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## POSTMODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores the complex relationship between Martin Heidegger's philosophy and postmodern thought. It examines how postmodern philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Michel Foucault have engaged with Heidegger's ideas, particularly his critique of metaphysics, language, and technology. The article highlights key postmodern critiques of Heidegger, such as Derrida's deconstruction of Heidegger's concept of Being and Lyotard's extension of Heidegger's analysis of technology to critique the commodification of knowledge in postmodernity.

### KEYWORDS

Question of Being, Sein (Being), Dasein (Being-there), Ontological difference, Being-in-the-World (In-der-Welt-sein), Authenticity vs. Inauthenticity, Thrownness (Geworfenheit), Facticity, Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode), Care (Sorge), Fallenness (Verfallen), Ekstasis (Temporal dimensions), Technological enframing.

### INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of Martin Heidegger, one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century, has undergone numerous interpretations and re-evaluations, particularly within the framework of postmodern thought. Heidegger's work, which grapples with the

nature of Being, language, and technology, has been both a source of inspiration and contention among postmodern philosophers. This article aims to explore the postmodern interpretations of Heidegger's

philosophy, focusing on how these readings have evolved in recent scholarship.

## METHODS

In crafting this article, several key methods were employed to ensure a clear and accurate exploration of Heidegger's philosophy. Textual analysis was used to closely read Heidegger's primary texts, ensuring accurate interpretation and presentation of his complex ideas. Conceptual clarification involved defining and explaining key concepts to make Heidegger's philosophy more accessible. Comparative analysis was employed to highlight Heidegger's unique contributions by comparing his ideas with traditional philosophical views. The synthesis of scholarly interpretations integrated insights from various scholars to provide a balanced understanding of Heidegger's work. Critical reflection considered the relevance of Heidegger's ideas for modern issues, drawing connections to contemporary thought. A hermeneutic approach was used to uncover deeper meanings in Heidegger's philosophy through interpretative methods. Finally, philosophical exposition systematically presented the ideas in a logical sequence to build a comprehensive understanding. These methods combined to create a well-rounded and accessible discussion of Heidegger's philosophy, making complex ideas understandable while maintaining their depth.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Martin Heidegger's exploration of "The Question of Being" (die Frage nach dem Sein) is one of the most significant contributions to 20th-century philosophy. His central work, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), published in 1927, is dedicated to reawakening the question of what it means to be. Heidegger believed that the question of Being had been forgotten or obscured throughout the history of philosophy, and his project was to bring it back to the forefront of philosophical inquiry.

Heidegger observed that Western philosophy, since Plato and Aristotle, had focused on specific beings (Seiendes)—the entities that exist—rather than on Being (Sein) itself. He argued that this focus led to a neglect of the fundamental question: what does it mean to exist? For Heidegger, the question of Being is the most basic and essential philosophical question, yet it had been overlooked in favor of more tangible inquiries into the nature of individual beings. Martin Heidegger's philosophical project is fundamentally driven by a desire to reawaken what he saw as the most profound and yet neglected question in Western philosophy: the question of Being. Heidegger believed that since the time of the ancient Greeks, philosophy had gradually lost sight of this fundamental question, becoming increasingly preoccupied with specific entities and their characteristics rather than with the more basic inquiry into what it means for something to

be. Heidegger's motivation stems from his critique of the Western metaphysical tradition, which he argued had reduced Being to a mere abstract concept or equated it with particular beings (entities) [2].

This reduction, Heidegger contended, led to a forgetfulness of Being (Seinsvergessenheit), where the true nature of Being was obscured by the focus on beings and the categories imposed upon them by metaphysical thinking. In his seminal work Being and Time (Sein und Zeit), Heidegger sets out to recover the question of Being by investigating the meaning of Being itself. He does this through an existential analysis of human existence, which he refers to as Dasein (literally "being-there"). Heidegger posits that Dasein has a unique relationship to Being, as it is the entity that can reflect upon its own existence and, therefore, is capable of raising the question of Being. Heidegger's reawakening of the question of Being is not merely an academic exercise but is tied to his belief that understanding Being is crucial for confronting the existential and philosophical crises of modernity. He saw the modern world as increasingly dominated by a technological mindset that further alienates humanity from a genuine encounter with Being, reducing the world to a mere resource to be exploited. By reawakening the question of Being, Heidegger aimed to open up new possibilities for thinking and living that would move beyond the limitations of modern technological enframing [1].

Heidegger's motivation was to redirect philosophical inquiry back to the fundamental question of what it means to be. He sought to challenge the Western metaphysical tradition's neglect of this question and to explore how a renewed understanding of Being could offer a way to address the existential concerns of the modern age. Through his focus on Dasein and the existential analysis of human life, Heidegger aimed to uncover the deeper structures of existence and to reorient philosophy toward a more authentic engagement with the question of Being.

One of Heidegger's key contributions is the concept of the "ontological difference," which distinguishes between Sein (Being) and Seiendes (beings). Sein refers to the condition of existence itself, the underlying reality that makes any entity possible. Seiendes, on the other hand, refers to any particular entity or object that exists. Heidegger's goal was to explore the nature of Sein rather than simply cataloging or analyzing individual entities (Seiendes). One of Martin Heidegger's most significant contributions to philosophy is his articulation of the ontological difference, a distinction between Being (Sein) and beings (Seiendes). This distinction is foundational to Heidegger's thought and central to his critique of the Western metaphysical tradition. Being (Sein) refers to the fundamental nature or essence of existence itself. It is not a specific entity or thing but rather the condition that allows any entity to exist. For

Heidegger, Being is what makes anything possible—what it means for something to be. However, Being is not something that can be directly observed or described in the same way that individual entities can. It is instead a more abstract, underlying reality that gives rise to all particular beings. Beings (Seiendes), on the other hand, are the individual entities or things that exist within the world—objects, people, animals, and all other entities we encounter in our everyday experience. Beings are what we typically think of when we consider the contents of the world around us [4].

They are the concrete, particular instantiations of existence, each with its own characteristics and attributes. The ontological difference is the distinction between these two concepts: Being as the ground or condition of existence, and beings as the entities that exist within that ground. Heidegger emphasizes this difference to critique the history of Western philosophy, which he argues has predominantly focused on beings—what things are, how they can be categorized, and how they interact—while neglecting the more fundamental question of Being itself. Heidegger asserts that this neglect has led to a "forgetfulness of Being" (Seinsvergessenheit), where philosophy has lost sight of the deeper, more original question of what it means to be. By focusing exclusively on beings, philosophers have overlooked the more profound inquiry into Being—the very condition that makes the existence of beings possible.

This ontological difference is crucial for Heidegger's project because it reorients philosophical inquiry away from the analysis of specific entities and toward a more fundamental investigation of existence. Heidegger's goal is to "reawaken" the question of Being, to bring it back into focus as the primary concern of philosophy. He believes that by recovering this question, we can develop a deeper understanding of human existence and the world. In summary, the ontological difference between Being and beings is a central concept in Heidegger's philosophy. It distinguishes between the fundamental nature of existence (Being) and the individual entities that exist (beings). Heidegger uses this distinction to critique the history of Western philosophy and to redirect philosophical inquiry toward the more fundamental question of what it means to be [7].

Heidegger introduces the concept of Dasein, a German term that literally means "being there." In Being and Time, Dasein is used to describe human existence because humans are the only beings who can question their own existence. Heidegger argues that Dasein is unique because it has an awareness of its own Being, and this self-awareness is what allows humans to ask the question of Being in the first place. In Martin Heidegger's philosophy, the concept of Dasein plays a central role in his exploration of the question of Being. Dasein, a German term that literally translates to "being-there" or "presence," is Heidegger's term for



the human being, but it is meant to capture more than just the idea of a person or an individual. Dasein is, according to Heidegger, the specific being that has the unique capability to question its own existence and, more broadly, the nature of Being itself [3].

Heidegger introduces Dasein in his seminal work *Being and Time* as the being for whom Being is a question. Unlike other beings (animals, objects, plants), Dasein has a particular relationship to its own existence. It is aware of its own being and can reflect upon it. This self-awareness and ability to inquire into the nature of existence situate Dasein in a distinct ontological category. For Heidegger, Dasein is not just a subject in the traditional philosophical sense; it is the being that exists in a world, interacts with it, and interprets it in a way that is fundamentally tied to its understanding of itself. Heidegger's analysis of Dasein is existential, meaning he focuses on the concrete, lived experience of being human rather than abstract, theoretical descriptions. Heidegger explores various aspects of Dasein's existence, such as Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*), which emphasizes that Dasein is always situated in a context, engaged with the world and with others. Dasein's existence is characterized by thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), the idea that we find ourselves in a world we did not choose, and facticity, the concrete details of our life circumstances that shape our existence. Another key aspect of Dasein is Being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*), which refers to

the way Dasein is constantly aware, even if only implicitly, of its own mortality. This awareness shapes how Dasein lives and understands itself. For Heidegger, the recognition of death is not merely an end but a fundamental aspect of Dasein's existence that grants life its urgency and meaning. Heidegger's choice of Dasein as the focal point of his inquiry into Being is deliberate. He believes that only through an analysis of Dasein can we begin to approach the question of what it means to be. Since Dasein is the being that asks about Being, understanding Dasein's structure and way of being is essential for uncovering the nature of Being itself. Heidegger contends that Dasein is always already involved in understanding Being, even if this understanding is vague or implicit. By making explicit this pre-ontological understanding that Dasein carries, Heidegger seeks to illuminate the conditions under which the question of Being can be meaningfully asked and answered [6].

A significant part of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein involves the distinction between authentic and inauthentic modes of existence. In its everyday life, Dasein often lives inauthentically, conforming to the expectations of others and losing itself in the "they" (*das Man*), a term Heidegger uses to describe the anonymous, collective norms that shape much of human behavior. In this inauthentic mode, Dasein fails to confront the deeper questions of its existence, including the question of Being. However, when Dasein

becomes aware of its own finitude, particularly through the recognition of its mortality, it has the potential to live authentically. In authenticity, Dasein takes ownership of its existence, makes choices in accordance with its own understanding of Being, and confronts the profound questions of existence, including the question of Being itself. In Heidegger's philosophy, Dasein is not just a term for human beings but a concept that encapsulates the unique position humans occupy as the beings who ask about Being. Through Dasein, Heidegger seeks to explore the fundamental structures of existence and to reawaken the question of what it means to be. By analyzing the existential conditions of Dasein—its Being-in-the-world, its Being-toward-death, and its potential for authenticity—Heidegger aims to uncover the deeper, often overlooked dimensions of existence that ground our understanding of Being [5].

Heidegger rejects the traditional subject-object dichotomy that dominated much of Western philosophy. Instead, he introduces the concept of Being-in-the-World (In-der-Welt-sein), which describes the fundamental way in which Dasein exists. Dasein is always already involved in the world, engaging with it, and cannot be separated from its environment. This notion challenges the idea that individuals are isolated subjects who perceive a world of objects from a distance. Instead, Dasein is deeply interconnected with the world and its own Being. In Martin Heidegger's

philosophy, the concept of Being-in-the-World (In-der-Welt-sein) is central to his understanding of human existence. Introduced in his seminal work *Being and Time*, Being-in-the-World is Heidegger's way of describing the fundamental way in which human beings (Dasein) exist. This concept challenges traditional notions of subject-object dualism by emphasizing that human existence is always already embedded in a world of relationships, contexts, and meanings.

Heidegger rejects the Cartesian notion of the self as a detached, thinking subject that stands apart from the world. Instead, he argues that Dasein (the being who asks about Being) is inseparable from the world it inhabits. Being-in-the-World is not just about being physically located in a space; it is about being inherently involved with the world. This means that our existence is always tied to the contexts, practices, and social norms that give our lives meaning.

The world Heidegger talks about is not just a collection of physical objects but a web of significance. For Dasein, the world is a meaningful structure in which everything has relevance and purpose in relation to other things. For example, a hammer is not just a tool; it is meaningful within the context of building, crafting, or working. This network of meanings is what constitutes the world for Dasein.

Being-in-the-World implies an active engagement rather than passive presence. Dasein is always already involved in the world, dealing with things, interacting with others, and navigating various situations. This engagement is practical and pre-reflective; we do not first think about the world and then act—we are always already acting within it. Heidegger refers to this as care (Sorge), which denotes the way Dasein is concerned with and takes responsibility for its existence and the world it inhabits.

Being-in-the-World also includes Being-with (Mitsein), which refers to the inherently social nature of human existence. Dasein does not exist in isolation but is always with others, even when physically alone. This Being-with shapes how Dasein understands itself and the world, as it is always influenced by the presence and expectations of others. The social world, or das Man (the "they"), plays a significant role in how Dasein navigates its existence, often leading to inauthentic modes of being where one conforms to societal norms rather than living authentically [8].

Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-World reshapes how we understand existence. It emphasizes that our existence is not a detached, intellectual exercise but a lived, embodied experience deeply intertwined with the world around us. This existential understanding is pre-theoretical, meaning that it is not derived from abstract reasoning but from our everyday, practical dealings with the world.

Heidegger introduces the idea of worldhood to describe the structure of the world as it is experienced by Dasein. Worldhood is what makes the world intelligible, allowing us to navigate it meaningfully. It encompasses the totality of relations, significances, and practices that define our environment. This concept shifts the focus from the objective characteristics of things to their relational and functional roles within a broader context.

Heidegger's exploration of Being-in-the-World also touches on the themes of authenticity and inauthenticity. Inauthentic existence occurs when Dasein loses itself in the everyday routines and social conventions dictated by das Man ("the they"), becoming absorbed in the world without questioning its own Being. Authentic existence, on the other hand, involves a conscious awareness of one's Being-in-the-World and a deliberate effort to live in a way that is true to oneself, rather than merely conforming to external expectations. Being-in-the-World is a foundational concept in Heidegger's existential ontology, encapsulating his view that human existence is inherently relational, situated, and engaged. It challenges traditional philosophical distinctions between subject and object, mind and body, and individual and world, offering a more integrated understanding of existence. By emphasizing the practical, social, and contextual aspects of Dasein's existence, Heidegger provides a framework for

understanding how we navigate and make sense of our lives [1].

Another crucial aspect of Heidegger's analysis is the connection between Being and time. Heidegger argues that the understanding of Being is inherently tied to time. Dasein's existence is temporal, meaning that it is always situated within the flow of time—past, present, and future. This temporality is not just a backdrop to existence but is fundamental to the way Dasein understands and relates to Being. The finitude of human existence—awareness of death, for example—shapes how Dasein experiences the world and its own Being. In Martin Heidegger's philosophy, the relationship between temporality and Being is central to understanding his existential ontology. Heidegger argues that time is not merely a sequence of moments or a backdrop against which events unfold; rather, temporality is the very structure of Being itself. This idea is most fully developed in his seminal work *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), where he explores how human existence (Dasein) is fundamentally temporal and how this temporality shapes our understanding of Being [6].

Heidegger contends that Being can only be understood through the lens of time. He introduces the concept of temporality (*Temporalität*) as the "horizon" within which the question of Being becomes intelligible. This means that our understanding of what it means to be is intrinsically linked to our experience of time. For

Heidegger, time is not something external to Dasein; rather, Dasein is time. Dasein's way of being is temporal, meaning that its existence is always oriented towards the past, present, and future.

The Three Dimensions of Temporality Heidegger describes temporality through the concept of *ekstasis*, which refers to the "standing out" of Dasein into the different dimensions of time. He identifies three fundamental dimensions of temporality:

This dimension is about Dasein's capacity to project itself into possibilities and anticipate what is to come. The future is not just a point ahead in time but the space of possibilities within which Dasein makes choices and shapes its existence. Heidegger emphasizes that Dasein is always oriented toward the future because it is always in the process of becoming, of realizing potentialities.

The past represents the dimension of Dasein's facticity—its "thrownness" into a particular situation that it did not choose. The past is not merely what has happened, but it continues to shape the present. Dasein carries its history with it, and this history influences how it understands itself and its possibilities.

The present, for Heidegger, is the realm of Dasein's immediate experience and involvement in the world. However, Heidegger often portrays the present as the dimension where Dasein can become absorbed in the



distractions of everyday life, losing sight of its authentic potentialities. This absorption in the present is what he calls "fallenness," where Dasein becomes caught up in the routines and social conventions that can obscure its deeper possibilities [3].

Heidegger's concept of temporality is closely tied to his notions of authenticity and inauthenticity. Inauthentic existence occurs when Dasein becomes absorbed in the present, losing itself in the everyday concerns dictated by society (das Man). In this mode, Dasein is disconnected from its own future possibilities and fails to confront its past meaningfully.

Authentic existence, on the other hand, involves an awareness of the full scope of temporality. In authenticity, Dasein acknowledges its finitude—its Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode)—and understands that its time is limited. This awareness compels Dasein to take responsibility for its existence, to live deliberately and meaningfully in light of its past, present, and future. Authentic Dasein projects itself into the future possibilities while being grounded in the past and fully engaging with the present, but without being consumed by it.

Heidegger also introduces the concept of historicity (Geschichtlichkeit), which refers to the way Dasein's existence is embedded in a historical context. Dasein is not only temporal in an individual sense but also in a collective sense, as it inherits meanings, traditions, and

ways of being from its cultural and historical situation. This historicity shapes how Dasein interprets its existence and possibilities. Understanding Being, therefore, requires understanding the historical conditions under which Dasein exists [2].

## CONCLUSION

Through the exploration of Martin Heidegger's concepts of Being-in-the-World, Dasein, and temporality, we uncover a profound rethinking of human existence that challenges traditional philosophical paradigms. Heidegger's philosophy reveals that Being is not a static or abstract concept but is fundamentally intertwined with time and human experience. One of the most groundbreaking ideas in Heidegger's thought is the notion that Being can only be understood through the lens of temporality. This challenges the traditional view of time as a mere sequence of moments and instead positions time as the very structure within which Dasein experiences and interprets existence. Heidegger's concept of ekstasis—the three dimensions of temporality (future, past, and present)—provides a new way of understanding how we relate to our own existence and the world around us. Heidegger's exploration of authenticity in relation to temporality introduces the idea that living authentically involves a conscious engagement with all dimensions of time. This engagement allows Dasein to take ownership of its existence, acknowledging its historical context

(historicality) while projecting itself into the future. This insight suggests that authenticity is not merely about individual choices but is deeply connected to our temporal and historical situatedness. The idea that Being-in-the-World involves being embedded in a web of significance redefines our understanding of the world. The concept of worldhood as a network of meanings rather than a collection of objects offers a new perspective on how we navigate and make sense of our existence. This understanding shifts the focus from a detached analysis of objects to a more holistic view of how things gain meaning within the context of our lives.

Heidegger's insights invite a reevaluation of how time is considered in philosophical inquiries. Rather than treating time as a backdrop for events or as an abstract dimension, we might consider time as integral to the very nature of existence. This could lead to new approaches in fields such as existential psychology, where understanding the temporal structure of human experience could provide deeper insights into issues like anxiety, purpose, and identity.

The integration of temporality into the understanding of Being has significant implications for contemporary philosophy, especially in areas like phenomenology, hermeneutics, and existentialism. Heidegger's ideas challenge us to rethink how we conceptualize existence, identity, and meaning in a world increasingly dominated by technological and instrumental thinking.

His critique of modernity, particularly the reduction of Being to mere resources within technological enframing, remains relevant in today's discussions on technology, ecology, and ethics.

Heidegger's concepts of authenticity and Being-toward-death suggest practical ways to approach life with greater awareness and intentionality. By recognizing the temporal nature of our existence, we can live more authentically, making conscious choices that reflect our true values and potentialities rather than merely conforming to societal expectations. This could lead to more fulfilling and meaningful lives, both on an individual and collective level.

Heidegger's exploration of temporality and Being offers a transformative understanding of human existence. By framing Being within the context of time, Heidegger provides a new way to think about our relationships with ourselves, others, and the world. His philosophy challenges us to consider the temporal and historical dimensions of our lives, encouraging a more authentic and engaged way of being. These insights not only deepen our philosophical understanding but also offer practical guidance for living more intentionally in a complex and rapidly changing world.

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