Writing the Self

Case Studies in Phenomenology and Fiction

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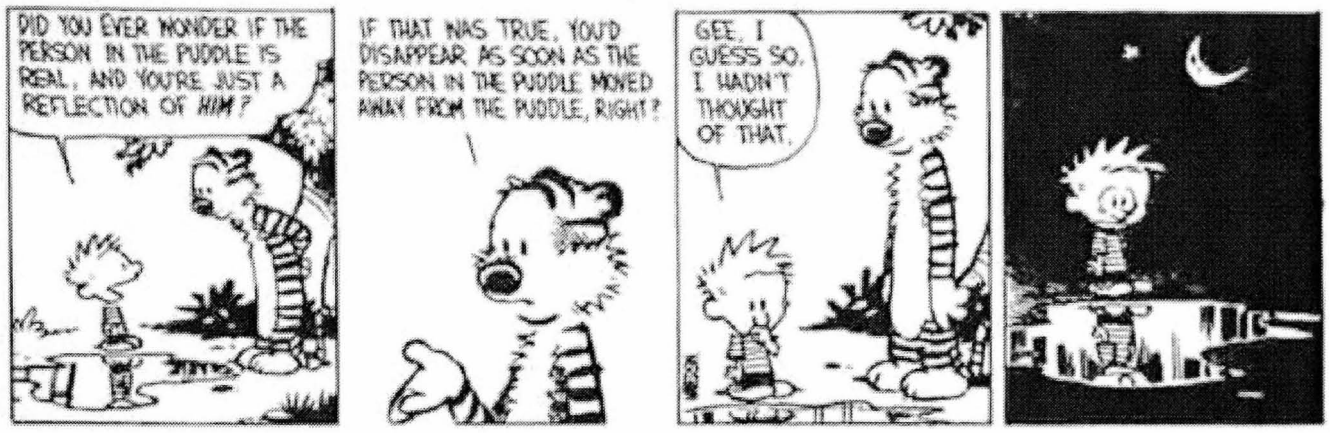
DID YOU EVER WONDER IF THE PERSON IN THE PUDDLE IS REAL, AND YOU'RE JUST A REFLECTION OF *HIM*?
IF THAT WAS TRUE, YOU'D DISAPPEAR AS SOON AS THE PERSON IN THE PUDDLE MOVED AWAY FROM THE PUDDLE, RIGHT?
GEE, I GUESS SO. I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT.

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Abstract

Writing the Self: Case Studies in Phenomenology and Fiction explores the way in which the notions of self, being and consciousness find expression in works of literary fiction and philosophical texts. It raises the question of whether there are paradigmatic features that are distinctive to philosophy and imaginative literature in their engagement with ontology. Whilst discussing various works of imaginative literature and philosophy, this thesis concentrates on aspects of Husserlian phenomenology and Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962) from the philosophical tradition and focuses on three selected works of post–1900 literary fiction: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), and Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* (1944).

In an essay on "Literary Attestation in Philosophy", Robert Bernasconi asks, "Literary texts have a certain autonomy, but what happens to them when they are submitted to philosophically inspired readings?"(Bernasconi in Woods 1990: 24). This thesis argues that literary texts need not be "submitted" to philosophically inspired readings. Bernasconi makes an error by using the word "submitted". The texts themselves are not written with a view to supporting the philosophical claims made in a philosophical treatise. This is how both philosophy and literature retain their autonomy. This thesis will demonstrate how autonomy functions differently from insularity purporting that such a distinction is often overlooked. What is not being investigated in this thesis is whether or not philosophy can be used to prove fiction as an application of philosophical ideas. Rather, what is intended is to read them both as different enterprises but at the same time together. Coming together is not to be understood in the same way as dissolving the differences that exist between the two. Nor are the two fields to be understood as mutually dependant. Literature does not derive its conception of "literature" in opposition to the conception of philosophy nor vice-versa.

Chapter I of this thesis is a discussion of the theoretical foundation upon which the remainder of this thesis will rest. Through the discussion of selected works of

philosophy and literary fiction, this chapter will lay down the theoretical parameters of the issues under examination in the chapters that follow. In chapter II Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) is studied in conjunction with Heideggerean and phenomenological thought. Chapter III takes as its point of departure the question of essence and existence in *The Waves* (1922) in order to examine the exploration of the Heideggerean notions of the ontic and the ontological. Chapter IV focuses on Bellow's *Dangling Man* (1944) and examines the way in which the protagonist's struggle in it is explored as a battle between the particular and the universal, and consequently as a strife between notions of essence and existence and ontic and ontological. The conclusion to this thesis endeavours to provide a premise within which ontology and hermeneutics may be understood in imaginative literature and philosophical writing.

The intention is never to prove that a work of fiction is phenomenological or Heideggerean but rather to highlight the treatment of Being, Consciousness and the Self in literary fiction and philosophical enquiry. This thesis aims to understand the manner in which the concepts of the ontic and the ontological are expressed in literary fiction and philosophical texts, and does so by raising the question of whether in fact the literary enterprise as opposed to the philosophical one is more adept at expressing either of the two concepts. Based upon such an examination, this thesis, strives to examine whether or not philosophy and literary fiction exist as two separate enterprises by traversing both the similarities and discrepancies that exist in the two fields.

Introduction

Revisiting the Ancient Quarrel: Literature and Philosophy

We can indeed distinguish, precisely and objectively, literary works from philosophical, historical, or scientific works, for certain ends. But we cannot do so by listing internal properties possessed by works of one kind and not the other. A literary point of view can often and fruitfully be adopted to, for instance, philosophical works, particularly those that employ textual features, such as dialogue, narrative form or fictional example, which are characteristic of more paradigmatic works of literature. But a literary interest cannot be adopted at the same time as a philosophical interest. The two are categorically distinct [...] The purposes behind philosophical, historical, or scientific works are different, as are the modes of apprehension and the expectation of "rewards". But there is no reason to think that these differences lie at a deep "metaphysical" level, that discourse falls into "natural kinds", or that they rest on profound differences in the way that truths are disturbed in the objective world. They are differences in practices: in ends sought, expectations raised, conventions followed, rewards attained.
---*Fictional Points of View,* Peter Lamarque 1996

I devoted myself first to metaphysical speculations, then to scientific idea. Finally I was drawn to sociological theories. But at no point in the various stages of my search for the truth did I find security or relief. I read little in any of these fields, but in what I did read of all these theories it wearied me to see how contradictory they were, though all were based on a convincing line of argument, all equally probable and in accord with certain chosen facts that seemed to stand for *all* facts. If I raised my weary eyes from the books, or if my restless attention wandered off to the outside world, I saw one thing that negated the usefulness of all reading and thinking, that plucked off one by one all the petals from the idea of that effort: the infinite complexity of things, the immense sum [. . .], the infinite unattainability of the few facts one needs in order to create a science.
---*The Book of Disquiet,* Fernando Pessoa 1991

My choice of the two passages quoted above serves to set in motion the argument presented in this thesis. But it does more than that. The two passages indicate also the methodology adopted and the relation of the methodology to the content of the argument. *Writing the Self: Case Studies in Phenomenology and Fiction* investigates through the Heideggerean categories of the ontic and the ontological, and through aspects of Husserlian phenomenology, the paradigmatic differences in the expression of self, being and consciousness in a philosophical treatise and imaginative literary fiction. But before it may attempt to do so, it begins first by raising the question of whether in fact such a difference does exist.

This introduction serves to highlight the aims of the present thesis. It will accordingly undertake to illustrate the problematic inherent in the establishment of rigid boundaries between imaginative literature and philosophy. However, it will also demonstrate the problematic of replacing such rigid boundaries by entirely fluid ones. Chapter I provides the theoretical framework on which the argument of this thesis rests. This chapter will outline the aspects of Husserlian and Heideggerean thought, relating it to the history of philosophy and demonstrating the manner in which imaginative literary fiction and philosophy will be read alongside each other in light of the problematic associated with the defining of boundaries between the two fields of thought. The following three chapters set the theory into motion by focussing upon a particular text of literary fiction and reading it alongside Heideggerean and Husserlian thought.

I would like to begin the discussion by stipulating the aims and ambitions of the argument in this thesis. Firstly, in phenomenological style, this thesis is a study that must focus on a specific range of topics and texts whilst bracketting out what lies beyond the extent of such a study. Hence, my intention is limited to providing the general tendencies that are prevalent and dominant through the debate. I do not hold that all philosophers and literary writers be understood according to the framework outlined in the argument that follows. I have chosen for the purposes of this study three literary texts. Whilst I propose that a similar manner of reading can be extended to other texts within the fields of literature and philosophy, I am not by any means suggesting that the method of reading that is proposed in this thesis will hold true for every text under the conditions I outline in the first chapter of this thesis.

Any study that seeks to investigate the paradigmatic differences between philosophical works and works of imaginative fiction must take as its point of departure the "ancient quarrel" between the two fields of thought that Plato discusses in Book 10 of *The Republic* (2003).[1] Suffice it to say here that Plato declared that all poets be banished from the ideal state because literature was a form of lying and hence could prove detrimental to society. Philosophers on the other hand were raised on a pedestal and

[1] In book 10 of *The Republic*, Socrates warns Glaucon about the dangers of poetry. He remarks "We may assume, then, that all the poets from Homer downwards have no grasp of truth but merely produce a superficial likeness of any subject they treat, including human excellence. [...] Then we can fairly take the poet and set him beside the painter. He resembles him both because his works have a low degree of truth and also because he deals with a low element in the mind. We are therefore quite right to refuse to admit him to a properly run state, because he wakens and encourages and strengthens the lower elements in the mind detriment of reason, which is like giving power and political control to the worst elements in a state and ruining the better elements. [...] Our defence, then, when we are reminded that we banished poetry from our state, must be that its character was such as to give us good grounds for so doing and that our argument required it. But in case we are condemned for being insensitive and bad mannered, let us add that there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (Plato 2003: 367, 373, 376).

were prescribed to be kings in order to bring about the perfect functioning of the state. With this decisive move begins the marking of territories between what is considered "literary" as opposed to "philosophical" writing, and thus the ousting of poets from *The Republic* and the simultaneous installing of philosophers as rulers begin the history of a continuing battle between literature and philosophy in Western thought. Critical work on the dynamics of the relationship between the two disciplines has been wide ranging. However, the very fact that the debate has been ongoing for centuries emphasises the presence of a distinction between the two rather than undermining it. For if there were no such differences then all discussion regarding whether or not philosophical works and imaginative literary fiction be treated in more or less the same ways with the same intentions and results would in fact be redundant.

Let us briefly turn our attention to Richard Rorty, for two reasons. First, Rorty's comments on the concept of "literature" and "literary criticism" are ones that I shall turn to in order to explain my own position. Second, his views on hermeneutics and textual interpretation serve as a point of departure by means of which I shall explain the methodology of the argument in this thesis. But this study is by no means informed by or pitched against Rorty generally. I am merely illustrating my own standpoint by placing the debate within a context, in this case Rortian, in order to set the debate into motion. He begins by raising the position of "literary criticism" to cover all kinds of writing: novels, plays, poems, theology, philosophy, social theory, political discourse and so on.[2] By extending the scope of "literary criticism", what follows logically, he argues, is that

[2] In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Rorty writes about his conception of the way in which the very concept of literary criticism has broadened over the years. He writes "It originally meant comparison and

the scope of "literature" itself has been broadened because literary criticism deals with works of a literary kind. There is now simply one category into which texts of all kinds fall and that is the category of "literature". Closely related to his view of what falls under literary criticism, is his view, on the task of interpretation of these works of "literature". He writes:

> A text just has whatever coherence it happened to acquire during the last roll of the hermeneutic wheel, just as a lump of clay only has whatever coherence it happened to pick up at the last turn of the potter's wheel [...] the coherence of the text is not something it has before it is described [...] its coherence is no more than the fact that somebody has found something interesting to say about a group of marks and noises — some way of describing those marks and noises which relates them to some of the other things we are interested in talking about. (1992: 27)

Every text then is a collection of a different set of "marks and noises" and consequently the distinction between various kinds of writing, literary, philosophical, historical, scientific, is at best non-existent or simply lumped under "a seamless, undifferentiated 'general text'" (1991: 87). Several problems arise with such an analysis. It is not Rorty's argument against an essentialist conception of disciplines that is at issue here, but the way in which he stretches his anti-essentialist analysis. He is correct to state that there is a fundamental quality or a formula against which texts may be judged as being literary or philosophical. But I propose that there is a problem with treating all kinds of writing in the same manner, so much so, that to do so makes all writing and interpretation of all writing a redundant task. The task of hermeneutic interpretation entails a method by which a certain text is interpreted in a particular manner. For instance, the tools with which we interpret a literary text make demands of a different nature from those that we

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evaluation of plays, poems and novels — with perhaps an occasional glance at the visual arts. Then it got extended to cover past criticism (for example, Dryden's, Shelley's, Arnold's and Eliot's prose, as well as their verse). Then, quite quickly, it got extended to the books which had supplied past critics with their critical vocabulary and were supplying present critics with theirs. This meant extending it to theology, philosophy, social theory, reformist political programs, and revolutionary manifestos. In short, it meant extending it to every book likely to provide candidates for a person's final vocabulary" (1989: 81).

use to interpret a philosophical treatise. We might perhaps choose to focus on the literary devices used in a philosophical work but that does not imply that philosophical texts become literature. Quite the contrary, we say instead that the philosophical text in question uses literary devices. I further find a problem with Rorty's views on the task of interpretation. Interpretation is certainly not a way of merely relating the "marks and noises" in a text. That would imply that "anything goes". There is a difference between a plurality of interpretations and stating that the text's "coherence is no more than the fact that somebody has found something interesting to say about a group of marks and noises". Rorty confuses three things: the intention of the author at the time of writing the text, the task of interpretation by the reader or the critic, and the consequent meaning of the text. To sever the author from the text does not necessarily mean that anything and everything can be read into a particular text and consequently a text cannot be read in any possible way by a critic or a reader. To postulate something of this nature is simply incorrect. And that is precisely why his theory works. Because to say that a text can be read in any possible way is also to suggest that every interpretation is as good as the other. No differences exist between any kinds of writing because potentially each text can be interpreted in every possible manner.

Opposed to Rorty is Kendell Walton, an American philosopher of aesthetics who argues in *Categories of Art* (1970: 339–67) that art can be better appreciated when understood according to the category that it works within. For if the category is known then much can be said about the work's aesthetic qualities. Hence, knowledge about impressionistic methods would help determine whether an impressionistic work of art is well constructed. Of course, Walton talks about art, and whether or not his theory can be

extended to literature and philosophy is questionable but nevertheless something to be thought about. It is perhaps Wolfgang Iser who best provides a view in direct opposition to Rorty on the subject of literature and the task of interpretation. According to Iser, literature provides a space where the imagined and the actual become superimposed. The reader of a literary text does not simply extract a supposedly inherent meaning from the text but rather interacts with the world of the text in such a way so as to be both constrained, as well as transcend what is said within the text. The reader's interpretation and understanding of the text is limited by both what is said in the text and what is left unsaid. This serves to blur the distinction between fiction and reality. Because fiction offers the element of the possible or the alternate whilst at the same time it involves shared elements of a common actuality, there is a communion between the fictive and the real. Iser discusses the philosophical implication of the dynamic between reader and text. Because human existence is a realm of possibilities, literature allows for a process of self-discovery. Hermeneutics of the text become a hermeneutic of oneself. He explains in a in a lecture on "The Significance of Fictionalising" [3]:

> If a literary text does something to its readers, it also simultaneously reveals something about them. Thus literature turns into a divining rod, locating our dispositions, desires, inclinations, and eventually our overall makeup. [...] In what is to follow, we shall focus on fictionalizing as a means of actualizing the possible in order to address the question why human beings, in spite of their awareness that literature is make-believe, seem to stand in need of fictions. (1997: 1)

Reading and interpretation of a text become a process whereby the self is revealed, constructed, imagined and grasped. Literature allows for an experience of a coherent self otherwise inaccessible to the individual, yet at the same time, because fictional texts might generate multiple meaning effects, it also provides a parallel to the fundamental

[3] Iser's lecture was later published in the journal, Anthropoetics III, No. 2, 1997.

element of various possibilities that is the self. Hence, what Iser is suggesting is that the groundlessness of being oneself is analogous to the groundlessness of the meaning-effects generated by a literary text. Groundlessness suggests the inability to fix an unchanging and atemporal meaning.

Perhaps the debate on the problematic interrelationship of literature and philosophy might gain something from a separation of philosophy into the analytic school and its continental counterpart. Arthur C. Danto explains analytic philosophy as a discipline that has always maintained solidarity with science as opposed to the arts. What are the implications of this similarity between analytic philosophy and science, at a time when all texts are read as "literature" in the manner that Rorty (1989, 1992, 1991) and Derrida argue (1981, 1982)? Danto's primary question throughout his "Philosophy as/and/of Literature" (Cascardi 1987: 1–23) is whether or not in Derridean fashion he agrees with the claim that philosophy is literature. Danto's essay seeks to bridge the gap that has been formed by analytic-semantic and intertextual accounts of literature and its relationship to philosophy. Both of these, according to Danto, limit literature's connection to the world. The semantic theories, for instance, suggest that literary worlds do not refer to or correspond to the world but are distortions or imagined variations of the world. Theories of intertextuality suggest that literary texts work horizontally and thus the world of one text refers to the world of another, as opposed to analytic texts, which refer vertically to the world outside and hence to "truth". "Truth" here is understood in the traditional sense as a correspondence between the world in the text and the physical world outside. It is by introducing the role of the reader in philosophy and literature, that Danto brings together the two fields whilst simultaneously keeping them

apart. Each time a text is read, a dimension of the self is revealed. This, he argues, is the case for literature as well as philosophy. But it is precisely at this juncture that philosophy differs from literary writing. He explains:

> So philosophy is literature in that among its truth conditions are those connected with being read, and reading those texts is supposed then to reveal us for what we are in virtue of our reading. This revelation is not metaphorical, however, which is why I cannot finally acquiescence in the thought that philosophy is literature. (Cascardi 1987: 23)

Danto offers the example of the Cartesian *Meditations*, in which the reader is required to co-meditate with the writer in order to discover the philosophical self. However, in order to read the text, the reader must be "the kind of individual the text requires if he can read it, and the text must be true if it can be read" (Cascardi 1987: 22). Where literature retains metaphoricity, philosophical texts may begin as metaphors but end as fact, according to Danto, for the discovery of a dimension of self, being or consciousness is not an imaginative product, but happens in the course of engaging with the philosophical text. Hence, for Danto, theorists such as Derrida, who argue that all texts be read as literature, are quite plainly wrong.[4]

In their attempts to identify a line of demarcation between philosophy and fiction critics often turn to Searle and Austin on speech-act theory. Peter McCormick (Cascardi 1987: 52–74) explains the current model of speech-act theory according to which the

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[4] There is much argument about Derrida's own writing on this issue. Derrida famously declared metaphysics to be "white mythology" by which he meant that philosophy, like literary writing, is inundated by metaphors such as "eidos", "logos", "telos", "ouisa", and also by myths such as "transcendence", "homecoming", and so on. These, Derrida argues, in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), get transformed over time into pure abstractions. Much criticism revolves around his claim that philosophy must be treated as just another kind of writing and thus one must deconstruct philosophical texts as one would literary and other texts. Yet other critics suggest that Derrida is not privileging literature or literary criticism over philosophy and that he does not advance the claim that philosophy be included within the genre of literature. This is further supported by his rejection of a rule or genre, based on which texts may be distinguished (1982).

distinction between philosophy and literary texts may be found. He goes on to test the theory with three texts of a supposed non-fictional nature and ends with the suggestion that speech-act theory fails to provide a rule for any such difference between the two fields. According to Searle and Austin, saying and doing can be understood on the same plane. But does this hold in the case of fiction? The standard view suggests that fictional texts as opposed to non-fictional ones (philosophy), contain not illocutionary acts and the performance of these but the representations of illocutionary acts.[5] The distinguishing word here is "representation". McCormick shows the inadequacy of such a formulation. Finally, if fictionality can be said to be based upon speech-act theory, as it has been in many cases, then there would have to be place for a theory of genre as well as a kind of rule to keep the two separate from one another. By comparing a number of fictional texts and philosophical ones (non-fictional), using the speech-act theory, McCormick illustrates how this too proves to be insufficient and a deficient mode of keeping the two fields apart and distinct.

There has also been a tendency throughout the debate around literature and philosophy to elevate the status of one in an attempt to illustrate its dominance over the other. The predominant view has been either of the following: that literature has conquered philosophy or that philosophy occupies the privileged position of a superior kind of

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[5] In "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse", John Searle poses the question of why and how fictional texts elicit response and generate value and meaning despite the fact that, as a form of discourse, they are built on pretence. He writes "So my first conclusion is this: the author of a work of fiction pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts, normally of the representative type. Now *pretend* is an intentional verb: that is, it is one of those verbs which contain the concept of intention built into it. There is no textual property, syntactical or semantic, that will identify a text as a work of fiction. What makes it a work of fiction is, so to speak, the illocutionary stance that the author takes toward it, and that stance is a matter of the complex illocutionary intentions that the author has when he writes or otherwise composes it" (1975: 325).

discourse. In *Literature Considered as Philosophy* (1957), Everett W. Knight takes exactly this approach. He says in his introduction, "Philosophy has always exercised a strong, where not determining influence upon literature, to such an extent that the latter is often a sort of practical demonstration of the principles of the former" (1957: xiv). He argues that this remains the case for as long as the task of philosophy is considered to be the search for Truth. Then several pages later he writes about the changed situation. "What is new in the current situation is not that literature has become philosophical — it has always been so — but that philosophy is seeking through literature to regain access to existence. However, such recourse could only result in the gradual absorption of philosophy by literature, in the pulverization of philosophy into as many systems as there are authors, unless the particular could somehow be made universal" (Knight 1957: 80). Clearly, the relationship between literature and philosophy seems at best to be one of power and dominance. But the relationship between the two fields is also determined by the varying theories on truth and objectivity. The view is that philosophy is no longer equipped or concerned to provide statements about a universal and generalising theory of truth. Philosophy as conceived by Descartes or Hegel no longer holds. But that does not imply that philosophy as an enterprise has been pulverised, and there is no reason to assert so vehemently that it has. To do so need not be seen as a condition upon which the place of literature may be consolidated.

The dynamics of the relationship between philosophy and literature is further complicated by the rift within philosophy between what is commonly referred to as the analytic and the continental divide. The question here is not that the face of literature has changed, but instead that the notion of "philosophy" has undergone a metamorphosis.

I shall not delve into much depth regarding the tensions prevalent within such a divide. To do so would merit an entirely independent study. However, it is of importance at least to acknowledge the troubled relation between the two schools of philosophy since it has much to bear on its relation with literature. In "Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Explaining the Differences" (2003), Neil Levy undertakes to elucidate the divergences between the continental and the analytic divide. He postulates that whilst continental philosophy models itself on modern art, analytic philosophy models itself on the methods of modern science. But what in fact does such a conception entail, and more importantly, what implications does it have for the intricate relationship that has existed between imaginative literary writing and philosophical enquiry? Amongst several other things, Levy points out that, like modernist painting, continental philosophy is characterised not by a search to find what still has not been found, but rather, by revolutions that challenge established and old ways of thinking and encourages new perspectives of seeing. Analytic philosophy, like science, on the other hand, is a cumulative enterprise and is defined by a search to find answers to questions that have been posed. Because continental philosophy revels in challenges and revolutions, it is constantly aimed at disrupting established foundations and subverting ways of understanding the world and ourselves, before they become sedimented. In the case of analytic philosophy, revolutions become part of the entire enterprise not as disruptions but as part of its history. Finally, he explains that where analytic philosophy has clearly defined its problems and works toward finding a solution to these, continental philosophy will decline vigorously from even formulating problems lest this should narrow the horizon and prevent the emergence of radically new possibilities. If we subscribe to this model of understanding philosophy, it can be argued that philosophy

has not been pulverised nor is it extinct. Neither can it be suggested that philosophy has entered the margins of literature or that it has been transformed into literature. Once again, let us look at Knight's comments but this time in the light of Levy's argument. Knight writes:

> The fear of the traditionalist that the existentialist heresy may eventually lead to the disappearance of philosophy as a separate discipline is perhaps ill-founded, but the very essence of philosophy may well be transformed. For if truth is part of existence itself and not the distillation of some complex scientific or logical apparatus, then it is accessible to all of us; it becomes, *par excellence*, the domain of literature. (1957: xiii–xiv)

Knight writes specifically with reference to existentialist philosophy but this may be applicable to continental philosophy in general. He begins by stating that the disappearance of philosophy as a discipline is an unlikely event, but soon after goes on to suggest that in dealing with such a changed notion of truth as existence, philosophy has entered the sphere of literature. Is he suggesting that with a shift in the essence of the philosophical enterprise philosophy itself has changed so that it resembles literature more and more? Or, is there an inconsistency in his argument and in his explanation that even though philosophy as a discipline still exists it has nevertheless been appropriated by literature? I am not entirely sure if it can even be suggested that the essence of philosophy has changed. Perhaps it is more fruitful to acknowledge two different schools within the discipline of philosophy: analytic and continental. This is justified by the fact that any history of Western philosophy would include both schools and hence all talk of the essence of philosophy must fail were one to consider this. Several scholars also emphasise the fact that philosophy enters the domain of literature with the recognition that a reverence of the universal, which philosophy has so far entrenched itself in, has

now given way to the particular which literature has traditionally been the custodian of.[6] But there are complications inherent in any such argument as well.

In 1921, the "Newbolt Report" on "The Teaching of English in England" remarked that "All great literature has in it two elements, the contemporary and the eternal [...] To concentrate the study of literature mainly on the first aspect [...] is to ignore its nobler, more [...] universal element" (Widdowson 1999: 47–48). Clearly then if philosophy has penetrated the sphere of literature by an examination of the particular, literature has infiltrated philosophical space in its concern with the universal. In an interview with Richard Von Oort (1997), Iser speaks about exactly how the impulse for fiction is derived from the inability to experience the self as a coherent self. The impossibility to have complete hold of the self is in part related to the fact that we are unable to experience death. Until the fact of death, the self is as yet unrealised and in a state of constant becoming. This is compounded by the question of whether or not it is possible to grasp existence. The self is always unfolding and never static. Heidegger refers to this as being-ahead of oneself. Here is what Iser says:

> As early as the sixteenth century we have had reflections on fiction and fictionality. [...] Now there are a great many things of which we can be pretty certain. We shall die. We have been born. But we neither shall have an experience of these events nor any knowledge of them. One could further say that we do not doubt that we exist, but we do not know what this existence is. If you are a believer, then you know what it is. But if not, you are not satisfied with this not-knowing. As the events mentioned are impenetrable in terms of experience and knowledge, we produce fictions. To put it in Beckett's terms, either we live — but then we don't know what it is to live — or

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[6] On the issue of the particularity of literature, Lamarque writes in *Fictional Points of View* (1996), "Nevertheless, the novel does offer a further condition for determining truth in art: good art reveals the *particular*. Here, particularity is not contrasted with universality but rather with generality or theory. The view is, therefore, not necessarily in opposition to the Aristotelian doctrine that art yields universal truth in contrast to the particularity of history. There is no reason why such universal truth should not be attained through attending to the particular in fiction" (102–103).

> we want to know what it is to live, and thus we come up with all kinds of explanatory fictions in order to grasp what is barred from knowledge. (1997: 1)

Following Iser's remarks, the line between the particular and the universal become blurred. The two are interlocked. This thesis addresses the question of universality and particularity in literary fiction and philosophical enquiry by setting them alongside the concepts of existence and essence and the Heideggerean categories of the ontic and ontological.[7] I use the terms "universal" and "particular" with reference to literature and philosophy within a very specific context which I shall discuss in the first chapter of this thesis. However, whilst doing so, this thesis does not claim to attend to literary fiction/ literature and philosophy in its entirety. My use of the terms "literature", "literary fiction" and "philosophy" is placed within the context of the texts that are examined through the chapters in this thesis. Having said that, the argument in this thesis proposes that this particular understanding of literature and philosophy in terms of universality and particularity, essence and existence, ontic and ontological, can be applied in general to other texts in the two fields. It does not imply that doing so will negate other possible models of understanding and interpretation.

Further, I have earlier outlined that the issue of what comprises literature and philosophy by itself is a challenging and arduous task. However, any discussion on the concerns and questions that lie embedded within and across the two fields cannot begin without delineating a framework within which the two disciplines might be understood. In accordance, the following thesis begins with and pursues the task of demarcating a

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[7] An introduction and detailed discussion of the ontic and the ontological is undertaken in the first chapter of this thesis. The first chapter lays down the theoretical basis for the argument in the thesis. Hence the concepts of the ontic and the ontological will not be discussed in this chapter.

working conception within which the fields of "literature" and "philosophy" might be understood in general.

* * *

Throughout the argument in this thesis I have employed a certain terminology toward specific ends. In this section I will proceed to introduce the specific terms and concepts that have been used in the chapters that follow. Many of these terms have an incoherent and disputed definition, and hence the intention in this section is not to provide or construct a stable definition but to illustrate the various and often contradictory positions taken with reference to the terms and to highlight the way in which my argument will employ them within the scope of this thesis.

The term "consciousness" spans disciplines and is used in various ways across different fields of studies such as philosophy, neurology, cognitive science and psychology. Further, within a particular discipline itself, there is much debate and argument about what consciousness really denotes. There is for instance within philosophy a divide between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. Ned Block proposed that consciousness can be understood according to two types:

> Phenomenal consciousness is experience; the phenomenally conscious aspect of a state is what it is like to be in that state. The mark of access-consciousness, by contrast, is availability for use in reasoning and rationally guiding speech and action. (1995: 227)

Phenomenal consciousness (P-consciousness) refers to the experiential aspect of consciousness. It is experience itself. As opposed to phenomenal consciousness, Block argues that there is what is called access consciousness (A-consciousness). The experiential states that we have during an experience, for instance, of pain, heat,

boredom would be referred to as P-consciousness. Access consciousness involves non-phenomenal aspects of consciousness such as introspection, memory, and cognition. It involves processing of information or experience and also reporting it, constructing it and conveying it. In response to Block, Daniel Dennet (1995) questions the very premise of whether or not access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness can be clearly distinguished.

It has been variously argued that consciousness resides in the physical world or that it is separate and must be distinguished from the physical world. It has been located and often equated to the notion of a soul, it has sometimes been declared to be present in the neural workings of the brain. What is evident is that there exist several different stances on consciousness. More generally it comprises and is associated with notions of subjectivity, personal identity and the capacity to perceive and have awareness of the relationship between oneself and the environment. It is in this wide sense that the term consciousness will be used in the argument that is laid out in this thesis.

* * *

The term "being" is one that has been used extensively in ontology and metaphysics.[8] Being refers to anything that can be said "to be" and is hence used both for living beings as well as for objects and things. Hegel, for instance, distinguishes between the being of people and the being of things. However, it is with reference to Heidegger that I use this term in this thesis. Heidegger's task was to overcome metaphysics. Metaphysics is an enquiry of beings *qua* beings, but also of the fundamental ground for being. In this sense, metaphysics for Heidegger attempted to provide a solution to the problem of being by asking the question, "what is Being?" Heidegger argues that the problem of metaphysics lies precisely in the way the question is asked. Instead, he argues, one must ask what the meaning of Being is. It is only in this way that the problem of existence can be addressed. Heidegger questions the meaning of being and also the different modes of being. He differentiates between being as present-at-hand as in the case of objects, ready-to-hand which is the kind of being that tools and equipments possess, and the "*Da*" of *Dasein* or "being there" which is mode of being of human beings. Being is related to existence in the sense that it is the quality of is-ness of a particular thing or

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[8] In *Being and Some Philosophers* (1952), Étienne Gilson discusses the paradoxes inherent in the concept of being that have been the source of bafflement to philosophers over time. He explains how the very term "being" is fraught with ambiguity, expressing both the essence of a thing/person as well as the idea of existence and possibility. He writes that: "In a first acceptation, the word *being* is a noun. As such, it signifies either being (that is, the substance, nature, and essence of anything existent), or being itself, a property common to all that which can rightly be said to be. In a second acceptation, the same word is the present participle of the verb "to be". As a verb, it no longer signifies something that is, nor even existence in general, but rather the very act whereby any given reality actually is, or exists. Let us call this act a "to be," in contradistinction to what is commonly called "a being". It appears at once that, at least to the mind, the relation of "to be" to "being" is not a reciprocal one. "Being" is conceivable, "to be" is not. We cannot possibly conceive an "is" except as belonging to some thing that is, or exists. But the reverse is not true. Being is quite conceivable apart from actual existence; so much so that the very first and the most universal of all the distinctions in the realm of being is that which divides it into two classes, that of the real and that of the possible. Now what is it to conceive a being as merely possible, if not to conceive it apart from actual existence? A "possible" is a being which has not yet received, or which has already lost, its own to be. Since being is thinkable apart from actual existence, whereas actual existence is not thinkable apart from being, philosophers will simply yield to one of the fundamental facilities of the human mind by positing being minus actual existence as the first principle of metaphysics" (1952:6–7).

person. It is also concerned with how this is-ness is expressed in existence. In my thesis the term "Being" is used in this Heideggerean sense. Because of its relationship with the is-ness quality of objects and people, and because of attention to its manner of manifestation, the term is intricately bound to notions of the self, consciousness and personal identity.

The "self" as used in philosophy implies a unified being and is the agent of action and thoughts. There is the persistent question of whether over time different actions and thoughts may be attributed to the same self. I use this term in its broadest sense. Accordingly, it may be understood to be the source of consciousness and is enmeshed with the notion of a personal identity. Personal identity itself is one of the foremost concerns of this thesis. It includes both the diachronic as well as the synchronic facets of personal identity. Under the synchronic aspect one might investigate what kind of a thing a person is as contrasted to the diachronic aspect where what is investigated is the conditions under which it is possible to claim whether or not a particular person is the same over a period of time despite changes in behaviour, attitude, beliefs and actions. In this way, it is possible to look at the problematic notions of both "essence" and "existence". Thus, consciousness, self and Being are intricately related within the scope of this thesis.

It is not my intention to use a philosophical text in order to read certain texts of literary fiction or vice-versa. The argument does not postulate that literature is an imaginative application of philosophical terms. Rather this thesis attempts to examine whether or not philosophy and literary fiction exist as two separate enterprises. If it is arguable that

the two are indeed distinct from one another then there must be differences in modes of functioning, differences in terms of writing, differences in terms of intended meaning-effects and differences in terms of issues explored. It is impossible to address all these questions throughout the entire corpus of literary and philosophical thought. I will hence address the question of the self as it is approached in specific texts of post 1900-imaginative literary fiction and in specific aspects of Husserlian phenomenology and Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962). The intention in this thesis does not rest on claiming whether or not a particular writer is phenomenologically informed or whether or not the writer is Heideggerean or Husserlian. This is the reason I have chosen a selected text rather than focussing on the entire *oeuvre* of a writer's work. This thesis follows the method of bringing to light certain instances of the author's aesthetic philosophy in relation to the work that is being examined. However, by doing so it does not at any juncture make claims about the author's intention, rather it attempts to highlight a manner of reading that can combine author, reader and text. Roland Barthes's revolutionary essay on "The Death of the Author" (1968) provided a style or method of reading that sought to exclude the author's intention completely. There is a difference between the author's intention of a particular work and the author's aesthetic philosophy which applies to art in general. It is the latter I am concerned with, not the former.

Chapter one of this thesis is a discussion of the theoretical foundation upon which the remainder of my thesis will rest. In this chapter I shall lay down the parameters of the issues under examination in the chapters that follow. Because this chapter is largely theory based, it will look at the strands and the parallels that have existed and continue to do so between the two fields of literature and philosophy in general. This chapter will

also undertake a discussion of the ontical and the ontological as used by Heidegger and certain aspects of Husserlian phenomenological thought and the manner in which the understanding of these two concepts are pivotal for my own conception of a possible framework within which literary fiction and philosophical enterprise may be inspected. Because of the theoretical nature of this chapter I have refrained from using any one particular literary or philosophical text. Rather, I have adopted the manner of browsing over several writers and texts, both literary and philosophical, in an attempt to present a background of past and contemporary debates against which my study might be understood. This chapter will introduce and discuss aspects of Heideggerean hermeneutics and Husserlian phenomenology and will illustrate the way in which the subsequent chapters will bring together an analysis of particular works of literary fiction and phenomenological philosophy.

Chapter two, three and four explore the way in which the ontic and the ontological is expressed in philosophy by concentrating on Heidegger's *Being and Time* as opposed to literary fiction by focussing on three texts: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* ([1899]; 1999), Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* ([1931]; 1992) and Saul Bellow's *The Dangling Man* ([1944]; c2003).

Chapter two discusses Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in conjunction with Heideggerean and phenomenological thought. After a brief explication of the Heideggerean categories of the ontic and the ontological, this chapter will demonstrate how the ontic in Conrad's novella unearths itself both stylistically and in terms of content. Are there instances of the ontological too in Conrad's novella? If there are such instances of the ontological,

what implications do they have, if any, for the question of the expression of the ontological in literary fiction?

Chapter three concentrates on Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and Heidegger's *Being and Time.* Does Woolf try to convey the essence of existence or rather existence itself? From this central question, several others will be explored. I will discuss certain aspects of phenomenology and Heideggerean hermeneutics and illustrate certain striking similarities in literary fiction. I am not implying that there is a manifestation of phenomenological or Heideggerean thought in Woolf's text. Rather, I am demonstrating how the notion of the self, consciousness and being is expressed in the two texts, and examining whether either of the two, philosophical writing or literary fiction, is more adept at examining the self, or simply offer different paradigms of a study of consciousness and the self.

Chapter four undertakes a study of Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* alongside *Being and Time*. The concept of Heideggerean *Dasein* will be examined and related to Joseph, who is the authorial voice of Bellow's text. In Joseph's search for the self there is an ensuing conflict between an understanding of the self as essence and as existence. Joseph tries desperately to disclose the meaning of what it means to be and in his quest for the self it is possible to identify glimpses of phenomenology. Further, in his commitment to the diary in which he chronicles the self there is an implied hermeneutic of the self. The battle between existence and essence becomes a battle between the universal and the particular. It becomes evident from the first entry onward that Joseph is driven by the

questions "who am I ?" and "what does it mean to be ?" Keeping these questions at the focal point of my argument in this chapter, I shall address the question of how Bellow treats *Dasein* in his text always with the consciousness of writing literary fiction.

The conclusion to my thesis endeavours to provide a premise within which ontology and hermeneutics may be understood in imaginative literature and philosophical writing. At this juncture I shall discuss Stanley Rosen's, "The Limits of Interpretation" (Cascardi 1987: 213–241). Rosen claims in his essay that ontology and interpretation entail one and the same thing. The self is as much of a text, left open to interpretation, as the literary text itself. Rosen argues that theory contains limits. Hence any theory of interpretation as theory is virtually impossible. Does this then imply that both literary hermeneutics and philosophical hermeneutics are destined to end in a failure? If a particular work of philosophy takes up the task of ontology, and if certain texts of imaginative literature are immersed in questions related to the notion of the self, there is then what we call ontology, on the one hand, and interpretation, on the other. To put it in a slightly different manner, there is theory of interpretation, on the one hand, and the very task of interpretation on the other. Does this then imply that imaginative literature on the issue of being, consciousness and the self and ontological hermeneutics blend into one another so that literature and philosophy begin to amount to the same thing? These are some of the questions that I shall attempt to answer in the conclusion to this thesis.

The following thesis will demonstrate that, despite certain intersections between literary expression and philosophical enquiry, there is a very evident disparity between the ways in which literary expression functions to create meaning-effects as compared with

philosophical enquiry. As Steven Haugom Olsen remarks in his essay, "Thematic Concepts: Where Philosophy Meets Literature" (Olsen in Griffiths 1984: 75–95):

> Literature offers its own alternative realm of application for thematic concepts. It offers an imaginative rather than a discursive interpretation. And this possibility of applying thematic concepts in literary appreciation does not contribute to philosophical or theological insight. It constitutes its own form of insight, its own kind of interpretation of thematic concepts. It offers an imaginative rather than a discursive interpretation. [...] Literature does not compete with philosophy, nor does it instruct it. Literature and philosophy meet in thematic concepts, but it is not a meeting which leads to a marriage or even to holding hands. (1984: 92–93)

Olsen offers a more generalised account of the chasm between philosophy and literature. Further, the very assertion of the imaginative aspect of literature versus the discursive aspect of philosophy must be rigorously interrogated. The relation between literature and philosophy is a much contested one: there is much to be lost by encouraging a divorce between them, but to assert that they be tied together in matrimony is to promote a reductive appreciation of them.

Chapter I

In Search of Definitions: Literature And Philosophy

Not all literature is fiction, but the greater part of it is or involves fiction, invention, masks, playing roles, pretending, imagining, story-telling. [...] So in a way as word users we all exist in a literary atmosphere, we live and breathe literature, we are all literary artists, we are constantly employing language to make interesting forms out of experience which perhaps originally seemed dull or incoherent. How far reshaping involves offences against truth is a problem that any artist must face. A deep motive for making literature or art of any sort is the desire to defeat the formlessness of the world and cheer oneself up by constructing forms out of what might otherwise seem a mass of senseless rubble.
---*Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, Iris Murdoch (1997)

The I, the I — that is what is deeply mysterious.

---*Culture and Value*, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1984)

Introduction

The argument in this introductory chapter follows a threefold development. Hence, this chapter proceeds in three main sections. The first section serves to map out a general overview of the long-standing and contentious interaction that has existed through the ages between the disciplines of philosophy and literature. The overview is not intended to follow any chronological order, nor does it claim to be a comprehensive examination of the inter-relation between the two disciplines. My aim in offering such an overview is with a view to illustrate the rich dialogue that has traditionally existed and continues to exist between the two fields of expression and thereby to outline the context within which I place the argument of this thesis.

The second aim of this chapter is to provide a brief discussion of certain ongoing debates in relation to the proposed distinctions within the fields of literature and philosophy. In the second section, I look at the issues surrounding what has traditionally marked the boundaries between the two disciplines and the problematics associated with defining these boundaries and what has sometimes led to the view that there can be and that there has often been a collapsing of these very boundaries. I also make the argument that it may be possible for these two fields of intellectual pursuit to retain their territories despite their coming together. Indeed within this framework, I propose that in understanding imaginative literature and philosophy through different paradigms yet in a way that facilitates their coming together, we allow for a richer and more varied understanding of notions related to being, consciousness and existence.

Finally, the third section is meant to locates my argument within the general field of the debates that have prevailed for centuries. In this third part of the chapter, I state explicitly the aim of the thesis and the framework of the argument. The present chapter illustrates the problems associated with either a conflation or a rigid separation between the two fields of literature and philosophy.

The debates that surrond the difference between literature and philosophy go far back in time. Virtually all medieval philosophers of any repute were theologians. In the fourteenth century, Petrarch began to establish certain forms of knowledge or *studia humanitatis* that constituted history, philosophy and letters (poetry and prose) that in the present day is understood as the humanities. Petrarch's division produced several issues. Humanities implies a distinction between humanities and the natural sciences.

Humanism emerged as a reaction against Catholic church dogma and the the logicalistic, and deductive thinking that became closely associated with it. The humanist insistence was on an arts basis for education. Such a tension was apparent at the time in the universities of Paris and Bologna. In the present day the tension between the humanist way of thinking and education as opposed to the logical and deductive way of thinking is manifested in the difference between faculties. Immediately this brings to attention questions of truth and fact. Petrarch inaugurated this divide by separating humanities from theology and it is within this tradition that the humanities in understood even today. For Heidegger the past, heritage and tradition often determines the possibilities of the future. Philosophy and literature were working within a specific tradition. The goal of philosophy was to find answers. Literature was a web of metaphors where answers constantly escaped from one's grasp. Literature and poetry had a specific role that philosophy, as it had been delimited according to a past tradition could not fulfill. Does such an understanding of literature and philosophy against a historical background further problematise the distinction between literature and philosophy?

* * *

My approach throughout the thesis follows a phenomenological methodology. The term "phenomenology" is used to refer to both a twentieth-century philosophical tradition as well as a method of investigation. As a philosophical tradition, phenomenology is generally understood to have begun with Edmund Husserl who developed a method of investigation that involved focussing purely on the phenomena at hand.[1] In this sense, phenomenology studies things as they appear to the consciousness perceiving them.

There is thus an element of accessibility or originary givenness that is imperative in phenomenology. This means that everything that is talked about must be potentially accessible as the intentionally given object whether this be intuited, imagined or experienced bodily. There is immediately a correlation that exists between objectivity and the subjective experience of that very objectivity.

The concern lies not so much in whether or not the phenomena at hand exist in an objective sense but rather in the manner by which the phenomena disclose. Phenomenology would thus treat phantasy and imagination with as much validity as it would treat an act of perceiving an object that lies before the individual. By doing so the aim of the phenomenological analysis is to arrive at an understanding of the structures of consciousness through which knowledge can be gained. Structures of consciousness refer to acts of perception, recollection, experience, aspiration, reflection and so on. It is supposed that in these acts of consciousness, objects in the world, the self and the world as a whole, show themselves as they really are. Immediately, a correlation is struck up between the perceiving subject and the perceived object. This does not imply that the object *is* as what it appears for every individual. In finally comprehending the essence that defines a particular intentional act or a specific object, the activity of consciousness does not depend on a particular case of an intentional act but rather on the correlation of this particular case of intending and its *eidos*. *Eidos* or essence is that element or feature which is always necessary for an act/object X to be an X. Thus there is a movement from the contingent and particular case to the universal. This movement is termed the

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[1] The term phenomenology itself was used by many other philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Carl Stumpf and Brentano prior to Husserl. However, in the modern usage, as a systematic philosophical system and

Eidetic Reduction and is worked out by a strategy of "systematic variation in imagination".

The object that appears in its givenness always transcends the manner in which it is given. For instance, in my observation of a pair of scissors lying on a table, what is given to me is the frontal view. I am unable to see the underside of the pair of scissors. Even if I lift it up and hold it in front of me there is always some part of the scissors that remain hidden from any one particular angle of vision. Yet, this does not in any way convince me that there is no underside to the scissors. The object as scissors is always understood by me as having a front and a rear and is thus complete. However, in my observation of the scissors, the very act of observing itself is given to me entirely. The intentional state, unlike the object of intentionality itself, is not given to us in its limitations but always as a whole. Thus in reflecting on an intentional state we are able to understand it as completely given not simply as given in only one aspect.

* * *

How does my approach follow this phenomenological method?

Firstly, I am focussing my attention on a very specific area within the wide field of philosophy and literature and thereby isolating the "thing in question". Once the thing in question has been identified, it is focused upon with careful and rigorous attention and is subjected to a process of bracketing out, a holding in temporary suspension of all other data and assumptions regarding the object at hand which, within this context, will consist of assumptions and judgements related to what is understood as imaginitive

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technique of investigation, it is linked to Husserl.

fiction and philosophical entrprise. It will also consist in holding in temporary suspension judgements related to the author's own intention in relation to his or her work, and to previous critical conclusions regarding these works. Phenomenology begins with what is referred to as the "natural attitude" and concerns the sum total of all the assumptions and ordinary everyday beliefs we have about the world: what exists and what can be known about everything in the world: objects, time, the self, space, meanings and concepts and so on. The first step in phenomenological analysis is what is called *epoché* and *bracketing* and comprises *phenomenological reduction* (1969).[2] Phenomenological reduction is the process whereby one can describe the essence of the phenomena under investigation. It refers to the method of proceeding from that which is contingent and particular to the fundamental structures of consciousness and of the objects in the world.

Bracketing involves setting aside assumptions that we oridnairly rely upon in our everyday experience of the world and ourselves and calls attention to pure consciousness and pure phenomena. Bracketing literally involves placing in brackets empirical data or the natural attitude. By bracketting all such assumptions one is purely focussing on the manner in which objects reveal themselves in an act of intentional directedness.

Epoché which is a Greek term and a concept that Husserl borrowed from ancient skepticism literally means "to stop". It involves assuming a neutral position toward the

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[2] These are some of the terms that philosopher Edmund Husserl uses in his writings on phenomenology. The term *epoché* was borrowed from Greek skeptics and refers to holding in suspension. Bracketing was a term that Husserl borrowed from mathematics. Husserl himself was trained as a mathematician and philosopher. Husserl first used the term in *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1969).

world and the act of holding in suspension any judgements concerning the world as a whole, thus making possible a transition from phenomenology as the study of essence to a phenomenology as a philosophy. Because *Epoché* is not limited to merely one aspect of existence but to the world as a whole it allows for phenomenology to become philosophy. In order to understand this, it is imperative to understand that, like Aristotle, Husserl believed that philosophy must not study merely the being of one type of category in the world (the being of objects or the being of intentional states of consciousness) but rather, existence as a whole. And in order to study existence as a whole, one must begin by isolating that which is common to everything that exists in the world. That common denominator is Being.

What Husserl calls *eidetic reduction*[3] involves the process of imagining variations on aspects of the object or phenomenon that has been taken into consideration, that is, variations of the thing at hand that is being analysed. To put it another way, *eidetic reduction* involves introducing variations and noting the limits beyond which these variations might result in a change in the essence of the phenomenon toward which intentionality is directed. I offer a very straightforward and simple example. I might stare at my pair of black scissors and imagine it to be in a different colour. Does the change in colour affect how they work then as a pair of scissors? In doing such an exercise I am subjecting the pair of scissors to *eidetic reduction.* The aim of *eidetic reduction* is to arrive at the essential features of that which is in question. This is done

[3] This is a term used by Husserl for phenomenological inquiry. Husserl developed the strategy of *Eidetic Reduction*. The term was borrowed and adapted by him from Plato's Greek word *eidos* meaning universal essence. Husserl explains these terms in *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1969).

within the confines of my thesis, by the choice of different literary texts. Through such a process, would it be possible to arrive at the essence of works of literary fiction and philosophical enterprise? The question that will be posed is whether Heidegger's explication of the being of *Dasein* can be applied to the characters in these literary texts in an analysis of the meaning of Being. If Heidegger's ontological categories of Being are given expression in the literary texts I examine, can this expression be seen as an imaginative exploration of the ontic? Further, if that is the case, then, is there ground to suggest that philosophy and literature work in radically different ways as far as issues of being, consciousness and the world work? Could this then provide an essential understanding of philosophical enterprise and imaginative literature? These are some questions that will be analysed in the course of this thesis.

Whilst the methodology in this thesis is based on phenomenological principles, the analysis of the content within the literary works are themselves studied against a phenomenological background. Phenomenology is not so much concerned with causal relations and objective reality as much as with how things appear to the conscious mind. It is, therefore, involved in understanding how meaning is disclosed. A phenomenological analysis of the texts will thus undertake to illustrate the manner in which the world and the self in imaginative literature disclose themselves. The argument in the chapters that follow is not concerned with the issue of objective reality. The disclosure and construction of meaning has much to do with the ways in which individuals experience the world and the ways in which Being shows itself. This world, in which the individual finds him or herself, is one shared by other individuals and things. It is a shared, inter-subjective world. The conflict between the particular and

contingent intentional act in the attempt to understand the world and the self on the one hand, and the importance of objectivity in order to facilitate inter-personal relations and communication on the other, is of paramount importance in phenomenology. This thesis will attempt to demonstrate the manifestation of this conflict in imaginitive literature. In philosophical enterprise, particularly in phenomenology, there is a movement from the particular to the universal, but what happens in the case of imaginative literature? In the answer to this question does there emerge yet another ground upon which it might be proposed that the two fields may be understood as distinct from each other or, rather, do their boundaries blur?

Section I

Where Literature And Philosophy Meet

Literary writers and philosophical figures have shared an intimacy with each other through the ages, at certain times being inspired by one another's works, at other times engaging in long conversations with each other, sometimes agreeing and at other times disputing with one another.[4] Marcel Proust, one of the leading figures in literature of the modern era, for instance, called Henri Bergson "the first great metaphysician since Leibniz"(Petri 2004). Proust and Bergson had met on several occasions. Proust himself was educated and well versed in the history of philosophy from Plato to Descartes and Kant and Schopenhauer. Samuel Beckett read extensively in the philosophy of

[4] The examples of philosophers and literary writers referred to in these pages are not by any means intended to provide an exhaustive survey of the interactions between philosophers and writers. My intention is to draw on a few examples in order to demonstrate that a relationship between the two fields of thought has always existed not merely between individuals or only between the more formal aspects of their work. The cross-over in themes, content and stylistic aspects between literature and philosophy could very well be intentional. On the other hand, it could work on a more sub-conscious level.

Descartes, Schopenhauer and Gelulinx. Dostoevsky, was exposed while growing up to the idealism of Schiller . "I am weak in philosophy, but not in my love for philosophy which is strong" (Gallagher 2004), he is known to have said. According to Nicolai Berydyaev, a Russian existentialist religious thinker, Dostoevsky was the greatest metaphysician of Russia, whilst Nietzsche stated that Dostoevsky was the only person to have taught him anything about psychology. By no means is it a one sided equation, with literary writers being seduced by philosophers. Jean Paul Sartre devoured a number of French classics such as *Madame Bovary* by the age of nine. He wrote both literary novels as well as philosophical texts. Hegel, who knew Goethe personally and admired his writing, often quotes the writer in his works. It was under the influence of Hölderlin that Hegel developed an interest in both Greek literature and philosophy.

The intimacy between literature and philosophy is not just restricted to the figures from the two types of writing but displays a blurring of boundaries in the formal aspects of the writings and the texts themselves. Plato's dialogues, Rousseau's *Confessions*, and Augustine's discourses are read as literary texts as well as philosophy. Employing the dialogue and the confessional form to elucidate questions of metaphysics and ontology, they are at the same time attentive to matters of style, character, wit and other such literary devices. On the other hand, works by authors such as Dostoevsky, Proust, Beckett and Borges, to name just a few, immerse themselves in philosophical issues, using literature as a medium of expression.

During her Nobel Lecture in 1991, Nadine Gordimer discussed the relationship between literary writing and philosophical concerns.

> Yeats' inner 'lonely impulse of delight' in the 'pilot's solitary flight', and his terrible beauty born of mass uprising, both opposed and conjoined; E.M. Forster's modest 'only connect; Joyce's chosen, wily 'silence, cunning and exile'; more contemporary Gabriel Garcia Marquez's labryrinth in which power over others, in the person of Simon Bolivar, is led to the thrall of the only unassailable power, death — these are some examples of the writer's endlessly varied ways of approaching the state of being through the word. Any writer of any worth at all hopes to play only a pocket-torch of light — and rarely, through genius, a sudden flambeau – into the bloody yet beautiful labyrinth of human experience, of being. (Gordimer 1991)

What Gordimer calls "The bloody yet beautiful labyrinth of human experience, of being", is that which terrifies and fascinates the imagination. It is what torments the human mind: the eternally posed questions of what it means to be and the problem of how we might understand ourselves and the world we live in. Through the word, one explores and interprets the meaning of Being. It is not my concern to look at philosophy and literature in general, but to focus the lens on a specific area under discussion and highlight how this area may be addressed within the two broad areas of literature and philosophy.

My argument does not propose to validate any of those claims, nor to reject them, simply because to do either would require familiarity with every single text in both traditions. Instead, what I propose to do is to highlight how the notion of Being is explored and expressed in radically different ways in both fields of thought. By doing so it might be possible to argue that philosophy and literature differ paradigmatically in their treatment of consciousness and being yet might display striking similarities in other areas. One of the questions that I raise is whether the question of Being as explicated by Heidegger in his *Being and Time* can be explored in a fundamentally different way by

certain texts in literature, if literature is understood as a case of the particular and philosophy as a case of the universal. If *Being and Time* is meant to expound universally applicable claims and if literature is understood as being a case of the particular what may a reading of the two in conjunction with one another demonstrate? However, before launching into an analysis of Being, it is necessary to understand what is meant by the opposition between literature as a case of the particular and philosophy as a case of the universal. But before this can be attempted a few words to define the constraints and the ground covered by the argument in this thesis.

Within the field of literature in general, my area of concentration is the twentieth century. But even within the vast ground of twentieth century literature my analysis is concentrated on three texts. These are Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* ([1899];1999), Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* ([1931]; 1992) and Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* ([1944]; c2003). All three writers are considered to be amongst the most innovative writers of the twentieth century. Conrad's impressionistic style, Woolf's experimental style and Bellow's stylistic preoccupations in literature were all attempts at conveying the texture of experience, the process of perception and the understanding inherent in the "moments of being".[5] There are other commonalities that are of significance which I will touch on briefly. Firstly, each of the selected texts involves the protagonist as the figure who narrates/writes/documents the events in the text. The protagonist in each text is primarily involved in the act of understanding the meaning of existence, Being, Self. The notion of the self as a subject understanding itself as an object occupies an

important if not primary concern within the texts. Characters in all three texts are concerned with ontological and epistemic questions but at the same time with an awareness that meaning is located within the individual. Yet, somehow each of the texts dsiplays a distrust of subjectivism and seeks to overcome it in the quest for objective truth and meaning.

The philosophical text that is the focus of study in this thesis is Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time,* which was translated from the German, *Sein und Zeit*, (1927) and is also a twentieth century work. The work itself was left uncompleted by Heidegger and the available text stands as one third of what Heidegger had initially intended. The second part of the treatise was abandoned. Heideggerean scholars usually differentiate between the early Heidegger and the later Heidegger. *Being and Time* represents the early Heidegger. I do not discuss Heidegger's writing in terms of this distinction but instead focus primarily on the question of Being as treated in *Being and Time.*[6] It is however worth mentioning that in his later philosophy Heidegger increased his attention on issues related to language. Poetry attained a higher place than all other arts and the German poet Hölderlin remained for him a source of admiration and interest. Language he famously declared was the "house of Being" (Heidegger 1946: 217).[7]

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[5] *Moments of Being* (1978b), is the title of Virginia Woolf's autobiographical sketches. I use it as a phrase to capture the sense of the intermittent flashes of understanding and the sudden isolated moments of revelation that are inherent to a process of self understanding.

[6] There are two translated editions of *Being and Time* from the German *Sein und Zeit.* One of translations is by Joan Stambough (1996), and the other one is by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (1962). Though I have studied both versions, for reasons of consistency, all quotations and references are made to the translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (1962).

[7] The well known and oft-cited quotation is from a *Letter on Humanism* (1977). In the year 1845, Karl Marx had made several notes on the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach and one of the things Marx stated was that in its search for objective truth, human thought could not be divorced from the practical. About a century after Marx's commentary on Feurbach, Jean Beaufret in November 1946 wrote a letter on the issue of the practical and the theoretical aspects of the question of Being to Heidegger, to which Heidegger

The period between 1930 to 1940 is identified as a *Kehre* or Turn in the thought of Heidegger. *Being and Time* was seen as a path or a road leading to a clear understanding of fundamental ontology. The question of Being according to later Heidegger was one without an answer. The important stress lay on the manner in which the question was asked. One could go on at length about Heidegger's intentions and views on the issue of Being as dealt with in the early works and the later ones. But this is not the place for such an analysis. My emphasis is on how Being is dealt with in his *Being and Time*.

The term "Philosophy" poses several problems. Firstly, there exists several traditions of philosophy: Western philosophy, Hindu philosophy, Chinese philosophy, Korean philosophy and hence to simply use the term "philosophy" is not merely inappropriate but highly misleading. There is within western philosophy the analytic tradition and the continental tradition both of which approach the idea of philosophy in very different ways. Analytic philosophy comprises branches such as logical positivism, logical empiricism, logical atomism to name just a few and some of the philosophers who come under the analytic tradition are Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Rudolf Carnap and the Vienna Circle, Frege and many others. Continental philosophy as a tradition includes, for example, existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction and critical theory and thinkers such as Fredrick Nietzsche, Karl Marx, G.W.F. Hegel, Merleau-Ponty, Kierkegaard.

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responded in the following month. The response forms the content of the *Letter on Humanism*. For the complete text of *Letter on Humanism* refer to (Heidegger 1977:214–265).

There are different types of philosophy such as Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Philosophy or Metaphilosophy, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Mind and so on. Understandably it is not my intention to speak on behalf of this entire terrain. I am not attempting a historical study of philosophy, neither a detailed analysis of the various traditions of philosophy nor the differences inherent between them. Rather than 'Western philosophy' I refer to the Heideggerean and Husserlian phenomenological tradition. My intention then is to focus on a particular area which is the question of Being as it is treated in Heidegger's *Being and Time* with references to Husserlian phenomenology from which Heidegger took much of his inspiration.

There are perhaps even greater problems associated with the term 'Literature'. Literature may refer to any document which might be a record or a description. In this sense corporations might have literature pertaining to codes of conduct or organization roles. Sometimes commentaries on different subjects like Psychology or Philosophy might be regarded as literature. Literature comprises different forms of writing and so might include popular fiction, science fiction, detective fiction, autobiography, essays and letters, journalistic writing and innumerable other kinds of writing. Further, the question of what literature is, is one that is understood differently in different historical periods and has always been a subject of debate by scholars in the field, irrespective of whether they live in the same historical context or not. Literature spans geographical settings and might refer to Indian literature, American literature, Caribbean literature and so on. Literature can be classified according to movements such as Romanticism, Literature of

the Modern Period, Middle Ages Literature and 15th Century Literature to give a few examples.

Although I do use the term 'Literature' as a blanket term, my use of the term is nevertheless restricted by both historical treatment as well as examples. Rather than 'Literature', I mean specifically post 1900 imaginative literary fiction and largely fiction written before the 1950's. In my argument the word 'Literature' refers specifically to literature of the western tradition. Within the western tradition my concentration is on works of literature written in the English language. Modernist fiction emphasises the particular, because meaning, perception and understanding is located within the individual as the experiencing subject. The term modernism was used to identify a shift in the style, themes, form and concepts of literature and other arts of the early 20th century. The beginnings of literary modernism is located as far back as the closing years of the 19th century around the 1890's but gained momentum especially after the First World War (1914-1918). Modernist fiction is characterised by a deliberate and radical break with earlier traditional modes of western literature, art and culture. Modernist writers tended to see themselves as an avant-garde disengaged from bourgeois values, and disturbed their readers by adopting complex and difficult new forms and styles. Chris Baldick writes that "In fiction, the accepted continuity of chronological development was upset by Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, and William Faulkner, while James Joyce and Virginia Woolf attempted new ways of tracing the flow of characters' thoughts in their stream-of-consciousness styles" (Baldick 1996). In that sense it is mimetic because fiction during the modern period was a means of representing reality but reality as it was experienced by the conscious, perceiving subject. It is significant to

note that most modernist literature celebrated open-endings to suggest that truth and reality were not to be objectively found. However, there is in modernist fiction an attempt to move beyond the particular and toward the search for that which is fundamental and essential in experience and being. Modernist literature often functions in the same way as philosophy. Like phenomenology it conceptually examines notions of time, reality, being and experience. For instance, modernist writers experimented with the process of perception and knowing, the understanding and presentation of reality by restructuring the presentation of time and the sequential ordering of episodes and events. Language was no longer understood as a transparent medium in representing "reality"; rather it was seen to be inundated with multiple meanings and inconsistencies and largely elusive. Themes in modernist literature dealt largely with issues such as the search for meaning and truth, the critique of traditional values and understanding related to language and reality, the notion of the self and its relation to perception of the world and the concept of time and its relation to self-awareness. Yet, this thesis attempts to propose that despite such similarities modern literary fiction and phenomenology function in very different ways. Because conscious experience has a uniquely first person feature I am looking at how characters in the novels grapple with what it means to be "themselves" through this act of interpreting and understanding their own lived past experience and through their own present moment awareness of themselves and the world they live in. In all of the three literary texts that will be examined in this thesis there is the persona of the main protagonist or voice in the novel, writing, constructing, understanding and reflecting on the self. The narrative immerses itself in the questioning of traditionally held values in the face of the modern age and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* exhibits modernisms pre-occupation of experimentation with narrative

structure, construction of the self and problems associated with conveying "reality" and constructing "truths". Woolf's experimentation with the stream of consciousness style is pushed even further in *The Waves* as compared with her other writings and Bellow's Joseph in *Dangling Man* is a modern hero or anti-hero and experiments with dialogue. The self is actively constructed and written and hence consciousness of the self becomes the emphasis in all three texts that I will be looking at in the chapters that follow.

The expression of the self in literary novels as opposed to philosophical texts follows different paradigms. The philosophical text is intended to be a universal statement or analysis on the subject that is under study. It often seeks to find an ultimate objective truth or to arrive at a knowledge that is free from subjectivism and hence at that which is lasting, though this need not always be the case. However, it is concerned with that which is universally applicable to all mankind. Philosophy has always aimed to sever itself from all kinds of prejudices. It is in this vein that Plato asserted that opinion or *doxa* must be replaced by unadulterated knowledge or *epistēmē*. Philosophy typically undertakes to answer a problem that has been posed by way of critically examining certain claims. The concepts used by philosophers are basic and broad and deal with issues such as God, Truth, Knowledge and Beauty. These issues are scrutinised as they apply to the whole of existence. They are rigorously analysed, certain assumptions are made, and a systematised map of an argument is drawn: the question to be undertaken, the concepts to be defined, the distinctions that need to be drawn, the way the question has been tackled in the tradition and how the present treatise wishes to address the question that has been posed. All this is done by way of proceeding in a logical manner based on reasoning and argumentation or through the developing of a specific system to

arrive at a universal understanding of human beings and the world in which they live. The problem to be studied is identified, all known facts are laid down, arguments for the solution are proposed, and counter-arguments are tested in the light of previous work in the same area.

There are however important and interesting counter arguments against the notion of universality. It might be said that Continental Philosophy for instance, and as a specific example Existentialism as a philosophical tradition, particularises and rejects the notion of a universal truth. It focuses on the individual. Whilst there is validity to such an argument, my own use of the term "universal" is not merely restricted to truth claims. The term "universal" as used in my argument does not necessarily point to a universal truth claim. It might imply either a universal truth claim or it could refer to an understanding of existence and Being as a whole without focussing on any one aspect, for instance, the psychological or the physical.[8] Even when one aspect, say the psychological, is focussed upon it is done in such a way as to demonstrate its applicability to the whole of existence. Finally universal may refer to certain terms developed by philosophers, which are universally applicable, more simply, the vocabulary used by the philosopher or the philosophical tradition in reference to what is being analysed.

Within this understanding of the universal, existentialist philosophy seeks to understand the concept of Being under the universal dictum that "existence precedes and rules

essence".[9] Further, it examines this dictum within the framework of certain concepts like Angst, Anguish, Being-in-itself, Being-for-itself and many more. The question of what it means "to be" seeks an answer by recourse to these categories which are used by existentialist philosophers in one form or the other. Hence, even within Continental Philosophy there is an attempt to make articulate a system with reference to which the thing in question might be understood. Thus we can talk of a Hegelian system which would refer to the Hegelian dialectic, or the Nietzschean concept of the "will to power" which he proposed as being the primary force of nature. What is being asserted then is that the difference between philosophy and literary fiction is not one that can be identified merely on the basis of stylistic and formalistic diversities. Just because a certain literary text incorporates philosophical questions or just because a philosophical work uses literary devices or examples does not mean that they have successfully liquidated their distinctness. Continental Philosophy still retains universalism not in terms of finding some objective truth but in the sense that it still relies on certain conceptual terms (Angst, Will to Power) propositions (existence precedes essence), methodology (Eidectic reduction, époche) and sometimes elaborate systems (Hegelian Dialectic) which are understood as universally applicable in the search for the meaning of Being or the meaning of existence. Further, as a whole it can be generally argued that Continental Philosophy in its anti-transcendent view argues that thought cannot be understood as detached from material or natural preconditions and so in Marxism the history of society can be understood only with recourse to the history of class struggle,

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[8]Aristotle in *Metaphysics* for instance, argued that philosophy (metaphysics) must concern itself not with merely one particular aspect of existence but with existence as a whole and that which is most fundamental to existence.

for Nietzsche the fundamental essence of man is his "will to power", and Sartre had his own idea of fundamental freedom.

Literature, on the other hand, is not primarily concerned with the exposition of universal claims. The literary fiction writer is engaged in an act of creation. The writer creates a world unlike the philosopher who discovers the world. This is not to say, as Descartes would argue, that the literary fiction writer does not seek to convey certain truths as insights that occur to him or her. Notions of truth since the time of the Greeks serves to further animate the debates on philosophy and literature. Truth as concerns what is true (adequatio) is to be sharply distinguished from truth as a mode of showing (as in Phenomenology). According to Heidegger truth is disclosed and the disclosure of truth from non-concelament is what is termed *alethia*. The difference in operation of the notion of truth has much to do with the difference between literature and philosophy. Can both literature and philosophy be understood as "truth" in the sense of an unconcealement rather than truth as a kind of sameness? The literary writer grapples with the dilemmas of existence and Being and strives to convey the fundamental and the essential in experience and the world, but he or she does so in a radically different way from philosophy. Literary writers strive to express the fundamental understanding of existence as occurrences of the writer's or character's own insight. This is not to say that statements that point to an understanding of the more essential and fundamental meaning of Being and Existence in literature are strictly restricted to the writer's or character's personal views or opinions. In a lecture on "The Significance of Fictionalising" (1997),

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[9] The statement famously became the slogan of Existentialism and is one of Jean Paul Sartre's most well known and oft quoted statement from *Being and Nothingness* (1992).

Iser writes about the relationship of truth, reality and the imaginary in fiction. He explains that "As the creation of an author, the literary text evidences a particular attitude through which the author directs himself or herself to the world" (1997). He goes on to explain how it moves beyond the author in order to reveal to us the variety of truths that comprise the human condition or as he puts it "our overall makeup" (1997). The writer of fiction for instance penetrates through his own personal experience to convey the more fundamental. Yet, despite this, there is always the awareness that in literary fiction, the imagined protagonist who is situated in a fictitious world is engaged in the lived experience from which emerges a more all-encompasing understanding of issues such as Being and Existence. There is however a fundamental difference. Imaginative literary fiction is not concerned with arriving at unbiased knowledge. In this sense Olsen for instance explains how literature offers its "own form of insight" (Griffiths 1984: 92).F The distinction between *epistēmē* and *doxa* that Plato articulated, and which he stated should be the distingushing mark of philosophy, can now be applied to imaginative literature. Imaginative literature is very often *doxa* or opinion. That does not necesarily imply that knowledge remains beyond its clasp. Rather imaginative literature lies between pure *doxa* and pure *epistēmē*. Unlike in philosophy, the universal is not first and foremost subjected to analysis and evaluated as conceptual terms. Peter Widdowson in his book *Literature* links the specific and the creative in his account of the meaning of Literature. He writes about literary works that:

> [T]heir specificity, in other words, constitutes their originality. Further I assume them to be constructions of written language whose 'reality' is comprised by that linguistic construction (their reality, in other words, is that encoded in their 'fabrication'- however much they may allude to a reality beyond their own). Similarly, they are 'imaginary' (products of the imagination) whose relationship to experiential reality in the material world exists only by way of their formal contrivance. (Widdowson 1999:18)

Widdowson makes an important point when he asserts that Literature, when it alludes to reality, does so within a fictitious constructed world. The philosopher is concerned first and foremost with discovery whilst the literary fiction writer is involved in an act of creation. However, neither the philosophical text nor the literary work are exclusively restricted to either of these. Discovering is the uncovering of meaning, a gradual unearthing of various propositions that are existent but that might remain hidden. Discovering them involves rescuing them from concealedness and bringing them to revelation. Creation involves the construction of a world from nothingness. This does not imply that in the act of creating a fictive imagined world, the literary writer remains in any way disconnected from the world or from "reality". Rather, what is meant is that the writer of imaginitive literature is concerned with the construction of imaginative variations of the world. In an essay called "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1865), Matthew Arnold writes about what he understands to be the difference between the work of the literary artist and the philosopher:

> For creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas, that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations — making beautiful works with them, in short. But it must have the atmosphere, it must find itself amidst the order of ideas, in order to work freely; and these it is not so easy to command. (Arnold [1865];1914: 12)

Arnold's distinction between literature and philosophy draws on the difference between discovery and creation in a different sense. The literary writer, according to Arnold, is not a discoverer but something like an assimilator. Literary genius is not a matter of finding an idea, a sort of revelation. That is the work of the philosopher. Arnold's

distinction is reductionist. Is not both the writer of fiction as well as the writer of a philosophical enterprise concerned with the discovery of an idea? The idea comes first. Then the execution. The difference lies in how the idea is expressed. The idea, however, is pivotal to both the philosopher and the fiction writer.

Let it not be assumed that my argument denies the view that there are similarities between literature and philosophy. There most certainly are. This chapter traverses both the similarities that are displayed between the two and the differences, but it goes beyond such an analysis. It finds within the differences and similarities a ground to establish that literary fiction operates as a distinct field from philosophical enquiry but in such a way that both can be brought together in more ways that one.

Literature & Philosophy: A Methodological Difference?

It must be remembered that both literature and philosophy are intellectual pursuits by human beings and what concerns human beings are certain basic questions: Why are we here? What meaning can there be in Being? How do we know what we know? The difference lies in how these questions are raised and the manner in which they are addressed. However this is not the same as saying that imaginative literature and philosophy both do the same things in radically different ways. They do not. Both function differently. Literature may and most often does deal with issues of common human concern, questions of how we understand ourselves, the world we live in and such themes. However, the way it does this is through the creation of a fictive world. Style, narrative, rhetoric, form and content come together to express varied themes.

Whilst it can often start off with an aim of discussing and analysing these philosophical concerns, the ultimate goal is not to provide an unbiased system of knowledge concerning these issues. Philosophy does. The main intention in philosophy is discursive and it engages in an analysis of certain themes which relate to or are meant directly to correspond to reality. The question of reality itself is under scrutiny and often the idea of the existence of an objective reality itself is rejected. It has been endlessly suggested that philosophy is an intellectual activity whilst literature is emotive. However, both are intellectual activites but of different kinds. Literature aesthetisizes intellectual activity and therein lies one of the differences.

Philosophy is often regarded as literature as is evident from Plato's *Phaedo* (1975) or his *Symposium* (1980) or Rousseau's *Confessions* ([1782]; 2000). The dialogues of Plato have a dramatic quality. They are written in the form of a play that can be performed. They contain episodes like acts or scenes and often include the listeners in the form of a chorus. Rousseau's *Confessions* is in the form of a confessional biography and is read as a literary text as much as a philosophical one. The plays and novels of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus traverse the ground of both philosophy and literature as do the works of Samuel Beckett (1979, 1984). So where in fact are the boundaries between the two drawn if in fact they do exist?

Plato's dialogues themselves are testimony to the fact that there are certain texts that are neither clearly literature nor philosophy. One might argue against such a view by saying that Plato's dialogues are works of philosophy. The way the work is structured illustrates without doubt, that the intention of these works is to proceed through logical

argumentation toward universal claims. Whilst character and situations might be incorporated in the dialogues, the works themselves are primarily concerned with an intellectual search for fundamental truth claims.

There are several issues at stake when considering the question of whether in fact Plato writes philosophy or literature. I will enumerate some of the issues in question. To begin with, Plato's dialogues are structured such that a statement is posed to which counter arguments are made and responses to those counter arguments are put forth. Thus there is no truth claim being asserted by Plato. Socrates does dismantle what seems at first to be a statement or observation of common sense meaning by one of the characters but somehow truth claims are never put forth. There is the sense that characters must arrive at an understanding of that which is under examination via logical argumentation. The dialogues are Plato's method of illustrating how to argue logically to convey a certain point; what it does not imply is that one can arrive at fundamental truth claims. The dialogue form is hence most suitable.
Such a reading of Plato would come in direct conflict with the view that philosophical texts have as their intention the exposition of fundamental and universal truth statements. Yet because these texts by Plato do not expound truth claims does not automatically negate them as texts of philosophy. I argue that these texts are first and foremost works of philosophy. Further because they employ literary features does not provide sufficient reason to argue that they are literary texts.

Fundamental truths are slippery concepts and the question really is whether they retain the element of fundamental truths once they have been declared by a certain individual.

In that sense it might be argued that philosophical texts can never reach essential statements of truth or that literary novels constantly engage with fundamental truths. However having said this, a work of fiction is very obviously a product of the imagination and is meant to be imaginative in a way that a philosophical treatise is not.

Let us take another example. In his novel *Nausea* (1965) which was written in 1938 Jean Paul Sartre, explores imaginatively most of the premises that formed the content of *Being and Nothingness* which followed in 1943 (1992) which he wrote five years later. Both *Being and Nothingness* and *Nausea* cover for the most part a similar terrain. Yet why is it that whilst one text is read as philosophy the other is read as literature or a philosophical novel? Albert Camus who wrote a review of Sartre's *Nausea* is known to have commented on the novel by claiming that "A novel is nothing but philosophy expressed in images (Aaronson 2004)."[10] The comment by Camus immediately draws the reader's attention to a similarity that lies between literature and philosophy. But if read with more careful attention, it calls into question an important difference as well. That difference is one of methodology that is employed by the two fields of intellectual pursuit. Where literature uses images to convey universal claims, philosophy engages in argumentation, description and analysis.

There can be little doubt that Sartre's *Nausea* engages in existentialist philosophy but it does so within the fictionalised world of the protagonist Roquetin. Further, it begins as a case of the particular. It is the particular struggle of Roquetin who is also the narrator-

[10] The citation referred to in this chapter is taken from an online excerpt of the book of the same title and is available at: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/027961.html

writer who struggles to understand the meaning of Being. Universal claims do emerge from the individual quest but the quest for meaning is worked out in such a way that it is somehow bound to the individual, at least initially. The reader or scholar might extract a universal thesis yet the universal thesis is never proposed as the universal. In that sense, as an existentialist novel, *Nausea* is a brilliant exploration of existentialist philosophy which posits that existence precedes essence: not only because the protagonist is continually aware of the fact that existence comes before essence but also because Sartre uses the particular (the novel in this case) as the means by which we (the reader) arrive at the more fundamental and the essential. Often, literature demonstrates what philosophy then examines theoretically.

This thesis does not intend to undertake a general study of what the definition of literature is or what philosophy is.[11] That is a question that opens up an age old debate, inexhaustible and unresolvable. I merely wish to state, that philosophy seeks, at its best, to rigorously scrutinise ideas and propose methods while literature immerses itself in the expression of ideas rather than a thorough analysis of them. Literature is therefore, the endeavour to express an idea in language and writing, aesthetically, while philosophy is the endeavour to investigate. The investigation itself may be expressed in an aesthetic manner but this is not of prime importance to the philosophical text. Literary fiction portrays and demonstrates life-experiences or disorients the reader by deliberately making absurd our experience in the world. Philosophy does not concern itself with

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[11] The arguments in the chapters that follow are specific in so far as they look at Heidegger's *Being and Time* and certain specific works of literature. Hence, in these chapters, I am not trying to arrive at a formula of the formal or methodological differences between all philosophical texts as opposed to all

demonstration in the literary sense. It does not create fictive life-like experiences rather it states abstractly what is under consideration. It might use examples of a literary kind, either fictive or demonstrative from real life situations as a way of explaining what it has stated abstractly, yet to do so does not mean that the philosophical text can be appropriated as imaginative literature.

In his preface to *Literature and Philosophy* (1971), Richard Kuhns writes about what he thinks accounts for the distinction between literature and philosophy. However, in describing the difference between the two fields he simultaneously highlights the inter-relation that could potentially link them together. Kuhns states that:

> Philosophy takes as one of its tasks an account and analysis of the grounds of experience; literature takes as one of its tasks the presentation and realisation of specific experiences. What philosophy explains, literary art realises or makes. Philosophy asks "What makes experience possible?" and "What makes *this* kind of experience possible?" Literature establishes the realities for which philosophy must seek explanations. Although philosophy and literature have always been co-ordinate modes of articulating experience, enmity and ignorance have kept them apart. Most philosophers lack literary power; most writers find philosophy puzzling. (Kuhns 1971: vii)

Whether or not the last two sentences contain much truth to them is highly debatable. What is made rather obvious in the above quotation is the judgement that the tasks undertaken by the two are of a radically different nature.

I am not arguing against the view that literature does not amount to a rigorous intellectual activity and questioning. It certainly does and this is most evident in the works of writers of the rank of Sophocles, Euripedes, Shakespeare, Woolf, Beckett, and many others. Literature creates imaginary situations with imaginary characters, fixing

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literary texts. However, in this chapter I do look at some of the more fundamental differences that are

them within fictional circumstances and provides as much insight into the meaning of existence and life as does philosophy. I am proposing that the methodology by which this is achieved and the kind of insight that is acquired by the two makes visible a gap between literature and philosophy.

Section II

The Particular and The Universal: Literature and Philosophy

A familiar and frequent way of making a distinction between literature and philosophy is the universal-particular framework of argument that has been debated by a number of scholars in both fields. In "*Philosophy as/and/of Literature*" (Danto in Cascardi 1987: 1–23), Arthur C. Danto makes the case of the particular instance of the literary text under study and the universal instance of the philosophical work under analysis. Among other things, he argues that philosophy's main concern is the establishment of universal claims whereas literature's main preoccupation lies in expression. Without going into the details of Danto's argument I will explain how literature and philosophy function along the lines of the universal and the particular. However this analysis carries with it certain problems.

Literature is a case of the particular. With words, the writer weaves a world of characters, situations, places; they come together to tell an account of a day, a year, a month, a minute or a lifetime in the life of any one of the characters. Within the scope of

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present between philosophical and literary texts.

such an imagined world, literature grapples with questions of being, reality, death, truth, life, knowledge and other such concerns.

Philosophy is universal in scope or at least it aims to be. It aims to solve problems or to analyse them: the problem of how we know or what we know, the problem of what it means to be, and so on. It is hence, in a sense, practical in scope. While the philosopher universalises, the novelist particularizes. But they do this in a curiously paradoxical way. The philosopher delineates a particular area: a certain question to be studied and examined, extracts from a sea of problems one for which he will seek an answer which might be a sort of principle that seeks to be applicable to all of existence. The concern often lies in that which is common to everything in existence. The literary fiction writer pushes the margins, draws into his text various concerns by focussing on certain specific factors all of which are fictional and imagined. The main concern is not to find answers and solutions but to express. Expression and the method of expression is of primary significance to literature as opposed to philosophical texts. Literary texts use universal concepts towards specifics: specifics of character, situation, time and place.

Literary texts present an imagined world. The presentation of an imagined world is what perhaps serves as one of the distinguishing features that separate literary texts from philosophical ones. Philosophy does not create a fictionalised space in which situations unfold. Philosophical statements are laid down as fundamental and universally applicable; literary ones are fictional and in that sense are never expounded as universal claims. It was partly based on this aspect of literature that Plato evicted poets from *The Republic* (2003). He argues that literary art and poetry could never be philosophical

because the statements written by literary artists would never be a source of true knowledge. Secondly, he argues that it (literature) could never be ethical for art aroused in the receiver unwanted passion. Ever since then literature and philosophy have been engaged in an unending battle. Those philosophical writers attempting to infuse their writings with a literary flavour are often regarded as committing violence to philosophy. Literary writers writing with philosophical issues in the foreground are often read as writers with philosophical interests but as somehow being a step below serious philosophy.

The Space between Literature and Philosophy

One might argue against the notion of literature and philosophy as functioning differently by saying that it resorts to a way of thinking in terms of binaries. It may be argued that I am establishing rigid boundaries that define the limits of the fields. I would disagree with such arguments. Equating a work of literature to philosophy, and vice versa, does not necessarily imply a breaking down of boundaries. It instead implies an incorporation of literary features in philosophical works and philosophical issues in works of literature. The boundaries still exist for if they did not there would be no notion of incorporating aspects from the other into either of the two fields. It is more interesting and important instead to read them both as different and at the same time together. Coming together is not to be understood in the same way as dissolving the differences that exist between the two. By coming together I mean the different ways in which the two fields of thought interact and the ways in which they do so are varied and infinite. This thesis explores just one of those possible ways from the countless others that exist

or that will come into existence each time that they are brought together. Both come together in order to facilitate an understanding of ourselves and the world we live in. Because both the fields engage in the questions that concern all human beings and because they engage with them in such radically different ways, what is available to us is a more rich and wide-ranging perspective on the very questions at hand. Before we make too much of a virtue of deconstructing binaries, we may instead allow for the possibility that thinking of literature and philosophy as different human pursuits may actually have more to offer us than we are ready to acknowledge. This is different from stating that the boundaries that exist between literary works and philosophical texts are unbendingly established. The boundaries can never be rigidly placed, for each time that philosophy and literature come together the boundaries are always shifted and drawn anew. Finally, the term binary implies a system with two parts, often such that both are mutually dependent on the other. Philosophy and literature do not exhibit such a mutually dependent relationship. It is one thing to assert that much might be gained from such a co-existence between them but that does not in any way signify dependence between them. Literature does not derive its status as literature in opposition to the status of philosophy. The very fact that there is a difference in the methodology that is employed by philosophical texts and literary ones points to something deeper. Literary art should not aspire to be philosophy; neither should philosophy be declared literature. To say this does not imply that literature cannot be philosophical. And admittedly, like the literary artist, the philosopher too must make certain decisions about narrative style, content and form.

Literature deals with universals by recourse to the particular, whereas philosophy examines the connections between universals. However, a writer such as Soren Kierkegaard might prove such a view erroneous. Kierkegaard is a problematic example but nevertheless an important one. He rejected the idea of a universally applicable truth and understood truth as an individual struggle, different and varied for each. Some scholars consider him more of a theologian than a philosopher. Writer and thinker, Jorge Luis Borges, is one who thinks of Kierkegaard in such a manner. He writes:

> He was less a philosopher than a theologian, and less a theologian than an eloquent and sensitive man. A Lutheran evangelist, he denied the arguments that prove the existence of God and the incarnation of Jesus, considering them absurd from a rational point of view, and he proposed an act of individual faith for every believer. [...] Religion was the strongest of his passions. (Borges 2001: 519)

Kierkegaard's own belief was that in his work he directed more attention to the question of how to become a Christian. Yet on the other hand, he is generally identified as the father of existentialist philosophy which is not religious. To many his works are largely a parody of Hegelian philosophy. There are those who read his writings as literary examples of philosophical issues and view him as a skilful master of Danish prose. I do not intend to go into a detailed analysis of the works of Kierkegaard. The question of whether his works are texts of philosophy or literature or literary examples of philosophy is a question that would demand an entirely different undertaking. I merely wish to draw attention to Kierkegaard as one example amongst the many cases when literary devices and philosophical procedures come together. With such cases it remains largely non-consensual whether a work is a literary or a philosophical one. Can it be both literary and philosophical? Kierkegaard's works were admired by leading thinkers, notably Heidegger, Sartre and Wittgenstein. These philosophers often regarded his works as sources of important influence to their own philosophy. Kierkegaard thought of

himself as a religious and aesthetic writer. He distinguished between speculative philosophy with its concern for objective truth and religious faith which is concerned with subjective truth. Suffice it to say, that Kierkegaard's oeuvre was extensive and covered religion, philosophy, literature and psychology. Noted scholar, Charles K.Bellinger[12] divides Kierkegaard's works into six distinct categories. The first of these categories is Criticism in which he includes works such as *Early Polemic Writings* (1990a), written in c.1838 and *The Book on Adler* (1988a), written in c.1847. In the second category of Fiction he includes examples such as *Either/Or* (1987), *Repetition* (1942) and *Fear and Trembling* all written in 1843. Philosophy of Religion is the third category with works like *The Concept of Anxiety* (1980) and *Philosophical Fragments* (c.1985), both written in the year 1844. The fourth category of Pastoral Theology includes works such as *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (1990b), written between 1843 and 1844, *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* (c.1993) which was written in 1845. The fifth category is Polemic Theology and refers to works like *The Sickness Unto Death* (1944) in 1849, *Practice in Christianity* (1991) in 1850 along with miscellaneous later writings and finally the sixth category of Autobiographical works includes *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* (c.1998b) in c1848, *Journals and Papers* written in the years between 1829–55. He puts each of Kierkegaard's texts into one of these categories. What is made evident from the discussion above is that an identification and isolation of certain literary features in texts is not sufficient reason to classify a text as literature. The same can be said about philosophy.

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[12] For a detailed account of Bellinger's analysis on Kierkegaard see: K.Bellinger, Charles. *A Very Short Life of Kierkegaard*. Available: http://libnt2.lib.tcu.edu/staff/bellinger/skbio.htm. Oct 2004.

Another contentious figure is Mallarmé. Mallarmé has been hailed as a philosopher, as a critic of his own philosophy, as a poet and a poet-philosopher. He has been praised as one of the greatest literary writers and has been compared to Baudelaire, Valéry and Proust (Cohn: 1998) and to English poets such as Shelley, Shakespeare and Blake (Predmore: 1998). The disruption of ordinary syntax in Mallarmé's works have often led to the view that Mallarmé was in fact a transcendental philosopher rather than a poet. Can it can be argued that there are several works that are neither literature nor philosophy but are closely and curiously related to both literature and philosophy?

In a certain sense, philosophy stands apart from itself. It approaches the question of Being, trying to understand it from a distance. Literature, it may be argued, incorporates in the act of creation the very meaning of Being. Writing the literary work is as much an exploration of the self and the world, as reading it is. The literary act of creation is already an instance of Being. Once again, I quote Nadine Gordimer from her lecture, *Writing and Being* (1991), to illustrate what as a literary writer she understands as being the pursuit of fiction. She remarks:

> For we writers are evolved for that task. Like the prisoners incarcerated with the jaguar in Borges' story, 'The God's Script', who was trying to read, in a ray of light which fell only once a day, the meaning of being from the marking on the creature's pelt, we spend our lives attempting to interpret through the word the readings we take in the societies, the world of which we are part. It is in this sense, this inextricable, ineffiable participation, that writing is always and at once an exploration of self and of the world; of individual and collective being. (Gordimer 1991)

Philosophical enquiry on the other hand, takes a step away from the expression of Being in order to understand the "what". What does it mean to be? However, in writing this, it does not become an instance of the expression of Being. Hence, it cannot simply be said

that philosophy and literature attempt to solve the same problems in two very different ways. The difference is one that goes deeper than is apparent at first glance. In an essay titled "Literary Examples and Philosophical Confusion" (1984), R.W. Beardsmore addresses the question of the difference between literature and philosophy, in his argument against Renford Brambrough. According to Beardsmore, Brambrough in his writings on literature and philosophy tries very hard to unite the two systems of thought. He does so by thematically drawing up a list of topics that form the preoccupation of both philosophy and literature (such as Man, God, Nature, Knowledge and Ignorance) and by identifying a common methodology[13] with which the themes are treated. Beardsmore replies to this by saying:

> [B]rambrough is right to say that the problems, puzzles, paradoxes that torment philosophers are also to be found in literature. But there is a difference in saying that though works of literature may involve such problems, philosophy *starts from them.* (Griffiths 1984: 72)

He further adds that Brambrough's attempt to unify literature and philosophy on the grounds that they deal with certain common concerns is not very helpful since these are the very basic questions that concern man. To imagine an issue that does not fall under one of the concerns that Brambrough mentions almost amounts to an impossibility. Further, Beardsmore goes on to argue that something can be literary without having to necessarily deal with a problem. He quotes, as an example, Ford Madox Ford's response[14] on reading the manuscript of Lawrence's *Odour of Chrysanthemums* (Griffiths 1984: 72).

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[13] Beardsmore explains what Brambrough means by a common methodology. He writes, " [I]n both we find a procedure aimed at removing paradox and confusion engendered by generalities through an examination of particular cases, by 'a process of examining more minutely and particularly the minute particulars concerning which the opposed generalities are in conflict'" (Griffiths 1984: 72).

[14] Beardsmore writes that Ford Madox Ford related his reactions on receiving the manuscriptof Lawrence's *Odour of Chrysanthemums*. Beardsmore writes about Ford Madox Ford that "He read, so we

Whilst I agree with Beardsmore on the one hand, it must be emphasised that while there might be a couple of sentences in a short story that do not deal with any general human concerns, by and large, what forms the content of a literary piece is that which captivates and troubles the mind and these are questions that are related to existence. Literariness refers to a mode of expression of those concerns not to the content contained within a particular work.

So what in fact accounts for the great divide between these two fields of intellectual endeavour? Philosophy functions on a paradigm of argumentation. The assumption of the philosopher is that the reader can partake in his views simply because man is capable of reasoning, analysis and intellectual understanding. Literature functions on the supposition that the reader is able to share the world of the novel based on past experiences, memories, the past and the present. Thus, there is a coming together of conceptual modes of understanding coupled with perceptive modes. Literary fiction elicits feelings and emotions in a way that a philosophical treatise does not. This is a very fundamental difference, certainly not the only one, between the two systems of thought.

Within a fictionalised space created in the pages that fill a novel, the notion of time is often treated with special attention. The novel might be rooted in a specific time period. There is also the additional time-frame in the lives of the characters involved. This might

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are told, the first few sentences and knew that he was in the presence of a great writer. Yet these sentences present us with no problems, indeed nothing of any generality at all (Griffiths 1984: 72).

be a concentration on a particular phase in the character's life (adulthood, youth) or the time-line might follow a certain character from youth until death. Alternatively, time might concentrate on a day, a month or a year. Philosophy, deliberately extracts particulars of time. The philosophical treatise does not involve a time-line. Between the first page of the treatise and the last page, time has neither advanced nor stood still. Instead the very concept of time is often under scrutiny, a concept to be thoroughly analysed. Temporal awareness is one of the basic pillars of conscious experience. It can be generally assumed that at the time of living through an experience, we are not able to categorize or interpret it. It is only after having lived through them that we are able to grasp them, interpret them, understand in an act of recollection how they relate to previous experiences, make conclusions about our responses to them and how they might have affected us. This is also our own unique perspective on them, what is commonly known as a first person perspective. Literary texts are involved in the expression of such a temporal awareness precisely through the creation of characters rooted in specifics of time, situation, motives, character traits, habits and such other features. Philosophical texts by abstracting these various factors try to grasp conscious experience and its basic structures as intellectual concepts.

To state that literature is primarily concerned with aesthetic expression would be highly incorrect. The point in this argument is not to outline what the differences between literary texts and philosophical texts are but rather how certain notions are common to both disciplines yet are dealt with in radically different ways. The pre-occupation with the Self or Being is the focal point of this thesis. This pre-occupation is not exclusive to either philosophy or literature. The difference in the treatment of questions related to the

self is what in this study will ultimately differentiate literature from philosophy. Martha Nussbaum writes about precisely this difference in an essay from *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (1990). She says:

> Our actual relation to the books we love is already messy, complex, erotic. We do 'read for life', bringing to the literary texts we love (as to texts admittedly philosophical) our pressing questions and perplexities, searching for images of what we might do and be, and holding these up against the images we derive from our knowledge of other conceptions, literary, philosophical, and religious ... The very qualities that make the novel so unlike dogmatic abstract treatises are, for us, the source of their *philosophical* interest. (1990: 12)

Dogmatic or not, Nussbaum highlights the practical side to literature as opposed to the theoretical aspect of a philosophical treatise. Nussbaum's main concern is in the area of moral philosophy and the contribution that literature can make to questions of moral philosophy.[15] Toward this, she asserts that the philosophical nature of literature lies in the dissimilarity that exists between novels and philosophical treatises .

While literature, for the most part, allows us to actively explore and relate to certain common experiences; philosophy allows us to understand experience or consciousness against a theoretical plane. Herein lies one of the problems with assertions such as literature can be philosophy or vice versa. To say something to this effect would effectively amount to a diminution of either one of those fields of thought. Stemming from the argument that I proposed earlier about aesthetic expression being one of the central concerns of literature, I turn to what follows most logically as one of the most

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[15]Iris Murdoch who also writes on the relationship between literature and philosophy differs from Martha Nussbaum's position on the subject. While Murdoch agrees that literature can successfully convey and enhance moral understanding and whilst she is as critical as Nussbaum in her view of philosophy, she nevertheless agrees that philosophy and literature display differences and are different kinds of writing. For a more detailed analysis of the dialogue between Iris Murdoch and Martha Nussbaum see: G.Holland, Margaret. "Can Fiction Be Philosophy?" *Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*. Boston, Massachusetts: The Paideia Archive, August 10–15, 1998. This is available online at : http://www.bu.edu/wcp/MainLite.htm

significant differences between literature and philosophy. Each literary text holds a unique perspective on reality, consciousness, being and such issues. It is understood that every particular text is only one of many perspectives. Literature understands the many ways of seeing as inexhaustable. Philosophical texts, on the other hand, function differently. Every philosophical text is an assertion. The texts are not one of the varied ways of seeing, rather each treatise would argue that this, and only this, is the way of seeing or understanding. That is how philosophical texts aim at providing a universal applicability.

Does universal applicability indicate universal truth claims? Or are they to be understood in different ways? The notion of truth is a problematic one. The history of western philosophy has been preoccupied with the search for a fundamental, objective and universal truth. However, philosophers themselves have never been able to agree on the notion of truth. Postmodern philosophers argue that the concept of a universal and objective truth is an illusion and that there is no one single truth but many truths based on tradition, belief and faith. But in this very assertion which states that there is no ultimate truth, lies latent a universal statement.

Let us take as an example. The philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche immediately comes to mind. Nietzsche rejects the very idea that there are universal truths. Nietzsche asks:

> What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. (1979: 84)

According to Nietzsche, the notion of truth is likened to a process of cultural sedimentation. It is a concept that is continually and actively constructed, dismantled and re-instated. What the philosopher engages in is then not the exposition of truth claims but of universals. There is a difference between that which is "universal" and that which we call "truth". The universal seeks to understand human life as an entirety that is applicable to all of mankind. Even when it has been asserted that there is no one objective truth, as in postmodern philosophy, the very assertion itself is proposed as a universal law. In the dictum that every individual constructs his own truth, there is the conviction that the construction itself is a universally applicable. Objective truth would imply that the meaning constructed is the same for every individual. This is not the only manner in which the term universal will be used in this thesis.

One might argue against the universality of philosophy by stating that it is historical and cultural. There is no arguing against the claim that philosophy is situated within a historical period and within a cultural specificity. However, I distinguish between philosophical production and philosophical applicability. Whilst the text might have been written by a French thinker during the first world war, the text itself and the analysis that it engages in, seeks to transcend limitations of culture, the period during which it was written and other specifics. The aim is to transcend the specific and achieve a universal applicability. Whether or not it always does so is an entirely different matter.

My intention is to read the specific using the universal. I am concerned throughout the thesis with two related questions. The first one is " What does it mean to be and how

does one construct and disclose what it means to be for oneself?" The second and related question is "how" the concept of Being is treated in literature and philosophy?

Further, my intention is not to postulate a single distinct characteristic that could be identified as the marker that separates literature from philosophy. So for instance, just because a certain text uses the literary devices of setting, wit or irony, does not mean that it is a literary text. On the other hand, a text that analyses questions of existence and Being, truth and reality does not automatically imply that the text is a philosophical work. Many modernist works of fiction for instance are largely conceptual. That however does not transform them into works of philosophy. They might be read as philosophical novels, yet that is different from saying that they are works of philosophy.

The aim is not to discover the method by which an essentialising of literature and philosophy can be possible. On the contrary, what is being said is that several attributes must be explored within the text, several features must work together and only then might we arrive at the notion of whether we are reading fiction or philosophy.

Section III

Line of Argumentation

My method of approaching the issues surrounding philosophy and literature is through the study of particular literary texts and the characters in those specific texts. The methodology that I use is one of approaching a philosophical question of the meaning of

"Being" as analysed by Heidegger in his *Being and Time*, a treatise which by its very philosophical nature attempts to provide a universal understanding and applicability to all mankind. My intention is to extend this applicability to the very precise imagined world of the literary texts.

I am working under a certain assumption. My concentration is on novels that proceed from a first person point of view. This is because I am primarily concerned with the issue of conscious experience. Conscious experience is uniquely first person in nature. The "I" lives through them. However, he or she does not merely live through them, but must be conscious of living through them. Whilst there are instances when we might be conscious of performing or living through an experience, there are in the Heideggerean sense, those habitual acts that we engage in without being conscious of them, like a repetitive or habitual or mundane act that we might engage in, for instance, brushing your teeth every morning. In the literary texts I examine, I am specifically looking at the effort of categorizing experience, either by recounting it through memory or by documenting it. This might involve the process of trying to understand and interpret an experience after it has happened. What are the implications of such an understanding of ontical issues for what it means to be oneself.

Why Heidegger?

I propose to undertake a reading of the literary texts and the questions that they raise about the self in conjunction with the thought of Martin Heidegger and his analysis of "Being" in his *Being and Time.* Heidegger fractured the traditional western way of

thinking that was set into motion by Descartes. Cartesianism severed the mind/consciousness from the body. Cartesian philosophy elevated the *cogito* to a privileged position. The mind was the only certainty and one from which knowledge about all else proceeded. The outer world and its objects are deceptive and not to be believed. The subject that engages in an active denial and doubting of all things external proves his own existence. The knowing subject (internal) doubts all known objects (external). If objectivity is understood as knowledge of the objects and things in the outer world, in Cartesian thought, the passage from an internal sphere (that of the subject) to an external one (that of the object) does not occur. Any movement by the subject goes back into the subject. In this way a distinction between subject-object is established by Descartes. Heidegger challenged this distinction. Heidegger argues for an analytic of *Dasein*, a term that literally means, "Being there". Heidegger uses the term to mean the Being of persons and in his mammoth work he undertakes an analysis of what is meant by *Dasein*. Heidegger employs the word *Dasein* toward certain specific ends. He explains that there is a concurrence between essence and existence. This means that in the very act of being, man understands what it means to be. This notion of understanding is not an act that is performed by man but is rather what man is. The understanding that *Dasein* does, is the very mode of being of *Dasein*. This mode of being is such that it involves an understanding of what it means to be and what it means to be is discovered in the very act of being itself. Hence there is no pre-determined substance to *Dasein*.[16]

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[16] Emmanuel Levinas in an essay on Heidegger explains Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*: "Understanding of being characterises man not as an essential attribute, but is man's very mode of being. It determines not his essence, but his existence. No doubt, if we consider man as *a be-ing,* the understanding of being constitutes the essence of this be-ing. But to be precise — and this point is fundamental to Heideggerian

In the introduction to *Being and Time,* Heidegger explains what he means by the term *Dasein*. He writes:

> And because we cannot define Dasein's essence by citing a "what" of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter [eines sachhaltigen Was], and because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own, we have chosen to designate this entity "Dasein", a term which is purely an expression of its Being [als reiner Seinsausdruck] ... The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. The understanding of oneself which leads *along this way* we call "existentiell". (Heidegger 1962: 32–33)

Thus to say that *Dasein* or the way man attempts to understand what it means to be, in a contemplative-reflective way, would essentially entail the generation of a subject-object divide between being and knowledge. And this is precisely what Heidegger argues against. Understanding what it means to be, according to Heidegger, does not come as an after-thought, as a sort of cumulative adding up to reach a sum total. It is not the kind of knowledge to be digested, contemplated and then added to an already existing reservoir of character traits.

The opposition between subject and object is erased when *Dasein* as subject does not attempt to comprehend itself in an act of contemplative understanding as the Object of knowledge. This can only happen when existence and essence concur perfectly, in the

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philosophy — *man's essence is simultaneously his existence. That* which man is, is at the very same time his *way of being,* his way of *being-there* [*être-là*], his way of self-"temporalizing". [...] One could say, the confusion of essence and existence signifies that man's essence is enclosed in his existence, that all the essential determinations of man are nothing other than his modes of existing" (Levinas 1996:15).

Heideggerean sense, which amounts to saying that understanding is *Dasein*'s mode of being and hence coincides with the meaning of *Dasein*.

Can it be argued that in the case of literature and more specifically in the literary texts that are analysed within the confines of the present thesis, that this sort of concurrence is virtually impossible? If the answer is in the affirmative, can it then be argued that the reasons for this impossibility lie in the nature of literature which concretises the abstract theoretical aspect of philosophy and relies on the non-conceptual and non-theoretical mode of expression? To answer these questions I must first turn to the concepts of the existential-existentiell as dealt with by Heidegger.

Early in *Being and Time,* Heidegger makes a distinction between the terms existential and existentiell. Existentiell refers to the act of existing and of the understanding of oneself that each *Dasein* derives either by grasping or ignoring its possibilities. Existential analysis refers to an inquiry into the Being of *Dasein*. There is also an important distinction drawn up between ontic and ontological such that existential and ontological form a working pair as against existentiell and ontical. The ontical is concerned with the being of specific entities and the facts about these entities. Ontical inquiry seeks to understand what distinguishes specific types of entities from others. Ontological inquiry is about Being and the meaning of Being. *Dasein* is unique because it is the only type of Being for whom Being is an issue. It is hence both ontic and ontological or ontico-ontological. For *Dasein* to exist means that *Dasein* must ontologise. That is what distinguishes *Dasein* from all other entities in the world. *Dasein's* ontical specificity is that it is ontological; it inquires into the truth of the

meaning of Being. Does imaginative literature explore the manifestness of the ontical: the manner in which *Dasein* asks questions about Being in order to understand the meaning of Being rather than the ontological?[17] Immediately a problem arises: Heidegger would also argue for literature and philosophy as different "modes of showing". The "truth" about Being is disclosed through different ways of Being and existing. Phenomenology is concerned with the ways in which objects show themselves. The manner in which objects show themselves are the "modes of showing". Does the difference between literature and philosophy rest in their different "modes of showing" themselves? If so, does the ontic distinction between literature and philosophy hold? Philosophy is ontical and the ontical distinctiveness of philosophy lies in the manner in which philosophy operates as philosophy.

This thesis is an attempt to answer that question. Ontical existentiell understanding refers to the different ways of being for different *Daseins*. It is concerned with lived experience and the question of existence. It is individual. Existential ontological analysis, on the other hand, refers to the structures of being. It is hence an inquiry into what is meant by the Being of *Dasein* and is not the actual living experience of the individual. Existential ontological understanding cannot be different for different human beings. It is the framework within which Being must be understood. For the purposes of my argument, this distinction becomes extremely important. Existential understanding, in a sense, depends on the existentiell way of Being. *Dasein* understands itself by being, that is by existing, and hence has a pre-theoretical

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[17] The phrase "ontic struggle" and the "manifestness of the ontical" refer to the ways in which the ontical is expressed in the world that *Dasein* exists in. An ontical struggle immediately implies an ontological

understanding of itself. Existentiell attestation is how the disclosure of Being takes place or how Being shows itself. It follows then, that the existentiell presupposes that such a disclosure will and can occur and hence the ontic presupposes the ontological simultaneously as the ontological is revealed in the ontic. Let me explain with the help of a simple example. Imagine that an individual X is required to go to a certain place, Y, for an appointment. He could either take the bus, drive in his car or walk. However he cannot do all three at the same time. He must choose either one from the alternatives that he has and thereby limit the possibilities of how he might get to the required place. However, as a human being he is already in a situation with limitations. So, for instance, he cannot fly, since as a human being this is not possible. The knowledge that he cannot fly is pre-theoretical in the sense that he always- already knew that human beings are unable to fly. He is "thrown" into a world of limitations. The decision that he makes of whether he will ride in a bus, drive or walk to the place Y, is an example of an existentiell kind. When we say existential, we might analyse why it is impossible for a human being to fly, for instance. This might help us to arrive at a notion of what it means to be human. Through this example what is also illustrated is that *Dasein* already has a pre-ontological understanding if itself. This is a vague and dim understanding of Being that *Dasein* already has and strives to clarify through ontological inquiry. To put it all very simply, Heidegger is essentially reducing the gap between a theoretical framework and the practical and concrete working out of it. According to him both overlap one another. Therefore, the act of existing allows for the disclosure of Being which is an understanding of *Dasein* that is pre-theoretical. This pre-theoretical understanding rests on the condition that a disclosure of *Dasein*

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inquiry. Heidegger writes that "*Dasein* is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological" (1962: 32).

will necessarily occur. It also relies on the fact that this disclosure will finally lead to an understanding of Being not just of myself but of the structure of Being for all *Dasein*s. Emmanuel Levinas explains how Heidegger merges the theoretical and the practical with the fundamental and the particular in Being.

> Being is precisely what is revealed to *Dasein,* not under the form of a theoretical concept that one contemplates, but in an internal striving, in a concern that *Dasein* has for its very existence. And, inversely, this way of existing where "existence is at stake" is not something blind onto which knowledge of the nature of existence would have to be added, but this existence, in taking care of its own existence, amounts to the understanding of existence by *Dasein.* We now understand better than before how the study of the understanding of being is an ontology of *Dasein,* a study of *Dasein*'s existence in all its concrete plenitude, and not only of an isolated act of this existence ... (Levinas 1996: 18)

Hence, existential ontological analysis seeks to examine the more formal structural basis of existence. Existentiell ontical understanding refers to the particular individual's understanding of existence and Being through the very act of existing itself. It concretises in specific instances what the formal structures analyse theoretically. Therefore, how human beings interpret their own consciousness and Being is of an ontico-existentiell nature. Thus the Being of *Dasein* is of two types: Ontic and ontological.[18] *Dasein* is on the existential ontological level. It is not peculiar to any one individual. This is a more fundamental understanding of what it means to be, which does not differ from the Being of one *Dasein* to the Being of the other. This is what is of ontological nature. However, how *Dasein* interprets its being-there, how consciousness is interpreted and disclosed by *Dasein,* by Being-in-the-world, is of an existentiell ontic nature. This differs from individual to individual because it functions on a more subjective plane. It would be a mistake to distinguish the existential ontological from the existentiell ontical by an individual-general divide. Such an

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understanding is superficial and to be strictly avoided. *Dasein*, says Heidegger, enacts existence within the lived experience of the everyday. In an essay titled "Saving Heidegger from Benner and Wrubel" (2004), Stephen Horrocks examines the implications of the ontical and the ontological. He argues against the analysis that Dreyfuss proposes of the ontic and the ontological by claiming that what Dreyfuss has done is not a philosophical but a sociological reading of Heidegger. In this essay Horrocks responds to Benner and Wrubel's reading of Heidegger's *Being and Time,* specifically with regard to Heidegger's notion of ontical and ontological and existential and existentiell. Horrocks states that Benner and Wrubel's reading goes against the interpretation of some of the most important Heideggerean scholars and is consistent with only the Dreyfussian interpretation, however with certain serious consequences. Toward this, Benner and Wrubel argue that both the existentiell and the existential are ontological and not ontic. It is with this assertion that Horrocks takes issue and argues against Benner and Wrubel. Horrocks writes:

> What Dreyfuss wants to do is to give examples of the ontical activities, which are the specific manifestations of the underlying ontological framework. He wants to prove that *Dasein*'s understanding of Being is grounded in an individual's shared cultural activity, and that this activity has come about from being socialised into human practices... The problem Dreyfuss has is that the shared ways of behaving are *manifestations* of the ready-to-hand, he stays at the level of the ontological framework. He only describes the manipulation of tools and the use of equipment; he does not describe cultural ontic activities. (Horrocks 2004: 178)

Horrocks argues against the Dreyfussian interpretation of Heidegger. Dreyfus, according to Horrocks, argues that the ontic can be explained as specific manifestations of the ontological. These specific manifestations are located in culture and in the roles we play. But Dreyfuss goes on to argue that Heidegger is not

interested in this specificity. He is more concerned with the explication of the meaning of Being in general or what fundamental ontology is about.

I argue that the ontical manifests itself as the individual struggle to understand the Being of oneself and through that Being as a whole. How one does this differs from individual to individual and it is that difference which results in ontical differences. It is not the cultural codes or the roles we play which are ontical differences; rather it is the unique struggle of every individual irrespective of whether they come from the same cultural background or a different one, which amounts to ontic existentiell differences.

The Ontic and the Ontological in Literature and Philosophy

Practical and theoretical are meant to work with each other, the practical being the basis for the theoretical. Are not literary novels practical variations of the theoretical issues that are examined in philosophy? To create real life-like scenarios, is it not necessary to create circumstances and situations, characters with motivations, experiences and qualities that in some way correspond to the average everydayness of reality? If philosophy must undertake a rigorous analysis of Being and Existence must not the initial step be to identify what is to be analysed and what problems one might encounter? And if any such issues are to be identified, then as Heidegger asserts, they must first be disclosed in the very act of existing. In an essay titled "Literary Attestation in Philosophy: Heidegger's Footnote on Tolstoy's "The death of Ivan Ilyich"', Robert Bernasconi asks, "Literary texts have a certain autonomy, but what

happens to them when they are submitted to philosophically inspired readings?" (Bernasconi in Wood 1990: 24). My contention is that literary texts need not be submitted to philosophically inspired readings. Bernasconi makes an error by using the word "submitted".

Bernasconi argues, that if it can be said that the existential reading dominates Heidegger's text in such a way that a work of literature might be able to provide the existentiell dimension, it undermines the autonomy of the philosophical text. Bernasconi through an analysis of Heidegger's reference (1962: 495,n.xii) to a footnote on Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Illyich,*[19] tries to show how literary works cannot serve as imaginative explorations of philosophical concepts and that using literary examples only serves as a violence upon philosophy.

The argument in this thesis takes as its point of departure Bernasconi's claim and argues against it. Whilst they might not directly support the functioning of the philosophical text itself, works of literature most definitely facilitate a more enriched reading of the concepts and terms analysed by philosophy. Philosophy prides itself on being insular. Heidegger's attempt at distinguishing between the concepts of the existential and the existentiell, such that neither can be employed without the functioning of the other, might go a long way to establish the autonomous working of a philosophical treatise. However, what cannot be denied is that the existentiell still

[19] Heidegger refers to Tolstoy in *Being and Time* (1962) in his analysis of death. Heidegger's note xii, in division two, chapter one reads: "In his story 'The Death of Ivan Illyitch' Leo Tolstoi has presented the phenomenon of the disruption and breakdown of having 'someone die'". Heidegger's reference centres around an analysis of the authentic and inauthentic modes by which *Dasein* confronts death and dying.

retains the theoretical element. One way in which the existentiell can be practically explored is by turning to literature. There is a difference between insularity and autonomy, which can be and is often easily overlooked. The entire body of philosophy is seen to function independently amidst its very own conceptual terms and linguistic devices whether this be an effort to reject and subvert the existing system of knowledge (as an example, Kierkegaard rejected Hegelian rationalism and universality) or to supplement it (Existentialist philosophers were inspired by Kierkegaard's ideas on the subject of Being). This is autonomy in a larger sense. The individual text functions within its own system (The Hegelian Dialectic, for instance) and in relation to this larger system and this is autonomy of a particular work. This sort of autonomy is desirable and I think quite necessary to maintain the distinct discipline, which in this case is philosophy. Insularity is something completely different. It forces one to look at something with blinkers and often provides a constricted approach to that which can be potentially explorative. It is against such an insular approach that the argument proposed in this thesis takes issue, and not against autonomy. It has always appeared as if philosophical writing occupies a specific terrain and there is a vigorous effort to mark out and maintain the boundaries of it by scholars in the field. It has always been something of a virtue to keep literature away from philosophy. In that, thinkers of philosophy often find it demeaning to draw the literary into the philosophical or to use literary texts to elucidate arguments of a philosophical nature. The same obviously cannot be said with literature for literature does most often deal with issues of philosophical concern. However when one speaks

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Using Tolstoy's work as an illustration, Heidegger argues that the experience of another person's death is an insufficient and inauthentic manner of understanding one's own death.

of a literary work as being philosophical it is said with pride and often as something that is admirable. To even suggest a reading of philosophical works via literature however, is sacrilegious and definitely not rigorous philosophy, at least to scholars of philosophy. In his introduction to *Philosophers' Poets* (1990), David Wood captures exactly what I have argued above in the following words:

> [I]f the distinctiveness of philosophy is understood in terms of its difference from other modes of writing, its relation to poetic and other literary texts will become central, and more interestingly problematic than ever. What we can expect is that the borderlines will be recast – not just moved, but rethought. More structural parallels will become visible, more mutual incursions and transgressions, at the same time as the boundary is maintained. (Wood 1990: 3)

It cannot be disputed that literature and philosophy are two very different disciplines and that it is desirable to maintain the boundaries of each with the recognition that the boundaries themselves are constantly shifting and being interpreted in innovative ways. The question that is to be raised is whether philosophical texts and more specifically whether Heidegger's *Being and Time* is capable of providing existentiell grounding for the existential analysis of Being. I am not by any means saying philosophy should indulge in merely existential analysis. Existential analysis must be supported by concrete example through existentiell analysis. What this thesis attempts to propose is that in *Being and Time* (Heidegger: 1962), even the existentiell analysis is largely a formal examination of conceptual specifications. I will explain what I mean. If by existentiell, Heidegger meant the understanding that arises by "existing" for every *Dasein*, then existentiell understanding differs for everyone. The question is whether, in fact, there is an understanding of Being that might be universal, a sort of fundamental understanding of Being that *Dasein* is able to arrive at and this Heidegger calls the existential mode. Ontically what distinguishes *Dasein* is that it is ontological.

Yet, the manifestness of the ontical differs from individual to individual. Existentiell ontical understanding differs for every *Dasein*. It is a case of the particular. However from it arises an existential ontological understanding, which is fundamental ontology. Thus, fundamental ontology is possible only once an existentiell ontical understanding has been attempted. The entire movement is a circular one. *Dasein* begins with a pre-ontological understanding of Being-there. However this pre-ontological understanding is not to be equated with fundamental ontology. It is a vague understanding of Being and must be made obvious in an existentiell way that is by the very act of existing in what Heidegger terms everydayness. This leads to an ontic understanding of Being and is subjective.

Literature provides an exploratory field for such an existentiell understanding to occur. The possibilities of variation that imaginative fiction allows for may in many cases allow us to understand the more theoretical analyses in philosophical texts. Literary fiction is able to make real, the problems and issues that philosophy is embedded in. Without these problems and the questions we have about them there would be no philosophy. However these problems must first be identified. It is through literature that these problems are identified. Literature, by focussing on particular characters, in the specific circumstances that they find themselves in, battling with questions related to their lives and to existence in general, provides the existentiell ontic understanding that is so very imperative if we are to arrive at any sort of fundamental ontology.

In *Being and Time,* Heidegger draws up the ontological structure of Being with the help of three classifications. *Dasein* in being-in-the-world relates to the world in three

ways: Ready-to-hand, Present-at-hand and Being–with-others. These are what can be identified as ontological structures of Being. What does it mean to say this? According to Heidegger, these structures of Being are applicable to every *Dasein* and every individual's way of existing unfolds within these broad categories. Thus every individual deals with things in a ready-to-hand way or in a practical way, for instance, using a kettle to boil water. The same example can be used to illustrate a present-at-hand way or theoretical way, for instance the knowledge that a kettle can be used to boil water and understanding the theory of boiling. Further every individual does not exist in isolation but with and amidst others. How each individual subjectively arrives at a conscious awareness and understanding of their own Being that unfolds within the above three categories is what differs from individual to individual.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* is a rigorous analysis of the structures of Being. His study undertakes an ontology of Being and he is hence concerned with the frameworks within which this ontology is to be studied. The focus here is a universal framework under which the meaning of Being can emerge. The question that I raise is whether, in fact, a philosophical treatise can isolate a specific instance or whether by its very nature it is more adept at studying the universal. In the same essay referred to earlier by Horrocks, it is pointed out that Heidegger's intention is not the study of a specific case but the meaning of Being and the structures that inform such an understanding of Being:

> But Heidegger does not focus on human being and its everydayness for its own sake, but as a way of finding out the meaning of Being in general. He is not being ontical, which can be seen as looking at real life issues such as nursing … he is studying everydayness so as to reveal the essential structures of *Dasein* and then hopefully reveal the meaning of Being in general. (Horrocks 2004: 179)

While it might be true to say that the way of being of *Dasein* is not to be found by analysing the culture, motivations, roles and other such variations, what can be asserted without doubt is that in these one does find the struggle of the individual trying to grasp the meaning of Being and consciousness. This is an ontic struggle and is expressed existentielly. It operates as a specific not a universal statement about Being. And because it operates as a specific it is best expressed in narratives of imagination or literature. The structure of the meaning of Being does not retain much if it cannot be concretised into specific instances. At best, without such tangible expressions rooted in specifics, the meaning of being would remain inaccessible. Most works of literature are expressions of the ontic-existentiell understanding of Being. In their expression of the ontic it is not necessary for them to have recourse to the ontological which is what makes them works of fiction in the first place. However because philosophical texts (in this case Heidegger's *Being and Time*) are concerned with the ontological existential analysis of Being, one method of manifesting the existential ontological claims within particular instances would be through a reading of literary texts. Once again, this is in no way synonymous to the claim that philosophical texts are unable to function by themselves, only that more might be gained by reading the two together.

> While literature may not allow us to adjudicate on philosophical claims, there is every reason to think that the possibilities of imaginative description offered by literature can help us grasp what, in practice, certain philosophical claims might come to. If literature is or can be something of an experimental exploration of the ramifications of a philosophical position, and if that process is an essential dimension to the consideration one gives to a philosophical claim, then a philosophy that did not have its literary enactments or corollaries would be radically deficient. (Wood 1990: 2)

It is possible to argue against David Wood when he states that without imaginative literature, philosophy would be necessarily lacking. "Radically deficient" or not, more might be gained by reading philosophy and literature in conjunction with each other. What I am not investigating is whether or not philosophy can be used to *prove* fiction as an application of philosophical ideas. If that were the issue at hand I would merely juxtapose terms coined by Heidegger to certain episodes within a literary work and conclude that the work of literature has succeeded in applying those terms in a literary way.

To do that would entail a reductive reading of both philosophy and literature. Because literature is imaginative it does not as such need to support the claims it makes or to prove them in any way. The existentiell mode is the dominant one in literary texts; whereas in philosophy the concepts and the theory emerge from an observation of the practical. Both existentiell and existential modes are operative. However, can it be said that the existentiell mode finds a greater opportunity of expression in literary texts? If that were the case, is not ontic understanding more accessible by reading works of literature? Heidegger's *Being and Time* offers no examples of what he means by existentiell ontic understanding. He does talk at length about a very tangible notion of what he means by Being-in-the-world and being fixed in everydayness. However what he does not do and I think what he never intended to do is to illustrate these notions with more concrete examples. It is evident that Heidegger's intention in *Being and Time* is fundamental ontology, to arrive at what the meaning of Being is. To concentrate on particular instances would essentially mean that the work was not in any way generating a universal statement or framework of understanding Being. Is this

because to concern oneself with the ontical would in many ways turn the philosophical discipline into something other than philosophy? Would it not necessarily involve a shift from the universal claim to a case of the particular? These are some of the questions I will be looking at but with primary attention to Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

Heidegger and Literature

My argument in this thesis stems from the question of how Heidegger's ontological structures of Being might be expressed in literary works, that is as ontical existentiell expressions of the ontological existential structures proposed by Heidegger.

In the texts that I analyse I propose that the three categories outlined by Heidegger of Being-in-the-the-world: the present-at-hand, the ready-to-hand and being-with-others find expression in two very basic but contradictory desires experienced by the self. These two desires express themselves in the literary texts as a need for differentiation and an urge to find unity. The existentiell ontic struggle is set into motion in the novels that I examine by the very fact that the protagonist in these works is actively struggling to understand what it means "to be" himself or herself. It is a personal struggle but there are moments when the scope of the struggle broadens to the deeper question of what it means "to be" in general. The struggle of the former kind, the more personal of the two, makes itself visible in the urge to differentiate. With the latter, however, there is an attempt to unify. When the ontological categories outlined by Heidegger are interpreted in specific ways by different individuals, they become identified on the

ontical existentiell plane. I argue that literary texts are ontical existentiell explorations of these ontological categories. Bernasconi argues that Heidegger roots the individual in the everyday for the purposes of an ontic understanding, knowing that the everyday in being close to the ontical is furthest away from the ontological. During his Nobel lecture in 1976, the writer Saul Bellow spoke about how the literary novel explores imaginatively the mystery of existence, a mystery that is sometimes revealed yet sometimes obscured, a mystery that baffles every individual. He rejects as an illusion the notion of there being any one single existence. This rejection, however, does not necessarily imply that there cannot be something fundamental within the human experience. Perhaps that which is fundamental is the quest to find what it means to be. How one goes about that quest is what differs.

> A novel is balanced between a few true impressions and the multitude of false ones that make up most of what we call life. It tells us that for every human being there is a diversity of existences, that the single existence is itself an illusion in part, that these many existences signify something, tend to something, fulfill something; it promises us meaning, harmony and even justice. What Conrad said was true, art attempts to find in the universe, in matter as well as in the facts of life, what is fundamental, enduring, essential. (Bellow 1976)

Literature allows for such an ontical imaginative exploration. It cannot provide an ontological understanding simply because that is not what it aims to do. There are instances of ontological expressions in literary texts as well. These ontological categories of Heidegger (Dreyfus:1992)are present in a literary work but not as ontological principles. The works do not lay down universal claims based on a systematic examination of experience but instead begin from the self of the author and strive to express the struggle and curiosity which marks the solidarity between the many selves that read the work. In that sense literary works are ontological. To identify these ontological structures does not amount to finding analogies of them in

literature. To identify them means instead to set the existentiell in motion. Bernasconi asks in an essay, " Literary texts have a certain autonomy, but what happens to them when they are submitted to philosophically inspired readings?" (Bernasconi in Wood 1990: 24).

I answer, that literary texts retain their autonomy. The texts themselves are not written with a view to supporting the philosophical claims made in a philosophical treatise. This is how both philosophy and literature may retain their autonomy. By stating that literature makes particular the universal I am not in any sense implying that literature does not concern itself with the more fundamental elements of existence. It most certainly does, but with the conviction and celebration that there is no one answer to these, merely possibilities and alternatives.

The notion of Being-in-the-world and Being-with-others are explored in fiction as the tangible world that the character finds himself or herself enmeshed in, amidst things and others, to be physically rooted within this world. I relate this notion to the "body" in the novels. It is a form of embodied subjectivity. Within the confines of my thesis, the articulated body is also to be understood as mind and thought. The body is articulated in and through language. Language leads to a sense of self-identity. Language allows for a disclosure of Being and one of the many ways in which Being is disclosed is through language. This self identity arrived at in and through the use of language is of two types. One type of identity is based on the articulation of sensations that are felt by the body. This helps for a differentiation between the other and me. For instance, the table I touch is recognised as being something outside myself, and hence

other than me. There is, however, another type of identity, which erases boundaries between the other and me. In my memory of sensations and impressions, there are inevitably other people and places, which become part of my memory and hence part of me. My sense of who I am becomes compounded by other people, places and things. Any sensation that I experience is not merely a pure theoretical sensation but my response to various factors owing to which I am able to experience the resultant sensation or impression. What are the implications of being caught in the problematic of constructing identity based along these two lines? They manifest themselves as two distinct desires: A need for differentiating and a craving to find unity.

The Heideggerean notion of present-at-hand is expressed in the novels as conceptual thought. It is linked to the more theoretical modes of thought and discourse of characters who are conscious of the problematics involved in constructing meaning. Discourse on issues such as language, meaning of the self and death of the self, might be one way of expressing the present-at-hand in literature. Self identity makes one aware of the annihilating powers of death to undo that self identity. The ego that struggles to define itself whilst living cannot struggle to define itself once it no longer is. The ego recognises death as a cessation of every way of being. This recognition is of primary importance because, with the realisation of my own death, I am aware that the question "who am I" will not be of any concern to me subsequent to my death. The self is no longer concerned with this once it dies. It simply cannot be concerned with this once it no longer exists. Whilst it exists, it is always engaged in a dialectical process. The self as subject tries to understand itself as object. In order to understand itself as object, language is used. The self as subject trying to understand itself as

object must articulate its sensations and affectations, which are experienced bodily in thought and words. One of the main questions that I will be asking is whether the sort of concurrence between subject and object that Heidegger writes about can occur in literary fiction. If it cannot occur, then there is always a part of the self that transcends objectivation. This is because there is always some part of the self that lies on the other side of the equation as the subject. What are the implications of this in the obsessive quest for a complete understanding of subjectivity and identity?

The present–at-hand category in fiction and more specifically the discourse on death in fiction does retain more of an existentiell rather than an existential aspect because the discourse manifests itself as the concerns and thought processes of one of the individual characters. Can the present-at-hand be expressed in literature? Or is it a purely philosophically expressed notion?

Finally, there is a difference in saying that the structures of Being expounded by Heidegger do find expression in works of literature and that a literary work or character is itself Heideggerean in nature. The latter is not what I am interested in. It is with the former assertion in mind that the present study of literature and philosophy concerns itself: to find instances of expression of Heideggerean notions in the works without asserting that the works are Heideggerean. Further, to find instances of expression of these very Heideggerean notions is to capture the radical manner in which literary texts treat them. It is not in correspondence but in difference that these must be detected. Further, to say that a particular character or literary novel was Heideggerean would immediately undercut any remarks on the autonomy of the

literary text and would point to the implication that these works of literature are merely an application of philosophical notions. It would also suggest that the work of literature could be read only with reference to Heidegger and no more, that all it contains has been said by Heidegger. But my intention is to illustrate the very opposite. The writer's vision and the reader's response come together in such a brilliant way so as to penetrate the mystery of human existence. That mystery which philosophy tries to solve, literature revels in as a question eternally posed, riddled with the unsolvable.

> While the poet entertains he continues to search for eternal truths, for the essence of being. In his own fashion he tries to solve the riddle of time and change, to find an answer to suffering, to reveal love in the very abyss of cruelty and injustice. Strange as these words may sound I often play with the idea that when all the social theories collapse and wars and revolutions leave humanity in utter gloom, the poet - whom Plato banned from his Republic — may rise up to save us all. (Singer 1978)

Singer's celebration of the poet is a celebration of the certainty that there cannot be a final solution to the question of Being and existence. Each reading and each understanding has the potential to be as valid as the other. To reduce an imaginative literary work and contain it within one interpretation, whether that be Heideggerean or not, is to distort what imaginative literature is all about.

By undertaking such a reading I make clear two distinct but related ideas.

First, that it is possible and more importantly enlightening to read texts from the two disciplines in conjunction with each other. Second, that such a reading does not in any way threaten the boundaries of either of the two.

Chapter II

Unveiling the Truth behind the Facts

> "Know thyself". Understand that thou art nothing, less than a shadow, more insignificant than a drop of water in the ocean, more fleeting than the illusion of a dream.
> --- *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B.Cunninghame Graham*,
> Joseph Conrad 1969
>
> For myself I don't know what my philosophy is. I was not even aware I had it.
> ---Joseph Conrad in a letter dated July 25th 1905 to Edward Garnett (1998)

Introduction

Conrad started writing *Heart of Darkness* in 1898, almost eight years after he had returned from the Congo. His experience during the time he spent in the Congo informs much of the subject matter of *Heart of Darkness.*[1] The actual journey itself had long lasting consequences for Conrad, consequences that were both physical and psychological. Following his journey to the Congo, Conrad suffered from repeated bouts of depression, mental breakdown and even attempted suicide (Conrad 1927, Conrad 1930, Conrad 1969). However, to read *Heart of Darkness* as a factual record of Conrad's own experiences would not only be reductive but also erroneous. It would be erroneous because what Conrad sought to do in fiction was not to convey facts but the impressions that were formed by facts on the human mind.[2] Yet, in order to better understand the

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[1] *Heart of Darkness* was first published in 1899 in *Blackwood's Magazine* and serialized in three parts which appeared in the February, March and April issues of the same year. It then appeared as a novella in the book entitled *Youth, a Narrative and Two Other Stories* (1902).

[2] In a letter written in 1922, to his friend, Richard Curle, Conrad writes, "Didn't it ever occur to you, my dear Curle, that I knew what I was doing in leaving the facts of my life and even of my tales in the background. Explicitness, my dear fellow, is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, robbing it of all suggestiveness, destroying all illusion. You seem to believe in literalness and explicitness, in facts and in expression. Yet

difference between fact and truth that so preoccupied Conrad and that plays a significant role in *Heart of Darkness*, it is helpful to turn to Conrad's own account of the Congo expedition.

In the "Author's Note" which forms the Preface to the 1923 edition of *Youth: a Narrative and Two Other Stories,* Conrad draws attention to the source and style of *Heart of Darkness.*[3] Whilst admitting that the novella has much to do with his experiences in the African subcontinent, he is quick to add that it is built not merely on facts but on the craft of conveying experience to the listener. He says that:

> This story, and one other, not in this volume, are all the spoil I brought out from the centre of Africa, where, really, I had no sort of business. [...] "Heart of Darkness" is experience, too; but it is experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case [...] (Conrad 1999: 64)

What lies beyond the actual facts are the impressions formed on the human mind that has experienced those facts and the problem of how best to convey those impressions so that the impressions might achieve an actuality.[4] The writer must try and convey not bare facts but the way an individual sees, experiences and feels those facts. Conrad explicitly differentiated literary truth from other forms of writing such as scientific and philosophical writing. The work of the literary fiction writer was to appeal to the sense of wonder, beauty and mystery. The aim of a writer of fiction should be to merely suggest and thereby arouse the imagination of the reader. Fiction must penetrate fact,

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nothing is more clear than the utter insignificance of explicit statement and also its power to call attention away from things that matter in the region of art" (Conrad 1930:142).

[3] It has been argued that Marlow served as a mouth piece for the author himself. See for instance: Karl, F., R. 1960:50. My study does not concern itself with this trajectory of thought.

[4]The exchange of ideas between Ford and Conrad has been well documented, and both influenced each other to a large extent. In an essay on Conrad, Ford writes about Conrad and himself: "[W]e saw that life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains. We in turn, if we wished to produce on you the effect of life, must not narrate but render impressions" (Ford, M., F. 1924: 194–195). See also: Karl, F., R. 1960: 20-42.

and create the illusion of truth. That is why truth in fiction is always of a different kind than truth in philosophical, historical or scientific writing. Truth in fiction can be achieved by reproducing the life itself. "It is to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth — disclose its inspiring secret: the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment" (Conrad 1923: x).

Phenomenology, as explicated by Husserl, makes its concern not with facts but with essences. In fact, Husserl in *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* ([1931]; 1969) discusses how the realm of essences which is the subject of phenomenology differs from the realm of facts which is the topic of a science such as psychology. Actual existence is to be distinguished from essential being. What is of importance to the phenomenologist is not the individual situation. Instead one must abstract from the individual situation to that which is the essence of the intentional structure and the phenomena. In this sense Conrad sought to convey the essence of life and the various impressions that formed what he believed to be the essence of life.

Marlow's[5] effort in *Heart of Darkness* follows Conrad's aesthetic principle. He tries to convey the essence of human experience, which involves not just an imparting of factual information but the sights, the sounds, the smells and the colours that fill each piece of

[5] The character of Marlow appears in several of Conrad's texts. These are: *Youth: A Narrative: and Two Other Stories* (1898); *Chance: A Tale in Two Parts* (1913); *Lord Jim: A Tale* (1900); and *Heart of Darkness*. There have been studies on the development of Marlow as a character through these texts. I limit my study to Marlow as he appears in *Heart of Darkness.* In the 1917 "Author's Note" to *Youth*, Conrad writes (1946: v-vi) about Marlow, "he was supposed to be all sorts of things: a clever screen, a mere device, a 'personator', a familiar spirit, a whispering 'dæmon'. [...] He haunts my hours of solitude, when, in silence, we lay our heads together in great comfort and harmony [...]"

factual information and transform it into a distinctive experience. What Conrad said about writing in the Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), could well have been the words spoken by Marlow as he recounts his tale on board the *Nellie*: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you see" (xxvi).

Much has been written on the historical significance of the events and the people that inhabit the novella. Critics have variously chosen to focus on the novella's historical, political and psychological aspects. Chinua Achebe writes scathingly about the novella and accuses it of racism.[6] Edward Said reads it as a work of European imperialism.[7] There have been numerous Jungian and Freudian readings of the novella. Cedric Watts, for instance, describes it as "[...] a mixture of oblique autobiography, traveller's yarn, adventure story, psychological odyssey, political satire, symbolic prose-poem, black comedy, spiritual melodrama, and sceptical meditation" (1996: 45). Whilst these critiques certainly bring to fore several important issues in *Heart of Darkness,* my focus in the present chapter is entirely different.

The intention in this chapter is to undertake a reading of *Heart of Darkness* ([1899]; 1999) alongside Heidegger's *Being and Time*. My primary question throughout this chapter is to explore how the ontic is expressed in Conrad's novella both stylistically

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[6] Achebe, C. (1977) "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness". *Massachusetts Review,* 18, 782–794.

[7] In his first book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*(1966), Said draws out the link between Conrad's life and fiction. In *Orientalism* (1979) Said sets out to first define and evaluate the term "Orientalism" as a game of politics and power that defines the relationship between the east and the west and its manifestation in discourse.

and in relation to the content of the work as well. I will also address the question of whether the ontological finds expression in the novella. This chapter does not concern itself with the historical and political ramifications of Conrad's novella. In the light of Husserlian and Heideggerean phenomenology, this chapter will attempt to illustrate that, despite close resemblances between the literary text and the philosophical enterprise, the literary text under analysis in this chapter cannot be misconstrued as working in a manner similar to the philosophical work. My approach to the novella lies close to what the critic John Peters has to say on *Conrad and Impressionism.* Peters explains that:

> [C]onrad's works are philosophical not because of a particular system nor solely because of philosophical questions broached, but because certain ideas concerning the way human beings experience phenomena permeate his works. (Peters 2001: 29)

Whilst it is true that Conrad did have his own philosophy and worked his philosophical ideas into his fiction, it would be incorrect to argue that he developed a systematic philosophy with respect to his views on existence. Hence, I do not follow the method of identifying common characteristics or features that might run throughout the *oeuvre* of his works but instead focus on *Heart of Darkness* and the ontico-ontological questions that it raises. By following this approach, whilst one might identify phenomenological or existential aspects in Conrad's work, it does not provide a ground to label the work itself as phenomenological or to label Conard himself as a phenomenological or impressionistic writer. For to do so, would imply that Conrad subscribed to a consistent world view and this was something that the writer himself consistently resisted. He remarks:

> I am no slave to prejudices and formulas, and I shall never be. My attitude to subjects and expressions, the angles of vision, my methods of composition will, within limits, be always changing — not because I am unstable or unprincipled but because I am free. (Peters 2001: 29)

What is significant in the above quotation is the phrase 'within limits'. It allows the reader to isolate instances of the writer's philosophy without having to tie him down to any one system of thought. Within such a framework, I argue that one of Conrad's central preoccupations has to do with the question of selfhood and the meaning of existence. These two questions, broadly speaking, fall under the Heideggerean categories of the ontic and the ontological: what does it mean to be an "I"? And secondly, what does it mean to be? The first question relates to the existing self and the second to that which is more fundamental to the meaning of "Being".

* * *

There have been several critiques of *Heart of Darkness,* which have variously proposed that Marlow's journey into the dark recesses of the African Congo is metaphoric of a journey within the self. Within the novella, Marlow himself alludes to the fact that the journey up the river and into the Congo "seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me — into my thoughts" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 72). The tale recounted by Marlow is his own rendering of his experience and yet it is more than that. The subjective understanding of a past experience is given a semblance of solidity and reality by recounting it to a community of other sea men on board the *Nellie.*

The argument in this chapter is divided in two sections. The first section is a phenomenological reading of *Heart of Darkness*. In this section, I illustrate how the novella may be read alongside principles of phenomenology. This section looks at both, Conrad's stylistic approach as well as character analysis within the text. The second section focuses on the questions related to the self. This section follows from the first and narrows the focus from an analysis of general phenomenological principles and

locates it within the framework of the Conradian consciousness in *Heart of Darkness*. This section will focus intensively on the text without drawing upon Conrad's aesthetic philosophy. The main analysis will rest on an examination of how the ontico-existentiell and the ontological-existential are expressed in this particular work of fiction. I will also posit an answer to the question of whether, in fact, the expression of the ontico-existentiell and the ontological-existential pose problems in the novella. I will examine these issues in relation to Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to illustrate that, whilst it is possible to say that there are occurrences of Heideggerean and phenomenological aspects in the novella, these are not adequate to permit one to state that the work itself is written with a view to supporting the principles of phenomenology. Hence the point of this chapter is to demonstrate that, despite concurrences, the literary artist who engages in issues which are similar to the concerns that the philosopher delves into does so in an entirely different way from that of the latter. Further, the philosophical treatise examines and analyses what the literary text expresses. I will elaborate on these differences throughout the chapter. The question that will be examined is whether the categories of the ontical and the ontological as discussed by Heidegger can be worked out within literary fiction.

Phenomenology and *Heart of Darkness*: Aesthetic Approach, Style and Content

It is impossible to outline an elaborate system of belief that Joseph Conrad consistently subscribed to because he resisted any conformity to a stable structure of thought. However, if there is one steady conviction amounting to a philosophy that can be traced

throughout his works, it would point to his certainty that any illusion of the existence of an objective truth was bound to be just that: a mere illusion. He says in a letter to Cunninghame Graham, "And suppose Truth is just round the corner like the elusive and useless loafer it is? I can't tell. No one can tell. It is impossible to know. It is impossible to know anything tho' it is possible to believe a thing or two" (Conrad 1969: 45). To him, human existence was a futile search for objective reality and led to the eventual realisation that the only kind of truth available was that created by the individual himself.

Yet, there is the notion that mere individual truth ends in nothingness without social consensus. For Conrad, facts meant nothing if they were not somehow linked to the individual mind that experienced them as facts. In a similar vein to Husserlian phenomenology, one is able to experience something only if it is immediately given in some way or the other, either bodily or intuitively. Thus everything that appears and is experienced is subject-specific. Phenomenology begins from such a subject-relative understanding, but finally aims to transcend the factual and contingent and enter into the realm of the essential. Reality was not out there, neither was it within the individual. It lay instead at a point of mediation between the world outside and how the mind experienced and conveyed the outside world. What Conrad sought to do in his art was to identify where that point of mediation lay. The artist was, for Conrad, an individual involved in this effort. Conrad explains:

> You must squeeze out of yourself every sensation, every thought, every image — mercilessly, without reserve and without remorse: you must search the darkest corners of your heart, the most remote recesses of your brain — and you must search them for the image, for the glamour, for the right expression. And you must do it sincerely, at any cost. (Conrad in Karl 1960: 23)

What strikes the reader in the above quotation is that for Conrad, the artist somehow was engaged in conveying "existence" itself. The experiencing mind did not comprehend objects merely in accordance with facts. Instead, the perceiving mind is bombarded by impressions that mix with factual aspects. That is why, for Conrad, the true artist must not be concerned merely with facts but must be engaged in "snatching in a moment of courage [...] a passing phase of life" (Conrad in Karl 1960: 25). Every individual experiences objects in his or her own unique fashion but not in isolation. Every individual is located within the accidental factors of time and place, culture and history. That is why *Heart of Darkness* uses the narrative technique of an individual point of view. Within this type of a narrative the "I" must be sharply distinguished from the "I" of an omniscient narrator. With the omniscient view point, the narrator gives the reader the impression that everything is known — the thoughts and feelings of all the characters and the general meaning of the episodes in the plot. With the individual point of view, Conrad is able to convey to the reader the impression that all knowledge is dependent on the unique experience and understanding of the individual perceiver. It is also dependent on the intentional act which is directed at the object. That is why knowledge about a particular experience can never be complete. Marlow can never fully comprehend all aspects of the journey to the Congo. Like the pieces in a puzzle, he must constantly re-assemble information. With each different person that he recounts the events to, and with each re-telling there arises an additional facet of the experience that previously hidden now becomes known to him.

However, there was also, for Conrad, the notion of an inter-subjective shared world. Truth could be achieved by making the other see, feel and hear what was experienced by the conscious mind. But what is of significance is that merely making someone see and feel and hear what one has experienced was not enough to achieve the kind of realism that Conrad sought. For Conrad, realism is to be understood in a very specific way. That is why *Heart of Darkness* can be read as an illustration of phenomenological principles in its examination of reality and consciousness. My contention is that the mediation between individual truth on the one hand, and objectivity on the other, that forms one of the most important preoccupations and motifs within the novella, is closely associated with phenomenological principles of thought. In his study of Conrad entitled *The Metaphysics of Darkness*, Royal Roussel writes about this middle ground between subjective truth and objective reality. He says that:

> Human awareness, for Conrad, has no more independence than any other aspect of the world. It does not arise from an isolated moment of recognition when mind, abstracted from all around it, becomes alive to its own nature. Such a version of the Cartesian *cogito* with its implications of an independent consciousness is not possible here. (Roussel 1971:10)

Thus, truth about the self and the world in *Heart of Darkness* is not something that can arise purely within the individual. Instead, the individual finds himself "thrown" into a world amidst things and people yet without any given meaning about the nature of consciousness and the universe. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger explains what is meant by the term "thrownness".[8] "Thrownness" or *Geworfenheit* suggests that *Dasein* is "thrown" into existence in such a way that *Dasein* itself has not chosen its existence. *Dasein* merely finds itself located in a particular time and space, within the world, in a

[8] For a more detailed explication of Thrownness or *Geworfenheit,* see: Heidegger, M. 1962: 219–224, 320–321.

particular culture, and must exist. However, "thrownness" also allows for *Dasein* to reveal itself and to understand itself. Within this understanding, even though "thrownness" is imposed on *Dasein*, it helps *Dasein* to realise what it means "to be" and what it means "to be oneself'. On the one hand, "thrownness" is a fact of *Dasein*'s condition. It finds itself literally "thrown" into the world as a fact. However, Heidegger is quick to say that "thrownness" cannot be understood merely as a factual condition. It is in "thrownness" that *Dasein* is both hidden and revealed. Because *Dasein* is "thrown" into existence, the manner in which *Dasein* exists becomes the manner in which "thrownness" is revealed. And in revealing "thrownness", *Dasein* is essentially revealing itself. Heidegger explains:

> Dasein's facticity, however, is essentially distinct from the factuality of something present-at-hand. Existent Dasein does not encounter itself as something present-at-hand within-the-world. But neither does thrownness adhere to Dasein as an inaccessible characteristic which is of no importance for its existence. As something thrown, Dasein has been thrown *into existence*. It exists as an entity which has to be as it is and as it can be. (Heidegger 1962: 321)

The last statement in the quotation above, points to a paradoxical duality that is contained in the concept of "thrownness". *Dasein*, in being "thrown" into the world, finds itself amidst limitations, cast in a world over which it has no control and no understanding and moreover without any choice as to whether or not *Dasein* wished to be there in the first place. There is a difference between what is meant by facticity and factuality which is important in understanding the notion of Heidegger's "thrownness". Facticity is *Dasein*'s existential understanding of itself. *Dasein* understands that its existence is a fact but in such a way that *Dasein* is aware of the limitations within which it finds itself. Because of an awareness of the limitations of the conditions in which *Dasein* finds itself, it understands that any understanding of the world and of the self

will always be a partial and subjective understanding limited by factors such as historical period, culture, society, state of mind and such other aspects. This condition of being thrown into the world is an absurd condition that every individual finds himself in, but nevertheless a condition that *Dasein* must reconcile with. Moreover, *Dasein* does not exist as a mere fact, like an object present-at-hand, but instead must existentially understand itself. This means that *Dasein* must understand its potential to be *Dasein* and thus reveal itself in existence.

The motif of uncovering the hidden, of struggling to reveal that which is concealed is a constant throughout the narrative of *Heart of Darkness*. To understand this, one has only to turn to the title of the work and the implication of its meaning. In *Heart of Darkness*, the word "Darkness" in the title has been read as metaphoric in more ways than one by several scholars. Darkness can be read as a metaphor of the impenetrable. The dense jungle is submerged in darkness, allowing for no possibility of sunlight to penetrate through. The sense of displacement and concealment that pervades the landscape infiltrates almost everything that enters it. Within the darkness, nothing can be seen, forms remain blurred and indistinct and the eye searches in vain to mark out contours in a shapeless mass. Repeatedly, Marlow uses words and sentences to qualify an understanding of the world and of himself as something that can be only vaguely captured, yet something that every individual is driven obsessively to decipher. There is the sense that he has been thrust into the world and must "put up with the sight, with sounds, with smells" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 124). Marlow continually finds himself in situations over which he has no control. This is especially true during his journey up the river Congo. In general, Marlow is of the view that any understanding of life and of

himself is only partial and incomplete. What is remarkable however is that Marlow is always aware of this. He has no illusion of any universal objective truth, nor does he deceive himself as far as an understanding of the self is concerned. Instead, to the contrary, because he is able to reckon with the fact that any complete understanding is only a shadow to be chased, he is always alert to the fact that all understanding is conditioned by the individual and the individual's existence in a particular space and time frame. Yet in this knowledge lies his tragedy. His tragedy rests in the sense of futility and pessimism that confronts him and that arises from the above recognition. He says:

> Droll thing life is — that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself — that comes too late [...] (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 149)

The darkness that surrounds Marlow pervades everything, with only intermittent flashes of light. The reference to a "futile purpose" that Marlow alludes to in the above quotation is indicative of the consciousness of an individual who has understood that all knowledge will necessarily be limited by an existentially conditioned comprehension of the world.

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Phenomenology as developed by Husserl aimed at studying the structures of human consciousness. Phenomenology focussed on the perceiving mind and not on questions of objective reality. The catch word of Phenomenology is "intentionality". It is supposed that the mind is always directed at an object of intention. Whether one is talking about an object or whether the object is bodily intuited, the object itself is always given to us in a specific manner. One of the many aims of philosophical phenomenology is to reproduce the manner in which the human mind experiences, feels, sees and hears the

intended object. Phenomenology is not concerned with whether or not the mind that perceives the intending object does or does not coincide with the actual object. However, this does not imply that Phenomenology is purely subjective. Instead, it is inter-subjective. Within phenomenology inter-subjectivity becomes the basis upon which any objective understanding of the world is possible at all. According to Husserl, it is impossible to have access to another person's consciousness. There is, however, always an awareness of the "Other". In this awareness there also lies the simultaneous recognition that the "Other" remains inaccessible and transcends the "I". To experience the "Other" in an authentic manner is to experience the "Other" as inaccessible. As opposed to things and objects in the world, it is the experience of precisely this transcendent element that allows any experience of the "Other". Why then does objectivity depend on inter-subjectivity? I shall explain. In my experience of an object, I also understand that the "Other" can experience the same object. But the "Other" experiences the same object in a different manner from me. It is at this point that I realise there is a difference between the object itself and the object as it shows itself to me. The object now ceases to exist merely to the subjectivity experiencing it. However, it must be emphasised that the manner in which the object shows itself to the "I" is what the object is. The difference between the object as it shows itself and the actual object is not one of authenticity. That is, the truth about the object is not concealed behind the adumbration that is visible. The aim of the phenomenological methodology is to make the "Other" see the world and the objects in it according to the manner in which the experiencing mind absorbs them. By doing so, the "Other" is trying to communicate that which lies beyond the subjectivity of the "I". "Bracketting" is a method in phenomenological analysis that involves the putting aside of theories, assumptions,

beliefs and habitual ways of seeing a particular object or event, and, experiencing it as it presents itself. It can thus be extended to experiencing what the "Other" has experienced and what the "Other" is trying to communicate in a given situation. The notion of the existence of an inter-subjective world, within which an individual finds himself, is an important one in phenomenology. There is a shared world in which individuals exist. However, there is the notion that the only thing that can be communicated with certainty is the experience of the individual. But this does not imply that the "I" can gain access to the consciousness of the "Other". Yet, within the conviction that all understanding resides within the individual mind and that reality lies in the individual consciousness, there is a simultaneous acknowledgement that any understanding of the world and consciousness cannot be reduced to mere solipsism. Phenomenology does recognise an intersubjective world. Objects that are intended by the individual mind do have a universal aspect to them as well, for only if it were so, would it be possible to talk about trees, chairs, sadness or hope, for instance.

One of the other techniques of phenomenology is the method of phenomenological reduction. Through the process of eidetic reduction, we can arrive at the essence of pure phenomena. This essence is akin to an understanding shared by all individuals. We are thus able to talk of an experience of sun light falling on a landscape, as an individual experience, but, the concept of sunlight is a universal and can be described by all persons.

In the *History of Philosophy*, William Sahakian explains why Husserl and phenomenology must not be reduced to solipsism. He states:

> Husserl is not a solipsist; on the contrary, his doctrine of *intersubjectivity* assumes the existence of other people. The role of *empathy* and the fact that essences (the intelligible structures of phenomenal objects) are common to all persons compelled him to accept the belief in alter Ego, the conclusion that other Egos like his own exist [...] It is through intersubjectivity that we attain objectivity concerning the external world. (1968: 333–334)

For Husserl, then, the individual consciousness does not exist by itself but is always amidst others. This being amidst others is very much understood as a condition upon which any possibility of objectivity is achievable. Intersubjectivity, empathy, essences and objectivity, all four of which Sahakian has remarked about in the above quotation, are some of the primary concerns in Conrad's novella. More specifically, it is by bringing these four notions to interact with ideas of subjectivity that Conrad skilfully escapes solipsistic enticements.

How are these ideas expressed in Conradian fiction? In the next section, I propose to examine this question by bringing together an analysis of *Heart of Darkness* with principles from Husserlian and Heideggerean phenomenology.

Consciousness, Being and the Self in Phenomenology and *Heart of Darkness*

Heart of Darkness is set on board the deck of a yacht which stands at the mouth of the Thames. As the sun begins to set and as darkness begins to descend all around, Marlow begins to recount the tale of his journey up the river Congo to his fellow travellers. It is through the frame of one of the travellers that Marlow's story eventually reaches the reader's ears.[9] There is hence a double filter through which Marlow's experiences are conveyed to us. First, Marlow recounts his journey up the Congo and his search and

[9] The frame narrator is unnamed. He opens and closes the narrative and appears intermittently throughout. Thus, *Heart of Darkness* is to be read as a tale within a tale.

eventual meeting with Kurtz, the mysterious European ivory trader, from memory. Second, Marlow's tale telling is reported to the reader by the unnamed sailor on board the deck of the *Nellie*. For most part of the novella it is easy to forget that the events recounted in *Heart of Darkness* are actually brought to the reader through an unnamed fellow traveller of Marlow's.

The main problematic of gaining an understanding of the events in *Heart of Darkness* stems from the fact that the narrative itself is so intricately wrought. Firstly, there is Marlow, who is recounting a past episode. Recollection, as an intentional act, explains Husserl, is different from other acts of intentional experience.[10] In that, the object of intentional directedness is not itself present or given to us at the moment of recounting. The object remains "empty", not because it lacks content, but because it is not immediately given. But it is derived from a prior experience or perception and hence it cannot be understood as empty of content. Importantly then, in order for such an intending to be meaningful at all, the "empty intending" itself must be able to re-trace itself and refer to a prior experience, where the object was given to the subjectivity experiencing it.

The role of the frame narrator has been variously examined by several scholars. Some scholars have suggested that he be understood as Marlow's double. Seymour Gross

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[10] In an essay entitled "Heidegger's critique of Husserl's and Brentano's Accounts of Intentionality" (2000), Dermot Moran explains how, for Husserl, the act of recollection differs from other intentional acts. He explains that: "In *recalling* sensorily the blackbird in the garden, the object is certainly 'seen' in a certain sense, but not grasped as bodily present, it is there as 'remembered'. The levels of 'fullness' of the object can diminish, until in the cases of merely talking about something (e.g., a bridge we have never seen, a concept we have not mastered) we are merely employing the name of the object, still signifying it, but now with a form of 'empty intending' (*Leermeinen*), a purely 'signitive' form of referring" (2000: 49).

(1957: 167-170) draws attention to the frame narrator's role by suggesting that Marlow and the unnamed narrator both start at the same place, make the same journey and finally arrive at the same place. Like Marlow, for whom Kurtz is little more than a voice, for the unnamed narrator Marlow becomes little more than a voice. The tale passes from Marlow's lips to that of the unnamed narrator and contributes to a sense of continuity in narrative where what is exposed is the incompleteness and haziness that surrounds the tale. The telling serves to make more obvious that which transcends the tale as the untold. But if it does so, it also adds validity to Marlow's account which has passed from a subjective rendering by Marlow himself to a more objective one recounted by the frame narrator. It is precisely in the play between the subjective and objective that the novella itself is wrapped. The unnamed narrator in a sense serves to preserve Marlow's voice and thereby to grant the tale objectivity, but in such a way that it is ironically Marlow's voice at the cost of the unframed narrator's that we hear so consistently through the pages of the novella. The unnamed narrator relates to his listeners who are the readers of the tale, what Marlow has in turn related to him. What is significant, however, is that the voice that the novella resounds with, is Marlow's. The unnamed narrator evaporates steadily and only returns sporadically. Marlow's primary preoccupation in the novella is centred on his own awareness of himself as the narrator of his experiences. To him, it is not merely enough to recount what passed during his time in the African continent, but he must convey the experience with sincerity and integrity. And to do that, he must make his listener's experience what he has experienced in the heart of the dark continent.

> I don't want to bother you much with what happened to me personally [...] yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw,

> how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 72)

What is made evident in the above quotation is the fact that Marlow intends to convey to his fellow sea farers not merely the factual details of his journey: the date and time, how long it took him, how often he stopped, but instead, the cumulative effect of his experience. To convey an effect he must make his listeners live through his experience, feel what he felt, see what he saw and hear what he heard. It is as if inter-subjective communication and an empathic understanding are imperative to validate the experience that Marlow has lived through. Without these, the experience retains an element of phantasm.[11] The effect is not merely a sum of all the facts but instead the cumulative effect of the entire episode. Hence, to convey the effect would mean to convey the whole. Why does Marlow place such a heavy significance on recounting what he has experienced personally? Does communicating it to others hold any particular significance for him? Marlow is continually plagued by the threat of being driven into a state of oblivion. For him, to find a point of consensus between the listeners understanding of his experience and his own re-telling of what has been experienced by him is a way to make certain and real what seems otherwise vague and illusory. The re-telling is suggestive of a process of the self trying to understand itself from past experiences. For Husserl, one is already in the mode of being a subject in every experience that happens to the "I" because there is always a consciousness of being the one to whom the experience is occurring. But in reflective self-awareness, the consciousness of the self is intensified, because reflection as an act itself implies that it

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[11] In the epigraph to *Lord Jim* (1900), Conrad writes, "It is certain my convictions gains infinitely, the moment another soul will believe in it" (1986:41).

has been initiated with the directed motivation of understanding the intentional act or the phenomena. It is precisely in this mode of reflection that Marlow recounts to his audience the events that crowd the narrative in *Heart of Darkness.* The Congo experience provides him with a perfect opportunity for this. But it also represents all that is foreign to him. Through it, Marlow is unable to experience what it means to be. Only later does he realise that his inability to experience a self stems from the fact that his experience of the bareness that pervades the African landscape is actually an estrangement from a familiar social code and system that provides him with a feeling of selfhood and self-identity in the European continent. That is why he says:

> We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. [...] We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. [...] We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign — and no memories. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 107)

For Marlow, then, the self that exiles itself from the world is always at the brink of dissolution. There is a heavy emphasis on the relation between the self and the world in the novella. This has to do, at least to some extent, with the relation between the perceiving subject and experienced object in *Heart of Darkness.* The line between subject and object does not display a clearly defined demarcation. The object in *Heart of Darkness* is not to be equated with that which is essentially distinct from the subject. Because the object is so intricately bound up with the subject that experiences the object, there is a blurring between subject and object. Objects do not receive their definition and description based on factual information. Rather, the object is brought alive in addition to factual information by a subjective experience of it. This does not mean that objects

that are experienced by the experiencing human mind have no existence without the mind that perceives it. Nor does it in any way imply that the object is that which it appears to be for each individual. If that were the case then there would be no inter-subjective shared world. Notions of subjectivity are influenced by the object as much as the objects in the world are influenced by the experiencing subject. For instance, it is significant to ask why Marlow's self-awareness is more coherent and confident in the European sub-continent, as compared with the wilderness of the African landscape, where all sense of self drains away into a feeling of insubstantiality. Marlow describes the feeling that overcomes him:

> Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. [...] you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off forever from everything you had known once —somewhere far away — in another existence perhaps. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 105)

The landscape, though full of vegetation, is likened to a "desert" thus offering a contrasting picture of stark bareness. His description of the landscape is inextricably linked to his own sense of the self. This has to do, at least to some extent, with the treatment of the relation between subject and object in the novella. The psychological landscape and the physical surroundings are superimposed such that each one is responsible for the effect produced by the other. The repeated use of certain words and phrases, suggestive of losing oneself, not because of an emptiness but because of an impenetrability, is symbolic of the self trying to attain self-awareness and self-identity, as if it were a given condition of consciousness that can always be recovered even when severed from familiar cultural and social factors. Through the journey Marlow begins to understand that the self is in a state of constant becoming and cannot be divorced from

existence within a particular culture and world. That is why, when he finds himself in this altered and unknown landscape, he is not certain of what it means to be Marlow here. The "Marlow" that he has known himself as, does not hold in this changed landscape, where language contains different words, where it does not mean anything to say that he is Manager of a steam boat, and where, what he has until now understood as universal codes of social conduct become mere dogmas. For Marlow then, the essence of the self lies in existence. What must be emphasized here is not that the self is socially or culturally constructed but instead that self-understanding is conditioned to some extent by factors such as culture and the world in which each individual finds himself. It is crucial to understand that, for Marlow, addressing the other sailors is an affirmation of the self. This is because, in addressing the other, the "I" is experienced in opposition to the "You". But the "I" becomes the central framework from which everything is seen, heard and understood. And once this is recognised there is simultaneously the realisation that all knowledge is conditional and dependent on a specific perspective and never an absolute. One of the riddles for Marlow is how best to resolve the contingency of knowledge. The journey into the Congo systematically destroys all the conditional factors that provide him with the sense of a coherent self.

It would be a mistake to assume that, for Marlow, the self is purely socio-culturally constructed. Instead, the recognition that there is some part of the self that is influenced by a specific culture immediately forces Marlow to realise that any self-understanding that he has achieved is merely partial and incomplete. But what is the self when severed from all such cultural specificity? Perhaps, once all such factors have been extracted that which remains is the fundamental in the self? That is why it is important for him to

transform the memory of the Congo experience into reality by communicating it to his fellow travellers. Communicating it to the others brings with it the vague sense of investing it with universality and seeking the fundamental essence of the self. Marlow's battle is between two extremes: on the one hand he realises that self-understanding is and must be always partial. On the other hand, there is the temptation to accept that the conditional existence can paradoxically provide one with a complete self-understanding. The result of these two possibilities can be either incapacitating or destructive.

Because Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* is making the other sailors experience what he has experienced, they must be able to live through, in imagination, what Marlow has lived through. Because he is not primarily interested in conveying the finer factual details of the story, Marlow's report of the events in the Congo and the effect they had on him has the texture of a stream of consciousness account. Through the narrative Marlow's mind shuffles back and forth in time, searching for meaning. The mind remembering does not order experiences into a coherent and chronological series of events. It often remembers events and people as impressions that have been formed by them. There is additionally the fact that the experiencing mind is always located within the specifics of time and place, state of mind, physical conditions of heat or cold, darkness or light and all these have an influence on what has been experienced. Recounting from memory carries with it the supplementary factor of understanding the experience and categorising it after it has been lived through.

Significantly, it is because Marlow recounts the story of his journey and what happened to him during the journey up the Congo from memory that it becomes also a quest for

finding what it means "to be". Phenomenology typically undertakes to understand the first person perspective on experience. Phenomenology studies that which is given to us directly and immediately in experience. Hence it is concerned with a uniquely first person perspective. The individual mind makes sense and invests meaning into experience not at the time of living through them but often after having experienced them. The experience is then placed in context and related to past experiences, through reflection. Communicating a past experience necessarily implies a consciousness of the experience, of having lived through it. It hence indicates consciousness of oneself. That is why Marlow's journey and his recounting it is simultaneously a process of self awareness and self understanding. Marlow himself talks about the journey as a journey of self-discovery when he says:

> It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me — and into my thoughts. [...] No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 72)

The lines above could very well be those spoken by the mind thinking aloud. Marlow's relating of the experience is not a straightforward recounting of an experience to an audience but weaves within itself the personal struggle of a mind trying desperately to make intelligible what has passed and thereby to achieve some amount of self-knowledge. The "I" as subject becomes also the "I" as the object. According to Husserl, in the natural attitude, the "I" "just lives". In a phenomenological analysis, the "I" begins to pay emphasis on the manner of givenness. In doing so, that is, in paying attention to how objects are given, rather than assuming that they simply exist, the individual is taken back to his or her own subjective understanding, but with the simultaneous realisation of the horizon that imposes restrictions on any understanding. By revisiting a

past episode in memory, Marlow reflects upon his experience. His own re-telling necessarily has the quality of reflection.

There is a constant dialogue in *Heart of Darkness* between the particular and the universal. This dialogue is played out on several levels. The first of these that I will examine is related to the self and consciousness. The particular finds expression in Marlow's struggle to attain solidity with regards to his own self. It is related more to identity, perception, feeling and thought. The universal, however, is related to recognising the more fundamental and essential quality of "Being" and "Consciousness". In *Heart of Darkness* the particular and the universal are inter-related. Whilst awareness of oneself does provide a vague sense of solidity, there is nevertheless the recognition that the more essential remains hidden and incommunicable. The essential is the attempt to identify the essence of human experience. This is an instance of the ontic and the ontological.[12] The ontic is the very struggle to understand what it means to be oneself. But, for Marlow, what it means to be oneself is not revealed within any inner region of oneself. It can attain a semblance of solidity only by bringing it to the world outside.

However, herein lays the problem for Marlow. For, on the one hand, there is the notion that he must communicate what it means to be Marlow if at all the meaning itself, is to have any concreteness. Yet he realises that the self cannot be communicated without being adulterated both by the other and by language. That is why he says:

> No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence — that which makes its truth, its meaning — it's subtle and

[12] An extended analysis of the difference between the ontic and ontological as used by Heidegger is made in the first chapter of this thesis.

> penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream — alone ... (Conrad [1899]; 1999:97)

It is the "life-sensation" that must be conveyed, not the mere facts of one's life. As a narrator, Marlow's struggle is with how he can best convey the "life sensation". His realisation of the inability to do so goes beyond the problematics of language. It is not that language is inadequate to communicate the essence of the self; it is that the essence itself remains largely hidden and unknown to the human mind. The question that this throws up has been one of the recurrent pre-occupations of phenomenological thought. It has to do with the question of whether it is possible at all to share another's experience in exactly the same way as has been experienced by the experiencing self.

Marlow is firstly involved in an ontical-existential struggle. The knowledge of what it means to be Marlow is accompanied by a conscious awareness of the fact that any such knowledge can come only by "Being-in-the-world". And Being-in-the-world does not assume the passive stance of an observer or an awareness that one is among other people and things. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger explains that Being-in-the-world[13] is not to be understood in terms of a spatial orientation of objects in the world. The manner in which *Dasein* exists is by Being-in-the-world. *Dasein* is different from other objects in that it is not merely there in the world as an object that is present-at-hand. Further, *Dasein* does not exist in a way that separates the world from *Dasein*. Both the world and *Dasein* exist interdependently. *Dasein* is always taken up by the concern of understanding itself. This self-interpreting that is always *Dasein*, Heidegger calls existence. *Dasein* is always

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[13] For a more detailed explication of Being-in-the-world, see: Heidegger, M. 1962:78–86.

understood in relation to the world, never in isolation from the world. In fact, there is no *Dasein* that is isolated from the world. Heidegger explains:

> Dasein understands itself proximally and for the most part in terms of its world; and the Dasein-with of Others is often encountered in terms of what is ready-to-hand within-the-world. But even if Others become themes for study, as it were, in their own Dasein, they are not encountered as person — Things present-at-hand: we meet them "at-work", that is, primarily in their Being-in-the-world. Even if we see the Other "just standing around", he is never apprehended as a human — Thing present-at-hand, but his "standing-around" is an existential mode of Being [...] The Other is encountered in his Dasein-with in the world. (Heidegger 1962: 156)

Thus, persons are not understood in a theoretical way, but by the way in which we deal and interact with them. And because this interaction is always occurring in the world, we cannot understand what the experience of being human is by divorcing it from the world. The question that follows has to do with how in fact does *Dasein* understand itself in terms of its world? More specifically, how does Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* understand himself in terms of Being-in-the-world? For Marlow, there is the notion that self-interpretation must come via community and the world he inhabits. He says that work, for instance, is not something that he likes but presents him the chance of discovering himself, of being able to understand what it means to be Marlow. The journey into darkness itself is a journey into the disappearance of a familiar social code of conduct. That social code of conduct is instrumental in constructing identity. What then happens to Marlow when he journeys into the heart of darkness? In the brooding expanse of the African continent, the physical changes in the landscape impinge upon the changes that occur in Marlow's consciousness of himself. The darkness that pervades the landscape of the African continent is the undefined and the featureless. In fact, Marlow specifically uses the word "featureless" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 79) in describing what he sees around him as he sets sail. In a menacing way, the featureless

landscape is not merely a reference to the backdrop of a geographical territory but points to the potentiality of a self that has "kicked himself loose of the earth [...] kicked the very earth to pieces" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 144).

However, the alternative of finding the self embedded within the codes of European life is not entirely satisfying to Marlow. He is always aware that this self is a façade. Yet the façade offers a potential choice. The journey into the Congo is prompted by an urge to discover what it means "to be". The darkness is a metaphor for Being and Consciousness. It is undefined but not empty. And what is of prime importance is that it is undefined specifically for Marlow. Within this understanding, the voyage into the darkness is Marlow's journey and no one else's. The darkness that Marlow talks about is intricately bound up with the fact that Marlow's journey into the wilderness is simultaneously his departure from Europe. It is a journey from the known to the unknown and becomes for him a journey of self-discovery only because the notion of the self as constructed by him in the European continent does not hold in the Congo. The journey becomes a quest for the self not because the Congo is the mysterious *per se* but because for Marlow it is the unfamiliar. Hence, all his notions of identity and self consciousness do not hold any longer. Precisely because his identity is shaken and because he is conscious of it crumbling in the African continent, the voyage begins to be transformed into a search for the essential. The logic of the argument lies in the assumption that there must be a stable and unchanging core of the self which remains undisturbed by external changes. But this assumption is seriously threatened as Marlow embarks on his journey. The Congo in all its strangeness and unfamiliarity challenges the self that has been constructed and experienced by Marlow in Europe. However, once

he does find himself in an unknown world, a strange transformation begins to beset him, a metamorphosis that is both intangible and unexplainable according to Marlow. He asks:

> You can't understand. How could you? — with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums — how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him into by way of solitude — utter solitude without a policeman — by the way of silence — utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 123)

The solitude and the silence is the haunting experience of the strangely unfamiliar world in which Marlow suddenly finds himself. Any grounding in a world that has been experienced by him in the past is now systematically pulled away from under his feet, leaving him alienated, not just from the world but from himself. And if, in fact, world and self are so intricately linked with each other, then it becomes all the more impossible to identify whether it is the alienation of the self that leads to an alienation from the world or vice-versa. Rather, both are mutually occurring. For Marlow solipsism is equated to annihilation of the self. In a way, that is why the journey into the dark continent is a journey of the self into darkness. The person who emerges from the heart of darkness might very well be the same physically, but what has been experienced by him is the power of the darkness which cannot be recorded by any instrument. Within this context, I now turn my attention to an episode that occurs early on in the novella.

Marlow recounts his pre-departure visit to the Doctor who measures his head with a pair of calipers. "I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there," says the Doctor, to which Marlow replies with a question. "And when

they come back, too?" The Doctor answers by saying "Oh, I never see them, and, moreover, the changes take place inside, you know" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 78). The word "inside" is not meant to suggest the presence of a deeper region of the self. It means instead that the changes that occur are not measurable. The darkness carries with it the power to negate the self because, in the midst of the darkness, Marlow finds himself at a loss of fixing himself within any definitions, be they of work, community, ethical codes of conduct or belief. Once again there is the reinforcement of the idea of a conditioned existence and a conditioned understanding. Thrown into the strangeness of a different world, Marlow's sense of self begins to lose all substantiality. Marlow is ultimately faced with a choice to surrender to the "the heart of a conquering darkness" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 153) or to return to the falsity of the "sepulchral city" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 150). Marlow's curse, however, lies in the fact that he has experienced both alternatives without finding comfort in either. The consolation of the city is the substantiality of a self but an always incomplete and artificially constructed self. On the other hand, while the darkness might offer the chance to be heroic and renounce all artificiality and incompleteness it carries with it the cost of a complete annihilation. The tragedy lies in Marlow's awareness of such a situation. The character of Kurtz represents the possibility of what might become of Marlow should he choose to take the plunge into the darkness from which, he admits, "I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 149). Yet his return to his former city cannot provide him with a better alternative. That is why he says:

> I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge

> of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not know the things I knew. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 150)

The same things that Marlow believed had once made such a difference, work and everyday life, now become to him a mere façade, a subterfuge of superficiality constructed by human minds to raise a merely conditioned existence to the status of a universal truth.

There is a striking parallel between Marlow's attitude to this world of pretence and the Heideggerean analysis of an inauthentic existence.[14] Heidegger calls the average everdayness that *Dasein* finds itself immersed in, as the "they-self" and distinguishes it from the "authentic self". According to the notion of the "they-self", *Dasein* is absorbed by the world, and the people and things in the world. More importantly, any understanding that *Dasein* has of itself is conditioned by the world in such a way that even the meaning of "Being" is understood based on what the world constructs as the meaning of "Being". The world and the public begin to dictate what one understands as Being and the self. In this way the reality and the truth get obscured. The truth that gets obscured is the very fact that all understanding is based on the average everydayness. This again points to a perspectival understanding that is the fate of all human beings. In a sense, what Heidegger is arguing is that the way to authentic existence lies in the recognition that all interpretation and understanding lies within a condition of being caught in a particular world. It is a particularised and conditioned existence. Can it then be argued that the figure of Kurtz provides an alternative authentic existence to the lives

[14] For a more detailed explication see: Heidegger, M. 1962: 78–86.

of the Europeans in the sepulchral city? The short answer to that question is that he does not.

Kurtz certainly represents an alternative but an alternative inauthenticity. He represents the condition that arises when the self becomes the source of a negation of itself. In *Heart of Darkness,* there is the play of two opposing ideas related to the self. One is represented by Marlow and the other is represented by Kurtz. The universe that pervades the world of the novella is an essentially inexplicable and absurd one. In it, the human being finds himself lost and struggles to make sense of it. However, there are two types of consciousness in *Heart of Darkness.* One type of consciousness tries to master and control the self and the world. In this way, there is an attempt to challenge the darkness that envelops the human condition. But how does one master and control both self and the world? Therein lies the tragedy of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* The surface, in this case, provided by the life in the sepulchral city saves one from slipping into an abyss. The surface somehow provides solidity through routine and habit, code and conventions, work and leisure. It provides one with a sense of the self as it finds itself embedded in the fabric of society. It might also prohibit the individual from dwelling much on what it means to be oneself. That is why Marlow says:

> When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality — the reality, I tell you — fades. The inner truth is hidden — luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes [...] (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 105)

The individual is the tight rope walker, always attempting to balance and thereby resist falling into the darkness. The reality that Marlow speaks about in the above quotation is the tragic knowledge that nothing can be known in the mysterious universe that the

individual finds himself in. This is the only truth that can be known and both Marlow and Kurtz have gained that recognition. Unlike the other people in the sepulchral city, Marlow is able to see beneath the surface. But the surface can often prevent the individual from penetrating through to that which lies beneath. In fact this is most often the case and it is perhaps why Marlow symbolises the figure of the enlightened one and is described three times as sitting in a Buddha-like pose. What makes his situation tragic, however, is that he has chosen to live with the knowledge that absolute truth is unattainable and that all sense of the solidity that humanity in general seems to find comfort in, is but a sham, a façade, though a necessary one. Marlow's misfortune is the direct result of his enlightenment. It lies in the dilemma between living amidst a world of appearances and surfaces with the knowledge that the world is just that, on the one hand, and knowing, on the other hand, that to reject the world of surfaces and lies and to chose the alternative, as Kurtz does, means to destroy oneself. Self-preservation comes at a dreadful cost. On his return to the city, all this knowledge debilitates him.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, discusses how Beings understand themselves for the most part by recourse to the activities that they are involved with in everyday living. According to Heidegger, *Dasein* is so involved in the activities of everyday life that the true meaning of existence gets concealed. The concealment occurs because *Dasein* chooses to pay attention to that which is obviously revealed, thereby ignoring the possibility that the outer appearance conceals the true meaning of "Being". This act of ignoring the hidden Heidegger calls "forgetfulness". Heidegger is not saying that the hidden can reveal itself only in an act of introspective reflection. Rather, he implies that the individual is absorbed in living, so much so, that no attention is paid to the manner in

which *Dasein* and the world shows itself. It is simply taken for granted. Involvement in the world is an essential mode of being for *Dasein*. However, the mere involvement in the world without any recognition that the meaning of Being and Existence is hidden because of this taken for granted attitude and is always in a state of becoming is symptomatic of a state of *Dasein* which Heidegger refers to as "fallen". "Fallenness" refers to a mode of Being in which *Dasein* exists amidst other *Dasein*s as well as entities-other-than *Dasein*. *Dasein* is, thus, immersed in this world because it provides a less troublesome alternative to discovering its ownmost potentiality of Being. Heidegger is also clear to state that falling does not imply a descent from a higher level to a lower one. Falling into the world remains a temptation for *Dasein* because it is "*tranquillizing*".[15] It is tranquillizing because in fallenness everything is known, nothing is mysterious and the façade becomes the universal truth. Paradoxically, however, fallenness leads to alienation, because it forces *Dasein* into an inauthentic mode of Being. *Heart of Darkness* provides a lucid illustration of such fallenness in Marlow's abhorrence of the people who are so entangled in the hustle of everyday life. To Marlow, these people, in their blissful ignorance of what might lie beneath the surface of everyday life, are living inauthentically, unaware of a knowledge that has become accessible to him. Perhaps this enlightenment accounts for the association between Marlow and the Buddha. How does one move from the state of fallenness and inauthenticity toward an authentic existence? Heidegger explains that authenticity is not a mode of existence that exists in a realm outside the world. Authenticity is made manifest in anxiety. Once *Dasein* recognises that it is lost in the "they-self", there is also an accompanying alienation from the world that leads to anxiety. *Dasein* might

[15] For a more detailed explication see: Heidegger, M. 1962: 222

experience a loss of the self and must find what it means "to be". The experience of a loss of the self comes with the realisation that *Dasein* is lost in the "they-self" but this realisation paradoxically offers the possibility of authenticity. Thus authenticity, according to Heidegger, does not imply a pure, unadulterated self that exists isolated from other things and other people. On returning to Brussels, Marlow is taken aback and even appalled at the hollowness of the lives of the people absorbed in what seems to him the vacuity and deception of everyday life:

> [I] felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. (Conrad, [1899]; 1999: 150)

Both Marlow and Kurtz have deliberately severed themselves from all links to the everyday life in the European continent. Both have torn themselves away from the "sham". But the consequences for both are of a radically different nature. It leads Kurtz to a death of the self and offers Marlow the preservation of the self but at a tragic cost. Kurtz drowns himself into oblivion by immersing himself in the darkness. He does this by surrendering himself to the recognition that truth is impenetrable and by renouncing the inauthenticity of European life. He tears himself from the external sham that occupies the mind and protects it from noticing the darkness. But Kurtz's error lies in giving free rein to the illusion that by doing so he can be master of the self. And hence the response of freeing himself from the external controls of society results in his taking an excessive control over society. Kurtz moves from one end of the spectrum to the far end on the other side. Abandonment leads to control and finally results in annihilation. Kurtz moves within such a framework. In *Heart of Darkness,* abandonment is equivalent to a loss of self-control. Self-control is partially dependent on the values and codes of

societal norms. Because the self has been habituated to understanding itself in context with a specific culture and society, the rejection of the rules and codes that make up that society leads one to a sense of nullity. The self without society is confronted by nothingness and is hence faced with panic. The response manifests itself as a desire to take control. This taking control extends to both oneself and to the environment. In its extreme form it eventually results in disintegration. This is precisely what happens to Kurtz. Marlow explains to his listeners:

> You should have heard him say, "My ivory." Oh yes, I heard him. "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my —" everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places. Everything belonged to him — but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 123)

Once Kurtz has abandoned everything, including all sense of the self, he is confronted by emptiness. The words "I", "my" and "myself" resound with vacuity. Because of this, Kurtz must reclaim himself but without surrendering to what he has abandoned. Hence he goes to the other extreme. He begins to claim everything around him. In an act of madness and panic, everything belongs to him, finds source in him and resides in him. He literally spirals out of control and this is how he lays himself open to the darkness around him.

The darkness in the novella is of two kinds. One type can be knowledgeable because it can lead one to the insight that any attempt at penetrating the sham to discover an absolute truth is but an illusion. The second type of darkness is destructive. It lies in the hubris of one who thinks that by abandoning the sham of a surface reality, one can be victorious over the darkness. The arrogance of such a belief leads to an annihilation of

the self. This is what happens to Kurtz. But what in fact is the darkness that Kurtz desires to control? The darkness symbolises that which cannot be known, that which always remains mysterious to the human mind. It has to do with questions of epistemology, and of consciousness and the knowledge of what it means to be oneself, and finally, of how the universe works and man's place within the universe. That is why there are certain recurrent images within the novella. The tale begins at sun set as darkness begins to descend over the landscape and draws to a close with dark clouds drifting across an overcast sky leading into "the heart of an immense darkness" (Conrad [1899]; 1999:158). Throughout the novella, the emphasis placed on "sight" is not without significance. There is firstly the fact that Marlow and his companions are unable to see each other on board the *Nellie*, because of the pitch dark that surrounds them. The frame narrator even goes so far as to point out that it is impossible to say with certainty whether the rest are asleep or listening to Marlow's tale. Marlow himself has become a voice. The frame narrator draws attention to all of this following Marlow's remark:

> . . . No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence, — that which makes its truth, its meaning — its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream — alone. [...] Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know. . . . (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 97)

Marlow's remark is ironic because on the one hand he is certain that the self cannot be communicated and grasped by the other. Struggle as he may to convey the sense of the self, it remains largely incommunicable. Yet he insists that the listeners on board the ship are able to see him, "whom you know", despite the fact that it is dark and they cannot see him at all. Marlow plays with the word "see" rather cleverly. The notion of "sight" is juxtaposed throughout the novella with the impenetrable darkness which has both a physical and a metaphoric status. To be able to penetrate the darkness, one must

be able to see. Hence the act of "seeing" in *Heart of Darkness* is synonymous with knowledge and understanding. Darkness is not to be equated with nothingness; rather it is that which is incomprehensible to human understanding. For Marlow, who is recounting the tale, Kurtz largely remains no more than a voice. Ironically enough, the frame narrator points out that Marlow himself has become a voice and nothing else because of the darkness that prevents any of the travellers from seeing the one who speaks. There are two things going on in the above quotation. What Marlow means by remarking that his listeners "see him" is that his rendering of Kurtz and the Congo experience throws light on Marlow rather than on Kurtz, because it is his unique perspective that is being recounted. However, the frame narrator undercuts Marlow's comment by drawing attention to the fact that Marlow is invisible as a result of the darkness that has descended. In addition to the night, the darkness is also a reference to the fact that it is virtually an impossibility to see and experience the tale as Marlow has experienced it. That is perhaps why the frame narrator says of the narrative recounted by Marlow that "it seemed to shape itself without human lips" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 97). He calls attention to the inherent problem of communication and an important concern of phenomenology: the problems associated with accessing the consciousness of another. One might be able to recount an experience and the listener will be able to understand what is being said but to be able to experience it in the same way as has been experienced by the subject who lives through the experience is necessarily impossible.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time,* expands on how all self-understanding is determined by the mood that *Dasein* is thrown into. *Dasein* perceives the world according to the mood in which it finds itself. The mood that *Dasein* finds itself in projects an understanding of

the world and every understanding is hence projected by a specific mood. That is why all self-understanding can never be objective and independent from the standpoint of the individual. Because every understanding of the world and of the self is determined by a mood, all understanding is limited and potentially always in a state of becoming. *Dasein* can never free itself from being thrown into a mood. It is what Heidegger calls a "fundamental *existentiale*" (Heidegger 1962: 173).

Thus when we encounter things and situations we do not perceive them as merely present-at-hand but as potentially threatening, exciting, interesting, confusing or incomprehensible. However, it would be erroneous to suggest that Heidegger slips into solipsism in his analysis of mood. Being thrown into a mood does not imply that every individual has his own private world that remains inaccessible to the other. In that sense, moods are not to be understood as a subjective state of mind or a psychical emotional state that are essentially private.

> A mood assails us. It comes neither from "outside" nor from "inside" but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being. [...] Having a mood is not related to the psychical in the first instance, and is not itself an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatic way and puts its mark on Things and persons. (Heidegger 1962: 176)

The public or the social world allows for the possibility of moods because the public has already disclosed and interpreted the world in a specific way based on which the experience of moods is possible in the first place. Moods cannot be understood in an objective manner and hence *Dasein* cannot understand mood in an objective fashion. Every attempt to escape a mood results in a counter-mood and hence *Dasein* is always-already in a mood. *Dasein* and the world are hence always disclosed according to the mood into which *Dasein* is thrown. What Heidegger is saying is that the world is not

experienced in a purely theoretical way with things that are present-at-hand. The world and *Dasein* are always being disclosed in different ways at different times. That is why *Dasein* cannot and must not attempt to understand itself in a cognitive-reflective way. Nor is it possible to understand the self and the world according to a subject–object divide. Being thrown into a mood is not the same as understanding things according to subjective feelings. Objects, the world and *Dasein* are always encountered within a mood. Moreover, moods reveal a way of being by which the world and things in the world matter to *Dasein*. *Dasein* is as much affected by things in the world as things in the world are affected by the moods that *Dasein* finds itself thrown into. For instance, a particular situation can prove to be threatening only because it matters to *Dasein*, for if it did not matter there would be no mood made manifest. Similarly, *Dasein* might find itself thrown into a mood in which all appears threatening and frustrating. Thus moods do not exist outside or inside *Dasein* but are an essential mode of Being-in-the-world.

Mood refers to an attunement to a world such that the world already-always matters to *Dasein*. It is a primordial condition. At the most basic level, a mood refers to a general atmosphere that is already present in the world in which we find ourselves. Hence, the mood of the modern world can be referred to as sceptical and pessimistic. There is in this sense a global mood: a mood in a particular restaurant or amongst a group of people in a party or a cultural mood of the time. Even within the global mood, there are different levels that operate amongst different groups and situations. The global mood is hence not to be understood merely as a general cultural sensibility. *Dasein* is thrown into this world which has already been determined by a public mood. Moods have the characteristic of often being unrecognisable. This means that moods are present in such

a way that their very presence is not something that *Dasein* reflects upon. Moods are never in us; instead we are always in a mood. They are there without drawing attention to their presence. *Dasein* finds itself thrown into this primordial mood and has to find itself. The way in which the world, the primordial mood and things in the world affect *Dasein* helps *Dasein* to reveal itself. Yet, the revealing of *Dasein* always occurs in such a way that *Dasein* is always revealed in a particular mood or state-of-mind, never as something theoretical and pure, or as severed from a mood. Of most importance to the discussion on mood provided by Heidegger is the fact that it must be understood without a subject-object divide. I will explain this with examples from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* There is in the novella a more all pervasive facticity and a particular facticity. Pervasive thrownness is the general mood of the specific cultural time while particular mood is tied to individual facticity. There are three things working in the analysis of mood and the problem is one of how they work together such that Conrad is able to escape the dangers of solipsism. On the first level, the world itself is always covered over by a mood. Second, the individual always finds himself thrown into a mood that might change at any given time. Third, the private and particular meet with the general and the all pervasive. Finally, how does the plurality of the private world of multiple individuals and the all pervasive mood that the world is, and in which it is *a priori* covered in, work together toward epistemological and ontological issues? I postulate that the answer to the above question lies in the problematic of thinking along a subject-object divide. In his book *Conrad and Impressionism,* John Peters argues that Conrad's impressionistic literary technique addresses the problems of both idealism and positivism. He explains:

> In fact, impressionist representation lies neither solely with the subject nor solely with the object but rather in the space between the two. In this way impressionism diverges from both positivism and idealism. Positivism saw reality in the object — the external world. Idealism saw reality in the subject — the internal world. Impressionism mediates these extremes and posits the necessary existence of both subject and object — but not from a dualist position; rather the two merge such that their outlines blur. (Peters 2001: 18)

According to Peters, subject and object work in such a way that the boundaries blur. He explains that objects are experienced always in context to time, place and person. Peters argues that the object that is experienced is always filtered through a particular individual consciousness but also that the object experienced is affected by other factors such as its own location within a physical surrounding. The blurring of boundaries between subject and object is one point amongst many others in Peters' own extended analysis of the relation between impressionism and *Heart of Darkness* that the argument in this chapter draws upon. However, it must be reiterated that this chapter is not concerned with whether or not Conrad employs an impressionist literary technique in *Heart of Darkness*.

The Heideggerean explication of moods works outside the subject-object divide because Being-in-the-world refers to a mode of existing that immediately rules out the notion of an individual existing as a subject in a world of objects. Because *Dasein* is enmeshed in the world and this is a basic existential structure of Being, there is no distinction to be made between independent world and thinking mind in Heidegger. Peters, on the other hand, does draw out a subject-object divide but in a way that the experience of each affects the other. There is, what Peters calls a "mutual influence" (Peters 2001:19) in reference to the subject-object relation. However, Peters' argument eventually arrives at a similar point but through a completely divergent route from that of Heidegger's.

Where Peters argues that subject and object merge, Heidegger posits that there is no subject and object in the first instance. What Peters does not explain is how such a blurring occurs. It is at this juncture that I bring in Heidegger's theory of moods. However, the fact that Peters does claim that the boundaries between subject and object merge and blur is itself testimony to the fact that impressionistic literary techniques do start by postulating a subject-object divide and finally arrive at a point where such a divide dissolves. What remains of significance to my analysis of *Heart of Darkness* are three primary questions: first, does the novella postulate a subject-object divide?; second, if there is a subject-object divide then how does any blurring between the two occur?; the third and related question is that if there is no subject-object distinction, how is the absence of such a divide expressed? I propose that as far as Marlow is concerned, there is no self that perceives objects in the world such that the experiencing self can be clearly distinguished from the experienced object. Instead, there is only the existing self. That is why Conrad employs the narrative strategy of Marlow recounting his experience. It is the means by which he is best able to express the idea that Marlow is not recounting a gained insight but understands as he recounts. There is no indication of a self as a subject that introspectively understands a past experience as an object. What Marlow has experienced in the Congo is not recounted to his fellow travellers as an illumined knowledge that Marlow is now in possession of. It is true that Marlow does look back at a past experience in his desperate attempt to communicate it to the other sailors and in his extreme urge to understand what effects it might have had on him. In that sense, it is possible to say that Marlow as subject looks back at his past as object, trying to grasp the meaning of all that has happened during the Congo episode. However, the subject-object divide gets undercut because of the treatment of memory in the novella.

Memory in *Heart of Darkness* works in a very particular way and to achieve a very specific end. The act of remembering a past experience in the novella is not concerned with conveying factual information or a cumulative knowledge that has been gained. There is a superimposition of past and present in *Heart of Darkness.* Marlow is never outside the experience and hence cannot understand a past experience as an object that must be comprehended. The already experienced is always being lived in the present because it comes back to Marlow in recollection. It is not something dormant that has passed and can be thought of rationally, but instead is active and always in the present. It must be remembered that the Congo episode is brought alive to us only through recollection. There is no way of contrasting how Marlow felt whilst he was there in relation to what comes back to him as flashes of memory. Past and present merge in two ways. First, Marlow goes back to the impressions of what has been already lived but he does so and is in fact able to do so only by being in the present. Perhaps what he remembers is determined by the present, by the darkness that is descending all around them on the *Nellie*, perhaps what he is able to recollect is only what is visible to him at the present moment. The past is hence not just a stored resource of facts and the role of memory does not perform the function of accessing lived experience from a reservoir in the mind. In this sense, the past is experienced not as the past but as the present. It is literally brought to life again and this is exactly what Marlow tries to express. That is why Marlow constantly breaks his narrative by making certain that his listeners are able to capture what he is trying to tell them. In one interjection while talking about Kurtz he asks:

> Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream — making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 97)

The questions posed to his listeners are in the present tense. Marlow is drawing on material from the past but the material itself is not factual but related to the senses, to images and to emotions. That is why he finds it more difficult than ever to transmit his experience. That is also why the past and the present come together. The comparison to a dream suggests the texture of something real yet infused with unreality. The unreality stems from a lack of emphasis on factual data. Mood colours everything in *Heart of Darkness* and because of that, memory functions not as a separator of the past and the present but instead serves to press one against the other. Such a treatment of time in *Heart of Darkness* stresses the notion of consciousness as existence rather than the idea of mind assimilating and understanding experience and itself in an introspective and rational manner.

The language that Marlow uses whilst recounting the Congo experience suggests an inherent disbelief in the conviction that there can be a complete understanding of past experiences and of things in general. There is a constant need to understand things and events in such a way that no understanding can be exhaustive and final. But the understanding itself is not done in a way that divides the understanding mind from the object to be understood. Rather they are both intertwined in such a way that each one affects the other. It is not convenient to read *Heart of Darkness* within the framework of a subject-object divide because the dream like quality of the novella interweaves everything in a way so as to create not divisions but superimpositions. There is a certain

mood that Marlow is literally thrown into and this mood is a general one in the sense that it envelops the novella as a whole. The mood is dark, sombre and foggy. These are references to both the physical conditions that the novella is set in as well as the atmosphere that fills the pages of the novella. The physical landscape of the Congo presses upon the landscape of Marlow's mind such that there is a commingling of the two. The narrative operates in such a way that it is impossible to state whether it is Marlow's state of mind that creates the brooding mysteriousness of the narrative or whether in fact it is the landscape of the Congo with its people and rituals that produce the mood that Marlow projects throughout. And the question is not merely which one influences the other but in fact what the true nature of both, Marlow and the physical surrounding is, if there is any true nature at all. The haze that surrounds the tale is one in which Marlow is entrenched in as well. That is why he uses the language in the way that he does:

> [T]he meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 70)

The frame narrator by making the above observation draws attention to the fact that the tale cannot be understood in the specific way that it is were it to possess an objective clarity detached from Marlow. It is hence appropriate to conclude that there is no way by means of which the tale and Marlow can be understood as separate from each other. All understanding is contextualised but in such a way that the phenomena experienced are inextricably linked to the person who experiences them. Yet this does not suggest that it is a purely subjective understanding either. There is an inter-relatedness such that the mood of the landscape that Marlow is thrown into affects his interaction with the

surrounding environment in a specific way which has to do with the mood that Marlow himself is thrown into. This in turn projects a mood onto the surrounding landscape. All this occurs not in a linear development but as a superimposition of mood upon mood image upon image and understanding upon understanding. Within the vast expanse of the African wilderness that Marlow describes as featureless, Marlow loses all sense of his self. It is as if Marlow himself is now featureless and the attempt to penetrate through all the thickness of the jungle becomes simultaneously an effort to pierce through the physicality of the body to a substantial notion of what it means "to be oneself".

Marlow's narrative throughout his journey points essentially to an ontic struggle in the Heideggerean sense. What can be said of the ontological? Are there any instances of unearthing any ontological principles in *Heart of Darkness?* The expression of the ontological is not laid down as fundamental principles in the novella but nevertheless it can be stated that there are brief allusions to ontological principles. By ontological I mean certain basic structures of Being, as Heidegger explains the term. For Heidegger, ontological categories of Being can be identified as ready-to-hand, present-at-hand and Being-in-the-world. Surely Conrad's text finds literary expression of these three structures but does not lay them down as universal categories of Being but rather as a personal ontical struggle that Marlow is engaged with. It is hence through the particular that the universal is expressed. In fact, it may be erroneous to use the term universal. All the understanding that Marlow gains is specifically his understanding and, moreover, it is a contextualised understanding. It is possible to say that *Heart of Darkness* postulates certain basic principles by which the self and the world are understood. These might be that all human understanding of both self and world is always incomplete and changing,

that objectivity is a sham but that subjectivity can be dangerous, that there must be a point of mediation between objective and subjective understandings of the world and of ourselves and that this point of mediation is how we relate both to the world and consciousness. Yet, these fundamental claims, or structures of Being and Being-in-the-world work within the specific context of the novella. They might work outside the text but there is no claim as to their universal applicability. That is why they cannot work along the lines of ontological principles.

Perhaps it is the absence of ontological structures and the non-existence of a shared essence among all mankind that leads to the dramatic last words of Kurtz as he takes the plunge into death. Death in *Heart of Darkness* points toward the futility and terror that is the fate of all mankind. It is not something that is seen as separate from existence. And because it is not understood as being outside existence it has overwhelming bearings of an anxiety related to selfhood. For Marlow, death is as absurd as life. It is not a cumulative endpoint, at which juncture an individual might gain true knowledge about the universe and the self. In fact, to the contrary, it only makes the incomprehensibility of life more glaring. In his discussion on death and dying, Heidegger draws a distinction between perishing and demise. Perishing refers to the end of that which lives. *Dasein* has its own perishing in the sense that it too is brought to an end. However, in authentically dying, *Dasein* does not simply perish. Demise is the word that Heidegger uses to refer to *Dasein*'s authentic dying. According to Heidegger, thinking of death as an inevitability that is certain but has not yet happened is a way of fleeing death. Death is *Dasein's* ownmost possibility. This means that *Dasein*'s ownmost and true possibility is nothingness. There is an ontological structural nothingness that is *Dasein* and hence

death cannot be understood as an annihilation of the self. The essentiality of *Dasein* lies in a groundlessness, nothingness and non-specificity. This means that *Dasein* must acknowledge that it has no fixed and specific nature, content, identity or essence. Hubert Dreyfus explains what Heidegger means by one of his most debated statements of "[*D*]*eath, as the end of Dasein, is Dasein's ownmost possibility — non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped*" (Heidegger 1962: 303). Dreyfus explains:

> Thus Dasein can have no concrete possibilities of its own on which to project; it can have no fixed identity; indeed its only essential or ownmost possibility is nothingness. Heidegger calls this the "inessentiality of the self". He attempts to illuminate this ultimate structural nullity definitive of Dasein, viz. the impossibility of Dasein's existence as an individual with an identity of its own, by bringing it into relation with the possibility of death to which it has obvious formal similarities. (Dreyfus 1991: 310)

Death is an existential structure. And in that sense, nothingness becomes an existential structure of Dasein. Death only makes more manifest what *Dasein* has been all along. This is because, when confronted with death, *Dasein* must own up to the fact that death is the impossibility of existence, that it has no more possibilities, but that this nothingness is one of its ownmost possibility. This is akin to the anxiety that *Dasein* feels once it acknowledges the falsity of the "they". There is in that anxiety a loss of any sense of the self, a nullity similar to the one that the possibility of death holds. Everything seems meaningless and void. Much has been written about the infamous last words that are spoken by the dying Kurtz. "'The horror! The horror!'" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 148) cries Kurtz, face contorted, lying in a dark room filled only by the light of a burning candle. The argument in this chapter posits that Kurtz's final cry is a predicament of the nothingness that surrounds man both in life as well as in death. Marlow describes the expression that transforms Kurtz's face as being one of "intense

and hopeless despair" (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 148). The despair comes from the expectation and the resulting disappointment of the expectation, which leads one to believe that death might bring with it a final and complete knowledge. What Kurtz sees is, in fact, ironically best described by Marlow's remark. He says:

> I have wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable greyness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamour, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary. If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle than some of us think it to be. (Conrad [1899]; 1999: 149)

Marlow's words make the nullity of death, the tragic predicament of man's life. He uses the word "nothing" several times in the course of his description of death. The use of the word "nothing" is not without significance. It points to the "nothingness" and to the nullity that is the final lot of all mankind but in such a way that it draws a parallel with life. In the final sentence from the above quotation, there is an obvious suggestion about how death in its vacuity is not to be understood as something distinct from existence but rather in relation to existence. Not only does the possibility of an "ultimate wisdom" that might arrive with death become an impossibility, but such an impossibility makes existence and life, in general, all the more impenetrable and intolerable. Kurtz and Marlow realise that the self is a masquerade and that beneath all the façade lies a nothingness. Both Kurtz and Marlow seek liberation from the pretence of a self that is a mere illusion, though they both do so in radically different ways. The realisation that comes with the destruction of a self that is a mere illusion brings to the forefront the awareness of another possible kind of destruction in death. The nothingness that accompanies the destruction of a self is analogous to the nothingness that death brings along with it. Marlow realises this and acknowledges mortality more than Kurtz does.

That is why, when the realisation dawns upon Kurtz, it does so as something horrific and tremendous. The only reality beneath the façade is the certainty of an existence devoid of any clarity about the meaning of existence. In death, nothing is revealed as concerns the meaning of human existence.

What then is the consequence of liberation from the everyday self? Heidegger argues:

> The Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the *authentic Self* — that is, from the Self that has been taken hold of in its own way [eigens ergriffenen]. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been dispersed into the "they" and must first find itself. This dispersal characterizes the "subject" of that kind of Being which we know as concernful absorption in the world we encounter as closest to us. If Dasein is familiar with itself as they-self, this means at the same time that the "they" itself prescribes that way of interpreting the world and Being-in-the-world which lies closest. (Heidegger 1962: 167)

Heidegger does go on to explain in more detail what he means by the inauthentic self in the analysis of the "they-self". However, the analysis falls short of clarity. He does say that *Dasein* can be understood according to the way in which it comports itself in the world: how *Dasein* uses, produces and interacts with the world. This is *Dasein*'s way of Being-in-the-world. *Dasein* already has an understanding of the way in which it must deal with the tools and the world. I argue that the notion of the "they-self" is also related to the way in which *Dasein* understands itself, according to the roles and practices, according to the way in which equipment is used, according to the particular culture and the codes that the specific culture carries with it. The inauthentic existence means submitting to the mundaneness and empty repetitiveness of society and the public. However, inauthenticity is *Dasein*'s way of being, to the extent that it provides for the possibility of authenticity. It is in recognising inauthentic existence that *Dasein* can achieve any sort of authenticity. With this recognition comes a feeling of angst or

anxiety. The angst that *Dasein* is faced with comes with the compulsion of having to decide whether it wants to live an "authentic" or "inauthentic" existence. Heidegger explains that:

> In anxiety what is environmentally ready-to-hand sinks away, and so, in general, entities within-the-world. The "world" can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others. Anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the "world" and the way things have been publicly interpreted. [...] But in anxiety there is the possibility of a disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualizes. This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. (Heidegger 1962: 232, 235)

Thus, Heidegger works his argument in a full circle. For being authentic, one must exist inauthentically. The inauthenticity of everydayness is one of the ways of *Dasein*'s Being and is essential if any authentic existence is to be a possibility. I shall explain the above with reference to *Heart of Darkness*. Heidegger's analysis of the authentic-inauthentic categories offer no concrete examples and is not meant to. The "everydayness" that he talks about remains vague and can be applied to everyday norms, public codes of conduct, rituals and practices, or can be relegated to the feeling of a mundane and meaningless existence. The question that is raised is how anxiety helps one to live authentically.

One of the ways in which anxiety works is by facilitating the collapse of the everyday meaning that *Dasein* attaches to things and the world. The general familiarity of the world begins to recede and *Dasein* is confronted with understanding things and the world in a way that questions the already given meanings assigned to them. It is primarily with this characteristic of anxiety that Marlow's choice in *Heart of Darkness* can be understood. Further, Marlow does not confront the choice between the return to

Europe and the choice of remaining in the Congo as one between "authenticity" and "inauthenticity". The Congo does not symbolise the "authentic" as opposed to Brussels. The emphasis here is not on a location but on the notion of a conditioned existence that is the result of existing within the specifics of place and time. That is why I do not argue that the journey into the Congo is a journey within. It certainly brings to the fore questions related to selfhood and consciousness but not because there is something inherent in the Congo, a sort of primeval landscape for the discovery of pure consciousness. Hence, the Congo allows for a process of self-discovery or self-awareness only because of a set of conditions within which Marlow is rooted. *Heart of Darkness* is Marlow's ontical existentiell struggle to disclose what it means to be Marlow. The entire narrative strategy is Marlow's own attempt to understand the Congo experience. It is not that he has gained insight into the absolute truth of humanity. Instead, Marlow himself is uncertain about his experience and thereby he is unsure of himself.

The interplay between the inside and the outside in *Heart of Darkness* is not purely metaphorical. The motif of the interior and exterior is used throughout the novella in different ways. There might often be a clear demarcation between the inside and the outside. But even within such a demarcation, the inside and the outside impinge upon one another. So, when Marlow journeys into the deepest recesses of the jungle, there is still an outside. But the transformation that occurs in the outer physical landscape, the growing thickness and impenetrability, is determined by Marlow's growing sense of alienation from himself which in turn is a result of journeying further and further into the indefinable landscape. The structure is cyclic, with the impossibility of identifying any

point of origin from which all else follows. Instead, inside and outside merge with one another much in the same way as subject and object overlap. And rather, it is because of the superimposition of subject-object that occurs throughout the novella, that there is no clear line of division between the inside and outside.

The search for Kurtz must not be understood simply as a journey within the self. Instead, the question is what are the implications of the self which has been severed from any sense of belonging to a world and a community? Marlow is definitely not a solipsist who can rest in the belief that all meaning is found within the self and originates in the self. Instead, to the contrary, the desire to communicate to his fellow-sailors and the importance he places on their understanding of his experience only illustrates that for Marlow, knowledge attains reality in a shared inter-subjective understanding of it.

The final question that remains to be asked is whether *Heart of Darkness* is Heideggerean. I have emphasised earlier that this analysis is not directed toward arriving at any such conclusion. The analysis in this chapter does certainly illuminate several passages and situations within the novella within a Heideggerean and phenomenological context. As a text in its entirety, *Heart of Darkness* does not subscribe to any one philosophical system. To subscribe to a particular system of thought would indicate a failure of the artistic process as far as Conrad was concerned. Art, for Conrad, was meant to convey life with all its complexities and contradictions, mystery and wonder. In a letter to Barret Clark written in 1918, he writes, "A work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion" (Conrad 1927, vol.2: 204–205).

The novella deals with issues of epistemology and consciousness, existence and death and subjectivity and objectivity. The characters are engaged with philosophical preoccupations. There certainly are similarities between phenomenology, existentialism and *Heart of Darkness*. But the similarity is restricted to philosophical ideas that are present in both, literature and philosophy. Because the novella does not engage in a systematic explication of either a phenomenological or Heideggerean analysis, it would be erroneous to suggest that *Heart of Darkness* may be read in a way that is similar to the reading of a philosophical treatise. If this is understood then a more enhanced reading of both the philosophical text as well as the literary text is possible. There is no conservatism in the argument that literary texts and philosophical texts have as their undertaking very different paradigms of thought and execution. In fiction, questions about the nature of truth, existence, being and consciousness are the often raised by the characters within the text. The moment the question is raised by a particular character, the ontical struggle is set into motion. It is the expression of this ontical struggle that is so evocatively expressed in Conrad's fiction that Virginia Woolf much admired and found much inspiration from. She writes at length about this in *The Common Reader* (1925).

On a superficial level both seek to answer questions of epistemology, ontology and metaphysics. Both are involved in a search for fundamentals. Both grapple with questions that open up age-old debates about "what can be known" and "how one can know".However, it would be reductive to assert that literary texts and philosophical treatises work in the same manner based on the identification of these similarities. The

literary text most certainly deals with both the ontological and the ontical but in such a way that these are weaved into the text without any pretext of having consciously constructed them as fundamental principles that are applicable beyond the text. This is not the case with the philosophical treatise.

Chapter III

Lost and Regained: The Incessant Search for the Perfect Phrase

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Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide. Nevertheless, we go on perseveringly, conscientiously, constructing our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds. So much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story is not merely labour thrown away but labour misplaced to the extent of obscuring and blotting out the light of the conception. The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this? Must novels be like this?

--- *Modern Fiction*, Virginia Woolf 1919

For, Lord, Lord, how much one lacks — how fumbling and inexpert one is- never yet to have learnt the hang of life — to have peeled that particular orange … Suppose one could really communicate, how exciting it would be! Here I have covered one entire blue page and said nothing. One can at most hope to suggest something … it all seems infinitely chancy and infinitely humbugging — so many asservations which are empty and tricks of speech; and yet this is the art to which we devote our lives. Perhaps that is only true of writers — then one tries to imagine oneself in contact, in sympathy; one tries vainly to put off this interminable — what is the word I want? — something between maze and catacomb — of the flesh. And all one achieves is a grimace. And so one is driven to write books … I shall gently surge across the lawn (I move as if I carried a basket of eggs on my head) light a cigarette, take my writing board on my knee; and let myself down, like a diver, very cautiously into the last sentence I wrote yesterday. Then perhaps after 20 minutes, or it may be more, I shall see a light in the depths of the sea, and stealthily approach — for one's sentences are only an approximation, a net one flings over some sea pearl which may vanish; and if one brings it up it won't be anything like what it was when I saw it, under the sea. Now these are the great excitements of life.

--- *Letters 1929–1931*, Virginia Woolf to Gerald Brenan on October 4 1929

(1978)

Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* initially titled *The Moths* was a new kind of writing not just for the reader of the text but also for Woolf herself.[1] In her diary entry on 21st February 1927, she writes about it "why not invent a new kind of play ... away from facts: free; yet concentrated; prose yet poetry; a novel and a play" (1927:128). *The Waves* reverberates with six voices, three of which are male and three of which are female. There is mention of another male persona who is called Percival but we never hear him and only learn about him through the other voices. By and by, Percival emerges as the common link between the friends; a much revered hero who we learn was tragically killed in a riding accident whilst in India. His absence acquires an overwhelming presence as the narrative proceeds. Whether the six voices really are all part of one personality or whether they are six separate people is difficult to say and has been the source of much debate by scholars.[2] The treatment of subjectivity makes it difficult to refer to the voices as "characters". Perhaps the difficulty stems from the notion that the six figures in *The Waves* are not presented as having fixed identities but seem to be in a constant process of configuring and dismantling notions of what it means to be oneself.

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[1] Critical work on Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* has been wide ranging. Scholars have variously studied it as a heroic myth with a political dimension (Gorsky [1972], Graham [1983], Poresky [1991], Marcus [1993]). Marcus, for instance, argues that the language and structure of *The Waves* are employed as "vehicles for a radical politics that is both anti-imperialist and anticanonical". (1991: 243). Other critics (Minow-Pinkney [1987], Transue [1986]) have studied it as a work preoccupied with identity, inside and outside a social order. Feminist studies would fall within this approach. Other critics (Graham [1970], Harper [1982], Moore) engage in comparative studies with other works of modernist literature and art, focusing on the techniques employed by Woolf. Writers like Peter Jacobs (1993) and Gerald Levin (1986) discuss the significance of music to Woolf's art.

[2] Interestingly Virginia Woolf, in a letter to G.L.Dickinson on October 27 1931 alludes to a similar feeling that she expresses in *The Waves* regarding the body. Her remark in this letter is made with reference to *The* Waves. She says, "I'm getting old myself — I shall be fifty next year; and I come to feel more and more how difficult it is to collect oneself into one Virginia; even though the special Virginia in whose body I live for the moment is violently susceptible to all sorts of separate feelings" (1978a: 397).
In their reading, James Naremore (1973) and Daniel Ferrer (1990) contend that the six voices are aspects of one character. Harper (1982), on the other hand, does not agree with this argument.

James Naremore in his book, *The World without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel,* writes:

> *The Waves* cannot be reduced to a series of stylized quotations from the consciousness of six characters, though many critics take this approach. What the novel potrays is not simply the consciousness of Bernard, Susan, Jinny, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis, but their being; not their existence but their essence. (Naremore 1973: 175)

Naremore asserts that *The Waves* is about conveying essence not existence.[3] Instead, I argue that what Woolf tries to persistently convey throughout the narrative is that any essentialist understanding of the self and being is necessarily impossible. It is more appropriate instead to say that the narrative is about the characters' struggle with notions of essence and existence. The novel itself is not about conveying essence. The six voices, whilst searching for the essence of what it means to be, are painfully aware that any such knowledge is always beyond their grasp. The element of artificiality that the soliloquies are infused with, calls attention to the fact that these six voices are constantly thinking and rethinking what it means "to be". Bernard's question during his final summation, "Who am I?" is the one persistent question that occupies the minds of all six voices. The narrative itself verges both on the interior monologue and soliloquy, but there is some amount of artificiality in the presentation of the thinking mind. However, it is not merely the thinking mind that is presented to the reader, but also the way in which the six voices perceive both the world around them and themselves. It has been repeatedly asserted by various scholars that what Woolf

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[3] Arguing against James Naremore's assertion Makiko Minow-Pinkney (1987: 157) states that the "Woolfian 'personality' is never essentialist although her role is often a quest for the essence of character. The quest always involves a sense of the impossibility of fixing the essence: there is no inherent substantiality to the personality ..." (Minow-Pinkney, 1987: 157). My argument specifically concerns the six voices in Woolf's *The Waves*. I argue against Naremore's contention and posit that this chapter rests fundamentally in the notion that the six voices in *The Waves* struggle with the very issues of essence and existence.

sought to do in her fiction was to convey the inner world of her characters. But as far as *The Waves* is concerned, my argument is that the narrative is not merely concerned with the inner workings of the mind. Rather, what Woolf does in *The Waves* is of a more complex nature.

The Waves, then, is not a novel in the traditional sense of the word. It certainly moves beyond the stream-of-consciousness style. The six friends might be sitting together in a room, yet the walls of the room stretch into oblivion. Every once in a while, the six personalities become simply six voices, sometimes they fuse into one singular voice, and yet each one of them has his or her own story to recount. We read in the present but we might rather be in the past or the future. We might by the end of the book have heard of the little episodes that make up their lives yet we know very little about them: how they look, how they sound, how old they may be. *The Waves* gives to the reader none of this, and yet strangely transcends all of it. As Guiguet writes:

> True, there remain a conflict and a tension, acute and tragic, but they do not belong to any particular instant of situation; we might describe them as transcendental; they are the essence of the soul, not its existence, which amounts to saying that *The Waves* is less an expression of the inner life than an attempt to formulate Being. (Guiguet 1965: 378)

The Waves is not merely Woolf's struggle to formulate Being. *The Waves* is concerned with the inter-relation between the thinking mind and the world, and how the relationship between the two determines the individual's experience of themselves and of the world. And all three, the individual consciousness, the world and experience, are to be understood not as separate but as pressed one against the other. There is the notion of a shared world throughout the narrative. The voices describe their impressions of the various phenomena that inhabit their common world. There is the

sense that they are in a constant struggle to find the right balance between their own worlds and the world held in common. The narrative is interspersed with interludes before the start of each new chapter. The interludes describe in italics the time of the day as the sun rises, reaches its zenith and eventually begins to set. The interludes coincide with the lives of the six voices as they navigate us from childhood to old age. These ideas that are expressed throughout the narrative of *The Waves,* bring to mind some of the essential principles of phenomenology.[4]

Phenomenology itself is deeply concerned with the philosophy of experience. It aims to describe how a perceiving subject experiences a particular phenomenon. It is thus concerned with how we experience ourselves, objects in the world around us, and inter-personal relations. Furthermore, different structures of experience alter the way in which something is perceived. And so our experience of the world and of ourselves is in a state of constant flux, depending upon different intentional states. Structures of experience might for instance refer to imagination or memory or moods. So, for example my experience of a landscape is of a different nature when I am actually observing it as opposed to my experience of it from memory. That is why phenomena can only be partially understood. Each intentional state brings forth a different experience of a given phenomenon. Thus, the phenomenon always transcends any

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[4] In an essay on Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Randi Koppen writes: "Critics with a basis in phenomenology emphasize Woolf's interest in perceptual and bodily states and the effect of such states on the manifestation of the external world" (2001:376). Or as Roger Poole phrases it "In Virginia Woolf ... phenomenology found its novelist. The way the body is 'lived' is active in creating, and participating in, a world of meanings, is her theme throughout her fictional career"" (2001: 376). Koppen argues against psychoanalytic, phenomenological and Foucaultian readings of Woolf's experimentalism by saying that such readings are either reductive or complicated and seek to contain Woolf's work and art within their own systems of understanding. My own work, in this chapter, employs a completely different approach to Woolf and phenomenology from that which Koppen proposes, as well as from Poole's statement.

particular experience of it. This is not to say that all experience is purely subjective. Husserl did not dispute the existence of a shared inter-subjective world which was common to all: "an objective spatio-temporal fact-world *as the world about us that is there for us all, and to which we ourselves none the less belong*" (Husserl 1969: 105).

The Waves uses the authorial voice of an omniscient narrator throughout. However, the use of the omniscient authorial voice works differently within the narrative and I shall therefore treat *The Waves* as a narrative that employs the first person voice. Firstly, the omniscient voice does not serve the purpose of conveying to the reader the omniscient view-point. Rather, it is the six voices that communicate their thoughts and impressions throughout. I shall argue that Woolf used the omniscient voice to very specific ends in *The Waves*. There are stylistic reasons for this. For instance, in order to differentiate between the voices that for the most part speak with the same tone and rhythm, Woolf employs the omniscient voice. But this is done by drawing attention to the very fact that the monologues/soliloquies/dialogues that are spoken by the six voices often flow into one another. This tension between unity and differentiation within the speeches of the six voices is maintained throughout the narrative. On the one hand, there is the idea that the six voices are limited by their own consciousness and perspective. This is constantly undercut, on the other hand, by the opposing strain of thought that seeks to transcend such a limitation by finding a unity beyond the boundaries of one's self. That is why I choose not to read *The Waves* as a narrative that employs the omniscient voice in the conventional sense. In fact, the omniscient narrator in *The Waves* speaks from the point of view of all six voices and this is pushed to such an extreme that often it is difficult to indicate who really is speaking.

I propose to undertake a reading of *The Waves* and the questions that it raises about the self in conjunction with the thought of Martin Heidegger and his analyses of Being in *Being and Time.* Heidegger argues for an analysis of *Dasein*, a term that literally means, "being there". Heidegger uses the term to mean the being of persons and in his mammoth work he undertakes an analysis of what is meant by *Dasein*. He employs the word *Dasein* toward certain specific ends, and explains that there is a concurrence between essence and existence. This means that in the very act of being, man understands what it means to be. This notion of understanding is not an act that is performed by man but is rather what man is. The understanding that *Dasein* does is its very mode of being. The being of *Dasein* is such that it involves an understanding of what it means to be, and what it means to be is discovered in the very act of being itself. Hence there is no pre-determined substance to *Dasein*. Heidegger explains:

> *Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence — in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. (1962: 33)

Thus to say that *Dasein* or man attempts to understand what it means to be in a contemplative way would essentially entail the generation of a subject-object divide between being and understanding. And this is precisely what Heidegger argues against. Understanding what it means to be, according to Heidegger, does not come as an afterthought, as a sort of adding up to reach a sum total. It is not the kind of knowledge to be digested, contemplated and then added to an already existing reservoir of character traits. The opposition between subject and object is erased when *Dasein* as subject does not attempt to comprehend itself in an act of contemplative

understanding as the Object of knowledge.[5] This can only happen when existence and essence concur in the Heideggerean sense, which amounts to saying that understanding is one mode of being for *Dasein* and hence coincides with the meaning of *Dasein.* Is this the case with Bernard in *The Waves*? Can it be said that there is always a line that separates Bernard the subject from Bernard the object? Or do they overlap? What does the disappearance of the subject-object duality entail? And how does Bernard experience it, if in fact he does? This chapter attempts to answer these questions by analysing the subject-object framework that is problematised throughout the narrative of *The Waves*. If essence and existence were to concur, that would mean a loss in the fissure that divides understanding and being. Within imaginative fiction, would this entail the disappearance of character-like attributes that allow one to be identified as a person with attributes that build up to a self-identity? Does the lack of such attributes indicate an indefinable self? Does this not amount to a death of the self? Does Bernard undergo a death of the self? The identification of character traits implies an understanding of oneself as an object that possesses such attributes. How then does Bernard experience this death of the self and what are the implications of such an experience?

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[5] The subject-object divide that is discussed at this point is not the same as the one explained earlier in the argument. In this case, it implies a difference between oneself as subject and oneself as object. Hence there are two types of subject-object divide that I analyse. There is, firstly, that which has to do with oneself as subject and as object. The other type draws into focus the divide between oneself and what lies outside of oneself, that which is other-than-oneself. I propose that the self as subject is expressed by being or existing. The self as object, on the other hand, implies a deferred understanding of the self. My contention is that language helps maintain this gulf. Later in this chapter, I raise the question as to whether there is a possibility for the erasure of this gap and whether, if it is a possibility, it becomes manifest in the absence of language.

The relation of the inner world and the outer world in *The Waves* is intricately related to the treatment of the subject-object divide. This accounts for the poetic quality that infuses the narrative of *The Waves.* The narrative is not a factual account of an objective reality that is being conveyed to the reader. Neither is it the inner lives of the six voices. Rather, it is a more complex view of the relationship between individual consciousness, the world, and the way in which both of these impinge upon one another to shape the individual experience of the world. Phenomenology is concerned with the interrelationship between the object perceived and the perceiving subject such that the psychical world of the individual meets with the outer objective world in order to produce an experience of the outer objective world. The question that follows then is how can one ever be certain about the true meaning of an object? The notion of phenomena indicates the relationship between "appearance and that which appears" (Husserl 1964: 8–9). Objects, for instance, are not perceived as they are but as they appear to the individual and are thus constituted according to an intentional structure of consciousness, according to intentional states of imagination, memory or perception. Thus there is:

> [A] distinction between *appearance* and *that which appears*. We thus have two absolute data, the givenness of the appearing and the givenness of the object … it really makes no sense at all to talk about things which are "simply there" and just need to be "seen". On the contrary, this "simply being there" consists of certain mental processes of specific and changing structure, such as perception, imagination, memory, predication, etc. and in them the things are not contained as in a hull or a vessel. Instead, the things come to be *constituted* in these mental processes, although in reality they are not at all to be found in them. (Husserl 1964: 9–10)

What Husserl is saying is that there is a curious point of mediation beween an object as it is and an object as it appears to the perceiving mind. Experience of the world is neither purely objective nor purely subjective. Objects, the world, and even ourselves

are always perceived and comprehended according to intentional structures of experience which vary in time. That is also why an absolute understanding is always an impossibility. In the same vein as Husserl, Woolf in *The Waves* is illustrating that there is always an intentional structure of consciousness that influences and even dictates how we perceive the world. In *The Waves*, emotion and imagination become the binding glue that holds the viewer and the viewed, the perceiving subject to that which is perceived. The resultant profusion of poetry and sense-description that pervades the narrative is the evocation of the three-fold interaction between subject-object-experience. The six voices do not develop in the conventional sense like characters in a traditional narrative. Instead the evocation of moods in which the voices are always immersed disclose to the reader their unique experience of the world. For instance, Rhoda speaks in a perennial tone of fear, and is invaded by a sense of anguish at her inability to experience the world in a spatio-temporal way. Hence her monologues tend to float above her and attain a dreamy, fluid texture to them. The way she experiences the world is fused with the way she relates to the world, which is always entrenched in a feeling of terror and uprootedness. The rhythm of the emotional lives of the six voices becomes the rhythm of the way in which they each perceive the world and the objects around them. The poetic quality that flows through the narrative is an attempt to convey the experience of life, not as a factual record, but rather as an incessant stream of imagination, memory, feeling, emotion and impression: "From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from the old [...]" (Woolf 1925: 189). The experience of life and of objects in the world cannot be severed from the one who experiences.

Bernard's effort throughout the narrative of *The Waves* is one of comprehending what it means to be. It is the supreme act of creation for him: the self constructing itself. He sculpts himself, like an artist using a chisel to create a statue from a block of formless marble. Like the waves relentlessly lashing against the shore, now rising above the sea, now gracefully collapsing into thick white foam, so Bernard's act of self-creation is an unremitting process of evaporation and consolidation. Like the rise and fall of the waves Bernard's interminable struggle with the self is a cyclic repetition of surrender and resumption.[6]

> 'Fight! Fight!' I repeated. It is the effort and the struggle, it is the perpetual warfare, it is the shattering and piecing together — this is the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit. (Woolf [1931]1992: 207)

The disintegration and reconfiguration of subjectivity is the central focal point of *The Waves*. That is why the metaphor of the waves rising and falling, of doors opening and shutting, of the sun rising and setting, works so brilliantly in the text. The status of the subject-object relation retains a complexity throughout the narrative. The poetic quality of the narrative stems from the treatment of the subject-object relation. On the one hand, there is the sense of Bernard and the others trying to understand what it means to be. Within this understanding it is possible to say that the self as subject is attempting to understand itself as object. On the other hand, the self in *The Waves* can never grasp itself as an object because the voice that speaks does so simultaneously as it thinks out

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[6] It is interesting to note that in a footnote on Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* (1969), Derrida in "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel" Levinas (1978: fn.7, 312) uses the metaphor of the waves in a similar way as I have argued Woolf does in her treatment of consciousness and Being. Derrida writes specifically with relation to *Totality and Infinity*, "It proceeds with the infinite insistence of waves on a beach: return and repetition, always of the same wave on the same shore, in which, however, as each return recapitulates itself, it also infinitely renews and enriches itself." Derrida is here referring to the "self" that at every moment negates itself by repeating itself. It is a repetition with a difference.

what is being said. For the most part of *The Waves,* speaking is not so much reflecting. In an essay on *The Waves,* Naremore writes:

> [L]ife is going on as we read the soliloquy; and while the outer world has completely lost the hegemony it has in the conventional novel, there nevertheless remains a sense of the *simultaneity* of the active, objective world and the passive, subjective one … (Naremore 1973: 161)

It is problematic to qualify the objective world as active and in opposition to the subjective world that Naremore qualifies as passive. If, as Naremore has argued, the outer world has lost the hegemony that it retains in a traditional narrative, does it even make logical sense to talk about the objective as active and opposed to the subjective as passive?

This is precisely what phenomenology tries to explain. The psychical inner world and the objective outer world both interact actively with one another in order to shape experience. I shall argue that there is a tension between the existence of a subject-object divide and instances where there is no subject-object divide; where understanding and being are superimposed. Introspection in this sense is not reflection that comes after an event or a thought but is simultaneous to experience. There is a heightened self-consciousness. This can be better understood in the context of Heidegger. Heidegger's critique of Husserlian phenomenology had to do, at least in part, with the notion of a detached understanding of self and the world, which Heidegger believed was promoted by Husserl's concept of "bracketing". Heidegger emphasised a more pragmatic approach to the concept of being and even makes explicit use of the Greek term "pragmata" to explain his departure from Husserlian phenomenology. Things in the world were understood not merely as objects but were instead grasped in their usefulness and within

the network of other things amongst which they existed. A hammer, for instance, is used in order to drive a nail into the door. The nail that is driven into the door is used to hang a coat which is used in order to protect me from the cold outside. This aspect of the "in order to" suggests that we understand the world and the objects in the world, not by suspending or bracketing out information about it; rather it is through our assumptions and everyday beliefs about them that the world is grasped. Similarly, *Dasein* is understood as *praxis*. It is in existing that *Dasein* finds its essence. *Dasein* is self-interpreting and discloses its essence by existing. Perhaps Woolf is trying to convey a similar notion in *The Waves*. The six voices understand themselves only in Being and not through the act of reflecting on their lives and themselves as the object of understanding. There are instances when they attempt to look back and understand themselves as the object of understanding. The conflict between the two modes of understanding oneself is not a logical flaw in the narrative but rather the conflict that confronts the six voices.

Margins of the Self

In *The Waves,* the articulated body is to be understood as mind and thought. The body is articulated in and through language. Language leads to a sense of self-identity. This self identity arrived at, in and through the use of language, is of two types. One type of identity is based on the articulation of sensations that are felt by the body; this helps for a differentiation between the other and myself. For instance, the table I touch is recognized as being something outside myself, and hence other than me. There is, however, another type of identity that erases boundaries between the other and myself. In my memory of sensations and impressions, there are inevitably other people and

places which become part of my memory and hence part of me. Other people, places and things compound my sense of who I am. Any sensation that I experience is not merely a pure theoretical sensation but my response to various factors owing to which I am able to experience the resultant sensation or impression. Bernard is caught in the problem of constructing identity based along these two lines. They manifest themselves as two distinct desires: a need for differentiating and a craving to find unity. What does the recognition of death entail, and how in fact is anything akin to recognition of death even possible? In the answer to this question lies the explanation as to why Bernard's struggle is between metaphoric death and biologic death, both of which are related to the desire for unity and differentiation.

Self-identity makes one aware of the annihilating powers of death to undo self-identity. The ego that struggles to define itself whilst living cannot struggle to define itself once it no longer is. The ego recognizes death as a cessation of every way of being. As Bernard says, "our flame, the will-o'-the-wisp that dances in a few eyes, is soon to be blown out and all will fade" (Woolf [1931] 1992: 211). This recognition is of primary importance because, with the realization of my own death, I am aware that the question of "who am I?" will not be of any concern to me subsequent to my death. The self is no longer concerned with this once it dies. It simply cannot be concerned with this once it no longer exists. Whilst it exists, it is always engaged in a dialectical process. The self as subject tries to understand itself as object. In order to understand itself as object, language is often used. When Bernard writes the story of his life, he is essentially trying to convey the body as a site of a complex of passions and affectations. The self as subject trying to understand itself as object must articulate its

sensations and affectations, which are experienced bodily through thought and words. In *The Waves,* there is a difference between understanding and experiencing the self. To understand oneself means to understand oneself linguistically. Bernard literally constructs himself using language. The minute he stops using language Bernard experiences a death of the self, which differs from a bodily form of death. However, experiencing the self can occur devoid of the use of language.

Within the narrative of *The Waves*, death of the self is not merely biological. There is another form of death, which is metaphoric and is related to language. For Bernard, as a novelist, the writer of phrases, it is this form of death that is of central importance. Language generates the cyclic occurrence of identity dissolved and identity regained. Loss of identity is perceived of as death-like, which then urges a reinforcement of self-identity. However, self-identity allows for the recognition of the destructive power of death that can undo any regained self-identity. The waves rise and fall. As they rise, they take shape, momentarily, and then fall back into formlessness. And so this goes on. On this sea, the self gets thrown and tossed around on the uninterruptible current of formation and formlessness.

Biological Death and Metaphoric Death: The Body and the Mind

I am not suggesting that biological death is bodily-related while linguistic death has a mind correlate. To make such a proposition would immediately amount to identifying a body-mind dualism. I am implying the opposite. The body is a site of a multiplicity of affectations and passions. The mind or thought is an extension of the body that

translates feelings, impressions and sensations into language. The impressions that press on the body are infinite and are not exactly conveyed by the words that are constructed in order to communicate them. There is always a gap between what is felt, and the articulation of what is felt. This gap is veiled over when language begins to construct what the body feels. This happens because language is social by nature. In order to communicate the body, language must be used. The subject who experiences sense impressions becomes the object under scrutiny, whose sense impressions must be recorded and understood in and through language. "If I could measure things with compasses I would, but since my only measure is a phrase, I make phrases", says Bernard (Woolf [1931] 1992: 213). Yet Bernard is always aware of the fissure between the sensations felt and the words used to express them. Words make gaunt the sense of what is experienced. Words are a shroud and the ultimate type of a worded shroud is the self. Nevertheless it is a shroud of primal significance.

> But in order to understand, to give you my life, I must tell you a story — and there are so many, and so many — stories of childhood, stories of school, love, marriage, death, and so on; and none of them are true. Yet like children we tell each other stories, and to decorate them we make up these ridiculous, flamboyant, beautiful phrases. How tired I am of stories [...] also, how I distrust neat designs of life that are drawn upon half-sheets of notepaper [...] life is not susceptible perhaps to the treatment we give it when we try to tell it. (Woolf [1931]1992: 183, 205)

Bernard draws attention to the notion that the self becomes, over time, a linguistic illusion. Language helps to impose a sequence on an otherwise random sense of the "I". The myriad sensations, impressions, feeling, emotions that are experienced by the "I" are ordered and neatly disguised by words. Words help fill in the gaps, but by doing so, simultaneously reveal the veil that they are. If the self is largely constructed linguistically, at least in so far as Bernard is concerned, then all interpretation, perception and understanding of the world, which are expressions of the self, are also

linguistic. However this does not amount to saying that the self is nothing without language.[7] When Bernard says that there are no words to describe the world seen without a self, he is not implying that the self is purely a linguistic construction: quite the opposite. He is addressing a rather dense linguistic and ontological issue of how ontology has been thought of in language. The very notion of the "self" prompted by the words "what am I?" has always been answered in language and is therefore subsumed by language. It is an attack on the method of thinking, on the question itself, rather than on the answer. It is what Bernard refers to as "the penalty of living in an old civilization with a notebook" (Woolf [1931] 1992: 141).

Perception is embodied through language. But there is also perception without language. However, perception without language is synonymous with the death of the self: it is a disembodied perception. The six voices in the narrative, continually vacillate between embodied and disembodied perception. Naremore comments on this in a slightly different sense. He writes:

> It is as if Virginia Woolf were asking the reader to suppose that the six types she has arranged in the novel can at any given moment be represented by six detached spokesmen who are continually going through a process of self-revelation. These voices seem to inhabit a kind of spirit realm from which, in a sad, rather world-weary tone, they comment on their time-bound selves below. Even while the voices assert their personalities, they imply knowledge of a life without personality, an undifferentiated world like the one described by the interchapters. (1973: 173)

For Bernard, is there really a body with its complex of sense experiences without language? And is it merely the body that provides a sense of the self for Bernard? For Woolf, there is always something beyond the self-contained ego, outside it, that remains mysterious yet inescapable. To embody perception in language, to clothe it in

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[7] To say that the self is linguistically constructed implies that all experience, interpretation, perception and

words, is one way of perceiving the world and experiencing the self.[8] Yet there is always something beyond, which cannot be put down in words. It is akin to an impression, a sense of things, of the real. It is not a mystical experience. It is not expressible in language: it is the unsayable. It is the sense of merging with everything around one and is experienced as a disconnection with the barriers imposed by space and time and language. There is always the awareness that all understanding pertaining to this notion we call "the self" is a term coined by human beings, a convenience to gain control over what in actuality is uncontainable. Perhaps it is related to the quest for wholeness. The six voices in the narrative are drawn to experience "wholeness" and this urge takes two forms. In one form, wholeness is sought after through language. The voices attempt to experience a time- and space-bound self through language. In the second form, wholeness is linked to the feeling of oneness with the world around and this form of wholeness requires the dissolution of time and space.

Certainly, at least this much can be said: Bernard is aware that a semblance of a coherent sense of being is constructed through language. Yet there is also the simultaneous acknowledgement that language constantly betrays the sense of the self. But because it constantly betrays this sense of the self, there is always that aspect of

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description of the world must necessarily be an expression of the self.

[8] Bergson talks about two different selves, one of which is an external manifestation of the other. This other self exists devoid of a sense of time. The external self is synonymous to a socially constructed self and serves to provide a sense of substantiality. He writes in *Time and Free Will,* "Hence there are finally two different selves, one of which is, as it were, the external projection of the other, it's spatial and so to speak, social representation. We reach the former by deep introspection, which leads us to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly *becoming*, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate one another [...] Over against this homogenous space we have put the self as perceived by an attentive consciousness, a living self, whose states, at once undistinguished and unstable, cannot be separated without changing their nature, and cannot receive a fixed form or be expressed in words without becoming public property. [...] In place of an inner life whose successive phases, each unique of its kind, cannot be

the self which remains ungraspable for him. In his introduction to *Between the Acts,* Frank Kermode writes:

> Wholeness, as Bernard saw [...] is something imposed on or discovered in the world by writing. And the wholeness would be false without randomness. To make a fuss about everything, it may be necessary, at least in appearance, to make a "fuss about nothing". To produce your *summa* you may need to submit reality, whatever that is thought to be — "cancer and calico" she once called it — to language, to the inward looking fuss of language, to what looks like linguistic self-indulgence ... (Kermode 1992: xviii)

Language allows Bernard to construct the self in so far as it allows him to impose a structure on the otherwise random sense of what it means to be. What it means to be is not a pre-given pattern to be discovered by Bernard in a single act of mystical revelation. It is an active process and comes into existence at the various "moments of being". From out of shapelessness, Bernard orchestrates sequence and order. The meaning of being is to be found in being. However this meaning is always deferred. That is why Bernard is so preoccupied with summing up his life. To localize what it means to be Bernard for him means in some way to make the self accessible to language. But to become accessible to language entails an understanding that comes after the moment of being. In this act, the gap is revealed between Bernard as subject and Bernard as object. For Bernard to encapsulate what it means to be himself involves a translation of that into words. And this translation can occur only when Bernard understands himself as the object of understanding.

> We have proved, sitting eating, sitting talking, that we can add to the treasury of moments. We are not slaves bound to suffer incessantly unrecorded petty blows on our bent backs. We are not sheep either, following a master. We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road. (Woolf [1931] 1992: 109)

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expressed in the fixed terms of language, we get a self which can be artificially reconstructed ..." (199-?: 231, 236, 237)

The treasury of moments is an adding up, a sort of cumulative stockpiling of experiences and character traits that all add up to a final resultant self. Bernard can thus be understood grammatically. He is a sentence, a phrase: except he is an unfinished phrase. He is continually inserted into new contexts with new associations, erased and then written anew. Prior to the construction of the phrase, there is no phrase. In writing himself, Bernard is attempting to understand exactly what it means to be.

> Had I been born not knowing that one word follows another I might have been, who knows, perhaps anything. As it is, finding sequences everywhere, I cannot bear the pressure of solitude. When I cannot see words curling like rings of smoke round me I am in darkness — I am nothing. (Woolf [1931] 1992: 99)

To Bernard, it is through words and phrases that any sense of the self coheres. His pocketbook filled with stories and phrases is his blueprint. By linking one story to the other, by binding one sentence to the other, Bernard gains self-solidity. The ordering of the sentence, the constructing of meaning and coherence, the use of punctuation, the building of a sequence: for Bernard these are limited not just in writing stories but in constructing what it means to be himself. It is significant however that almost all of Bernard's stories are unfinished; his phrases are never rounded off. He is the eternal constructor. He is never deceived by language, which is forever saturated with metaphors and lies, substitutions and evasions. The "I" of language contains no permanency and is inhabited by the multitude of people using it at any given time. Who is Bernard? This is a question that perennially fascinates and terrifies him. Bernard tends toward an anti-essentialist stand. He does not understand himself as having some fundamental quality that always lies latent within him. He is the creator who brings himself into existence.

Constructing the Perfect Phrase: Impossibility

Bernard's predicament lies in this: a profound disillusionment in the failure of language to provide him with a lucid and complete containment of what he is and the terrifying possibility of an absolute negation of the self without language. I argue that Bernard chooses the former, because it holds the promise of a struggle, of sudden moments of revelation interspersed by confusion and chaos. Bernard immerses himself in that very struggle. As a novelist, he will try ceaselessly to construct that one perfect phrase. The perfect phrase is symbolic of discovering once and for all what is meant by Being and who is meant by "Bernard". It is through language that Bernard has chosen to discover what it means "to be", and it also through language that any such meaning will constantly betray itself. Yet it is nevertheless a struggle, ever renewable. Bernard the creator of phrases will actively construct himself. With each sentence he writes, he will animate some aspect of himself. But whilst he does so, he will, at the same time, draw into his own story the stories of other people and other lives that have permeated his own: he will fail repeatedly at communicating that which cannot be captured by language. And because there is always something that lies beyond language, because the spoken word stimulates different associations for every individual, because language is both solid and fluid, the self expressed in and through language is an eternal process of construction, destruction and reconstruction, partly expressible, partly eclipsed and partly unknowable. Language imposes boundaries, but it can also serve to systematically destroy boundaries. The opposition between the two is the struggle that Bernard is caught up in.

Heidegger's critique of Husserlian phenomenology stems in part on the grounds that the method of "bracketing" is necessarily impossible. In a similar manner, Naremore's assertion that *The Waves* is about "essence rather than existence" (1973:175) overlooks the basic premise upon which Woolf's narrative rests. That premise is that any essentialist understanding of the self is necessarily impossible. This is because the self in Woolf is continuously unfolding, such that it is in the unfolding that the essence of the self is to be found. The irony however is that the unfolding itself is ceaseless and hence negates any essentialist understanding of the self.

The Bi-polar Self

In *The Waves,* two distinct desires can be identified. These two desires are often seen to be directly in contradiction to one another. Yet curiously, both result in a death of the self. There is, firstly, the yearning to extend boundaries and find unity. This yearning must eventually result in a loss of the self. It is synonymous to a desire for death and expresses itself as a metaphysical longing to merge with men and women, objects and nature, until they melt into one another. Solitude now becomes a burden: it becomes the burden of asserting a self.

> [I]f I find myself in company with other people, words at once make smoke rings — see how phrases at once begin to wreathe off my lips. It seems that a match is set to a fire; something burns. An elderly and apparently prosperous man, a traveller, now gets in. And I at once wish to approach him; I instinctively dislike the sense of his presence, cold, unassimilated, among us. I do not believe in separation. We are not single. (Woolf [1931] 1992: 49-50)

Bernard dislikes solitude as much as Rhoda clings to it, for it is in solitude that the "sense of being [becomes] so extreme" (Woolf [1931] 1992: 100). Being by oneself is as much a physical condition as it is metaphoric. Rhoda for instance almost always finds

herself alone, contemplating and pondering over the mystery of the universe. Characters seduced by solitude are faced by a constant threat of being dissolved, by merging with the objects around them. Rhoda is neither bound by time nor space, and is hence engulfed by a feeling of uprootedness. This is poetically expressed through her use of language.

Throughout *The Waves,* there are amongst other recurrent symbols and images, passages that have as their central idea the opening and shutting of doors and windows.[9] Both open and close with the regularity of an individual inhaling and exhaling. This image of doors opening and closing can be read as suggestive of the notion of selfhood in various ways. I shall draw attention to what I have identified as three primary instances. In the first of these I shall draw a parallel to Heidegger's notion of revealing and concealing. In being, *Dasein* is essentially that which reveals and conceals itself. Concealment and unconcealment are the eternal rise and fall of the self. Truth lies in the interplay between concealment and disclosure but mystery is also present. That is why understanding must always be provisional. Every understanding of the self and of the world reveals a certain interpretation or way of seeing, but at the same time, restricts alternative perspectives. In phenomenology, this is referred to as the "horizon". Like the opening and shutting of windows and doors, *Dasein* is essentially this interplay of concealment and disclosure.

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[9] James Naremore (1973) writes about the significance that rooms and windows play in Woolf's works. He remarks, "The recurrent room-window symbolism is simply another way for Mrs. Woolf to state the unresolved tension between two worlds of experience that is the source of her art. On the one hand is the world of the self, the time-bound, landlocked, everyday world of the masculine ego, of intellect and routine, where people live in fear of death, and where separations imposed by time and space result in agony. On the other hand is a world without a self-watery, emotional, erotic, generally associated with the feminine sensibility — where all of life seems blended together in a kind of "halo", where the individual personality is continually being dissolved by intimations of eternity, and where death reminds us of a sexual union" (245).

But there is also another sense to these two elements. *Dasein* is for the most part immersed in the they-self. By being absorbed in the world of everyday concern, *Dasein* begins to understand the world and itself according to the terms set out by the they-self. By doing this, *Dasein* turns away from itself, and this is what Heidegger calls "falling".

> *Dasein* has, in the first instance, fallen away [abgefallen] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the "world". "Fallenness" into the "world" means an absorbtion in Being-with-one-another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. Idle talk and ambiguity, having seen everything, having understood everything, develop the supposition that *Dasein*'s disclosedness, which is so available and so prevalent, can guarantee to *Dasein* that all the possibilities of its Being will be secure, genuine and full. (Heidegger 1962: 220–222)

What Heidegger is saying is that *Dasein*, when immersed in the world, is dictated by the world to the extent that its very absorption remains obscured. But being lost in the they-self is a fundamental existentiale and allows for the possibility of authentic existence. Once *Dasein* has become aware of the inauthenticity of the they-self, *Dasein* is confronted with the alternative choice of an authentic existence. In this recognition lies *Dasein*'s first disclosure. In *The Waves* the self that sits isolated in a room surrounded only by walls is contrasted to the self that looks out through the window to the world outside. The opening and closing of doors is suggestive of finding the balance between the two alternatives: the world outside and the solitary world within. Rhoda, for instance has no sense of herself. She needs to constantly touch objects around her to assure herself that she is a distinct entity. Time and space blend into eternity for Rhoda, which accounts for the sense of dissolution that she is constantly engulfed by. Doors and windows open up a world to her, where she is confronted by other people who are reminders to her of an insubstantiality that pervades her sense of being. To herself, she has "no face" and is like "the foam that races over the beach or the moonlight that falls

arrowlike here, on a tin of can, here on a spike of the mailed sea holly, or a bone or a half-eaten boat" (Woolf [1931] 1992: 98). The symbol of the door is at once the shock of the "real world" for Rhoda. She says:

> The door opens; the tiger leaps. The door opens; terror rushes in; terror upon terror, pursuing me. [...] One moment does not lead to another. The door opens and the tiger leaps. I am afraid of the shock of sensation that leaps upon me, because I cannot deal with it as you do — I cannot make one moment merge in the next. To me they are all violent, all separate ... (Woolf [1931] 1992: 78, 97)

The "real world" of people and objects, where time follows a sequence, is one from which Rhoda is excluded. The other world is the unchanging world where time and space melt into eternity. It is the door that separates both these worlds, the former in which she has no recognizable face because all identity escapes her, the world that torments her with its inauthenticity and sham, a world of violent sensations in which she must act and react as an individual person. The private world on the other side of the door is formless and fluid; one in which Rhoda's sense of self dissolves and blends with everything around. In this world she experiences no self. Rhoda is of the view that the others, Susan and Jinny for instance, have very real identities and without them to imitate, she has no face and no identity of her own. In Rhoda's opinion, the others have access to a truth that she is deprived of. The door divides Rhoda's world. On one side, each time that the door swings open, "the tiger leaps" and on the other side of the door is the world where the "swallow dips its wings". It is immediately apparent from the contrast of the two images, one violent, the other placid, that the world where the tiger leaps is the time-space bound world of sensations and impressions, of people entering and leaving, of time advancing, as opposed to the other world of the swallow that dips its wings calling attention to the sense of sinking into fear, formlessness and non-differentiation that Rhoda is constantly confronted by.

Bernard too is constantly noticing doors open and shut and is aware of people who come in through doors and leave through them. He looks in through shop-windows and explicitly uses the words opening and shutting to talk about Being and identity. For him, nothing is fixed and the metaphor of opening and shutting is expressive of the changes that impinge on the self. There is always, for Bernard, something new that enters, something that departs, something that alters his being. It is also why he finds it so difficult to pin down what or who Bernard is. The opening and shutting of the door is the apertures and fissures of the self, because of which one is always in the state of Becoming.

The search is for a balance between utter solitude on the one hand, and the complete immersion of oneself with the world outside on the other. Further, the rhythmic rising and falling of the waves is symbolic of the two opposing desires that permeate the entire narrative. The six voices are plagued by either the desire to blend in with the world, to dissolve into a formlessness, or instead by the contrasting urge to adhere to a sense of individuality. Again, this notion of unity versus differentiation is symbolically contained in the single wave that rises but that must also break and fall back into the unending sea.

The Waves works along the lines of just such a fundamental solitude amidst plurality. Toward the end of the novel, Bernard's soliloquy repeatedly asserts that he is unaware of how he might be able to distinguish himself from the other. Rhoda is constantly reaching out to touch things that exist in the world outside to reassure herself of her existence. She says:

> There is the puddle, and I cannot cross it. I hear the rush of the great grindstone within an inch of my head. Its wind roars in my face. All palpable forms of life have failed me. Unless I can stretch and touch something hard, I shall be blown down the eternal corridors forever. What, then, can I touch? What brick, what stone? And so I draw myself across the enormous gulf into my body safely? (Woolf [1931] 1992: 120)

In a certain sense then, solitude for characters in *The Waves* is only achievable amidst both things and others. It is against such a multiplicity that solitude is opposed. So why then does Bernard assert that he cannot feel any division between himself and the others? Language for Bernard becomes a weapon against solitude in *The Waves*. It is through language that the six voices merge into one. Language is pushed to an extreme absurdity in the novel. It is not Rhoda, Susan, Jinny, Louis, Neville and Bernard who fuse into one another, it is the words they speak, the sentences they form and the phrases they use that merge into one.

> 'But when we sit together, close,' said Bernard, 'we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory.' (Woolf [1931] 1992: 10)

The limitations imposed by language, rather than working against the identity for oneself because of its limitations, provide a tool for unification. Unity is not to be understood in terms of being collected within oneself. Quite the contrary, unity achieved through language is the dispersion of oneself into another, into several others. Through language, words and phrases, the ego becomes like:

> The flower, the red carnation that stood in the vase on the table of the restaurant when we dined together with Percival, (*has become)* a six-sided flower; made of six lives. (Woolf [1931] 1992: 175)

The above quotation calls attention to the idea that the self is composed of other people, things, impressions and lives. The whole single flower that is composed of six different petals is much like the single life of the individual that achieves its singularity precisely through its multiplicity. As Bernard progressively stops writing phrases and using

language, he becomes accessible to death. There is a distinction between the ego whilst it exists and once it dies that might help to illuminate the significance of Bernard's unfinished stories. The ego that struggles to define itself whilst living cannot continue this struggle once it no longer exists. The ego recognizes death as a cessation of every way of being. This recognition is of primary importance because with the realization of my own death, I am aware that the question "who am I?" will be of no concern to me subsequent to my death. It is simply impossible. Finishing the story is the announcement of death because it signals an end. As long as the self is, it will always be incomplete. In Benard's inability to complete his stories there lies the suggestion, and possibly his awareness, of finality. Should he complete his sentences and stories, his stories will no longer be, and as a consequence, nor will Bernard. The figure of Percival survives in the stories that we hear about him. Paradoxically, however, it is also perhaps why he dies. The finished story signals death.

Heidegger argues that with the anticipation of what it means to "not be", *Dasein* is driven by the desire to understand what it means "to be". Anticipation leads *Dasein* back to itself. The unity of time is thus worked out dynamically. In existing as a being-toward-death, *Dasein* moves ahead. The moving ahead involves the possibility of the not-yet. *Dasein* is therefore its own possibility, always already ahead of itself. Such a projective futural movement leads *Dasein*, once confronted with what it means to "not be", back to itself, in an effort to understand what it means "to be". *Dasein*, as a being of infinite possibility, as worked out by Heidegger has its basis in his concept of temporality. I argue for *Dasein* as a realm of pure possibility in another sense which has to do with language. *Dasein* is in this sense, "linguistically-pure-and-infinite-

possibility". Until death, the self can be ever renewed by the resources of language and is ceaselessly appropriated, constructed and destroyed, and hence is always unfinished.

As Bernard becomes accessible to death, there is an emphasis on his solitude. For if there is one thing that language is incompatible with, it is death. Death comes toward Bernard at a point when he is unable to use any more phrases, when he has thrown away his book stuffed with words about himself and his life. As we reach the end of the novel, there is a raw physical quality that begins to take possession. That physicality is the body. It is the sense of the disintegration of the body as death approaches. The body is Bernard's and Bernard's alone. Try as he might to fuse it with the bodies of the six other voices, he fails, for it is only the words that merge. The body remains alone and solitary. And it is not merely Bernard, but all six voices that are desperately trying to merge at some point: Rhoda through her obsession with the hard fixtures of things in the outside world, Susan through her attempt at literally merging with the natural world, Louis through his constant remarks about his ancestry, and Jinny by always finding someone or something to look at, whether that be a reflection of herself in a mirror or a reflection of Susan whom she might chose to imitate.

The sense of merging of voices is also perhaps why readers of *The Waves* have often been unable to distinguish whether Rhoda, Jinny, Susan, Louis, Neville and Bernard are six voices or six characters, or whether in fact they are all one and the same. Paradoxically, because Bernard is unable to draw a distinction between the story of his life and the lives of the others, the body-self and the linguistic-self come into conflict with each other. Bernard is one body and one body only. But Bernard is also the six

others; their stories are his. Their lives have to be told if we are to understand who Bernard is. Perhaps this is what Bernard means by death. Bernard as one body has no one voice that can be said to be purely Bernard's. Has achieveing such a multiplicity led to death?

Bernard revels in the fluidity of language. His being is subjected to the texture that language takes and the changes that it brings. Bernard, forever constructing sentences and phrases, often celebrates the breaks and fissures that are so much part of language. For him, language is never fixed but constantly constructing and renewing itself. The nucleus of language is shattered and dispersed. And so is Bernard.

> Thus there is not one person but fifty people whom I want to sit beside tonight … I am no hoarder — I shall leave only a cupboard of old clothes when I die — and am almost indifferent to the minor vanities of life which cause Louis so much torture. Veined as I am with iron, with silver streaks of common mud, I cannot contract into the firm fist which those clench who do not depend upon stimulus. I am incapable of the denials, the heroisms of Louis and Rhoda. I shall never succeed, even in talk, in making a perfect phrase. But I shall have contributed more to the passing moment than any of you; I shall go into more rooms, than any of you. But because there is something that comes from outside and not from within I shall be forgotten; when my voice is silent you will remember me, save as the echo of a voice that once wreathed the fruit into phrases. (Woolf [1931] 1992: 100-101)

For Bernard then, language is taken to an absurd extreme. He is not Bernard the maker of phrases. He is the phrase. Constructing allows him to link one sentence to the other and thereby achieve some semblance of a sequence or order. However, because language, like a bottomless abyss, is a resource that is endless, there are always phrases left untouched, always phrases that are unwritten: and such is the nature of the self. The self is pure and infinite possibility, and not merely in the Heideggerean sense. As Bernard explains, "whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap

and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers (Woolf [1931] 1992:197). Language and phrases construct Bernard, be that a never completed construction and always-potentially something other than what has been constructed. In this sense, Bernard is a variant of Heidegger's *Dasein*. He is a being who is linguistically-infinite-possibility. Each phrase actively constructs him, but with each phrase there is also the possibility of another. What Bernard means when he speaks about the million other words that leap out at him from the cauldron refers to the condition of being caught in a perspectival understanding. It is one of the central preoccupations of phenomenological thought. What it means is that there is always a possibility to shift one's perspective of seeing, but that at any given time, how one understands oneself and the world is but one way of seeing amidst an infinity of others. Hence all understanding is necessarily limited by a specific standpoint.[10]

In writing the stories he writes, he is indeed writing himself. Bernard is in this sense a pure linguistic construction. However linguistic construction inevitably fails him. He is almost always unable to find the perfect phrase, unable to fix it without it slipping away from between his fingers. His sequence is never fully a sequence but disintegrates into the fractures and gaps inherent in language itself. Bernard is the creator, not just of stories, but also of himself. Bernard brings himself to live through the stories he tells. His tussle with language translates into a struggle with himself. In a certain sense,

[10] Ruotolo, in his book on Woolf (1986), suggests that similarities exist between Woolf's philosophy and existentialism. He quotes several different philosophers, including Heidegger. He writes: 'So we share with her [Woolf] characters the sense of an external universe where meaning can only be deferred and no single perspective can hope to supply comprehensive answers to existential questions. What is real is open-ended" (84).

Bernard's self has a brittle texture to it. Like an amorphous powdery substance that falls to the floor, it often needs to be swept up and collected.

Being, self-consciousness, *Dasein*: all of these are located in the force of language. When language breaks, when language reveals fissures and fractures, when language flows, when language unifies, when language distinguishes, when language fixes and locates and when language escapes: *Dasein* is. "To be" is a phrase, a clause, incomplete and impossible to nail down. "To be", the very words run ahead of themselves, refusing to stand still.

The question of whether there is a true self beneath the semblance of an everyday self is a redundant one in *The Waves*. For Heidegger authentic and inauthentic are two modes of being for *Dasein*. *Dasein* reveals itself by existing authentically and conceals itself in the inauthentic mode. When *Dasein* is absorbed in the world and lost in the they-self, *Dasein* is in the inauthentic mode. In confronting inauthenticicty, *Dasein* becomes anxious. This is an ontological anxiety. *Dasein* is now driven by the urge to understand what it means to be without recourse to the answers given by the world in which it finds itself. Conformity to the world draws *Dasein* into the they-self. Woolf in *The Waves* leads the six voices toward an experiencing of such an ontological anxiety in a slightly different way. Notions of revealing and concealing are explored by Woolf through the metaphor of reproduction. There is a clash between what is and what is seen. Woolf does not provide an answer to authenticity, but merely points to the existence of a confrontation between notions of authentic and inauthentic.

Seeming and being are intertwined, neither of them being exclusive from the other, neither of them being exclusively authentic or inauthentic. There is a curious point of coincidence in the novel that has to do with what might be seen to function as a metaphor of the authentic and the inauthentic. Jinny sits in front of the mirror and Bernard sits in front of his writing desk, pen in hand. The looking glass reflects what it absorbs, however the question is: what is it that it absorbs? Is it an authentic reproduction of the image that is reflected? Is it something that remains unchanging each time that it is reflected? What Jinny sees is a constant variation:

> So, before the looking-glass in the temple of my bedroom, I have judged my nose and my chin; my lips that open too wide and show too much gum. I have looked. I have noted. I have chosen what yellow or white, what shine or dullness, what loop or straightness suits. I am volatile for one, rigid for another, angular as an icicle in silver, or voluptuous as a candle flame in gold. (Woolf [1931] 1992: 170)

The physical human body is as fluid as language. Not only does it appear differently under different lighting, under the moon and sun, in the day and at night, to each person varied, but it also physically changes from birth until old age. The body is never the same. The passage above is a brilliant illustration of not just the notion of a perennial metamorphosis but also of the notion that what one sees is always only a certain aspect and never the entire.

There is no one authentic self: however, that does not imply that the self is what it appears to be, a mere semblance and thus amounting to an inauthenticity. Instead, there is no means whereby the two can be distinguished. And that happens with the characterization of Bernard. Bernard sees; he is in a sense the looking glass in *The Waves*. He sees and invents phrases. Both what he sees and what he writes are in a state of constant and inevitable flux. Furthermore, all that has been said about the looking-

glass and writing metaphor brilliantly comes together in one particular passage in the novel. It is the point at which Rhoda, carrying a message, comes by a puddle. She is unable to cross it because "identity failed me" (Woolf [1931] 1992:47). The puddle of water with its presumably shiny surface symbolizes the silvery mirror. At the same time, it also symbolizes the watery ink that runs through a pen. Unformed and fluid in a very literal sense, it is an allusion to the self: both the physical and the linguistic. But what does it mean to say that within the narrative of *The Waves,* there is often a need to individualize and differentiate? What does such a differentiating involve?

> And now I ask, "who am I ?" I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt "I am you". This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome [...] thus when I come to shape here at this table between my hands the story of my life and set it before you as a complete thing, I have to recall things gone far, gone deep, sunk into this life or that, and become part of it ... (Woolf [1931] 1992: 222)

Bernard begins to understand that "myself" contains the other, the imaginary, the corporeal, the instinctual, the primitive, the inarticulate and the articulate. Bernard's obsession in the narrative to find that one perfect phrase is an effort on his part to gather all of these aspects into some unifying and totalising structure. However, should he achieve such a structure, he would perish. He does nevertheless try in a number of ways. For instance, he localises himself in the stories of all the others in an attempt to place before us his entire self. By doing so, he is no longer simply Bernard, but has been mixed with the other voices. In this sense, he is dead. However the metaphoric death that he goes through is inevitable if he is to be resurrected. There is, moreover, a consistency in the manner in which Bernard tries to achieve such a unification.

> "But when we sit together, close," said Bernard, "we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory." (Woolf [1931] 1992: 10)

He employs language, and it is through language that the six voices merge into one. It is not Rhoda, Susan, Jinny, Louis, Neville and Bernard who fuse into one another, rather it is the words they speak, the sentences they construct and the phrases they utter that blend with one another. Whilst the body might resist any such totalisation, words are susceptible to it. *The Waves,* by employing such a mind-body dialogue, brings questions of subjectivity and body and self-dentity and language into sharp focus. Bernard will never succeed in completing the perfect phrase. It is forever deferred. It is also deferred because death signifies an end, and the struggle of the self is deathless, never immune to change.

Throughout the novel, if characters seem obsessed with the need to be around things and people from whom they might derive their identity, it is not because they are trying desperately to seek identification of who they are, but rather that they are attempting to resist any fixed identification of themselves. Multiplicity becomes a defense against death's challenge to subjectivity. Fragmentation, the de-centering of the self, the multiplicity that is the self: all are an attempt to snatch from death its powers of annihilating subjectivity and solitude.

Rhoda, amongst all the voices that are heard, appears most resistant to any fixed identity. She is almost malleable in texture. For her, time is not a continuum. It is for this reason that Rhoda does not perceive of any final end toward which her life might be progressing. Whilst the other voices in the novel might deliberately try to scatter their

identity, Rhoda refuses almost entirely to have one. Her rejection is carried to an extreme ultimately when she commits suicide. This is the ultimate challenge to death. From time to time, she must assure herself of the external world, and so presses her hands against the corner of a cupboard or a desk. Yet she must escape the external world, for it is in the external world that Rhoda can have some sense of her body. Her body and any sensation of it is what torments her, for it gives her the sense of having an identity. Rhoda's challenge to death borders on a frantic destruction rather than a rejection of her self-identity. She floats above the others, above the world like a phantom that cannot be caught.

For the six voices then, death and their being-toward death does not lead them to question what it means to be. It instead leads them to reject any such questioning, and by doing so, to deny death any victory that it might have over subjectivity. *The Waves* in this context can be read, not as the struggle of six voices as they each try to build an identity, but rather as the attempt of the six voices to systematically destroy or negate any move towards creating a solid, permanent identity.

Bernard's effort in the novel is the irreconcilable choice between biological death, which amounts to self-annihilation, and a metaphoric death, which is part of a process of understanding the self because it is akin to biological death. What is of primary significance here is that metaphoric death allows for the process of self-understanding only because it is similar to biological death. Metaphoric death is the more unsettling of the two forms of death since it carries with it the implication of a self in perpetual

construction, a self never to be realised, a futile effort at self-understanding. What adds to the sense of futility is the awareness of an approaching biological death that will in one final stroke erase any trace of such an effort. Yet Bernard goes on and on, like the waves of the sea, rising up against the tide, advancing forward toward the shore. Death is the all-threatening point of negation within the narrative of *The Waves.*

What is the significance of Bernard's failure in completing his stories? The narrative stands as a bundle of impressions, stories and thoughts without any seeming progression toward a final end. The final end is always beyond reach. There is the sense that Bernard sees this as something to be celebrated rather than mourned as the narrative progresses. It is both liberating as well as frustrating. Bernard realizes that every experience of the dying self makes more apparent the uncontainable vastness of Being.

Phenomenology describes that which appears. Hermeneutics is a search for that which remains concealed. Is there an inherent contradiction here? Not in the least. There is an implied search in the notion that phenomenology describes that which appears. For Heidegger, that which appears always conceals. That is why in *Being and Time* he argues that it is what is proximally closest to us that remains hidden from us. Further, in phenomenology one is always taken up by the question of how does something appear, and in answering this question, we are first directed at discovering exactly what appears in our consciousness of a specific phenomenon. A striking correspondence can be identified with Woolf's *The Waves*. The novel begins at dusk when "the sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky [...] gradually as the sky whitened a

dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky ..." ([1931] 1992: 5). Here the sun can be symbolically understood as that which throws light upon the phenomena and thus enables one to see. There is therefore the suggestion here that, as the novel proceeds, certain phenomena, perhaps the understanding of the self, will gain clarity. However, the gradual rising of the sun also simultaneously suggests that any such understanding must be unearthed and must be excavated from the debris that covers the self. Hence the motif of the sea on which the light of the sun falls so brilliantly. What is seen is merely the surface, merely that which appears visible. Yet there is that which remains beneath all appearance and which must be penetrated.

It is not very surprising to find links between Woolf's *The Waves* and Husserlian and Heideggerean phenomenology. However, having said that, there is no reason to suppose that Woolf was trying to write fiction that would support the tenets of phenomenological thought. What is clear is that, by the time that Woolf was writing, philosophy and psychology had broken away from the traditional mind-matter dualist thinking. Furthermore, the individual was now no longer seen as a single unitary self. However, that is not reason enough to define Woolf's writing as being phenomenological in nature.[11] Ideas of discontinuity, multiplicity, and becoming were substituted for a stable self. Ideas related to the philosophy of perception and reality, space and time, of subject and object, of states of experience like memory and imagination were fervently discussed by Woolf and her contemporaries in the Bloomsbury Group. The Bloomsbury

[11]That Virginia Woolf did not follow a steady and entire system within which the self, Being and consciousness might be understood, is itself an anti-essentialist view.

Group was not based on any common philosophical or intellectual theory or ideas. The group came together in Cambridge and comprised people such as Roger Fry, Vanessa and Clive Bell, John Maynard Keynes, G.E.Moore, Lytton Stractchey, Duncan Grant, David Garnett, E. M. Forster, Leonard Woolf and Virginia Woolf. The members of the group were deeply influenced by philosophy due to several reasons. As Rosenbaum writes,

> Two of the Bloomsbury's fathers were Cambridge Utilitarian philosophers, and all the men of Bloomsbury except one went to Cambridge; there all but one became members of now what must be the most famous undergraduate society in the world, the Cambridge Apostles. Through the Apostles, Cambridge philosophy in general and G.E.Moore's in particular had a deep influence on Bloomsbury. This influence appears in the epistemological, ethical and aesthetic interconnections in their text [...] The importance of Cambridge philosophy for Bloomsbury's writings is to be located not so much in their topics as in their assumptions — assumptions about the nature of consciousness and its relation to external nature, about the irreducible otherness of people that makes isolation necessary and love possible, about the human and nonhuman human realities of time and death, and about the supreme goods of truth, love and beauty. (1981: 337)

It was only natural that these were the ideas that Woolf experimented with. Whether or not Woolf was influenced by Bergson has been the subject of much debate and further whether or not the Cambridge time philosophy during the existence of the Bloomsbury group was developed in response against Bergson's time philosophy is much contested (Banfield 2003). What is certain is that Woolf and the Bloomsbury group had read and discussed Bergson. The quest to find the philosophical influences that impinged on Woolf's ideas and works has been the source of immense scholarship. This chapter has extended the discussion beyond such studies. The argument in this chapter is not merely concerned with the expression of the influence of ideas between two thinkers but rather

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In her book, Pamela Caughie (1996) writes: "Woolf's characters and narrators do not present a consistent theory of self and world. Instead, they make us self-conscious of theorizing about self and world by making the narrative strategies self-conscious" (4).

demonstrates the way in which a central preoccupation, that of being, self and consciousness find expression in phenomenology and fiction.

Chapter IV

Seizing the Self: Surmounting the Obsessive Device of the Self

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> Experts know certain things well. What sort of knowledge have writers got? By expert standards they are entirely ignorant. But expertise itself produces ignorance. How scientific can the world picture of an expert be? The deeper his specialization, the more he is obliged to save the appearances. To express his faith in scientific method he supplies what is lacking from a stock of collective fictions about Nature or the history of nature. As for the rest of us, the so-called educated public, the appropriate collective representations have been pointed out to us, and we have stocked our heads with pictures from introductory physics, astronomy, and biology courses. We do not, of course see what is, but rather what we have been directed or trained to see. No individual penetration of the phenomena can occur in this way. [...] there is a mode of knowledge different from the ruling mode. That this other mode is continually operative — the imagination assumes that things will deliver something of their essence to the mind that has prepared itself and that knows how to listen.
> ---"A World too Much With Us", Saul Bellow 1975

> To begin with, I agree with the description that Joseph Conrad gives in his introduction to *Heart of Darkness* or *Lord Jim.* "To make you feel, hear, to make you see. ..." It's a kind of groping for the original sense of being, a being that precedes social shaping. Perhaps that's the difference between scientific writing and art. Art assumes that it faces mysterious being. Science assumes that it deals with intrinsically knowable, ultimately knowable being.
> --- "An Interview with Saul Bellow", Saul Bellow 1984

Introduction

It is now well-established that Saul Bellow did read a substantial amount of philosophy. Among several thinkers he read widely on were Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, and Steiner. He also makes mention of German phenomenology and Husserl in his Library of Congress Address (1963). Most of the characters in his books read philosophy too: Herzog, for instance, rejects Hegel's philosophy; Ravelstein is devoted to philosophy and is a character inspired by Bellow's philosopher friend Allan Bloom, Dr Tamkin

from *Seize the Day* (1956) reads among other things the best of philosophy and often talks on absurdist philosophy and nihilism. I have drawn attention to the fact that many of Bellow's protagonists are philosophers themselves because it is of significance to the argument in this chapter. In an ironic way, this very fact serves as a means by which Bellow carefully articulates on the confluences and divergences of philosophy and imaginative literary fiction.

This chapter studies Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man* (1944). It will proceed to undertake an analysis of certain Heideggerean and phenomenological principles within the context of *Dangling Man.* Because it is focused only on certain principles of phenomenological investigation and Heideggerean thought, it is beyond the scope and more importantly beyond any intention of this chapter in terms of a conclusion to arrive at the claim that Bellow's text or that the protagonist in it are Heideggerean or phenomenological in their world view.

* * *

Bellow wrote the *Dangling Man* whilst serving in the Merchant Marine. Joseph, the protagonist in the novel, is a philosopher-theorist like so many of Bellow's other characters and has in the past studied and worked on Diderot and other philosophers of the Enlightenment. He even quotes Spinoza intermittently. Hence it would be no surprise at all to study Bellow's work in conjunction with philosophical thought, and, further, to find through such a study, similarities between his fiction and philosophical enquiry. However, in conducting such a study there is always the danger of using the work of fiction in order to demonstrate entire philosophical systems. Bellow himself would take issue with any such analysis. He says in an interview, when asked about the

parallels in his work and in philosophical enquiry, "A book to illustrate what Nietzsche means by nihilism? I don't think of novels in that illustrative way" (Roudané 1984: 268)? For Bellow, literature and philosophy work in very different ways, toward different ends and adopt typically unique approaches. Hence to undertake a study of his work with the ultimate aim of trying to put a label on it, be that existentialist, nihilist or absurdist, would be a gross reduction of not only the work itself but of Bellow's aesthetic philosophy. It is in this context that Bellow expresses rather strong views on French and German imaginative literature of the fifties. In an interview, he says:

> To my mind, the main fault of current French novelists is that they are so cognitive. They lean so heavily on the history of philosophy or on ideologies of one sort or another. [...] Often French novels take the form of logical demonstrations or work out postulates systematically. I prefer to get my philosophy from philosophers. This is not to say that I am opposed to ideas in fiction. (Enck 1965: 156)

And indeed Bellow's fiction is full of ideas. Consciousness, being, the self, individuality, death, angst, these are just some of the themes that recur in his fiction.[1] In line with Bellow's own views, my approach in the present study of Bellow's *Dangling Man* is to bring to light certain Heideggerean phenomenological instances but without attributing a consistent and deliberate conceptual system within which the novella may be understood.[2]

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[1] In an essay on Bellow, Daniel Fuchs (1974: 67) contends that: "In American literature physical acts are eloquent (Hemingway, Faulkner) but the reflective consciousness is often mute. But if Bellow is a novelist of intellect, he is not an intellectual novelist. He eschews the thesis novel, one which proceeds because of an idea; this he considers "French" (Gide, Sartre, Camus). Bellow sees his characters in their personal reality, sees them as selves, or better, souls, whose thought moves with the inevitability of an emotion". Fuchs comment, highlights how Bellow treats issues of consciousness and the self in a non-theoretical manner. Fuchs proceeds by qualifying Bellow as a "novelist of the intellect" rather than an "intellectual novelist". My own argument attempts to understand whether the manner in which Bellow's examination of the notions of consciousness and being follow a different paradigm from the manner of expression of these notions (consciousness, being) in philosophical texts. I shall examine if the theoretical and the non-theoretical exploration of the notion of consciousness provide one such a paradigmatic difference between literary texts and philosophical ones.

[2] I do not provide an overview of Heidegger's thesis in *Being and Time* or of Husserlian Phenomenology in this chapter because this is beyond the scope of such a study. An analysis of the specific area within

For Heidegger, the search for the self is prompted by the fact that *Dasein's* Being is concealed. This concealment manifests itself in the condition of "falling". In falling, *Dasein* conceals its own Being. The concealment of Being is manifested by *Dasein* in the manner in which *Dasein* conceptualizes itself: in terms of the world.[3] Because of this condition, *Dasein* must discover and reveal the truth of its own Being. Husserl's now famous dictum which was later to become the slogan of phenomenology, "back to the things themselves", is a call to allow for things to show themselves. It is a call to resist understanding things according to tradition, common sense or a pre-given meaning. However, according to Heidegger, Husserl's mistake was to assume that it was possible to come to things without any pre-given understanding already present. Instead, Heidegger argued that one is always first and foremost aware of the pre-given meaning and that this pre-givenness is fundamental in order to unearth the truth that lies beyond and beneath it. For Heidegger truth is not a correspondence between the object as it appears and the object as it really is. Rather, by truth, what is meant is that the world is masked and covered over by taken for granted meanings. When *Dasein* ceases to understand itself as an interpreter of the world and of itself, truth gets masked over by already given answers whose validities are never questioned. This condition of always

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Heideggerean thought and phenomenology, which this thesis will be concentrating on, has already been provided in the first chapter of this thesis.

[3] In an interview with Agni, Saul Bellow speaks about the world and the self. His remarks bring to mind Heidegger's proposition that the objects and phenomena in the world are understood in terms of how we relate to them. Heidegger uses the well-known example of the hammer and says that the hammer-thing cannot be understood in abstraction, but in fact, in our relatedness to it as a hammer. In a similar sense, Bellow says, "One of the distractions is thought, thought itself. Even good thought, even what we call *advanced* thought is a distraction because it takes us away from our phenomenal surroundings. And a novel can't live when it's divorced from these phenomenal surroundings. It can be divorced from anything else" (Birkerts 1997, No. 46).

being amidst things such that *Dasein* and the world are always revealed according to the relatedness between *Dasein* and things in the world, Heidegger terms "being-with". Thus disclosedness and inauthenticity become essential and in fact primary conditions in order for truth to reveal itself. A similar outlook is echoed by Bellow himself. He says, in an interview when asked about the determining force of environment upon the self.

> Environments matter, but they do not determine being. Being towers over them. To cover oneself up with labels or shut oneself up in pigeon holes is also one of our own deliberate choices. One must rather try to decipher the necessarily obscure message concealed within the appearances. (Roudané 1984:267)

Deciphering the meaning of the self is exactly what Joseph does through his long wait. The notion of a "message concealed within the appearances" is present throughout the phenomenological tradition. In *Dangling Man*, the motif of a facade that conceals the true nature of things is a constant and steady one. The first entry by Joseph in his journal is a remark on how in the present day one is compelled to "strangle" individual feeling and emotion in order to portray a tough exterior. Already, in the first pages of the novella, there is the hint of covering over something in order to display a false exterior. Joseph's sense of the self and of his identity is masked over with labels, yet he knows not who he really is. His relationship with Iva satisfies the definition of a marriage yet beneath that definition lies the truth of their relationship. His job is a convenient veil in order to escape the condemnation of being free. He tries desperately to find what lurks beneath the mass of humanity that for most part seems a mere "reflection of the things they lived among" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 15).

The ambience that pervades the narrative is also highly suggestive of a covering-over that resists all attempts at penetration. Mists, darkness, clouds and snow obstruct the sun

and thus literally and metaphorically cloud the sight. Smoke from chimneys, the height of trees, tall buildings, electric signs that suffuse the surrounding atmosphere in blinding neon lights, are all hindrances to clear vision. The newspapers are saturated with words that seem merely to gloss over, perhaps, the more fundamental truth. As a project, hermeneutics sought to discover the hidden which lay beneath that which appears visible. Historically, hermeneutics involved the interpretation of Biblical texts. In philosophy, it has come to be associated with thinkers such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Husserl and is associated with the art of interpretation and the uncovering of hidden meanings. But where Husserl suggested the strategy of "bracketing" (1964,1969) in phenomenological analysis, which posited that all knowledge of lived experience must be suspended in order to discover the essence of an object, Heidegger went further and to an extent rejected the Husserlian technique of "bracketing". Heidegger focused instead on *Dasein* as a Being-in-the-world and this mode of being was an essential mode of Being for *Dasein*. *Dasein* cannot be understood without the world in which *Dasein* exists. Within this framework, Heidegger proposed that to understand *Dasein* it was necessarily impossible to "bracket" our assumptions about the world in which we exist. Heidegger would argue that knowledge about the world cannot be suspended as Husserl suggested. Instead one might become aware of the assumptions within which the world is understood and understand and interpret them for what they are. This is what is referred to as "truth" in Heideggerean hermeneutics.

Where Husserlian phenomenology is more descriptive in its analysis, Heideggerean phenomenology tends to be more interpretative and, as some might argue, more pragmatic in its approach. In fact, Heidegger himself wrote in *Being and Time,* that the

Greek term "pragmata" described appropriately the Being of *Dasein*. *Dasein*, explains Heidegger, shows itself by comporting itself in this or that particular way, by letting things in the world affect *Dasein* rather than by understanding them as mere objects. However, for most part, *Dasein* remains hidden. That which shows itself conceals that which remains hidden in *Dasein*, and to discover this hidden is the task of Heideggerean phenomenology. Hence Heidegger undertakes to interpret *Dasein*'s experience in the world. But beyond this, he undertakes to bring to light what makes the experience of the everyday possible. We thus arrive at analyzing the structure of the meaning of Being so as to understand what makes our phenomenal everyday experience possible. By existing and interpreting experience we necessarily interpret *Dasein*'s Being.

Joseph, in *Dangling Man,* might well be understood within such a framework. The real world that exists in the narrative is a shared world of meaning and relationships. He writes in one of his entries about his society and his world and the people in it, "We were figures in the same plot, eternally fixed together" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 15). On the other hand, civilization teaches that each of us is an inestimable prize" ([1944]; c2003: 86). It is evident, whether he likes it or not that he is part of a common world and he even explicitly refers to it as "my generation, my society, my world" ([1944];2003:15). Man is a being-in-this-world. Yet, this does not imply that the individual is determined by the world or by his environment. Being-in-the-world always means being-with-others in D*angling Man.* Truth, for Heidegger, is achieved only by being-in-the-world, not by merely perceiving or experiencing an object in a vacuum which would then immediately call for an observing subject and the experienced object. Rather objects in the world are each related to the other and form a network which is

then understood to be the world. According to Heidegger, objects are never understood in isolation from the world of which they are a part.

There is a difference between descriptive phenomenology and interpretative phenomenology. Describing phenomena is generally associated with Husserlian phenomenology because of its emphasis on reflection, evidence and description. Interpretation, on the other hand, is allied to Heideggerean hermeneutic phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology focuses on the structure of experience: what makes experience possible? Through such an understanding, descriptive phenomenology seeks to arrive at the essence of experienced phenomena and at the essence of the intentional act. For instance, in perceiving a chair that stands in front of me, descriptive phenomenology might seek to understand how the chair is experienced through the intentional act of perception. What does a particular intentional act reveal about the Being of the chair? In this sense, Heidegger would argue, there is still the silhouette of a subject-object divide in the one who experiences and in that which is the object of the intentional act. Heidegger posited that the interpretative technique of hermeneutic phenomenology erases such a subject-object divide and proposes instead that both, perceiving and the perceived, constitute each other and are dependent on every individual's pre-understanding of the world and the historicality of the individual. It is between these two modes of thinking that Joseph is caught. This can be explained with recourse to a certain episode that occurs a few lines before the last entry in the journal. Joseph has been informed that he is soon to join the army. Prompted by his days spent waiting all alone in a room, Joseph is reminiscing about past years and writes:

> The room delusively dwindled and became a tiny square, swiftly drawn back, myself and all the objects in it growing smaller. This was not a mere visual trick. I understood it to be a revelation of the ephemeral agreements by which we live and pace ourselves. [...] I rose rather unsteadily from the rocker feeling that there was an element of treason to common sense in the very objects of common sense. Or that there was no trusting them save through wide agreement [...] To be pushed upon oneself entirely put the very facts of simple existence in doubt. (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 139)

Several things are going on in this passage. Joseph visits his old childhood room in his father's house. We find him reflecting on his experience of the room as a young boy as he sits in the same room several years later, a grown man now when the reflecting is taking place. This interpretive-descriptive analysis of his experience of the room makes him reflect on the specific intentional content of his experience. It is through memory that he experiences the room that he is already present in, but from a completely different perspective. Pure description of the room as experienced by him in the present is added to experience of it through reflection. The past is merged with the present. The same object is intended in radically different ways. That which was first seen is now experienced in thought through memory. The episode begins with a separation between the experiencing subject (Joseph) and that which is experienced (the room). But as Joseph begins to reflect, he also begins to analyse. He understands that reflecting upon it and remembering it from the perspective of a young boy alters the experience of objects in the room and the room itself. But as the reflection proceeds Joseph becomes increasingly aware of the co-mingling of the experiencing subject (himself as a boy) and that which is experienced (the room of his childhood) such that each affects the other, each is intertwined with the other.

Objects can be experienced through different intentional acts and different intentional acts alter the way in which an object is given to experience. This only serves to emphasize the instability of absolute knowledge. The intended object of consciousness, in this particular case the room that Joseph reminisces about, is never given in its entirety. It is always experienced from a particular and limited perspective. And because it is always given in one of the many possible ways, the truth about the Being of the room will always transcend any experience of it. The concept of "Horizon" in phenomenology may serve to clarify this. "Horizon" refers to the limits within which *Dasein* is able to understand and experience the world. The perceiving subject while apprehending an object of intention is already placed within the context of certain possible apprehensions. Thus the object of perception is always understood within a context and relates to the subject's activity. In this case, the room is apprehended in and through the intentional act of memory and is hence understood from within the context of such a remembering. This does not imply that all of the many perspectives through which an object can be intended are necessarily false but that the object itself always transcends itself and the way in which it is experienced. Does this not then imply that phenomenology is caught in the snares of solipsistic thinking? Not in the least. Just because an object is given to consciousness in different ways and according to different mental acts does not mean that the object is purely dependent on the perceiver or that all meaning is derived through the mental act. For if that were the case then it would be impossible to experience an object as being the same object over time because the experience of the object itself would differ with each intentional act. Nor would it be possible for other individuals to talk about and experience the same object. Temporality and intersubjectivity become the means through which phenomenology is rescued from

solipsistic thinking. For Heidegger however there is no question at all about the experiencing subject and the perceived object because there is no distinction between a subject and an object. Both are interlocked and mutually influence and shape one and the other. Further, *Dasein*'s experience of the world and of its own Being, is determined by several factors such as historicality (the space and time that *Dasein* finds itself in), mood in which *Dasein* always finds itself in, and on our practical dealings with the world and objects in it. Therefore, Heidegger argues, the nature of "truth" is such that it constantly conceals and discloses itself.[4] When one particular interpretation makes itself apparent, all other interpretations are necessarily closed off. The intention of Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerean hermeneutics is a rigorous argument against the Cartesian notion of the thinking/acting/experiencing subject as the source of all knowledge.[5] It is not the intention of this thesis to draw out the differences and similarities between Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerean hermeneutics. The subject of the nature and status of these differences is by itself a topic of much debate by scholars in the field and calls for an entirely different undertaking which lies beyond the scope and intention of this particular study. I have drawn only on certain differences between Husserlian and Heideggerean phenomenology and on other occasions used phenomenology as a blanket term emphasizing the similarities.

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[4] In his speech, during the Nobel Prize ceremony (1976), Bellow himself touches upon the way in which consciousness and the self constantly reveals and conceals itself. He remarked: "The essence of our real condition, the complexity, the confusion, the pain of it, is shown to us in glimpses, in what Proust and Tolstoy thought of as "true impressions". This essence reveals and then conceals itself. When it goes away it leaves us again in doubt. But we never seem to lose our connection with the depths from which these glimpses come".

[5] A brief overview of what is implied by the Cartesian view is provided in chapter II of this thesis (67).

In *Dangling Man,* the notion of an isolate locked up by himself in order that he might discover the truth is seriously put to test. It is not that knowledge about the world and the objects in it have a self-contained truth to them. Neither is it entirely an attack on subjectivity. Rather, it hints at the notion that even to attempt to separate oneself from the world that the individual is inextricably embedded in is not merely futile but destructive to the self. The room that Joseph contemplates is fixed within the factors of time and space. It crosses his mind that perhaps very many years ago it didn't even exist. It is something he will never be able to know. The realization forces Joseph to confront the contingency of all knowledge. The contingency derives from the fact that the individual is always rooted within the specifics of space and time. All knowledge is always dependent on, and hence, limited by the constraints of space and time. One of the issues that phenomenology concerns itself with is the conditions underlying the possibility to transcend the constraints of space and time in order to arrive at an atemporal knowledge of the essence of things. To believe that knowledge held solely by the individual is universal and constant is a mere delusion of the mind. It foretells the threat of solipsism. Perhaps, then, the answer lies in the mediation between the individual and the Other. Communication is possible only because Joseph shares the world with other individuals. Truth must be discovered in the phenomenal world of everyday experience. Isolation and annihilation are but the same sides of a coin. For, as Joseph writes, "to be pushed upon oneself entirely puts the very facts of simple existence in doubt" (Bellow [1944]; c2003:120). The sovereignty of the self becomes a curse for Joseph. However sovereignty of the self must clearly be distinguished from autonomous individuality. Sovereignty implies that if each individual were to rely solely on his or her own peculiar "truth" or "perspective" then it would all end in a kind of stark

meaninglessness or absurd universe. Meaningfulness is hence found in the mediation between inter-subjectivity and individuality. But is there really mediation between intersubjectivity and the isolate in *Dangling Man?* Where in fact does such mediation lie? What is the alternative to the existence of the isolate? Does it lie in throwing ourselves away? Does not Joseph give himself up entirely to "the world"? Perhaps that is the reason why he writes:

> We struggle perpetually to free ourselves. Or to put it somewhat differently, while we seem so intently and even desperately to be holding on to ourselves, we would far rather give ourselves away. We do not know how. So, at times, we throw ourselves away. When what we really want is to stop living so exclusively and vainly for our own sake, impure and unknowing, turning inward and self-fastened. (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 112)

There is a significant difference between Joseph's conception of "giv[ing] ourselves away" and "throw[ing] ourselves away". Within the present study, this difference is particularly important because it draws parallels with Heidegger's concepts of "thrownness" and the categories of authentic and inauthentic modes of existence, all three of which must be understood in relation to the others, rather than as individual concepts. If we read the passage above carefully, there is an antecedent moment that is left unarticulated. The passage starts "We struggle perpetually to free ourselves". This suggests that there is "something" that holds every individual captive. It is from this "something" that every individual struggles hard to sever himself. A few pages earlier, Joseph writes about the lack of choice thrust upon the individual who finds himself, whether he likes it or not, in a specific time and a particular place in history. He says about himself, "[…] whether I liked it or not, they were my generation, my society, my world. [...] The worlds we sought were never those we saw; the worlds we bargained for were never the worlds we got" (Bellow [1944]; c2003:15). The sense of being flung into

the world without control over the situation is made immediately apparent. Throughout the journal, this idea is brilliantly brought out by countering freedom against freedom. Joseph finds himself a free man: he is currently unemployed, and is waiting to be drafted into the army. The consequent situation is one filled with potential freedom. Joseph is free to spend his time whilst waiting as he pleases. However, there is a contradictory type of freedom that runs against this potential freedom. In that, freedom is forced upon the individual in two ways: firstly there is the notion that freedom is burdening. It has no form and no meaning and this consequently becomes the very meaning of the self. Joseph explains, "We are afraid to govern ourselves. Of course. It is so hard. We soon want to give up our freedom. It is not even real freedom, because it is not accompanied by comprehension" ([1944]; c2003: 122). Secondly, freedom is curtailed by the factors of space and time within which the individual ego finds himself. Pure formless freedom is counteracted against by a truncated freedom. Joseph struggles to free himself from the limitations imposed upon him. He does this by freeing himself from the shackles of his job, from the suffocation of society and from the sham that surrounds him in everyday life. In freeing himself from all of this he is confronted with a shapeless freedom and is forced to mould it into a form or face the risk of confronting an indefinable self. The ontical struggle arises from the conflict between freedom as a potential "to be" and a formless freedom. The conflict gives rise to the question of what it means to "be Joseph" but also resists all attempts to provide an answer to it.

I now turn to Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* as a "thrown project". According to Heidegger, *Dasein* is literally "thrown" into existence. This implies that *Dasein* has had no say or control of the time, place, historical era, no choice as to whether or not *Dasein*

wanted to exist within the historical conditions that *Dasein* finds itself rooted in. Instead *Dasein* finds itself within the particulars of all these without prior preparation, knowledge or alternative. Heidegger explains:

> This characteristic of Dasein's Being — this "that it is" — is veiled in its "whence" and "whither", yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the "*thrownness*" of this entity into its "there" [...] The expression "thrownnness" is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*. (1962: 174)

The idea of potential freedom versus a truncated freedom can be found in Heidegger's explication of *Dasein* as a "thrown being". For Heidegger, what is of significance is not that *Dasein* is simply "thrown" into the world but instead the way in which *Dasein* chooses to attend to this "thrownness". The freedom that is inherent in *Dasein*'s own disclosure is contained within its "thrownness". *Dasein* can choose how to relate to "thrownness" and in this choice *Dasein* reveals itself either authentically or inauthentically. Thus, there is the indication of a formless freedom which *Dasein* must take hold of by making choices and by disclosing itself but this is possible only because *Dasein* exists in "thrownness" and thus within the parameters of specific social, cultural, personal and historical factors. *Dasein* is "thrown" into the world in which other things and other *Daseins* exist. *Dasein* is confronted with two choices: authenticity and inauthenticity. It can relate to the condition of being "thrown" in such a way that "thrownness" allows *Dasein* to reveal its own Being by understanding its own possibilities and to disclose itself through mood. Alternatively, *Dasein* may take the other path and rely on the "they-self" to provide pre-established definitions of the self and the world. In the condition of inauthenticity, *Dasein* falls away from itself. An expression of the notion of the "they-self" is possibly what Joseph alludes to, when he writes in his journal, "We throw ourselves away". It is worth noting that in the same

entry he also uses words such as "impure", "unknowing", "inward" to qualify the "thrown self". His entry draws direct attention to the idea of being shackled. I am not suggesting that Joseph is Heideggerean in his outlook; but that the notions of inauthentic existence and the "they-self", of Heidegger's *Dasein* as a "thrown" project and Joseph's own outlook correspond to a great degree. The manner in which the concepts of the "they-self", of *Dasein* as a "thrown project" and the notions of the authentic and inauthentic are expressed in the fictional text as part of the ontical struggle that Joseph finds himself thrown into. This is partly why the concepts are not developed in a theoretical manner in the fictional text. Within the ontical struggle that Joseph is immersed in, the notion of the "thrown self" is of significance because it is the "thrown self" that can provide a refuge from the question of what it means "to be". Joseph refuses to seek comfort in that refuge and the refusal intensifies his struggle to discover the meaning of who or what he "is". In his book on Bellow's fiction, John Jacob Clayton (1968) undertakes a comparative study of *Dangling Man* with Sartre's *Nausea*.[6] In it, he too draws a distinction between "giving oneself away" and "throwing oneself away". He says:

> The distinction between giving ourselves and throwing ourselves away is important: to become a mass man, to join, to belong to a movement in which you can eschew personal choice, in which you can avoid thinking and feeling for yourself – this is throwing yourself away; it is partly what Joseph is doing by putting himself up for

[6] In his book, Robert R. Dutton (1982), also undertakes a comparative analysis of Sartre and Bellow, in reference to their treatment of consciousness and Being. Dutton illustrates the manner in which the notions of consciousness and Being are treated by Bellow in all his works. He writes: "Philosophically, the heroes of Bellow are in the Sartrean position of the *en-soi* versus the *pour-soi*: the being-in-itself versus the being-for-itself. Unlike the stone whose being can never transcend itself, and which is therefore complete and whole in itself, a being-in-itself, man, blessed or cursed with an imaginative consciousness, is forever in a state of self-transcendence, or in a state of being-for-itself, as well as being-in-itself. Through his imagination, man would be something other than what he is, or seems to be, is an irritatingly unsatisfying and discomfiting mystery, a mystery to which depth and breadth are given with every stretch of his imagination. Bellow's novels are narrative dramatizations of the fact of this dilemma of existence; they are working-out not to a resolution, but to a revelation of a human condition" (1982: 2). Through his analysis of Bellow's works, Dutton attempts to explain why the self is always understood as being incomplete.

> immediate induction [...] But a different loss of selfhood — a giving yourself away, joining the human brotherhood, longing for such a loss of selfhood, is also implicit in Joseph's giving himself to the army. (1968:117)

Amongst various other things, Clayton's study seeks to illustrate that both Sartre and Bellow attack the idea of the self and ego and both deal with a type of death of the self but in radically different ways. Clayton suggests that Joseph partly "throws himself away" but also partly longs for the loss of selfhood and hence "gives himself away". The study also draws on certain existentialist themes that run through the narrative of *Dangling Man* but is careful to draw out the divergences between existentialist thought through Sartre's *Nausea* (1938) and Bellow's *Dangling Man.* Clayton's study stems from the notion of "freedom", which is of immense importance to Sartre's philosophy. The study addresses the question of how Bellow's characters attempt to confront a dark and absurd situation. This chapter, whilst addressing similar concerns, seeks to elucidate instances of phenomenological thought with a view to attending to the question of whether in fact imaginative literary fiction is better suited to an ontical or ontological study of Being.

Before proceeding with my analysis of the text itself, I should like to draw attention to the significance of the theorist-persona in *Dangling Man* because, like many of Bellow's other characters, Joseph too is an amateur theorist. As a theorist, he fails all attempts to define who he is. The search for the self assumes a literal stance in the first few pages of the novella. Here it becomes a struggle to define the self. Joseph is waiting to be drafted into the army because "who he is" remains unknown. He is of Canadian descent and a British subject. Due to the confusion that results from his unknown identity he is

classified as an "alien". His classification as a 1A in the army must undergo revision after notification that he is married. He is required to undergo two blood tests. And whilst this search to discover who he is goes on, he has nothing better to do than to "dangle". He must quite literally simply wait until he is given further notification of "who he really is". In his search for himself, Joseph sometimes speaks of himself in the third person. The earliest episode of Joseph talking about himself in the third person occurs in the first few opening entries of his journal. But there is a significant point that must not be overlooked in his third person encounter with himself. Joseph speaks of an older self, a self of the past, and it is when he talks about the Joseph of the past, that he refers to himself in the third person. The self as subject tries to understand the self as object. But the question to be asked here is whether in fact the subject and the object are the same? He says,

> For legal purposes, I am that older self, and if a question of my identity were to arise I could do nothing but point to my attributes of yesterday. I have not tried to bring myself up to date, either from indifference or from fear. ([1944]; c2003:16)

The notion of the self is problematised because of the lack of trace between the past and present. There is no means by which Joseph can assuredly state that the Joseph of yesterday is the same as the Joseph of the present. And by "same", I do not mean to imply that the attributes remain unchanged but that, despite alterations and differences, there might be a fixed and identifiable atemporal core or essence that might remain unchanged. The lack of continuity between the Joseph of the past years and the Joseph in the present is an instance of metaphoric death. It becomes necessary within the novella because it questions the consistency of the self and shatters the belief in an unchanging essence of the self. But more importantly, it brings to light the difference between the notions of a constructed identity and the self. In *Dangling Man* the self is

pure experimentation. Joseph struggles to find the means by which he might locate himself. The finding and searching results in experimentation: he tries out different approaches. What or who is the self? This is the question that remains unanswered but not without the burning desire to find the answer to it: "We are all drawn toward the same craters of the spirit — to know what we are and what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace" (Bellow [1944]; c2003:112). *Dangling Man* is an exhaustive exploration of the ontical because in it Joseph ontologises. He is seeking the answer to the question of "Being". The ontical is made manifest through the act of writing in the journal *intime*.

Joseph tries to define himself according to his physical appearance, he tries to attribute character traits that might provide him with a fixed and stable identity, he attempts to understand the self as sporadic and indefinable, he constructs alternative selves which might be understood as him, he sometimes refers to himself in the third person in an effort to grasp some substantial sense of the self. Sometimes he is the subject searching for himself. The subject and object are one in this case. At other times he is the subject searching for the object. The object in this case is a constructed self. He is at times attracted by the idea of the possibility of finding the self within the world whilst at other times he is attracted by the idea of discovering the self as a mind existing alone within a room. He finally turns to the army: "Perhaps the war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during those months in the room. Perhaps I could sound creation through other means. Perhaps" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 139). The repetition of the word "perhaps" is clearly suggestive of uncertainty. That uncertainty comes from the fact that other attempts have ended in failure and the expectant feeling that perhaps this

attempt might well too. It is precisely the self as experimentation that Heidegger talks about in his treatise, *Being and Time.* Heidegger states:

> We do not *know* what "Being" means. But even if we ask, "What is "Being"?" We keep within an understanding of the "is", though we are unable to fix conceptually what that "is" signifies. [...] However much this understanding of Being (an understanding which is already available to us) may fluctuate and grow dim, and border on mere acquaintance with a word, its very indefiniteness is itself a positive phenomenon which needs to be clarified. (1962: 25)

I will elaborate on why the "indefiniteness" is to be understood as a positive phenomenon. The inability to lay down a fixed definition of what the Being of *Dasein* means points to "possibility". "Possibility" itself is a Heideggerean notion. It means that, for *Dasein*, there exist possibilities or ways of being. In being, *Dasein* is continually revealing and concealing itself. To confine it to some concrete system of interpretation is reductive and erroneous, according to Heidegger. However he is quick to add that, because of the lack of any fixed ground upon which the Being of *Dasein* can be understood does not imply that *Dasein* is nothing. Thus he argues:

> The existential analytic of Dasein comes before any psychology or anthropology, and certainly before any biology. While these too are ways in which Dasein can be investigated, we can define the theme of our analytic with greater precision if we distinguish it from these. ... [T]o put it negatively, we have no right to resort to dogmatic constructions and to apply just any idea of Being and actuality to this entity, no matter how 'self-evident' that idea may be; nor may any of the 'categories' which such an idea prescribes be forced upon Dasein without proper ontological consideration. We must rather choose such a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this entity can show itself in itself and from itself. (1962: 71, 37)

Heidegger argues that *Dasein* should not be understood as an entity with a pre-given essence or as something that has properties. All attempts to define what *Dasein* is will necessarily escape us. But because it is impossible to ground *Dasein* as a fixed concept does not automatically imply that *Dasein* is nothing. *Dasein* is pure possibility. To understand *Dasein* means to uncover what it means to be. And this can be done only in

the everyday world which is where *Dasein* exists. To be able to seize its own possibilities, *Dasein* must first and foremost be engaged in the urge to enquire into what it means to be *Dasein*. *Dasein* is always what it can be. In this sense *Dasein* must understand itself as a potential to be. "[P]ossibility signifies what is *not yet* actual and what is *not at any time* necessary. It characterizes the *merely* possible" (Heidegger 1962: 183). However it must be remembered that when Heidegger explicates on the notion of possibility and potentiality, he does not suggest that it is infinite in terms of limits. *Dasein* always finds itself with certain conditions that restrict the horizon of possibilities.

In his analysis of Bellow's fiction, H. Porter Abbott argues that Joseph's preservation of himself is directly dependent upon the fact that the self in Bellow's *Dangling Man* is not essentially defined. He explains that "Joseph's failures of conceptual thought are what preserve him. [A]t the end, the evidence against the self does not prevail because no 'position' is taken" (1980: 271). Thus within the Heideggerean context of understanding, Joseph is not to be understood as nothingness but as existing toward his own potentiality-for-Being. Because there is no fundamental essence prior to existence for *Dasein*, there is a certain freedom as concerns the Being of *Dasein*. This freedom is the freedom for *Dasein* to be itself. *Dasein* must continually unveil itself and this is possible in the several modes of Being that *Dasein* finds itself in. To exist in such a way is to live authentically. The converse of such an authenticity is what Heidegger refers to as the inauthentic. To ignore the primordial freedom of being and to construct an artificial and manufactured self in order not merely to escape the burden of freedom and of having to discover the self but also to rid oneself of the sense of anxiety and alienation that one is

confronted with when faced with the overwhelming question of what it means "to be", is to live inauthentically according to Heidegger.

The Heideggerean account of the self when placed alongside Bellow's own views on the self highlights significant intersections. Bellow has repeatedly argued that the failure to define oneself according to any stable system does not imply that the self is nothing. Clearly this is also Joseph's view in the *Dangling Man.* Joseph believes, like Heidegger, that the search for the self is an ongoing process of concealment and disclosure. To both Heidegger and Joseph, it would seem something of a betrayal to submit to a fixed notion of what the self is. And hence, Bellow's "dangling man" is forever condemned to a quest that has no logical end. Writing in the *New York Review of Books,* Charles Simic (2001) illustrates the theme of an unending search in the works of Bellow and Dostoevsky. He argues that:

> Bellow too is convinced that to have a conscience is, after a certain age, to live permanently in an epistemological hell. The reason his and Dostoevsky's heroes are incapable of ever arriving at any closure is that they love their own suffering above everything else. They refuse to exchange their inner torment for the peace of mind that comes with bourgeois propriety or some kind of religious belief. (Simic 2001)

Simic maintains that the protagonists in the works of both these novelists "love their own suffering", seeing it "as perhaps the last outpost of the heroic in our day and age". Simic's observation is questionable. Joseph is undoubtedly tortured by his suffering but on the other hand to submit to a coherent system seems not merely unacceptable but even impossible to him. It is not that he loves his suffering: rather it is the consequence of resisting reductions of the self to a mere construct.

For *Dasein*, authenticity and inauthenticity are two modes of possibilities of Being. *Dasein* is literally thrown into the world without the preliminary choice of whether or not it wished to be in the world. *Dasein* is for most part lost in the they-self. Because it is fallen into the they-self in which *Dasein* exists in its average everydayness, *Dasein* has lost itself. Being absorbed by the everyday world and having lost itself in the they-self is tranquilizing for *Dasein* because being in this mode frees *Dasein* from its authentic freedom to discover what kind of a Being, Dasein really is. All answers are provided for by the they-self.

> We take pleasure as *they* take pleasure; we read, see and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; [...] The "*they*", which supplies the answer to the "who" of everyday Dasein, is the "*nobody*" to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in being-among-one-another. (Heidegger 1962: 165–166)

In a certain sense such absorption in the world allows for *Dasein* to exist and function within the world amongst other people and to be part of the world. However, because everything is already assigned with a pre-given familiarity and understanding, *Dasein*, by being immersed in the they-self, is led to the deceptive view that "one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine 'life'" (1962: 222). However, *Dasein* is soon faced with anxiety, and with the sense of not-knowing itself without conformity to the they-self.

One might understand Joseph's viewpoint within such a Heideggerean context. Joseph, it can be argued, vacillates between two opposing modes of Being. Certainly, there are instances of losing oneself in the mass of men in *Dangling Man* but there is also, along with this, a handing over of oneself in the world which is not an absorption into the "they". This handing over is best manifested by Joseph's own recruitment into the army. On the one hand, the army provides Joseph with a regimental form by which he can

define himself. Yet, at the same time there is the suggestion that the army will help him discover who he really is, away from the world of common concerns. The army, in *Dangling Man* becomes an alternative to the everyday world and offers him the opportunity to be a "good citizen". However both these instances of losing oneself result in a loss of the self because individual choice is put into serious question. On the other hand, there is an increasingly burdening freedom in the days that he spends within the confines of his room. Within the confines of his room he is unable to use his freedom and unable to make choices because he is who he really is always escapes him. As a result this too will result in a loss of selfhood. For Joseph, the self is not a product of the environment; neither can it be grasped in acts of intense self-reflection. He will experiment with different means to unveil the meaning of what it means "to be" without the realization that it is in experimentation that the answer to his question lies.

Being-in-the world can in certain instances lead to a sort of metaphoric death of the self. It is a death because the self is won over by the "they-self" and finds such an absorption into the world "tranquilizing". But this is one form of a metaphoric death of the self and is radically different in nature to another form which results from a deliverance of the self.

> Great pressure is brought to bear to make us undervalue ourselves. On the other hand, civilization teaches that each of us is an inestimable prize. There are, then, these two preparations: one for life and the other for death. [...] We are schooled in quietness and, if one of us takes his measure occasionally, he does so coolly, as if he were examining his fingernails, not his soul, frowning at the imperfections he finds as one would at a chip or a bit of dirt. Because, of course, we are called upon to accept the imposition of all kinds of wrongs, to wait in ranks under a hot sun, to run up a clattering beach, to be sentries, scouts or workingmen, to be those in the train when it is blown up, or those at the gates when they are locked, to be of no significance, to die. The result is that we learn to be unfeeling toward ourselves and incurious. Who can be the earnest huntsman of himself when he knows he is in turn

> a quarry? Or nothing so distinctive as quarry, but one of a shoal, driven toward the weirs. But I must know what I myself am. (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 86)

Joseph takes to writing in his journal to find an answer to a formidable question, "Is there a self"? There is also a sense of superiority in Joseph's attitude. The need to find and define the self is so sharp that there is a detectable tone of repugnance in Joseph's voice at the various forces that smother any possibility of discovering a unique coherent self. The insignificance of being simply one among a million other men, the futility of finding oneself in a world that stifles all attempts at uniqueness, reverberates in the above passage. Impersonality is literally imposed upon the self, who is merely one amongst the many others who "wait in ranks under a hot sun" or who "run up on a clattering beach" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 86). Further, death makes a mockery out of individual selfhood by threatening to annihilate him. A loss of selfhood, either way, follows one like a shadow that will not fade away. Joseph is of the opinion that even those engaged in the search for the self are deceived easily and are, for most part, satisfied by illusory answers as if one were "examining his fingernails, not his soul"(Bellow [1944]; c2003:86). The individual gets lost in the mass and becomes just another in the immense crowd. Individual selfhood is asphyxiated by the "they". And as Joseph himself remarks, often this is reason enough to make one "unfeeling" and "incurious" toward oneself. Yet, Joseph himself is driven by the urge to discern "what I myself am". How can this urge be explained?

The Heideggerean notion of Being as infinite possibility and its inauthentic counter-part find expression in *Dangling Man* in the idea of the ideal construction. An ideal construct is a false universal, and one through which the individual defines and

interprets himself or herself and the universe. It is restrictive, allowing for just one way of interpreting, and is inauthentic because it is a construct for mere convenience. In a conversation with his alternative ego, Joseph explains:

> An ideal construction, an obsessive device. There have been innumerable varieties: for study, for wisdom, bravery, war, the benefits of cruelty, for art; the God-man of the ancient cultures, the Humanistic full man, the courtly lover, the knight, the ecclesiastic, the despot, the ascetic, the millionaire, the manager. I could name hundreds of these ideal constructions, each with its assertions and symbols, each finding — in conduct, in God, in art, in money — its particular answer and each proclaiming: "This is the only possible way to meet chaos". ([1944]; c2003: 102)

As Joseph says, the ideal construction becomes a refuge against chaos. Chaos is to be understood as that which is indefinable, as that which transcends captivity or in the Heideggerean sense as "infinite possibility". To Joseph, many of the other more minor characters who appear in his journals seem to be living inauthentically, in other words according to contrived definitions. They do so because the alternative found in the genuine freedom of unpredictability is much too overwhelming for them. And so they choose to define themselves according to a construct within which they may fit, rather than the opposing alternative of a resistance to any such definition. And so Jimmy Burns, for instance, might see himself as a communist party member, and Joseph, as a "contemptible petty-bourgeois renegade" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 23), or Steidler who "under the influence of an ideal construction", swears by an idea of dramatic and would "willingly let go everything in his life that is not dramatic" ([1944]; c2003: 102). Joseph tells us that Steidler is "willing to pursue his ideal until his eyes burst forth from his head and his feet from his shoes" ([1944]; c2003: 102). The notion of the ideal construction, the inauthentic existence and the universalizing tendency that comes with it, are all intricately woven by Bellow. The ideal constructor uses his construction as the only way

of seeing and hence everything becomes subsumed by this or that particular way of seeing

What is to be said then of Joseph's persistence with the question that informs the narrative of *Dangling* Man? Why is it that no "ideal construction" can satisfy Joseph? Perhaps, Heidegger can provide an answer. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger writes that anxiety forces *Dasein* to discover what *Dasein* is anxious of. *Dasein* is forced out of the immersion of the they-self and comes into direct confrontation with the question of "what *Dasein* is", when severed from the they-self. This brings *Dasein* into an authentic mode of being. Because this anxiety is not specifically directed at anything all, the "they" is unable to resolve it. *Dasein* realizes that the "they" cannot provide it with any truth as to what kind of a Being, *Dasein* really is. Perhaps *Dasein* must look at itself in order to discover the truth about itself. But this pushes *Dasein* into choosing for itself and brings it into a realm of freedom where all decision must be made by *Dasein* and not by the "they". This causes as much anxiety as the realization that the "they" cannot provide *Dasein* with the truth about Being.

The use of the journal form in *Dangling Man* is suggestive of a desire to construct and that is precisely what Joseph is attempting to do. He is immersed in constructing a notion of what it means to be himself and the form of a diarist writing about himself becomes synonymous with the theorist who is involved in generating systems of understanding. Joseph's failure as a philosopher theorist is of primary significance.[7] The

[7] The importance of the construction of a persona who theorizes and fails miserably at it, is reflected in Saul Bellow's own remarks in his Nobel lecture (1976). Here, he stresses the importance of the failure of

significance of Joseph's failure as a theorist can be placed in the context of Bellow's own views when talking about Freud. In an interview Bellow once said,

> I worry about these geniuses who create systems which then take the mind captive. It's very difficult to escape from any system of metaphors which successfully imposes itself upon you. You begin to think in that way and pretty soon you can't think in any other way. (Boyers 1975: 18–19)

Joseph voices a similar abhorrence to the notion of the "ideal construction". But it is distrust of any "ideal construction" that results in Joseph's unending quest for the self. Joseph's failure to find a system is echoed in other ways as well. Firstly, there is the fact that he has abandoned his biographical study of Diderot and other philosophers of the Enlightenment. We learn also that he had been a member of the Marxist party but has given up this alliance. He struggles throughout to achieve some definition of himself through constructions, and he even goes so far as to create an alternative personality with whom he can talk concretely about himself. There is no system by which he can define himself entirely. Joseph is unable to characterise himself not as a Marxist, nor as an existentialist, nor as a philosopher. All attempts to fix himself within a definite system end in disillusionment. The form of a journal only serves to highlight all of this. The diary form works against the construction of a definable self. Most often used to record and document impressions, reactions, convictions and details of events and of oneself, one might imagine that it offers the potential to know and solidify the sense of the self. It provides the self with a sense of continuity by tracing and linking the self of the past, present and the future. It is otherwise with Joseph. The entries in his diary only heighten the fragmentary and conflictual forces within the self. It amplifies the

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systems of thought for the human being. He said: "We must hunt for that under the wreckage of many systems. The failure of those systems may bring a blessed and necessary release from formulations, from an over-defined and misleading consciousness".

evanescence and the immense lack of fixity that is the self. The use of the diary form works towards and generates specific ideas. The protagonist, in this case Joseph, literally observes and records himself. The subjective "I" is also simultaneously the observed "other". He is at once both subject and object. Joseph the subject of *Dangling Man* becomes the very object of his search. He is essentially writing "himself". It is hence the most conducive form of writing for a recluse or, to phrase it in a different way, for the ruminations of a thinking mind. But if all this, the diary or the journal *intime*, is in many ways the most fitting form to augment the treatment of time. The journal chronicles the time period from when he quits his job in a Travel Bureau through his sixteen month wait until he is drafted into the army. On the one hand, while it traces the movement of time from the day he gives up his job until the day when he receives the letter from the army, the form of the diary through its entries also paradoxically undercuts the sense of passing time by highlighting its static quality.

> I can't answer for Iva but for me it is certainly true that days have lost their distinctiveness. There were formerly baking days and washing days and days that began events and days that ended them. But now they are undistinguished and all equal and it is difficult to tell Tuesday from Saturday. When I neglect to look carefully at the newspaper I do not know what day it is. If I guess Friday and then learn that it is actually Thursday, I do not experience any great pleasure in having won twenty-four hours. (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 57)

It is not merely to fill time that Joseph records entry in his diary but the diary itself becomes one possibility among others through which Joseph might find himself. The form and content of the journal *intime,* it is supposed, might well correspond to locating the form and content of the self. The motif of waiting and of the static texture of time that resounds throughout the novella is simultaneously undercut by the sense of the ceaseless flow of time. This magnifies the notion of "becoming" and of the hard fact that the self is always unfolding, sometimes revealing itself as this and at other instances

concealing itself. Joseph's search for himself is not a mere groping about in the dark. There is a faint understanding of the self that has been concealed. Hence the search is directed to recover that which is concealed. Bellow explains in an interview:

> In almost everything I write there appears a primordial person. He is not made by his education, nor by cultural or historical circumstances. He precedes culture and history. [...] there is something invariable, ultimately unteachable, native to the soul. A variety of powers arrive whose aim is to alter, to educate, to condition us. If a man gives himself over to total alteration I consider him to have lost his soul. If he resists these powers, forces of his own can come into play. (Roudané 1984: 276)

Joseph's entire journal, and the very fact that he writes in it about himself, is testimony to discovering the "primordial person". In parts, the journal is descriptive, at other points it becomes more penetrating in terms of interpretation of the implication of those descriptions toward the question "who am I?" The entire novel echoes with the idea that even though there is a vague impression of the self, that very impression itself remains to be found and unveiled. There are instances of the physical being, the historical being, the social being: Joseph as a citizen, Joseph as a husband, Joseph as an ex-member of a party, Joseph as an isolate. Yet, there is lurking behind all these various Joseph's "a Joseph" that transcends all of this. "Who is Joseph"? Despite the very many ways in which he can define himself he is unable to answer the basic question of who he is. This brings us to an episode he records in his diary. Joseph arrives at a bank to cash a cheque. Twice he is rejected, once because he lacks identification and the second time because the vice-president is unable to say for sure that there is a correspondence between the identity on his card and the Joseph who stands before him. Surely, this points to the central question that informs the entire narrative. It is the question of "who he is". "We are all drawn toward the same craters of the spirit — to know what we are and what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace"(Bellow [1944]; c2003: 112).

Joseph sets himself the task of searching for this self that overarches these various modes of Being. All this comes through with lucidity in a conversation Joseph has with his alter- ego or what he also refers to as the Spirit of Alternatives or *Tu as Raison Aussi*. Prompted by the inevitability of death, the conversation concerns the overwhelming question of the meaning of "what it means to be oneself".[8] Joseph is afraid to "make my own way toward clarity" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 122). He must decide if he is to be moulded by forces or if he must discover the more primordial and transcendental meaning of the self that is something beyond a mere sum total of these forces. He is weighed down by the freedom that is the self, in all of its infinite possibilities and discouraged by the incomprehension that such a freedom carries with it. This incomprehension of knowing once and for all, what or who the self is entices one to "run out, choose a master, roll over on our backs and ask for the leash" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 122). Joseph is not without the realization that Being transcends all these inauthentic enticements. There is something beyond mere definitions provided by the social and the physical descriptions of the self, there is something more to the self than that which becomes apparent through our acts and beliefs. Prompted by this awareness, Joseph falls prey to an outburst against an ex-comrade, Jimmy Burns, in a restaurant. The episode begins with Joseph waiting for Myron Adler to discuss the prospective of

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[8] Opdahl traces a shift in Bellow's treatment of the question "what it means to be". In doing so Opdahl separates the social man, from the metaphysical one. The argument that I propose, in this chapter, brings the social and the metaphysical together. Opdahl places Bellow's fiction in the space between the social realists and personalists. In the struggle to find "what man is", or "what it means to be oneself", Bellow's heroes move between the social and the metaphysical. Opdahl writes that for Bellow, "Man is a social creature, defined by his social loyalties, but he is also a biological, psychological, philosophical, and religious creature. [...] Bellow's hero yearns to join society but is held back by his psychology: he works hard to be "human" but is distracted by social pressures. [...] In the early novels he begins with the assumption that man is a social creature, and then passes to a metaphysical view; in *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog* he shifts from a personalist bias to a social one" (1967: 11).

finding a job. Whilst waiting for Myron Adler to arrive, Joseph recognizes Burns, a friend he had once known whilst he still belonged and subscribed to a political party. Joseph proceeds to make his acquaintance with Burns but is met with indifference when Burns pretends not to have recognized him. What follows is a diatribe by Joseph. In the course of his invective, it becomes apparent that Joseph's attack stems from the frustration of a sense of non-existence derived from the fact that Burns refuses to recognize him. This, argues Joseph, is a direct result of rejecting a party ideology according to which one may choose to define oneself. The fact that he does not belong to the party anymore puts his very identity into question for Jimmy Burns. His tirade is directed against Jimmy Burns but it is also as much, if not more, a launch against the notion of defining the self according to a set of principles that one subscribes to. He says, "When a man obeys an order like that he's helping to abolish freedom and begin tyranny" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 21). The freedom that Joseph refers to is the freedom to think, but also the freedom to be an authentic self, which lies beyond the confinements of any definition. But is not Jimmy Burns' espousal of the party similar in many ways to Joseph's commitment to the army? Do they not serve the same ends? Several pages after the Burns episode, Joseph writes in his journal: "If I were a little less obstinate, I would confess failure and say that I do not know what to do with my freedom" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 110). Then in his very last entry before he is to join the army he does indeed confess, "I am no longer to be held accountable for myself; I am grateful for that. I am in other hands, relieved of self-determination, freedom canceled" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 140). Both Burns and Joseph ultimately choose the same thing: the inflexibility of being caught within a system, the converse of a freedom that is the self. But, perhaps, like dissociating himself from the party that he once belonged to, the army too might

become in time only experimentation for Joseph. Like his many abandoned projects, the army too may well be abandoned by Joseph in the future. That is why the question of the self persists, sometimes revealing itself and at other moments becoming fainter that ever.[9]

Heidegger begins his exposition on Being in his *Being and Time* by focusing on the importance of the manner in which the question of Being is raised. He explains that the formulation of a question is of fundamental importance to any inquiry since it directs that which is to be answered. Further on, he writes that, as concerns Being, there is already a fuzzy understanding of Being which explains why human beings behave and act in the varied ways we do. There is then already an implicit understanding of what the limitations and possibilities of *Dasein* are, of how we exist within the world and amidst others in the world. However this needs to be clarified because, over time, *Dasein* becomes susceptible to an inauthentic existence which conceals the possibilities and limitations that *Dasein* truly is.

> Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way. [...] we always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being. We do not *know* what "Being" means. But even if we ask, "What *is* "Being"?", we keep within an understanding of the "*is*", though we are unable to fix conceptually what that "is" signifies. [...] *But this vague average understanding of Being is still a Fact.* (Heidegger 1962: 25)

For this "vague fact" to achieve clarity, Being must become transparent and this can happen only if the inquirer is the seeker himself, according to Heidegger. *Dasein* is the name given to the kind of Being who enquires about his own Being. One of the

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[9] Abbott (1980: 271–272) writes about a similar idea but links it to Bellow's narrative strategy. He writes, "If Bellow's own works do not attain the complexity of argument found in Dostoevsky, the continuing dilemma of their conclusions — their resistance to interpretation — may well be a conscious formal strategy aimed at this effect. By the way they end, they avoid a reduction to idea. Thinking in other words, is still in progress, and this, as Bellow states above, is part of the "art" ".

primordial modes of the Being of *Dasein* is found in this mode of enquiring "what it means to be".

One of the ways in which *Dasein* discloses itself, according to Heidegger, is through moods. *Dasein* is never to be understood as being severed from mood. Mood is a fundamental *existentiale* (Heidegger 1962: 173). Moods are not to be understood as mere psychical states. *Dasein* is always disclosed according to the mood in which *Dasein* finds itself. What is of significance is that moods are not merely ontically disclosive but ontologically disclosive as well. That is why Heidegger's explication on moods is not merely about the psychical state of mind that *Dasein* finds itself in. Moods reveal Being-in-the-world as a whole.[10] Heidegger writes: "*The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole and makes its possible first of all to direct oneself toward something*" (1962: 176). What Heidegger means by this is that moods limit *Dasein's* attention by making the whole of existence appear within a particular perspective. The world, being-with-others and *Dasein* are all revealed according to one of the many other possible modes of Being. Once again the world, objects in the world and others in it transcends the particular and specific mood which informs the directedness. *Dasein* always has some mood or the other. Heidegger's emphasis on moods undercuts any theoretical understanding and performs the task of destroying an abstract understanding of the world that the tradition of western

[10] Within this framework, it is interesting to note Opdahl's comments on Bellow's protagonist. He states, "Because Bellow's point of view is almost always that of his protagonist, the society he describes may be a reflection — and projection — of his hero's consciousness. His portrayal of it is often an exploration of the character who sees it" (1967: 10). Whilst Opdahl's observations may seem similar to my own approach, they strike at a more subjective interpretation. Opdahl's argument can be understood within the Cartesian framework. The argument that I posit, is in direct opposition to the Cartesian view, and hence, comes into conflict with Opdahl's viewpoint.

philosophy has usually resorted to. For Heidegger, instead, we are always already in some relation to the world. Any cognitive understanding comes after. *Dasein* finds itself "thrown" in the world and as a "thrown project", *Dasein* already has an understanding of the world. Moods disclose *Dasein* in its specific "thrownness".

In *Dangling Man*, one of the many ways in which Joseph's Being unfolds itself is brought about by the treatment of Joseph's relation to his surrounding physical environment. I am not by any means suggesting that a direct correspondence lies between Heidegger's exposition on moods and *Dasein*, on the one hand and the world of *Dangling Man*, on the other. What is being claimed however is that there is a rather clear indication of the way in which environment, Being and self-disclosure occur in the novella in an interestingly analogous manner to Heidegger's phenomenological explanation of Being-in-the-world. In his book on Saul Bellow's fiction, Irving Malin writes:

> Bellow is more interested in "metaphysical" questions than in mere craftsmanship, but he realizes that he can most effectively communicate his concerns through images. Theses images are not odd or forced. They are "natural"; they provide the "scene" in which his characters live. They make us experience the pains of existence. (1969: 85)

Malin is not specifically concerned with any sort of Heideggerean approach but his remarks draw attention to an important stylistic aspect of Bellow's fiction. The surrounding physical environment and the existing subject are enmeshed with each other. The reason I draw a parallel between this aspect of *Dangling Man* and Heidegger's theory on moods is because in both there is the notion that the way in which the world appears cannot be separated from the mood in which *Dasein* find itself in. In *Dangling Man*, the physical environment is amplified by the burdensome hostility of

Joseph's world. "Fog" makes it cumbersome for him (Joseph) to find his way, high winds threaten to throw him off his path as he walks along the roads, the onerous life that Joseph leads is reflected in the "street lamp bent over the curb like a woman who cannot turn homeward" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 68). The darkness and estrangement that has lodged itself in Joseph pervades the entire universe and as Joseph writes in his journal "the cold is part of the general malignancy" (Bellow [1944]; c2003:107). However, having said that, it is important to clarify that such an understanding does not imply that the world is a mere projection of the perceiving individual mind.

In his essay, "Saul Bellow: The Illusion of Environment" (1960), Ralph Freedman illustrates that there exists an opposition between Bellow's earlier works, in which he includes *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* (1947), and his later ones starting with *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). Freedman argues that, as opposed to the earlier works, in the later ones, world and protagonist become so intricately linked that the external world becomes a reflection of the hero's consciousness, but that, simultaneously the society or the external environment remains responsible for the hero's way of being. There is in Freedman's argument the sense of a mutual influence between hero and environment. However where he argues that this occurs only in the later works, I have illustrated that even in Bellow's earliest work, *Dangling Man*, there is already present the sort of dialectic between man and world such that both impinge upon one another. It can be argued that, because the novella uses the first person narrative voice, the environment becomes a direct reflection of Joseph's consciousness or inner world. However, the present study is precisely against such a dualistic understanding, in which the distance between subject and object are widened, so much so, that the world

becomes dependent upon, and a reflection of the subject's mind. It is impossible to say which one is a reflection of the other. Each magnifies the other so that Joseph's consciousness becomes not a reflection but an extension of the physical environment. But this is equally true of the physical world as well which can be understood to be an extension of Joseph's mind. In this sense, both are enmeshed with one another. Heidegger would argue that moods or the state-of-mind discloses *Dasein* in such a way that it reveals the way in which the world matters to *Dasein.* In *Dangling Man,* it is precisely such a disclosure that is illustrated: what is disclosed is the way in which the world matters to Joseph, and through this disclosure Joseph reveals himself to us.

* * *

What is to be said of the play between the universal and the particular? The universal and the particular find expression in *Dangling Man* primarily through the concept of Joseph's battle with notions of an essentialist versus an anti-essentialist conception of the self. This conflict is brought about by the vacillation between an inward turning to the self and its opposing counterpart of involvement with the world. There is an immense significance to the act of waiting in *Dangling Man.* It is not simply an existential waiting, neither is it simply a strategy to direct attention and to emphasize the static quality of time. Further, the waiting that Joseph is thrown into is magnified by his isolation. It is the waiting in solitariness that has heavy implications on the quest for the self. Joseph searches for the "essential self". The dissociation from external social factors weighs heavily on the quest to discover the essence of the self. In his book entitled *Saul Bellow* (1982) Robert R. Dutton argues that Joseph's final submission to the military accounts for the fact that it is impossible to exist by oneself in a world of which we are a part. It is from this world, argues Dutton, that any "self-meaning" and

"social meaning" is achieved. Against such a trend of taught, another critic, Opdahl (1967), argues that "Joseph's search for an autonomous self is a rejection of the assumption belonging to both the thirties and French Existentialism — that man is defined exclusively in external or historical terms" (1967: 31). Opdahl contends that *Dangling Man*, like many other of Bellow's other stories, are constructed around the relationship that they share with the social realism that was a product of the thirties. Further, he argues that Joseph's final defeat is not a consequence of his turning inward but because he is not able to do so as "he is nevertheless a part of his time ..." (1967: 31). Whilst Opdahl touches upon Joseph's failed attempt to locate an essential self, he attributes the failure to the fact that Joseph exists in a particular social milieu: that of the thirties. In shifting the centre of concentration from the historical setting to the ontological, my own argument stresses the search not so much for the "autonomous self" as opposed to the "essential self". The "autonomous self" implies an independent and unique self and is related more to the notion of identity. The "essential self", on the other hand, is related to that which lies beyond such an identity to the fundamental self which would prevail should identity disappear.

It is evident that Joseph resigned his job at the travel bureau in order to join the army. His intention to join the army stems from a sense of duty and guilt. But it is at this point in the narrative, that things begin to get complicated. Perhaps, there are other reasons too for his longing to join the army, and if these reasons are not manifest early on in the novella they become increasingly pronounced as the pages proceed. During his days of waiting, Joseph is confronted by the overwhelming question of "who he is". As the days pass by, his confinement intensifies. He is no more defined by his job, his identity is in

question, his ties with the outside world minimalise, he no longer reads books and thus is unable to imagine possibilities of being what he is not, his identity as a scholar of Enlightenment philosophy is put to test as he abandons his project, his relationship with his wife becomes estranged so that his identity as husband becomes something of a sham, his interactions with friends and family is tenuous and, as a result, his social identity and all that by which he has known himself is severely put to the test. In one of his many dialogues with the Spirit of Alternatives, it becomes clear that Joseph is tormented by the fact that all sense of the self becomes intangible when he divorces himself from ties to the world. So, to save himself from "the vanity of thinking that I can make my own way toward clarity" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 122), Joseph takes his place in the army. Let it not be supposed that I am making a case against the argument that the reason for Joseph's decision to join the army is motivated by his sense of duty to all humanity, to be in Joseph's own words a "good citizen". But this is not the only reason. Nor is the reason for joining the army purely a resort because the external world can provide him with the answer to who he is. Rather, I propose that he is quite aware that joining the army might provide a temporary relief from the burdens of "self-determination". But he knows that the relief will be merely transitory. The hesitation with which he announces, "Perhaps I could sound creation through other means. Perhaps" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 139), only serves to make apparent his feeling that this too could be yet another experiment that might end in failure. Yet the very fact that Joseph is immersed in this quest points to his conviction that there is an essence to the self that remains beyond grasp. That is why no amount of social ties, no amount of

periods of confinement, and no ideal construction will ever be able to provide him with a final and satisfactory answer.[11]

In the introductory chapter of his book, Opdahl contends that Bellow's vision is primarily a movement from the historical to the metaphysical; in that, he is concerned more with "the larger universal issue" (1967: 6). Whilst I agree with Opdahl's analysis, it is my contention that the movement in Bellow's *Dangling Man*, is not one from historical to universal. Rather the metaphysical and ontological question is at the centre of the work. The historical becomes one of the many possible ways of providing an answer to the question of selfhood. It is an experiment, like the many other ones, that Joseph juggles with. Joseph's struggle is an ontic-existentiell struggle. The ontological issue of the fundamental structures of Being are present as questions, as hesitations and as doubts. "In all principal ways, the human spirit must have been the same", (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 15) says the old Joseph. But what exactly is that essence of Being, is primarily the driving question that consumes Joseph. And it is precisely this questioning that makes Joseph's struggle an ontical one. This is because the ontical specificity lies in the fact that throughout the narrative Joseph is ontologizing. This chapter has attempted to understand the manner in which the ontical unfolds in the attempt to ontologize.

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[11] In a note, Opdahl explains his own position as regards the status of the "essential self" in Bellow's fiction. Opdahl makes mention of Marcus Klein's *After Alienaion* (1962, 1965), where Klein draws out a division that exits between the "simulataneous engagement and disengagement which is the characteristic movement of the novel in these past years". Opdahl clarifies his own views on Klein's statement and in specific reference to Bellow, he states, "Bellow's division lies deeper than the self's relation with society, I think, for the social is only one of the ways in which the hero may save or throw himself away. Clinging to the self, Bellow's protagonist would dissolve it in the biological, the spiritual, or the social — whatever he considers more purposeful than personality. Bellow seeks to end this conflict by imagining the Self which may enjoy all forms of engagement without loss of selfhood, and this search leads him to the essential or spiritual self" (1967:169).

Heidegger, in his analysis, explains that the experience of Being is determined by finitude or temporality. He argues that the issue of finitude has been forgotten both by the individual and by the history of philosophy. Finitude or our being-toward-death determines disclosure or the way in which essence is revealed in existence. This forgetfulness of finitude, both by the individual and by metaphysics, leads to nihilism. Heidegger uses nihilism in a very specific manner. For Heidegger, western philosophy and metaphysics has forgotten the question of Being. This is because the Being of beings for Heidegger is always showing itself, bursting forth from concealment into unconcealment, continuously and ceaselessly. But metaphysics has always tried to find an answer to the question of the Being of beings according to a calculated and value-assigning manner. This could be through science, modern technology, God, etc. In finding an answer to the question of Being, there has been a betrayal of the very question itself. For Being is that which is the source of mystery: a mystery that can never be grasped as a whole. This is because the problem of existence is such that it is always unfolding. Thus to reduce the question of Being to an answer or to the manipulation of the human mind, is to divorce it from existence. Thomas Sheehan explains in *Martin Heidegger: A Companion to the Philosophers* (2003):

> Today, Heidegger claims, the hidden core of disclosure is all but obliterated by the widespread conviction that the significance of entities consists in their universal availability for exploitation. Entities are understood to be, in principle, endlessly knowable by an ideally omniscient reason and totally dominable by a would-be omnipotent will. Here the meaningful presence of entities takes on its most extreme form: it means the unreserved presence and total submission of entities to human manipulation. Heidegger calls this state of affairs "nihilism" because the absence that dispenses meaningful presence — including today's presence-for-exploitation — now counts for nothing (*nihil).*(293)

In *Dangling Man*, Joseph is battling it out between just the sort of nihilism that Heidegger refers to, on the one hand, and between the intellect and reason, on the other.

The authority of reason is seriously put to the test by Joseph. Initially, Joseph refuses to submit to the failure of rational thought.[12] By and by, he discovers that his failure at building coherent theories to explain Being and the self are in many ways a reaction to the inflexibility of abstract thought. Instead, Joseph discovers that no system can provide a satisfactory answer to the question of the self because it lies beyond man's capacity for reason. In one of his many conversations with his alter-ego, he says "The human might is too small to pit against the unsolvables. Our nature, mind's nature is weak, and only the heart can be relied on" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 98). Thus, the nihilism that is constantly at bay in *Dangling Man* can be explained at least in part, to be the consequence of man's faith in reason and intellect. Yet at the same time, alienation is not the answer for Joseph. Instead he devotes himself to the search for the meaning of Being and to the quest for meaning, hoping and desperately believing in its possibility. Joseph's choice of joining the army is not to be seen as a surrender of the imagination. There are several instances in the journal where he does seem to be giving into the seduction of reason. At one point, he writes, "Out of my own strength it was necessary for me to return to the verdict for reason, in its partial inadequacy, and against the advantages of its surrender" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 68). It might even appear that he insists on the rationality that has so often failed him and his ultimate choice of joining the army is a surrender to reason itself. The induction into the army pronounces death not only in a literal and biological sense but in a metaphoric one as well. Reason, form,

[12] In this connection, Opdahl writes: "Joseph is an imaginative man trying to be rational, a rationalist overthrown by imagination. [...] His paralysis exemplifies the psychological danger of rationality. [...] Joseph associates the intellect with wilful control and the imagination or faith with a passive surrender of that control [...] he gives himself to society and possibly death because he is unable to give himself to imagination or faith" (1967: 44, 48). However, what Opdahl does not take into account is the fact that in joining the army, Joseph resists death. I will illustrate how Joseph resists death by joining the army later on in this chapter.

systems: all are modes of "a death of the self". They each seek to stifle the uncontainable vastness of the self. Yet, Joseph's choice cannot and should not be understood as a mere failure. He is not defeated. Death here is to be understood metaphorically as well. The death of the self brings with it simultaneously the promise of a re-birth and that is why Joseph's quest does not end with his enrollment into the army. Rather it can be viewed as a new beginning. It is significant that his chronicles start during the month of December and his last entry is made in the month of April. The association with December, wintry and foggy, dark and barren, is starkly opposed to April, a time of re-birth and renewal of life. Perhaps then, it is a metaphoric death that awaits Joseph.

Heidegger's analysis of temporality and finitude bring into focus *Dasein* as a Being-toward-death. Death is the ultimate possibility for *Dasein* and as the ulimate possibility it is understood as a possibility that ends all other possibilities. Heidegger explains:

> It is the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself toward anything, of every way of existing. In the anticipation of this possibility it becomes "greater and greater"; that is to say, the possibility reveals itself to be such that it knows no measure at all, no more or less, but signifies the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence. Being-toward-death is the anticipation of a potentiality-for-Being of that entity whose kind of Being is anticipation itself. (1962: 307)

Dasein must understand itself as a Being that is always disclosed in anticipation, or as a Being always already ahead-of-itself. This understanding arrives with the awareness of *Dasein's* finitude. *Dasein* is "thrown" into possibilities and hence is always and already "thrown" into its own death which is the final possibility that brings all other possibilities to a grinding halt. But because being "thrown" into possibilities is the condition from which *Dasein* might engage in purposeful action and might disclose itself through such action, temporality becomes the meaning of Being. *Dasein* is hence

always becoming its own death. In this recognition, lie both, the fact of one's own mortal becoming and the fact of one's own mortality. Heidegger is also quick to add that death does not simply belong to *Dasein* in a way that it belongs to every other *Dasein*. Death individualizes *Dasein*.

Does Joseph in *Dangling Man* take a hold of his mortality in an authentic way? It is very evident that Joseph is haunted by finitude and mortality. Joseph is constantly plagued by a sense of anxiety over death. Clayton (1968), argues that Bellow's characters are weighed down by a sense of guilt which stems from the belief that they are undeserving of life. Death becomes a sort of retribution or punishment for the characters. Clayton explains:

> Perhaps anxiety over death isn't so important as Bellow thinks, but what matters is that he sees it as central to his characters' psychology.[...]Bellow's defense of Man in related to his fear of death. The fallen man is analogous to Fallen Man. Bellow's heroes must defend Man because they have the guilty need to defend themselves. It is because they feel worthy of death that they must proclaim possibilities for the life of Man. (1968: 101)

Clayton's analysis focuses on the fear of death in Bellow's work by relating it to guilt. He argues that in order to defend his selfhood Joseph must ultimately reconcile his fear with death. In order to escape death Bellow's characters must find reasons "to be". The argument moves in a cyclic pattern. Joseph must find peace with his own mortality. In doing so, he will find peace with humanity at large because he flees not simply his death but also the death of all others. But in order to find peace with humanity he must in the first place "reconcile himself to death".[13] The anxiety over death that Clayton's study focuses upon is not so much an anxiety as it is a fear. Death is feared because the characters feel that it is what they are worth of. And hence, in order to prove this wrong,

[13] For an in-depth account of Clayton's analysis see: Clayton 1968: 97–101.

the characters must find reasons "to be". But there is also an anxiety related to death. That anxiety can be explained by the fact that the death of the self means a renewed struggle to find what it means "to be". But this is a metaphoric death of the self. It simultaneously provides hope but because of the hope it must necessarily result in anxiety.

My own analysis in this chapter does not follow this trajectory of thought. I relate Joseph's anxiety over death to issues of an authentic versus an inauthentic manner of understanding human finitude. More importantly my argument will illustrate how this anxiety over death that Joseph is constantly engulfed by has to do with the undefined self.

Joseph in *Dangling Man* is surrounded by images and events of either death itself or of images that in some way symbolize death. His landlady has been ill for the past three months and as Joseph says is not "expected to live long" ([1944]; c2003:8). In one incident he recalls a picture of his grandfather which was taken shortly before his death, at another time in the narrative, when he is on his way to meet Iva on the occasion of their sixth anniversary he becomes witness to a man sprawled on the street who might have been dead. He dreams about death and dying and is even re-visited by the vision of the dead man lying sprawled on he road. These events and memories are not merely incidental and do not occur merely in passing through the pages of the journal. Rather, their re-telling, their recounting and their descriptions are suffused with a tone of unease and fear, of the anticipation of his own inevitable death and with trepidation. More importantly, it is through these episodes that Joseph's own view on mortality finds expression. For Joseph, death implies cessation of all choice and in this sense his own

views on death strike an obvious similarity to Heidegger's analysis. Where for Heidegger, death is the ultimate possibility that cancels all other possibilities, for Joseph death is "the abolition of choice" (Bellow [1944]; c2003:107). What does it mean to say that he takes hold of his mortality authentically? When Joseph talks about death he personifies it as a hunter and a murderer seeking and awaiting for the moment when he might attack. It is true that, in like fashion to Heidegger, he understands that once *Dasein* "is" it is always already dying. From the day we exist "we know we are sought and expect to be found. [...]Who does not know him, the one who takes your measure in the street or on the stairs ..." (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 88). Further, death to Joseph means inexistence and the end of all choice. Not only does it mean that the individual no longer exists but that the individual self is no longer able to comport itself and take hold of a choice. But what of the words "choice" and "possibility", that are used by Joseph and Heidegger respectively? Do they entail a similar meaning? Whether they mean essentially the same thing cannot be said. What can be said with some amount of certainty however is that there is a point of convergence of meaning in the ways that they are used. Joseph does write about the annihilation of choice that death brings with it. And it can be understood in a Heideggerean sense. "Choice" means alternatives just like possibility does in Heidegger's analysis. He does also talk about the individualizing of the self that death brings with it. This happens according to Joseph because death shatters the separate autonomous self. For it is whilst thinking of death that Joseph writes "I am forced to pass judgments on myself and to ask questions I would far rather not ask: 'What is this for?' and 'What am I for?'" (Bellow [1944]; c2003: 89). The question "what am I for" can provide the answer to the question "what am I?" And it is this particular question — "what am I for?" — which is the root of his many

experiments: the answer lies in discovering the purpose and consequently the meaning of Being. He must first find a self to preserve and maintain which death in time can destroy. The anxiety over death that Joseph is confronted by stems from the lack of such a self.

Saul Bellow would shirk away from being labeled a philosopher. His experimentation with existentialism and other philosophical, religious and intellectual thought is more than evident in his works. His fiction and essays are a profound expression and examination of ontological, moral, intellectual, social and psychological questions. *Dangling Man* pursues all of the above concerns relentlessly and ends without a definitive answer to the several daunting questions that it raises. But that precisely is the point of the novella. The failure to provide an answer is not a narrative flaw: rather it is the main intention of the protagonist who constructs the narrative. Thus, to state emphatically at the end of my analysis that Bellow's work is Heideggerean or phenomenological would betray the very ideology upon which the work rests. The mystery of the self that torments Joseph is for Bellow, the mystery of mankind. At his Library of Congress Address, Bellow says:

> Modern writers sin when they suppose that they *know*, as they conceive that physics *knows*. [...] The subject of the novelist is not knowable in any such way. The mystery increases, it does not grow less as types of literatures wear out. It is...Symbolism or Sensibility wearing out, and not the mystery of mankind. (Bellow in Clayton 1963: 249–250)

In identifying convergences between Joseph's view and a Heideggerean or phenomenological perspective, the divergences cannot be ignored. In like fashion then, the argument in this chapter concludes without an authoritative theory about the

ideology into which *Dangling Man* should be inserted. Joseph, the man who dangles, transcends this effort.

Conclusion

The Resistance to Definitions: Philosophy, Literature and the Self

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> If I try to seize this self of which I feel sure, if I try to define and to summarize it, it is nothing but water slipping through my fingers. I can sketch one by one all the aspects it is able to assume, all those likewise that have been attributed to it, this upbringing, this origin, this ardor or these silences, this nobility or this vileness. But aspects cannot be added up.
> --- *An Absurd Reasoning*, Albert Camus (1955)

> Nothing holds, nothing is constant nor sure in my life. I resemble and differ in turn; there is no living creature so foreign to me that I cannot be sure of approaching. I do not yet know, at the age of thirty-six, whether I am miserly or prodigal, temperate or greedy. . . or rather, being suddenly carried from one to the other extreme, in this very balancing I feel that my fate is being carried out. Why should I attempt to form, by artificially imitating myself, the artificial unity of my life? Only in movement can I find my equilibrium.
> ----*Journal*, vol 1: 1889-1913, André Gide 24 August 1905 (2000)

It is not without reason that several works of imaginative literary fiction that are preoccupied with and deal with issues of consciousness, being and the self are largely written in the first person. The motif of a single human voice telling a story and, in doing so, grappling with the notions of being and consciousness, is not at all rare. Yet the use of the first person voice carries with it implications intricately bound up with the problematics of understanding the self and consciousness. In *Literature Considered as Philosophy,* Knight remarks:

> Philosophy, religion and perhaps art are the story of man's attempt to become God. The history of his effort to forget that, attached indissolubly to a given time and place, it is not in his power to attain to knowledge true in all places and for all time. The point of view, for instance that of the Platonic Ideas or of scientific law, from which the universe is visible as a whole, can only be that of God, that of a Being not subject to the limitations imposed by man's estate, which is to be "situated". One of the most inveterate traits of human thought is this ambition to "see itself from a distance", not to be compromised by the fragile clay with which it must enter into association. (1957: 69)

The first person authorial voice, however, immediately undercuts any such attempt on the part of man to "see itself from a distance". Consciousness is a deeply first-person matter. How then, we might ask, can any understanding of consciousness and the self be possible at all? That is, how can one provide an objective, third-person perspective on it? Novels that seek to penetrate issues of the self and consciousness transport the reader into the mind of the characters, into their thoughts and perceptions, their sensations and emotions, into the way in which they understand themselves and the world around them. The more they do so, the more private and personal the narrative becomes. But it would be wrong to suggest that the world recedes into the background. The world is apprehended through the consciousness of a particular individual mind. The particular supersedes the universal. The individual overtakes the objective. How then does literary fiction address the concerns that it has so thoroughly been immersed in through the ages: those of being, consciousness and the self? This thesis has demonstrated that imaginative literary fiction in the first person is itself an expression of the ontical. Through narrative, characters "ontologise" about what it means to be. Literature is an expression of the manifestation of the ontical. And because it involves interpretation it inherently contains within itself a hermeneutic project. But it is distinct from a philosophical treatise.

A brief reflection on prominent neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's views serves to highlight the link between fiction and the self. Damasio makes a distinction between the "core self" and the "autobiographical self" (1999), which he has also referred to as the "novelistic self". The core self is the present-moment self, manifested through

the brain's constant and ever-changing interaction with objects and the world. But there is another self: the novelistic self which arches forward and reaches backward in time, thus making connections and sequences. This self is a created self and is thus a product of the imagination. "The brain spins a narrative," Damasio says, "and that's what creates the self" (1999).[1] This thesis encapsulates the complex dynamics of the relationship between the present-moment self and the created coherent self by bringing together the notions of existence and essence and the ontical and ontological in philosophical enquiry and literary fiction.

One of the primary objectives of this thesis has been to understand, through an analysis of texts, both of a literary and a philosophical nature, whether or not imaginative literature and/or philosophy are in any way better equipped to express either the ontical or the ontological. Can it be argued that philosophy takes as its task the ontological as opposed to literature? Do both literature and philosophy grapple with questions of existence and essence? Or is one better suited to explore the ramifications of either of the Heideggerean categories of the ontical versus the ontological? As an answer to the questions posed above, what can be said with conviction is that both literary fiction and philosophical texts wrestle with the ontical

[1]Damasio explains that "[T]he two kinds of consciousness correspond to two kinds of self. The sense of self which emerges in core consciousness is the **core self,** a transient entity, ceaselessly re-created for each and every object with which the brain interacts. Our traditional notion of self, however, is linked to the idea of identity and corresponds to a nontransient collection of unique facts and ways of being which characterize a person. My term for that entity is the **autobiographical self.** The autobiographical self depends on systematized memories of situations in which core consciousness was involved in the knowing of the most invariant characteristics of an organism's life — who you were born to, where, when, your likes and dislikes, the way you usually react to a problem or a conflict, your name, and so on. I use the term autobiographical memory to denote the organized record of the main aspects of an organism's biography. The two kinds of self are related ..." (Damasio 1999: 17–18)

and the ontological.[2] What is uncertain is if either (literature or philosophy) deals more skilfully with the specified categories (ontic and ontological). An easy answer would simply state that because literature particularises it is better suited to an exploration of the ontical, of notions of existence, whilst philosophy deals with foundational claims and concepts and is hence directed at the ontological and at the notion of essence. But there is much to consider before accepting such an answer. Firstly, such a claim would entail an essentialising of both literature and philosophy and what has been established throughout this thesis is the problem that besets any such essentialist understanding of either of the two enterprises.

There are further problems associated with any such assertion. Knight, for instance, makes the argument that philosophy has become a case of the particular much like literature. Knight discusses the abandonment of the general in favour of the particular by more contemporary philosophical thought. He writes:

> Existence might almost be defined as intercourse with the particular. We live in a particular house and wear particular clothes; but particular things are precisely what philosophy will have nothing to do with, because they are inexplicable.[...] It is thanks to Husserl that the particular has at last become an object of philosophical speculation. [...] The philosophical prestige once enjoyed by abstracts has been given to the concrete. (1957: 27)

Knight contends that if philosophy is concerned with "truth" and if there has been a growing emphasis of "truth" as being part of existence, then philosophy has entered the terrain of literature. The status of universal truth claims has been seriously shaken and truth is now individual, constantly unfolding and never complete. Knight's objective is directed to prove that literature has overtaken philosophy or that

[2] Samuel Johnson remarks that: "In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species". Johnson's remark immediately draws into focus the idea that literary texts are not simply about the lives of fictional characters but reveal that which is fundamental about human beings. (Johnson 1978 vol 7: 62)

literature is philosophy. It is precisely with such a standpoint that this thesis takes issue. The argument that the face of philosophical enquiry has changed, that the objectives and methods of analytic philosophy no longer hold in the continental current, are acceptable and even true. The argument that literature is philosophical holds perfectly well. But to say that literature and philosophy entail one and the same thing is erroneous and even destructive. Further, several problem arise with Knight's interpretation of Husserl. What he means by the "particular" is unclear and, if he does imply that Husserl is mainly concerned with the particular, he is not completely correct. For Husserl, philosophy meant moving beyond the particular and toward the universal or the essential. The prestige of the universal in philosophy has not been overtaken by the particular; rather, Husserl posits that it is through the particular that one might arrive at the essential. This is the task of Husserlian phenomenology.

Having said that, one is immediately confronted with the problem of establishing the boundaries between philosophy and literature. Disciplinary boundaries are at best vague and constantly being disputed. Continental philosophy is for the most part taught in literature departments. Deconstruction, for instance, is a perfect example. Despite its philosophical origins, it informs the curriculum in courses on literary studies in much of the Anglo-Saxon world. Further, hermeneutics, which is a philosophical technique, provides tools for the interpretation of literary texts. As has been discussed, the very notion of "truth" and "objectivity" that have been the pillars of the philosophical enterprise are being rigorously questioned by philosophers themselves. There are cross-overs in the themes that literature and philosophy both engage in. The importance of rhetoric and persuasion is one cross-over that both philosophers and literary writers are well acquainted with. The role of imagination

in the production of both literary and philosophical texts has been much discussed. Husserl himself alluded to it in an essay called "The Origin of Geometry" (Husserl 1989), when he discussed the notion of "free variation in imagination"[3] as a tenet of phenomenology. In "free variation", we attempt to arrive at the essential attributes of an object by imaginatively introducing variations on the object itself. The aim of *eidetic reduction* is to arrive at the essential features of that which is in question. Do these commonalities provide sufficient ground to suggest that literary production and philosophical enterprise amount to the same thing? Simply the fact that there is no established and stable definition that can divide the two disciplines from one another does not provide reason enough to suggest that philosophy and literature are one and the same. And it is this very fact that accounts for the many claims forwarded by critics who assert that literature is philosophy rather than philosophical.

In *Finding a Replacement for the Soul: Mind and Meaning in Literature and Philosophy* (2004), Brett Bourbon argues:

> That the study of literature is philosophical does not mean that literary history should now become philosophy. Rather, if there is a question about what something means and if, as I will argue, it is not clear what kind of thing a literary text is, then we are stuck doing philosophical work whether we like it or not. (2004: xi)

The search for the meaning of literature, or what it is that makes a text a work of literature, is a task that is philosophical. The "what is?" leads it to be so. What is evident is that the relationship between the two disciplines of literature and

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[3] Husserl explains the method and implication of "free variation in imagination". He writes that: "Whenever we consider it, we find ourselves with the self-evident capacity to reflect — to turn to the horizon and penetrate it in an expository way. But we also have, and know that we have, the capacity of complete freedom to transform, in thought and phantasy, our human historical existence and what is there exposed as its life-world. And precisely in this activity of free variation, and in running through the conceivable possibilities for the life-world, there arises, with apodictic self-evidence, an essentially general set of evidence going through all the variants; and of this we can convince ourselves with truly apodictic certainty" (1989: 177).

philosophy is a highly complicated one, marked by striking convergences yet retaining conspicuous divergences.[4] This thesis has traversed both: points where the two meet and points of departure. The texts that have been examined demonstrate that through certain themes and concepts literature and philosophy meet. It is not through exclusion of themes and effects that the two fields differ, rather it is through their differences on the emphasis of these that they diverge. The meaning effects that they generate are intricately tied up with the ways in which language, expression, imagination and cognition are variously experimented with in fiction and in phenomenology. What then are the implications of the argument in this thesis for the ancient quarrel inaugurated by Plato? The argument in this thesis posits that it is incorrect to argue that philosophy has become literature or that literature is now philosophy. Rather the interconnections between the two are constantly evolving and metamorphosing. These interconnections are manifested as literary theory, the philosophy of literature, philosophy in literature, hermeneutics and literature and so on. What must not be forgotten is that all of the above practices must in the first instance acknowledge the existence of literature and philosophy, not literature or philosophy. Interdisciplinary studies work around such a paradox. In fact, it is not a stretch of imagination to suggest that interdisciplinary studies rest on a central

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[4] According to Silverman, interest in the inter-relation between literature and philosophy is a fairly recent development. Hugh J.Silvermann argues that: "Twenty years ago there would hardly have been any interest in philosophy and literature. Yes, philosophy, yes, literature, but not philosophy and literature. The development of philosophy and literature as an international enterprise is the inscription of a relation that cannot be reduced to one side or the other. Philosophy tries to colonize literature through the philosophy of literature. Literature tries to become significant by becoming philosophical. Philosophy tries to link up literature with the other arts — as in Aristotle (epic, comedy, tragedy), or Horace (poetry is like a painting), or Lessing (poetry vs. painting), or Hegel (in a whole system of arts), or Sartre (prose writing vs. poetry writing), or Dewey (art as experience), or Foucault (the discursive practice of the arts). The muses mark differences and form a pantheon of aesthetic gods. And literature is just one of them. Literature wants to be theoretical and so it invents (in the twentieth century) literary theory. Literary theory is taken to be a challenge to literary criticism rather than the supplement that it was intended to be. But literary theory becomes a close cousin to philosophy and their marriage brings the pleasures and pains of all incestuous relations. And yet they elaborate and develop their textual practices in the interstices of one another" (Silverman 1994).

paradox. Definitions and boundaries attached to disciplines are inescapable but so is the fact that these very definitions and boundaries are undecidable. They become the site of skirmishes and renegotiations. The history of philosophy and literature is a site of constant dialogue, always in a process of rewriting and re-examining.

Most critics and scholars working in the field of the much disputed relationship between literature and philosophy tend to focus on one of the following: the value of literary examples in philosophy; whether or not philosophy has become literature and vice-versa; and the role of moral philosophy in imaginative fiction. But there has been a considerable lack of attention to understanding the relationship between the two fields of thought in the light of how in fact these differences and similarities impact on the treatment of consciousness and the self. Further, there has not been any detailed study on relating the treatment of consciousness and the self to the particular and the universal and thereby to the notions of essence and existence and more specifically to the ontical and the ontological. As opposed to several studies which start off by postulating differences or similarities and then go on to illustrate these with recourse to particular texts, the argument in this thesis works backwards. In the first instance, it examines how consciousness, being and the self is expressed and analysed in texts from the two fields and thereby seeks to understand whether or not there is sufficient ground to state whether or not literature is more amenable to an examination of either the ontic or the ontological and essence or existence, as contrasted with philosophy.

Another common approach that scholars have adopted involves the explication of certain philosophical concepts and the juxtaposition of literary examples to support

those philosophical tenets. For instance, one might take the example of the concept of "thrownness" in Heidegger and juxtapose Beckett's *Act Without Words* (1958) in which the central actor is repeatedly flung onto the stage without any control over the surrounding in which he finds himself. Following such a method, merely serves to illustrate the way in which literature is an imaginative expression of philosophical concepts.[5] The intention in this kind of a study is to highlight the parallels between a said literary text or writer and its philosophical counterpart. However, illustrating parallels serves to identify how concepts in philosophy are expressed imaginatively in fiction. The argument in the present thesis has attempted to demonstrate, instead, certain paradigmatic differences in the ways in which certain core concepts (in this case consciousness and being) are treated in literary texts and philosophical ones. It does not claim that literature be understood as an application of philosophical concepts and terminology. To do so, would in some ways suggest a one-sided relation whereby literary texts are used in order imaginatively to explain philosophical statements and terms or the way in which philosophy works with the aid of literary examples.[6] There is a distinct difference in saying that much is gained

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[5] For instance, Lance St. John Butler in his study draws parallels between the thought of Beckett , Sartre, Hegel and Heidegger's *Being and Time* writes, "Returning to our original point we now find that we must rephrase the question thus: Is it true that Beckett tests by literary exemplification the philosophical theses Heidegger proposes about people and worlds? Answering this will involve selecting the main theses of *Being and Time* and seeing if they appear in Beckett" (1984: 9). This sort of a study seeks to explain the relation between literature and philosophy as a relation of "submission". In this case literature is submitted to a philosophical reading.

[6] Bourbon writes that: "I demonstrate the dependence of any literary theory or interpretation on a set of philosophical assumptions, metaphors, and theories of meaning and mind" (2004: 4). For Bourbon the word "philosophy" is used in a specific context. He understands philosophy as "a mode of self-reflection upon and criticism of the words we use and the claims we make". Hence for him "The *study* of literature is, however, a form of philosophy". Bourbon elaborates on the way in which he uses the word "philosophy". My understanding of literature and philosophy is a different one. Where Bourbon states that literature is a form of philosophy, I state that literature can be philosophical but not necessarily philosophy. To understand this is fundamental to my argument in this thesis. I have explained this in detail in the first chapter of this thesis. Further, throughout this thesis I have made the case against Bourbon's assertion of the dependence of literary theory on a set of philosophical assumptions. It is unclear in what context Bourbon now uses the term "philosophical". Does he mean

by bringing philosophy and literature together, as opposed to suggesting that philosophy and literature are doing the same thing in order to achieve the same goals.

* * *

I shall now turn my attention to the question that was raised throughout the thesis. What can be said, finally, about the different ways in which philosophy and literature grapple with notions of the self and consciousness, as we approach the end of the study undertaken in this thesis? At this point I wish to draw into the argument a passage by Bourbon. He begins by asking:

> *What does it mean to be human, to be a human person, with our capacities and our fate?* How could we answer such a question? Maybe with Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the works of Aristotle, or Bach's Mass in B Minor. If this question can only be answered, however poorly, with representative representations, it is not a question at all, but a riddle, a riddle we might answer with our own lives as well. This riddle, however, is not like the riddle of the Sphinx, for example. To know the solution to the Sphinx riddle, you have to know *how* it is a solution. If you are simply told that man is the solution, but do not understand why this is an answer, you do not understand the riddle. [...] The riddle "What does it mean to be human?" is not like this. One could call it instead a riddle of the enveloping facts. If in asking this riddle I situate the meaning of "human" by various comparisons with primates, fish, kinds of ivy, and protozoa, then I understand the riddle in a different way than if I frame "human" by a list of angels or demigods. Which of these sets of descriptions are the relevant ones? A riddle of the enveloping of facts is a riddle about such descriptions, if only we knew, however, what would count as the relevant facts in this case. So maybe it is also a riddle of fictions, not only of facts. (2004: 20)

The riddle that Bourbon discusses is answered differently, within different frameworks and conceptual systems and hence yields, each time that it is raised, a different answer. Further, the riddle itself is presented differently in literature and in philosophy. It is constrained by the limits necessarily imposed by philosophy and literature as disciplines. But therein lies the mystery of the riddle itself. It is not merely that there is no answer to the riddle but the fact that the riddle rests in part on

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philosophical in the sense of what he earlier in the above quotation defines as philosophy? If that is the case then literature is philosophical, not a form of philosophy.

the way that it is posed. The riddle is hence rife with confusions and assumptions, defences and attacks, assertions and doubts.

Ontology in literature is in many ways approached differently from ontology in philosophy. Literary fiction deals with the psychology of the characters in a fictional world, and the means by which these characters and through them the readers make sense of their own world and of themselves. Philosophical texts do not directly create fictional worlds and fictional characters in order to portray the inner psychology of the characters in them. Yet, on the other hand, there is a similarity which cannot be ignored. Literary fiction ultimately does deal with conceptual claims, conceptual claims about the self and the world, about the role of language in understanding ourselves and the world we live in, about who or what a human being is, about whether or not the self is a sum of its actions, intentions and beliefs. Philosophy weaves its own form of fictions through the use of metaphors and language games, through the use of literary examples, through the very assumptions from which it takes off.

What is easily contestable is the claim put forth by theorists and scholars who suggest that contemporary philosophy is unlike traditional analytic philosophy, in that it no longer universalises. However, I contend that the word "universal" is still retained in philosophy, even in existentialism, which is hailed as a philosophy that particularises. "Universalising" here, as I have previously stated, does not imply the formulation of truth claims. In my thesis, I have used it to point to the terminology adopted by philosophers, even existentialists, in order to put forth their philosophies, which in fact are often disguised forms of truth claims. "Anguish", "dread",

"freedom", "awareness of death" are examples of the terminology used by existentialist philosophers in the explication of their philosophical systems. The use of this common set of terms does have an implication on the general ideas and world-view proposed by these philosophers. This is universalism. And yet, it still holds that no fundamental and objective truth claim has been proposed. Philosophy still has not discarded "universals" in this sense.

Yes, literature and philosophy are engaged with certain common themes: ontology, epistemology, metaphysics. These themes are dealt with discursively and imaginatively. They are not the sole property of either literature or philosophy, which is what makes them common to both in the first place. Characters in works of fiction are ontologically different in that they are imagined. The notion of the Being of a fictional character is deeply rooted in language and through language to the actions that they perform or are a part of. They are conditioned by the limits of imagination both on the part of the reader as well as the author. This must be an important consideration in the understanding of ontology in fiction. The reader of a fictional work is simultaneously within the work of fiction and without. He or she imaginatively inhabits the world of the character in the novel but is also consistently aware that the inhabiting is an imaginative one. Questions of epistemology, ontology and metaphyics in fictional texts straddle between imagined world and the real physical one. But because the relation between what is imagined and the real physical world is what fiction is all about, literary fiction is able to penetrate the particular and arrive at the possible. Heideggerean ontology is, after all, about transcending "what is", in order to arrive at "what can be", or the realm of the

possible. Further, within the Husserlian framework, it is through the imagination that one is able to arrive at the essence of things.[7]

But what about the characters in the works of fiction that have been the object of this study? Do the principal voices and characters in the the three literary texts that I have chosen for the purposes of the present thesis, grapple with the issues at the heart of ontology? The ontic or the ontological: that is the question. Existence or essence? The question itself now becomes problematic. At the end of each fictional text that has been examined in this study, there is always the suggestion of an incompleteness. The self is always unfinished. The waves lash on, someone is drafted into the army and the re-telling of an episode reaches a close but the last page is read with an anticipation of what might follow. The narrative in each of the texts does end but the text itself evades closure. Episodes might be resolved and attain the semblance of coming to an end but the the narrative itself could carry on, and hence the symbolism of the waves advancing and receeding in Woolf's text (1931), the allusion to death which might well provide the possibility of a re-birth of the self in Bellow's *Dangling Man* (1944), and the the image of the yacht in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) sails on. The narrative structure of the literary texts mirrors the self that is never complete and continually re-interpreted, always aspiring to wholeness yet constantly falling short of this aspiration, and hence perennially in search of itself .

[7] It is interesting to note Iris Murdoch's comment with regard to this. On the subject of imagination, in a similar manner to Husserl, she writes that: "Truth is not an easy or simple concept. Critical terminology imputes falsehood to an artist by using terms such as fantastic, sentimental, self-indulgent, banal, grotesque, tendentious, unclarified, wilfully obscure and so on. The positive aspect of the avoidance of these faults is a kind of transcendence: the ability to see other non-self things clearly and to criticise and celebrate them freely and justly. This is a place for a definition of freedom, and for a distinction between trapped egoistic *fantasy*, and *imagination* as a faculty of transcendence" (1993: 86).

In the case of ontology, hermenutics and its relationship with philosophy and literature there has been a consistent argument put forth by critics in the field as to why literature and philosophy (ontology and hermeneutics in particular), must be understood as essentially the same thing. The argument is constructed in the following manner: Ontology is itself about interpretation and because it is so, it cannot be understood as a system or a coherent theory. This is what literature is all about: interpretation. Hence ontology, hermenutics and literature are one and the same.

Some amount of truth may be granted to the proposition that literature and philosophy (ontology) are marked by their resistance to theory. But to suggest that both are based on pure interpretation and reading is to miss the point. That would imply the contingency of all knowledge, yet it must be admitted that any interpretation is informed by a set of conditions that might remain stable through history and time. Philosophy is clearly informed by this search. To suggest that the existentialist is faced with dread and anxiety in the face of nothingness holds true through time. What man does in the face of such anxiety is what is left open. There is some indication here of a coherent theory. In this sense, philosophy cannot simply be equated to pure interpretation. But neither can literature. The fictional world that is created is built upon a set of conditions, but perhaps the difference lies in the fact that these conditions are not explicitly stated. That is why several interpretations can co-exist. But literature is not pure interpretation and that is why with fictional texts there are certain interpretations that are more plausible than others. In *Resistance to Theory,* Paul de Man discusses the notion that "literature is not a transparent message" (1986: 15). De Man argues that the reading of a literary text is never

complete and that its signification can never be fixed. Whilst on the one hand literary theory aspires to a method or a system of understanding, it simultaneously carries with it the awareness that no one conceptual system can be followed in reading a work of literature. De Man thus argues that literary theory inherently resists theorisation because of this axis of unpredictability and possibility that remains an essential to literary texts.

Would it be possible to suggest, then, that it is perhaps here that the difference in literature and philosophy lies? Perhaps, one could argue the case for a difference, based on De Man's argument that literature and literary theory cannot be amalgamated with the philosophical enterprise. And hence, if one were to use either, Nietzsche, Kant, Hegel or any one of the numerous names in the philosophical tradition in a reading of literature, it would still not provide reason to claim that the literary text works in a similar manner to the philosophical one, or that a particular writer or text is either Nietzschean, Hegelian, or Kantian. For to do so, would imply the fixing of signification and the elimination of the factor of unpredictability.

It might be worth asking why the relation between these two fields in particular is fraught with so much confusion. Philosophy has tried relentlessly to lay claim to literature. Literature has ceaselessly aspired to be philosophy. The two fields have continually wrestled with each other, at times defining themselves against one other, at other times merging with one another. The relationship between the two is marked by a continuous play of accommodation, dominance, subversion, marriage and divorce. One might ask, why literature and why philosophy? Instead, why not look at science or astronomy, biology or physics? Literature relies on similar theories of

metaphysics, mind and ontology as philosophy does, and thus comes under direct confrontation with philosophy. Each contests the other by raising the questions they do and searching for the answers. Often each does so with the hope that the other will fail.

Instead, what must be emphasised is that our theories, judgements and assumptions are constantly challenged by new ones. One way in which this challenge can be brought alive is by bringing together different fields of thought. Varied conceptual frameworks of thought provide us with multiple ways of seeing, because they raise the same issues in radically different ways, and, because the meaning effects they generate are informed by the manner in which the questions are raised. Literary fiction is constantly aware of its own fictitious nature. And because it is so, what it proposes is always one possibility from a range of several others. That is why it will always be tied to the "particular" as opposed to a philosophical text. One must not simply dismiss the importance of the manner of raising a question as something trivial. Rather, the manner in which a question is raised proves to be of significance: it is the question that often determines the answer, the unanswerable, that which can be known and the limits to what can be known.

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