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“An Unremitting Interchange: Heidegger and Shelley’s Affective Aesthetics”

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**Abstract:** Heidegger’s concept of *Stimmung* (translated as mood or attunement) contributes to modern affect and emotion theory in three ways: *Stimmung* dissolves the false oppositional categories of subject and object, interior and exterior; it accounts for both conscious and unconscious emotional states; and, most importantly, *Stimmung* articulates and designs everyday perceptual experience, making affect and emotion conditions of possibility. By reframing the human subject as a purely existential creature (*Dasein*), Heidegger’s *Stimmung* demands a circulation of people and their environment. Heidegger roots his critique of affect and emotion in Western philosophy’s faulty understanding of representation. Representation assumes a subjective ground of mental presentation whereby intentional objects are interpreted as the source of emotional experience. Heidegger offers us an alternative form of representation through his radical rethinking of aesthetics. This new formulation of representation conceives of representation as a form of apprehending: representation is no longer a conscious appraisal of intentional objects but a pre-cognitive, practical engagement with objects that are always-already interpreted as such. But Heidegger’s contribution to affect and aesthetics is not without its problems; by relying so heavily on the circulation of people in their environment, we find Heidegger needing to make normative claims about authentic self-understanding without justifying why average everydayness is a bankrupt, inauthentic realm of philosophical inquiry. I offer an alternative way of thinking about Heidegger’s dissatisfaction with representation through the work of P.B. Shelley. Shelley ironizes representation by recognizing the concept’s inability to arrive at any authentic or real presentation of the content represented. Only when we take mental representation as the true and essential form of things does representation become “tyrannical.” Therefore Shelley finds no need for a concept of authenticity.

## Introduction

Heidegger's concept of *Stimmung* (translated as mood or attunement) contributes to modern affect and emotion theory in three ways: *Stimmung* dissolves the false oppositional categories of subject and object, interior and exterior; it accounts for both conscious and unconscious emotional states; and, most importantly, *Stimmung* articulates and designs everyday perceptual experience, making affect and emotion conditions of possibility. By reframing the human subject as a purely existential creature (Dasein), Heidegger's *Stimmung* demands a circulation of people and their environment. This ecological notion of affect restores the worldly substance of the subject, reversing the trend in modern philosophy to alienate the subject from a de-materialized natural world and therefore dissolving the categories of subjective and objective. Heidegger roots his critique of affect and emotion in Western philosophy's faulty understanding of representation. Representational theories of consciousness assume a subjective ground of mental presentation whereby intentional objects are interpreted as the source of emotional experience. Heidegger offers us an alternative form of representation through his radical rethinking of aesthetics. This new formulation of representation conceives of representation as a form of apprehending: representation is no longer a conscious appraisal of intentional objects but a pre-cognitive, practical engagement with objects that are always-already interpreted as such. By placing affect and aesthetics in conversation with each other at the level of the ontological, Heidegger interprets aesthetic emotions (emotions arising from a confrontation with a work of art) as an everyday experience. Everyday aesthetics articulates and coordinates the affective contours of practical life prior to conscious apprehension.

But Heidegger's contribution to affect and aesthetics is not without its problems; by relying so heavily on the circulation of people in their environment, we find Heidegger needing

to make normative claims about authentic self-understanding without justifying why average everydayness is a bankrupt, inauthentic realm of philosophical inquiry. In the final section of this paper, I offer an alternative way of thinking about Heidegger's dissatisfaction with representation through the work of P.B. Shelley. Shelley ironizes representation by recognizing the concept's inability to arrive at any authentic or real presentation of the content represented. Only when we take mental representation as the true and essential form of things does representation become "tyrannical." Therefore Shelley finds no need for a concept of authenticity.

In giving *Stimmung* such theoretical power, we must ask what's at stake in dissolving the boundaries of subjective and objective. Heidegger's project reflects an escalating fear in modern philosophy that the dematerialization of nature, beginning with Descartes, alienates the subject from its worldly involvement, leaving the subject without a substance. Doubt of the senses leaves us with an irreducible substance, the *cogito*, whose mooring in the world hinges on faith in human rationality. Culminating with Kant's epistemological turn, modern philosophy permanently removes any subjective substance, arguing that to posit a substance of subjectivity assumes too much. Kant's synthesis of intuitions composes the immaterial self, which he labels a unity of apperception. Epistemological access to the thing-in-itself is then limited to how consciousness presents or represents (*Vorstellung*) worldly objects to our perceptual categories, making representation the primary mode of knowledge acquisition. This, in turn, makes all cognitive representation a form of conscious intentionality – an assumption at the heart of emotion theory and one which Heidegger takes issue with. J.M. Bernstein frames this modern crisis of subjectivity as the central concern of 19<sup>th</sup> century German aesthetics, a tradition to which Heidegger is clearly indebted: "Nature dematerialized and human subjectivity deprived of

worldly substantiality in their interaction and re-enforcement form the two struts supporting the various rationality crises of modernity to which it is proposed that art works and the reason they exemplify might somehow be a response” (Bernstein 10). Although Bernstein does not mention him, Heidegger’s response to what we may call the “crisis of representational phenomenology” is a rethinking of aesthetics. And this rethinking underlies the theoretical objectives Heidegger’s notion of *Stimmung* proposes

One of *Stimmung*’s central theoretical moves is to insist that affect articulate rather than represent affective experience. We see this with the etymology of the word *Stimmung* itself. Perhaps no philosopher was as attuned to the philosophical usefulness of language’s etymological roots as Heidegger. *Stimmung* derives from *Stimme* or voice, which suggests that affect contains a linguistic component. As we will see, one of *Stimmung*’s primary functions is to *articulate* the various possibilities of everyday experience. Articulation is a form of structuring everyday experience, while representation works as a selective framing of intentional objects. In most cognitive/evaluative theories of emotion, a vague understanding of representation undergirds their explanatory power: emotions arise from how we represent intentional objects vis-à-vis our scheme of beliefs, values, desires, etc. Such a distinction makes emotions the “stuff” of subjectivism, further distancing the categories of interior and exterior worlds – a distinction Heidegger finds misguided at best. Heidegger wants to move away from seeing affect and emotion as assaulting us, as if they resided in some external source; affect illuminates and articulates the very world in which we dwell, making affect an interchange between – rather than an expression of – subjective and objective worlds. The linguistic element of *Stimmung*, then, does not cohere with our traditional understanding of language. Language’s ontological function, for Heidegger, is an *unspoken* articulation that designs our world and “brings-forth” ” Being as a

whole. So the substance of subjectivity is restored by wedding the self with its environment – emotion, then, like art, coordinates the self as a being entangled in its cultural space.

Aesthetics, for Heidegger, is subject to the same misguided representational framing of emotion: a relationship between the intentional object and the subjective experience resulting from conscious appraisal. By moving aesthetics away from a form of representation to a kind of articulation, Heidegger makes aesthetic experience a form of everyday experience. To reconfigure aesthetics as a quotidian experience is to think of art not in terms of cultural exemplars or a selective framing of the artistic mind; making aesthetic experience an everyday experience ratchets up the value of aesthetics by making aesthetics that which orients the individual in his or her cultural and communal coordinates. This ontological notion of aesthetics reveals our engagement with art at a practical, pre-cognitive, existential level – therefore Heidegger radically opposes any formalistic, epistemological approach to art. He claims at the end of his famous essay “On the Origin of the Work of Art,” that “All art is... essentially poetry.” Obviously this should not be taken literally. Heidegger’s point, moreover, is about the shared function of aesthetics and affect – both articulate an ontological structure of worldly engagement, just as *Stimmung* brings voice to mood. This is not to say that art doesn’t “represent” some portion of the artist’s world; rather, art and affect articulate a narrative unity of an individual’s experience that structures consciousness anterior to conscious appraisal.

A cursory reading of this connection may be misleading, however. The complementarity between aesthetic experience and affective, emotional experience seems blindly obvious; after all, one of our most widely accepted criteria for determining the value of a work of art is whether or not it moves us emotionally.<sup>1</sup> But Heidegger is uninterested in such surface-layer discussions

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<sup>1</sup> This is rooted in Aristotle’s understanding of *katharsis* in the *Poetics*, which is one of the primary functions of tragedy.

of aesthetics. In fact, talking about art in terms of how we *feel* in relation to its content is precisely how Heidegger doesn't want us thinking about art. In his lectures on Friedrich Nietzsche, he pejoratively refers to aesthetics as existing in "a field of sensuousness and feeling" – what he calls "the logic of sensuousness"<sup>2</sup> (*Nietzsche* 83). Framing aesthetics in terms of sensuous objects and feeling subjects reinforces the illusory subject-object barrier that Heidegger undermines with his notion of an ecological affect. As I briefly mentioned above, traditional German aesthetics is also concerned with this problem, as a divide between subjective and objective creates a dematerialized natural world and a hollow, worldless notion of the subject. For Hegel (and Schiller, too), restoring the substance of the subject requires conceiving of the aesthetic object as "the sensuous embodiment of the idea." The object of aesthetic appreciation contains the objective property of beauty itself – beauty is to be understood as the sensuous expression of free spirit – making aesthetics the medium of resolution between subjective and objective via the bumpy dialectic of historical consciousness. Robert Pippin is keenly aware of the "indispensability" of the aesthetic dimension in Hegel's philosophical science as a tool of mediation between represented reality and truth (I argue Heidegger's aesthetics occupies a similarly indispensable position within his philosophical corpus, especially in his thinking about affect and emotion) (Pippin 108). Pippin cites a particularly suggestive quotation from Hegel's *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, one which helps us think about what Heidegger is after when he critiques representation as philosophically deficient: "Thinking is only a reconciliation between reality and truth within thinking itself. But poetic creation and formation is a reconciliation in the form of a real phenomenon itself, even if this form be presented only spiritually" (*Aesthetics* 2: 976). Hegel expands this understanding of poetry by writing, ""But if

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<sup>2</sup> "Falling back upon the state and condition of man, upon the way man stands before himself and before things, implies that now the very way man freely takes a position toward things, the way he finds and feels them to be, in short, his 'taste,' becomes the court of judicature over beings" (*Nietzsche* 83).

[poetry] attains its aim, not only is it liberated from that separation between thinking, which is concentrated on the universal, and feeling and vision, which seize on the individual, but it also at the same time frees these latter forms of consciousness and their content and objects from their servitude to thinking and conducts them victoriously to reconciliation with the universality of thought” (*Aesthetics* 2: 1006). The operative word in this passage for Hegel is “reconciliation.” Subject and object are taken as valid categories of interpretation until consciousness frees itself from the barriers of form and content via the dialectic path of self-consciousness – art is the medium that reconciles this division. But Heidegger is uninterested in any kind of resolution between subjective and objective and sees the two as theoretically indistinguishable – they both interact at the ontological, primordial level of practical engagement. We must ask ourselves, then, what we can learn from Heidegger’s rejection of representation.

Representation, taken in the broadest sense, is defined in theories of consciousness and Husserlian phenomenology as explaining “its target phenomenon in terms of intentionality, and assumes that intentionality is representation” (*SEP* Lycan). In the realm of aesthetics, this definition of representation is easy to see. Beginning with Plato’s aesthetics, representation is traditionally understood as mimetic or imitative: the artist or poet refracts some portion of reality through his or her subjective prism. So artistic representation is always two steps removed from the truth of the object’s form – an imitation of an imitation – making art and poetry a distortion of reality. In postmimetic theories of representation, particularly deconstructionism, however, the gap between representational systems (such as art and language) and the world is precisely where meaning and reality take shape. As T.V.F. Brogan writes, “One of the recognitions of postmimetic criticism is that representation always does violence to that being represented, in that there is always a gap between the two phenomena... the question is not whether the gap

exists, but only about its size” (Brogan 1040-1041). Although this modern version of postmimetic representation has been exhaustively employed in the realms of aesthetics and literature, its influence in affect theory has gone relatively unnoticed. Scholars such as Rei Terada have put deconstructionist theories of representation to highly productive use in the realm of affect theory.

In her book *Feeling and Theory*, Terada argues that the “violence” done to the represented object becomes the very source of emotional experience. Phenomenological representation, according to Terada’s reading of Derrida and de Man, is always suspended in uncertainty about the world’s symbolic order. Emotion, then, is a kind of overcompensation for our lack of understanding; it fills in our feelings when we don’t know what to feel (Terada 49). This does not mean that affect and emotion distort our representation of the world (as Plato would argue); rather, the representation of signs and expressions is already distorted – and it is in that gap of misapprehension where our emotions suffuse our understanding. This approach, as we will see, runs against the predominant theoretical strain of thinking about emotions, which relies on propositional attitudes and cognitive evaluation to explain the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of emotional experience.

Contrary to Terada’s claim, Heidegger is highly critical of representation providing any reliable access to affective states and aesthetics, as we have seen. So Heidegger offers two levels of viewing representation in his provocatively titled essay “The Age of the World Picture.” The prevailing theory of representation in Western philosophy is a selecting or framing of some external, empirical content, “to bring what is present at hand before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it to oneself, to the one representing it” (*Nietzsche* 80). This level of viewing representation (what Heidegger would call the ontic level, as he describes in *Being*



*and Time*) remains stuck in the Cartesian categories – it is a distinctly modern phenomenon.

There is nothing wrong with thinking about representation in this sense; we naturally talk about the world in terms of subjects and objects. But this level of representation only goes so far down, so to speak; it cannot refer to a more fundamental, pre-cognitive engagement with the world.

What Heidegger wants out of his more fundamental level of engagement is an understanding of Being that avoids reliance on epistemological categories. That is to say, Being should not be defined in terms of its properties, but in terms of its existence. This will become clearer in the following section. So Heidegger introduces a second level of representation – what he calls “apprehending.” At this level, we get a notion of representation that reveals the world in its ontological, rather than its ontic, form. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger never explicitly defines the two levels of analysis, but their definitions gradually become clear: ontic refers to the level of conscious experience that is present-at-hand – sensuous experience, in other words. The ontological is the pre-cognitive, practical level of engagement that structures our understanding of the ontic. These distinctions will be clarified as I progress. So as the title of “The Age of the World Picture” hints at, instead of observing the world as though it were a picture (the ontic level), the world reveals us as part of that picture itself: “Hence a world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture” (*AWP* 129). Heidegger gives us a painting without a painter, as it were. This complicated point will be fleshed out further below, but the point at its base is somewhat commonsensical. For Heidegger, we can draw no useful theoretical difference between true, material reality and appearance: asking about the difference between the appearance of a representation and reality itself is a bad question, because we are still only asking about observable properties – intentional objects. To ask for a “true,” underlying reality is only to operate on the level of the ontic. As

affective creatures, we are always-already thrown in a given structure of interpreted meanings and contextual involvements; reality emerges and illuminates itself through our engagement with it as a narrative whole. So affect, in line with Heidegger's understanding of representation, does not represent or express some interior subjective content; it reveals and illuminates our affective world as world. Our question, then, becomes the following: how does Heidegger's theoretical unification of aesthetics and affect help us think through the problems of representation in modern affect and emotion theory?

By wedding affect and aesthetics, Heidegger makes everyday experience essentially an aesthetic experience – an experience no longer limited to the relationship between the individual and the sublime. I argue that this move to place aesthetics within the realm of the quotidian moves us toward a concept of affect in line with Heidegger's redefining of representation as a form of apprehending. Emotion, then, according to Heidegger, serves to unite the self in narrative unity with the world, eliminating the categories of interior and exterior, just as aesthetics defines the self in terms of its ontological coordinates.

### **Situating Heidegger's Affect**

Heidegger's notion of an ecological affect proposes an integration of affect and Being that is a useful project in itself. For Heidegger, the history of Western philosophical thought has broached the problem of Being – questions of ontology in general – by asking precisely the wrong question. At the beginning of *Being and Time*, Heidegger raises a seemingly pedantic point about the nature of the verb “is” in the question “What is Being?” But this pedantry turns out to be productive, for no one has questioned what “is” actually refers to. When we ask “what is Being?,” we unassumingly cover something up, some ontological ground that – although we may have noticed it (think Kant's thing-in-itself) – we haven't had the intellectual courage to

figure out what “is” is. In the context of Western philosophical thought since Kant, this move is monumental. Heidegger rejects Kant’s insistence that the question of Being is an epistemological one: the synthesis of manifold intuitions that gives us a coherent concept of being, undergirded by a coherent concept of the self (what Kant calls the unity of apperception), is not an *a priori* given (A 120). Understanding properties in terms of how they cohere with our perceptual apparatus misses something fundamental. So if we’re going to discuss Being, where do we begin? We can’t begin with the world of things, Heidegger argues, as this would require that we index various properties and states of beings, drawing an inductive conclusion about the primordial ground of all life and all matter. Such an indexing must assume the referent of “is,” which we already know cannot be approximated so easily. So Heidegger decides that, in an investigation into the nature of being, we must begin with the being that matters to us most: the human being. What distinguishes us from other things is the simple fact that Being is an issue for humans; it concerns us. We have the capacity to ask why and how we exist. But because humans cannot be categorized in distinction from other things in terms of their properties (such as consciousness, rationality, etc.), only in terms of how we exist, Heidegger finds it necessary to refigure the label for human as “Dasein” (literally “being-there”). Dasein exists *because* of its involvement in the world and therefore in terms of its existence. This is why Heidegger asserts, “Dasein is an entity whose Being has the determinate character of existence” (BT 34). So if we are to conceive of Dasein as an entity whose existence remains undefined by any distinct properties, we have to approach the Being of Dasein in a way that illuminates its interaction and embeddedness in the world – an approach that views Dasein in terms of its potentiality rather than its actuality. Thus Heidegger finds affect and emotions to be essential for revealing the potential states of Being-in-the-world. Affect works in a way very similar to how Heidegger

wants us to think about Dasein's involvement with the world. Affect is something messy; it gets caught up and entangled in the world, binding us, outside of our control, to the world's phenomenal contours. It's never clear who or what is doing the affecting. Just as Dasein exists in its potentiality of existence, so affect only occurs only as a potential series of states and interactions.

Because Heidegger insists on refiguring the subject as a being who should only be conceived in terms of its existence, not in terms of its properties, we are forced to re-imagine the ground of affect. In other words, a new subject requires a radical rethinking of how the subject affects and is affected. Heidegger's critique of representation uproots philosophically, as it were, the stalks of three theoretical assumptions in modern emotion and affect theory. First, Heidegger no longer conceives of emotions as playing out on the Cartesian stage of subjectivism; he rejects all arguments that view emotion as expressing some interior content represented over and against our scheme of beliefs, values, and desires. This undermines the subject-object framing of all propositional theories of emotion. Second, Heidegger's notion of *Stimmung* accounts for all unconscious and conscious emotions and moods. Because *Stimmung* works at the ontological level of experience, we are attuned, pre-cognitively, to all practical engagement with the world. Most cognitive/evaluative theories see emotions emerging from a conscious appraisal of some intentional object, but *Stimmung* discloses those intentional objects *as* objects we are capable of perceiving (this technical language will be clarified in more detail below). Finally, *Stimmung* redefines representation as a form of articulation, which underscores the etymological purpose of *Stimmung* as giving voice to everyday experience. This means that Heidegger's notion of language serves an unspoken, ontological purpose that articulates certain objects, relationships and goals as meaningful, revealing ourselves as entangled in coherent phenomenal whole.

Affect theory and emotion theory are two very different – and very large – fields of study. To make a crude distinction, emotion theory brackets its focus around the cognitive elements of emotional experience, while affect theory is more interested in the intersubjective dimension of emotion – the “betweenness” of affective bodies. I examine emotion beginning from similar theoretical grounds as affect theory. With the exception of some deconstructionist thinkers (Terada, de Man, Derrida et al.) – for whom Heidegger’s thought serves as a point of departure – cognitive theories of emotion in philosophy and psychology assume a ground of subjective experience that is sharply at odds with how Heidegger wants us to think about the self. Although the debate in emotion theory is too expansive, too variegated and complex, to adequately outline here, I will hone in on two crucial questions that philosophical theories of emotion and affect are trying to deal with: 1) where does the affect occur (that is, is it purely psychical, or is it intersubjective?)? And 2) can we identify any source or content of the affect or emotion (that is, can we somehow give a lexical explanation of emotions and affects)?

What I wish to draw attention to with the following survey of theories are not the differences in the minutia of each theory: what constitutes a judgment, a physiological response, an emotion’s content, etc., I wish to point out how the philosophical grounding of representation falls apart within each one of these cognitive/evaluative theories. Heidegger offers us a way of critiquing such grounds of representation through the ontic and ontological levels of theorizing about representation. Deconstructionist thinkers such as Rei Terada offer an alternative way of thinking about the issue of representation. Each of the following theories shares a baseline assumption: namely, subjective experience, via representation, conditions what emotions one feels, how one feels them, and the objective source of that feeling. Representation, as a form of viewing phenomena in terms of their intentionality, seems like a commonsensical way of

thinking about emotion. But the representation of one's own subjective experience *to oneself* becomes an acute problem because subjectivism assumes a person maintains a privileged, transparent, third-person perspective to one's feelings. With this privileged perspective, one can always trace the interpretation of the emotion to some source or content within one's scheme of beliefs, values, desires and judgments. What cognitivist theories have failed to recognize, however, is the asymmetry between the content of emotions and how we represent and interpret those emotions. Heidegger provides a way of resolving this asymmetry of representation by discarding representation all together. By refiguring the subject as a being with properties that are definable only in terms of Dasein's existence, we remove the problematic ground of "subjectivism" all together. This underlying issue of representation has plagued modern cognitivist approaches; emotion theories are no closer to explaining what emotions really are than 2,000 years of philosophical discussion. As Paul Griffiths concludes at the end of his book *What Emotions Really Are*, "the general concept of emotion has no role in any future psychology" (Griffiths 247). This is because we have found no clear agreement on what constitutes emotion thus far.

One of the dominant schools of modern emotion theory to emerge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and from which many of its variants find their source) is the propositional theory of emotion advanced by Anthony Kenny in the early 1960s. Rejecting the deeply entrenched belief throughout the history of Western philosophy (with the notable exceptions of Spinoza and Nietzsche) that emotions are somehow antithetical to clear reasoning and rational thinking, Kenny proposed that emotions are the result of a subject's "propositional attitude" in relation to various intentional objects. By propositional attitude, he means a scheme of beliefs and desires that evaluate the object of emotion to be significant or insignificant to our being. Kenny called

these emotion-eliciting objects “formal objects.” As Paul Griffith’s succinctly summarizes, “If a person does not believe something is dangerous, then they do not have a state which has danger as its formal object. Therefore, according to Kenny, they cannot be afraid” (Griffiths 23). This is also known as the content-based approach, as it assumes each emotion to contain an evaluative judgment that makes the object matter to us. Of course, this reductive formulation is not without its problems. Griffiths identifies six problems with the propositional approach: non-intentional emotions such as anxiety, depression, etc. go unaccounted for; some emotions are merely reflexes, disconnected from any attendant judgment; to identify emotions with judgments gives us far too many emotions to account for, as some judgments and beliefs obviously don’t have emotional content; some judgments undermine emotions, so even if we have no belief or judgment about the object, emotions still emerge; some emotional response arise in response to imagined objects; and the propositional attitude ignores physiological responses” (Griffiths 28-29). Following in the traditional understanding of representation, Kenny sees judgment as revealing a transparent representation of our beliefs, attitudes and values vis-à-vis the intentional object. For Heidegger, this notion of representation assumes a conscious appraisal of one’s practical activity. A concept such as *Stimmung*, however, is explicitly pre-cognitive, unreflective and prior to any *evaluation* of the object present at hand. One of the central issues Heidegger wants us to think about is how emotions affect us both consciously and unconsciously.

Whereas Kenny seems to bracket his framework to emotional experience that can only be conscious experience, William James gives us an account that leaves more room for unconscious emotional experience. Although Griffiths does not devote much attention to it, the William James and Karl Lange theory (as both came up with the theory simultaneously) pre-empted Kenny’s propositional theory by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. James came to similar conclusions as

Kenny in his famous essay “What is Emotion?” But James proposed a method of thinking about emotion in terms of what he called a “total situations.” This is not quite the same as thinking about emotion as the content of some judgment or belief; rather, it sees the human as immersed in an affective experience in which physiological responses constitute emotional states – specific emotions are simply the labels we assign to these diverse physiological experiences. As James phrases it, “the bodily changes follow directly the ‘perception’ of the exciting fact, and our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion” (James 170). He continues with an apt illustration: “the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble” (James 170). In other words, the physical feeling we experience upon apprehending an object that may evoke fear (such as a bear) is only interpreted as fear once we run away, sweat profusely, tremble, or experience any other physiological reactions. Emotion becomes a lexical ordering of physiological responses; if we see a bear in an enclosure, we feel a certain response, interpret such a physiological response as fear, and file bears under the category of “fearful” objects. Such a lexical ordering is antithetical to Heidegger’s emphasis on *Stimmung*’s articulation: empirically, we do not label emotions as objects eliciting such emotions as such. Rather, as Hubert Dreyfus puts it, objects show up *as* something for Dasein (Dreyfus 238) – something always-already interpreted. Therefore, *Stimmung* articulates what those objects “show up” as, not what the objects themselves *are*. This distinction will be significant for thinking about how Heidegger sees the conflict between world and earth, as objects within our world only show up as interpreted, not essentialized substances belonging to earth.

A more contemporary cognitivist account of affect comes from philosopher Martha Nussbaum, whose neo-Stoic, eudaimonistic theory of emotions complicates the kinds of



judgments we attach to formal objects and physiological stimuli. She modifies James's theory by arguing that emotions *cause* physiological effects; the physiological effects are not themselves the emotions, as it is difficult to say which effects are consequence and which are part of the emotional experience itself (Nussbaum 58). In this sense, she falls back into the cognitivist tradition laid out by Kenny. However, while Nussbaum still firmly maintains the cognitive-evaluative framework, assuming the subjective self to be the stage on which emotional experience gets played out, she differentiates between four types of cognitive judgments: background and situational judgments and general and concrete judgments. Each of these categories complicates the subject's propositional attitude toward the subject, addressing many of the problems Griffiths raises with Kenny's theory. Nussbaum writes, "once one has formed attachments to unstable things not fully under one's own control, once one has made these part of one's notions of one's flourishing, one has emotions of a background kind toward them – on my view, judgment that acknowledge their enormous worth – that persist in the fabric of one's life, and are crucial to the explanation of one's actions" (Nussbaum 71). As we can see, this account is radically different from what Kenny argues with intentional objects being the sole source of emotion. But while Nussbaum's approach gives us a rich, densely packed analysis of an individual's emotional experience, it cannot tell us anything more about the "stuff" of emotion other than that it occurs within some shell of subjectivism. As I will demonstrate below, deconstructionism sees the recourse to subjectivism as an insufficient ground for emotional experience. The inconclusiveness of modern emotion theory yields a whole new body of literature aimed at affective possibility rather than the content of cognitive states. This direction of critique is similar to the route Heidegger takes. But it differs from Heidegger in the primacy it places on the gap of representation, not the dissolution of the gap itself. All forms of

representation for Heidegger make objects more objective and therefore deepens the subjectivity of the subject.

Following a deconstructionist approach to philosophical theories of emotion, Rei Terada's argues in her book *Feeling in Theory* that cognitivist, content-based approaches explain emotions circularly; they look like a "shell-game of concepts that claim to establish a subject actually given from the beginning" (Terada 39). Terada's subjectless theory of emotion begins moving us in the direction Heidegger wants us to take. According to Terada, emotion derives its affective force from the misapprehension of the intentional object. That is to say, the source or cause of the emotion does not reside in some external object; emotion arises from our representation of the emotion's sign as a sign. Because we can't know the emotional content of the sign itself, emotions fill the space of uncertainty between the sign and our representation of it. So if we think of emotion as the figure that represents a faulty image, the figure always imposes a "faux-literal" meaning on the image itself. As Terada writes, "When we don't know what to think, emotions give us something to feel; they make our unstable perceptions and sensations seem more stable and nameable" (Terada 49). By way of illustration, imagine the experience of encountering a bear. The bear symbolizes something dangerous, but the feeling of fear does not result from the reliable belief that the bear will cause us harm. Rather it is by figuring the bear as something we ought to fear that the bear acquires the literal meaning of a "fearful object." But this literal meaning of fearful object is only meaningful precisely because we mistakenly take the figure of fear for its literal content. The gap of representation becomes the very space where emotions acquire their meaning and affective power, making the real, physical gap between subject and object a virtual one. This presupposed subjective ground leads to the misguided belief of auto-affection, where "the mode of transparent self-reflexivity, ensures

passage from the affect – mere corporeal sensations – to meaningfully interpretive emotions that can be ascribed to subjects” (Terada 17). Terada wants to move away from thinking about emotion as an expression of some inner state of experience to which the self, from the privileged third-person perspective, has unmitigated access. Terada draws out a convincing critique of auto-affection using Paul de Man’s notion of “passions.” She quotes de Man’s definition of passion as the following: “passion is not something which, like the senses, belongs in proper to an entity or to a subject but, like music, it is a system of relationships that exists only in terms of this system” (Terada 50). For de Man, it is only through the interaction with others, a system of relations, that one’s emotional state comes to be known – and that perception of the Other’s emotion is chronically distorted (de Man 35). In Terada’s summation, perceived emotions of other people “lead us to believe that perceptible things express unknown inner states, and therefore project the unity of outsides and insides” (Terada 51). Thus representation becomes the very condition of emotional experience rather than a distortion of reality. It is at this level of representation where I see the target of Heidegger’s attack on modern affect theory and aesthetics. But it is also at this level where we must conceptualize affect and aesthetics as vitally complementary. For Heidegger, a critique of representation leads to a radical rethinking of aesthetics.

This intersubjective take on affective states has become a popular way of thinking about affect in contemporary scholarly literature – rather than trying to approximate inner psychological states, affect theorists want to think about bodily potential. But while Heidegger’s *Stimmung* seems to fall more in line with the theoretical foundations of affect, we must remember that Dasein maintains a certain attitude towards the world. Authenticity is defined as a “forerunning resoluteness,” which, though abstract, leaves room for interiority. As Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg put it, “With affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself –

webbed in its relations – until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter” (Seigworth and Gregg 3). But Heidegger goes further than categorizing emotion as an intersubjective relationship between bodies. He maintains a minimal space for subjectivity, but he brings subjectivity down to an ontological level, making the self’s relationship with its affects a relationship with the world itself; affects become modes of interchange between self and world – hence what I call Heidegger’s “ecological affect.” Because the subject has proved so problematic in thinking about affects and emotions, the move to refigure the subject as a creature defined by its existence rather than its properties makes Heidegger’s linkage between being and affect a vital contribution to the theoretical literature on affect and the emotions I have outlined above. But as I will argue, the very concept that opens the self to its world (Heidegger’s labeling of affect and emotion as *Stimmung*), escaping from the shell of subjectivism, simultaneously subjects the self to a totalizing mood of anxiety – what Heidegger calls the *Grundstimmung* (literally the “ground mood”) of Dasein’s authentic mode of Being-in-the-world. This tension between *Stimmung*’s liberatory potential and its tendency to universalize affective states requires further investigation. The following section examines how Dasein allows us to maneuver around the subject-object problem and the problem of conscious intentionality in modern affect theory. Moreover, I suggest that *Stimmung* is theoretically useful in dealing with modern philosophy’s alienated subject; Heidegger gives us a notion of the “dwelling” subject to wed the self with its world. Finally, I examine how Heidegger’s notion of authenticity creates problems for thinking about affect in terms of potentiality rather than psychological, subjective content.

### ***Stimmung*’s Unremitting Interchange**

Heidegger makes it explicitly clear that Western philosophy has fundamentally misunderstood emotions and affects since the ancients: “What has escaped notice is that the basic

ontological interpretation of the affective life in general has been able to make scarcely one forward step worthy of mention since Aristotle” (*BT* 178). He continues that affects and feelings have incorrectly fallen under the category of “psychical phenomena.” This is one of the few instances in which Heidegger uses the word “affective” to describe emotional experience throughout all of *Being and Time*. He substitutes “affect” with *Stimmung* throughout the rest of the book, which is translated commonly as mood but is more accurately understood as “attunement.” This suggests, as I will demonstrate, that *Stimmung* possesses its own explanatory power that words such as emotion and affect fail to capture. Before going any farther, it is necessary to distinguish between mood and emotion, as these terms should not be conflated.

Emotion and Heidegger’s understanding of “mood” (*Stimmung*) are not traditionally understood synonymously. It should also not be overlooked that the German language does not possess a word that corresponds with the conventional English term “emotion.” This lack of a distinction has serious consequences for Heidegger’s thought. In modern psychology, emotions are generally attached to intentional objects. Moods, on the other hand, are considered non-intentional. Anxiety and boredom, for instance, are not necessarily directed at a specific object, but they still *affect* us. By classifying all emotions as moods or “attunement,” Heidegger subsumes intentional emotional experience – emotions with formal objects – under non-intentional affective states. He does so in order to sharply draw a distinction between the pre-cognitive structure of emotional experience as an ontological condition of possibility and the level of intentional objects.

*Stimmung*’s primary theoretical purpose is to wed the self to the world in a narrative unity, breaking down the false barriers of subjective and objective dimensions of experience. The term I use to describe this opening of the self is “entanglement.” But as Heidegger emphasizes,

one's entanglement in the world means something much different than merely living alongside the "objective" world at hand. In his chapter on the "Worldhood of the World," he writes, "Ontologically, 'world' is not a way of characterizing those entities which Dasein essentially is *not*; it is rather a characteristic of Dasein itself" (BT 92). That is to say, Dasein's self presupposes a more fundamental engagement with the world that underlies the faulty – but real, nonetheless – perception that I stand in contradistinction to the world of matter. This is not to argue that Heidegger's argument is normative in the sense that viewing Dasein in terms of its worldhood is good while distorted perspectives (such as viewing the world in terms of subjects and objects) are bad.<sup>3</sup> A moment's reflection reveals that the way we *actually* interact with things is not as objects of observation, but as objects with contextual meaning. Worldhood, then, takes on a meaning that is *entangled* with Dasein's involvement with it. Such an entanglement forecasts the dissolution of the subject-object distinction that Heidegger achieves with his notion of *Stimmung*.

*Stimmung* reveals the world to us in all of its contexts, references and relationships – the Being of beings-in-the-world. Organization of nature's phantasmagorical world occurs by means of assigning emotional significance to certain objects and relationships over others. *Stimmung* structures and designs the world in gradations of importance – it does not merely taint our perception, as our common understanding of mood might suggest. For instance, the way we recognize and distinguish familiar faces depends upon the emotional importance we imbue them with. Certain cultural artifacts elicit more powerful emotional attachments than objects made out of the same material but originating in an entirely different location. *Stimmung* functions as a way of orchestrating these meanings in a coherent, phenomenal whole that constitutes our worldly space. Heidegger calls this worldly space the "There." And it is because Dasein is

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<sup>3</sup> There is some contention surrounding this issue, but I think the fairest way to read Heidegger's critique of the subject-object distinction is as conceptually misguided, not normatively "bad."

attuned to its entanglement in the world that the world becomes intelligible: “Having a mood brings Being to its ‘there’” (BT 173). To avoid falling into endless abstractions, think of “There” not as a physical location (as in, I am here, not there), but a space in which one dwells with unreflective familiarity – the “There” could be the comfort of my home, the context of my culture, or the meaning of my religious affiliation. In every moment, Dasein is entangled in its context. But Dasein must be disposed in a certain way to encounter the world as meaningful. As the translation of *Stimmung* as “attunement” suggests, one must be “in tune” with one’s surroundings, which precludes alienation from the natural world. “Nothing like an affect would come about...if Being-in-the-world, with its state-of-mind, had not already submitted itself to having entities within-the-world ‘matter’ to it in a way which its moods have outlined in advance” (BT 177). So the self’s interchange with the natural world presupposes that the space of the “There” has been disclosed “in advance” of our conscious engagement with it. This concept of the “There” or “the One” (*Das Man*) becomes crucial for understanding Heidegger’s notion of average everydayness and inauthenticity. The “There,” more or less generally speaking, is the social space that Dasein *co-exists* with other Daseins, what he calls “publicness” (*Offenlichkeit*). Once again, Heidegger plays with the root of *Offenlichkeit* to reveal its connection to the word for “Open,” (*Offen*). The public space, then, opens a clearing that always-already exists. As Theodore Schatzki puts it, “Daseins perpetuate an already existent clearing, and doing this is intrinsic to their being” (Schatzki 240). Schatzki’s phrasing makes clear what I have mentioned above with Dasein’s narrative unity with the world, which makes *Stimmung* the concept that articulates this phenomenal clearing as a coherent, preexisting structure of associations, relationships and meanings. Beings can’t be defined in terms of their properties because the

properties have already been interpreted within the clearing – the “phenomenal whole”  
Heidegger is searching for.

But what does this phenomenal “wholeness” really mean? Heidegger makes emphatically clear that his entire project aims at grasping “the totality of the structural whole ontologically” (BT 191). *Stimmung* provides the answer by pointing out a vital distinction between how Dasein perceives the world as an observer and how Dasein understands itself as involved in the world. Via *Stimmung*, Dasein understands its existential structure in the “There” by revealing the world’s thingly contents in a coherent whole. This is where Heidegger radically turns over the subject-object distinction in Western philosophy with his notion of “equipment.” Heidegger’s redefining of thinghood as “equipment” overturns Descartes oft-cited category of *res extensa* (the corporeal substance) as existing outside the mind substance of *res cogitans*. Instead of thinking of Descartes’s external world as a rigid category, standing in opposition to the self – something with properties, attributes, etc. – we need to start thinking about thing substances in a context of relationships, references, signs and meanings. Heidegger’s most famous example of equipment is his description of a hammer (he also uses doors and traffic signals to make a similar point). In order to understand what a hammer is, we must understand it in its context: the aim for which it is used (hammering nails), the setting in which it’s appropriately used (the workshop), and the larger project of which it is a part (building a house). These are the constituent parts of the hammer’s world and existence, and it is only through a practical involvement with the hammer’s world that Dasein can understand Being in the ontological sense. The point of this somewhat mundane example of a hammer is to demonstrate that every entity Dasein understands must exist in a larger structure of Being. The structure for the hammer is its context of involvements in which it makes sense for us – its backdrop, as it were. Dasein, then, is absorbed



in this world of involvements in the sense that it understands how to operate without explicit purpose or instruction – a kind of practical know-how. Heidegger introduces another useful term for thinking about how humans exist in this wordly space: dwelling.

In his essay “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” Heidegger sketches out a peculiar connection between the words building and dwelling. He writes, “Building as dwelling, that is, as being on the earth... remains for man’s everyday experience that which is from the outset ‘habitual’ – we inhabit it, as our language says” (*BDT* 147). Heidegger wants to draw out the etymological connection between the two words to demonstrate how their true meanings really reveal the world. But just as the verb “is” has been obscured by our ignorance of its referent, so too have “building” and “dwelling” lost their true, ontological meanings. *Wohnen* (to dwell or live) is related to *Gewohnte* (to get used to or to habituate oneself). *Ich bin* (I am), Heidegger points out, originally derives its meaning from *bauen* (to build), suggesting that both dwelling and building complement the other. To be is to inhabit a context of meaning that is always-already built. Heidegger goes on to argue that we cannot dwell because we build; rather, we build because we are dwellers. This complementarity of the two terms engenders serious consequences for how we discuss the self’s relationship to the “objective world.” What this enigmatic language of dwelling and building does for the subject-object dichotomy is make the objective a convex to its subjective concave – each defines the other (Daston and Galison 197). Daston and Galison’s trace this metaphorical symbiosis to a recurring tension within the split scientific self – the active and passive, will and world, known and knower. They argue that, epistemologically, these binary categories have always functioned as mutually constitutive. Heidegger, however, pushes on Daston and Galison’s claim by arguing that these categories are *ontologically* indistinct.

But how can the diverse array of particular emotional experiences be explained through a single concept of “attunement?” Heidegger clarifies this with his famous distinction between fear and anxiety. He argues that in order for an object to elicit fear, our belief in its dangerousness is not the only condition of our fear. Rather, as the fundamental mood of Dasein’s existence, anxiety reveals intentional objects as objects that *matter* and concern our condition of Being-in-the-world: “Being-anxious discloses, primordially and directly, the world as world” (BT 232).<sup>4</sup> But anxiety, oddly, has no physiological manifestation if we think about anxiety on the level of the ontological. When objects reveal themselves as dangerous, our underlying existential anxiety translates those intentional objects into objects of fear: “The existential meaning of anxiety is such that it cannot lose itself in something with which it might be concerned. If anything like this happens in a similar state-of-mind, this is fear, which the everyday understanding confuses with anxiety” (BT 394). Heidegger raises a key distinction, then, between everyday particular emotional experience (the ontic level) and the underlying structure of all emotional experience (the ontological level). Everyday experience occurs in the social, public space of “the There” or *Das Man*, as was mentioned above. *Stimmung*, however, works at the ontological level; we can’t adequately explain particular emotional experience without reference to *Stimmung*. Particular emotional experiences (sadness, happiness, grief, love) don’t accomplish the intellectual work Heidegger demands of them. This explains why Heidegger has no concept of emotion in the sense we commonly use. Emotion is just a corollary of mood.

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<sup>4</sup> Sianne Ngai (2005) offers an alternative account of Heidegger’s notion of anxiety. She argues that the priority Heidegger assigns Dasein’s fundamental state-of-mind of anxiety – an affect that “individualizes” Dasein and retrieves it from its fallenness in the “They” – is grounded in Dasein’s passive, “thrown” state of Being. This submission to the asignifying world *as* world allows Dasein to proceed as a self-interpreting agent. Anxiety, then, gives the masculine subject a way of gauging his spatially thrown state and becomes the only state of mind capable of defining the totality of Dasein’s structural whole. Ngai genders anxiety as a masculine phenomenon because only males have traditionally been understood to suffer from Freud’s “castration complex.” Furthermore, Ngai wants us to think about why anxiety occupies such a prominent theoretical position in Western thought and what that tells us about the kind of philosophy we’re doing (209-247).

By way of illustrating the theoretical importance of a concept such as *Stimmung*, cognitive brain science has recently picked up the threads of Heidegger's argument. Relating Heidegger's theory of moods to recent studies of emotion in cognitive neuroscience (predominantly in the work of Antonio Damasio), Matthew Ratcliffe provides a useful clarification, describing Heidegger's moods as analogous to Damasio's notion of "background feelings." According to Ratcliffe's synthesis of Heidegger and Damasio, moods and emotions serve as both a backdrop and an anchor for deliberation and action; moods reveal contexts and goals that we navigate without conscious attention of them. Ratcliffe writes, "Moods are, if you like, the rhythm of life, a quiet metronome, whose beat structures, or "attunes," all our interaction with the world and underlies explicit cognitive deliberation" (Ratcliffe 298). This quiet metronome serves as a useful metaphor for thinking about how anxiety structures our particular emotional experiences – anxiety doesn't feel *like* anything; it illuminates what we can feel. Moods exist, then, on sliding scale of awareness but cannot be separated from cognitive deliberation or reasoning; certain realms of experience *matter* for us more than others precisely because our mood has disclosed them in a certain way. Ratcliffe provides the example of people suffering from Capgras Syndrome, which causes its victims to believe close family members or friends are imposters. Due to damaged neural pathways between the temporal lobes and limbic systems, the disorder demonstrates how emotion creates and designs our perception of those to whom we devote the most attention; familiar faces are dissociated from the emotional response they once elicited (Ratcliffe 301). Our world is constructed and made coherent by the moods in which we are disclosed. Dasein's emotional "submission" to the world allows sensory and conscious experience to be possible: But with Dasein's emotional submission to the world, we begin to see the dangers of a concept such as *Stimmung*.

Anxiety's existential character brings us closer to how Heidegger wants us to think about aesthetics's relationship to affect, and the way in which a notion such as *Stimmung* can arrive at an authentic understanding of Being-in-the-world. Thinking about anxiety as the ground of all particular emotional experiences moves us away from thinking about emotion as a representation of some propositional attitude. This bestows upon *Stimmung* a theoretical primacy by making all thinking experience essentially affective experience. We cannot represent any particular source of anxiety because as soon as we do, our representation of the emotion immediately moves us to an inauthentic mode of Being, which tells us nothing of its structural totality. This distinction between Dasein's authentic and inauthentic levels of emotional experience brings Heidegger to a much more contentious line of argument. Not only does Heidegger see anxiety as the "quiet metronome" of everyday experience; he argues that anxiety constitutes the authentic mood of Dasein's existence. In making this move to authenticity, Heidegger shifts his analysis from a purely descriptive exposition of Being-in-the-world to a normative prognosis. In doing so, we get a concept of mood that totalizes the notion of the individual within the structure of *Stimmung*. At the end, after doing away with subjectivity as a valid epistemological category, we have no concept of personhood. As I will argue in the following sections, the concept that tries to save the subject's substance by restoring its worldliness – which has been revoked by modern philosophy's dematerialization of nature – ultimately oversteps its goal. *Stimmung* loses the individual in its insistence on a circulation with the environment and can only retrieve a notion of individuality by way of a normative argument for authentic selfhood. Underlying an authentic notion of the self is the ontological concept of anxiety.

Authentic anxiety derives from Dasein's understanding of itself as a being whose existence is understood as a possibility – not in the sense of a physical possibility (to be or not to

be), but a narrative possibility. Dasein *is* its possibilities. “Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities” (*BT* 232). This individualizing places Dasein in a narrative of self-understanding. Think of Dasein’s moods as attuned to the narrative structure of a novel. We presume that in order to understand the significance of an event or a particular character’s experience, our attention is *directed* towards the larger narrative structure. This is not to say – blandly – that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, but that the very arrangements of parts becomes significant only by the reader’s continuously shifting position in relation to the before and after of events. We understand ourselves in relation between past, present, and future in which Dasein has and always will be a possibility. That shifting position in relation to the whole constitutes the reader’s world of significance. Heidegger calls this the projection (*Entwurf* or design) of oneself on one’s possibilities, implying that our relative position in the novel continuously designs our whole understanding of it. Experience is therefore always interpreted as something in relation to the parts that give it meaning – in this case, the novel’s setting, characters, tone, style, etc. The parts of the novel, then, being fixed beforehand, are disclosed in Dasein’s mood as things that matter to the narrative more than others.

Heidegger’s distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity carries obvious normative overtones. But Heidegger supplements this division by adding a third category of experience – one that I have mentioned but not fully clarified – that is normatively neutral: the category of everydayness. The first division of *Being and Time* concerns itself entirely with revealing the structure of average everydayness, which does not provide Heidegger the means to achieve his ultimate theoretical goal: to grasp the totality of Dasein’s structural whole. Average everydayness may reveal the self as a being attuned to its environment and social space, but

*Stimmung* reveals only a limited portion of Dasein's world within the public space of the "There." "For the most part, however, [Dasein's] mood is such that its thrownness gets closed off" (BT 321). That portion of everyday that "gets closed off," so to speak, is the structural *Grundstimmung* of anxiety, which our everyday, particular emotional experience covers up. This becomes clearer when we recognize that there is a profound difference between how Dasein perceives and represents itself from an observational standpoint and how Dasein understands itself, unreflectively, as a being thrown in a context of relationships, involvements and interpretations. So what does it mean to pass in and out of authentic, inauthentic and average everyday moods? As Taylor Carman has drawn our attention to, the categories of the inauthentic and the average everyday are not so clear: "Heidegger himself goes on to blur the distinction between indifference and inauthenticity by seeming to dismiss the analysis in the first half of *Being and Time*" (Carman 293). Heidegger writes at the beginning of Division II, "our existential analysis of Dasein up till now cannot lay claim to primordially." Dasein's existential structure "never included more than the inauthentic Being of Dasein, and of Dasein as less than a whole" (BT 276). All we really know about the inauthentic and the everyday is that they cover up some portion of Dasein's authentic experience, meaning their normative status is relatively equal and their differences irrelevant.

Carman's acknowledgement of Heidegger's ambiguity proves instructive for thinking about Heidegger's notion of the authentic, and he provides a provisional interpretation of authenticity. Ultimately, as Carman argues, Heidegger's search for authenticity is a search to find a principle of selfhood that resists assimilation into any overarching, unified concept of selfhood. Carman interprets Heidegger's authenticity (which Heidegger defines in hopelessly abstract fashion as "forerunning resoluteness") as the following: "Attending to the fine-grained details of

the concrete situation and wholeheartedly embracing the inherent inertia and dissolution of possibilities [authenticity] requires that I hold fast to my first-person self-understanding and resist letting it be assimilated into any generic or impersonal conception of people like me in situations like this” (Carman 292). Such an interpretation of Dasein’s selfhood simultaneously emphasizes its finitude yet foregrounds Dasein’s capacity to understand itself in an existential structural totality. Carman sees Heidegger’s authenticity as privileging one’s first person perspective of oneself, not letting the self get caught up in single unified concept as defined by others *like yourself* (*Das Man*). Unlike Carman, however, I argue this is where Heidegger has betrayed his own project of breaking down the divisions of subject and object, exterior and interior.

The problem with *Stimmung* becomes the following: the very concept that opens the self to the world (Heidegger’s notion of *Stimmung*), making Being an ecological entity that operates in exchange with its environment, is simultaneously the concept that erases all identifiable properties from the human. Heidegger is forced to rely on authenticity as the concept to save him from the inauthentic, unreflective practicality of *Das Man* – a level that proves to be theoretically useful but normatively nauseating. Heidegger can’t stomach a theory of average everydayness that contains no liberatory potential. But by positing authenticity, we fall back into asserting a position of first-person objectivity utterly at odds with a concept such as *Stimmung*.

Heidegger’s move to authenticity is a move to free Dasein from the impersonal, social space of “The One” or *Das Man*. But *Das Man* is more than the social space of public life, it is an existential condition of inauthentic, everyday life itself. In the existential space of *Das Man*, there is no third person, first person distinction; we all fall under a generic concept of personhood. As Theodore Schatzki describes it in his essay on Heidegger’s sociality, “[The One]

is a leveling power that reduces human lives to the same and obliterates the line between public and private” (Schatzki 241). Heidegger’s normative argument – to rescue the individual from the generic concept of *Das Man* – undermines the theoretical power of a notion such as *Stimmung* by reaffirming an untenable category of subjectivity.

Although Carman sees authenticity as resisting any universal notion of personhood, *Stimmung* gives us no coherent concept of persons in the first place. So by arguing that authenticity undercuts any definition of the person, Carman is fighting against a concept that has already been defeated. *Stimmung*, as we have seen, disposes of subjectivity in Heidegger’s exposition of average everydayness (Carman neglects to mention *Stimmung* in his essay). This is not to suggest that Carman’s interpretation is incorrect; rather, it misses the problem with authenticity’s denial of personhood. *Stimmung*, in fact, gives us a notion of the authentic self that is defined by the universal mood of anxiety. This universal mood removes any definite concept of person, yet gives us an essential condition of personhood. This seemingly paradoxical formulation contains a more problematic implication, however, in that subjective self-understanding cannot be understood without a historical or cultural mood to condition its self-understanding. Cultural conditions become the ground for totalizing identifies and shared interpretations, meanings, contexts, etc.

Thus the permeability of the concept of *Stimmung* opens it to liabilities: if we are working at the level of the ontological and can’t define the human by way of epistemological properties, we are forced to assert some ontological, essentializing ground. “Man’s ‘substance,’” Heidegger writes, “is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*” (153). While Heidegger is averse to any essentialism, the category of existence does in fact leave us



with an essential, ideal ontological ground. As we will see with Heidegger's aesthetics, this ground is articulated in the historical tension between world and earth.

### Heidegger's Everyday Aesthetics

At the base of Heidegger's notion of ecological affect is an aesthetic question: how does one *represent* his or her emotions to oneself and others. As we have seen, representation is at the heart of modern affect theory (such as Terada has shown us) and theories of emotion. But Heidegger views representation as an obstacle to the explanatory power of *Stimmung* as Dasein's medium of practical and primordial engagement with the world. Representation, as I mentioned above, suggests a selective, formalized framing of some external content or world. Heidegger sees such a definition as a purely "modern" mode of thinking (Heidegger defines modern thinking as a representing), and argues that modern representation "conquers" the represented by distancing the human from its environment, solidifying the faulty stance of subjectivism. He writes in essay "The Age of the World Picture," "The more extensively and the more effectually the world stands at man's disposal as conquered, and the more objectively the object appears, all the more subjectively does the *subiectum* rise up, and all the more impetuously, too, do observation of and teaching about the world chance into a doctrine of man" (*AWP* 133). We see, once again, the theme of alienation cropping up. The dematerialization of nature as a conquered world requires accessing nature at a more fundamental level of experience. So instead of thinking of phenomenological representation as a tool of mediation between subjective and objective, Heidegger introduces a new notion of representation, cohering with how the Greeks once understood it – a form of practical everyday engagement with the world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Average everydayness in Heidegger's later works carries much different normative overtones than the average everydayness of *Being and Time*. My concern here is not with the differences between Heidegger's earlier and later works, but the continuity in Heidegger's search for an essentialist ontological ground of Being that *Stimmung* reveals to us in its phenomenological completeness.

Heidegger reformulates representation as a pre-cognitive apprehending, or allowing oneself to be “borne along” by that which is. “That which is does not come into being at all through the fact that man first looks upon it, in the sense of a representing that has the character of subjective perception. Rather, man is the one who is looked upon by that which is” (*AWP* 131). These enigmatic lines become clearer when we think about what Heidegger means to suggest by describing the world as a “picture.” By apprehending, the Greeks do not stand over and against the world, as though they were observing a work of art, they are “driven about by its opposition and marked by its discord (*AWP* 131). They are contained within the world picture and therefore represented as the picture itself. When Heidegger says that the “that which is” does the looking, he means that the very object of representation articulates how the Greeks think, how they understand themselves, and how they apprehend the world itself. Heidegger turns the meaning of representation on its head. Instead mediating between subjective and objective realms, the represented defines the human who represents, prior to any conscious appraisal. This becomes one of the central claims of Heidegger’s most famous work on aesthetics, “The Origin of the Work of Art.” History is “driven” by the conflict between represented earth and the human who represents her world. In thinking about how Heidegger wants us to use *Stimmung*, we can see a parallel between the aesthetic apprehension of world and *Stimmung*’s illumination of world as an affective topography – both function as an anti-formalist, unreflective means of engagement. This insistence on blending affect and aesthetics leads Heidegger to conceptualize aesthetics as an everyday experience – aesthetic objects don’t just represent but articulate a set of beliefs, cultural practices, and behaviors. We must then ask what we gain by thinking about aesthetics as an everyday experience

By bringing the locus of aesthetics to the phenomenal whole of worldly experience, Heidegger makes the question of aesthetics a question of authenticity. If we understand aesthetics as a pre-cognitive, practical engagement with the world, then aesthetics gets us to the authentic ground of Being-in-the-world. But the focus on the structural totality of everyday aesthetic Being sets up a tension with the notion of the individual, as we have seen: how do we arrive at a concept of personhood if our identity is subsumed under the structure of worldhood itself – always-already represented? Carman helpfully points out that “although Heidegger has helped to free us from an incoherent concept of subjectivity... he nevertheless leaves us without a coherent account of persons” (Carman 292). I will first articulate how Heidegger weds aesthetics with the everyday and what we stand to gain from such an integration, then I will show how the work of P.B. Shelley helps us amend Heidegger’s lack of a coherent concept of personhood.

To help us think about how Heidegger interprets aesthetic experience as a kind of everyday experience, I will begin by examining his most significant contribution to aesthetics, “The Origin of the Work of Art.” At the end of his essay, Heidegger makes a mystifying claim about the nature of art: “All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry” (*OWA* 72). Clearly Heidegger has something different in mind than our traditional notion of poetry. Poetic speech, for Heidegger, acquires a whole new ontological meaning – one which helps us understand how art articulates everyday experience rather than represents a select facet of experience in a formally pleasing way. As with all of Heidegger’s concepts, poetry engages at a more fundamental, ontological level – it is at this level where all art can be subsumed under the category of poetry.

Essential to understanding poetry's ontological dimension is Heidegger's understanding of poetic speech as a kind of bringing-forth of historical beings. In his essay "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger makes a point to use the Greek word *Poeisis*, the root of our modern word "poetry," to describe the "bringing-forth" or "presencing" of being. "Through bringing-forth, the growing things of nature as well as whatever is complete through the crafts and the arts come at any given time to their appearance" (*QCT* 11). This interpretation of poetic speech radically opposes a conception of language as some representational system, a tool for expressing some interior content. Instead of thinking about language and meaning as inhering in the relationship between sign and signified, Heidegger wants us to think about how signs are always-already signified. Meaning exists in the world as a given understanding and given interpretation – a non-verbal practical engagement. Heidegger makes this eminently clear in *Being and Time*'s hermeneutic exposition of worldhood: "'In talking, Dasein expresses itself [spricht sich... aus] not because it has, in the first instance, been encapsulated as something 'internal' over against something outside, but because as Being-in-the-world it is already 'outside' when it understands" (*BT* 205). Subject and object should not be employed in the traditional sense speak about them because the phenomenological categories of inside and outside are already confused. This confusion poses serious ramification for our conception of language. Heidegger provides us with a paradoxical proposition: what gives language its expressive power is its ability to silently bring-forth the nature of being in its pre-cognitive, coherent totality. The "bringing-forth" of *Poesis* makes us think of language as a historical backdrop, something that embosses certain symbols and entities in a coherent, organized manner. So by saying that all art is essentially poetry, Heidegger does not mean this literally, as such an assertion would be a formalist claim. Rather, he means that art – even if it contains no linguistic

elements – performs the same ontological function as language by articulating a set of cultural beliefs and practices that are always-already interpreted as such. This makes *Stimmung* and aesthetics part of the same project. His clearest articulation of this is in his lectures on Nietzsche: “art is grounded in the aesthetic state, which must be grasped physiologically [through the concept of *Stimmung*]... We do not dwell alongside the event as spectators; we ourselves remain within the state” (*Nietzsche* 139). Aesthetics and affect, rooted in Heidegger’s reformulation of representation, are unconscious, articulatory practices that are brought forth through the ontological function of language. This poetic function of bringing-forth is most clearly illustrated in his example of the Greek temple.

Of the three aesthetic exemplars he provides in “On the Origin of the Work of Art,” the Greek temple proves to be the most useful for Heidegger. To understand Van Gogh’s peasant shoes painting and Meyer’s Roman fountain poem would take up an entire essay, so I will keep my focus on the temple. First and foremost, Heidegger sees the temple’s function as anti-representational. It expresses something beyond the artist’s individualized taste or the formal demands of a cultural epoch. The temple is a symbol whose significance is understood only tacitly, yet within this tacit understanding it articulates a set of practices that make sense and matter to us. In this remarkable passage, Heidegger sees the temple as serving the following purpose: “It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being” (*OWA* 42). The temple is not only a reflection, then, of a culture’s values, but constitutes a paradigm in which those values mean something. The articulation of an aesthetic object remains unspoken. Thus the way we understand artistic articulation, the bringing-forth of Being, is not an explicit

interpretation of the art's formal character but the art's organization of a culture's shared practices and behaviors, a pronouncement of what is essential to a human being's existence. The temple gives the culture in which it's embedded its own self-consciousness; it sets up its own world. To use Hubert Dreyfus's concise articulation, "the work of art doesn't *reflect* the style of the culture or create it; it *illuminates* it" (Dreyfus 414). In interpreting aesthetics as an everyday coordination of experience, Heidegger understands the role of aesthetics as an unconscious one – a proposition that seems counterintuitive given our common understanding of aesthetic experience being a limited and bracketed portion of a human's relationship with the beautiful or sublime. To account for the beautiful within the everydayness of aesthetics, Heidegger equates beauty with historical truth.

As the title of the essay indicates, Heidegger is searching for the origin of a work of art, and the word "origin" implies a historicity to the essence of art. Heidegger takes the Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, to make his point. In English, it can be roughly translated as "unconcealedness." To clarify this word, Heidegger introduces the image of a clearing in a forest. As a historical moment in which entities are simultaneously revealed and concealed – as various interpretations strengthen and decay – the clearing never fixes truth as historical fact: "Concealment conceals and dissembles itself. This means: the open place in the midst of beings, the clearing, is never a rigid stage with a permanently raised curtain on which the play of beings runs its course." Rather, "the unconcealedness of beings – this is never a merely existent state, but a happening" (*OWA* 54). This notion of clearing in no way precludes what Heidegger offers us with the concept of dwelling, which gives us a subject in continuous interchange with its environment. The clearing gives us the phenomenal totality that erases the problem of alienation, as the subject is defined in terms of its historical Being. History, then, *reveals* the immediate

environment in which Dasein dwells. Therefore an artwork does not represent; it “unconceals” the truth of historical Being. “That is how self-concealing being is illuminated. Light of this kind joins its shining to and into the work. This shining, joined in the work, is the beautiful. *Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness*” (OWA 56). This “shining” of aesthetic objects suggests that the objects illuminate themselves as beautiful and meaningful as rooted in their historical context. Heidegger doesn’t seem to be saying that beauty is irrelevant in aesthetic appreciation, or that the individual’s experience of the art is faulty; rather, the art is beautiful precisely because it reveals a certain historical Being. The articulation of beauty is “*one way*” in which truth is revealed, not truth itself. Because truth is a happening beauty is simply a mode of truth.

Merely labeling everyday experience “aesthetic” does us no good, however. What makes the move from the everyday to the aesthetic meaningful for Heidegger is the aesthetic’s ability to generate cultural history. If we think of the aesthetic as the unconscious apprehension of given interpretations and meanings, then the movement of cultural history occurs as a tension between that which has been interpreted and that which is yet to be interpreted – what Heidegger calls the eternal struggle of world and earth.

The distinction between world and earth may sound as though Heidegger is falling back to the categories of form and content, subjective representative over and against the objective represented. But since the earth and world are in a continuous tension with one another, Heidegger sees no possibility of reconciliation between the two – the complete appropriation of the thingly, material world by the rational, imagistic representation of it. If we recall Nietzsche’s distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian impulses in *The Birth of Tragedy*, we see a seamless analogy with Heidegger’s notion of world and earth. The Apollonian represents and

rationalizes the plot and characters on the stage of Aeschylus's tragedies, while the Dionysian impulse's absurd, unrelenting life force of resides in the chorus of satyrs – omnipresent and unintelligible (Nietzsche 59). So the set of meanings "gathered" by the temple is always in tension with the material, thingly substance of the temple itself – form and content remain in a vitally asymmetrical relationship, thus generating new and potential meanings. Heidegger writes, "By contrast the temple-work, in setting up a world, does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the Open of the work's world. The rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock" (*OWA* 46). Heidegger seems to be using the rock of the temple more metaphorically here, but the point is that the potentiality of the rock's form engenders an infinite variety of interpretations and meanings precisely because it resists a single use – the material does not simply "disappear." Otherwise, the temple would mean the same thing for us as it did for the Greeks 2,000 years ago. The material "secludes" itself with the gradual decay of its significance: "The self-seclusion of earth... is not a uniform, inflexible staying under cover, but unfolds itself in an inexhaustible variety of simple modes and shapes" (*OWA* 47). As Dreyfus aptly puts it, "And since no interpretation can ever completely capture what the work means, the temple sets up a struggle between earth and world. The result is fruitful in that the conflict of interpretations that ensues generates a culture's history" (Dreyfus 412).

The tension between world and earth reveals an understanding of language and meaning that is vitally relational. What poetic speech and art bring forth to our worlds of concerned understanding – the worlds that *Stimmung* reveals to us to be significant and essential to our everyday dealings – are grounded in an inexorable historical process. This is not to say that Heidegger is advancing any rational, progressive theory of history – to the contrary. History



moves as humanity's paradigmatic, structural interpretation of itself evolves. Going back to Heidegger's assertion in "The Age of the World Picture" that modern man's representational mode of thinking further reinforces the divisions between subjective and objective, we can see how subjectivity – as a valid ground for depicting the world – is merely a transitory paradigm of collective understanding. As Heidegger writes, "Man makes depend upon himself the way in which he must take his stand in relation to whatever is as the objective" (*AWP* 132). With this, the turn to aesthetics makes historical-cultural reality a conflict of interpretations, appearances generating appearances. Heidegger's world is a painting without an artist.

If we have done away with representation as a valid mode of thinking, done away with the subject as a valid category of feeling and aesthetic pleasure, how can we have any notion of personhood left? P.B. Shelley offers a useful modification of Heidegger's theory which gives us an escape route from Heidegger's totalizing of the individual within a cultural historical context. Shelley does so by ironizing the object of intentional representation. If we approach the gap of representation with a suspended belief in its legitimacy, we don't risk losing the individual in an ontological totality.

### **Shelley and the Irony of Essence**

The similarities between Heidegger and Shelley's thought are indeed striking. As we saw with Heidegger's distinction between world and earth, the earth substance (the essence of things) continuously resists the world's imposition of concrete meanings and interpretations. Representation, for Heidegger, ultimately ought to be viewed as a form of apprehension, whereby every interpretation is simultaneously a reinterpretation, not an appropriation of empirical content. History and culture evolve precisely because the human world cannot choose which relationships and symbols are interpreted as such – we are always-already thrown in a

context of involvements. So Heidegger turns to art (specifically poetry) to reveal the historical ground of Being as the “true” ontological ground. By turning to an aesthetics rooted in ontology, Heidegger restores the substance of the subject; that is to say, because representation divides nature and subject, divorcing the objective from the subjective and leaving us with a worldless *cogito*, Heidegger characterizes the subject in terms of its world, thereby restoring the subject’s worldly substance – its involvements, meanings, and interpreted associations. So Heidegger’s aesthetics is ultimately concerned with how an ontological account of art saves the subject from alienation with its world, not an epistemological account of artistic form and content.

Shelley is equally concerned with the limits of representation as an aesthetic mediating tool; he, too, sees the instability of symbols, meaning and language as a representational system. And poetry, for Shelley, serves an ontological function as well. As he writes in the concluding act of *Prometheus Unbound*, “Language is a perpetual Orphic song, / Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng / Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were” (*PU* IV, 415-418). This articulation of senseless, shapeless thought brings-forth, as Heidegger likes to say, the Being of the thoughts themselves. This is not to say that we cannot think without language; rather, language and beings emerge simultaneously. Because language gives shapes to things, Shelley sees it as “vitally metaphorical;” it is the figure of metaphor that gives language its potential to generate new meanings, cultural significance, and contexts. Shelley sees language as continuously restoring and reconfiguring this worldly substance, hinging the definition of the subject on its narrative unity with the world. Jerrold Hogle aptly highlights Shelley’s understanding of metaphor as containing both productive and historical power: “metaphor does make us live both ‘in the future and in the past; it strives to rename something to which it would return as to a center, yet it only repeats with a difference, looking ahead to another translation

that may complete its effort even as it looks back to what seems a lost origin” (Hogle 67). This continuous decentering and centering of things and words, mind and world suggests that every interpretation will yield yet another “unapprehended relation” between things, moving history inexorably forward. A cross-fertilization of Shelley and Heidegger illuminates representation as a form of articulating pre-existing, always-already interpreted associations in which the subject understands itself; this gives us a notion of the subject that is not merely a hollow Cartesian “I,” nor a Kantian synthesis of intuitions – both of which direct our focus to the world’s epistemological status. Rather, the subject regains an aesthetic and ontological richness as a being defined through a collective narrative rather than a classification of properties. *Heidegger wants us to think of narrative as ontological*. Looking at Shelley through the prism of Heidegger allows us to see Shelley’s language as a form of ontological presencing: by severing the relationship between words and things (understanding our speech as vitally metaphorical, as words always return to things with a difference), we presence ourselves ontologically as a narrative whole, irreducible to properties or epistemological categories.

A Heideggerian take on Shelley gives us more than deconstructionists are willing to provide: interpreting Shelley’s language as an abyss of deferred meanings only gives us half the picture. If we think of language only as a succession of deferrals, language must remain a representational system – language tells us nothing about ontology. But if we think about Shelley’s language as an articulation of senseless, shapeless thought, then language brings forth Being – as a narrative – giving language an ontological function. At stake in this comparison is the question of how far we are willing to take ontology. Shelley ultimately provides a useful way of salvaging representation from Heidegger’s indictment. But he salvages it in an

epistemological fashion, arguing that representation can make ontological claims only if employed ironically.

For my purposes, a comparison between Heidegger and Shelley proves instructive for two reasons: 1) Shelley helps us make sense of Heidegger's reformulation of representation. By identifying the historicity of metaphor, Shelley gives us a way of thinking about how language ontologizes Being that specifies what Heidegger means when *Stimmung* gives voice to beings: as Shelley writes in *Prometheus Unbound*, "Speech created thought, / which is the measure of the universe (*PU* IV, 72-73). Speech, according to Shelley and Heidegger, articulates a coherent phenomenal whole of experience, but in a space – the clearing of the "There" – that is finite. So a "measure of the universe" is both the articulated historical ground (the measure) and the infinite space of possibility (the universe) that generates the tension between world and earth. This tension is vital because, as we have seen, language's ontological function hinges on the figure of metaphor – metaphor assumes a tension between thing and word, thought and nature analogous to the tension between world and earth. But what makes metaphor so powerful for Shelley is its recognition that to ask for anything more fundamental than the word itself is to ask for too much. To ask that the word represent the thing itself is more than we need. It is here where we see Shelley diverge from Heidegger in one essential respect. 2) Instead of viewing representation as an obstacle to arriving at an ontological account of Dasein's worldly, affective dwelling, Shelley uses representation ironically to try and understand *what to do* about gap between ideal ontology and its representation. Shelley argues, in essence, if the truth of our representation hinges on the untruth of our representational system, there is no deeper ontological level to arrive at, only an epistemological level that acts *as if* it were representing some ontological content – the question is how to treat this ontological-epistemological gap. And an ironic treatment requires a

suspension of our belief in representation's reliability. The difference between the two thinkers, then, hinges on the question of whether we can get outside of representation. Unlike Heidegger's deep skepticism of representation providing any access to ontology, Shelley views the irony of representation as a therapeutic mending of the gap between subject and object. We therefore find Shelley seeking psychological consolation rather than an ontological fix. Before examining the ways in which Shelley modifies Heidegger's ontology, though, we must see how a cross-fertilization of the two thinkers help us think about language as both a form of ontological articulation – a bringing-forth of preexisting associations, to recall Heidegger's use of the Greek *poesis* – and a continuous deferral of meaning, making metaphor the figure driving the self's narrative history forward. That every interpretation is simultaneously a reinterpretation does not mean we must take away the ontological ground all together. The point I wish to emphasize with Shelley's ironic representation is that, by accreting bottomless layers of similes and metaphors, we receive a picture of the world that appears to restore the ontological worldliness of the subject (every surface presencing yet another surface), and maintains the desire to reach that ground, but recognizes the irony endemic to metaphor's endless deferral of meaning by way of these accreted similes.

Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias" gives us a way of looking at language as both an ironic representational system and an illumination of historical beings. Shelley helps us think about Heidegger's reformulation of representation as an involvement in the "world picture" rather than an objectification of the picture itself. To objectify the picture is to further hollow out the substance of the subject, as the more objective the object appears the more worldless the subject becomes (*AWP* 131). As we recall from Heidegger's claim in "On the Origin of the Work of Art" that "all art is... essentially poetry," the ontological function of poetry is not to literally signify

through written or spoken word. Everyday experience is aesthetic because language articulates an *unspoken* understanding of an individual's cultural coordinates: the series of preexisting associations, relationships, references, contexts etc. Aesthetics is the paradigm for collective self-understanding. In *Ozymandias* (the Greek name for the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II), Shelley gives us an aesthetic object (the ruins of Ramses's statue) which articulates a set of relationships and contextual meaning extending beyond the sculptor's representation of the Pharaoh's expressions. The sculptor's relationship with the aesthetic medium illuminates, rather than reflects, a kind of historical mood. And it is a mood much different than the Ramses would want history to see, making the meaning of his "shattered visage" extend far beyond the interests of the ruling class. By illumination, then, we see both what the Pharaoh intends to represent and how the sculptor (and his fellow Hebrew slaves) relate to the aesthetic object; it becomes, as Heidegger would want to point out, a point of psychological coordination.

This aestheticizing of Ramses's head calls into question how Shelley himself frames his representation of the statue. Indeed, Shelley's framing of the poem is vital to understanding the logic behind his representational system. Representation always brackets the potential of what we can and cannot know. Any reader of Platonic dialogues will see a similarity with the way in which Shelley frames the depiction of the object as three steps removed from the reader's aesthetic engagement with it: the narrator introduces us to the traveler from the antique land – whose speech consumes all but the first two lines of the poem – who gives us the thoughts of the sculptor as he expresses them on the sculpture of Ramses's face: "Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown, / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command, / Tell that its sculptor well those passions read / Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things, The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed," (*OZY* 4-8). Such an immense gap between the sculptor's reading of

Ramses's passions, the traveler's account of the sculptor's representation, and the narrator's account to the readers may seem an impossible chasm to bridge, if we really wish to know of Ramses' passions.

A Heideggerian approach to the poem helps us see both what Shelley is searching for and what Heidegger is trying to do with an ontological notion of representation: we are not concerned with the actuality of Ramses's passions – their content, and interiority – only the context of relationships they illuminate. Heidegger would be interested in the historical mood the sculptor's "mocking" hand reveals. Presumably, the sculptor was a slave tasked with designing a massive effigy of the king. The mocking refers to the collective resentment of the Hebrew slaves, which "unconceals" – to use Heidegger's technical term – the truth of the broader cultural ethos. Ramses's passions "yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things" because the sculptor has represented his own relationship with Ramses's figure rather than just the properties of the face itself. Once again, the thingly, lifeless structure of earth crops up in tension with the interpreted, meaningful realm of worldly things. So the meaning we derive from the poem is precisely the kind of ontological, historical articulation Heidegger and Shelley want us to think about; the poem is an existential, structural understanding of the beliefs, emotions, and power associated with Ramses's rule. And is because we perceive (though far removed) the sculptor's mocking intentions on Ramses face that the sculptor's world opens up for us. The ontological presencing of his narrative demands that we critique Ramses's rule and the univocal meaning Ramses intended his statute to represent – a signifier of immutable omnipotence. Recalling Heidegger's analysis of C.F. Meyer's poem "Roman Fountain" in "On the Origin of the Work of Art:" "The work, therefore, is not the reproduction of some particular entity that happens to be present at any given time; it is, on the contrary, the reproduction of the thing's general essence" (*OWA* 37).

Reproduction of a thing's essence suggests not the essence of the thing itself (as that would collapse Heidegger's distinction between world and earth), but a reproduction of the relation between thing and word, thought and being that produced such an understanding of the thing represented. Bringing us back to the unspoken, ontological function of language, Ramses's shattered visage articulates a series of relationships whose shared, historical understanding brings forth the essence of the statue, but only so long as essence is understood as a form of relationality.

There is another way of viewing the sculptor's mocking hand, however, which tends closer to the function of representation Shelley wants us to think about. Not only does it reveal the relationship between the sculptor and Ramses, it reveals how representation itself can be a form of mocking. This is the irony to which Shelley is attuned in every act of representation. And it allows us to see Shelley's hesitance in adopting Heidegger's reformulation of representation as an ideal and essential ontology.

For Shelley, the way around representation is to constantly remind oneself of representation's limits. The question is not whether the gap between objective and subjective exists, but what to do about the gap. So Shelley's treatment of the problem becomes an ethical question. How do we comport ourselves toward a gap of representation that is ultimately a parallax, to use Žižek's term? To label the gap a parallax is to recognize the impossibility of a literal suture but not disregard the desire for an ideal ontology or essence. Taking the desire for a suture seriously requires us to frame the gap in terms of ontology but act on the basis of epistemology. Shelley's ethical treatment gives us a way coping with the problem without giving us a rigid moral framework to adhere by, thus not giving us any ontological assertions about the world present-at-hand. Indeed, Shelley is explicitly unwilling to offer us any normative guidance



on how to deal with the gap of representation. As Marlon Ross points out, Shelley makes a clear distinction between poetry with a didactic aim (poetry pushing readers towards moral action and reform) and poetry with didactic content (poetry advancing some ideological agenda) (Ross 114). The didactic aim of Shelley's poetry, then, is to cope with the gap of representation between word and thought, mind and world by embracing the gap itself.

As we know from Shelley's oft-quoted lines on the poet's "vitally metaphorical" language, perpetuating the reconfiguration of words and things drives the previously unapprehended relation of things forward, continuously reinforcing the gap. So the moral function of poetry becomes the nourishing of the moral imagination by "rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought" (*Defense* 517). In his brief essay "Speculations on Morals," Shelley sees the capaciousness of imaginative power as the very source of difference among virtuous and ignoble characters: "The only distinction between the selfish man, and the virtuous man, is that the imagination of the former is confined within a narrow limit, whilst that of the latter embraces a comprehensive circumference" (*Speculations* 75). We see, again, in the *Defense* this emphasis on "replenishing the imagination with "thoughts of ever new delight" (*Defense* 517). Looking at the line of thought through these few passages, we see that the ironic suspension of the gap nourishes the imagination as well as informs our moral character. But this ironic suspension is by no means automatic; it requires a kind of psychological resoluteness. As Ross points out, "We must tend self-consciously to how the concatenation of words can work against the correspondence of word and thing" (Ross 121). Shelley is acutely aware of the tendency to unconsciously take words and things as a unidirectional correspondence. As Shelley draws our attention to in his epic *Prometheus Unbound*, when we take the literal representation of symbols as their true and essential meaning,

the correspondence between words and things becomes “tyrannical” – they confine the imagination within “a narrow limit.” Susan Brisband aptly summarizes the function of “Promethean voice” – the way Shelley wants us to think about language: “Promethean voice is always reclaiming speech from a language of reference, where words are assumed to have stronger relations to the objects and thoughts they represent than to one another” (Brisband 59). Thus the didactic aim of Shelley’s poetry is to ironically distance ourselves from the promises language makes on its ability to accurately represent the world. As we saw with the sculptor’s mocking hand, the poet’s attitude must not fully invest in the truth of the represented object. If we begin to think of Shelley’s solution to the representation dilemma as a question concerning moral psychology, we find Heidegger and Shelley incommensurably at odds. Heidegger sees the traditional concept of representation as evacuating any authentic self-understanding, while the violence done to the apprehended object, for Shelley, is the very condition of the imagination’s expansion and thus moral development.

Because Shelley sees the individual’s moral power as that which self-consciously tends against the literal correspondence between words and things, Shelley demands of us a new approach to epistemological problems. By giving us an ironized epistemological approach to an ontological aesthetics, Shelley maintains subjectivity as a valid category but suspends its reliability by acknowledging the tenuous correspondence between language and thought. In his poem “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,” we see Shelley using a form of representation that ironizes the ontological status of the hymn’s subject, intellectual beauty, and complicates the relationship between collective and individual – a distinction Heidegger finds no need to explicate given his tendency to subsume art and *Stimmung* under the collective social space in which Dasein dwells.

The first – most obvious – indication of this irony is Shelley’s decision to write the poem as a hymn, which is ironic given the hymn’s substitution of a religious subject for “intellectual beauty.” It could be easily argued that Shelley’s intellectual beauty is some Platonic form of beauty– the hymn serving as a collective imitation of beauty itself. However, such a reading is immediately undermined by the complicated ontological status Shelley gives the object of intellectual beauty. He introduces it as an “unseen Power,” then immediately turns “unseen” into a simile: “Floats *though* unseen amongst us.” The power of intellectual beauty occupies a plane of sight both seen and unseen, as the modification of the first line with a simile implies that we must be seeing something. Shelley employs the form of the hymn to ironize the object we’re praising: unlike God or some ideal Platonic form of beauty, intellectual beauty passes in and out of material and immaterial existence, which should make us uneasy, for a hymn praising a physical object becomes a kind of paganism. By calling the form of representation into doubt (in this case, the limits of what a hymn allows us to praise), Shelley wants us to think about what kind of claims representation can make on the ontological status of external reality. For both Shelley and Heidegger, representation only makes false promises about reaching the underlying essence and truth of things. Unlike Heidegger, though, Shelley finds no need to redefine representation to accommodate a notion of ontological essence, because representation already presumes essence to be unattainable.

The remaining lines in the first stanza further complicate the representation of beauty. We notice, first and foremost, that readers must wade through the layers of imagistic representation. There are five lines in total that begin as a simile: “Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower... / Like hues and harmonies of evening, -- / Like clouds in starlight widely spread, -- / Like memory of music fled, -- / Like aught that for its grace may be” (*HIB* 7-

11). The most straightforward interpretation of Shelley's proliferation of metaphor is the deconstructionist account: the unrelenting onslaught of similes defers the meaning of intellectual beauty, making the absence of any direct representation the very space we suffuse with meaning. The metaphors circle their intentional object; but because metaphor resists intentionality, there's no expectation that we actually reach the object referred to. Recall Shelley's line in *Defense*, "Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of meaning never exposed" (*DOP* 528). Thus the deconstructionist account gives us countless ways of thinking about how Shelley wants to conceive of language, because deconstruction sees meaning as transpiring through deferral rather than reference. But it still emphatically resists making any claims about ontology itself. Beauty is the veil of representation itself, not anything outside of or beyond it. By the second stanza, Shelley personifies intellectual beauty as the Spirit of Beauty, but this, too, gets us no closer to a direct representation of the spirit's beauty; the second stanza laments the flight of the Spirit – the personification both offers and takes away any potential knowledge of the Spirit itself. So if representation only gives us one of many bottomless veils of representation, making our approach to the gap in representation the space where we suffuse our self-understanding. I wish to draw our attention past this point on language as a continuous deferral of meaning and bring our attention back to the idea of the poem expressing a collective voice. The collective nature of the hymn sets up a tension between the narrator's emergence in the fifth stanza that can help give us a clue to how Shelley legitimizes an epistemology that neither alienates the subject from the natural world nor subsumes her within an ontological grid of historical progression.

Two lines stick out in the first stanza that complicate the unity of the hymn: "As summer winds that creep from flower to flower... / It visits with inconstant glance / Each human heart and countenance" (*HIB* 4; 6) These lines are striking because they point to intellectual beauty as

visiting individuals – for a poem that flatly identifies itself as a hymn, such a tension between collective and individual seems conspicuous. This tension becomes more jarring when Shelley reveals the narrator in the first person in stanza five. For a form usually expressed by a collective body, how can the poem switch suddenly to the first person? This tension tells us, first and foremost, that the form of representation Shelley is employing is subject to the poet's own narrative – as we saw with Shelley's notion of metaphor, the narrative is always subject to new and conflicting interpretations of unapprehended relations. So the narrator's appearance in stanza five to give us his personal account of encountering intellectual beauty is simply one account among many. Shelley's ironic representation of intellectual beauty existing in a murky ontological space is in part a reflection of his self-consciousness to the form in which he is presenting the object. Shelley acknowledges his interpretation as yet another reinterpretation: "Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers / Of studious zeal or love's delight / Outwatched with me the envious night" (*HIB* 65-67). The phantoms to whom Shelley refers seem to provide a preexisting, interpreted narrative that Shelley reconfigures with his poetry. Recalling his line from the *Defense*, "The story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures and distorts that which should be beautiful: Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted" (*DOP* 515). The Spirit of Beauty, then, seems to have always been distorted, as its ontological status is consistently vague. But to self-consciously approach the gap of representation as if it were reliable is what allows Shelley to maintain the epistemological legitimacy of subjective, individual representation.

## Conclusion

Beginning as an examination of the ways in which *Stimmung* restores the subject's worldly substance by creating a circulation of people and their environment, this essay has

broadly characterized the fields of affect theory and aesthetics as engaged in the same philosophical project: erasing the oppositional categories of subject/object, interior/exterior, thought/ being. But the wedding of aesthetics and affect has done more for us than simply break down these faulty theoretical dichotomies. As we have seen, underlying both fields of affect and aesthetics is the problematic philosophical notion of representation. By critiquing representation as a mediating tool between subjective and objective states – arguing that a category of subjectivity further crystallizes the objectivity of the object – Heidegger allows aesthetics and affect to speak to one another at the ontological rather than epistemological level. In order to accomplish this, we needed to understand how Heidegger upends our traditional notions of representation by radically rethinking aesthetics. Heidegger’s reformulation of representation as apprehension prioritizes the represented over the subject representing. Paintings create the artist, as it were. That, in turn, allows us to conceive of the subject’s engagement with the world at a practical, pre-cognitive level of involvement, making the phenomenal content of the subjectivity indistinguishable from the subject’s involvement with its environment. So Heidegger draws the question of representation back to ontology, as the subject is always already thrown in a system and paradigm of meanings, signs and contexts. The ontological turn is significant not only because it reorients the trajectory of modern philosophy; it also defines the subject in terms of its existential structure – a “thrown projection” – rather than a thing possessing certain properties (such as consciousness, reason and speech). Heidegger’s Dasein exists in a narrative unity with the world, and Dasein’s narrative is itself ontological. This is the case because Heidegger’s subject must be conceived as a subject without physical, ontic properties. Within the realm of affect, then, Heidegger’s property-less subject helps us think about a level of analysis previously bypassed by modern theories of affect and emotion. As an ontological concept, *Stimmung* forces

us to conceive of emotion as a kind of condition of experiential possibility. Dasein gives us a topology of moods, so to speak, that organizes the world in a coherent system – a system organized by our emotional submission to the relationships and contexts we confront.

But no sooner does Heidegger offer us an escape route from modern philosophy's nagging alienation problem – that subject and nature remain irrevocably severed – does he find his contribution normatively bankrupt. *Stimmung* may reveal the world in its coherent unity, but it covers up the world *as* world; that is, *Stimmung* covers up the phenomenal wholeness of Being-in-the-world (an existential entity with the characteristics of state-of-mind, understanding, discourse and fallenness) by causing Dasein to “flee” from its authentic self-understanding. Only the fundamental existential mood of anxiety reveals to us the authentic nature of Dasein's Being-in-the-world – a being defined in terms of its possibility. By making this normatively loaded move to the authentic, Heidegger cannot retrieve a notion of personhood that is conceptually coherent. That Heidegger oversteps the scope of his project underscores the hazards of shifting all philosophical analysis to the realm of ontology. P.B. Shelley, however, offers an intriguing alternative to Heidegger's problem: Shelley maintains the importance of ontology but ironizes representational systems as a mediating tool between subjective and objective. If we take the content of our representational system to be what really *is*, the gap between sign and signified becomes morally problematic. If we adopt a certain approach to the gap, however – a suspension of belief in its reliability – we don't run the risk of subsuming all Being under an incoherent ontology.

By putting aesthetics and affect into conversation, we have peeled back the layered philosophical assumptions to reveal a vital complementarity between the two. Moreover, we have been able to consider aesthetic emotions as much more than an individual's relationship

with the beautiful and sublime. Aesthetics articulates and structures everyday affective life. And modern affect theory is deeply indebted to Heidegger for contributing such an insight. This paper has also helped us think about the deeper philosophical problems underlying both fields of affect and aesthetics. Modern philosophy's alienation problem re-emerges when we examine the philosophical roots of emotion and aesthetics, and Heidegger and Shelley are acutely aware of the dangers representation poses for both fields. Consistent with many continental thinkers since Kant, we see Heidegger and Shelley turning back to aesthetics to solve some of philosophy's most persistent problems.



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