Logos and the Place of the Other

PEG E. BIRMINGHAM

Pace University

The task of this essay is to show that Heidegger’s thinking, through its articulation of Mitsein, allows for an interrogation of the political. In other words, I suggest that Heidegger’s understanding of Mitsein allows for a rethinking of the political bond that no longer presupposes a self-determining, autonomous, disembodied subject. In order to show this, I suggest in Part One of the essay a rereading of Being and Time, specifically Heidegger’s analysis of authenticity. This is necessary insofar as readings which overlook the importance of Mitsein in Dasein’s response to the possibilities of its Being fail to grasp the importance of Mitsein in Heidegger’s later attempts to articulate the response to the epochal presencing of Being. This rereading suggests that Heidegger implicitly challenges Hegel’s understanding of self-determination which, in turn, calls into question the fundamental categories of modern political theory: Autonomy, Sovereignty, Universality.

In Part Two I take up the discussion in Being and Time of destiny (Geschick) as Dasein’s historicizing in Being-with Others (Mitgeschehen). Such a consideration is essential insofar as the question of the political cannot be separated from that of the historical. Finally, in Part Three I show in a preliminary way, through an examination of Being and Appearing in An Introduction to Metaphysics, how Heidegger in his later thinking carries out the analysis of Mitsein. The conclusion suggests that Heidegger offers an emancipatory notion of political action formulated on the basis of an understanding of Mitsein as the differentiated and heterogeneous response (logos) that lets epochal presencing be.
I. Authenticity and the Nonrelational

From the very beginning of *Being and Time*, the question of self-determination is of central importance. Heidegger begins his analysis by asking about the "mineness" of existence:

Because Dasein has in each case mineness [*Jeneinigkeit*], one must always use a personal pronoun when one addresses it: "I am," "you are." Furthermore, in each case Dasein is mine to be in one way or another. Dasein has always made some sort of decision as to the way it is in each case mine [*je meines*].

The question of the self is not the question of reflective identity but of self determination. Responding to the call of conscience Dasein must choose itself, determining its existence authentically.

The importance of Mitsein in the authentic response is grasped only by taking seriously Heidegger's previous discussions of the "Anyone" [*das Man*], immersion, and embodiment:

The appeal to the Self in the they-self does not force it inwards upon itself, so that it can close itself off from the "external world." The call passes over everything like this and disperses it, so as to appeal solely to that Self which, notwithstanding, is in no other way than Being-in-the-world.

The appeal is not a call to inwardness, insofar as the analysis of the "Anyone" reveals that Being-in-the-world is equiprimordially Being-with and Being-immersed (*Verfallen*):

This elemental wordly kind of encountering which belongs to Dasein and is closest to it, goes so far that even one's own Dasein becomes something that it can itself proximally "come across" only when it looks away from the "centre of its actions"... or does not as yet "see" them at all.

Thus the common expression, "suddenly I found myself walking down the street." This is not an unusual situation but the everyday occurrence of walking down the street and suddenly finding myself in the world. Such a finding, however, is not the recovering of the "I" from the midst of the city. Instead, Heidegger suggests that it is a finding that always remains on the street, immersed in the activity of the street as I walk along with others. Dasein is originally and inescapably immersed in the world and permeated by that world.

The last is clearly grasped in Heidegger's analysis of embodiment. Dasein is not a spiritual, inner being transported into the world; rather, Dasein is an embodied being, always already immersed and involved in the world. The question of the place of Dasein's being is not a question of a corporeal thing present-at-hand. The occupying of place is the being-alongside of Dasein as Being-already-in-the-world. Being-alongside is an embodied here which is also there: