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Reclaiming Individuality from the Homogenous Mass

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Reclaiming Individuality from the Homogenous Mass

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Reclaiming Individuality from the Homogenous Mass

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The modern project has succeeded in creating a world that is more democratic and egalitarian than ever before on the back of the technological domination of both nature and man. As a result, people have been drawn into a universal homogenous mode of being, losing their individuality and peoplehood in the process. Both Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger offer modes of thinking that allow the individual to recapture their true self and become distinguishable from the masses. Nietzsche's overman and Heidegger's authentic self are both means to becoming your best individual self, free from both the *rabble* and *theyself*. Although these means offer comparable ends, they differentiate themselves in the ways in which the ends are achieved. Nietzsche's overman is achieved, according to Heidegger, in a much more active manner that focuses on overcoming as opposed to the more passive manner in which Heidegger's authentic self is achieved by letting Being be. Although they have their differences, the beauty of these ideas lies in their ability to help us rethink selfhood and reclaim individuality in a historically unique, and modern environment.

Both Nietzsche and Heidegger's philosophies center around a critique of the modern project, and the world that it has created. A common theme in both philosopher's writings, is how the technological domination of nature and man has resulted in an egalitarian, globalized world in which people have lost their individual identities in exchange for being a part of a homogeneous collective. Because we can now receive news from all over the world, easily travel across the globe, share cultures with just a click and so on, people have lost their individual selves in exchange for a global identity. Each philosopher is in complete disagreement with the modern project and offers a means to reobtaining the individuality that we have tragically lost.

One of Martin Heidegger's most popular and useful ideas is his concept of one's authentic self. Throughout his critique of the modern project, Heidegger speaks about what he calls "theyself." Theyself is a superficial, socialized mode of being that the individual succumbs to when they fail to get over their "thrownness" and instead follow the "chatter." According to Heidegger, the chatter is what we see every day on TVs, in newspapers, and hear when talking to other people already apart of theyself. Heidegger argues that at the beginning of everybody's life, they are thrown into a world and time in which they had no part of choosing. This world we are thrown into is made up of a particular and narrow social structure surrounded by specific prejudices and necessities that we have no say or control over. This thrownness can include frustrations and needs that one does not choose, such as social responsibilities or ties of family. Heidegger offers a solution to this thrownness by understanding it and getting past it to a more authentic selfhood outside of theyself.

In order to overcome one's thrownness into the world and escape theyself, Heidegger suggests that we focus on our own death, *das-nichts* or the nothing. One of the reasons we succumb to theyself is because we are scared of death and in turn choose not to think about it by smothering our connection to Being with chatter. Heidegger suggests that we allow the anxiety that is felt while considering death, to become omnipresent as a constant reminder that the finality of death is always present, and always possible. This anxiety helps the individual forget about the inauthentic theyself and start to focus more inwardly on what matters to the individual authentic self. It is only when we realize that no one can save us from the nothing, that we are most likely to start living for ourselves. This requires not only a constant focus of Being towards death, but also an understanding of the nothing, something that is impossible to do metaphysically in the modern project.

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Similar to Heidegger's idea of gaining one's authentic selfhood, is the goal of Nietzsche's future philosophy, the overman. The overman is the antithesis to the last man who only lives for a long comfortable life filled with good sleep. The overman is a future philosopher who is more psychologically strong, and truthful than ever before that has reclaimed nobility. In order to overcome yourself and become the overman, you must overcome the spirit of gravity, spirit of revenge, and nausea. These spirits embody our fear of death, disdain for time and pity for others that inhibit the way we live our day to day lives. The spirit of revenge is our inability to affirm the past, so in turn we allow ourselves to be dragged down by it. The spirit of gravity focuses more on the way our fear of death drags us down into the despairing and nihilistic attitude which we succumb too. Nausea refers to the pity we feel when considering pitiful beings, despite the fact that there will always be someone or something to pity. We must overcome these attitudes by accessing the will-to-power if we ever hope to reach a new future, and to overcome ourselves. In order to overcome these spirits, we must deconstruct and forget our past and innocently will a new future. It is only after this deconstruction and innocent creation that the possibility of a new, grounded time of a future philosophy can be realized.

Another important aspect of Nietzsche's future philosophy is the idea of affirming the Earth. Throughout modernity, humans have always negated our existence with the earth for the belief that we exist on the earth. This idea manifests itself in modern man's belief in the afterworld, most commonly a Christian heaven, and in our technological domination of the planet. Heidegger strongly agreed with this idea of affirming the earth and existing with it, instead of on it. Although described slightly differently, both philosophers agree that linear progression of modernity has clouded our view of our existence as well as inhibited the way we think and conduct our daily lives. Both Nietzsche's overman and Heidegger's authentic self are these authors solutions to the issue of homogenous wordlessness that modernity has imposed.

Although the goal of these ideas the same, escaping the problem modernity created, the ways in which Nietzsche and Heidegger believe we do so are different. One of Heidegger's most in depth critiques of modernity, is his critique of metaphysical thought. He believes that our language, the house of Being, and our metaphysical thinking have made it nearly impossible for us to get outside of modern tradition because they are both, at this point, modern. He critiques Nietzsche's overman on the grounds that he believes it is still metaphysical. Nietzsche emphasizes an active overcoming of self in order to become the overman, or as Heidegger would say, willful creators in the realm of Being. Nietzsche's belief in these creators that would possess the ability to will new myths is inherently metaphysical to Heidegger because they would supposedly be creating Being as opposed to allow it to come to presence.

Heidegger believes in a much more withdrawn mode of Being in order to take a step forward. Instead of willful creators who have already overcome themselves, Heidegger believes that we must simply allow Being to be. Humans existence, Dasein, is nothing more than a clearing in the woods for Being to come to presence. If we act this way after getting past our thrownness and escaping the chatter, we will be left with the ability to participate the truth revealing activities in order to reveal to ourselves what we believe to be "the good." Truth revealing activities can be anything from poetry and fine art to walking through the countryside. When a group of people hold a shared idea of what "the good" is, this what defines our peoplehood, and our world. Heidegger believes that the modern concepts of nationhood and cosmopolitan society inhibit the presencing of Being, where as a peoplehood that dwells is capable of being in touch with and allowing Being too presence.

Both Fredrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger agree that our linear modern progression, in which technology has revealed our Being, has been a mistake. This modern project has resulted in an unaffirmed world of wordless, ungrounded and homogeneous peoples. Because they have no ground to stand on, they slip into theyself by way of the chatter and into the dishonorable rabble. Both theyself, and the rabble are the results of modernity, and the issues it imposes on Being. Heidegger and Nietzsche

also agree that we must change if we hope to get to a brighter future. Nietzsche argues that the change must be willed by individuals who have overcome themselves, as opposed to Heidegger's belief that we must simply deconstruct the old and allow Being to presence itself through our existence. Although these methods do slightly differ, the sentiment that human history has stagnated, and that people are no longer readily able to live in an authentic manner remains true. Despite their differences both the overman and the authentic man provide ways for us to take steps forward, to a time where history can start up again.