

Heidegger and the ethics of care

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Abstract

The claim that, in some nontrivial sense, nursing can be identified with caring has prompted a search for the philosophical foundations of care in the nursing literature. Although the ethics of care was initially associated with Gilligan's 'different voice', there has more recently been an attempt – led principally by Benner – to displace the gender perspective with a Heideggerian one, even if Kant is the figure to whom both Gilligan and Benner appear most irretrievably opposed. This paper represents the first half of a double-edged project: initially, to point out that Heidegger explicitly disowns any ethical implications for his ontological thinking, and to argue that no ethical theory (including an ethics of care) can be derived from *Being and Time*; and then to argue that Kant's categorical imperative is not only compatible with the ethics of care but actively entails it. In this, Heideggerian, part of the argument, I consider three attempts to wrest an ethics from *Being and Time* – those of Benner, Olafson and Guignon – suggesting that, for different reasons, they all fail. Benner systematically confuses the ontological with the ontic, not recognizing that care, concern and solicitude have 'deficient' modes as well as positive ones, and that Heidegger's ontology retrieves the possibility of an ethics-in-general without at any point implying an ethics-in-particular (whether of care or justice). Olafson does recognize this, and to that extent admits his failure, but his efforts to amplify Heidegger's thought in such a way as to generate an ethical theory involve both the importing of Kantian premises, and an appeal to some rather doubtful empirical observations. Guignon resorts to Heidegger's discussion of authenticity, and the idea that authentic Dasein 'may choose its hero', suggesting a morally reassuring list of heroes who might fit the bill. However, there is nothing in Heidegger's account of this choice that justifies his confidence,

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and I conclude by proposing that we should take Heidegger at his word when he says that ontology has ‘no result, no effect’.

Introduction

There have, I think, been three main conceptual developments in the recent literature on nursing and caring. First, in the early 1980s, nursing adopted an ethics of care that was initially associated with – and, to some extent, remains associated with – Gilligan’s (1982) highly influential contribution to developmental psychology (see also Noddings, 1984). Second, Leininger (1984) introduced the idea that nursing might, in some nontrivial sense, be identified with caring, and this view has become equally entrenched, although her particular version of it (caring as the *essence* of nursing) has not always found favour, and is in fact rather easy to rebut (Edwards, 1996). Third, in trying to establish a philosophical foundation for the ethics of care, Benner has proposed a Heideggerian framework in which, given an adequate phenomenological concept of the person, caring is seen to have ‘primacy’ (Benner & Wrubel, 1989). In this paper, I am not especially concerned with the second of these, but I shall be dealing with the first and particularly the third (not surprisingly, they are closely connected).

Gilligan is not a philosopher, and her interests are largely empirical. Her early views represent a criticism – certainly an important qualification – of Kohlberg’s interpretation of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981). According to this interpretation, there are six stages through which we may pass during childhood and youth, the final stage being the end of a linear progression towards moral maturity (although not everyone will attain this). The culmination of Kohlberg’s scheme, the highest stage of moral development, is the adoption of universal principles of justice, grounded in a recognition of personal autonomy. Gilligan, observing that the subjects of Kohlberg’s researches (initially, at any rate) were all male, focused her attention on women, and found a ‘different voice’, suppressed in Kohlberg’s findings, and at odds with the moral reasoning characteristic of men. This ‘voice’ does not prize individual separa-

teness and autonomy, nor does it make an ultimate appeal to justice. Instead, it begins with relation and connectedness, and hesitantly explores the possibilities of interdependence, rather than deriving logical conclusions from moral equations. It stands, not for an ethics of principle, but for an ethics of care.

It has frequently been noted that Kohlberg’s highest stage bears a close resemblance to Kant’s moral philosophy (Hekman, 1995), and to the essentially Kantian perspective of Rawls’ theory of justice (Rawls, 1971). Indeed, Kant’s thought (or a popular account of it) plays a pivotal role in the debate following the publication of Gilligan’s book, in that the principle of autonomy, together with the categorical imperative, is regarded as the epitome of a way of thinking about morality which the ethics of care must inevitably challenge. Also it is Kant who finally provides the link to Benner, because in privileging the ontology of Heidegger in their understanding of the person, Benner & Wrubel make it clear that the Kantian version of autonomy is one of the concepts they are attempting to undermine (Benner & Wrubel, 1989; Benner *et al.*, 1994). In a sense, therefore, the gender axis on which the ethics of care was originally inscribed has been displaced, in Benner’s work, by an ontological axis, and the primacy of caring finds a new home in Heideggerian phenomenology. What the two approaches have in common is that Kant remains the *bête-noire*, a dark philosophical adversary hovering in the background.

In the rest of this paper, I want to begin the process of turning this picture on its head. I will wish to argue, eventually, that the ethics of autonomy and the ethics of care are not inimical to each other. Now by this, I do not mean that they can both be accommodated in practice – a compromise position (so-called ‘domain relativism’; Flanagan & Jackson, 1987) that has been suggested from time to time, and not least by Kohlberg himself (Kohlberg, 1984). I mean that they are not inimical to each other in principle. I think that (i) Kantian ethics are not the ethics of justice – not,

at any rate, in the sense usually intended; (ii) the categorical imperative is not incompatible with the ethics of care; (iii) more radically, the categorical imperative (together with the principle of autonomy), far from being opposed to an ethics of care, actually entails it.

However, that phase of my project will have to await another paper. In the meantime, I shall focus on the Heidegger part of the equation, and suggest that: (i) there is no ethical theory in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962), because Heidegger was not particularly interested in ethics; (ii) furthermore, it is not possible to derive an ethics – and certainly not an ethics of care – from that book; and (iii) while Heidegger's discussion of authenticity is conducted in what might be called an 'ethical register', the idea of authentic existence cannot be identified with any form of ethics that nurses are likely to find congenial.

Assuming both the Heideggerian and the Kantian halves of this argument are correct, it would follow that, if we propose to justify the ethics of care – as part and parcel of a strategy designed to identify caring and nursing – the philosopher to whom we should be appealing is not Heidegger, but Kant. However, a full defence of this claim cannot be accommodated in a single paper; so here I will defend only the Heideggerian half, leaving the Kantian portion for another occasion.

The absence of ethics in *Being and Time*

It may seem strange to suggest that a work whose key terms include 'care' (*Sorge*), 'concern' (*Besorgen*) and 'solicitude' (*Fursorge*) has nothing to say about ethics in general or the 'ethics of care' in particular. So it may be necessary to begin with a short account of what Heidegger is trying to achieve, even at the risk of offering a caricature. In view of the limitations of space, I shall make no attempt to explain the terminology, and to that extent I am presupposing a basic familiarity, if not with the text, then at least with one of the introductions to it (of which Mulhall, 1996, is the most accessible).

It is not exactly true to say that *Being and Time* is an attempt to undercut certain forms of scepticism,

but one of the important things that Heidegger's ontology permits him to do is show why scepticism, in many of its familiar guises, cannot get started. Division One includes an attack on Cartesianism which emphasizes this point, because Descartes' method of philosophical inquiry is the traditional jumping-off point for the sceptic. If everyday involvement in the world is 'primordial', and the withdrawal to a theoretical, reflective, or scientific point of view is derivative (or, as Heidegger puts it, 'deficient'), then it is impossible to wonder whether the world, as physical reality, exists. Dasein is essentially Being-in-the-world, and it is that *before* it can be anything else. Concerned absorption in the world, disclosed as a nexus of equipment – things ready-to-hand, and transparently available for use – is ontologically prior to reflection, prior to the sense of ourselves as minds contemplating a present-at-hand reality which, conceivably, may be an illusion. So the sceptic's premise is denied. As Mulhall says 'an analysis of Dasein as Being-in-the-world deprives the sceptic of any possibility of intelligibly formulating her question' (Mulhall, 1996, p. 45).

The same goes for what is known in philosophy as the 'problem of other minds'. Even if I accept the existence of people as bodies, the sceptic asks, what reason do I have for supposing that these bodies have minds, like mine, 'attached' to them? What proof can there be? This is a question to which the Cartesian can provide no convincing answer. As before, however, Heidegger's ontology outflanks the sceptical premise. Dasein is, primordially, Being-in-the-world, but it is also, equiprimordially, Being-with ('*Mitsein*'). It is, so to speak, in the company of others (or the Other) *before* it can be conceived as an entity in isolation from others. It follows that scepticism about other minds is no more viable than scepticism about physical reality. 'The world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a *with-world*.' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 155 [118])

So far, I have been discussing epistemological scepticism, but there is another form of scepticism that is more directly relevant to the subject of this paper – moral scepticism. In this case, the nature of the sceptic's question is exactly the same. Each of us

will no doubt agree that we have good reasons for doing what is in our own interests. Acting morally, however, often (and, it is very plausible to suggest, usually) means having to do something that goes against those interests. What persuasive reasons can there be for doing that? It is important to see that this is a general question, not a specific one. The sceptic is aware that if she asks, in any particular instance, what reason she could have for doing this or that, some moral justification will be forthcoming. The point of the general question, however, is to enquire why justifications of that type can ever be taken as a convincing reason for acting in a manner that is counter to self-interest. The philosophers who have argued with the sceptic on her own terms have normally tried to show that, however unlikely it may appear at first sight, acting morally *is* – in the final analysis, we might say – acting in one's own interests. The general view, however, is that this is not a very promising line of thought. Other philosophers have side-stepped the query by attempting to justify morality through reference to the concept of 'human flourishing'; but this will not satisfy the sceptic, whose objection is precisely that other people's interests are not *prima facie* reasonable grounds for acting against her own.

If Heidegger is going to outflank the moral sceptic in the same way that he outflanked the epistemological sceptic, we might expect him, in Mulhall's terms, to 'deprive her of any possibility of intelligibly formulating her question'. In point of fact, he does not do this explicitly. Nevertheless, it is quite clear what his reply would be, and it is certainly consistent with that strategy. To explain this, though, I will have to say more about Being-with.

Being-in-the-world is, intrinsically, concern. Dasein is involved in things, has uses for them, furthers its projects by employing and transforming them. If 'care' is the generic structure of Dasein ('for as "care" the Being of Dasein in general is to be defined') then 'concern' is that specific aspect of care that belongs, as Heidegger would express it, to Being-in-the-world. So there must also be a specific aspect of 'care' that belongs to Being-with, as equiprimordial with Being-in. This is solicitude. Just as Dasein is 'always already' concerned with things that are ready-at-hand, so it is

always already solicitous for the Others it finds in the with-world. Heidegger does not in fact say a great deal about solicitude: he spends no more than a couple of pages on it. However, its role is evident, and parallel to concern. In particular, where concern is ontologically prior to the derivative ('deficient') modes of abstraction, solicitude is ontologically prior to the derivative modes of indifference.

There are two significant observations that can be made about this claim. In the first place, it represents the sort of answer to the moral sceptic that we might have anticipated earlier. A moral appeal to other people's interests does not need to be justified in terms of one's own interests. It does not need to be justified at all. A concern for the welfare of others is part of Dasein's ontological condition, as it were, and is (in that sense) prior to selfishness or indifference. Dasein is a solicitous entity, and it is that *before* it can be an indifferent or self-interested one. We are, to that extent, moral beings, so it makes no sense to ask what reasons we can have, in general, for acting morally. It would be a bit like asking why keys are used to unlock doors, or why clocks are used to tell the time (although Heidegger himself would not endorse this somewhat Aristotelian analogy).

Secondly, however, we must be cautious about exactly what the ontological claim entails. For one thing, it obviously does not imply that people will always act in a morally appropriate manner, and all too clearly they do not. The ontological claim is not an empirical generalization about what Dasein will always, usually, or even often be inclined to do. Just as we frequently disengage from concern, for the purposes, say, of reflection or theoretical analysis, so we can disengage from solicitude for the sake of pursuing self-interest. Indeed, as Heidegger notes, 'Dasein maintains itself proximally and for the most part in the deficient modes of solicitude' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158).

Still less is it the case that we can infer moral ideals (let alone moral injunctions) from the ontological claim. Ontological primacy is not ethical primacy. It does not follow from the fact that solicitude, in its positive modes, is ontologically prior to the deficient modes of indifference or selfishness, that acting for the welfare of others is the right thing to do – or even

the best thing to do – in a particular situation (see Koehn, 1998, for a shrewd comment on circumstances in which selfishness is the best option). So the decision to act in this way, in a specific instance, is not something that can be justified by appealing to ‘solicitude’ (any more than using a key to unlock a door can be justified by saying: that’s what keys are for). What Heidegger has done is show that, *in general*, acting on moral grounds, out of solicitude, does not require an extraneous justification, and cannot be given one. However, this does not licence the view that we should, in a *specific* instance, act on such grounds. Unlocking doors may be ‘what keys are for’, but it does not follow that we cannot, or should not, use them for other purposes, such as wedging the door open. A moral ‘ought’ is not to be derived from an ontological ‘is’.

The question of how I should act in a particular situation is what Heidegger would term an ‘existentiell’ or ‘ontic’ matter. Even if we generalize this question, and enquire what sort of ethics should inform our approach to dealing with the world and other people, it remains an ontic, rather than an ontological, query. In just the same way, scientific and theoretical investigations – into the origins of the universe, the biochemical basis of life, or the structure of society – generate ontic knowledge, specific theories about this, that or the other disclosed entity. This is just the sort of question that Heidegger does not consider. Indeed, he has no interest at all in questions of this kind; as a philosopher he restricts his attention to the nature of being itself, and to the ontological conditions for the disclosure of entities in general. Throughout *Being and Time*, on matters that are potentially of scientific, social scientific, political or ethical concern, he never shows the least inclination to ‘follow the ontic trail’ (Thrift, 1996).

This, then, constitutes a preliminary conclusion to the discussion so far. There are no ethical theories in *Being and Time* and, in particular, nothing that represents any sort of commitment to either an ethics of care or an ethics of justice. Because solicitude belongs to Dasein as Being-with, and because the world in which we dwell is a with-world, there is no occasion to doubt the cogency of moral reasons for action, no basis for supposing that morality, in general, must be

in need of justification.* But the existentiell question of what sort of morality this should be, what sort of ethics we should adopt, is one that is simply not addressed. In principle, both the ethics of justice and the ethics of care, as ontic alternatives, would meet the ontological condition of Being-with, and Heidegger makes absolutely no attempt to adjudicate between them.

Attempts to wrest an ethics from *Being and Time*

This omission has certainly puzzled a number of commentators. In a recent book on Heidegger and ethics, Olafson (1998) notes that neither the concept of Being-with, nor its ethical implications, ‘can be said to have been at the centre of his thought about being as such’. He continues in a footnote:

It does not seem to have occurred to Heidegger . . . that the chief significance of his conception of being as presence lay in what it implies about our relations with one another. The idea that reciprocal presence involves a kind of recognition that is implicitly ethical is simply not to be found in his work. (Olafson, 1998, p. 97)

Olafson’s remark illustrates a general tendency to imagine that Heidegger’s work must have ethical implications of some kind, even if Heidegger himself did not notice them. In what follows, therefore, I will briefly consider three recent efforts to derive an ethics from *Being and Time* – those of Benner, Olafson, and Guignon – arguing that, on each occasion, the attempt ends in failure. My analysis is aided by the fact that, in Olafson’s case at least, the failure is more or less admitted.

* This does not, of course, mean that there is any such thing as ‘morality-in-general’ (ontically) devoid of specific implications. Heidegger’s position is that there will always be ‘moral considerations’, but he refuses to privilege any particular moral view. Analogically, we can say that physical objects must, in general, have shape, without specifying the shape of any particular object we encounter – and without implying that there is something called ‘shape-in-general’ which some object may actually have.

Benner

To say that Benner & Wrubel (1989) attempt to derive an ethics of care from *Being and Time* is not strictly accurate. They discuss caring without reference to an ethics *per se*, and the only place in which the ethics of care gets a mention is in the following passage:

The ethics of care and responsibility may be seen as complementary but also as more basic than a strict ethics of rights and justice. For example, rights and justice are remedial in a context of caring; therefore, rights and justice, while important, are not sufficient and must be grounded in an ethic of care and responsibility . . . [references at this point include Gilligan, 1982] . . . We maintain that autonomy is not the pinnacle of achievement in adult development . . . Instead we hold that caring and interdependence are the ultimate goals of adult development . . . Caring is the most basic human way of being in the world . . . [references here include Heidegger, 1962] . . . (Benner & Wrubel, 1989, pp. 367–8)

The view advanced here goes somewhat further than Gilligan, because Benner & Wrubel in effect reverse Kohlberg's hierarchy, portraying caring and interdependence – rather than autonomy – as the 'ultimate' goal of development; and it is evident, from the final sentence, that they would justify this move by appealing to Heidegger's philosophy. To this extent, then, my claim at the beginning of this paper – that Benner has displaced the gender axis of care with the ontological axis – seems to be an accurate one. To describe this displacement as a 'derivation' of the ethics of care, however, is slightly misleading. We should say, instead, that Benner takes caring to be fundamental for Heideggerian reasons; that, accordingly, she takes the ethics of care to be more 'basic' than the ethics of justice; and more speculatively, that she sees no point in making ethics the reference point for a discussion of caring in nursing, because the ontological 'primacy' of caring renders an ethics, as such, redundant (we do it anyway, so to speak).

However, there are some tensions and ambiguities in this position. For example, caring is the most basic human way of being in the world, but it is also, with interdependence, the ultimate goal of adult development. It is not immediately apparent how it can be

both. It looks as if the inversion of Kohlberg has been superimposed on Heidegger's view, with the result that caring is represented *both* as an ontological condition (this is what we are) *and* as a developmental achievement (this is what we can become). It may be possible to argue, of course, that this is not the contradiction it seems to be. After all, Heidegger concedes that 'Dasein maintains itself proximally and for the most part in the deficient modes of solicitude', so an ability to 'maintain' oneself in the more positive modes may count as an attainment, a successful realization of what one 'truly' is.

This argument may resolve the apparent contradiction, but, in the context of *Being and Time*, it still confuses the ontic with the ontological. Solicitude, it should be recalled, is an ontological idea. The distinction between its positive modes and its deficient modes is a distinction between 'concern for the welfare of others' and the lack of such concern: indifference, selfishness and malice. The ethics of care and the ethics of justice are both ontic possibilities, and they are both subsumed under the ontological concept, 'concern for the welfare of others'. The ontological primacy of solicitude does not therefore establish the ethical primacy of 'caring' (when this is opposed to an ethics of justice).

There are, in other words, two different contrasts here: the ontological contrast between (positive) solicitude and indifference, and the ontic contrast between the ethics of justice and the ethics of caring. Benner & Wrubel confuse the two – mainly because, in their argument, the word 'caring' does double duty. It refers both to (positive) solicitude and to the ethics of care. This permits them to slide from an ontological premise to an ontic conclusion. Caring (ontological) is the most basic way of being in the world, so caring (ontic) must be more basic than justice. It should be clear by now that, in Heidegger's terms, this is an illegitimate inference.

The slide from ontological to ontic is characteristic of the arguments that Benner & Wrubel employ elsewhere. Discussing theory and practice, for example, they make the following observation:

The . . . premise that theory is derived from practice is based upon the Heideggerian view that practical engaged activity

is more basic than, and is prior to, reflective theoretical thinking . . . We take the stance that theory about human action and concerns cannot be mechanistic and causal in the formal sense. Theory about human issues and concerns must be descriptive and interpretive. (Benner & Wrubel, 1989, p. 20)

This is to confuse ontological primacy with methodological primacy. Questions about how we should explain and understand human activity are ontic and, again, Heidegger shows no interest in them. As I have noted before (Paley, 1998), the fact that detached, theoretical reflection is derivative does not imply that it can tell us nothing new, valuable or interesting about the social world; nor does it imply that scientific findings and causal explanations are incapable of changing how we construe everyday practical affairs. It is absurd to suppose that psychological and sociological theories must be rejected if they contradict what we are normally inclined to say, although Dreyfus (1994) gets perilously close to making this claim (Benner & Wrubel's reading of Heidegger is largely based on Dreyfus' commentary). The ontological primacy of 'practice' means that we cannot think of ourselves as essentially theoretical beings, for whom concerned engagement in the world (Being-in and Being-with) is an optional extra. It does not mean that practice is necessarily privileged or inviolate, immune to theoretical correction.

Olafson

Unlike Benner & Wrubel (1989), Olafson (1998) recognizes that Heidegger refrains from any attempt to identify Being-with as the ontological foundation for ethics. Yet he remains convinced that it can provide such a foundation, and his study is intended to show how and why this is true. Olafson concedes that 'an amplification of Heidegger's account of *Mitsein* seems to be required if it is not to prove ethically vacuous' (p. 49), and that what he will propose 'is a constructive philosophical account of the ground of ethics . . . [which] must be judged on its own merits' (p. 6). However, the 'amplification' turns out to involve concepts drawn from non-Heideggerian sources, and chief among these sources – or so I

will suggest – is the apparently unlikely figure of Kant.

Olafson's account[†] of the problem is as follows: the concept of *Mitsein* cannot generate the 'peculiar binding character that is the hallmark of distinctively moral relationships'. In order to establish a basis for this 'binding character', he argues that *Mitsein* implies a recognition of the Other as an 'Alter Ego' – a being which, in spite of the characteristics that make it different from Ego, has something significantly in common with it:

This identity in difference is due to the fact that, for all the great differences that set one human being apart from another, any human being as an entity that has a world is the same as any other because that world is the same for every human being. (Olafson, 1998, p. 56)

This is an interesting move, and it has distinctly Kantian echoes. Olafson's 'identity in difference' is not, as it is for Kant, the autonomy of a being capable of making rational decisions; but it is, nevertheless, a 'formal' identity in virtue of which all human beings have 'equality and equivalence'. It expressly abstracts from the unique individuality of each *Dasein*, and locates moral significance in the acknowledgement of sameness. The morally significant self is, in other words, something distinct from its particularity; it is an antecedently individuated being, whose essential attribute identifies it with, rather than distinguishes it from, other similar beings.

There is here a close parallel with the 'antecedently individuated subject' which critics of Rawls find in the latter's neo-Kantian theories (Mulhall & Swift, 1996). By rooting his justification of liberalism in the 'original position', in which autonomous choosers decide on political arrangements, Rawls (1971) deprives these autonomous subjects of the specific characteristics – values, ends, attachments – which make people what they are. As a consequence, it is argued (for example, Sandel, 1982; MacIntyre, 1981), he also deprives them of the basis for any meaningful, recognizably human, choice. The 'identity in difference' that Olafson ascribes to *Dasein* does not coincide

[†] In this section, I refer to *Mitsein*, rather than to Being-with, because it is the term that Olafson himself routinely prefers.

with the idea of an autonomous chooser of ends, but in separating the self from all 'the circumstances that differentiate the positions we occupy and the functions we perform in the social order' (Olafson, 1998, p. 60), it achieves the same effect. In making this observation, I am not myself arguing against the neo-Kantian position; I am merely suggesting that Olafson has transposed Dasein to a Kantian framework.

It is, in this respect, worth noticing that Olafson's examples of moral responsibility, lying and promising, also have a Kantian ring. The justification for keeping promises, and refusing to lie, are not of course derived from a 'moral law', governing the exercise of a rationally free will; but again, the structure of the argument runs parallel to Kant's. For Olafson, the obligations we must honour are binding, not on autonomous self, but on a self that is a 'moral partner' with every other human being. Everything I can cite in justification of some action, Olafson says, 'must be accessible to those to whom this justification is offered'. Here, then, is the same universalism that one finds in Kant, the same cross-culturalism that critics (especially Walzer, 1983) ascribe to Rawls. It can come as no surprise, then, to find Olafson suggesting that *Mitsein* generates 'rules that give effect to the underlying equivalence of one human life with another', that it yields a 'deontological principle', and that it 'restricts our options as the principle of right has been supposed to do'.

There is, however, a further role that Olafson wants *Mitsein* to play. Because the rules that *Mitsein* generates are not unconditioned, as the moral law is for Kant, there is a risk that compliance with them will depend on the expectation of reciprocation. Olafson therefore requires (or thinks he requires) a new dimension:

What is now required is that *Mitsein* be shown to be deeply implicated in the condition of our own and everyone's well-being or happiness. What this amounts to is the claim that the happiness of each one of us stands in a relation of interdependence to that of others, so that the well-being of Alter cannot in principle be indifferent to that of Ego, even if there is no sign of a reciprocating interest on Alter's part. (Olafson, 1998, p. 82).

The necessary claim is substantiated by an appeal to the idea that at least one version of happiness is

the fulfilment of a lifelong purpose, and that this fulfilment is contingent upon the response of other people – specifically, their support while the effort is being made, and their recognition of what has been achieved. I think this view has a number of weaknesses. First, it seems to rest on a rather shaky empirical generalization, and it is hardly surprising to find Olafson struggling with some obvious counter-suggestions. Second, to the extent that the generalization is true, it applies most clearly to those who are closest to us (as Olafson's main example, bringing up a family, indicates); on what basis it can be extended much beyond that inner circle, let alone to 'everyone', is very far from self-evident. Third, the 'massive, residual dependence', as Olafson calls it, can be no less vulnerable to the kind of disingenuousness and exploitation that he discusses with reference to the deontological axis, and which encouraged him to propose the new 'dimension' in the first place. Fourth, it is possible to argue that the new dimension is itself a Kantian import because it closely parallels the duty to be benevolent (see Gewirth, 1982, for an interesting comment on this idea). The main difference is that, for Kant, failing to recognize this form of interdependence is immoral (but conceivable), while for Olafson it is a solipsistic and incoherent fantasy.

Whatever we make of this line of thought, however, we can confidently assert that it does not originate with Heidegger, as Olafson frankly admits. It switches attention from the ontological to the ontic, and its plausibility hangs on an ambitious claim that looks all too susceptible to empirical disconfirmation.

In summary we can say that, where Olafson's first dimension involves the importing of Kantian ideas into the Heideggerian position, with Dasein portrayed as an antecedently individuated subject, his second resorts to a form of naturalism, precariously balanced somewhere between an ethics of care and the familiar, but not entirely plausible, view that one's own interests inevitably implicate other people's. Olafson's achievement (if I can put it a little uncharitably) is to have shown that two familiar types of ethical theory, often regarded as mutually inconsistent, are both compatible with Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein*. However, if the reading of Heidegger that I

outlined earlier is correct, this is precisely what we should expect. *Mitsein* is an ontological idea, and the fact that Dasein is Being-with (as well as Being-in) merely shows that we are intrinsically moral entities, for whom a general justification of 'acting morally' is superfluous. What type of 'morality' this should be, however, is an open question (ontologically) because the actual selection of an ethical standpoint is an ontic matter. *Mitsein* itself is indifferent to the possibilities Olafson sketches, whether justice, care, or enlightened self-interest. If we now enquire as to the reason why it is indifferent, the answer, crudely, is just this – because, potentially, it encompasses them all. *Mitsein* is, as Olafson's title suggests, the ground of ethics-in-general, but it does not imply any ethics-in-particular.

The ethical register in Heidegger

It is true, however, that part of Heidegger's discussion, including his analysis of the idea of authenticity, takes place in what might be called an 'ethical register'. It seems to occupy the space that ethics would be situated in, and to carry the same sort of weight. If 'ethics' has a significance of a certain type, parts of the existential analytic, especially in Division Two, appear to share that kind of significance. Heidegger recognizes this explicitly in the *Letter on Humanism* (Heidegger, 1993), where he finally comments on the relationship between ethics and ontology. The passage is worth quoting:

If the name "ethics", in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ethos*, should now say that "ethics" ponders the abode of man, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who exists, is in itself the original ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance because it is ontology. (Heidegger, 1993, p. 258)

So ontology is the 'original ethics', insofar as it 'ponders the abode of man'; but it is not 'ethics in the first instance', by which I take Heidegger to mean that it is not 'ethics' as we normally think of it. Ontology, we could perhaps say, retrieves the possibilities of existence by telling us what we are, but it does not tell us what we should do. It is not the kind of 'thinking'

from which we can draw moral conclusions; and if we expect there to be a connection between an account of 'our place in the universe' and the sort of values, principles and ideals we should espouse, Heidegger consistently refuses to fulfil that expectation. A little later, he poses the question more directly:

... can we obtain from such knowledge directives that can be readily applied to our active lives? The answer is that such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass before this distinction. Such thinking is, insofar as it is, recollection of Being and nothing else ... Such thinking has no result. It has no effect. (Heidegger, 1993, p. 259)

The position could hardly be stated more clearly. Still, the idea of an 'original ethics' is undeniably a powerful one; in particular, the concept of authenticity has what might be described as practical connotations, to the extent that it seems to require the exercise of responsibility (even if this observation would need to be heavily qualified: 'practical' in some sense, 'requires' in some sense, and 'responsibility' in some sense). So, to this extent, authentic existence appears to point us in a particular direction, and that direction looks as if it must be in some way preferable to the inauthentic alternative. However, from the standpoint of 'ethics in the first instance', there is little that is attractive (in the first instance) about authenticity. To illustrate this observation, I shall finally consider an attempt to link authenticity more directly to moral concerns.

Guignon

There is another term, apparently borrowed from a certain type of ethical theory, which appears in *Being and Time*, but which we have not yet considered. This is 'conscience' (*Gewissen*), and it plays a central role in Heidegger's account of 'authenticity'. Like many of the words in Heidegger's technical vocabulary, it should not be taken at face value, because the use he makes of it is only indirectly related to its conventional meaning. Usually we think of conscience as a kind of 'inner voice', uncomfortably reminding us that what we have done, or propose to do, is not morally acceptable; but for Heidegger, while the idea of a voice remains, the 'call' it issues is a summons, a beck-

oning, and what it beckons us towards is not moral propriety but a taking hold of existence.

Everyday Dasein, being absorbed in the world, is also lost in it. Thoroughly at home in the with-world, it is overwhelmed by the 'everybody' of Das Man, and thereby loses its potentiality for genuine selfhood. In this inauthentic mode of being, Dasein allows itself to become existentially 'passive', a cork bobbing on the waves of existence, rather than a figure swimming and diving. To modify this (personal) imagery, inauthentic Dasein is a consumer of lifestyles rather than a producer of an individual life, it is a loose series of anecdotes rather than a story, it is the driven not the driver. Permitting this, Dasein abandons at least half of its heritage as 'thrown projection'. It accepts the inheritance of the with-world ('thrown'), but evades the opportunity – Heidegger would also say, the responsibility – of creating a self ('projection'). However active, energetic, thrusting, or ambitious we may be, so long as our purposes simply mirror the endless possibilities in the world around us, we remain inauthentic, and existence remains the gift that we are unable to own. To achieve authenticity, on the other hand, is to establish a genuine basis for the self, the fluctuations of desire giving way to resoluteness, and the welter of fragmentary moments yielding to the totality of an integrated life.

The ontological details – how inauthenticity is a flight from Being-towards-death, and how confronting death as the characteristic of existence that is most intrinsically mine is a necessary condition for taking hold of existence authentically – need not concern us here. The main point is that authenticity involves taking responsibility for who I am and who I will become, recognizing that at every moment I am in the process of building a life – a life that is 'my' life, not merely in the sense that I am the one living it, but in the sense that I have created it.

This taking hold of existence is independent of ethical considerations, and Heidegger nowhere connects the authentic and the moral. As Olafson comments:

... in choosing authentically can we fail or go wrong in some sense that has ethical relevance or does resoluteness itself constitute the only warrant we can have for what we do?

It does not appear that an answer to this question (and certainly not an affirmative one) can be gathered from Heidegger's writings. It is surely significant, however, that the account he gives of conscience makes no mention of other human beings as figuring somehow in this responsibility that is constitutionally ours. (Olafson, 1998, p. 47)

Guignon (1993) has, however, suggested that the connection can be made. Drawing on passages in *Division Two*, he notes that 'authentic Dasein "remembers" its rootedness in the wider unfolding of its culture, and it experiences its life as indebted to the larger drama of a shared history'. This is why Heidegger can say that authentic Dasein 'may choose its hero' and is 'free for the struggle of loyally following in the footsteps of that which can be repeated' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 437 [385]). Guignon goes on to suggest some of the heroes and heroines Dasein might choose: Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Helen Keller and Malcolm X. From a moral point of view, and with the possible exception of the last named, this list is a reassuring one. If authentic Dasein always modelled itself on such figures, and if there were some good reason for thinking that this kind of choice is inevitable, then it might well be possible to associate authenticity with moral decency, or even moral supererogation.

Unfortunately, however, there is nothing in Heidegger's account which justifies this confidence. There is no reason to suppose that the 'heroes' must be moral heroes, and the language Heidegger uses in describing this loyalty conjures up darker possibilities:

Resoluteness implies handing oneself down by anticipation to the 'there' of the moment of vision; and this handing down we call 'fate'. This is also the ground for destiny . . . (Heidegger, 1962, p. 438 [386])

We can take it that the historical resonances here are coincidental, even if Heidegger's association with the National Socialist Party, and the fact that he admitted that the basis for this association was his concept of 'historicity', rather strongly suggests otherwise (the principal source for Heidegger's political career is Farías, 1989, but see Sheehan, 1993 for further references). Setting aside the record, there is every reason to think that the language is intended to

be morally neutral. But this does not help Guignon's case, because there is still nothing to prevent a Hitler, a Capone, or a Crowley being added to the list. Or, for that matter, a Hemmingway, a Warhol, a Curie, or a Thatcher. Such 'heroes' and heroines can also be identified with 'paradigmatic stories', sketching out 'plot lines' for one's own life history. The idea that authentic choice must also involve a form of moral commitment is therefore illusory.

The responsibility that Heidegger invokes in his account of authenticity is not, then, a responsibility to other people (as Olafson is obliged to concede). It is a responsibility to oneself, and invites us to acknowledge that our own actions, our own lives, are just that – ours, and nobody else's. There is a moral neutrality inherent in this concept,[‡] a kind of impartiality that is indifferent to whatever existentiell loyalties an authentic Dasein might possess; it permits choices that are consistent with the deficient modes of solicitude as well as choices that express a commitment to the welfare of others. In this respect, therefore, authenticity is no more capable of guaranteeing an ethics of care (or an ethics of justice) than *Mitsein*. So it can be of little help to nurses seeking to establish a proper philosophical foundation for the practice of caring.

We must, I think, take Heidegger at his word when says that ontological thinking 'has no result, no effect'. The existential analytic explains the possibility of ethics without, at any point, implying a particular ethical theory. Neither authenticity nor Being-with can perform this function, and attempts to make them perform it must import concepts from outside the Heideggerian framework, or pursue the 'ontic trail' in a way that Heidegger himself refuses to do. It would seem to follow that, in order to provide a moral surety

[‡]Hodge (1995) might disagree, because she believes that the call of conscience is a summons to ethical questioning, although she accepts that 'the relation to self, for good or ill, is privileged over the relation to others' (p. 203). But her view rests on the idea that ontology is 'disquotational ethics' – which is to say, not an ethics in the usual sense at all, because she has disclaimed any interest in ethics as the 'specification of a concern with the well-being of human beings and with deriving rules of human conduct' as early as page 2 of her book.

for the ethics of care, nurses must adopt one or both of these strategies, and search for the philosophical basis of caring somewhere other than in Heidegger's ontology.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to several people who offered comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I must thank, in particular, Steve Edwards, Joan Liaschenko and Sue Billington both for their insight and for their encouragement; I hope that they are not becoming weary of my constantly bouncing ideas off them. I would also like to express my gratitude to the anonymous referees of *Nursing Philosophy*, who offered valuable advice on how the paper might be improved.

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