

The Value of Nihilism in Hope: A Nietzschean and Heideggerian Reflection

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Abstract:

In times of crisis man has been known to push the limitation of possibilities amidst conflict and strife. Through various experience of nihilistic conditions, we have witnessed in history the willful resolve of man to go beyond his means. This recurring condition in human history discloses an intrinsic connection between the phenomena of nihilism and hopelessness as an impetus for man to create and establish hope. This paper aims to highlight the salient connection between the notion of nihilism found in both Nietzsche and Heidegger's philosophy as an opening towards the existential and epistemic possibility of hope as a resounding "leap" towards an unknown and ungrounded future.

Keywords:

Nietzsche, Heidegger, nihilism, hope, ungrounded future

“Waste, decay, elimination need not be condemned: they are necessary consequences of life, of the growth of life. The phenomenon of decadence is as necessary as any increase and advance of life: one is in no position to abolish it. Reason demands that we do justice to it.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 39/162.

Introduction

Nihilism in most philosophical discourses is often ridiculed as the absence of either a guiding principle for moral values or a criterion for truth. Because of the general tendency of human epistemological conditioning, the condition of nihilism is perceived to be negative, relativistic, and even absurd, to the point that philosophers, such as Jean Baudrillard, would often refer to nihilism in the form of sarcasm or even irony.¹ In line with this, Nietzsche's position with nihilism is neither supportive of the idea that it is ascribed with a negative value nor a positive one, yet surprisingly enough, nihilism is ascribed as a necessity² in man's search for a teleological purpose of existence. In coming into terms with this concept, we are faced with the dreary picturesque view of a purposeless existence to which hope becomes extinguished and no longer seen as a viable possibility. In times of great political, economical, and social distress nihilism is a possible source of hope in so far as it enables man to question or digress from the very source of anxiety and conflict. The objective of this paper is to present and highlight the salient connection between the phenomena of nihilism and its intrinsic relationship with the establishment of hope when established values are questioned and intimately dealt with man's innermost beckoning. In this paper, I would begin my discussion of nihilism through Nietzsche's and Heidegger's notion of nihilism as the dismemberment and questioning of values, which would consequently lead to the affirmation of authentic hoping and “leaping” towards an indeterminate possibility.

¹ Baudrillard's assertion of his position as a nihilist can be seen as a form of irony and perhaps even as a sarcastic remark that refers to the decay or the mis-representation of information (simulation) in the form of a statement or appearance. If all things uttered (or represented) can no longer promise a utopia that would correspond to the reality of the world that we would see (i.e. the Gulf War), then nihilism is a condition that we can always already encounter in almost all of the aspects of life that we experience. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, tr. Sheila Faria Glaser, (University of Michigan Press, 1995), 62.

² “Nihilism as a *normal* condition. It can be a sign of strength: the spirit may have grown so strong that previous goals have become incommensurate. Or a sign of the lack of strength to posit for oneself, productively, a goal, a why, a faith.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufman, (Vintage Books, 1968) 23/17-18.

Nihilism and Epistemic Certitude: The Cycle of Distress and Hope

Throughout human history, there has been a series of institutionalized systems of values that has been hitherto questioned and subverted upon its own foundations. To some extent, human history can be conceived to function in a cyclical motion, a powerful figure, individual, or institution is seen to rise to power, and later on fall from its own glory. The fall and decline of Nazi Germany, for example, gives us a glimpse of the possibility of an *ouroboric* cycle of anxiety, resoluteness, and hope. From the enactment of the treaty of *Versailles* to war-torn Weimar Republic, the hungry, impoverished, and angry, casualties of the said treaty sought a new source of hope to pick up the pieces that was left from a war that ravaged their very lives. In Lieu to this treaty, the *Third Reich* rose to power as the possible source of hope for the Germans.

Though one might find the topic of Nazi Germany to be either problematic or controversial, especially when the question of ethics is touched, I find it interesting to begin my discussion of nihilism through the transition of the Weimar republic to the NSDAP³ because it allows us to see the willingness and resoluteness to submit oneself to a power in order to see hope amidst a crisis. Amidst this crisis, we see a re-questioning of certain values that might have been responsible for the changes that threaten the everyday existence of these people. The idea of nihilism, for Nietzsche, is somewhat simple and straightforward, yet it maintains a subtle suspension of valuation, it is an occurrence wherein one sees "... *That the highest values devalue themselves*" and that "the aim is lacking" for which the question "why" no longer finds any answer.⁴ Nietzsche sees this phenomenon occurring within the context of Christianity, whereas one sees suffering and dismay in the physical world as an impetus for one to hope for an afterlife, that would negate *this* reality for an exodus out of suffering and misery. As an investment, Nietzsche finds this binarism between the flesh and the spirit as superfluous:

"The Christian concept of a god – the god as the patron of the sick, the god as a spinner of cobwebs, the god as a spirit – is one of the most corrupt concepts that has ever been set up in the world: it probably touches low-water mark in the ebbing of evolution of the god-type. God degenerated into the contradiction of life. Instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yea! In him war is declared on life, on nature, on the will to live! God becomes the formula for every slander upon the "here and now," and for every lie about the "beyond." In him nothingness is deified, and the will to nothingness is made holy!"⁵

³ *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Worker's Party); Of course this is in reference to the post 1st World War Germany.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2/9.

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, trans. by H.L. Mencken, (See Sharp Press, 1999), 18/34.

The binarism in this sense is made apparent, one sees that reality as it is is subject to the changes that constantly clash with one's ideologies. Once a belief, value, or even a norm that exhausts itself and is seen as something that is no longer permanent, nihilism begins as a sign of distress that should be acknowledged or reckoned. In looking at the recent global financial crisis one can wonder how much trust has been invested in the belief with the free-market economy with the hope that individual liberty would be able to balance itself through equal competition and opportunity.

In the context of nihilism, one understands that the *own-ness* of one's existence implicitly places man or *Da-sein* as the main arbiter of one's historicity. In as much as we are concerned with understanding the ontological inhabitation of man's own world in the context of space and time, it is always necessary to consider temporality as an issue regarding one's distress. Heidegger's conception of nihilism is a derivative of Nietzsche's re-questioning of moral values conditioned by the "death of god." We find the germinating thoughts of this re-questioning of values in *Being and Time*, particularly in the 6th section of this work regarding the destructuralization of the history of western ontology.⁶ With this, we ask with Heidegger, not a question that merely seeks an answer, but rather a reflection on the limits of how we can actually answer the question. Man as a temporal being is a *Da-sein* that is stretched throughout time, from the moment of birth; *Da-sein* is subject to its own personal and worldly concerns. The everyday existence of man, as an always already given condition, elicits a sense of *futurity*, or in Heidegger's own word a *Vorlaufenheit*.⁷ The modality of man's existence amidst the world brings about a sense of understanding of time. As an absolute consequence of man's existence in this world, death becomes an ultimate possibility that allows even men with the most mundane sense of existence a resolute inquiry into their purposive existence. These concerns, by way of attunements through care⁸, shake the very foundation of a person's inhabitation, and in every instance that a person's concerns are threatened; the existential angst of its ownmost being is summoned into its own tout-court.

This brings about a very important point in our understanding of the concept of nihilism. Heidegger, in his reading of Nietzsche, is not simply concerned with the significance of nihilism with moral values:

⁶ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. Joan Stambaugh, (State University of New York Press, 1996), §6 pp.17-23

⁷ Stambaugh, in her translation of *Sein und Zeit*, opts to translate this idea as 'anticipation.' Whereas, the actual meaning of the word *läufer* in Deutsche means to 'run,' hence the actual idea of *vorlaufen* in Heidegger's writings implies an active participation of *Da-sein* to seek the fruition of its intended existential goals. Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 306/283). In this regard, I would prefer to retain the original sense of the word by referring to the actual Deutsche concept that Polt would literally translate as *running forward* or *facing up*. Cf. Richard Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, (Cornell University Press, 1999), 87.

⁸ De Sorge.

“Nihilism in Nietzsche’s sense means that all *goals* are gone. Nietzsche has those goals in mind that grow of themselves and transform humans (whereunto?). Thinking in terms of “goals” (the *telos* of the Greeks that has long been misinterpreted) presupposes the *idea* and “idealism.” Therefore, this ‘idealistic’ and moralistic interpretation of nihilism remains *provisional*, in spite of its importance.”⁹

The conception of nihilism as a critique of morality in Nietzsche is fused with Heidegger’s own philosophical understanding of authenticity and inauthenticity in the context of Da-sein’s *falling-prey* for ideas that fail to correspond to the own-most concerns of Da-sein.¹⁰ More importantly, Nietzsche opines that nihilism is a *normal* condition.¹¹ It can be, on one hand, a sign of an *increased power*, whereas the individual, who grows from the tension of existence, moves beyond the limits of the *telos* that an idea offers.¹² On the other hand, nihilism as a sign of *weakness* is manifested by the weariness of the individual who becomes passive in its acknowledgement of the distress behind the *telos* of an idea.¹³ The significance of nihilism towards the re-questioning of values puts forward an implusive personal deconstruction of the self that casts doubt on one’s conviction and intentions. Such is the state of nihilism, that to some extent, one can conceive of it as either authentic or inauthentic. Authentic nihilism, on one hand, is an actual experience of seeing actual value of an idea devaluate as it exhausts its meaning (e.g., the realization of the death of EDSA as a symbol of democracy in the Philippines); on the other hand, nihilism as an inauthentic experience is manifested by the destabilization of values, not as concern or care for one’s own-most resoluteness towards a fearful anticipation of the future, but simply as a machination of a reified idea (e.g., EDSA as a symbol to rally the masses for a self-inflicted anxiety: EDSA 2, EDSA 3, EDSA 4, *ad nauseam*) that no longer serves as a resolute response to the own-most concerns of Da-sein.

Perhaps then, as what Nietzsche would opine, the most dangerous misunderstanding that we can have is to *reify* or *deify* a system, idea, or structure as an absolute and consistent representation of reality¹⁴. These concepts, when reified, will always be subject

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (On Enowning)*, trans. by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Indiana University Press, 1999), §72, 96.

¹⁰ A very interesting example of this falling-prey, is perhaps, Heidegger’s affiliation with Nazism.

¹¹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 22-23/17-18.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ In the interest of “simplifying” our understanding of reality and habitation to a social world our tendency is to discard “truth” for a system that “seems” to represent truth: “...But in any case it seems to me that “the correct perception” – which would mean “the adequate expression of an object in the subject” – is a contradictory impossibility. For between two absolutely different spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression; there is, at most, an aesthetic relation: I mean, a suggestive transference, a stammering translation into a completely foreign tongue – for which I there is required, in any case, a freely inventive intermediate sphere and

to exhaustion, and as such can be harmful in so far as they try to present a future that is pregnant with predictable possibilities.¹⁵ Discourses are always subject to exhaustion, and one can either draw an affirmation towards this distress or simply a decadent denial of what is tugging at our innermost anxiety from our interaction with the world. Take the prevalence of the so-called symbol of democracy in the Philippines in the reification of EDSA as an example. EDSA stands as a symbol of peaceful revolution through which the people are able to oust a reigning political system in a “peaceful” display of political dissent resembling a peculiarly Filipino festive noontime show. The reification of EDSA as a concept, however, suffers its own implusive exhaustion; as a concept that is subject to manipulation and change, we now see that EDSA is an organized and machinated symbol of shifting political control. Nihilism in this sense encourages a possibility for change, in itself, the exhaustion of a reified concept lends to the possibility of either a complete abandonment of it or an adjusted modification of such a concept¹⁶.

To a certain extent, nihilism allows one to have a greater degree of creative appropriation, when one questions the very structure that governs or defines one’s telos, one finds the un-grounding of certain values to be unnerving, to the point that one is reminded of the possibility of constructing an aberration that is reminiscent of the Derridean monstrosity¹⁷ which comes as a product of either a conscious or an unconscious consequence of understanding (deconstructing) a concept.¹⁸ Thus, in this sense, nihilism opens up new avenues wherein an oppressive structure is always already open for its own unraveling and disruption.

mediating force.” Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, in Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the early 1870’s*, ed. trans. by Daniel Breazeale, 86.

¹⁵ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 48/30.

¹⁶ In this junction, we can compare Nietzsche and Heidegger’s view of the effects of responding to nihilism; the former offers a *sober* view of its effects, the latter could be read in an optimistic tone. For Nietzsche, the response leaves a residual trace of a previous nihilism, which bought the valuations in the first place, bringing forward the previous decadence that has been bought into man (imagine a genealogy of decadence) Cf. *Ibid.*, 39/25. In Heidegger, the abandonment of being is the echo or the *Anklang* that gives man his impetus to move forth and over come the distress Cf. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, §52-54. Heidegger’s idea of the distress in this case is transitional, taking into consideration that being sways and that man is always in pursuit of this essential swaying.

¹⁷ One sees this possibility in Derrida’s deconstruction of the human sciences as the possibility in which signs or signifiers are no longer seen to be as a stable bridge between an idea and the reality that it tries to represent. In the case of the human sciences, the reality behind these signs inhabits a consciousness that is always already lost at the moment that it is communicated. The monstrosity refers to the de-stabilization of such an effort to “pin” down a meaning into a text that comes from the human sciences, and thus what Derrida would refer to as a monstrosity. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences, Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass, (The University of Chicago Press, 1973) p.293

¹⁸ Cf. Roland Theuas S. Pada, “The Paradox of Ipseity and Difference: Derrida’s Deconstruction and Logocentrism,” in *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 1:1 (June 2001), 39-40, <http://www.kritike.org/issue_1/pada_june2007.pdf>.

Hope and Nihilism

In Nietzsche and Heidegger, the lost of awareness for is already a sign of distress, for in thinking of one's own inhabitation of a *Lebenswelt*, one always perceives an underlying conflict in one's environment. Though bounded by limitations and inhibitions, man is capable of adapting, selecting or even modifying its environment to suit his needs and desires. The latter poses an affirmative resolution to the call of distress. Recognizing nihilism in its own sense is always already an affirmation of one's existence:

“Nihilism does not only contemplate the “in vain!” nor is it merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy. – This is, if you will, illogical; but the nihilist does not believe that one needs to be logical. – It is the condition of strong spirits and wills, and these do not find it possible to stop with the No of “judgment”: their nature demands the No of the deed. The reduction to nothing by judgment is seconded by the reduction to nothing by hand.”¹⁹

Nihilism is an impetus for transformation. It questions, it disturbs, and it destabilizes the very thing that keeps us *decadent*.²⁰ As an impetus, nihilism enables us to take the decisive step to answer the innermost distress that our being experiences. But despite this beckoning, the response that nihilism elicits is still dependent upon the resoluteness of the answer of the individual. In the process of responding to the call of nihilism, hope comes into view not simply as an affirmative attitude of overcoming the death of an idea²¹, but, rather, it is an emergent and authentic resolution of facing up to an inestimable future.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 24/18.

²⁰ In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche offers a critique of morality of decadence. For Nietzsche, decadence is rightly seen when values shift to an altruistic slant, when one makes the pretension of altruism as a higher ‘good’ of putting others first before oneself because one clearly devaluates the value of one's life. For mostly religious reasons, Nietzsche abhors the devaluation of oneself because it is tantamount to self-destruction. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, tr. Judith Norman, (Cambridge University Press, UK: 2005), IX/35, 209.

²¹ To note, Bolaños offers a very clear understanding of the death of god movement: “Interpreting the death of God from a purely religious context undermines its *epistemological* and *ontological* implications – that the statement itself is a defiance of the dominance of Reason. This means that what has died is a principle of transcendence that unconditionally grounds the claims of classical epistemology and ontology. I am not, of course, denying the fact that the death of God is also a religious statement; but it is only religious inasmuch as religion (especially the Christian one) only makes sense by tacitly deploying the postulates of epistemology and metaphysics. In other words, the presuppositions of Christian religion are warranted through the signature of Reason.” Paolo Bolaños, “Nietzsche, Spinoza, and the Ethological Conception of Ethics,” in *Minerva – An Internet Journal of Philosophy*, II (2007), 114.

In understanding one's own authentic *Vorlaufenheit*²², one acknowledges the tension that disturbs the very core of his person. An authentic and resolute response to the disturbing feature of nihilism is that it presents a tension between values that have sheltered and fostered the conventions in which ideas are used as teleological crutches. A very simple example of this vexation comes in Heidegger's *Da-sein*, its realization of death as its ultimate possibility that ends all the futural possibilities.²³ The conflict that the past presents to man's present moment, and more importantly its future, is enough to question the values in which ideas are taken for as a teleological guide. Nihilism as a catalyst of hope succumbs to this problem:

"The whole pose of "man against the world," of man as a "world-negating" principle, of man as the measure of the value of things, as judge of the world who in the end places existence itself upon his scales and finds it wanting – the monstrous insipidity of this pose has finally come home to us and we are sick of it. We laugh as soon as we encounter the juxtaposition of "man and world," separated by sublime presumption of the little word "and." But look, when we laugh like that, have we not simply carried the contempt for man one step further? ... Have we not exposed ourselves to the suspicion of an opposition – and opposition between the world in which we were at home up to now with our reverences that perhaps made it possible for us to endure life, and another world that consists of us – an inexorable, fundamental, and deepest suspicion about ourselves that is more and more gaining worse and worse control of us Europeans and that could easily confront coming generations with the terrifying Either/Or: "Either abolish your reverences or – yourselves!" The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be – nihilism? – This is our question mark."²⁴

The juxtaposition of man's relationship with its world poses a problem that needs to be addressed in dealing with nihilism. Are we not simply dealing with the problem of

²² De. State of moving forward. It can be noted that Joan Stambaugh opts that instead of translating the *Vorlaufen* as anticipation (as seen in the earlier English translation; Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, (Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., Oxford, UK, 1962). fails to express the strength and character of Heidegger's use of the word. Stambaugh, on the other hand agrees with a better rendition of the concept as "running forward in thought." Cf. Heidegger, *Translator's Preface, Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, xv.

²³ "First of all, we must characterize being-toward-death as a being toward a possibility, toward an eminent possibility of *Da-sein* itself. Being toward a possibility, that is, toward something possible, can mean to be out for something possible, as in taking care of its actualization. In the field of things at hand and objectively present, we constantly encounter such possibilities: what is attainable, manageable, viable, and so forth. Being out for something possible and taking care of it has the tendency of annihilating the possibility of the possible by making it (death) available." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §53, 241.

²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, (Vintage Books, 1974), 346/286-287. One has to take into consideration that Nietzsche's reference to European is his own generalization of a culture that is suffering from decadence. Nihilism is often associated to Europe in Nietzsche's writings to emphasize the "death of god" movement found in western metaphysics.

maintaining the stature of our ideas by revering them to the point of their immutability? Or are we not simply touting the relativistic valuation of ideas? The dilemma that Nietzsche lays down for us gives us a glimpse of the extent of nihilism in the way we respond to it. We are, to a relative extent, nihilistic. Hope in the midst of the process of resolving the tension and anxiety of nihilism only promotes another possibility of nihilism, but in the process of succumbing to the possibility of nihilism, one stands for one moment on the side of overcoming nihilism and on the other hand side of things stands to proclaim another possibility of nihilism. Nihilism in this sense, pervades every aspect of human anxiety, it is the consequence of understanding or facing up to reality in the level of absolute distinctions, contradictions, and generalizations. Extending the margins of reasoning to the level of the absolute often entails the recurring possibility of nihilism, thus in reading Nietzsche's problematic account of nihilism, one understands that he is pointing out a double gesture that goes beyond contradictions and distinctions. It would be very difficult to point out that Nietzsche is a nihilist, precisely because one already falls victim of this double gesture. Hope is a concept that is not very explicit in Nietzsche's corpus of writing, it is however possible to put his idea of hope into its proper context. Let us look at fragment 72 of *Human All Too Human*:

"Pandora brought the box containing the evils and opened it. It was the gift of the gods to mankind, outwardly a fair, seductive gift and named the 'box of good fortune'. Then all the evils, living winged creatures, flew out: since then they have been hovering about doing harm to men by day and night. A single evil had not yet slipped out of the box: then by the will of Zeus, Pandora shut the lid, and thus it remained within. Now man has the box of good fortune forever in the house and is amazed at the treasure he possesses in it; it stands at his service, he reaches for it when he desires to do so; for he does not know that the box Pandora bought was the box of evil and regards the evil that has remained behind as the greatest piece of good fortune – it is hope. For what Zeus wanted was that man, though never so tormented by other evils, should nonetheless throw life away but continue to let himself be tormented. To that end he gives men hope: it is in truth the worst of all evils, because it protracts (prolongs) the torment of men."²⁵

Taking this mythico-theological allusion as a Nietzsche's conception of hope²⁶, one opts not to hastily generalize its condition as a perpetual evil. This is the real condition of men, we are subject to hope since it is a human frailty for us to expect something from the future that we can never grasp in its totality. One then remembers in this case the Nietzschean *amor fati*, not as an impetus to remain docile and submissive to the given condition of the world, but rather, as a given acceptance of a world that is indifferent to anthropomorphisms.²⁷

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 72/45.

²⁶ To some extent, we find Nietzsche putting up a lot of effort to emphasize the nihilist's priority of an afterlife over this "world."

²⁷ As a side note, fatalism in Nietzsche's philosophy is decadent in so far as religions ascribe a supernatural cause to a reality that is beyond our understanding. Reality as it is, is really beyond our understanding. The point of the matter is that these interpretations of reality gives us, as a conse-

The problem now lies with how one should understand Nietzsche's position on hope and nihilism. The solution lies with avoiding the very thing that causes nihilism: the elevation of ideas to infinity. Nietzsche's writing style, as Derrida notes, is characterized by suspension;²⁸ in so far as we are by convention conditioned to understand truth as an absolute straight-forward deliberation, we can understand the truth of Nietzsche's writings as a woman.²⁹ In modularizing Nietzsche's notion of nihilism and hope, one can turn to the idea of the eternal return as its fundamental principle. In the eternal return, Nietzsche provides us a reversal of theology as a cosmology, which suspends our understanding of a predictable and homogenous future that is tied down to a transcendent entity. Interestingly enough, Nietzsche precedes Heidegger's understanding of time by stating that in the process of eternal recurrence, one understands the actual tension in time by the conflict offered by an eternal past and an eternal future that presents itself in the appearance of the moment.³⁰ The eternal return, for Nietzsche, is an understanding of the epistemological limitation of cosmology as opposed to the theological understanding of reality presented by Greek mythology or the Judeo-Christian notion of creation. The eternal return is a declaration of the limited sense of certitude of time, whereas the two lanes that stretches out in Zarathustra's musings³¹ are referred to as pathways in which "no one has yet followed either to its end"³² contextualizes the limits of how one should understand an idea's extent: it is neither an absolute cause nor an absolute effect.

Hope then in the context of nihilism is best understood in the framework of time. To recall Heidegger's musings on the importance of the temporality, understanding the horizon of the *Da-sein* presupposes the interplay of the past and the future in relation to the present or the moment. In nihilism, we gain an understanding of time as the fundamental attunement of man through his world through the concept of fear and angst:

"That before which we are afraid, the "fearsome," is always something encountered within the world, either with the kind of being of something at hand or something objectively present or *Mitda-sein*. We do not intend to report optically about beings which often and

quence, a bitter sense of resentment on how reality should be as opposed to how we could live with this reality. I can imagine, as an example, the idea of resentment found perhaps on Adam and Eve's temptation, in the sense that humanity could have stayed in the Garden of Eden free from pain and suffering as opposed to what we are currently experiencing at this moment.

²⁸ Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, tr. Barbara Harlow, (The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 57.

²⁹ *Ibid.* "In other words, it could be said that if style were a man (much as the penis, according to Freud is the normal prototype of fetishes), then writing [in the case of Nietzsche's style] would be a woman." [My interpolation]

³⁰ "Behold this gateway, dwarf!" I continued. "It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'Moment'." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, The Portable Nietzsche, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (Penguin Books, 1976), 269-270.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

for the most part can be “fearsome,” but to determine phenomenally what is fearsome in its fearsome character. What is it that belongs to the fearsome as such which is encountered in fearing? What is feared has the character of being threatening.”³³

Through nihilism we experience the “fearsome” as a threat to the stability of ideas that leads us to a general *telos*. Fear, according to Heidegger,³⁴ is something that is always already objectively present or was present within the horizon of time. It is always already known, but only to the extent that we can objectively say that it is indeed a threat to our attunement with the world. Hope, in the same context of Nietzsche’s suspension, is always left hanging amidst the realization of fear in the present and its relation to the future. The future, as we would anticipate it, is open to possibilities that we might have or have not imagined, and thus as an underlying principle of hope, fear and angst function as *heuristic* devices that allows us to respond *authentically* to nihilism.

Fear and angst disclose to us the horizon in which we find authenticity in the concerns of man’s care for his own being. It also opens up the entire totality of the structure of man’s assertion for its concerns by being a *Vorlaufer*³⁵, always anticipating and moving towards the resolution of the future to suit its concerns. Authenticity is possible through the active thinking of the future, the innermost experience of the self allows one to understand and project the possibility of its choices simply because of its intimate connection with the past and the world. Heidegger, in this part, would allude to death as something that we know, and are aware of, but do not have an authentic grasp of its meaning when it is not directed towards us.³⁶ Despite the disclosure of fear, authenticity is still tenuous in as much as the distraction of everydayness is always capable of shifting our focus from either our intimate connection with our world or from the actual cares on concerns that we have. Take for example the problematic situation of a voter who sells his vote for immediate monetary gratification. On one hand, the voter might be able to answer, let us say the, the immediate concern of giving comfort to his family through monetary resources; but on the other hand, denies a greater possibility of uplifting his family’s meager living conditions by choosing the wrong candidate.

Heidegger identifies several responses that angst can elicit in the general mood of fear as a futural attunement; however, I want to focus my attention on the idea of authentic hoping inasmuch as hoping discloses the modality of one’s attunement to the world. Heidegger gives us a clear idea of the intimate attunement of the self towards fear and angst:

“Although both modes of attunement, fear and Angst, are primarily grounded in having-been, yet their origin is different with regard to the temporalizing belonging to each in the

³³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 141/132

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ One who is actively facing up to the needs of sustaining one’s cares and concerns. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §46, 219.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, §47, 221.

totality of care. Angst arises from the future of resoluteness, while fear arises from the lost present of which fear is fearfully apprehensive, thus falling prey to it more than ever.”³⁷

In thinking of fear and angst, one realizes that these modes of attunements are traces its origin from the cares and concerns of the past. While fear is something that we would immediately experience, it is however, subject to fall-prey to things that are not under the concerns of the self. Angst, on the other hand, can either be a consequence of fear, as it threatens man’s cares and concerns, or be simply a fear from without, as an anticipation of possible threats that has not yet made itself present or ready-to-hand. Angst differs from fear, in so far as the existential mood of fear would always come from things that are ready-to-hand. Angst is much more anticipatory, in so far as it goes beyond the immediate, and actively engages the world with a resolute response to threats that endanger its cares and concerns. Hope then, as a response to fear, is in itself subject to falling-prey because it is unable to sustain its hold towards an authentic self-determination and fulfillment of its futural cares and concerns. With this in mind, hope is understood in a deeper context of angst:

“In contrast to fear which is related to *malum futurum*, hope has been characterized as the expectation of a *bonum futurum*. But what is decisive for the structure of hope as a phenomenon is not so much the “futural” character of that to which it is related as the existential meaning of hoping itself. Here, too, the mood character lies primarily in hoping as hoping something for oneself. He who hopes takes himself, so to speak, along in the hope and brings himself toward what is hoped for. But that presupposes having-gained-onself. The fact that hope brings relief from depressing anxiousness only means that even this attunement remains related to a burden in the mode of having-been.”³⁸

The anxiety over the death of an idea that guides our individual telos discloses the horizon of our resoluteness to respond to the call of its needs. Hope in the midst of nihilism situates us to the things that really matter for us because it makes present to ourselves the willingness to go beyond ourselves to overcome the grief, tension, and burden of angst that grips the very core of our being. In this regard, hope is much closer to the call of our authentic existence by coming to terms with the values that need to be questioned in terms of its effect on our future. Here, hoping as a resolute response as a *Vorlaufer* is our measure of authentic existence.

Hope and Responsibility: Mittence as the Category of Authentic Existence

One of the important criticisms against Heidegger’s analysis of human existence through the questioning of the modes of attunement of Da-sein is that its ontic and

³⁷ Ibid., §68, 316.

³⁸ Ibid., §68, 317.

ontological analysis is still subject to the problem of solipsism in so far as it limits itself to what is already disclosed to Da-sein in its inner world.³⁹ Furthermore, through his analysis of Da-sein, Heidegger admits that to some extent that *Being and Time* fails to further expound the depth of Da-sein's disclosedness due to the failure of his own choice of language (the language of metaphysics).⁴⁰ Heidegger's response elicits a different approach to the analysis of Da-sein that tries to move away from the traditional language of metaphysics. Instead of following a *Kantianesque* writing style, Heidegger follows the poetic style Hölderlin and Nietzsche in *Contributions to Philosophy*. Heidegger's motifs in the Contribution are characterized by both an assertive and resolute movement of man towards the resolution of distress caused by nihilism to the swaying motion of be-ing⁴¹ (*Da-seyn*). Heidegger insists that in overcoming the distress that comes from nihilism, one opts to approach this distress with a certain sense of hesitation, a hesitation that is neither calculative nor estimative, rather it is an intrinsic understanding of the swaying grounding of being as it flees and finds home in a new beginning. As a resolute response to the echo or the angst of being grounded in being, one's active resolution of the distressed is signified by the *leap*⁴² towards a new grounding to act as the sheltering conduit of Being.

Despite this poetic appropriation of responding to nihilism, one is still stuck with the problem of solipsism in Heidegger's philosophy. The problem is not explicitly resolved in the *Contributions*, rather we find it resolved within the preparatory disclosure of Da-sein in *Being and Time*. As a given condition of being, man is always already living along with others (*mitda-sein*)⁴³, the others serve not only as a starting point of understanding one's ontological difference, but also as a general feature of its own cares and concerns:

“As opposed to the theoretically concocted “explanations” of the objective presence of others which easily urge themselves upon us, we must hold fast to the phenomenal fact which we have indicated of their being encountered in the surrounding world. This nearest and elemental way of Da-sein of being encountered in the world goes so far that even one's own Da-sein initially becomes “discoverable” by looking away from its “experiences” and the “center of its actions” or by not yet “seeing them all. Da-sein initially finds “itself” in what it does, needs, expects, has charge of, in the things at hand which it initially takes

³⁹ Vallega-Neu opts that this limitation is seen in Heidegger's understanding of conscience as a “call from afar” is simply a call from the self to respond “properly” through its own most convictions and concerns. Daniela, Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Contribution to Philosophy (An Introduction)* (Indiana University Press, 2003), 15-16.

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, trans. by David Farrell Krell (Harper San Francisco, 1992), 231.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, §4, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, §5, 11.

⁴³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §25, 109-110.

care of in the surrounding world.”⁴⁴

This salient feature of being-with-others opens up the extent not only of one’s personal responsibility to one’s self, but also its own responsibility to others as a part of its care of its world. To a greater extent we can see that the task of resoluteness in hope is only made authentic once man is able to acknowledge connection with the world through others.

The Value of Nihilism in Hope

In Nietzsche we find the notion of nihilism as a value shaking moment that discloses an innate existential distress. Nihilism as a moment of distress that questions the appropriateness of the values that we have come to inhabit and revere, as such, it is possible as a sign of strength or weakness to either grow from this distress or wallow in the weight of the lost of values found within a telos of an idea. Heidegger’s analysis of nihilism and the existential response of man through authentic hoping and opens up a deeper understanding of how man answers the anxiety that shakes the very foundation of its own most potentiality. The futural implications of nihilism offer to us a decisive reflection of its importance in the existential mood of hope as a resolute response to its distress.

To conclude, one can think of the word existence in the sense of hoping, as an authentic and resolute answer to the call of distress. It answers the distress not by simply looking at its own solipsistic interest but also to the social dimension of its being-with-others. One then proposes and existence of resolute hoping by continuously participating with the project of the self in relation to others, and no longer a Being of *exit-ence*, a being that is simply comported by the inability to address the real and authentic areas of its own care.

⁴⁴ Ibid., §26, 112.

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