embodies) and this is an act of affirmation. Whether we like it or not we are a self that has interpreted, and yet part of what is interpreted is ourselves as a 'nothing' or 'lack' and thus the fact that we have to interpret. We can, in turn, choose to affirm *this* but this just takes us into an unhelpful regress. Through interpreting (or choosing) ourselves we are confronted with a paradox which I shall call the 'existential paradox' and this is (or should be), as far as I can see, the core of Tillich's anxiety of meaninglessness.

If we are to be authentic we must confront, *live with*, this paradox and to a great extent to understand the meaning of authenticity is to understand its nature. It differs from a notion like 'self-actualization' or 'self-realization' in that it takes on board the understanding that whatever measures we use for the 'actual' or 'real' self do not represent completion but have been chosen by us in the first place. As such they contain no possibility of self-coincidence, are in no sense absolute, and are always open to being undermined or revised. But how is authenticity to be achieved? How are we to embrace the basic alienation that the existential paradox represents? That this is the central issue of existentialism as Tillich confirms when he defines it as 'the expression of the anxiety ... [of] meaninglessness and of the attempt to take this anxiety into the courage to be as oneself.'[32] The anxiety of guilt (the raw material of anxiety B) is in one form or another what we first encounter as this signifies a self and a set of self-relations that are of direct concern to us and our responsibility to actualize. When the parameters of right and wrong are viewed as absolute then the individual's mission is relatively straight forward and his anxiety is directed at his possible failure in this project. Arguably it is our realization of being responsible and therefore of moral freedom that opens us up to doubts as to the foundations of our values,[33] and I would suggest that

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[32] CTB, p.138

[33] I say arguably because I do not see that there is a necessary connection between an awareness of our own responsibility and the contingency of the values this responsibility is defined in terms of. Moral anxiety can, I think, exist to an intense degree without incurring existential anxiety (even though there may be a degree of suppression of urangst going on). Not until a moral system displays its failings does the business of existential individualization begin, and even if we change from one set of values to another we might, in a Hegelian fashion, see this as determined by the realization that the new values are correct, the old one's only mistakenly thought to be so. In this kind of case the 'existential shock' is limited in that the negation is caused by a 'greater' affirmation, not a 'greater' negation. One's own sense of responsibility is now broadened to include not just the task of living up to an ideal, but also of choosing the *right* ideal. In a sense one is individuated, but in a way that is undergirded with the (at least implicit) hope of there being an ideal to coincide with. This is what Chapter 3's spiral of uncanniness looks like minus the ontological element of the 'call of conscience.'

to overcome the alienation this engenders is partly to rediscover something like the sense of 'at-homeness' we had prior to its relativization. To a great extent we are anxious before contingency and ontological freedom because of their impact in undermining our original sense of at-homeness. The self is now seen as an ontologically as well as a morally isolated entity, and the onus is thus well and truly on it, and it alone, to find the way back. The new home—the mode of authenticity—must somehow encompass the origins of anxiety A and anxiety B and the measure of its efficacy is its success in the degree to which it appropriates Tillich's anxiety of meaninglessness.

One potential problem with Nagel's concept of the absurd is the threat of an infinite regress. We can take an objective view of our concerns and projects, yet they do not lose their potency and *this* general state of affairs we find absurd, but are we then in a position to find finding this absurd, absurd? The absurd perspective is neither subjective *nor* objective it seems, but what else can it be?[34] My answer is that we can only see life as absurd from one or other of these positions and that we cannot escape from this represents the existential paradox. This of course can be formalized from the objective point of view, but it cannot be *existentially appropriated* from this point of view. It is significant that the *feeling* of the absurd we associate with Mersault is a despair at the world's 'silence' rather than the more lofty or ironic realization that Nagel refers to. Nagel points out that the meaning someone like Mersault is looking for does not make sense (even a god (or at least a god we could imagine) could not offer the completion required[35]) but Nagel's absurd structure must manifest itself, subjectively speaking, as the desire for meaning and completion and this creates only the unfulfilling objective viewpoint (which in turn adds to the absurdity because this point of view is necessarily driven by an essentially subjective desire). From here we see that what is absurd is that despite the impossibility of meaning nothing really changes in our life,[36] but this viewpoint cannot existentially appropriate the seemingly unquenchable desire that infects the subjective viewpoint and is itself a sense of absurdity which is intimately related to the same absurd structure.

When Heidegger speaks of *Sorge* it seems to capture this broader complexity where not only does the 'clash of perspectives' lead to a sense of the absurd, but the absurd manifests itself differently

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[34] Nagel later confirms that '[t]his person does not occupy a third standpoint from which he can make two relativized judgments about life.' (VFN, p.216)

[35] We would have to become that god—be *en-soi-pour-soi*—which also involves a contradiction.

[36] Although the change in 'flavour' does in a sense amount to a change in life's content.

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in both viewpoints. This too, though, is formalized—*Sorge* cannot be lived directly but we can nonetheless be 'resolute'. As suggested, the resolute frame of mind captures anxiety A and anxiety B by embodying urangst, but even something like this, I will go on to argue in the next two chapters, must sit 'for the most part' in anxiety A or anxiety B for it is not so magical that it can seamlessly weld the subjective and objective points of view. In this way we can see that not only is the anxiety of condemnation not commensurable with the anxiety of death, but neither is the anxiety of meaninglessness. It has, if you like, a finite and an infinite element; the non-being that it represents is not absolute as death is absolute—ethical concerns, though relativized, remain—but it nevertheless lacks boundaries as in it the self will always be more (or perhaps less) than what it takes as its measure.

The nature of modes of authenticity in general will be given a lot of attention in the remainder of the dissertation, but for the present I will concentrate further on the role of courage in Tillich's philosophy. My suspicion is that existential anxiety would not be seduced by courage alone. There is not necessarily a clear-cut distinction between courage and neurotic anxiety—it could merely be a matter of degree. Along similar lines, courage can be read as having a primarily negative function—it fortifies our self-affirmation '*in spite of*' non-being (suggesting there remains considerable friction between the two so that the 'in spite of' can be read as similar to saying "we'll play tennis in spite of the rain but it'll make the game harder"). Unlike neurotic anxiety it does not attempt to pretend non-being does not exist by locking the door on it, but it does place a bouncer at the open door. The bouncer is conscious but ill-informed. He has orders to keep out anything going by the name of non-being and to report its attempts to get in back to the management, but it is not really sure of non-being's real business and so the information it relays back is couched in terms of the clothes it's wearing rather than the damage it threatens to do. What courage does not do is let anxiety in and dance along with the other guests; it does not appear to embrace or fully accept it.

A more passive acceptance of the non-being revealed in anxiety A is a crucial element of authenticity, and it is this that both Kierkegaard and Heidegger seem to want to allow for. Tillich's courage can be seen as a 'static' and 'weak' mode of authenticity in that the individual, finding some compromise between anxiety A and anxiety B, only remains still by suppressing the full impact of one or the other (in this case anxiety A), or possibly elements of both. Its affirmation

appears Nietzschean but without the irony.[37] A 'strong' static mode of authenticity would remain still but not through suppressing anxiety. As things have been presented this seems impossible, but arguably Rorty wants his version of irony to be something like this. (Although if he does I think he fails, as I shall argue in Chapter 6.) More realistic is perhaps the idea of ''dynamic' authenticity where urangst plays a vital role in facilitating a regular, meaningful, shift between anxiety A and anxiety B. Here anxiety is necessarily objectless and indefinite (but nonetheless highly potent) because, existentially, the nature of what it implies—its source—is incommensurable with the individual's current comportment. In this sense it is like the duck/rabbit phenomenon—we can only see (or experience) one or the other. The opposing anxiety cannot be 'added on', but how we respond to the urangst which is its messenger is essentially the measure of our authenticity. It is this dynamic element that I cannot find explicit reference to when Tillich talks about courage, although, as I shall briefly discuss in the final section, his 'absolute faith' possibly brings us closer to a more complete existential acknowledgement of anxiety.[38]

IV

'human life begins on the far side of despair'—Sartre (*The Flies*)

'Man is the joy of yes in the sadness of the finite'—Paul Ricoeur (*Fallible Man*)

If courage is inadequate to deal with the full breadth of the anxiety phenomenon, the 'absolute faith' Tillich talks about in the latter sections of CTB is perhaps better equipped. This, significantly, he describes as a 'state' rather than a belief, and as such it is likely to remain elusive to the non-initiate, but we can at least assess the work Tillich wants it to do.

The essence of absolute faith seems to be a return to the fact that for non-being to be meaningful there must first be being, and it is the *sense* of being that is the key—'the experience of the power of being which is present even in the face of the most radical manifestations of non-being.'[39] This

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[37] Although the question of what exactly irony is I will involve myself with in the next chapter.

[38] Martha Nussbaum's 'perceptive oscillation' is structurally very similar: 'there is a pervasive tension' she says 'between love and the ethical ... Any life that wishes to include both cannot aim at a condition of balance or equilibrium, but only at an uneasy oscillation between [them].' She reads this into the style of Henry James' *The Ambassadors* where the reader perceives 'around the margins of the novel, the silent world of love.' (*Love's Knowledge*, p.52)

[39] CTB, p.171

sounds like a royal road to mysticism and is not unlike the direction Heidegger takes in WIM, but Tillich is keen to avoid this. He realizes the need for the affirmation of our individuality, the pursuit of self etc., and salvages this by claiming that absolute faith embodies an acceptance of our finite self —'the acceptance of being accepted' as he puts it. The problem here is that to feel justified or accepted we need someone to do the accepting, but Tillich insists that 'in despair there is nobody and nothing that accepts. But there is the power of acceptance itself which is experienced.'[40] The idea of acceptance despite our basic contingency is a deeply Protestant idea (it also underpins Kierkegaard's ontology) and all the time it seems to be taking all Tillich's strength not to bring a substantial idea of God into the picture. Without such a God (i.e. a God who is something other than 'the ground of being', with which I cannot see how we might have a personal relation) this 'accepting of acceptance' I find incomprehensible, and yet I can see that what we can perhaps accept is an unexplicable life-force or 'natural' affirmation that we as human beings generally possess. To say we should 'accept' this seems inadequate in as much as we cannot *become* it, but we can, I suppose, affirm or accept *this* acceptance. Clearly there is an infinite regress problem here and perhaps this whole set-up is in need of an *attitude* of acceptance to swallow up the regress. This may well be what Tillich is getting at, and if so then we have a weak, static mode of authenticity which it is hard not to see in terms of Kierkegaard's Religiousness A and as such its (directly) incommunicable quality must be stressed. Still, as Kierkegaard himself says, our existential risk is diminished by the immanence of God's acceptance and thus anxiety B is suppressed. If God is thinned down to the 'ground of being' a dynamic authenticity where the individual oscillates between courage and absolute faith makes some sense, but Tillich's language in these latter stages seems too suggestive of immobility to allow for this.

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The next chapter will deal with what I see as a full-blooded attempt to fulfill Nietzsche's demand for an attitude to life that affirms our individuality whilst acknowledging the contingency of all things including that affirmation—namely Rorty's version of irony. As suggested, he appears to be striving for a strong static mode of authenticity, but in contemplating this and contemplating his approach to it we encounter some puzzling issues: is such a state of mind an unattainable ideal that nonetheless plays a vital role in achieving another form of authenticity?; is it a 'state of mind' at

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[40] op cit, p.172

all, or is he driving at something more categorially subtle?; is there an implicit authentic dynamism embodied in his style of writing, or in what he does not say rather than in what he openly propounds?; and finally, To what extent is he alive to all of this—in other words, how are we supposed to read Rorty? In the final chapter I will take many of my findings from this and what has preceded it and attempt a final picture of the ways in which the secular individual manifests their struggle with anxiety in their general attunement to existence; their day-to-day attitudes, states of mind, interpretations and choices.

6

The Ironic Remedy: Rorty

'In irony a man annihilates what he posits in one and the same act'—Sartre (*Being and Nothingness*)

'You can't control life. Only art you can control, art and masturbation. Two areas in which I'm a complete expert.'—Woody Allen (*Stardust Memories*)

'And modern (or future) man no longer feels this absence of meaning as a lack, or as an emotional distress. Faced with this emptiness, he succumbs henceforth to no dizziness. His heart no longer requires a hallow place in which to take refuge.'—Alain Robbe-Grillet (*Old "Values" and the New Novel*)

'All along the watchtower/Empresses kept the view/While horsemen came and went/Barefoot servants too' —U2 (*All Along the Watchtower*)

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The previous four chapters have partly attempted to describe a progression in the role assigned to anxiety away from a religious or absolutist significance and towards a secular, relativized and ethical significance. Some of the work of Richard Rorty—particularly that concerning 'irony'[1] — can be seen as continuing and attempting to complete this process, or at least as demonstrating, sometimes deliberately or overtly and at other times not, its limitations. Rorty does not refer to anxiety by name (probably because it has too many metaphysical connotations) but it seems clear that its significance, so far as I have outlined it, is directly responsible for his seeking after a Utopia in which the particular subjective or private concerns of the individual, the issue of the individual's relation to history and to other people, and the issue of how *these* relate to one another in the context of a single life, provide the foundational problems that need to be tackled.

Irony is not a version of anxiety A or anxiety B—it is, directly, neither a response to contingency nor an awakening to our individual responsibility and freedom—rather it is an attempt at a mode of

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[1] I am mostly concerned with what he has to say on this in *Contingency Irony and Solidarity* (CIS) and *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (EHO).

authenticity (although, again, Rorty would probably reel at the mention of this phrase). Charles Taylor says, 'when the commitment to universal concern takes on non-theistic definition, something else has to play the role of grace'[2] and for Rorty, I argue, it's irony. As such I align it with Tillich's 'courage', Kierkegaard's 'faith'(or passion), Heidegger's 'resoluteness' and Sartre's 'authenticity'; but question whether it is meant to be, and can work as, a form of static authenticity or as a form of dynamic authenticity. Should it have turned out to be a viable, non-religious (or non-metaphysical) static authenticity I would consider this a major breakthrough, but unfortunately, as with all its predecessors, irony does not appear to achieve this. For the structural and psychological reasons I shall make apparent irony fails, and its failure signifies for me the necessary failure of any attempt to bring the concerns of anxiety A and anxiety B into a unified and consistent existential attitude. Remember that, even Kierkegaard, whose Religiousness B is a contender for a strong static authenticity has said;

An existing person cannot be in two places at the same time, ... When he is closest ... [to this] he is in passion; but passion is only momentary, and passion is the highest pitch of subjectivity.[3]

As I have previously alluded to, and shall further discuss in the conclusion of this chapter and in the next chapter, human existence is inherently ambiguous or 'meta-stable' and the closest we are likely to get to satisfying the demands of the anxieties would involve an alternating, time-dependent, well-greased and possibly interpersonally-reliant movement between an objective and a subjective stance: dynamic authenticity. The role of self-deception (which is in a sense akin to Rorty's metaphysical thinking) is vital to this, and significantly the ability, seemingly inherent to human consciousness, of self-deceit or deliberate forgetfulness, remains itself shot-through with obscurity and ambiguity. In the next chapter I will champion two writers who were well aware of this—Conrad and Camus—over those like Rorty who (appear to) write as if there is nothing fundamentally problematic in holding the base elements of anxieties A and B in a single point of view.

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[2] *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, 1992), p.410
[3] CUP, p.199

I

'I conceive of nothing, in religion, science, or philosophy that is more than the proper thing to wear for a while.'—Charles Fort (*Wild Talents*)[4]

Rorty's objective is to add to the body of literature that might, he hopes, one day stamp out what he calls metaphysics and see it replaced with an 'ironicised' way of thinking and acting. The mistake of the metaphysician is perhaps best described in two parts: firstly the propagation of the notion of the world or human existence as having an overall purpose like Hegel's *Geist*; and secondly, and more significantly, the search for necessity or truth, for reality behind appearance, or for deeper meanings that are in touch with something beyond human creations. In line with Nietzsche he says;

The very idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature—one which the physicist or the poet may have glimpsed—is a remnant of the idea that the world is a divine creation, the work of someone who had something in mind, who Himself spoke some language in which He described His own project. Only if we have some such picture in mind ... can we make sense of the idea that the world has an "intrinsic nature".[5]

Like Nietzsche and Heidegger (both of whom, ultimately, he considers to have failed to escape the 'metaphysical urge') Rorty wants to de-devinize our language, to expel all traces of the notion of a source of truth beyond the human from our ways of thinking about the world. If this sounds a simple task in theory and/or in practice it is because we have not yet investigated the full implications of what it would mean to be non-metaphysical, and Rorty's books and articles— directed at all the main areas of modern philosophy (although I am only concerned with ethics (in the broadest sense) and the self here)—seek to do just that. The picture that emerges, superficially at least, has a certain structural elegance, but this disguises a substantial problem, pointed out by many of his critics, with making cogent the details of a theoretical and a working notion of a metaphysically exorcised individual and culture. To someone who has achieved this he assigns the pronoun 'ironist', the corresponding culture is (of course) 'utopian', and it is mostly to the question of whether there could ever be a full-blown ironist, and partly to the question of whether Rorty's utopia is plausible (although this largely stands and falls on the result of first question) that this

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[4] Fort (1874-1932) was an American researcher into anomalous phenomena. In particular he was concerned about scientific dogma and attitudes to 'inconvenient data'.
[5] CIS (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989) p.21

chapter is addressed. Another way of putting it is to ask whether we can imagine an individual and a culture functioning healthily (or indeed at all) whilst having an entirely transparent relation to anxiety.

Rorty is a pragmatist: for him truth means only what works, what works is always defined in terms of human desires, and our desires are the only thing we can ever be sure about. Broadly speaking these desires fall into two categories; what we desire for ourselves, and what we desire for other people. Theories are not the sorts of things that could ever be closer to uncovering reality, or 'getting to the truth' than other things, but only 'new tools to take the place of old tools'[6]—better ways of achieving what we want to achieve rather than being like the piecing together of a jigsaw puzzle. For those who 'make things new'[7] he admits that the tools analogy is not quite perfect in that the craftsman knows what he wants to make before he starts out whereas the creator or 'poet' (as he would call anyone—in the sciences or the arts—who is substantially innovative) can never be fully aware of what he wants to achieve. 'His new vocabulary' he says 'makes possible, for the first time, a formulation of his own purpose.'[8] Nietzsche's would say that such a person is more 'fully' human, and while Rorty would reject this metaphysical sounding claim he would endorse the idea that many of us will treat these tools as if they are part of a jigsaw and in so doing be distracted from the task of 'self-enlargement' through a rearrangement of language. A further analogy might be the difference between someone who goes travelling after planning all his stops on a world tour in advance with the express purpose of visiting the 'seven wonders', learning more languages or 'bettering themselves' with the view to fulfilling set tasks which will produce a requisite 'self' approved in advance, and someone who *wanders* out into the world, driven by an urge to create or discover but with no particular plan or timetable and for no formularizable reason. For the latter person what they want for themselves and the nature of the self that wants are inextricably linked, and thus the concepts of identity and creation merge. Theorizing—seeing patterns—can only do its job retrospectively: 'Christianity', Rorty says, 'did not know that its purpose was the alleviation of cruelty, Newton did not know that his purpose was modern

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[6] op cit, p.12
[7] ibid, p.13
[8] ibid

technology ... But *we* now know these things, for we latecomers can tell the kind of story of progress which those who are actually making progress cannot.'[9]

A stronger aim of Rorty's is not only to make notions like truth redundant, but also to reject anything that plays a truth-like role. Arguably (as I shall say more about later) pragmatism of this kind can, for the majority of us, make 'what works'—our currently useful but basically contingent 'final vocabulary'—seem a lot like 'what is the case'. If most people one encounters 'prefer' (act in accordance with, say complimentary things about etc.) the theory of evolution it is easy to slip into (or make difficult to break out of) the habit of considering it to be the way things are *in themselves*. But even if this is avoided, Rorty would consider the idea of universal consensus undesirable—it tempts the metaphysical urge in the way mentioned, and impoverishes the potentially rich and detailed landscape of ideas from which the individual should be nourishing his project of self-enlargement. For him this landscape is best represented by those writers who stimulate our imagination in terms of this project (i.e. help us realize our contingency and freedom to create) and also in terms of our concern for the plight of others.[10] The canon includes (for one or other of these purposes or both) Darwin, Dickens, Nietzsche, Freud, Proust, William James, Dewey, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Orwell, Nabokov, Derrida, Davidson and Foucault, and it is Rorty's (mis)readings of these people that provides the backbone for *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*.

II

'I enjoy saying no, always no, and I should be afraid of any attempt to construct a finally habitable world, because I should merely have to say—yes; and act like other people.'—Sartre (*The Age of Reason*)

In taking elements of Rorty's philosophy to task I am concentrating on how far it seems plausible to go in aestheticizing and relativizing the *self* and its *values* and in defusing the 'metaphysical urge'. In other words to what extent it is appropriate to replace concepts like 'self-discovery', self-actualization', 'authenticity', 'duty', 'good' and so on with words like 'self-creation', 'playfulness', 'experimentation', 'preference' and 'usefulness'. I am not so much interested in

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[9] op cit, p.55. This difference in perspective is all important, and as Rorty points out, signifies the metaphysical trappings all theorists (even ironist theorists it seems) find hard to avoid. Later on I will argue that *no one* can avoid it and that irony fails largely for this reason.

[10] That the desirability of universal consensus seems to be built in to this aim is an important point to which I shall return.

whether there is anything like 'truth' or 'reality' tied in with values and the self, but in whether there is a requirement for something *truth-like*—something meaningful beyond the personal and particular—to be attached to what we find ourselves concerned about and committed to. The aim of CIS, at least ostensibly, is to paint a picture of what Rorty calls the 'liberal ironist'. In the introduction he provides the following working definition of such a person in term of its component parts;

I use "ironist" to name the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her most central beliefs and desires ... Liberal ironists are people who include among these ungroundable desires their own hope that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease.[11]

Embodied in this agenda is the dissolving of traditional philosophical questions into matters of aesthetic preference that are judged in terms of their efficacy in stimulating us towards the aims I have outlined. As such Rorty decompartmentalizes the library; there is no longer a section concerning truth named "philosophy" or a section concerning fiction called "literature" but only an alphabetically ordered list of writers who serve essentially the same function. In Rorty's utopia we would no longer read the *Republic* or the *Critique* as an attempt to get at the truth of the world but rather as sources of private edification or perhaps (in the case of the *Republic*) as a means to a better understanding of the different ways we can be cruel to others.

An objection that might be immediately raised is that Rorty's treatment of the issue of cruelty, or his acceptance of the principles of evolutionary theory or psychoanalysis is itself metaphysical—he is saying the latter two bear some claim to truth and that the former should at least be universally acknowledged (which itself suggests something which is true of human beings in general). I will deal with this in the short-term by repeating that he only claims to *prefer* these ideas or beliefs, and if it turns out that others prefer the same things its a matter of coincidence or conditioning and not something that will necessarily occur because of a general advancement towards a clearer picture of 'reality'. In the case of liberalism however it can be argued that universal consensus *is* desirable and the status this sort of claim might have (and the problems it causes) will be discussed later.

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[11] p.xv

Most attacks on Rorty have focused on the impossibility of being both an ironist and a liberal,[12] but for reasons suggested in the introduction I am more interested in questioning the possibility of irony itself than in its relation to liberalism. I cannot, however, ignore the 'public' element because in Rorty's picture he wants the concern for contingency and the concern for diminishing cruelty to in some sense happily co-exist, and the reason why he wants this to be the case, and the reason (as I see it) why they are not, helps underline and undermine why Rortean irony is itself not a coherent concept. Before voicing my concerns I shall a give an account of what irony appears to involve, and add some bulk to the notion of liberalism.

Before offering a positive account of what irony is, I will contrast it with a concept that has cropped up on occasion throughout this dissertation and which is overdue a more formal definition, namely 'cynicism'. Cynicism I use to indicate an essential affirmation in the attitude of a person, but not an honest one. Contingency and ambiguity are basically repulsive to him to the extent that although he affirms *his* existence in his denial of a meaning to existence as a whole, he is unwilling to accept the paradox inherent in this meta-stable state by appropriating his condition in the form of static or dynamic authenticity.[13] The upshot is a defensive position not dissimilar to a broad or diffused version of Tillich's neurotic anxiety that can manifest itself in the superficial coolness of someone like Decoud in *Nostromo*, or can reveal itself in a non-sensical "shaking one's fist at the void". Examples of this kind are easy to find in existentialist literature as writers often find it easier to describe cases of inauthenticity than its opposite. 'We must take revenge for having to die alone' says Camus' Clemence in *The Fall*, and a 'poetic' character of Kierkegaard's rants 'Where am I? What does it mean to say: the world? What is the meaning of that word? Who tricked me into the whole thing and leaves me standing here? ... Why was I not informed of the rules ... where is the manager?'[14] Relevant here is Nietzsche's criticism of the 'ascetic priest' who attempts to distance himself from the world 'in a rebellion against the most fundamental principles of life' (appearance (versus reality), the body, death, reason etc.). 'Man' he says 'would rather will *nothingness* than

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[12] For example Guignon and Hiley's *Biting the Bullet: Rorty on Private and Public Morality* (in Alan Malachowski (ed.) *Reading Rorty* (Blackwell, 1990)), and Simon Critchley's *Is Derrida a Private Ironist or a Public Liberal?* (in Chantal Mouffe (ed.) *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (Routledge, 1996)).

[13] Tillich's description of the cynic's state of mind is similar to Camus' 'rebel'; 'the acceptance of despair' he says 'is in itself faith and on the boundary of the courage to be. In this situation the meaning of life is reduced to despair about the meaning of life. But as long as this despair is an act of life it is positive in it's negativity.' (CTB, p.170)

[14] REP, p.200

not will.'[15] Alain Robbe-Grillet sums up the inconsistency of the cynics position when he says that 'the distance between my call ... and the mute interlocutor to whom it is addressed, becomes an anguish; my hope and my anguish then confer meaning on my life.'[16] In *Notes from Underground* we find Dostoyevsky's diarist, railing against brute facticity, in a state of resignation which lies on the border between cynicism and irony; 'in consequence of all this' he says 'to sink ... into inertia, silently and impotently gnashing your teeth and reflecting that there isn't even anybody for you to be angry with, that an object of your anger can't even be found ...'[17]

I might sum up the position of the cynic as one where he *denies the fact that he affirms himself in his denial*, as against the ironist who *affirms the fact that he affirms himself in his denial*, but the lack of a clear distinction between Tillich's neurotic and courageous individuals is also a problem for your seeker after an attitude free from cynicism. Rorty even says at one point that 'there can be no fully Nietzschean lives'[18]—meaning, I presume, no lives that can affirm themselves while fully appropriating contingency—but the life of the ironist is, in a certain sense, supposed to do just that. It is this kind of problem that throws the possibility of a full-blown ironist into serious doubt, but prior to this, as I shall explain, it also casts a degree of confusion on what Rorty wants an ironist to be like.

The terms 'ironist' and 'strong poet' are for Rorty pretty much synonymous. (Although there is a case for saying that the strong poet represents just a (possibly unreachable) ideal form of irony that always stands against particular instances—more on this later.) The term 'Strong Poet' was borrowed from Nietzsche and used by the literary critic Harold Bloom to describe someone who, responding to the 'anxiety of influence' ('each poet fears that no proper work remains for him to perform'[19]), manages to break free from, or overcome his cultural inheritance and produce, in some small but significant way, something that has not been thought of before. His output is more than just an amalgam of available ideas but instead incorporates something that *only he* put there—something which gives his existence an element of autonomy. This classification of course refers to more than just poets but rather to any original thinker in any field: for example 'Strong

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[15] *The Genealogy of Morals* (Morern Library, 1968), p.99
[16] op cit, p.233
[17] p.23. One of the roles of Nietzsche's 'ascetic priest' is almost the reverse of this whereby he gives people back their control by putting the blame for their suffering on themselves.
[18] op cit, p.42
[19] *The Anxiety of Influence* (OUP, 1986), p.148

philosophers' Rorty tells us '—people like Hegel and Davidson [are] the sort of philosophers who are interested in dissolving inherited problems rather than solving them.'[20] They give us, in other words, radically new ways of thinking and speaking.

There is, however, a difference inherent in the disciplines of what he calls 'ironist theorists' (i.e. philosophers) and ironist writers and poets that has an important bearing on the future of philosophy as Rorty sees it. He says;

The goal of ironist theory is to understand the metaphysical urge, the urge to theorize, so well that one becomes entirely free of it. Ironist theory is thus a ladder which is to be thrown away as soon as one has figured out what is was that drove one's predecessors to theorize.[21]

But the problem is of course how to do *this* without oneself becoming a theorist—how to avoid finding a solution to this problem that is itself merely a continuation of the problem, or how to end philosophy, throw away the ladder, in a non-metaphysical fashion. An answer along the lines of "human beings theorize because they have an inherent need for stable meanings" is itself a theory in the form of an attempt to find something common to humanity. For Rorty, like Nietzsche, the whole process of theorizing or philosophizing, certainly in the traditional sense, seems to necessitate this trap, and even those who are acutely aware of the problem and set out to expose it, including Nietzsche and Heidegger do not, in the end, manage to avoid it. For Rorty the only solution is to stop theorizing altogether, and this means maintaining an awareness that all one writes has no truth-like status and is only significant as a means of attempting personal autonomy. If others find it edifying it is because it happen to coincide with their own project of 'self-enlargement', not because it represents something universally valid. For the strong philosopher to become fully ironic he must become a strong poet.

Heidegger's attempt to wind up the project of the Plato-Kant tradition of philosophy is, for Rorty, expressed in BT where he says that 'the ultimate business of philosophy is to preserve the *force of the most elemental words* in which Dasein expresses itself, and to keep the common understanding from levelling them off ...'[22] Such words (e.g. 'Dasein', '*Befindlichkeit*') are, Rorty says, 'designed to express the predicament of the ironist theorist'[23] in the way I have outlined, but Heidegger

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[20] op cit, p.20
[21] ibid, pp.96-7
[22] Cited on p.112
[23] ibid, p.113

ultimately fails to achieve both irony *and* strength. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is not clear how his interpretation of Dasein is anything more than that; in other words 'how' as Rorty asks 'does Heidegger know an elementary word when he sees one?'[24] He also sees Heidegger's disinterest in the holocaust as symptomatic of his 'attempt to encapsulate the West, to sum it up and distance himself from it'. It epitomizes, he believes, a lapse into ascetic priesthood—it was just 'one more power play.'[25]

Derrida, on the other hand, Rorty reads as having overcome his earlier transcendental tendencies and achieving irony in his later 'playful' work where he;

privatizes his philosophical thinking, and thereby breaks down the tension between ironism and theorizing. He simply drops theory ... in favour of fantasizing about [his] predecessors, playing with them, giving free reign to the train of associations they produce ...

Such fantasizing is, in my view, the end product of ironist theorizing. Falling back on one's private fantasy is the only solution to the self-referential problem which such theorizing encounters, the problem of how to distance one's predecessors without doing exactly what one has repudiated them for doing.[26]

'Derrida', he says later with specific reference to *The Post Card*, 'is coming to resemble Nietzsche less and less and Proust more and more. He is concerned less and less with the sublime and the ineffable, and more and more with the beautiful, if fantastical, rearrangement of what he remembers.'[27] Rorty's position on the strong philosopher-cum-poet is nicely summed up in a comment on Foucault who, he says, 'like Nietzsche, was a philosopher who claimed a poet's privileges. One of these privileges is to rejoin "What has universal validity to do with *me*?" I think that philosophers are as entitled to this privilege as poets, so I think the rejoinder sufficient.'[28] It is worth noting that someone determined to overcome aspects of their heritage need not subscribe to radical contingency. Such a person, and Kierkegaard might be an example, could be an absolutist who believes *they* and no one else (or only a few others) are in touch with a power or reality that is beyond the human. I take it that for Rorty' Nietzsche and Heidegger became just such people— strong *philosophers* rather than strong poets.

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[24] op cit, p.116
[25] EHO, p.70
[26] CIS, p.125
[27] ibid, p.136
[28] EHO, p.198

For Rorty the person *best* suited to maintaining this sense of contingency is the poet (in the narrow sense) or novelist. Disciplines that wed subjectivity and creativity in the way fiction and poetry do makes the practitioner far less susceptible to grandiose claims to truth and reinforces his sense of irony and contingency. In an ideal case, such as Proust, the novelist is not tempted to affirm himself via a power over others attained through his claim to being in touch with some non-human reality, but only through the creation of his own 'strong' self. 'The judge the [strong poet] has in mind' we are told 'is himself. He wants to be able to sum up his life in his own terms.' He wants, in Coleridge's words, to 'create the taste by which he will be judged',[29] but that taste and that judgement have no greater claim than others for capturing the imagination of present and future generations, they represent only the novelist's preferences and a concern for *his own life*.

What of the relation between the strong poet or ironist and the forms of anxiety detailed in the last chapter? As we have seen, ethically inward people—those who are sensitive to moral anxiety because of a keen sense of their responsibility for themselves and (possibly others)—are more exposed to urangst and the contingency that makes this freedom an issue in the first place. In my terminology the strong poet is profoundly afflicted by anxiety B which is directed at a concern for autonomy and individuality, and this to a great extent means in the context of others and within the boundaries of one's culture. But the ironist it seems wants more than this: he wants not just a culturally relative uniqueness but also to be in a position where no heed is paid by him to any measure of that uniqueness other than his own.

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Before developing a critique of irony in terms of anxiety A and modes of authenticity I will briefly describe what Rorty means by 'liberal' when he refers to his 'liberal ironist'. As stated, the liberal is someone who thinks 'cruelty is the worst thing we do'. In terms of political or moral theory Rorty sees J.S.Mill as having the last word and our only concern, following Wilfred Sellars, is expanding our sense of 'us' by improving our understanding of the different ways in which people can suffer and be humiliated. To this ends the best kind of books to read are not the theoretical kind but novels and ethnographies. 'In Sellars's account' we are told, '... moral philosophy takes the form of an answer to the question "Who are 'we', how did we come to be what we are, and what

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[29] EHO, p.99

might we become?" rather than an answer to the question "what rules should dictate my actions?"[30] In the task of expanding our 'we-intentions'—our sense of who is one of us—he sees the moral theorist as redundant.

The liberal ironist shares with Camus' 'absurd man' the belief that he 'cannot so much expect ethical rules at the end of [his] reasoning as rather, illustrations and the breath of human lives.'[31]

The characters of Dickens, he says, 'resist being subsumed under moral typologies ... Instead the names of [his] characters *take the place* of moral principles and lists of virtues and vices'.[32] Literary critics too become moral advisors 'not because they have special access to moral truth but because they have been around.'[33] Been around, that is, the subtle and detailed descriptions found in the novels of Dickens, Kundera, Orwell, Nabokov and others who bring to life a variety of idiosyncrasies (and the humiliations that can be associated with them) and a variety of ways we can be cruel so that they help us to learn how to avoid perpetrating such acts.

Suffering is made meaningful through the detailed descriptions found in the novels of people like Dickens and Orwell. The desired effect would presumably be similar to that described by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*;

We have a thought, or perform an act repeatedly, but on a certain day, the real meaning of the thought peals through us for the first time, or the act has suddenly turned into a moral impossibility. All that we know is that there are dead feelings, dead ideas, and cold beliefs, and there are hot and live ones; and when one grows hot and alive within us, everything has to re-crystallize about it.[34]

The claim that 'cruelty is the worst thing we can do' sounds metaphysical, but what Rorty wants to say is that this is the preferred moral stance of someone he calls a liberal. He is not saying that for some foundational reason cruelty is the worst thing we can do, but only that his sensibilities are such that he believes it to be the case.[35] The difference between the liberal and the non-liberal ironist is described by Rorty as a difference in the degree of publicness of their respective concerns.

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[30] op cit, p.60

[31] *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p.65. Later on he says, 'Not to believe in the profound meaning of things belongs to the absurd man ... The absurd man is he who is not apart from time.' (p.69)

[32] CIS, p.78

[33] ibid, p.80

[34] Cited in Colin Wilson, *Beyond the Outsider* (Pan, 1965), p.102

[35] I am not at all convinced that this makes complete sense, but unfortunately there is no room to go into this here.

The liberal writer writes in order to make people more sensitive to suffering, but the strong poet only writes for himself and he appeals *only* to those who happen to be moved by what he writes, making no claims to universal validity. If this were not the case then for the strong poet there would clearly be room for clashes between idiosyncratic ideals which might lead to the subjugation and humiliation of others (such as Nietzsche's) and the desire not to be cruel. Rorty wants to extinguish the possibility of metaphysics which he sees as inherent to any ideas that are claimed to be of relevance to anyone other that their author in all cases *except* the issue of cruelty. His '"poeticized" culture' is then 'one which has given up the attempt to unite one's private ways of dealing with one's finitude and one's sense of obligation to other human beings.'[36]

III

'In art as in everything else one can build only upon a resisting foundation: whatever constantly gives way to pressure constantly renders movement impossible.'—Stravinsky

'Omnipotence and the infinite were our two worthiest foemen, indeed the only ones for a full man to meet, they being monsters of his own spirit's making.'—T.E.Lawrence (*Seven Pillars of Wisdom*)

The citizen of this culture is the 'liberal ironist'—someone who embodies this public/private split so that they are profoundly aware of contingency, and yet committed to diminishing unnecessary suffering. This aspect of Rorty's political/moral writing has caused more controversy than any other, but as I said earlier, being an ironist seems to throw up enough problems by itself before considering the problems of being a liberal ironist, and because of its more direct links with the anxiety structure it is this that I am most concerned with. Still, I will make mention of the this issue because it creates problems structurally similar to those of irony itself, and because to understand its failing helps us understand the potential failings of Rorty's anti-metaphysical project as a whole.

The central problem is, of course, that of why if we regard everything as contingent should we care about the suffering of others. What gives this any more meaning than anything else? The claim is that Rorty is looking for a state of mind which is psychologically impossible. Guignon and Hiley sum up this 'ego-splitting' in the following way;

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[36] CIS, p.68

we are social selves who cannot help but feel loyal to our group, yet we always have the ability to step back and decide what that social identity means to us. At one moment we are swept away by faith in our capacity for 'moral and intellectual progress' through imaginative redescriptions of the plight of the oppressed; at the next we see all discourse as directionless 'play'. Rorty's ideal of self enlargement actually seems to advocate an outsider's perspective on ourselves, encouraging us to speak a new vocabulary in which, instead of saying 'Manipulating others is wrong' or 'Slavery is bad', we will be able to say, 'My superego is telling a story according to which manipulating others is wrong' or 'Our group currently holds the view that slavery is bad.' Yet somehow we are supposed to keep believing that these things really *are* wrong.'[37]

Similarly Simon Critchley says;

if one believes, with Freud, in the narcissistic origin of compassion, or the conscience is an ego-ideal for those unwilling to forgo the perfection of childhood, then doesn't this alter one's practical, public relation to acts of compassion and the fact of the conscience?[38]

The clash between aesthetic irony and sensitivity to suffering is nicely portrayed in a passage in Sartre's *Iron in the Soul* where an American art dealer Richie is showing war photographs to the Spanish Civil War veteran and disillusioned artist Gomez;

'We have brought photography to a high level,' said Richie: 'Look at these colours: might almost be the original.'
A dead soldier, a shrieking woman. The recorded images of a heart at peace. Art is optimistic. Suffering is justified as soon as it becomes the raw material of beauty. I am *not* at peace: I *don't want* to find justification for the suffering I see ...
'If painting isn't *everything*, it's no more than a bad joke ... One can't paint evil.'[39]

Richie is an ironist, Gomez a potential liberal ironist, but his sensitivity to pain and suffering leads him to give up on art and he is unable to divide the public from the private in Rorty's ideal sense.

Just how Rorty can weaken his position in order to incorporate these two perspectives I shall discuss once I have considered a similar problem in the concept of irony itself and its relation to anxieties A and B. His response in CIS seems to deliberately evade the question:[40] he turns it into an issue of why the ironist is likely to be a better liberal than the metaphysician, but this is surely not the point. The question is not why a commitment to openness leads to a greater sensitivity to suffering, but how there can be a commitment to openness and why the ironist should want to

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[37] op cit, pp.359-60
[38] op cit, p.25
[39] p.32
[40] See pp.88-94

sensitize themselves to suffering in the first place. My suspicion is that Rorty knows what he is doing here, and that this is an example of out-flanking a question to which he knows there is no non-circular answer. His work is seemingly full of contradictions which are most likely a deliberate reflection both of his own liberal irony and of the impossibility of justifying his beliefs. If this is the case (and I shall say more about this in my conclusion) we are led to ask how we are supposed to read him; if meaning is constantly deferred and stable conclusions sabotaged is this because we are falling into the trap of reading him as a theorist and not as gravedigger of theory; one who is sowing some of the first seeds of liberal irony, a position doomed to ambiguity or self-contradiction, not through argumentation but by some other form of appeal?

I shall leave this kind of approach for the moment and turn to the question of the coherency of irony itself. I want first to consider its relation to anxiety A's perspectivism. As mentioned, seeing the strong poet and the ironist as synonymous is potentially confusing as we often associate irony with a distancing from events akin to the cynic rather than the full-blooded engagement of the self-overcomer. This distance embodies an awareness of contingency, but not in the form of a commitment to overcoming one's heritage, but rather in the form of an ironic 'letting things be'. Significantly Rorty at one point makes reference to Kierkegaard's 'Shopman'[41]—a character, exemplifying 'Religiousness A', described as making a constant and seamless movement between the finite and the infinite—someone who is 'solid through and through' but whose earthly existence is undergirded by faith in God. If we read this in terms of irony this seamless movement occurs between an immersion in contingent projects and an awareness of their contingency. The upshot (a weak rather than a strong static authenticity) is a zen-like relation to the world in which all its aspects are enjoyed with a sense of playfulness, but in which no particular project stands out as more significant than any other. The shopman ironist, because his self is supported and validated by his connection to the infinite is able to 'go with the flow' rather than struggling to alter the direction of the stream in order to establish autonomy.[42] (As mentioned elsewhere (e.g. Chapter 4, section III) the paradox inherent in this attitude results from the commitment required to sustain a

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[41] See EHO, p.194.

[42] Michael Tanner's description of Nietzsche's notion of 'style' has similarities with this kind of attitude. He says 'we can agree that one of the things about a person which leads us to say that he has style is his capacity to carry things off, to incorporate disparate and what for most people would be embarrassing or humiliating experiences and make them part of a larger scheme.' (*Nietzsche*, OUP, 1994)

perspective.) This version of irony seems closer to the definition offered by Rorty outside of the context of the strong poet. He says;

I shall define an "ironist" as someone who fulfills three conditions: (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that arguments phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. Ironists who are inclined to philosophize see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal metavocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one's way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old.[43]

But there is vital sense in which such an anxiety A-type ironist, as with the 'shopman', is in danger of claiming privileges to 'a power not herself'. Rorty claims that '[the ironist] sees no futility in his failure to become an *être-en-soi*. The fact that he never wanted to be one, or at least wanted not to want to be one, is just what separates him from the metaphysician'.[44] This seems fair enough, but I presume he is, or is *also*, referring to the full meaning of our 'futile passion' as presented by Sartre. Only in bad faith do we act as if we are an *en-soi*, but authenticity needs to acknowledge the desire to be *en-soi-pour-soi* (i.e. God) and somehow deal with *this*. From what I have said this is close (or perhaps identical) to what the ironist is required to acknowledge—our requirement both for a fundamental awareness of contingency and for finite commitment. By acknowledging it ironically there is either an implicit awareness (embodied in a dynamic mode of authenticity) that in a unified sense this is desirable but impossible (an awareness captured by the urangst constantly infects both the subjective and objective 'views' perhaps); or, if the claim is that irony is a static mode of authenticity, a unification of this dualistic vision is possible and we have achieved a status which gains a perspective on our futile urge to be *en-soi-pour-soi*, but the problem is that this is itself a result of that urge. In this sense irony becomes precisely what Rorty does not want it to be, something transcendental and non-linguistic. In not thinking 'her vocabulary is closer to reality than others' she is merely satisfying her urge to be 'closer to reality' in a more subtle fashion.

The strong poet or ironist, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, incorporates *both* this perspectivalism and the specific commitment typified by the Strong Philosopher. When he says that the strong poet is 'best able to appreciate her own contingency'[45] he either means that *the person in*

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[43] CIS, p.73. By 'final vocabulary' Rorty means a kind of pragmatic belief system.
[44] ibid, p.99
[45] ibid, p.28

anxiety B is best able to do this, or that *the person in anxiety A* is best able to do this, or he is uttering a platitude in as much as the person who can keep their sense of personal responsibility and their sense of contingency before them is necessarily most aware of the full *weight* of contingency. In this way irony overarches both kinds of being in the form of a strong mode of static authenticity and can be seen as an attempt at a secular version of Kierkegaard's 'Religiousness B'. If this is the case then irony, like Religiousness B (and like any strong mode of static authenticity) becomes something quite mysterious; something that backs up Jacob Golomb's claim that 'the notion of authenticity ... signifies something beyond the domain of objective language'.[46] It can be experientially attested to, but involves antinomies such that it cannot be formally captured in a way that could make complete sense to the uninitiated reader. A generous reading of Rorty might allow this, but a less generous one is obliged to expose inconsistencies in the idea of irony *as far as it can be understood*. In other words we could remind ourselves of the strong poet's disanalogy with the craftsman in that he does not fully understand what he is making because 'his new vocabulary makes possible, for the first time, a formulation of his own purpose';[47] or we could remind ourselves of the claim that there are no non-linguistic truths.

If we are to take the case for irony being a strong static authenticity seriously then we face the familiar problem of *how* an ironist can take himself seriously whilst fully acknowledging contingency. How is it possible to become the kind of person 'who [combines] commitment with a sense of the contingency of their own commitment'?[48] Contingency does not, after all, stop at the self so why should we take this seriously as a project as the strong poet of course does? Rorty says himself that ironists are '"meta-stable": never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves',[49] but he does not follow through and expose the full implications of this sentence. In a crucial sense, the sense I have outlined above, the strong poet *is* serious and, as I shall go on to explain, must be serious if he is to be motivated to create himself, and if he is to be able to *maintain* his irony.

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[46] op cit, p.7
[47] CIS, p.13
[48] ibid, p.61
[49] ibid, pp.73-4

The full problem the aspiring ironist faces is summed up in a quote from Joseph Schumpeter who says;

To realize the relative validity of one's convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly, is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian.

And the source of this quote, Isiah Berlin, adds;

To demand more than this is perhaps a deep and incurable metaphysical need; but to allow it to determine one's practice is a symptom of an equally deep, and more dangerous, moral and political immaturity.[50]

This sentiment is reflected in Rorty's apparent prioritizing of liberalism over self-enlargement, but it also reflects something that Rorty does not want to accept; that our 'metaphysical need' is 'deep and incurable'. The problem is that if this need is thought of in terms of something 'deep and incurable' it becomes for Rorty a metaphysical notion which he need only redescribe, or 'side-step' not feel the need to cure. If this is the case Rorty has something to work with, even if it seems impossible to imagine at the moment what this redescription would look like. But even if the metaphysical urge is not structural we can still be seen to have a powerful *tendency* towards it, and this presents the pressing psychological problem of how a human being, as he (albeit purely by chance) *discovers* himself in his current *Befindlichkeit*, is supposed to shake off this need and become ironic. This need is partly responsible for his anxiety B, and though he is also 'uncanny' Rorty needs to show how that uncanniness can be used to fashion a concern for his self, a version of anxiety B, that is devoid of the metaphysical urge.

I shall expand on the problem of irony as a strong static mode of authenticity in terms of what I call the 'motivational problem' and the 'bootstrap problem' and suggest that what is more coherent is a dynamic mode in which, as with Sartre's 'reciprocal freedom', our social context plays a crucial role and which therefore undermines the public/private distinction.

The question of what motivates the ironist, and what platform he has for his irony leads us to question the strength of Rorty's analogies between one's commitment to the project of self-enlargement and our attitude to artistic preferences and to games. I shall take these one at a time and explain why I think they share similar weaknesses. Firstly it is true to say that artistic

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[50] op cit, p.61

preferences are more open to ironic detachment than other areas. Tastes are personal and can and do change regularly and we quickly learn (or should learn) that to treat them as somehow immutable is a mistake. Rorty wants to claim that all the ironist's beliefs and values—their final vocabularies—should, through the same realization of their contingency, become as malleable, but if this is the case what motivates us to take any of them seriously? Even in art absolutizing is rife, and in terms of the radical revision of the strong poet, could this be sufficiently motivated without its claim to being right or better, not just for oneself but for everyone concerned? Without this metaphysical empowerment it is hard to see why the artist would be concerned enough to create and become a strong poet. It is because of this, I would have thought, that those closely involved in the arts, and those who make their living from it often do not treat it as a contingency, but rather as being in touch with something profound or 'deeply human'.[51] Harold Bloom says that 'every poet begins ... by rebelling more strongly against the consciousness of death's necessity than all other men and women do.'[52] And if they become strong the result, the sense created by their strength, is not of being *in* time but of mastering it by '[achieving] a style that captures and oddly retains priority over their precursors, so that the tyranny of time almost is overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that they are being *imitated by their ancestors*.'[53] Simone deBeauvoir's view of the artist also stresses metaphysical motivations: the artist must feel like he is 'capturing' the world, 'not by treating his existence as transitory or relative but by reflecting the infinite within it, that is, by treating it as absolute. There is an art only because at every moment art has willed itself absolutely.'[54]

Even if the creative process is de-mystified great art does not then necessarily assume the form of something radically personal, but can rather be seen as something mundane with, presumably, the same motivations that underlie other, typically non-ironic activities. In the epigraph to this section Stravinsky alludes to this, and in the same passage he writes;

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[51] Iris Murdoch believes that great art is a transcendence of the self and by so doing makes its metaphysical facet quite explicit. Rilke, she comments, 'said of Cézanne that he did not paint 'I like it', he painted 'There it is'' (*The Sovereignty of Good*, p.59); it is virtually irresistible to look for 'self-aggrandizement' and 'consolation' in art, but 'to silence and expel self, to contemplate and delineate nature with a clear eye, is not easy and demands a moral discipline.' (ibid, p.64)

[52] op cit, p.10

[53] ibid, p.141. That Bloom and Rorty often do not seem to share quite the same philosophy is clearly important (in that it is less weight to Rorty's claims about artists), but not surprising given his policy of misreading people.

[54] op cit, p.130

I experience a sort of terror when, at the moment of setting to work and finding myself before the infinitude of possibilities that present themselves, I have the feeling that everything is permissible to me ... if nothing offers me any resistance then any effort is inconceivable, and I cannot use anything as a basis, and consequently every undertaking becomes futile ... What delivers me from this anguish into which an unrestricted freedom plunges me is the fact that I am always to turn immediately to the concrete things that are here in question ... And such matter presents itself to one together with its limitations. I must in turn impose mine upon it. So here we are, whether we like it or not in *the realm of necessity*. And yet which of us has ever heard talk of art as other than a realm of freedom? This sort of heresy is uniformly widespread because it is imagined that art is outside the bounds of ordinary activity ...[55]

With the games analogy, similarly, we must question how far it is possible to be 'playful' without a serious background. Our attitude to games is perhaps a better one for Rorty than that of art because few games that I am aware of are likely to encourage claims that they have some metaphysical significance.[56] Ideally, while we are playing them we can be utterly serious and utterly involved, but at the same time aware that 'it is only a game'. Winning and losing mean something but they do not require a greater context for the validation of that meaning, and we are able, on finishing the game, to let its significance fade. The major limitation of this analogy is that we cannot step away from our life as a whole making the motivations towards it entirely different. If the equivalent of the game with its rules and time restrictions is the sum of the contents of the projects involved in self-enlargement we do not have the space to step back into that a normal game allows us. Of course if one part fails, an ironic perspective can perhaps be afforded, but only because the overall structure remains in place. As Freud says, 'play is opposed not to seriousness but to reality',[57] and without reality, or something like reality, no sense can be made of 'play'.

My overall point in criticising these analogies is that in order to be motivated to 'enlarge' ourselves we need to believe that what we are doing is aligned with something greater than ourselves. Only if this is the case can we have the space to regard certain aspects of our concerns as contingent—it seems we have to believe that what we are doing is important. It does not *necessarily* have to seem important through its relation to something non-human—to God, the Forms or whatever—but it does at least have to be meaningful to the lives of other human beings, future generations and the like. Rorty points out that the attempt at transcendence by the ascetic priest are extremely useful; 'the spin-offs from private projects of purification turn out to have enormous social utility' because 'the result of trying to find a language different from the tribe's is to enrich the language of later

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[55] Cited in Lynch, W. *Images of Hope*, p.61

[56] With notable exceptions such as Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* (although, as the title suggests this has more in common with art or a meditative practice than sport)

[57] Cited in M.W.Rowe, *The Definition of 'Game'*, Philosophy, Vol.67 (1992), p.474

generations of that tribe.'[58] But he wants to claim that this can happen without the individual having to think they are transcending anything.

My claim, on the other hand, is that all strong poets are to one degree or another, ascetic priests: when Coleridge said that he wanted to 'create the taste by which he will be judged'[59] Rorty's emphasis is on 'create' and 'taste', but mine would be on 'judged'. The key point is that he would not have written what he wrote unless he thought it would have a profound effect on others, that he was somehow creating something that would be regarded as beautiful or true (or even just better) in their terms as well as his. 'Proust and Nietzsche are paradigmatic nonmetaphysicians' says Rorty, 'because they so evidently cared only about how they looked to themselves, not how they looked to the universe.'[60] My response to this is to question Rorty's interpretation of their motivations, but I will admit that the possibility of its being correct depends on the cogency of my structural criticism when added to this psychological one. Still, Bloom admits that the strong poet *must* care about the influence they strive to overcome; '[His] love of his poetry, *as itself*, must exclude the reality of all other poetry, except for what cannot be excluded, the initial identification with the poetry of the precursor.' The reason he feels strong is because he still recognizes the influence and importance of that person, but also an ideal necessarily other than himself; he 'peers in the mirror of his fallen precursor and beholds neither the precursor nor himself but a Gnostic double, the dark otherness or antithesis that both he and the precursor longed to be, yet feared to become.'[61] Even one of Rorty's own quotes from Orwell runs contrary to his diagnosis of the strong poet's motivations, and also opens up the second set of problems faced by the ironist ideal: 'Philosophers, writers, artists, even scientists' he says 'not only need encouragement, they need constant stimulation from other people.'[62]

This is relevant to the 'bootstrap problem' in a way I shall describe shortly. The force of this problem is that if the ironist is concerned only about how he looks to himself, only about what is forced on him and what is most proximal in terms of his 'thrownness' or the 'blind impress' how is he to prevent himself from losing his sense of irony? How will he *know* if he has retained it or not?

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[58] EHO, p.72
[59] CIS, p.97
[60] ibid, p.98
[61] op cit, p.147
[62] CIS, p.176

And indeed, how does he know what irony is in the first place? Does he invent his own measure of irony, and if so, what is it measured against. One could say his past selves, but either they are ironists and we have the same problem of measurement, or they are metaphysicians but only in terms of a public definition of the irony/metaphysics distinction in which case the ironist is intrinsically linked to the public domain.

An alternative is that irony is itself a sustaining 'power'—a state of mind with a boot-strap ability to renew itself—but this would represent an angling for metaphysical leverage in the way I earlier described the ironist's attempt to overcome our desire to be *en-soi-pour-soi*; and so we are, I think, left only with the public option. What maintains us in our ironic condition is the input of others in a fashion similar to Sartre's 'reciprocal freedom'—those who share a desire for irony in the way that we do commit to helping us retain our irony. For an advocate of dynamic authenticity like Heidegger this is an important mechanism and one which is implied at certain points in BT, for example;

Dasein's resoluteness towards itself is what first makes it possible to let others who are with it 'be' in their ownmost potentiality-for-being ... when Dasein is resolute it can become the conscience of others.[63]

But this solution raises at least three problems for Rorty. Firstly, in order for this to happen we must share a common notion of what irony is and implicitly promote this as worthwhile for others as well as oneself. Secondly we cannot be ironic about the relations which help us maintain irony or else that irony will be lost (This is similar to the problem of how we are supposed to commit to having no commitments, or desire to have no desires.)[64] Thirdly, it undermines his public/private division. Our ironic approach will no longer be just our own business but involve, at least, a handful of other ironists. Once this is allowed, there seems to be no place to draw a line between what counts as private and what as public. The only way to do this would be to form an elitist 'ironist's circle' of sorts which contravenes the liberal ironist's agenda of extending the boundaries of his 'we intentions'.[65]

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[63] p.344

[64] In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* Kundera describes an interview or interrogation scenario where the difficulty of 'maintaining nonbelief (constantly, systematically, without the slightest vacillation)' is demonstrated. To do this, he continues 'requires a tremendous effort and the proper training.' (pp.185-6)

[65] Or worse, a situation where ironists are promoted but are not themselves part of this 'circle' because this would be to fall into the trap of committing to irony. This nightmare is close to Williams' image of a wholly utilitarian state in *Utiltarianism: For and Against*.

IV

'irony is jealous of earnestness'—Kierkegaard (*The Concept of Anxiety*)

If irony seems not to work as a strong static authenticity it can, I think, work as a weak mode of authenticity that does not necessitate 'strength' in the way Rorty seems to indicate. But it cannot be read in this way without allowing metaphysics to sneak back in (via some zen-like bootstrap power or an absolutizing of our commitments in the way Simone deBeauvoir speaks of), and Rorty therefore cannot be happy with this. A static mode of authenticity is palpable in an immediate first-person sense, but a slightly odd upshot of dynamic authenticity is that it lacks this immediacy and is only recognized by others and through a consideration of one's past thoughts and actions in a way analogous to William James' description of personal-identity. He describes the present self or 'Thought' in terms of a 'hook' which 'never appropriates or disowns itself' but from which a chain of objectified past selves dangles.[66] A similar analogy turns up in *The Waves* where Woolf describes our sense of self as a series (or collection) of drops which continually form and fall; our current self always in the process of becoming until that world view (or an important aspect of it) is shattered, or becomes too heavy and a new one starts to grow.[67] A shift occurs, but always only from one drop to another; only momentarily do we receive the (uncanny) sense of unmitigated reality. The only possible completed sense of self becomes, in Heidegger's terms, one which is 'present-at-hand'—an object for disengaged inquiry and thus not fully a self at all. For this reason, as is the case with the eccentric, we should be suspicious of anyone who declares themselves, in the present tense, to be an ironist as to be an ironist they must at any one time be fully engaged with anxiety B or anxiety A, but not with both. Kierkegaard seems to make this same point about the ordeal of faith. He says;

This category, ordeal, is not aesthetic, ethical or dogmatic—it is altogether transcendent. Only as knowledge about an ordeal, that it is an ordeal, would be included in dogmatics. But as soon as the knowledge enters, the resilience of the ordeal is impaired, and the category is actually another category. This category is absolutely transcendent and places a person in a purely personal relationship of

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[66] *The Principles of Psychology* (Volume 1) (Harvard University Press, 1981), p.323. He continues 'Anon the hook will itself drop into the past with all it carries, and then be treated as an object and appropriated by a new Thought in the new present which will serve as a living hook in turn. The present moment of consciousness is thus ... the darkest of the whole series.'
[67] See, for example, p.184.

opposition to God, in a relationship such that he cannot allow himself to be satisfied with any explanation at second hand.[68]

It must be significant that even the people in Rorty's canon can be shown to lapse into metaphysics at one time or another; the suggestion being that this is inevitable and that the motivation to *become* an ironist, despite the contradiction this involves, is all the ironist can himself experience; the achievement of its being something in his past, always slipping away from him. In this motivation we find the strength to be open to urangst and the resultant flexibility and meta-stability of dynamic authenticity, but from the subjective point of view life will consist of times, like for Steinbeck's Doc, when 'he knows [it] is funny, but he cannot laugh at it.'[69]

Theoretically speaking what this indicates is something like the continuum we found in the last chapter between neurotic and existential anxiety; in the current terminology, between cynicism and irony. If our measure is our present self (which must always be in anxiety A or B) and other people, what makes this a *valid* measure of irony? In a sense nothing, but in another sense the broader the context of others which affirms our irony the greater validity the claim has. In a sense we cannot be *essentially* ironical or *essentially* metaphysical but only more or less metaphysical, or more or less ironical. Objectively speaking there is no *leap* into irony as there is a leap into faith for Kierkegaard; rather irony defines an ease and flexibility of movement—a 'readiness for anxiety'—rather than a unified state of mind. From the point of view of the subject the movement from anxiety B to anxiety A may feel like a leap, and perhaps *must* feel like a leap, but this is only possible because the essential limitations of this point of view in time, and it is in any case not a leap into irony. If there is a leap at all it is to an openness to our contingency that makes irony possible in the first place, but as I shall expand on in the next chapter this is more like Kierkegaard's qualitative leap than the religious leap and even then, any guilt or sense of uncanniness that is not directed at the infinite makes even this ambiguous.

Given what I have said I must conclude that Rorty wants irony to be a strong mode of authenticity. To begin with he appears to regard himself as an ironist (although he could of course be implicitly referring to past selves); and there are suggestions in his work that he leans towards the 'irony as

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REP, p.210
[69] *Sweet Thursday* (Pan, 1958), p.184. This refers to a scene where Doc, an intelligent, eligible man is 'scared stiff' of being rejected by an ex-prostitute whom he knows likes him.

transcendence' compromise rather than the 'breaking of the public/private divide' compromise.[70] One example is his implicit tendency to divinize the imagination. The person who creates only for themselves is clearly highly imaginative, and the imagination is of course a unpredictable, mysterious element of the psyche. It is easy to see how it might (or *must?*) come to be regarded as an 'Other'—something one has a discourse with or that one is in awe of, perhaps a power stemming from one's past that one is not in control of. It is common for artists to be lost for an explanation as to *how* they came up with the ideas they did, the reason being a kind of duality of conscious self and imagination. I wonder if Marcel has unlocked something of the subjective experience of irony when he contrasts *being* a genius with *having* talent. Genius is something beyond the will; it is more like a Heideggerian 'openness' to Being which is 'always outrunning itself and spilling over in all directions.'[71] Within the spiral of uncanniness the individual feels like he is making leaps as he encounters new and strange ideas and is forced to radically reorientate himself, and the subjective nature of these experiences (as the 'real meaning ... peals through [him] for the first time') is such that they are to all intents and purposes *his* discoveries. For the strong poet the sense of uncanniness is likely to be more intense, but the feeling he has, or at least the one which compels him to remain strong, would still be one of *discovery*—a discovery of his imagination.

If I am to conclude that the only comprehensible form irony can take is as a dynamic mode of authenticity—and if we are to suspend or defer the accusation that Rorty has given way under the metaphysical weight of the 'view from nowhere' and reduced the objective to the subjective—I need to meet the challenge of how the ironist can move so slickly from anxiety A to anxiety B and back. My answer is the ambiguous nature of urangst and our curious but vital ability to deceive ourselves. I do not want to enter into the debate about how self-deception is possible, only to acknowledge that it clearly *is* possible and that it seems such that so long as there is consciousness there is self-deception. Sartre accepts that it is unavoidable and a necessary ingredient of our meta-stability, and in all 'literature of ambiguity'—for example that of Conrad and Camus (as we shall see in the next chapter)—it plays a pivotal role. 'The most wonderful thing I know' says one of John Updike's more cynical characters, 'is the human capacity for self deception. It keeps everything else going.'[72] The degree of transparency of the significance of urangst is important in

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[70] In a different book, one more privately orientated, this of course might be reversed.

[71] *Being and Having*, p.173

[72] *Couples* (Penguin, 1970), p.268

determining one's willingness to shift perspective—one might say that the more it occurs the more runny and transparent the urangst becomes and the more ironic the person is. Urangst, we might say, is the oil in our ironic motor.

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Of course Rorty's work, like Nietzsche's, can be read as 'enticing' us, through its contradictions, to reject aspects of philosophical enquiry—as ironic to the core. The final chapter in my search for anxiety's meaning considers a couple of writers whose method of enticement is less indirect. Truth that is found in novels is often subtle, often disguised and often linked to style, but these novels do not profess to be anything *other* than novels. The reader does not have to become exasperated by indirect meanings dressed as direct meanings before the true purpose shines through, but has, in my view, a more honest and respectful relation to the writer. If post-modern philosophy's view requires this extra layer, then the existentialist's position is less in need of such self-consciousness. If the anxiety A—anxiety B structure reflects the essential paradox and antinomy of human existence then nothing more complex or reflexive is required to make us aware of the difficulties this creates, and a literature that wants to make us more human need only present this structure by describing life as experienced.

7

Unending Ordeals: Conrad and Camus

'The desire of being is always realized as the desire of a mode of being.'—Sartre (*Being and Nothingness*)

'The notion of Ambiguity must not be confused with that of absurdity. To declare that existence is absurd is to deny that it can ever be given a meaning; to say that it is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed'—Simone deBeauvoir (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*)

'The picture of the exposed and entangled state is what is required'—Henry James (*The Art of the Novel*)

'Outside in the distance, a wild cat did growl / Two riders were approaching ...'—Bob Dylan (op cit)

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In this final part of the dissertation I want to discuss two novels that I see as demonstrating the structure and dynamics of existential anxiety. By remaining inconclusive and elusive in their meaning and their recommendations on how to appropriate certain revelations, both *Heart of Darkness* (HOD) and *The Fall* convey a distinctive mood. Both deal with themes of absurdity, alienation, freedom and guilt, but in such a way that they are modulated by the ambiguous tension at the heart of human existence that is anxiety.

Apart from these serving as more concrete and contextualized portrayals of anxiety's influence, I want to make one or two more points and attempt to answer a question raised by the last chapter. One point concerns the relation of anxiety to guilt. In an atheistic world these can be even more closely allied than they are in, say, Kierkegaard's world, and what I want to show is that where we find anxiety has been acknowledged and appropriated into an authentic mode of existence a likely (or even inevitable) upshot is guilt. Just as existential anxiety is neither ethical nor ontological, so existential guilt is neither simply that of Heidegger's call of conscience nor of Sartre's strong bad faith. Perhaps the most concrete expression of urangst is the guilt experienced by the authentic individual; that which constantly reminds him that his view is not stable or complete, or at least

that he is not responding readily enough to urangst's demand for movement. We already know that the points of view of anxiety's A and B contain the seed of the other and that this is what makes anxiety existential, and the same process is found with the guilt that arises from the adoption of a mode of authenticity. In the ordeals of the heroes of Conrad and Camus' novels we find a movement towards existential awareness driven by anxiety, and in both cases I take guilt to be an indication that authenticity has been achieved. If there is a leap in a secular environment it is closer to that of COA rather than that of FT—a movement whereby we come to see ourselves as guilty. Both characters come to live with guilt, but one reason why I chose these books is the differing mood in which it is experienced. Marlow's orientation is towards anxiety A's objectivity and the associated guilt is not dissimilar to Heidegger's guilt before what we are, at not having made ourselves 'from the ground up'; whilst Clemence's is towards anxiety B's self-creation within a contingent, ethically charged environment and has more in common with the feeling that we could be doing more, or be closer to actualizing ourselves, if it were not for our tendency to flee anxiety into self-deception. This latter kind is beautifully represented by a passage in Steinbeck;

Where does discontent start? You are warm enough, but you shiver. You are fed, yet hunger gnaws you ... "What has my life meant so far, and what can it mean in the time left to me?" And now we're coming to the wicked, poisoned dart: "What have I contributed to the great ledger? What am I worth?" And this isn't vanity or ambition. Men seem to be born with a debt they can never pay, no matter how hard they try. It piles up ahead of them. Man owes something to man. If he ignores the debt it poisons him, and if he tries to make payments the debt only increases ... [1]

A question raised in the last chapter is whether a leap of irony is possible: is the ironic mode of existence something reached by a shift of perspective that provides an ironic lens to see through or an ironic platform to stand on, or does it lie on a continuum with cynicism at the other end? To answer this question we need to consider what kind of thing irony is. At the end of that chapter my suggestion was that in Rorty's world it can only make sense as a dynamic mode of authenticity and this would imply a continuum. If static, a leap is possible, but without God the price to pay is a loss of the potency of anxiety's antinomy. My thesis here is that though irony is dynamic, it must engender a sense of immutibility from the subject's point of view because of its relation to the perspectivism of anxiety A. An authentic individual must, like Marlow and Clemence, be orientated towards either anxiety A or anxiety B. If anxiety A has priority ironic authenticity is experienced as a leap, and movements into anxiety B engender ontological guilt; if anxiety B has priority movements into anxiety A do not feel leap-like, but engender the more ethical form of guilt. In this

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[1] *Sweet Thursday*, p.21

situation, as suggested in the conclusion to the previous chapter, only from the point of view of other people might one be considered ironic, but in truth a leap of equivalent status has been made. Roughly, anxiety A overstates its transcendence, anxiety B understates it.

These ideas should become more transparent as a result of my analysis of Marlow and Clemence's respective stories.

I

'in moments of doubt that will come to a man determined to remain free from the absurdities of existence, I often asked myself, with a momentary dread, in what what would life try to get hold of me?'—Conrad (*Victory*)

'in der man vor Fremdheit ersticken müsse'—Kafka (*Das Schloss*)

When considering *Heart of Darkness* the question of a leap will be primary, guilt secondary, and in light of what I have said so far, this correlates with Marlow's (and Conrad's) skew towards the revelations of anxiety A. Specifically what I intend on doing here is comparing the alteration in Marlow's and Kurtz's comportment or mood as a result of their experiences in the Congo with the aesthetic-ethical leap that occurs in Kierkegaard's COA and the ethical-religious one that takes place in FT. The central features of COA's leap have already been summarized (as far as it can be summarized) in terms of non-reversibility, 'existential shift', and guilt. For my purposes here, key elements of Abraham's story in FT are as follows: (1) it involves a 'suspension of the ethical'; (2) it is largely incommunicable; (3) there must be a prior 'infinite resignation'; (4) it results in an 'absolute relation to the absolute', and (5) this involves the ethical being returned and renewed (repetition).

Conrad's position is atheistic and so any similarities that arise might be candidates for evidence of the elusive 'leap of irony'. That he is aware of the absurdity generated by the single individual's simultaneous potential for a commitment to his life and a sense of alienation is apparent in many of his novels, and Ian Watt speaks of a 'foreground' in Conrad's own seafaring life 'which featured a series of the most direct personal and social commitments—to his career, to his fellow seamen, to

his adopted country',[2] which is contrasted with a profound cynicism reminiscent of aspects of Dostoyevsky or Camus. Clear expression of this is found in one of his letters;

The attitude of cold unconcern is the only reasonable one. Of course reason is hateful—but why? Because it demonstrates (to those that have the courage) that we, living are out of life—utterly out of it ... What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it ...[3]

Among Conrad's novels, HOD stands out as readily characterizable as existentialist in that it can be seen as wrestling with the anxiety that reveals and is created by this contrast. As suggested, his answer (or Marlow's answer if there's a difference) seems to side with anxiety A's uncanny transcendence—it follows Heidegger towards anxiety's 'bewildered calm' more than it does Sartre towards an anxiety of freedom through responsibility (although both are important).

Before looking closely at Kurtz and Marlow I will briefly describe the plot. An anonymous narrator introduces us to Marlow, a seaman and something of a loner, who proceeds to tell of the preamble to, and his encounter with a renegade ivory merchant named Kurtz. Kurtz's employers, worried by reports of his unorthodox 'methods' and lack of communication, send Marlow to retrieve him. In order to do this Marlow must first journey from Europe to Africa and then to the company's central trading station some two-hundred miles into the jungle. The further Marlow travels the more primitive his surroundings become and likewise the more denuded the moral constitution of the colonials he meets. If, for the moment, we assume that Marlow later makes a leap of some sort then these experiences amount to what Kierkegaard would call a quantitative accumulation that offers Marlow his first vague portents of what Kurtz represents. Whilst sitting out a long wait at the trading station he receives his first impressions of the primitive, forbidding, and yet oddly familiar presence of the jungle;

Beyond the fence the forest stood up spectrally in the moonlight ... the silence of the land went home to one's very heart—its mystery, its greatness, the amazing reality of its concealed life.[4]

In a similar manner Marlow is slowly introduced to the enigma that is Kurtz: he learns that he was a man of exceptional capabilities (a 'universal genius') and high ideals. Beyond this though he remains a mystery: Marlow is acutely aware that he is missing something but at this stage has only

[2] *Joseph Conrad: Alienation and Commitment* in Sykes Davies and Watson (eds.) *The English Mind: Studies in the English Moralists* (Cambridge, 1964), p.265
[3] ibid, p.260
[4] HOD p.80

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the slightest hint of what it might be. That Kurtz is somewhere up the river he is sure, but he says

he believes it 'in the same way one of you might believe there are inhabitants on the planet Mars'.[5]

In other words, the reality of Kurtz has for Marlow only the thinnest of meanings; it is like

Kierkegaard's spirit (or self) as presented in the initial stages of anxiety or a shadow in Plato's

cave.

Any initial sympathy Marlow has for Kurtz is mostly engendered by his dislike for the petty,

deceitful and greedy Westerners at the station;

A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse ... And outside, the silent
wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like
evil or truth[6]

This 'evil or truth', as well as describing the contrasting omnipotence of the jungle, is an allusion to

Kurtz's ambiguity. For Marlow at least, Kurtz is at a distance from this 'corpse'. His respect for

him, and to some extent his identification with him, increase when he learns about his last visit to

the central station when, after depositing his ivory, he turned around and paddled back up the river.

He says;

I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time. It was a distinct glimpse: the dugout, four paddling savages, and
the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, on relief, on thoughts of home ...[7]

At this stage though he does not understand Kurtz's motive for turning around; he has become,

amidst the corruption and through a lack of any kind of grip on his reality, an ideal, and in this lack

of understanding Marlow's enduring naiveté is demonstrated. He speculates that 'he was just a fine

fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake'.[8] In this we find one of the first examples of Marlow

as existing in something close to an ethical mode, prior and oblivious to the meaningfulness of an

individual beyond his duties and responsibility to others.

As Marlow begins his journey up the river the mystery of Kurtz and of his surroundings turns into

an increasing sense of disquiet. The wilderness starts to become less like something that is simply

'other', and more like something that has relevance to *him*. The movement from the 'speck' of

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[5] op cit, p.76
[6] ibid, p.76
[7] ibid, p.90
[8] ibid

civilization into the jungle is profoundly atavistic and would offer little restraint before a similar moral regression. Marlow, gradually waking up to this reality, comments, with respect to the tribesmen on the banks of the river;

they were not inhuman ... that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leapt and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their inhumanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you ... could comprehend.[9]

Once Marlow finally reaches the camp he discovers that Kurtz has become a god-like figure, exercising limitless powers over the natives, and the ideals with which he entered the jungle have been seduced and overwhelmed by his most basic desires and instincts. In Marlow's words, 'the wilderness had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh ...'[10] Kurtz might commonly be excused as having gone insane, but Marlow has seen enough, and *felt* enough by this point to suspect the situation to be more complicated than this. Kurtz can be said to have made, or at least *attempted*, a leap—he has turned the canoe around—and this I shall dwell on for a while.

Marlow says of Kurtz's 'soul', 'being alone in the wilderness it had looked within itself ... I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, no fear, yet struggled blindly with itself.'[11] One way of looking at Kurtz's state-of-mind would be in terms of Sartre's 'desire to be God'. His atavistic movement can be seen as an attempt to dig underneath the human condition in order to create himself from the ground up. It is a way of avoiding what Heidegger sees as the source of our existential guilt, a way of being answerable to no one, of being independent of history, culture and nature. But he also wants a distinctly human reward for this infinite perspective—he wants the freedom and the power of self-creation provided only by a bounded freedom. The problem is of course that one precludes the other. As we have seen, even for the strong poet, if we are to create ourselves this must at least be against a background of ideals and people we can respect. Deep in the jungle Kurtz is able to find an environment where his dominance is god-like but here he cannot create himself except in the most depraved sense; he is

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[9] op cit, p.96
[10] ibid, p.115
[11] ibid, p.144

without 'restraint' and his environment—the only one that can give him the sense of omnipotence—can offer none. To Kierkegaard's mind Kurtz's leap would be abortive: one that collides with the bedrock of finitude rather than finding freedom in the infinite. The desire to be God for him amounts to a 'defiance' of God and is described as;

Severing the self from any relation to the power which has established it, or severing itself from the conception that there is such a power. By means of this infinite form, the self wants ... to rule over himself, to create himself ... He wants to begin a little earlier than other people, not at and with the beginning, but 'in the beginning'.[12]

Outside of Kierkegaard's religious structure it is not so clear what would count as a leap at all, let alone an abortive one. According to Marlow we have in Kurtz someone who 'had made that last stride ... stepped over the edge',[13] and maybe a comparison with some features of Kierkegaardian leaps will help fathom whether something like this really has occurred, and if so why it has failed to achieve anything like completion for Kurtz.

Of the three characteristics or requirements of COA's 'qualitative leap' I have outlined I would say that two are possibly fulfilled but, conspicuously, the third is certainly not. Firstly, it would seem highly inappropriate for HOD to have ended with Kurtz returning to society and taking up a job as a bureaucrat or salesman. His 'leap' seems non-reversible, and particularly so as there is nothing he encounters that could initiate a reversal except the very essence of what drove him away from society in the first place. The second requirement (subsidiary in some ways to the first), that the individual's existence undergoes a profound shift, would appear to be the case with Kurtz. His life and surroundings are now of a substance that little resembles his former life as a political idealist, engaged to be married, and heading for the upper echelons of the ivory business. But one wonders if, despite appearances, this has really involved a leap and not just a logical pursuit of the motivations that underlie civilization and ultimately the desire to be *en-soi-pour-soi*?

The other feature—that the individual emerge as guilty, and as claimable by God (or perhaps something similarly absolute) is even less obviously fulfilled. Kurtz appears not to experience any kind of guilt. In Kierkegaardian terms we can probably say that he endures something like the pre-leap anxiety that (for Kierkegaard) all men experience whether they respond to it or not: Marlow,

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[12] SUD, p.99
[13] op cit, p.151

partially relating to his own experience, says '[the wilderness] had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception 'till he took council with this great solitude—and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating',[14] but in the resultant leap we do not find him emerging with the theoretically ambiguous but subjectively powerful sense of guilt that for Kierkegaard is so crucial. That this is the case is unsurprising considering that his stepping over the edge is motivated by a desire to be self-sustaining. It might however be argued that something does *claim him*. Having witnessed Kurtz's environment Marlow says, 'everything belonged to him—but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what *he* belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own.'[15] To counter this we should point out that for Kierkegaard God always has a claim over us, but the important thing for the individual is to know and accept himself in this way. Perhaps Kurtz's summation 'The horror!' is a realization of his having been claimed by the 'powers of darkness', but one feels, and I think Marlow feels, that though these powers are there, they do not necessarily have to claim us—we can show 'restraint', even 'faith', in the face of them.

There is then a poor match between Kurtz's situation and the 'qualitative leap', but, perhaps oddly, we have slightly more joy with the ethical-religious leap. Firstly he certainly goes beyond the ethical in pursuit of his self or truth (although it is of course not 'suspended'); and secondly there is a strong emphasis on the incommunicability of Marlow's experience. An important stylistic feature of the story is that the reader is kept two steps from knowing Kurtz and the reality of his experience. The first step is Marlow's impressions—'it is impossible', he says, 'impossible to convey the life sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes it's truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence';[16] and the second is Kurtz's experience, which Marlow himself can only catch glimpses of. The effect of this is to enhance the idea that Kurtz's world is something extremely unusual and thus very difficult, if not impossible, to understand and communicate. Marlow says;

You can't understand. How could you?—with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman ... how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him

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[14] op cit, p.131
[15] ibid, p.116
[16] ibid, p.82

into by way of solitude—utter solitude without a policeman—by way of silence—utter silence, where no warning voice of a neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion?[17]

And if Kurtz represents Abraham in this respect, then Marlow is Silentio. His attitude to Kurtz involves abhorrence, but more pronounced is his sense of bewilderment and awe. There is a certain honesty or purity in Kurtz's actions that he feels he is denied (or has denied himself);

I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. And perhaps this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible ...[18]

and earlier,

There was nothing either above or below him ... He had kicked himself loose of the earth ... he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone and I before him did not know if I stood on the ground or floated in the air.[19]

As already discussed Kurtz attains nothing like an absolute relation to the absolute and as a consequence no repetition, but we can perhaps see him as resigned. If being exposed to the falseness and contingency of his ethical and political ideals is enough for him to give up on his finite existence then we might interpret him as turning to an infinite ideal in the form of his own deification. The trouble with this though is twofold: firstly it is not those humanitarian ideals themselves which are made infinite; and secondly his self-deification is not an infinite sublimation but something he attempts to actualize.

Generally speaking Kurtz's story resonates slightly better with the religious leap than with the ethical one and this is interesting. One passage which says something about Marlow's character, and perhaps about his leap that places him in a more important role than Kierkegaard's Silentio concludes, 'when they [these social and moral guidelines] are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness.'[20] What Marlow means by faith here is more like self belief, understanding or mastery than something religious, but what is clear is that Kurtz lacks this. Can Kierkegaard's psychology explain why this might be? The answer is suggested when Marlow tells us that for Kurtz the 'whisper' of the wilderness had 'proved irresistibly fascinating'. 'It echoed loudly within him', he says, 'because he was hollow at the

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[17] op cit, p.116
[18] ibid, p.151
[19] ibid, p.144
[20] ibid

core'.[21] This hollowness suggests that Kurtz, despite possible appearances, was never in the ethical mode of being but still in the aesthetic. His previous ideals, perhaps unbeknown to him, were merely play or perhaps a levelled version of ethics that concentrates on duty rather than inwardness. When put to the test their flimsiness was fully exposed and he did not have the resources (although he clearly had the potential) to deal with their relativization. In COA's terms Kurtz is someone who acknowledged the call of anxiety, but lacked the humility to accept our essential guilt. As such the qualitative leap was never completed and instead replaced with an ersatz version, the inauthenticity of which is exposed with the kind of consequences that Kierkegaard warns us of at the end of his *Psychologically Orienting Deliberation*.[22]

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Marlow returns to tell his tale but in the existential sense is his journey completed? He was then, and still is, a seaman, so we cannot look for irreversibility in this simple fact. If we look further however it seems clear that although he '[drew] back his hesitating foot', his entire journey represents a threshold of sorts that precludes him from living in the same way as he did before he set out. Amidst this change there are several turning points, one of the most potent symbols of which is the scene when he is told of Kurtz turning his canoe around on delivering his last batch of ivory. Marlow is just beginning to feel a certain disquiet about Kurtz and what he represents, but his naive speculation—'perhaps he was just a fine fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake'— is not something we can imagine him repeating after his ordeal. Though filled with ambiguity and a dream-like quality, something about his encounter with Kurtz is burned on Marlow's consciousness; he tells us, 'it was the furthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed to throw a kind of light on everything about me and into my thoughts'.

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[21] op cit, p.131

[22] Kurtz perhaps most resembles Kierkegaard's 'genius' (COA, pp.99-103), described as an 'omnipotent [in-itself]', is 'placed outside the ethical', but his 'significance to himself is *nil*'. For Kierkegaard he is doomed to emptiness because he is defined not in terms of other men, nor in terms of God, but only in terms of 'fate' - essentially *nothingness*. However great his deeds are they do not contribute to a sense of self or spirit defined in terms of a meaningful relation to *something* exterior. Kurtz is also similar to Camus' Caligula about whom Golomb says, 'Like ... Abraham, his 'purity of heart' drives him 'to follow the essential to the end', but this end is not the leap to absolute faith, but rather a leap to absolute nothingness. *Caligula* is an illustration of the failure of lonely authenticity. Caligula, who wanted to be God, determining the fates of others declares at the end of his life: 'I have chosen a wrong path ... My freedom isn't the right one.'' (Golomb, op cit, pp.186-7)

Significantly though, he qualifies this saying it was 'not extraordinary in any way—not very clear either. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.'[23]

I shall say more about the irreversibility of Marlow's position at the end of this section, but in the meantime move on to the related issue of 'existential shift'. At the beginning of the book Marlow is described by the original narrator in the following way;

[he] sat cross-legged ... leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and with his arms dropped, the palms of his hands outwards, resembled an idol.[24]

Later we are told that for a seaman he was 'not typical' and it is confirmed, 'he had the pose of a Buddha'. The suggestion is certainly that Marlow is not the same man since his journey. The impression is one of detachment and perhaps serenity, but this Marlow is *still* a seaman. In an article comparing Conrad with Buddhism and Hinduism, Charles Ponnuthrai Sarvan and Paul Balles emphasise Buddhism as a philosophy of action and quote from one of Conrad's letters written a few years before HOD;

One becomes useful only on realizing the utter insignificance of the individual in the scheme of the universal. When one understands that in oneself one is nothing and that a man is worth neither more nor less than the work he accomplishes with honesty of purpose and means ... only then is one master of his conscience, with the right to call himself a man.[25]

This clearly resonates with Kierkegaard's resignation and I will consider Marlow's period of resignation shortly. Earlier I briefly mentioned Conrad's emphasis on work and commitment and one feels that this is idealistically heightened when he is led to consider that mankind has no higher purpose. Marlow is still a seaman, but one with a profoundly different perspective on himself *as* a seaman because he has now, in a clearer sense than ever before, *chosen* to be a seaman.

From what has so far been recounted it may not seem that Marlow emerges from his experience with any sense of guilt, but possibly we can identify an ambiguous kind of guilt in the later stages of the book. Before I move on to this I first want to mention that I would suppose Marlow to have undergone something similar to an aesthetic-ethical leap prior to this particular adventure. To be

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[23] op cit, p.51
[24] ibid, p.46
[25] *Buddhism, Hinduism and the Conradian Darkness* (Conradiana, Vol.26, no.1, 1994), p.74

captain of a vessel amounts to a great responsibility and Conrad has elsewhere referred to a ship as 'the moral symbol of our life'.[26] In the later novel *The Shadow Line* there is an important scene, imbued with Kierkegaardian leap-like imagery, when a young officer is given his first captaincy. 'My head swam', he tells us, 'and I felt a heaviness of limbs as if they had grown bigger'; and as he leaves the Harbour Master's office he feels he is 'dealing with mere dream stuff', but when 'at the last moment the fellowship of seaman asserted itself'[27] he becomes fully aware of what he has chosen and the leap is made. If there is a sense of guilt that accompanies this young man's new position it is the feeling of inadequacy, of having chosen what he perhaps cannot perfect and indeed what he may not be up to at all (the ambiguity of course being that one can *never* know the full consequences of one's choices in advance).

Marlow, we can assume, has accepted a level of responsibility, and possibly an attendant guilt (although with time and experience we might assume that this lessens), but the guilt that *this* journey bestows upon him is of a different kind—one that is tinged with a sense of the infinite, or with a solemn but ironic appreciation of our limitations. Early in the story we learn of Marlow's disgust for the men of the company—their shallow and selfish ideals, their greed, moral indifference, materialism, and basic self-deception and dishonesty. In a sense he is inescapably part of this—fallible, limited, mortal, duplicitous and open to the same temptations and part of the same fallen race. The brutality of the natives is after all our ancestry, and whether we know it or not most of our actions, even the seemingly altruistic ones, can be shown (as Freud shows us) to exhibit this. Marlow's more idealistic attitude is ostensibly morally superior, but the suspicion that it is commensurate with what it attempts to oppose cannot be discarded. Earlier on he seeks his own form of escape from this ambiguity: his honesty is more ontologically than morally motivated. He tells us;

You know I hate, detest and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies—which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world—what I want to forget.[28]

Kurtz, on first impressions at least, is the antithesis of the company's dishonesty. Geographically and existentially he has journeyed far away from society's superstructure and Marlow, particularly

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[26] Cited in Hawthorn's introduction to *The Shadow Line*, p.vii (OUP, 1985).
[27] *The Shadow Line*, pp.32-33
[28] HOD, p.82

in light of the men at the trading station, admires him for this. Kurtz, we are well aware by now, has 'made that last stride ... stepped over the edge', but is it possible to live authentically, not in Kurtzian excess but amongst such corruption?

Marlow is well aware of 'seriousness' and 'levelling'; of society's tendency to anodyne conformity and an almost conspiratorial covering up of death and the requirements of authenticity. Through his anxiety at least Marlow rises above this, though his comment 'one can't live with one's finger everlastingly on one's pulse'[29] indicates the insuperable difficulty of living amongst others and in history whilst maintaining something that might be called 'authenticity'. The guilt attached to this realization we now know well; that of, in Heidegger's words, 'never [having] power over one's ownmost being from the ground up'.[30] Marlow sees his own final attitude to existence as one of 'careless contempt', a form of resignation in light of the ambiguity and greyness highlighted by anxiety. Kurtz, by way of contrast, had 'summed up' and 'judged', and though that judgement was 'the horror!', simply having something to say—a kind of completion—is seen as a victory; defeat taking the form, not of pain, degradation or perdition, but of *indifference*, of having no right to belong. He has not transcended Heyst's position when we first encounter him in *Victory*. We are told;

It was the very essence of his life to be a solitary achievement, accomplished not by hermit-like withdrawal with its silence and immobility, but by a system of restless wandering, by the detachment of an impermanent dweller amongst changing scenes. [31]

Kierkegaard I think would agree that Kurtz, through naked exposure to the depths of his being or soul, is potentially closer to the infinite (or perhaps closer to being in Heidegger's terminology) than those who still rely on other people as a measure of themselves. Kierkegaard sees the areligious 'genius' as someone who, because of his refusal to acknowledge the truth of anxiety and make the 'qualitative leap', is ultimately hollow, but nonetheless describes him as someone who has gone beyond other men and confronts 'the profoundest mysteries of existence'.[32] Kurtz, as we have seen, discovers no guilt and no claim on himself and so his leap is, on Kierkegaard's terms, abortive. This is not so clearly the case in Marlow's eyes. For him Kurtz represents an ambiguous kind of

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[29] op cit, p.105
[30] BT, p.330
[31] p.128
[32] COA, p.102

guilt—the gnawing, outsiderish feeling that he has passed-up the chance of 'all wisdom, all sincerity.'

Typical of Marlow's situation, however, is that we might see his guilt working in the other direction as well. He has chosen to return to society but knows that his fidelity is not, and never will be, complete—a part of him wanted to, and still wants to, follow Kurtz over the edge. What, one might ask, 'permitted' him to 'draw back'? The answer, I think, *is* in fact some form of claim society has upon him—in essence an *ethical* bond. Just how Marlow can accept a claim over himself from a world that is seemingly so dishonest and to which he does not 'belong' in an ontological sense is clearly a question he wrestles with and one that, like HOD itself, has no simple solution. His position is summed-up by his own cynical acknowledgement of his freedom as 'a choice of nightmares'. That his choice of the particular nightmare that is society has gained, perhaps for the first time, its full significance, is made apparent in the famous scene towards the end of the story when he is speaking with Kurtz's grieving fiancée. Famously he lies about Kurtz's last words; he tells her not that it was 'the horror!' but that he uttered her name.[33]

The *apparent* irony is then that Marlow, a man who 'detests lies', finds he has given himself no other option. This *action* is strong evidence of an existential shift and of Marlow's acceptance of a claim upon him. To some extent the currency of lies is now less abhorrent to Marlow and yes, to some extent by maintaining the intended's illusion (in his eyes she could not have coped with the truth) he has made a greater commitment to the society or ethical realm which claims him. But things are more complex than this. If things were not so complex we might here have a close correspondence with the 'qualitative leap'—society (perhaps a Hegelian *telos*) functioning something like God—but Conrad does not allow us the kind of comfort that the intended is allowed. At the very end of the book it is clear that Marlow still feels he owes something to Kurtz—'the justice that was his due'. His new perspective on lies is not just an acceptance of compromise and conformity, but representative of his coming to terms with his own contingency. His journey into the Congo has given him a greater insight into his anxiety, but it is a perspective that does not lead him to *overcome* this anxiety but rather to realize he must assume it in some

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[33] To stretch the comparison with Kierkegaard a little further, this situation is not dissimilar to Søren's pretending to Regine his reasons for calling off the engagement were other than they were. At one point, for instance, he claims he wants to 'sow his wild oats'—an aesthetic explanation she can hope to understand rather than the 'religious' truth. (See *The Journals*, pp.91-103)

fashion. A result of the experience is a finer sense of the distinction between the ontological and the ethical. Ontologically speaking lies and self-deception remain repellent, but if there is any irony to be found in *the lie* it is that a person who does not face their contingency—a person who deceives themselves—is capable of nausea in the face of lies in general; whereas a person who is ontologically honest respects the ethical status of lies and illusion. As we know, it is hard to see how the two worlds could share a perspective, but as was tentatively concluded in the last chapter the ironist at least needs this as an ideal, even if in the final analysis self-deception (tempered by urangst) is required to do the dirty work.

I suggested earlier that, with Marlow's authentic orientation siding with anxiety A, to *him* there must appear to be a leap. Even if objectively we cannot point to a clear division between the old and new Marlow, we are nonetheless hearing from someone who feels in some sense reborn. To continue constructing the picture of what gives rise to this state of mind we need to look at what his journey shares with Abraham's. Firstly, the suspension of the ethical gradually occurs as he moves closer to Kurtz and further from the 'pilgrims'. That it does not *entirely* occur (he maintains his self through 'faith', self-knowledge etc.) is perhaps what stops Marlow from becoming Kurtz, but even then there is a period when he falls ill on the boat on the way back where he does seem to have lost his grip. His later recounting of his struggle with death ('in impalpable greyness ... without spectators, ... without glory ... in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary'[34]) would suggest resignation except, there being no ideal which sustains him, it is more like Camus' nihilism. Camus himself says;

The leap does not represent an extreme danger as Kierkegaard would like it to. The danger, on the contrary, lies in the subtle instant that precedes the leap. being able to remain on that dizzying crest—that is integrity and the rest is subterfuge.[35]

Repetition is suggested however in Marlow's altered comportment, his resembling the Buddha and so forth. He is still a seaman, but, we might say, a different kind of seaman, one who has undergone an ordeal. But has he made a leap? What I have said about his guilt implies he has not: he is on Camus' 'dizzying crest' relying primarily on support from anxiety A, but switching to anxiety B's more explicit approval of work, fidelity and self-knowledge when the urangst makes it

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[34] HOD, p.150
[35] *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p.50

too slippery to grip; and so on back and forth. From *Marlow's* perspective as a story teller it feels like a leap has been made, but once *The Nellie* sets sail I wonder what sense of this is retained? I suspect his mood would still be close to that which distracted him from his uncanny surroundings as he crawled towards Kurtz;

I did not see it anymore; I had no time. I had to keep guessing at the channel ... I watched for sunken stones; ... I had to keep a look-out for the signs of dead wood we could cut up ... for next days steaming. When you have to attend to things of that sort, to mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades ... luckily, luckily.[36]

And in an important ironic-ethical summation he says;

The earth for us is a place to live in, where we must put up with sights, with sounds, with smells, too, by Jove!—breathe dead hippo ... and not be contaminated. And there ... your strength comes in, the faith in your ability for the digging of unostentatious holes to bury the stuff in—your power of devotion, not to yourself, but to an obscure, back-breaking business.[37]

Still, if we are to liken resignation to cynicism (in my more specific sense of the word), Kierkegaard's view (or at least the view you feel he would like to maintain) is that in resignation there is 'peace and repose and consolation in the pain'[38] and in faith a constant struggle. Similarly we can point to irony as a constant struggle and a constant movement and say that it is *this* which makes it special or transcendent, but of course my whole point is that it is precisely this which precludes it from being transcendent in the way Kierkegaard wants faith to be.

As mentioned, Marlow is like Silentio in certain respects, but he himself also struggles to communicate his experience. If Kierkegaard's claim is that Abraham's experience is incommunicable even to other Knight's of Faith then this is not Marlow's situation. If he had 'made that last stride' we would understand him less (but he would still be understandable in principle), but, though his gaze is elsewhere his feet remain, if only in the driest earth, planted in the ethical and we can share the categories if not the intensity with him. Still, he insists that even to himself the meaning of his experience is not entirely clear and perhaps this is further indication that his mode of authenticity is dynamic rather than static. He does not have a fixed position from where he can locate all the nuances of anxiety; instead he oscillates. If his mode was static, as Religiousness A appears to be, then the problem of communicating to the uninitiated would take on

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[36] op cit, p.93
[37] ibid, p.117
[38] FT, p.74

a new stature, but his self-understanding would be limitless. As it is, his altered comportment most resembles the post-qualitative leap individual but, as Kierkegaard maintains, unless this is oriented towards faith it is insubstantial—unable to support itself—and ultimately in despair. Marlow's 'leap' is an intense realization that he cannot *be* his essential contingency which in a crucial sense is no leap at all: without a *telos* one's status remains fundamentally ambiguous.

II

> 'Can one become a saint without God?—that's the problem, in fact the only problem I'm up against today.' —Camus (*The Plague*)

Jacob Golomb points out a transformation in Camus' thought between *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Outsider* in the early 1940s and *The Plague* and *The Rebel* in the late 40s and 1950s. The later works stress the social element of authenticity and relegate the nihilism of the absurd to a starting point akin to Descartes radical scepticism. Upon this a self is created that takes into account its cultural and historical limitations. 'For there to be any value in Sisyphus' authenticity' Golomb writes, 'someone must assert it as a value that has significance for society, if only at its margins.'[39] Golomb wants to draw a social ethic and an ethic of authenticity together; he interprets Camus in light of this, and perhaps this is a reason why he pays no attention to *The Fall* which seems to me to be Camus' most mature consideration of authenticity.

The absurdity of our condition is recognized as as intractable as Descartes' reduction, but in his post-*Rebel* phase where we are inescapably social, a profound tension still exists between the demands of self-creation and our essential uncanniness. The manifestation of this is guilt, and guilt, as proposed, is the definitive product of an appropriated anxiety B. It is nothing as convenient as a melding of individuality and morality (although it certainly does not ignore the desire for this), and it is not a return to Mersaultian alienation. It resembles Nietzsche, but less so than Conrad or Marlow's quasi-transcendence of the morally situated individual. Perhaps like the Sartre of NE Clemence is deeply and uncynically social in his comportment, but at the same time aware that even an individual so created desires, like any individual, that impossible autonomy that Sartre speaks of and the immortality Unamuno sees as the fate of consciousness. The result is that he

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[39] op cit, p.180

inevitably plays out that desire in his social environment thereby wishing the destruction of the only thing that can sustain him.

Guilt is then Camus' theme in *The Fall*. There is less of a leap in evidence—Clemence slides or at most shudders towards his self-styled position of 'judge penitent'—but there is still a discernibly new Clemence even if he refuses to acknowledge this (and this refusal is itself part of his guilty orientation). A Kierkegaardian leap requires an essential openness and passivity which, to a degree, Marlow exhibits, but Camus' hero is essentially active and self-creating and here we can locate an important sense in which, though both strive for authenticity, their subjective relations to the anxiety structure are substantially different.

In this book we hear one side of a dialogue in which Jean-Baptiste Clemence speaks to and befriends someone who has wandered into his haunt, a bar near the Amsterdam docks. The bar is his court room, or perhaps psychoanalysts office, and the 'judge penitent's' job is to make people aware of their existential guilt—in particular their self-deception—by recounting the painful process which was the uncovering of his own duplicity. A central motif in the story is the Amsterdam fog which is representative of the ambiguity of existential guilt—the ambiguity already discussed coupled with the fact that, without God, we must be our own judges.[40] The critic John Cruikshank contrasts this with the 'sharply defined light and shade of North Africa'[41] that was the setting for *The Outsider*, and there is indeed a richer, more ambiguous anxiety inherent in *The Fall* that is missing in some of the earlier work. Sartre said of Camus;

[H]e likes bright mornings, clear evenings and relentless afternoons. His favourite season is Algiers' eternal summer. Night has hardly any place in his universe.[42]

But *The Fall* is different. Mersault's cynicism is replaced at the end by a rebellious transcendence that, like Marlow's position, leans towards anxiety A. Clemence, on the other hand always affirms existence quite straightforwardly, and only occasionally in the ironic sense of affirming he affirms it in his denial. But denial does not sit easily with him: it is a punishment he reluctantly assumes, and always he is looking for a reprieve, a means of justifying his preferred aesthetic existence. This

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[40] Fog is also used as a symbol of existential ambiguity in HOD.
[41] *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt* (Galaxy (OUP) 1960), p.183
[42] *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, p.34

he finds, but it is hard won, and as indicated it never entirely seems to him that he has made any advance at all.

Just how he arrives at this is interesting in as much as it appears to follow the progression from 'serious man' to psychoanalyst that I outlined in Chapter 4. Before becoming aware of his duplicity, Clemence is utterly immersed in life. He aims to please, to create the perfect social being (he is kind, generous, good-looking, intelligent, modest and very popular with both men and women) and takes himself very seriously. This state Cruikshank describes, with reference to the basic symbolism of the book, as 'primal innocence'. It is a very different kind of innocence to that of Mersault, but I think, as with Joseph in *Dangling Man*, an altogether more recognizable kind. The momentum with which we enter life presents us with emotional needs and a social structure usually designed to help fulfill them already part of our engaged existence. Clemence describes how he was 'altogether in harmony with life, fitting into it from top to bottom without rejecting any of its ironies, its grandeur, or its servitude.'[43]

For Clemence, an insight into his inauthentic seriousness occurred one evening when his 'powers' were at a peak;

I was riding on the crest of a wave ... I was happy. The day had been good: a blind man, the reduced sentence [he was a lawyer] I had hoped for, a cordial handclasp from my client, a few generous actions and, in the afternoon, a brilliant improvisation in the company of several friends on the hard-heartedness of our governing class and the hypocrisy of our leaders ... I felt rising within me a vast feeling of power and—I don't know how to express it—a completion, which cheered my heart. I straightened up and was about to light a cigarette of satisfaction, when, at that very moment, a laugh burst out behind me. Taken by surprise, I suddenly wheeled round; there was no one there ...[44]

This laughter is the anxiety encountered in a 'mood of seriousness' heralding bad faith, or the reaffirmation of bad faith. It was 'coming from nowhere ... At the same time I was aware of the rapid beating of my heart'. It was a laugh which 'put everything properly in its place.'[45] From now on Clemence is never entirely free from this laughter and its disturbing effect furthers a stripping-away of both the ontological status of his position amongst others and his self-deception with respect to his moral motivations.

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[43] *The Fall*, pp. 22-3
[44] ibid, p.30
[45] ibid

From this point of the story onwards, the anatomy of Clemence's bad faith, and bad faith in general, come under the microscope. His popularity is greatly aided by his modesty, but in truth he almost acquires and nurtures modesty *because* it makes him popular and more powerful. The same applies to acts of kindness. In one example he recounts how, after escorting blind men across the street he would touch his hat to them, but of course they could not see this;

To whom was it addressed? To the public. After playing my part, I would take my bow. Not bad eh?[46]

A kind of perversion of the 'fundamental project' is apparent in the true nature of his attitude to relationships. He thrives on being loved, but he does not want the commitment that is necessary to be loved (in return) properly. As such;

In my moments of irritation I told myself that the ideal solution would have been the death of the person I was interested in. Her death would, on the one hand, have fixed our relationship once and for all and, on the other, removed its constraint.[47]

He then describes his project taken to its idealistic limits;

I could live happily only on condition that all the individuals on earth, or the greatest possible number, were turned towards me, eternally unattached, deprived of any separate existence, and ready to answer my call at any moment, doomed in short to sterility until the day I should deign to favour them.[48]

This he was able to admit to himself, but clearly it would be very hard to sustain this knowledge whilst playing the role of a heroic, generous and modest man. Perhaps it is because this kind of attitude to relationships in general is favoured by an unreflective *pour-soi* that Sartre advocates the full awareness of ourselves as a 'fundamental project'.

His 'essential discovery' about himself, the one that more than anything prompted the 'laughter', came when he found he was too cowardly to save a girl drowning in the Seine. Crucially, there was no one else around when this happened and, at the time, he told no one about it. Given that this occurred a few years before the laughter, it places in doubt where he actually lost his 'primal innocence'. If he still took himself seriously it would be an ambiguous seriousness, or perhaps a seriousness he would have to try harder and harder to maintain.[49] But there is no clean movement

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[46] ibid, p.37

[47] ibid, p.50

[48] ibid, p.51

[49] Like in COA (anxiety defined as guilt, as fate, and as spiritlessness) where, despite a gnawing sense of anxiety one refuses to make the qualitative leap and become guilty before God.

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or leap from seriousness to an acknowledgement of anxiety; if the act of cowardice is his loss of innocence it is of course only his innocence in his eyes that is lost. From that moment he is free to reinterpret all that has occurred before (and equally free, in bad faith, not to). I can only suppose that he manages to ignore the most crushing significance of this act until the laughter first assails him those years later. His description of himself already cited ('I felt within me a vast feeling of power and ... a completion' etc.) strongly suggests seriousness, but it must amount to a re-enactment of seriousness, a (successful) attempt to be as complete as one was in one's 'primal innocence'. It is the laughter that initiates the assuming of a markedly different state of mind, and in this I think we find a clearer break—first to (with continued reference to Sartre) 'sincerity' and then to an (authentic) role as a kind of existential councillor.

In his 'sincerity' Clemence acknowledges himself as morally worthless, declaring that, apart from sports and performing on stage, he could never take anything seriously. In lines like the following he sounds like Mersault;

At times people on their deathbeds seem to be convinced of their roles. The lines spoken by my poor clients always struck me as fitting the same pattern. Hence, living among men without sharing their interests, I could not manage to believe in the commitments I made.[50]

He is different however in that he cares very much about himself and his pleasures, despite his indifference to others. He decides thus to be his own judge, and imagines exposing himself fully. This he does not do and realizes that; 'it was still a question of dodging judgement. I wanted to put the laughers on my side, or at least to put myself on their side'.[51] He manages to go some of the way though and starts acting and talking in a manner reflecting his selfishness, but mere exposure does not take him far enough;

it is not enough to accuse yourself in order to clear yourself; otherwise I'd be as innocent as a lamb. One must accuse oneself in a certain way, which it took me considerable time to perfect. I did not discover it until I fell into the most utterly forlorn state.[52]

The wrong way is to treat ourselves as a *thing* that is selfish, evil etc.—the right way involves an element of *acceptance* of our condition as well as an acknowledgement of our freedom in the form of an active attempt to remain honest. It is this acceptance that makes the guilt existential, and

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[50] op cit, p.65
[51] ibid, p.67
[52] ibid, p.70

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because it is experienced as guilt such acceptance is not experienced as the leap-like status which from an objective point of view can justifiably be ascribed to it.

Full acceptance is a while in coming however, and to begin with Clemence takes an 'outsiderish' strategy and leaves the 'society of men' to take refuge in the company of women and 'debauchery' as he puts it. His day to day duties are performed purely perfunctorily and the rest of his time he immerses himself in sex. This manages to subdue the laughter for a while. Here, like Goldmund in the Hesse story,[53] he finds a kind of immortality (or a suspension of his mortality at least), and he is to a certain extent freed. 'True debauchery', he says, 'is liberating because it creates no obligations. In it you possess only yourself; hence it remains the favourite pastime of the great lovers of their own person.'[54] He describes this period as a 'long sleep' where 'the laughter became so muffled that eventually I ceased to notice it'.[55] It does not last however, and one day he is awakened by a sight that reminds him again of the drowning girl. He realizes that there is no escaping himself in this respect and from here onwards it is a question of finding a suitable way of dealing with, or living with, his guilt.

At this stage he starts to get a clue as to his current state of mind. Somewhere here is something which approximates to a switch from strong to weak bad faith and likewise the guilt becomes more ontologically situated (though always only palpable in the ethical sense). He has given up, or run out of, attempts at self-deception and needs to find a way of living with himself, not so much as a 'freedom', but as *guilty*. He accepts his limitedness, his lack of completeness and justification, but loves himself and his life (meaning losing himself in it for much of the time) nonetheless. The honesty with which he approaches it is a kind of authenticity, but in the weak sense of bad faith he necessarily remains 'fallen'. The approach he takes is a step towards a kind of solidarity of guilt— 'we cannot assert the innocence of anyone, whereas we can assert with certainty the guilt of all. Every man testifies to the crime of all the others—that is my faith and my hope.'[56] Religion he sees as a way of assuring our innocence—a 'huge laundering venture'—and as such a fleeing of our condition. Clemence's belief is that no one is let off the hook, but, without God, the manner of the judgement is desperately ambiguous. He says;

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[53] *Narziss and Goldmund*
[54] *The Fall*, p.76
[55] ibid, p.78
[56] ibid, p.81

the keenest of human torments is to be judged without law. Yet we are in that torment. Deprived of their natural curb [God], the judges, loosed at random, are racing through their job.[57]

In his world there is no possibility of an 'absolute relation with the absolute'. Despite the purging, we must continue to be in the world of human affairs and we must, then, in a sense continually 'fall'. In accusing ourselves or others in an ethical sense we become serious, and in making a judgement about the seriousness of others we are engaging ethically; we must judge *in terms of* an artificially static conception of authenticity (either anxiety A or B) in order for our judgement to have the required weight. Either, from the platform of anxiety A, we charge others of seriousness and lay ourselves open to a denial of the necessity of risking seriousness in our commitments as well as the denial of a sense in which anxiety A is itself serious;[58] or, from the platform of anxiety B we charge others of a cowardly and futile attempt at transcendence whilst exposing ourselves to the trappings of subjectivity and the intractable problem that such a viewpoint cannot existentially appropriate its contingency. What makes existential guilt authentic is that it indicates a recognition of anxiety A, just as Marlow's detached irony indicates a recognition of anxiety B. The possibility of movement is acknowledged and approved of even though existential appropriation is not a concurrent option for that particular mode of authenticity.

After closing his legal practise in Paris Clemence moves to Amsterdam and becomes a 'judge-penitent'—his final, concluding role. As a lawyer one cannot reel-off all one's crimes or potential crimes before accusing or defending a client, and in such a way he feels there is something dishonest about the whole procedure (it assumes a degree of superiority or transcendence in the judge—precisely what Clemence's authentic guilt wants to avoid). The judge-penitent on the other hand makes it his duty to condemn himself before condemning others. This part, he has eventually concluded, is unavoidable, for the laughter will catch up with us eventually ('I have accepted duplicity instead of being upset about it'[59]). *But*, to make it bearable, to contain and even silence the laughter it is necessary to 'thin it out' by condemning everyone and accepting guilt as part of the human condition. There is clearly a strong selfish motive contained in this—there inevitably is according to Clemence—and this is to be the *first* to judge. In a very real sense Clemence has re-established himself as great, as in some way holding power over others ('I permit myself everything

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[57] op cit, p.86
[58] As Sartre portrays his earlier self in *Words* (see Chapter 4).
[59] *The Fall*, p.103

all over again, and without the laughter this time'[60]). This time there is no illusion of selflessness, he is merely in command of the truth of fallen existence (as he sees it), an existence he is as much a part of as everyone else, but still with the advantage of being able to judge from the lofted position of penitent.

That Clemence has power is arguably not his fault. He is a gifted individual who, no matter what he does (within reason) is going to please, or at least have a significant effect upon, others. By becoming a judge-penitent we can perhaps see him as assuming the most authentic attitude to his power. His selfishness, his influence, his indulgence, his role-playing become the very issue of his role and as such he is neck and neck with, or perhaps just a head behind his guilt, and I think we can reasonably assume that this is as much as he can do given the character that he is. He is clearly no saint, but this way he conjures no illusion to this effect. Instead, he makes indulgence his profession and this of course is the confession of many writers. The writer-philosopher in particular must be profoundly self-indulged, not to say arrogant to believe that people are going to want to read about their thoughts and their lives, and *The Fall*, quite possibly, reflects Camus' own guilt. I will reiterate though that I am not sure gifted people have much choice in the matter if they are going to fulfill themselves. Those who have power, in whatever sense, will inevitably influence and define the lives of those who do not. The profound thinker's particular talent is to see through many of our illusions which is liable to make him an outsider of sorts. If he is to play a part, what more authentic role than self-indulgent critic of all that he sees? So long as people are edified, entertained or made to consider their own lives in some way he is making a service out of his power whilst keeping it in tact *as* a power.

Clemence describes himself as 'an enlightened advocate of slavery'[61] by which he means that other people can provide the moral parameters that God once did. He used to promote freedom in a the more transcendental sense of anxiety A but, because it clashes with his essentially sociable and engaged personality, this he now describes as 'a chore ... a long-distance race, quite solitary and very exhausting.'[62] (Marlow would of course find it less exhausting.) The emphasis, in many ways the emphasis of the whole book, is on the need for some kind of solidarity. 'Anyone who is alone',

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[60] op cit, p.104
[61] ibid, p.97
[62] ibid

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he says, 'without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful.'[63] For Sartre, despite his emphasis on solidarity, the authentic individual must be his own judge and here is located his final interpretation of anxiety—we must be responsible for ourselves. In NE he says;

We arrive at the type of intuition that will unveil authentic existence: an absolute contingency that has only itself to justify itself by assuming itself and that can assume itself only within itself without the project justified inwardly ever being able on this basis to justify itself to others in its subjectivity ... and that justifies itself only by risking losing itself. But that all at once constitutes itself in a risk and in anxiety (who am I to justify myself) as *pure autonomy*. I have no right whatsoever to will what I will, and what I will confers no right upon me, yet I am justified in willing it because I will to will what I will.[64]

It seems though that the gap between the first and second act of willing needs to be given a thicker interpretation. To avoid an infinite regress, to 'will to will' is to adopt an attitude or mode of existing that facilitates authentic decisions (i.e. freedom). The first order choice is of an environment where positive choices present themselves and provide the necessary contours within which freedom can be exercised meaningfully. This second order environment (the home of anxiety B) must to a certain degree be independent of the first order choice (the home of anxiety A) because of the incommensurability of the anxieties they involve. I suspect that only a conflation of these two can make complete sense of Sartre's *'pure autonomy'*. Only anxiety A offers any kind of purity, and autonomy can only be meaningful in the context of other individuals (anxiety B).

This first order choice is thickened for Camus by his choice of a 'master' in the form of the judgement of others—guilt. Ideally we will all be slaves, but that would require us all to be penitent at the same time which is something to be reserved for the future. The image created is of a sort of Utopia of self-awareness and guilt; one in which, like Clemence, we can still function, but in a way where our penitence keeps the laughter, the urangst, on our side (so that it remains 'a good, hearty, almost friendly laugh'[65]). This is achieved by the shifts between first and second order choices which is similar to the anxiety A-anxiety B movements of dynamic authenticity.

Clemence is walking a fine line however. His role as judge-penitent attempts to fulfill his desire for power and autonomy whilst at the same time maintaining his sense of irony. Any imbalance and inauthenticity will again assail him. He has become something of an existential psychoanalyst, but

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[63] op cit, p.98
[64] p.482
[65] op cit, p.30. Similarly in *Sweet Thursday* Doc's 'greatest talent had been his sense of paying as he went' until the 'worm of discontent [began] ... gnawing at him' (pp.21-2)

his method perhaps has more in common with a writer's use of indirect communication. In contrast to the role of analyst, one's upper hand and the seriousness that attends this are constantly undermined by self-reference. In his bar (office) in Amsterdam he indulges people (or us, the reader) in conversation and leads it towards self-confession with the ostensible aim of jogging their (our) conscience;

I mingle what concerns me with what concerns others. With all that I construct a portrait which is the image of all and of no one ... when the portrait is finished .... I show it with great sorrow: "This alas is what I am!". The prosecution's charge is finished. But at the same time the portrait I hold out to my contemporaries becomes a mirror ... I stand before all humanity recapitulating my shames without losing sight of the effect I am producing and saying: "I was the lowest of the low". Then imperceptibly I pass from the 'I' to the 'we'. When I get to "This is what we are", the game is over and I can tell them off.[66]

He says to the silent character of the book's dialogue (or to us), 'Admit ... that today you feel less pleased with yourself than you felt five days ago',[67] Assuming this is the case he has done his job, but the serious work must of course be carried out by the person who feels 'less pleased'. Clemence can only point him in the right direction by revealing the duplicities in his own life, he cannot lay down rules or communicate directly to the other and this is very much in the nature of his ethic.

As indicated, there is another reason for his choice of this indirect approach. If to help others he must reveal himself this helps to prevent him from forgetting the meaning of the laughter. Here guilt again strengthens its grip: if his motive is his own salvation it is essentially selfishness but he *cannot admit this to himself* without destroying the essential illusion that he is committed to someone else or an impersonal ideal, and it is this necessary duplicity which provokes the existential guilt, and gives substance to his urangst. In terms of the 'spiral of uncanniness' he can be ironic about his past selves, but his present self is for the most part not uncanny and is therefore commensurable with the past he wants to detach himself from. Objectively he is aware of the absurdity of this situation but he still wants in—he still *chooses* guilt and the solidarity this implies. This is confirmed in the final passage of the book (that which makes sure the reader is left thoroughly unsettled) which concerns the suggestion that he has a second chance at saving the girl in the Seine;

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[66] op cit, pp.102-3
[67] ibid, p.103

Just suppose ... that we should be taken literally? We'd have to go through with it. Brrr ...! That water's so cold! But let's not worry! It's too late now. It'll always be too late. Fortunately![68]

From another point of view (and one that, in describing it as a 'chore', Clemence seems to have a glimpse of) this solidarity is gained to an extent at the expense of others because in revealing that others are like him he 'thins-down' his guilt. But of course there is another way—Marlow's way—where one's first order choice is to opt out and guilt only occurs when one *lapses* into an acceptance of the judgement of others. This choice Clemence does not (and to all practical ends cannot) offer his 'clients', but there again, perhaps such a (potential) person would not take much interest in Clemence in the first place.

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To conclude: as ironic characters go, one like Clemence will tend to experience guilt more keenly than Marlow because of his relation to anxiety B. In this world where one's sense of self has close cultural connections guilt represents the situation outlined earlier whereby completion is sought at the expense (in terms of the power of passing judgement) of the only thing that can sustain it (i.e. others and the approval they give). It is precisely the lack of a perceived 'leap' that engenders guilt. Without an elevated position (or at least not one that one has the ability or inclination to sustain long enough) from which to pass judgement, one can always be judged on one's judgement and on one's right to judge. Marlow would not be inclined to judge Clemence (as indeed he does not judge Kurtz) because his 'leap' would make him sympathetic to the impossibility of his position. If he does, as he must inevitably from time to time, he becomes commensurable and reveals the inherent instability of irony and the interdependence of anxiety A and anxiety B.

In this way the cycle of anxiety A—anxiety B—anxiety A etc. continues. For Clemence it is experienced as guilt, for Marlow as a leap. Is this though like the passionate (and seamless) movement between the finite and the infinite made in Kierkegaard's Religiousness B? The impression we receive is that once the initial leap to faith is made movement between the two realms is not only imperceptible to the observer, but effortless (or at least not entailing the demands of uncanniness) for the individual. I would claim that quite the opposite is the case for the atheistic authentic—something like a leap in the form of uncanniness is experienced each time Marlow re-

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[68] op cit, p.108

assumes anxiety A, *but precisely because this is the case, it is not a leap in the (religious)*
Kierkegaardian sense. Clemence's position is just as rarefied, but does not feel like a leap (as
indeed in the Kierkegaardian sense it isn't) even though its process and objectives are similar.
Might we say the realization, which both effectively share, that the revelations of anxiety A and
anxiety B can never be commensurable, itself comprise a revelation specific to a static leap-like
state of mind? Clearly not. As explained in the Chapter 5 with regard to Tillich and Nagel, this can
be formally stated from either point of view, and indeed its significance for *that* point of view can
become increasingly vivid, but existentially speaking (i.e. in terms of the full impact of existential
anxiety) a point can never be reached where its significance for both points of view takes on
dramatic and accurate representation simultaneously. Here we return to our duck/rabbit analogy:
one is supposed to believe that in Religiousness B one sees both at once but I do not accept this as
an option in the absence of a (highly obscure) religious backdrop.

Conclusion

'I don't believe there is a way out.'—Thomas Nagel (*The View from Nowhere*)

'The wind began to howl'—Bob Dylan (*op cit*)

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In the *Preamble* I described the task of this dissertation in terms of a critique of certain writers' ideas on anxiety, and in terms of generating my own account of its significance for existentialists. In my conclusion I will briefly summarize some of the details of my investigations, and consolidate those findings which feed into the broader picture as demanded by the second part of my task.

Even in the Quietest Moments attempted to make the distinction between anxiety in psychology and anxiety in philosophy clearer, and served as a substantial introduction to some of the central idea associated with existential anxiety. I concluded that psychology's general inadequacy in identifying existential elements of anxiety is highlighted by its inability to make sharp the distinction between fear and anxiety. Anxiety, particularly in later Freudian thought and (surprisingly) among existential psychologists like Rollo May, tends to look like a version of the former—the reason being a failure to locate its essential ethical and, more importantly (in terms of the categories that are in question) ontological roots. Relatedly, anxiety is straightforwardly regarded as a *response* to certain key features and not considered as itself a *revelation* of something basic. Of course, if it does have something unique to reveal it must do so in a way that is essentially irreducible—one without discursive reference to specific objects in the world or features of our being, but which still reveals something basic to human existence.

Much of the dissertation's energy was henceforth directed at what this might be and this was prefaced in this chapter by an brief outline of the 'anxiety structure'. Anxiety A, B and urangst were identified and from that point onwards they form a rough template for interpreting the major figures under investigation. One connection that is maintained with psychology is the formal similarity between urangst and the kind of anxiety generated by repression and manifesting itself as panic attacks, 'free-floating' anxiety, and phobias. Like these, urangst has a source or a cause

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which is not apparent to the subject; but unlike these it cannot be cured simply by unearthing this from the unconscious—the origin of urangst is, essentially, the definitive paradox of the human condition, a paradox which the subject must necessarily be living and which he cannot step outside of. To do this would be to cure it; it would also be in Sartre's words 'to be God', and it is what lies behind Nagel's conclusion—an epigraph to this section.[1]

The force of the 'objective' point of view is embodied in anxiety A, the force of the 'subjective' viewpoint in anxiety B, and the existential significance of their (and therefore *our*) incommensurability is the essence of urangst. This third and most important form of anxiety is in a sense the beginning and end of a cycle: it is that ever-present disquiet which drives us towards some form of truth in the (primarily) subjective (the responsibility of self-discovery, self-actualization, self-creation), or in the (primarily) objective (contingency, finitude, chance, loss of self) and then that which indicates that neither of these is adequate. But as soon as we try to grasp *its* essence, try to *be* our urangst we fail and slip, to whatever extent, into the world defined by the concerns of anxiety A or anxiety B. As was recognized by Kierkegaard, and so clearly formularized by Sartre, we cannot (without the help of God) be what we are. In its way urangst informs us of this, but only in the manner of continually unsettling us and making movement the principal feature of an authenticity which is a doomed to never entirely overcome alienation. To state our useless passion intellectually is not to transcend it but merely to abstract ourselves from our essential existentiality—the very existentiality which drives the desire for abstraction. To choose to submerge ourselves in hedonistic or even ethical dealings is always to *choose* to do this and urangst will always remind us of this.

Infinity's Messenger looked further at links between Freud and existentialism and at a parallel drawn in the first chapter between the development in Freud's theory of anxiety and the two halves of *The Concept of Anxiety*. The nature of anxiety changes in Kierkegaard from the signifier of something largely unknown and alien to the subject, to the signifier of something he has himself buried. In Freud the cause of anxiety can be uncovered and transformed (into fear), and something similar is true of Kierkegaard in that the individual becomes aware that his only possibility of salvation is faith. In this respect the association between their ideas is symptomatic of Kierkegaard's *dis*association from the other writers I have been concerned with, but of course it is

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[1] Which, for me, answers the original Bob Dylan epigraph from the *Preamble*.

not always clear from his writings that faith really is to be seen as an overcoming of anxiety. For Freud some (moral) conflicts are unsolvable and the anxiety they generate can not be cured, and, even if it requires reading between the lines of what is otherwise a relatively direct piece of writing, perhaps Kierkegaard's urangst is making its presence felt in his 'deliberation' on original sin.

That there are parallel 'anthropological' and 'conflict'[2] interpretations of Kierkegaard's work (particularly the 'psychological' books) is important in that it again reveals the central ambiguity of existence. The former falls into the parameters of anxiety B, and the latter offers a version of urangst qualified by the extent to which a confrontation with God and the infinite engenders anxiety A. The possibility of repetition of course muddies things, but *The Sense of Nothing* gave me an opportunity to superimpose something like Kierkegaard's developmental model onto Heidegger's atheistic system. When the primary revelation of anxiety is contingency the issue of how are we supposed to live in light of this becomes paramount. Heidegger's answer, or so I argue, is unsatisfactory, but we can at least work a meaningful version of anxiety B into his set-up (which some, Elizabeth Ewing for example, believe is assumed to be there anyway) and then consider the question of authenticity in light of this. The result is my 'spiral of uncanniness' which represents the resolute individual's developing understanding of his urangst, but acknowledges that this cannot become meaningful until he has worked or lived through various *existentiell* possibilities (akin to Kierkegaard's 'stages'). If he ever reaches a more rarefied strata then the 'nothing' which Heidegger speaks of can be experienced in the relatively pure sense suggested in *What is Metaphysics?* Up to, and to an extent *including* this point, 'nothing' (anxiety A) becomes meaningful only in contrast to our interpreting self (anxiety B), but what I take Heidegger as saying is that in certain rare and peculiar transcendental moments we do indeed grasp this 'nothing' and quench our urangst. For the most part though this cannot be achieved, and here again failings are revealed in Heidegger's notion of authenticity. A substantial answer to the question of how we might live as closely as possible to urangst's central signification is postponed until chapters 6 and 7.

What is suggested at this juncture is that a meaningful developmental model is still applicable. We do not learn how to 'journey through' our anxiety towards faith, but there is a sense in which we can learn to master it and develop a mode of being that is less of an escape and more of an

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[2] Expressions used by Nordenstoft in *Kierkegaard's Psychology*.

acknowledgement and an acceptance of our condition. Uncanniness is no longer experienced as the *shock* of realizing that things are not what we thought they were, but involves a more graceful appropriation. Analogous to this is Ann Beattie's metaphor of 'learning to fall' which Martha Nussbaum cites as part of an attempt to understand the specific revelations of love. It is more like a gradual 'opening up' to the world, to the other, and to one's feelings, than a sudden self-contained revelation. Nussbaum compares it to grace which;

You can't aim for ... It has so little connection, if any, with your efforts and actions .... Yet what else can you do? ... You open yourself to the possibility.[3]

As mentioned in the *Preamble* and in *Anxious Engagement* the connections between love and anxiety appear to be close, but I do not have the space here to develop this line of inquiry. How much love *is* like grace would be an important question is this context—an attunement to anxiety, I argue, cannot be achieved except possibly in the rare moments Heidegger speaks of, but there is something in the *process* of adjustment and self-mastery that requires a similar kind of openness coupled with an involvement with one's self as a *particular* project.

Anxious Engagement also looked at stages of self-mastery or authenticity in the face of anxiety, but Sartre's application of the concept is principally in the realm of anxiety B. I argue that in certain ways nausea plays the role of anxiety A, but that his notion of anxiety and its relation to freedom and nothingness is not complete unless a more explicit form of anxiety A is in play. Without it (and therefore without a singular concept or structure) there is no urangst, and without that his anxiety is ethical rather than existential. An acute sense of individual responsibility and freedom create its own kind of uncanniness which can in turn lead to a further metamorphosis of urangst which engenders anxiety at the contingent status of values. Even if this latter switch does not occur, its potential, as attested to by the urangst which underlies uncanniness, introduces the requisite dynamic. In his chapter on 'bad faith' Sartre seems to imply something like this— particularly in his reference to our condition as 'meta-stable'—and the weak and strong notions of bad faith align themselves with this essential disjunction in human existence (and also in the ambiguousness of existential guilt introduced by Kierkegaard and further nurtured by Heidegger). Generally Sartre on bad faith is more revealing of the complexities of anxiety than his specific references to the concept itself.

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[3] *Love's Knowledge*, p.278

The latter part of this chapter concerned itself with 'reciprocal freedom/anxiety'. The issue there was the role of the other in awakening and sustaining our sense of freedom, and how, in line with my previous analysis this must involve not just one's sense of personal responsibility but the whole anxiety structure. The aim of reciprocal anxiety is to make the other aware of their ambiguity for no other sake than itself. More specifically, I am highlighting our tendency not just to flee the revelations of anxiety A and anxiety B, but to dwell too comfortably in the embrace of one or other of *these* (for example in the form of a self-less contemplative detachment, or a thoroughly committed ethical or self-creative engagement) whereby their revelations harden and lose their broader significance. Bad faith in this sense is not a fleeing from our nothingness or our freedom, but from our *ambiguity*. The authentic other plays a vital role in enkindling the urangst which is a catalyst for the movement essential for dynamic authenticity. How this is achieved depends on the individual's particular take on existential anxiety and on their particular relationship, and though I maintain that the structure is essentially the same in all cases, the process itself is infinitely varied and complex. Two examples of authenticity are analysed in *Unending Ordeals* and both reveal the importance of the other, but these should not be taken as definitive in all their details.

The Existential Awareness of Non-Being consolidated the anxiety structure (this time with more specific reference to Nagel's ideas on the absurd and 'the meaning of life'). Features that arose from the core chapters on Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre were pulled together with the help of my analysis of Tillich's types of non-being, and here we first encountered the different categories of authenticity. This forms part of the answer to one or two of the questions concerning anxiety outlined in the *Preamble*—specifically "Can we overcome anxiety?" and "How should we respond to it?" The answer to the first is essentially "no", but this is mitigated by the answer to the second which indicates that a certain kind of response will alter the way in which anxiety is experienced. A dynamically authentic mode of existence reduces the intensity and suddenness (but not the significance) of the 'existential shock' and give some reason for supposing we can get close (but never all the whole way) to existentially acknowledging our urangst.

That authenticity must be dynamic rather than static I attempted to demonstrate in Chapter 6 with reference to irony. I criticized Rorty in that he seems to want irony to be static—my argument being that this cannot be achieved without recourse either to religious-like metaphysics or to an

absolutizing of our values and socio-historical environment, and thus without denying or at least adulterating our anxiety. My answer is that with the aid of self-deception we do both, but that authenticity or 'strength' is achieved by an ability to shift platforms, and that this process is a function of our ability to respond to the presentiments of our urangst. I qualified this process in *Unending Ordeals* with my claim that such authenticity will involve an individual being primarily located in the realm of either anxiety A or anxiety B. (This is in a sense a choice, but one that is partially determined by the form of anxiety in which we most readily find ourselves). Marlow and Clemence are both ironic and both embody a sense of detachment and a sense of guilt but, because of their differing relations to the anxiety structure, experience these to different degrees and in different ways. If anxiety A is one's primary location, I argue, then one's response to it is experienced in terms of what I call a 'leap of irony' (although objectively speaking there is no such leap that can be identified); and if one's primary location is anxiety B then one's response is an unambiguous sense of guilt (which, likewise, has no objective basis—only the paradox of existential guilt). When one's (felt) transcendence is occasionally (but inevitably) undermined then guilt is experienced, and when one occasionally considers (is forced or implored by urangst to consider) the baselessness of one's (felt) guilt then a brief sense of transcendence is experienced. These occasions might of course engender a switch of primary perspective, but my point is (and this ties in with the broad developmental model) that having been through a considerable ordeal to reach this stage—as Marlow and Clemence have—this is unlikely.

These two chapters engaged the question of what a 'leap of irony' might mean (there being no God to facilitate repetition) and relatedly the possibility of overcoming anxiety. It also reached some conclusions as to the relation between anxiety and authenticity, absurdity and guilt. The last of these has proven to be very important: not only does it exhibit the same structure as anxiety (as do other concepts such as individuality, death and 'falling'), but it seems to me to be a key way in which anxiety is authentically displaced. As indicated, urangst cannot be existentially appropriated, and the initial shock of a perspective change is short-lived and effectively paralysing, and so anxiety must make its impact felt *by proxy*—by means of a mood or attunement that is existentially receptive and (in Heidegger's terminology) 'ready' for movement. To answer the question "What is it to know oneself as anxious?"; it is to know oneself in light of a world before which we feel principally detached or principally guilty (including their attendant peaks of uncanniness), and only occasionally and fleetingly experience the full, object-less force of urangst.

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A further type of anxiety was introduced in Chapter 5, namely 'death anxiety'. Death certainly has connections with anxieties A and B (e.g. it can help make us aware of our contingency and of our individuality), but none that are unique to it in the way Heidegger and Tillich suggest. As far as I can see neither of these successfully deal with death in the way they want and claim to, and my response to this has been two-fold. Firstly, in this context, I do not give death any more attention than concepts like guilt and contingency receive (in fact probably less); and secondly, I nevertheless acknowledged its peculiar status by putting the experience it is associated with in a category of it own. The feeling aroused by the contemplation of our own death is unlike anything else—it is neither fear nor sadness nor a sense of futility (for example)—but it is nonetheless *something*, and because it is without an object and entirely slippery, something best described as anxiety. This anxiety is much darker and denser than anxiety A, B or urangst, but its claim to be 'existential' is more tenuous. Broadly though I think it deserves this title because it cannot be cured and, arguably, should not be ignored if we want to attain authenticity (partly or perhaps mostly because it involves a shock that slides with relative ease towards the anxieties A and B).

Finally, two of the more important but tricky questions—"What kind of thing is anxiety?" and "Why is it so important to the existentialists?"—turn out, pretty much, to share the same answer. It is tempting (and in a sense true) to say that anxiety can only be described as the kind of thing to which the last hundred-thousand words apply—particularly as it appears to inhabit a category of its own—but I can at least make some attempt at summing-up its general ontological location.

If we concentrate on the experience then anxiety is like an emotion as far as it is something which is *felt*, but unlike one as far as it has no object. This objectlessness complicates things as far as the experience goes, and we find that it covers a wide range—from panic and dizziness to uncanniness and disquiet to 'bewildered calm' and serenity—and this makes one more weary about calling it an emotion. It has the passivity of a sensation but is also infinitely denser in terms of its portents and interpretative capacities. Perhaps then the Heideggerian 'mood' or 'attunement' is the most appropriate category. Like a standard mood it is all-embracing—something in which we *dwell* and that conditions the way things in the world are encountered—but what other mood is so flexible with respect to the way things are encountered? What other mood offers one the chance to *grow into it* in the way anxiety does? As suggested in *The Sense of Nothing*, anxiety is more like a meta-

mood; one which afflicts other moods so that we experience anxious joy, anxious guilt, anxious irony and so on.

Relatedly we find that unlike other moods anxiety contains its own specific *kind* of knowledge: it reveals something quite basic about us and the world that cannot be captured or expressed by any other means. This is the crux of anxiety's irreducibility—its uniqueness. It reveals or contains the full existential significance of the central paradox of human existence. This paradox is formally described in terms of what I have called the 'anxiety structure', but this can never replace the experience which, though indescribable in the same way that all emotions and sensations ultimately are, is given an added dimension because its origin—the clash of the subjective and the objective, the ethical and the ontological etc.—is categorially unusual. Other concepts that express it are, as shown, guilt and ironic detachment, but they are less pure in that they can be explained in terms of the structure and in terms of the more viscose and articulate origins of the uncanniness associated with anxieties A and B. Purer still is urangst which rightly inhabits a category of its own. Our responses to it are as varied as the ways it is experienced; we can, and mostly do, attempt to hide from it, but we can also in varying ways and in varying degrees attempt to live with it. Crucially though we can never master it (for that would be to master ourselves) and in this very important sense we are always more than what we explicitly take ourselves to be at any one time, always oozing over any and all the boundaries we necessarily and continually construct. This, I would claim, is the central revelation, premise and preoccupation of existentialism, and this is why anxiety has a special place in the philosophy and literature of this otherwise loosely defined tradition. Add to this our overriding desire for completion—to be free from urangst—and we can see why human existence for the existentialist, despite and because of its ambiguity, is shot through with a particular sense of tragedy.

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