Heidegger's Argument for Fascism

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Abstract: Heidegger's ontological views, his observations about liberalism and fascism, and his evaluative commitments are three premises of an argument for fascism. The ontological premise is that integrated wholes and objects of a creator or user's will are ontologically superior, as *Being and Time* suggests in discussing Being-a-whole, creating art, and using equipment. The social premise is that fascist societies are wholes integrated by dictatorial will, while liberal societies are looser aggregates of free individuals, as Heidegger describes in his 1930s seminars. The evaluative premise, shared with the medieval tradition and expressed in his notebook remarks about war, is that ontological superiority makes things better. The conclusion that fascism is better than liberalism should be rejected along with the evaluative premise.

1. From ontology to fascism

Martin Heidegger is famous for his ontological views, and infamous for supporting Adolf Hitler.[1] Many scholars see no connection between these disparate ideas.[2] Kris McDaniel's (2017) account of Heidegger's ontological pluralism helps to reveal the connection. McDaniel's account assigns some things higher degrees of Being than others, giving these "ontologically superior" (4) things more existence and reality than others, which are "ontologically degenerate" (141).[3] For example, "an integrated whole is more real than its proper parts, whereas a mere aggregate is less real than its proper parts" (233-234). Artifacts may also gain higher degrees of Being from relations to a creator or user's will.

If wholeness and will confer ontological superiority, fascist societies are ontologically superior to liberal societies. Fascist societies are integrated wholes under dictatorial will, while liberal societies are looser aggregates of free individuals. Then if ontologically superior things are better, as Heidegger and his medieval predecessors claim, fascism is better than liberalism. This is Heidegger's *Argument for Fascism*:

social premise: Fascist societies are more whole and willed than liberal societies.

ontological premise: Whole and willed societies are ontologically superior.

evaluative premise: Ontologically superior things are better.

fascist conclusion: Fascist societies are better than liberal societies.

Heidegger eloquently describes the greatness conferred by wholeness and will in a public lecture to 600 German workers, saying that "Worker and work, as National Socialism understands these words, does not divide into classes, but binds and unites *Volksgenossen* and the social and occupational groups into the one great will of the State…" (59). He concludes:

> …we are only following the towering will of our Führer. To be his loyal followers means: to will that the German people shall again find, as a people of labor, its organic unity, its simple dignity, and its true strength; and that, as a state of labor, it shall secure for itself permanence and greatness. To the

[1] Habermas (1953), Ott (1988), Farias (1989), Wolin (1990), and Faye (2009) press the issue.
[2] For example, Olafson (1998), Williams (2011), Dallmayr (2016), von Herrman (2016), and Sikka (2017).
[3] Translations differ on whether to capitalize 'Being' [*Sein*].

man of this unprecedented will, to our Führer Adolf Hitler – a threefold "Sieg Heil!" (60)

Though Heidegger doesn't use cognates of 'fascism' like *Faschismus* for the political system he favors, he praises its unified wholeness under a Führer's will. This is an ontological justification for the *Führerprinzip*, commitment to the supreme authority of a Führer whose will embodies that of the people, which many regard as the central fascist doctrine.[4] As expressed by Nazi political theorist Ernst Huber (1939), "The Führer is the bearer of the people's will… He shapes the collective will of the people within himself, and he embodies the political unity and entirety of the people in opposition to individual interest" (194-195).[5]

Heidegger likely grasped the Argument for Fascism phenomenologically, rather than by abstractly recognizing its soundness. He generally doesn't express himself in deductively valid arguments, and never articulates all the premises at once. But he defends each premise in his writings, articulating and applying the conclusion in his political speeches, showing that his overall worldview includes the Argument for Fascism. This worldview wasn't unusual in his time, and has advocates today.[6] Perhaps a common phenomenology of fascism involves seeing greatness in attributes conferring ontological superiority, and wanting to make one's nation great again.

While anti-Semitism and self-interest motivated Germans to support Hitler, Heidegger gives little sign of these motivations in private notebooks where he could write without political consequences. Despite later disillusionment with Hitler, he always recalls his initial support as sincere, for example in the 1938-1939 notebooks: "Thinking purely 'metaphysically' (i.e., in heeding the history of beyng), during the years 1930-1934 I saw in National Socialism the possibility of a transition to another beginning and interpreted it that way" (318).[7] Heidegger doesn't explicitly refer to Jews as a group in the 380 pages of his 1931-1938 notebooks, though later notebooks include more anti-Semitic remarks.[8] Notebook passages discussing war however reveal stark indifference to the deaths of millions. He writes that "a destruction of the truth of beyng" would "infinitely surpass every annihilation of beings, such as in a new world war" (XI:16).[9] This entails supporting regimes that promote Being, even if they commit war and genocide.

This paper traces Heidegger's steps through the Argument for Fascism. Section 2 discusses the ontological premise as expressed in *Being and Time*, describing how wholeness and will confer ontological

[4] Nolte (1966), Woolf (1969), Pauley (1979).
[5] Translated in Murphy (1943).
[6] Dugin (2014) invokes Heidegger to defend a Russian nationalism with every feature of fascism discussed here.
[7] Casati (2022) describes this second beginning as when "Beyng and its truth become accessible, graspable, and intelligible" (111). 'Beyng' rather than 'Being' represents the notebooks' shift from *Sein* to the archaic *Seyn*. Wrathall (2016) writes that 'beyng' connotes something more "dynamic, historical in nature, and singular." Both are fundamental ontological terms.
[8] Trawny (2016), Fagenblat (2016), and Di Cesare (2016) discuss the anti-Semitism of the later notebooks. As Sluga (1993) describes, many German philosophers of the era favored a mythologized or idealized racism over biological racism, for anti-empiricist reasons. See also von Herrmann (2016) and Sikka (2017).
[9] The 19 essays in the Farin & Malpas (2016) volume on the notebooks don't mention this passage, and take little note of how Heidegger trivializes the deaths of millions in war.

superiority. Section 3 illustrates the social premise, showing how fascism makes societies more whole and willed than liberalism, as Heidegger describes in his 1933-1934 lectures. Section 4 finds the evaluative premise in Heidegger's notebook discussions of war and among his medieval predecessors. Section 5 considers Heidegger's expressions of the fascist conclusion. Section 6 concludes that the evaluative premise must be rejected. Value and ontological superiority are distinct, and conflating them leads to disastrous conclusions. Making a society ontologically superior can make it much worse.

2. Ontological premise: Whole and willed societies are ontologically superior

Heidegger regards Dasein as achieving authentic Being through wholeness. His views of tool use and artistic creation treat Being as encountered in relations to will. Wholeness and will confer ontological superiority, which McDaniel's pluralist account understands in terms of higher degrees of Being.

Division I of *Being and Time* ends by noting that it "never included more than the *inauthentic* Being of Dasein, and of Dasein as *less* than a *whole* [*als unganzes*]" (276).[10] *Dasein* refers to humanity in its characteristic mode of existence, glossed as "that entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue" (68). Heidegger expresses the need to "first of all raise the question of this entity's potentiality-for-Being-a-whole" (276). Dasein's "authentic potentiality-for-Being is attested by the conscience… By pointing out that Dasein has an *authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole,* the existential analytic acquires assurance as to the constitution of Dasein's *primordial* Being" (277).

The first half of Division II accordingly discusses Dasein's potentiality for Being-a-whole. Heidegger clarifies how conscience attests potentiality-for-Being – "*In conscience Dasein calls itself*" (320). He then explains how Dasein can achieve Being-a-whole through resoluteness: "*The question of the potentiality-for-Being-a-whole is one which is facticial and existentiell. It is answered by Dasein as resolute*" (357). This authentic wholeness can be social: "When Dasein is resolute, it can become the 'conscience' of Others. Only by authentically Being-their-selves in resoluteness can people authentically be with one another" (344). The Dasein of both individuals and social groups can be called in conscience, and have authentic potentiality for Being-a-whole.[11]

How wholeness confers ontological superiority is illustrated in contemporary debates over universal composition, the principle that any existing things compose a further thing. Ted Sider (2007) defends universal composition, which lets the microphysical particles of his ontology compose larger things like tree-trunks. Dan Korman (2015) notes that universal composition entails the existence of mere aggregates like trogs, composed of any tree-trunk and any dog, even at considerable spatial distance. If

[10] McManus (2015) discusses these issues.
[11] Authentic Being-a-whole involves other dimensions like temporality, especially as inflected by Being-towards-death. Societies don't die as that individuals do, so how Being-toward-death might affect their wholeness is unclear.

tree-trunks and dogs exist, universal composition entails that every trunk-dog pair composes a trog. Korman denies that the existence of tree-trunks and dogs entails the existence of anything "partly furry and partly wooden" (1). He rejects the existence of trogs, and universal composition along with it.

McDaniel's pluralism treats wholes like tree-trunks and dogs as ontologically superior to mere aggregates like trogs. Writing that "Heidegger provides a particularly clear statement of the doctrine that there are many ways to be" (12), he rejects the binary distinction between existence and nonexistence influentially defended by WVO Quine (1969). Holding that Being "has a quantitative aspect" (221), McDaniel agrees with Sider that tree-trunks, dogs, and trogs exist, while accommodating Korman by ascribing higher degrees of Being to tree-trunks and dogs than trogs. He dismisses mere aggregates like trogs as mere "beings by courtesy" (176) – "a truly degenerate way to be" (142). Trogs and other mere aggregates exist, but with lower degrees of Being. As McDaniel articulates ontological pluralism, "the semi-mereological notions of an integrated whole and a mere aggregate can be defined in terms of degrees of Being: an integrated whole is more real than its proper parts, whereas a mere aggregate is less real than its proper parts" (233-234).[12] McDaniel discusses two other forms of ontological superiority – having a higher level on the hierarchy of Being, and having a nonrelational mode of Being. Since he suggests treating wholeness and will in terms of degrees of Being, only this type of superiority concerns us here.

Heidegger writes that "If we are to have a fore-sight of Being, we must see it in such a way as not to miss the *unity* of those structural items which belong to it and are possible" (275). Tree-trunks and dogs are unified centers of explanatory power, unlike trogs and their smaller parts. A tree-trunk explains why the branches stay up, how nutrients move through the tree, and why the car that hit the tree is damaged. A dog explains why there are pawprints, why the neighbors hear barking, and why the owner isn't lonely anymore. Trogs offer a grossly disunified explanation of these six phenomena, as the tree-trunk part explains three and the dog part explains the other three. Parts of dogs and tree-trunks that are insufficient to be wholes, like fur or bark alone, generally fail to explain what wholes explain. The explanatory unity of tree-trunks and dogs gives them higher degrees of Being than their arbitrary parts and trogs.[13]

This pluralist ontological account of dogs, tree-trunks, their mere parts, and trogs reveals why Being-a-whole is naturally regarded as the authentic mode of Dasein. Wholes with explanatory unity, like tree-trunks and dogs, are ontologically superior. Mere aggregates like trogs or mere parts of tree-trunks and dogs are ontologically degenerate. (While a tree-trunk is itself a mere part of a tree, it's naturally assigned lower degrees of Being than a tree, but higher degrees of Being than bits of its bark.) Our Being is likewise best encountered as a whole, and not as a mere part or a mere aggregate.

[12] Kinkaid (2019), Stang (2019), and Casati (2021) regard McDaniel as accurately interpreting Heidegger's ontology.
[13] Lewis (1983) treats natural properties as explaining phenomena. McDaniel identifies Being with this naturalness: "a property is natural to the extent that it exists" (46).

Inauthentic modes of Being can be understood as mere parts and mere aggregates. The three main inauthentic modes *Being and Time* discusses are idle talk where "what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially" (212), a curiosity that "seeks novelty only to leap from it anew into another novelty" (216), and a related sort of "ambiguity" which "is always tossing to curiosity that which it seeks; and it gives idle talk the semblance of having everything decided in it" (217). While authentic communication, inquiry, and clarity explain genuine understanding, these parts of them fail to do so. They are merely superficial exteriors of the wholes that explain understanding, just as a dog's fur and a tree-trunk's bark are superficial exteriors that can't explain what the wholes explain.

Heidegger describes how machines can structure things so that Being becomes inauthentic, sometimes calling this *machination* [*Machenshaft*]. In "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954), he describes a hydroelectric dam as making a river's Being inaccessible, by "enframing" [*Ge-stell*] the river as a "standing-reserve" [*Bestand*]. He regards the new power-generation system as a troglike monstrosity that enframes the river and denies it Being. He then describes "the supreme danger" – that humans themselves "will have to be taken as standing-reserve" (10) as technology enframes them. Fearing that humans are losing their Being as they enter troglike fusions with inhuman machines, he writes that "*precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence*" (10).

We encounter the Being of artifacts in creating or using them. Heidegger writes that "Only as form-giver does the human being learn the greatness of Being" (140), as Karsten Harries (2009) notes, and understands artistic creation as *poiêsis*, or "bringing-into-being." Korman likewise treats a creator's will as giving spatially disconnected things Being, discussing a "work of art consisting of several disconnected parts: the ontologically significant difference between it and a trog is the presence of relevant creative intentions in the one case and their absence in the other" (154). McDaniel sympathizes, and suggests ascribing intermediate levels of ontological superiority to artifacts, invoking "degrees of being" just as in characterizing "an integrated whole" (233): "perhaps artifacts are more real than their arbitrary undetached parts but less real than their constituent particles" (234).

Heidegger famously describes how the Being of equipment is encountered in using it:

> the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is – as equipment. The hammering itself uncovers the specific 'manipulability' [*Handlichkeit*] of the hammer. The kind of Being which equipment possesses – in which it manifests itself in its own right – we call readiness-to-hand [*Zuhandenheit*] (98).

Both creation and use of artifacts involve ontologically superior relations to the will. Heidegger writes that "Being-in-the-world is essentially care" (237), and that "Willing and wishing are rooted with ontological necessity in Dasein as care" (238). Care can create deep ontological ties between its objects and our Being.

Will is a manifestation of care.

Inauthenticity, previously discussed as a deficiency of wholeness, can also be understood as a deficiency of will. Heidegger regards "Dasein's Being as care" (235), the ontological ground of will. For Dasein, achieving authentic wholeness goes with achieving a distinctive form of will. The forms of idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity Heidegger criticizes don't involve a resolute will to understand, and often produce no understanding as a result. Machination is the reverse of encountering the Being of a tool when you use it. You become enframed as the tool's standing-reserve, and lose your Being as the tool uses you.

Whether Heidegger accepted ontological pluralism is controversial. Denis McManus (2013) and John Haugeland (2013) claim that Heidegger explored pluralism, but found it untenable after encountering paradoxes. Filippo Casati (2022) replies with an innovative dialetheist interpretation that lets pluralists accept the contradictions in these paradoxes. Casati's textual evidence that Heidegger sought a dialetheist solution raises difficulties for Adrian Moore's (2015) view that Heidegger rejected pluralism. Even interpretations that don't invoke pluralism can accept the connections between wholeness, will, ontology, and value that the argument requires, as David Egan (2019) demonstrates. Considering these issues reveals that while pluralism offers a defensible and illuminating account of ontological superiority, a well-developed non-pluralist account might support the Argument for Fascism just as well.

McManus and Haugeland see the pluralist's multiple ways of Being as generating paradoxes. McManus sees "the emergence of a regress" (667) – is there a way of Being for ways of Being, and a way for ways for ways, and so on to infinity? He writes, "there is reason to doubt whether Heidegger attains a settled view of it or of its significance in the *Being and Time* period", but describes the regress as leaving him "on the point of despair" in subsequent work (668). Haugeland sees semantic paradoxes issuing from Heidegger's claim that "*Being*, by contrast, 'is' *not* an entity. It is not the case that being is – at all, ever. This is why there are shudder quotes around the word 'is' in the statement of the thesis: since *entities* are all and only what there is, it is strictly inappropriate even to use this verb in speaking of *being*" (53).

In *Heidegger and the Contradiction of Being*, Casati addresses these ontological paradoxes using dialetheism, which allows true contradictions. McManus' regress is what Graham Priest (2002) calls an "inclosure schema", with something both inside and outside a fixed totality. Casati notes that "dialetheists take 'inclosure-paradoxes' as paradigmatic examples of true contradictions" (95). Haugeland takes Being to be determined by modal constraints, and "one of these relevant modal constraints is *logical*" (99). Dialetheism resolves Haugeland's paradox by allowing contradictions about whether Being is an entity. As Casati articulates the resulting view, "Being can be the subject matter of an assertion and, at the same time, Being cannot be the subject matter of an assertion" and "Being is an entity and Being is not an entity" (95).[14] He quotes Heidegger's favorable remarks about dialetheism, for example that "The

[14] Dahlstrom (1994) considers a similar paradox. He writes, "Nor can the retrieval of what 'to be' means be the

principle of common logic, namely the law of avoiding contradiction, must be annihilated", to "precisely validate contradiction as the basic trait of all that is actual" (107).[15]

Moore interprets Heidegger not as a pluralist, but as "a champion of the univocity of being" (13) who regards all existing things as existing in the same way.[16] He sees Heidegger and Quine as agreeing that there is only one way of existing, while McDaniel and Casati see them as disagreeing. Moore's interpretation avoids the ontological paradoxes afflicting pluralism. But Heidegger explores denying noncontradiction to resolve ontological paradoxes, and a pluralist interpretation better explains this.

Egan's account of authenticity doesn't invoke pluralism, but still treats integrated wholes bound together by will as ontologically superior and valuable.[17] He notes the significance of wholeness and will in explaining how "every item of equipment is essentially part of a larger totality", writing that "A chair shows up as a chair because it has a place within a larger whole of significant action. In its authentic moments, Dasein understands the significance of that whole as something to which it is responsive, and whose continued significance is shaped by Dasein's responses" (155). In a section titled "The Analysis of Dasein as Fundamental Ontology" (37), he quotes Heidegger's remark that "'*fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the *existential analysis of Dasein'* (BT 13)" (39). He recognizes the value Heidegger attaches to the ontological significance of authentic Dasein, noting that "As if 'deficient' and 'inauthentic' were not themselves laden with negative value judgment, he also refers to inauthentic Dasein as 'lost' and 'fallen'" (78). Egan's pluralism-neutral interpretation thus recognizes authentic Dasein's relations to wholeness and will as gaining value from ontological superiority.

As Egan suggests, the ontological significance and value of wholeness and will might not require a pluralist intepretation. Non-pluralists can regard using a hammer as ontologically superior to merely looking at it, while denying that ways of Being explain this. They might for example claim that wholeness and will are sufficient for ontological superiority, even without deeper ontological foundations. Pluralist interpreters might reply that this non-pluralist view leaves it mysterious why wholeness and will are ontologically superior. Explaining ontological superiority in terms of ways of Being is indeed an advantage of current pluralist interpretations. Whether non-pluralists can offer a suitably substantial account of ontological superiority remains to be seen.

However these debates may go, pluralists and non-pluralists alike can recognize that Heidegger

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provenance of science, at least not a science that concerns itself with some object only insofar as the latter is or can be present" (777) and asks "is not the fundamental ontology undertaken in Being and Time itself a science?" (778). Casati (2021) recognizes this paradox of thematization as an ontic paradox rather than an ontological one.

[15] Citing Heidegger (2012).

[16] Also Deleuze (1994), Moore (2012).

[17] Many essays in McManus (2015) similarly connect wholeness and will to ontology and value via authenticity, without invoking pluralism. See Guignon (2015) and Käufer (2015). Mulhall (2015) may come closest to pluralism in invoking ontological paradox – "Authenticity is a matter of living out this essential non-self-identity – the gap between what it is and what it might be" (268). Whether dialetheism helps with this paradox remains to be seen.

ascribes ontological significance to integrated wholes and things created or controlled by will. All accounts of Heidegger's ontology that follow this textual evidence will arrive at the Argument for Fascism.

3. Social premise: Fascist societies are more whole and willed than liberal societies

In November 1933, Hitler held a referendum on withdrawing from the League of Nations. As rector of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger gave a speech encouraging students to vote in favor. He begins, "The National Socialist revolution is bringing about the total transformation of our German existence [*Dasein*]" (46). He concludes, "Let not propositions and 'ideas' be the rules of your Being [*Sein*]. The Führer alone *is* the present and future German reality and its law. Learn to know ever more deeply: from now on every single thing demands decision, and every action responsibility. Heil Hitler!" (47)[18]

Wholeness and will explain how Heidegger could see fascism as transforming German Dasein, and the Führer as embodying German reality. Societies achieving the fascist ideal are more integrated wholes, expressing the Führer's will as artifacts do, while societies achieving the liberal ideal resemble mere aggregates. Put simply, fascist societies are like hammers, while liberal societies are like trogs. For illustration, imagine young adults on a Saturday evening in societies approximating each ideal.

The young men of the fascist society are marching in a military parade, as ordered by their Führer and orchestrated by his loyal subordinates. The nation's marching music plays, and traditionally dressed young women applaud. All are of the same ethnicity, perhaps due to past expulsions or killings on the Führer's orders. They stand upon their ancestral native soil, where historical traditions are venerated, and novel or foreign cultural forms are deprecated. The Führer's speech to citizens about recent military victories is the climax of the festivities. He expresses optimism that the martial vigor cultivated under his rule will lead to further conquest, befitting a great people.

The Führer's will imposes order on this fascist society, giving it wholeness and Being like a hammer. Its form and activities are determined by the will of its creators and users, especially the Führer. That will can direct it to smash other things. Formed of one people, it's a solid and unified whole.

Heidegger approvingly recognized these features of fascism. In *Nature, History, State 1933-1934* (2013), he claims that peoples become ontologically superior when a Führer's will gives them order.[19] He writes that "Order is the human way of Being, and thus also the way of Being of the people" (49). He clarifies that he means "Order in the sense of the order of rule, of superordination and subordination, of leadership and following. And yet, what does order of mastery, order of power, mean?—The will of one gets implemented in the will of others, who thereby become the ruled" (58). A Führer provides this order:

[18] Wolin (1993).

[19] This is a summary of Heidegger's seminars by students, which he reviewed before publication. The editors note, "while we cannot rely on this text as a verbatim transcript of what Heidegger said, it is reasonable to take it as good evidence of the essential content of the views he developed during this seminar" (2).

"The highest actualization of human Being happens in the state. The Führer state [*Führerstaat*], as we have it, means the completion of the historical development: the actualization of the people in the leader" (64).

Militaristic ethnic nationalism is also characteristic of fascism.[20] It finds expression in Heidegger's discussions of how peoples and states relate to territory. Political organization is tied to ethnicity: "people and state are not two realities that we might observe isolated, as it were, from one another. The state is the preeminent Being of the people" (57). He later claims that "one cannot establish a theory of the state that is not already built upon particular ties to the Being of a people" (57). He regards ethnic groups as linked to particular territory, discussing peoples soon to be targeted by the German state: "For a Slavic people, the nature of our German space would definitely be revealed differently from the way it is revealed to us; to Semitic nomads, it will perhaps never be revealed at all" (56). He regards it as proper for a people to "to rule over the soil and space, to work outwards into the wider expanse, to interact with the outside world" (55). To "interact" [*Verkehr*] isn't limited to peaceful activities like trade and tourism. It includes expanding borders by conquering territory: "the space of the state, the territory, finds its borders by interacting, by working out into the wider expanse" (56).

We turn to the liberal society, which consists of students across the ethnically diverse college campuses of a modern democracy.[21] Many are gathering for activities they enjoy – dancing, sports, Dungeons & Dragons. The social socialize, the studious study, the solitary find solitude, observant Jews observe Shabbat, and a philosophy reading group is discussing a paper. Some are with their romantic partners at these events, while other couples (and some n-tuples where n>2) are having their own fun. There is freedom and variety in what to wear, which romantic partners to choose, which intoxicating substances to consume, which political views to hold, and which art and music to enjoy. New and foreign things are regarded with interest and curiosity. Campus society draws no deep distinctions between foreign and native-born students. While all avoid harming or disrespecting others, they otherwise say what they want to say, and live as they want to live.

This liberal society is more like a mere aggregate of individuals than the fascist society. Its internal constraints and lack of unity prevent coordination for wars or genocides. No overarching will determines its shape, let alone one will that rules all others, but instead aggregated individual wills and outside influences. Made of disparate parts not connected by will, it's the social equivalent of a trog.

Heidegger traces the origins of liberal individualism, claiming that it "began in the Renaissance, when the individual human being, as the person, was raised up as the goal of all Being" (42).

> Everything, and therefore politics too, now gets shifted into a sphere within which the human being is willing and able to live to the fullest. Thus politics, art, science and all the others degenerate into

[20] Griffin (1993), Stanley (2018).
[21] Mill (1859).

> domains of the individual will to development, and this all the more as they were expanded through gigantic accomplishments and thus became specialized. In the times that followed, all the domains of culture were allowed to grow ever farther apart until they could not be kept in view as a whole, up to our own day, the danger of such behavior displayed itself with elemental clarity in the collapse of our state. (42)

He further clarifies that by "people [*Volk*]" he doesn't mean anything like "'the crowd of people scattered': here we see an aggregation of subordinates" (43). Rather than such an aggregate, he means an integrated whole with its own distinctive causal powers, especially violent powers: "in the most comprehensive sense, we use the term *Volk* when we speak of something like 'the people in arms'" (43).

4. Evaluative premise: Ontologically superior things are better

"Better" in the evaluative premise ascribes a form of goodness justifying political action. Many types of goodness (moral value, holiness, reasonableness) might be ascribed to Being, justifying many different political systems and actions to create them. There are therefore many ways to accept the evaluative premise. Its effect within the Argument for Fascism is to ascribe value to the fascist society, guiding political action towards creating, sustaining, and obeying it. Ascribing insignificant sorts of value might support conclusions too weak to justify major political action – perhaps that fascism is better at making the trains run on time, or that fascist fashion is fashionable to fascists. Heidegger instead ascribes extreme significance to Being, supporting extreme conclusions.

Heidegger's reflections on war in his notebook entries of the late 1930s reveal the extreme value he ascribes to Being, relative to human life. Reflecting on World War I, he approvingly describes how "the spirit of the trenches [*Frontgeist*] gathered itself up and compelled the political distractedness into an order", with ultimately ambiguous significance for "experiencing for once things which are inconceivable about that Da-sein and in adhering to them for long" (XI:16). He then warns of a future in which "the greatness of history falls into the hands of those who are small", describing this as "an uncanny, totally unnoticed destruction—which, because it is a destruction of the truth of beyng, will infinitely surpass every annihilation of beings, such as in a new world war" (XI:16).

World War I annihilated around 20 million human beings; World War II would soon kill over 50 million. Even if Heidegger didn't foresee the higher death toll of the new world war, he might have recoiled from the abject brutality of the previous one, with millions killed in trench warfare by machine guns and poison gas. Yet he takes a "destruction of the truth of beyng" to "infinitely surpass" it.

Trivializations of war throughout the notebooks confirm Heidegger's extreme valuation of Being relative to human life. An earlier entry states, "That the 'world war' settled over the earth was indeed manifestly still too small a plight—since it brought forth no necessities of creativity and produced only

opportunities for expedients" (VI:156). Later he writes, "Once again—war is not the most horrible—more unsettling is the lack of a need for goals on the part of involuted historiological life" (IX:29). He sees the inauthentic modes of Being promoted by modernity as more appalling than war:

> War, even if an occasion and form for an always varied heroism, is appalling. *But this is even more appalling*: an ahistorical people, blind to its uprootedness, and without the sacrifice of blood and without external destruction, tottering about amid the greatest historiological noise of all its orators and newspaper reporters, meditationlessness counting as reason, and the latter securing its essence in unconditional calculation. (XIII:99)

Heidegger later clarifies that he is appalled by this society's "*obliviousness* to the possibility of a history which includes a decision on the truth of beyng. Wars and revolutions, even if of gigantic proportions, remain superficial incidents" (XIII:111).

After the war, Heidegger similarly downplays the significance of genocide, writing that "farming is now a motorized food industry, in essence the same as the fabrication of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starving of the peasantry, the same as the fabrication of the hydrogen bomb."[22] He decries all these forms of machination as undermining authentic relations to Being, disregarding whether they feed or kill millions.

These postwar remarks, like the notebook passages, reveal Heidegger's thoughts when no fascist government could reward or punish him. His notebooks were private and remained concealed until 2014, affording no benefit for supporting Hitler's wars. By 1949, political incentives favored distinguishing motorized farming from genocide. Rejecting these incentives suggests a principled view that the lives of millions are less significant than proper relations to Being.

Heidegger's reticence about explicitly speaking of 'value' shouldn't dissuade us from interpreting him in evaluative terms. As Catherine Botha (2014) notes, Heidegger "often uses the word 'value' in quotation marks (see for example *SZ*: 63; *BaT*: 59), which seems to imply that he already here considers the concept as problematic in relation to his own ontological project" (29). Heidegger indeed dismisses the significance of value, including moral value. But she and Egan recognize that he still makes politically significant evaluative judgments, even if he doesn't describe himself as doing so. Calling a destruction of Being more "horrible" or "appalling" than war is ascribing extreme negative value to it. Herman Philipse (1999) accordingly writes that "Heidegger endorsed an authoritarian view of ethics" (440), with his views about the source of authority changing over his career.

The medieval philosophical tradition ascribes great evaluative significance to Being. Heidegger identifies himself with this tradition in *Being and Time*:[23]

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[22] Quoted and translated in Lacoue-Labarthe (1990).
[23] Brogan (2005), Hacker-Wright (forthcoming).

> In medieval ontology 'Being' is designated as a '*transcendens.*' Aristotle himself knew the unity of this transcendental 'universal' as a unity *of analogy* in contrast to the multiplicity of the highest generic concepts applicable to things. With this discovery, in spite of his dependence on the way in which the ontological question had been formulated by Plato, he put the problem of Being on what was, in principle, a new basis. (3)

Goris and Aertsen (2019) explain that *transcendens* literally means "that which surpasses", indicating the "nobility of being which is free from matter." This was important to a medieval tradition ascribing great metaphysical and moral significance to an immaterial God (and also to nobility). Considering this medieval tradition reveals how natural it was for Heidegger to accept the evaluative premise.

Medieval cosmology organizes all things into an ontological hierarchy called the Great Chain of Being, or *scala naturae*. Having the most Being, God is at the top of the chain. He is followed in order by angels, men, animals, plants, minerals, and finally nothingness. As Arthur Lovejoy (1936) notes, this cosmology was widely accepted from the Neoplatonists until Darwin, and was the subject of poetry as late as the 1700s. He quotes Alexander Pope's (1734) *Essay on Man*:

> Vast chain of being, which from God began;
> Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
> Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see,
> No glass can reach! from infinite to thee,
> From thee to nothing! (60)

As Lovejoy notes, many accepted a principle of plenitude requiring a continuous chain with no missing links. Pope writes, "From Nature's chain whatever link you strike / Tenth, or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike" (60). French *philosophe* JB Robinet (1768) wrote, "All the minute gradations of animality are filled with as many beings as they can contain" (270), saying the same of plants and minerals.

Lovejoy describes how this hierarchy of Being was regarded as a hierarchy of value, with the principle of plenitude supporting social inequality.[24] Pope continues, "Order is Heav'n's first law; and this confest / Some are, and must be, greater than the rest / more rich, more wise" (206). Nonwhite peoples were often seen as intermediate links between humans and animals. As Felix Günther (1906) recounts, "The missing link was sought at the lower limits of humanity itself. It was held to be not impossible that among the more remote peoples semi-human beings might be found" (234). Lovejoy notes Soame Jenyns writing that "The universe resembles a large and well-regulated family, in which all the officers and servants, and even the domestic animals, are subservient to each other in a proper subordination" (207).

[24] Dubois (1982). Karbowski (2013) examines Aristotle's (1998) defense of natural slavery, which may also proceed from intuitive grasp of unities of analogy. Combined with this intuitive epistemology, the evaluative premise allows disturbingly direct inferences from the perceived ontological degeneracy of various demographic groups to their supposed moral degeneracy.

Here the distinct concepts of ontological superiority and value are connected via an "analogy between the macrocosm and the social microcosm" (207). Neither entails the other – one can consistently hold that valueless things are ontologically superior to valuable things. Intuitions about unities of analogy between value and Being are therefore needed to justify treating ontological hierarchies as evaluative hierarchies.

Ontological arguments for God's existence often include a premise tying value to ontological superiority. Anselm's (1078/1962) version of the premise is that existence in reality is greater than mere existence in the understanding. He argues that "a being than which no greater can be conceived" will not merely "exist in the understanding alone" but will also "exist in reality; which is greater." Descartes' (1641/1984) version of the premise is that necessary existence is a perfection. He writes that "necessary existence is contained in the idea of a supremely perfect being." These premises are widely conceded as plausible enough. Gaunilo, Aquinas, Leibniz, and Kant object to other premises or to the validity of the broader argument. Many of the era saw God's greatness as explaining moral normativity through divine command theory, and political normativity through the divine right of kings.

While ontologically superior things might be more beautiful or worthy of attention, these values don't support political decisions and therefore don't support the evaluative premise. A Heideggerian account of Being might help in understanding aesthetic value.[25] But choosing between liberalism and fascism simply on aesthetic grounds would be shallow. McDaniel holds that "being is a kind of value: it is metaphysical goodness. Fully real beings enjoy a certain kind of metaphysical goodness that beings by courtesy lack." (174). This goodness justifies attention: "there is one object-directed attitude that is maximally correct if and only if its object is fully real: the attitude of attending to. On this way of thinking, some objects are fit for attention and others are not" (173). Fascism may indeed be fit for attention – historians should attend to how it arises and geopolitical strategists should attend to threats it creates. But their aim should be to counteract fascism, not to support it.

Heidegger ascribed more significant value to Being, and drew a different conclusion.

5. Fascist conclusion: Fascist societies are better than liberal societies

Heidegger's expressions of the fascist conclusion express his acceptance of the premises. He advocates National Socialism under Hitler to make Germany ontologically superior.

After his election speech to students, Heidegger gave a new election speech to the general public and then to professors.[26] Both begin, "The German people has been summoned by the Führer to vote; the Führer, however, is asking nothing from the people. Rather, he *is giving* the people the possibility of making, directly, the highest free decision of all: whether it – the entire people – wants its own existence

[25] Harries (2009) and Thomson (2011) articulate Heideggerian aesthetic insights.
[26] Both speeches are collected in Wolin (1993).

[Dasein] or whether it does *not* want it" (47). Repudiating Hitler's decision and seeking to stay part of the international community would render the German people's existence ontologically degenerate. They would aspire to mere parthood within the international community and be disunified by internal conflict. But a German people asserting its distinct unity as its Führer willed would be ontologically superior. Nations are more integrated wholes when freed from international institutions so that they "stand by one another in an open and manly fashion as self-reliant entities" (48). Heidegger invokes unity of analogy with material things to defend this evaluative view, citing the "most basic demand of all Being *[Sein],* that it preserve and save its own essence" (47). Heidegger concludes his speech to the professors, "The Führer has awakened this will in the entire people and has welded it into *one* single resolve. No one can remain away from the polls on the day when this will is manifested. Heil Hitler!" (52). Italicizing "*one*" to emphasize unity is a change from his earlier speech to the public, which merely uses "a." Heidegger depicts Hitler both as tool-user and creator, welding German will into a well-unified whole.

In *Being and Truth* (2010), produced in 1933-1934, Heidegger advocates targeting minorities for extermination to strengthen German *Dasein*. Discussing Heraclitus' aphorism, "War is both the father of all things and the king of all things" (72), he calls for the courage "to perceive the primordial laws of our Germanic ethnicity in their most simple exigency and greatness and to put ourselves to the test and prove ourselves against this greatness" (72). Heidegger clarifies that he "does not mean ἀγών, a competition in which two friendly opponents measure their strengths, but rather the struggle of πόλεμος, war. This means that the struggle is in earnest; the opponent is not a partner but an enemy" (73). Evoking Carl Schmitt (2008), Heidegger describes these enemies and what should be done to them:

> An enemy is each and every person who poses an essential threat to the Dasein of the people and its individual members. The enemy does not have to be external, and the external enemy is not even always the more dangerous one. And it can seem as if there were no enemy. Then it is a fundamental requirement to find the enemy, to expose the enemy to the light, or even first to make the enemy, so that this standing against the enemy may happen and so that Dasein may not lose its edge.
>
> The enemy can have attached itself to the innermost roots of the Dasein of a people and can set itself against this people's own essence and act against it. The struggle is all the fiercer and harder and tougher, for the least of it consists in coming to blows with one another; it is often far more difficult and wearisome to catch sight of the enemy as such, to bring the enemy into the open, to harbor no illusions about the enemy, to keep oneself ready for attack, to cultivate and intensify a constant readiness and to prepare the attack looking far ahead with the goal of total annihilation. (73)

Any opponent of the Führer would threaten the Dasein of the people by disrupting its wholeness and will. Heidegger calls for all-out war against such enemies. Miguel de Beistegui (2011) notes that they "were clearly identified in 1933. Who could Heidegger have in mind when uttering those words, if not the

designated internal enemies of the Reich – the Jews, first and foremost, but also the Gypsies, the communists and all the opponents of the regime?"

Taken at his word, Heidegger endorses scapegoating innocent groups so that Dasein can achieve collective resoluteness in killing them. Sometimes it is a "fundamental requirement" "first to make the enemy" "with the goal of total annihilation" "so that this standing against the enemy may happen and so that Dasein may not lose its edge." Authenticity moreover requires total annihilation. Any remnants of the enemy would deprive Dasein of wholeness, undermine the unity of German will, and embody its failure. Through total annihilation of enemies it made, the Dasein of a people attains authentic Being-a-whole.

6. Against the evaluative premise

While much of the history of philosophy is a history of error, few errors are as terrible as the fascist conclusion. Which premise of the Argument for Fascism should be rejected to avoid it?

Rejecting the ontological and social premises to avoid the fascist conclusion would be premature. Considerations within ontology may justify rejecting the ontological premise.[27] But even those like Korman who don't accept pluralism can see why wholeness and will might determine ontological superiority. Denying another premise will avoid the fascist conclusion however ontological debates conclude. And while critics of the social premise might seek ways in which liberal societies are more integrated wholes bound by will, there are clear ways in which fascist societies are.

The evaluative premise must be rejected. Being and value are different.[28] Using a hammer doesn't generate the sort of value justifying political action. Making more hammers or getting people to hammer things might have instrumental value under some circumstances. But these are ridiculous ultimate goals for a political system. Treating Being and value as necessarily connected allows ethically irrelevant ontological considerations to guide politics.

The evaluative premise is most plausible when ascribing ethically significant Being to individuals rather than societies. McDaniel suggests a version favoring liberalism and individual rights. He invokes numerical relations applying to persons rather than wholeness and will:

> We are persons, and persons count. Among other things, this implies that persons are to be counted. If we are beings by courtesy, a more objective ontological scheme would not countenance us. Fundamentally, we would not be counted. We would not count.
>
> I do not think that this line of reasoning simply equivocates on what "are to be counted" means but rather captures that a necessary condition for persons mattering in the way that we take them to matter is that they are really to be counted, that is, they are fully real. (171)

[27] Critics include Builes (2019), Campbell (2019), and Han (2022).
[28] Eklund (2022) expresses similar concerns.

Since things must exist to be counted, the Being of persons is essential to counting them in the numerical sense of "count." This doesn't entail that persons count in the normative sense of having rights. Hammers can be counted too, but they don't have rights. Recognizing this equivocation as fallacious, McDaniel takes himself to intuitively grasp a unity of analogy. Heidegger and his medieval predecessors do the same.

Intuitive grasp of unities of analogy is an unreliable method for revealing truths about politically significant values, as revealed by the inconsistent and socially dependent conclusions its users reach.[29] McDaniel justifies liberalism with analogy to numbers; Heidegger justifies fascism with analogy to wholes and artifacts; advocates of the Great Chain of Being justify medieval social hierarchies with analogy to continuous plenitudes. We who share McDaniel's conclusions should reject his methods, as others derive opposing conclusions from the same methods without using them incorrectly in any clear way. Such methods also have a suspicious tendency to justify the era's reigning political ideologies, which change much faster than the fundamental truths of politics or ontology. Whether intuitive grasp of unities of analogy is similarly error-prone and socially dependent regarding purely ontological matters is for metaphysicians to consider.

Friedrich Nietzsche warned Heidegger against intuiting the nature of Being, and against the fascist conclusion. Describing intuitions about Being's fundamental nature as anthropomorphized and unreliable, Nietzsche's (1954) protagonist Zarathustra says that "the belly of being does not speak to humans at all, except as a human" and "all being is hard to prove and hard to induce to speak" (*Z* I: On the Afterwordly). Zarathustra moreover rejects Heidegger's ontological identification of peoples with states: "State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it tells lies too; and this lie crawls out of its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.'" Heidegger read his prophetic remarks during the 1930s, but did not heed them:[30]

> the state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says it lies – and whatever it has it has stolen. Everything about it is false; it bites with stolen teeth, and bites easily. Even its entrails are false. Confusion of tongues of good and evil: this sign I give you as the sign of the state. Verily, this sign signifies the will to death. Verily, it beckons to the preachers of death. (*Z* I: On the New Idol.)[31]

[29] Goldman (1986) assess reliability in this sense. Stewart (2006) and Sinhababu (forthcoming) explain how widespread disagreement entails unreliability.

[30] Heidegger (1991).

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