



JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, POLICY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

Volume 2, Number 2 (June, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3043-4211 (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: May 06, 2026 Accepted: June 13, 2026 Published: June 30, 2026

Citation: Okwa, Oche A. & Anjov, Terfa K. "Dasein's Temporality Within the Scope of Heideggerian Ontology." *Journal of Philosophy, Policy and Strategic Studies*, 2 (2): 83-94.

Article

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DASEIN'S TEMPORALITY WITHIN THE SCOPE OF HEIDEGGERIAN ONTOLOGY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine how the phenomenon of death gives meaning to live and inspire authentic human existence. As beings come into existence, they already inherently possess their potential for non-being. In this way, death becomes an inescapable event. The research explores how this event shapes our lives and to what extent one can maximize this event to live an authentic life. The philosophical enterprise took root with questions that bothered on the origin of 'all things'; this was the same questions that motivated Heidegger in his attempt towards explicating and restating the question of Being. However, Heidegger's ontology centred on the meaning and purpose of Being rather than its origin. Pondering on the purpose of the human life presents us with a seeming paradox: is there a purpose for my existence or am I just 'there'? The paper argues that that life is lived in 'angst' (dread) of nothingness (death), dread of an inescapable temporality of Being; and that through this 'angst' we are necessitated, and should be necessitated, towards living authentic lives. But then what does it even mean to be authentic? This paper attempts to explore these questions within the framework of Heidegger's postulation of Dasein's temporality.

Keywords: Temporality, Authenticity, Inauthenticity, Dasein, Being-towards-death

Introduction

The concept of death has become so shadowed that these days it is only talked about upon the news of a person's departure or at his burial. This reality (death) is often swept under the carpet as a means of hiding from the dread of its imminence. It is also often said that the

only subject upon which philosophers are at an agreement is death¹. The reason for this is not far-fetched: death is the only characteristic phenomenon in man which is indubitably certain to occur whether it is thought of or not as death is the inevitability of the true taste of living. Upon this backdrop, the researcher can in confidence say that the only thing we know about every individual, even a stranger one is just meeting, is that the individual will die some day. This may sound morbid, but it goes to accept with Heidegger's contention that "it is only through the recognition and acceptance of one's characteristic as a being-towards-death that one can actually live an authentic life".² Apart from the Biblical myths of longevity which hold that there were individuals who lived very long lives. For example, "Methuselah lived for 969 years".³ The *Guinness World Record* holds that "The oldest living person whose date of birth can be authenticated is Maria Branyas Morera. She currently resides in Spain. She was 117 years 51 days as of 24 April, 2024."⁴ Based on the above record, we can categorically state that every individual on earth right now was non-existent four hundred years ago. Every individual on earth, as at now, will be non-existent in four hundred years from now. This fact brings to the fore the fundamental characteristic of man; every man is characterized by a duration which has a start with birth as well as an end in death. Thus, one can state that man exists on earth only within a period. At this point, we can take the words of Scripture to elucidate this idea: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; ..." ⁵ This can be interpreted in philosophical parlance as a time for coming into existence and a time for going out of existence. The questions that arise from these established facts are: What is the meaning of our existence? What is the meaning of this temporal character of a human being? What is the meaning of life in general? Or to put it metaphysically as Heidegger did: "What is the meaning of Being?"

Philosophy no doubt is borne out of wonder and an incessant desire to know for the benefit of increasing human understanding. Little wonder then, Aristotle's first words in his "Metaphysics" were: "All men by nature are actuated with the desire of knowledge".⁶ Nevertheless, this quest for knowledge was exemplified in the lives of the Pre-Socratics in their search for the "ultimate stuff from which all things come"⁷ prior to Aristotle's existence. However, the Pre-Socratics used the lenses of the cosmos to give meaning to existence which earned them the title, "Cosmologists". Consequently, their views expressed that everything that 'is' and its meaning is founded upon water (Thales), air (Anaximenes), and the boundless (Anaximander). In The medieval era, the meaning and purpose of man is found only in relation to God. The idea of "man as a being-in-itself"⁸ was shadowed by such a Theocentric orientation. This Theocentric position and foundation was shaken with the

¹At least we can say that it is agreed that the phenomenon of death is real, as to what occurs after this phenomenon (afterlife), or what occurs right before the phenomenon of death (near death experience) there is no agreement.

² Heidegger, Martin (1949). *Existence and Being*. With an introduction by Werner Brock, London: Vision Press Ltd. 70

³ Gen. 5: 21-27 (Revised Standard Version).

⁴ *Guinness World Record*. "The Oldest Living Person". <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/84549-oldest-person-living>

⁵All subsequent Biblical quotations will be taken from the "Revised Standard Version" of the Holy Bible.

⁶ Aristotle (1991). *The Metaphysics*. A Translation by John H. McMahon, New York: Prometheus Books. 11.

⁷ Composita, Dario (1990). *History of Ancient Philosophy*. Bangalore: Theological Publications. 17.

⁸ "Man as a Being-in-itself" here refers to the examination of man in his nature (or essence) independent of any 'Being' such as the Christian God.

philosophical re-birth of the modern era – otherwise referred to as the ‘Renaissance’ period – which was characterised by an Anthropocentric conception; the study of man as man.

Anthropocentric approach towards philosophical enquiries reached its peak in the contemporary era in which Heidegger is found searching into the intrinsic meaning of Being. He uses *Dasein* as an opening into the understanding of reality – the understanding of Being. For Heidegger, the being that we should begin our investigation with is the being that asks the question “what does it mean to be?”⁹ As a corollary to the aforementioned, Heidegger opines that the meaning of the being of *Dasein* is found in its “primordial characteristic”¹⁰; that is, *Dasein*’s temporality. In order to explicate the idea and intrinsic existential meaning of death, which is the crux of this paper, there is need to examine the concept of *Dasein*. This examination will guide the reader to appreciate the meaning to the full when Heidegger says *Dasein* is a being-towards-death. The grounds for this clarification include the ontological exposition of the possibility of experiencing the death of others. Upon this background, the existential meaning of death as against the biological meaning of death shall be discussed, from whence the discussion on being-towards-death vis-à-vis *Dasein*’s authenticity shall be brought to the fore. This shall lead us to the discussion on the relevance of Heideggerian concept of temporality to the contemporary human being.

Understanding the Concept of *Dasein*

Heidegger uses *Dasein* as a unique neology to refer to the being of humans for a very important reason. Etymologically, *Dasein* is a coinage from two German words, “*da*” and “*sein*”; which translates to “there” and “being” respectively. Put together, this forms the phrase “being there”. Heidegger opines that “man is a being open to many possibilities to choose and define our future “beingness” upon discovering ourselves in the world”.¹¹ Succinctly, we are a being-in-the world (‘there’ in the world) and our state avails us the opportunity to make choices that determine our existence and only at death do these possibilities cease. Heidegger, is quoted by Michael Sasa as saying, “every man is born as many men, and dies as a single one.”¹² He goes further to explain his understanding of what Heidegger means to be “Born as many men”. It implies that so long as one is alive, one is imbued with the potentiality and possibility of choosing whatever or whoever one wants to become. For instance, a child in school may, today, tell his parents “I want to be a doctor; after watching the movie “God is not Dead”, the child may decide he wants to study philosophy to become good in oratory. The child has the opportunity to become whoever he wishes to become. Even at an advanced stage in the life of a doctor, there are various choices to make and myriad of things to become. A doctor may decide to abdicate his responsibilities as a doctor and retire to his village to become a farmer. If he dies in the village, he dies not as a doctor but as a farmer. And if that is not the case, even as a farmer, he has multifarious possibilities of becoming anything he wishes. But when one dies, he dies as a single one, a lawyer, a philosopher, a doctor or a farmer. In the light of the above implication, H. J. Blackham puts this lucidly:

The essence of *Dasein* is in its existence. This simply means that human reality cannot be defined because it is not something given, it is in

⁹ Dreyfus, H. L. and Wrathall, M. A. (eds.) (2005). *A Companion to Heidegger*. USA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 3.

¹⁰ Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Being and Time*. A translation of “*Sein und Zeit*” by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, USA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 380.

¹¹ Heidegger

¹² Sasa, Michael (2017). *Metaphysics*. Unpublished lecture note for Philosophy students of St. Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary, Makurdi.

question. A man is a possibility, he has the power to be. His existence is in his choice of the possibilities which are open to him and since this choice is never final, once for all, his existence is indeterminate...¹³

***Dasein*: Being-A-Whole and Being-Towards-Death**

There is a constant striving in man to become better, a striving and strife to outgrow the “now” and glimpse into the “not-now”. It is indeed the goal of studying philosophy – to improve the life of an individual and society. Anything less is not a drive to the study of philosophical knowledge. This intrinsic nature of man which is to surpass his present self is what Heidegger describes as “being-ahead-of-itself”¹⁴. In the same vein, Battista Mondin calls this phenomenon “self-transcendence”. Self-transcendence, for Mondin “...is that characteristic and exclusive movement of man with which he continually surpasses himself, all that he is, all that he wishes, and all that he has.”¹⁵ St. Augustine is credited to have said: “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”¹⁶ Thus, St. Augustine expresses the incessant strife in the nature of the human person to constantly strive to transcend its “newness” to a “not-now”. Heidegger succinctly explains that:

This possibility of this entity’s Being-a-whole is manifestly inconsistent with the ontological meaning of care, and care is that which forms the totality of *Dasein*’s structural whole. Yet the primary item in care is the ‘ahead-of-itself’, and this means that in every case *Dasein* exists for the sake of itself. ‘as long as it is’, right to its end, it comports itself towards its potentiality-for-being. Even when it still exists but has nothing more ‘before it’ and has ‘settled [*abgeschossen*] its account’, its Being is still determined by the ‘ahead-of-itself’. Even when one is without illusions and ‘is ready for anything’ [*Gefasstsein auf Alles*], here too the ‘ahead-of-itself’ lies hidden.¹⁷

The implication of this position, which is quite evident in human life, is that at every point in one’s existence, there is no point at which one is “satisfied” with his state of being. Even a king who seems to have “settled its account” wants more, and wishes to transcend his current status. As a result of this, the distinctive characteristic of incessant seeking to go beyond one’s current state is manifested in all *Dasein*. This strife can be interpreted as the manifestation of the fact that man is not yet complete. This is so because, for Heidegger, “as long as *Dasein* is an entity, it has never reached its ‘wholeness’”.¹⁸ However, “as soon as *Dasein* “exists” in such a way that absolutely nothing more is still outstanding in it, then it has already for this very reason become “no-longer-Being-there”.¹⁹ It implies that this Being is annihilated when what is still outstanding in its Being has been liquidated.”²⁰ That is, only in death does the phenomenon of self-transcendence or *Dasein*’s being-ahead-of-itself ceases.

¹³Blackham, H. J. (1961). *Six Existential Thinkers*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 88.

¹⁴ Heidegger *Being and Time*.

¹⁵Mondin, Battista (1985). *Philosophical Anthropology*. Rome: Urbaniana University Press.199.

¹⁶<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/42572-thou-hast-made-us-for-thyself-o-lord-and-our> retrieved on 19/03/2019.

¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin (1962).Op. Cit. 279.

¹⁸Ibid. 280.

¹⁹ Heidegger. *Being and Time*.

²⁰Ibid.

This awareness of the phenomenon of self-transcendence is very important for any exposition on the human subject. We may proffer that the reason for this constant unrest and urge to transcend one's current state is an unconscious exhibition of the 'not-complete' nature of the human person. The notion of Death, however, brings to birth another unknown level of transcendence. In the bid to offer a possible completeness of man, just as in Heidegger, it is our firm thought that death and the constant awareness and knowledge of this phenomenon (the phenomenon of death) brings about the 'wholeness' of *Dasein* in its ultimate transcendent form (the afterlife). Nevertheless, rather than conceive death as the 'end' of *Dasein* or as a phenomenon that marks the 'end' of the being of man, Heidegger according to John Macquarrie:

...shifts attention from death as the once-for-all observable fact at the end of life to the existent's inward awareness that his being is a being-towards-death. Though the precise moment of clinical death is uncertain and lies somewhere in the future, death is already present as a certain possibility – indeed, one may say as the most certain of all possibilities. In the mood of anxiety, I am aware of living in the face of the end; the existence that is mine is a precarious existence and at any time it may vanish into nothing.²¹

By implication, we are, so long as we are in existence, dying by the second. We are dying the death of a million years unending. Hence, this is the case with every human being, we should not only be conscious of this awareness; we should be conducting ourselves as people who are living on the road of death and to death. This is what should rightly be and is called "being-towards-death."²²

Experiencing the Death of Others

In engendering into the analysis of any object matter, it is imperative that the whole of the object of study ought to be examined. For instance, in the bid to analyse a book, one would put into consideration the type of paper that was used, the ink, the author, the publisher etc. But when we turn to the analysis or evaluation of the human person, we cannot really conceptualise the being-a-whole of such an object consequent upon the fact that most part of this object (Man) remains unknown to us. Paramount among these qualities that evade us is the concept of death. Since no one really has an experience of death, we cannot talk of death or analyse it from a participant perspective, thus making our knowledge of death impersonal and rather secondary. As Epicurus puts it:

Death, the most terrifying ill, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us, but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the later are no more.²³

However elusive is our knowledge of death, this paper avoids going the way of the agnostic and that of the positivists. Invariably, experience has thought us to discuss death with a sense of caution as those who are alive cannot really talk about death conclusively as they have not died before. We cannot give credence to those who are dead since they cannot

²¹Macquarrie, John (1972). *Existentialism*. Great Britain: Corpus Instrumentorum Inc. 195.

²² Heidegger. *Being and Time*.

²³Epicurus (1926). Epicurus letter to Menoeceus: the extant Remains. Oxford: Clarendon Press. <http://www.epicurus.net/en/menoeceus.html> accessed on 20/3/2019.

give testimony of their experience through any means of communication with the living for they are “no more”. Heidegger puts this more lucidly,

When *Dasein* reaches its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the Being of its ‘there’. By its transition to no-longer-*Dasein* [*Nichtmehr-Dasein*], it gets lifted right out of the possibility of experiencing this transition and of understanding it as something experienced.²⁴

Thus, our ‘talk’ of death shall only be based on the knowledge or experience we have garnered from the death of others. That is to say, any knowledge or experience of death that we possess is gained only from the death of others; this is because “*Dasein* is essentially Being with Others”²⁵; this being-with-otherness makes our experience of death possible. Succinctly put, we can experience the death of others. What, then, does it mean to experience the death of others? On the one hand, the actual death of the deceased, that is, the intrinsic process of the substantial change from a being-alive to a being-not-alive is what we do not experience. On the other hand, we experience the death of others only in so far as their death affects us. This impact of the death of others manifests itself to us as a loss of some kind. For Heidegger,

Death does indeed reveal itself as a loss, but a loss such as is experienced by those who remain. In suffering this loss, however, we have no way of access to the loss-of-Being as such which the dying man ‘suffers’. The dying of others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just ‘there alongside’.²⁶

The question then is, how does this experience really affect us and how should we conceptualise the phenomenon of the death of others that we experience? The death of others ought to remind us constantly that like others, we are a being-towards-death. Death, as a phenomenon, has various characteristics that illuminate the understanding of it. These characteristics as highlighted by Battista Mondin include Universality, Inescapability, Imminence, Inexorability and Fear. Death is Universal, according to Mondin, in the sense that:

All men fall to the scythe of death: youths and the aged, scholars and illiterates, atheists and believers, the rich and the poor, the black and the white, men and women, the healthy and the ill. Death looks no one in the face before striking its murderous blow, and does not take into account position, or race, or wealth, or age, or sex, or religion. It is not stopped when confronted with the innocent smile of the child, nor with the seductive beauty of the young woman, nor with the robust strength of the athlete or the warrior, nor with the wisdom of the scholar, nor with the piety of the monk. It has already fixed the hour of its arrival for everyone.²⁷

Unlike when apprehended by the police, or being jailed in prison or the like, with regards to the phenomenon of death, there is no possibility of an escape; death is inescapable. It is possible for every human being to find his/herself so consumed in the fact of life that makes the individual to completely jettison the inevitable phenomenon of death from our daily

²⁴Heidegger, Martin (1962). Op. Cit. 281.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. 281.

²⁷ Mondin, Battista (1985). Op. Cit. 265-266.

dealings. Benedict Baruch Spinoza, in a celebrated proposition of the *Ethics (Etica)* proclaims: “*Homo liber de nulla re minus quam de mortecogitat; et eiussapientia non mortis, sed vitae meditatioest*” (Of no other thing does man have less thought of than of death; his wisdom remains not in the meditation of death, but of life).²⁸ The truth about death, whether we are conscious of it or not, asserts Mondin, is that:

There is nothing to do against death: any battle begun against death is doomed to failure. Neither gold, nor the sword, nor astuteness, nor prayer succeeds in getting the better of this adversary. Against death, sooner or later, even the bravest player must surrender. Even if one obtains some small brief success, it serves only to delay for some time the decisive blow.²⁹

By implication, no matter how one would want to hide from this truth, every individual is walking towards his death. It is so sad, but an unbroken truth about human existence; every step an individual takes, is taking towards his/her death. Although as individuals, it is not possible to see us take this path. The best thing we can do is imagine our death without knowing the mode it shall take at the appropriate time and place. However, we are greatly encouraged to live on in anticipation of the arrival of death. Perhaps, the death of others is keeping us perpetually conscious of this phenomenon. Messori, as quoted by Mondin, observed that, “precisely this event, the only one predictable in the future of everyone, is the one most tenaciously ignored by this society of futurologists, planners, programmers, and organizers of the future.”³⁰ However, this awareness is imperative for an authentic living such that when we put death as a future possibility in all we do, it will shape our actions and direct our thoughts towards living the lives that we ought to live as best as we can in our prevailing conditions of life and through the choices we make in our daily lives.

Existential Analysis of Death

The adjective ‘existential’ is added to this analysis so as to distinguish it from other conceptions of death. When the question of death is formulated from the viewpoint of biology and physiology, *Dasein* moves into that domain of Being which we know as the world of animals and plants. In this field, we can obtain data and statistics about the longevity of plants, animals and men, and we do this by ascertaining them ontically. In this sense we can talk of the life span of a being as clearly recorded in the *Guinness Book of Record* contrary to the way Heidegger handles it.³¹ This physical or biological type of death Mondin calls *clinical death* (the cessation of the functions essential to the body but not necessarily the separation of the soul from the body or the total lifelessness of a being).³² From an existential perspective, Heidegger purports that, “death, in the widest sense, is a phenomenon of life.”³³ This implies that death is part of life and embedded in life itself. Not that death is the end of life, but that death is inherent in the idea of a life. This is experientially explained through the following analogies; to live is to die and to laugh is to cry. Succinctly put, to every life there is a fundamental and basic characteristic, death.

²⁸Spinoza Baruch, *Ethics* IV prop. 67.

²⁹Battista, Mondin (1985) *Op. Cit.* 266

³⁰Messori V. (1982). *Scommessasullamorte*(Wagering on Death). SEI: Turin. 23.

³¹Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Op. Cit* 290

³²Battista, Mondin (1985) *Op. Cit.* 264.

³³Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Op. Cit* 290

Death should not be conceived as something very distant from us, it is rather a closest friend, a mandatory acquaintance that every individual ought to learn to accommodate and co-exist with on a daily basis. This situation is evident whenever we meditate on the routine of every *Dasein*. This is the phenomenon that was considered as “Absurdity” by Albert Camus. Absurd in the sense that when you work so hard and life appears to be at its best, that is when death comes knocking at the door of your life ready to take you away. The bereaved are left to wonder the meaningfulness of life and the existence of God in the face of death as the ultimate evil and the strongest of all human predicaments. John Macquarrie describes the human predicament and the phenomenon of death thus:

When we look back, our memory embraces perhaps some decades but becomes increasingly vague and finally breaks off; and we assign to that black beyond memory our ‘birth’, our coming into being, for there was a time when we were not. Looking forward, we anticipate various events, but we know also that somewhere along the line we shall have no more part in the events of the world. Just as there was a beginning to our histories, so there will be an end- death. But whereas the beginning, as past event, can be assigned a date, we cannot assign a date to the future event of death. We can be sure that there will be such a date, but from our present point of view we cannot tell whether our actual existence will extend as far as our anticipations for the future or whether it might even extend beyond them.³⁴

Authentic Being-Towards-Death and the Everydayness of *Dasein*

In relation to the phenomenon of death or *Dasein*’s being-towards-death, the question that pops up is this: what should we concern ourselves with if our beingness is fundamentally a temporal structure? How does one live as authentic *Dasein* in the face of a phenomenon that causes anxiety, the phenomenon of death? What do we benefit from studying human existential evil? There are human beings who think that they can escape from the concept of death by not thinking about it and not talking about it. This is truly what it means to be human as most often, we act without the consciousness of death. Here lies Heidegger’s perennial warning to such persons, “Our everyday falling evasion in the face of death is an inauthentic Being-towards-death.”³⁵ He goes further to describe it as a form of living that is an inauthentic form of existence; refusing that which is. Heidegger calls it “Falling”:

...temptation, tranquillization, and alienation are distinguishing marks of the kind of Being called “falling”. As falling, everyday Being-towards-death is a constant fleeing in the face of death. Being-towards-the-end has the mode of evasion in the face of it – giving new explanations for it, understanding it inauthentically, and concealing it.³⁶

The antidote to this falling and inauthentic way of life is bringing to our consciousness the finality to be our motivating factor for a good living by the choices we make throughout our lives. What we ought to do is to face and accept death - this phenomenon as one that is imminent and inescapable in every sense of the word in the dictionary of human existence. Then, only can we cross the bridge from inauthenticity to authenticity. For an authentic “being-towards-death cannot evade its *ownmost* non-relational possibility, or cover up this

³⁴Macquarrie, John (1972). Op. Cit. 193.

³⁵Heidegger, Martin (1962). Op. Cit 303

³⁶Ibid. 298.

possibility by fleeing from it, or give a new explanation for it to accord with the common sense of the 'they'".³⁷ How exactly does one live as an authentic *Dasein*?

Authenticity in Heidegger

The idea of authenticity is very critical to existential living as it comes with accepting what actually is. An individual person must necessarily accept that s/he is born of particular parents, in a particular tribe, is in a particular economic, social, religious, political affiliation. The individuals who are particularly in pains, suffering depression, anxiety, lack of love from a spouse, friend and whatever other situation one may be in should accept the prevailing situation head long. It is when one accepts the situation one finds his/herself that the idea of choosing the right decision becomes important. It is following this acceptance that one gives room to authenticity by choosing rightly and making decisions that are uniquely based on knowledge of good of the agent and the consequences of any action so performed.

It is important at this point to state that no one should be afraid in the face of death. Death in itself is already imminent; we can actually live authentically when we accept it as an impending reality. Our idea of not just accepting it because it will definitely occur means much more than requiring individuals to expect and allow it from an informed position should not be based on mere preaching by materialists rhetoricians. All those who are involved must appreciate the teachings of Martin Heidegger who perpetually use the word "anticipation" to characterise such an expectation. We should anticipate death in such a way that it punctuates our every thought and intention, it should guide our motive behind every action, it should be the bedrock for every choice we make. This way of life means much more than thinking about ending either in Hell or Heaven. Hence Heidegger proffers that "Anticipation turns out to be the possibility of understanding one's ownmost and uttermost potentiality-for-Being – that is to say, the possibility of authentic existence."³⁸ By implication, we can only say one is living an authentic life when one is in perpetual anticipation of death and allows this anticipation, not to weigh him down and make him pessimistic, but rather enable him make the right choices that are not outright temporarily inclined. Albeit life is temporal, Albert Camus reminds us that we should not be gloomy; we should accept this fact and make the most out of life.³⁹

Nevertheless that 'Anticipation' characterises an authentic *Dasein*, Heidegger adds another quality that 'properly' enunciates an authentic being; he calls this quality "Resoluteness".⁴⁰ To be resolute means to be determined on something. Thus to be authentic is to resolve to actively anticipate one's death; not mere anticipation, but resolute anticipation. The moment *Dasein* understands death as its ultimate possibility; *Dasein* becomes transparent to itself as a personal being, breaks away from inauthentic being and by making false choices that are materialistically oriented and throws itself into its authentic being by thinking of the good of others who are sharing both human and natural resources. Subsequently, to reach our goal, it is to examine the implication of Heideggarian doctrine of *Dasein's* temporality especially as it regards to death and its consequences to the common man in contemporary society. Heidegger summed his teaching on *Dasein's* temporality thus:

We may now summarize our characterization of authentic Being-towards-death as we have projected it existentially: anticipation reveals

³⁷ Ibid. 304-305.

³⁸ Ibid. 307.

³⁹ Camus, Albert (1955). *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Middlesex: Penguin Books. 53.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, Martin (1962). Op. Cit 349.

to *Dasein* its lostness in the 'they-self'⁴¹, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather in an impassioned freedom towards death – a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the 'they', and which is factual, certain itself, and anxious.⁴²

Based on the quotation, it is imperative for us to submit that we cannot, in the strict sense, be free from death even if we wish to be liberated from the fangs of death. However, we can live authentically by the choices we make through accepting and resolutely anticipating it as one's future-thy-self. It is only by anticipating it resolutely that we can gain freedom from its torture. The question then, in the words of Heidegger, is this: "what can death and the 'concrete situation' of taking action have in common?"⁴³

Implication of *Dasein*'s Temporality to the African and the Contemporary Man

The implications of our analysis of death so far and the further imperative towards living what we have described as an authentic life as its corollary reflects an import on the African society. One will agree that the African traditional conception of death is in direct contrast to the Heideggerian perception of it. Our analysis of Heidegger's being-towards-death and being-the-whole implies the nothingness that awaits *Dasein* upon death. Consequently, one cannot infer any form of spirituality or an ontological existence of the ontic *Dasein* upon death. However, for the African, the reality of a spiritual existence of the being of man upon them should be the imperative behind living. Thus, from the African perspective, death is simply a transition from one ontological form to another. Omagu puts it thus, the African conception of death is "a transition to the world of ancestors."⁴⁴ This was elaborately presented by Baloyi when he purported that "...death is a natural transition from the visible to the invisible spiritual ontology where the spirit, the essence of the person, is not destroyed but moves to live in the realm of the spirit with the ancestors".⁴⁵ This statement illustrates a key aspect of many African worldviews: the belief that death is not the end of a person's existence, but rather a transition to a spiritual realm where the deceased person's spirit continues to exist. Further still, Baloyi's use of the term "ontology" suggests that this belief is not just a matter of personal belief, but rather reflects a fundamental aspect of African cosmology, or understanding of the nature of reality. The effect of living according to the standards of a fulfilled spiritual existence in view varies from one society to another. However, it goes without saying that this perception of death by the African does not invalidate the imperative for living an authentic life as emphasized by this paper.

Martin Heidegger worked out a philosophy that is totally devoid of any otherworldliness. Heidegger does not address the question of where *Dasein*'s origin is, neither does he attend to the question of the possibility of an 'other world' where *Dasein* will go after death. With reference to the question of the origin of man, Heidegger escapes from the problem by using the word 'facticity' – meaning that we just find ourselves as

⁴¹ "They-self" refers to the fall into public opinion so as to tranquillize the personal meditation on the notion of death.

⁴² Heidegger, Martin (1962). Op. Cit. 311.

⁴³ Ibid. 349.

⁴⁴ Omagu, Donald O. (2012). *A Wind of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2012. 193.

⁴⁵ Baloyi, Lesiba (NY). *The African Conception of Death: A Cultural Implication*. Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital. 232.

beings-in-the-world. In his analogy of the basic feature of man as *care* or *concern*⁴⁶, he made mention of Care as the former or creator of homo (man). That is, in expressing the fundamental and basic pre-occupation of *Dasein* Heidegger makes mention of a creator in the analogy; however, in discussing the problem of death proper, Heidegger totally deviates from any possibility of another world or creator. He expresses this mild atheistic position thus:

In the ontological analysis of Being-towards-the-end there is no anticipation of our taking any existential stand towards death. If 'death' is defined as the 'end' of *Dasein* – that is to say, of Being-in-the-world – this does not imply any ontical decision whether 'after death' still another Being is possible, either higher or lower, or whether *Dasein* 'lives on' or even 'outlasts' itself and is 'immortal'. Nor is anything decided ontically about the 'other-worldly' and its possibility, any more than about the 'this-worldly'; it is not as if norms and rules for comporting oneself toward death were to be proposed for 'edification'. But our analysis of death remains purely 'this-worldly' in so far as it interprets that phenomenon merely in the way in which it enters into any particular *Dasein* as a possibility of its Being.⁴⁷

In this way, Heidegger discards the possibility of an 'other-worldly-*Dasein*'. He further stated that such a study is not what he wishes to put into consideration in his work.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, such a possibility cannot be totally discarded; the world then would become meaningless, without a purpose, origin and, invariably, no future. Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical letter, "*Pastores Dabo Vobis*", "Reference to Christ is thus the absolutely necessary key for understanding the reality of priesthood".⁴⁹ The words of Pope John Paul II can be rephrased this way: "Reference to Christ, and an 'other-worldly' reality, is thus the absolutely necessary key for understanding the reality of human existence." Or as Mondin puts it: "...the absolute value of the human person is rooted in the Absolute Value, God."⁵⁰ The purpose of human life is for an eventual union with the divine. For a Christian, death, rather than being an end to the beingness of *Dasein* as Heidegger purports, is a passage from one world to another; the second often conceived as one that is eternal.

This explanation takes this paper to the question of the meaninglessness of life. Recourse to Albert Camus becomes very significant at this juncture. He puts it thus: "if you say life has no purpose, that life has no meaning, then, why don't we all commit suicide since it is meaningless?"⁵¹ No individual would agree to this, thus, we can infer that life has an ultimate meaning or a final cause (that is, a purpose). Toeing Aristotelian trail, if life has a final cause, certainly then, it has an efficient cause (an Originator or Creator, whom we may call God Almighty).⁵² If life has a final cause, as well as an efficient cause, then it certainly has

⁴⁶To the everydayness of Being-in-the-world there belong certain modes of concern, that which we preoccupy ourselves with. Heidegger implies that we have been condemned to a life of incessant *care* or *concern* for things-in-the-world.

⁴⁷Heidegger, Martin (1962). Op. Cit. 292.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹John, Paul II (1992). *I Will Give You Shepherds (Pastores Dabo Vobis)*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa. 24.

⁵⁰Battista, Mondin (1985) Op. Cit. 278.

⁵¹Camus, Albert (1955). Op. Cit. 107.

⁵²Lawhead, William F. (2002). *The Voyage of discovery; A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*. Belmont, USA:Wadsworth Group.77.

a material cause with its formal cause. In summary, we can infer that the Efficient cause, the Material cause, the Formal cause and the Final cause are respectively God, the Body, the Soul and Heaven or eternity. Consequently, we live authentic lives when we resolutely anticipate our death, and allow this anticipation inform whatever it is we do, as well as the choices we make.

Conclusion

The foundation laid by this paper raises questions for further research; to what extent has the African perspective and approach towards death precipitated the inauthentic lives exemplified by the African community at large? How does the African perception of death reflect in her social and political cultural milieu? These questions were not explored by this paper as the scope of this paper is limited to the general analysis of death and how its *presencing* is imperative for living an authentic life. From our analysis of death, we can say is an existential awareness of possible not-being; it reveals the true nature of what it means to be human. Heidegger believed that confronting our mortality allows us to live more authentically. By accepting that death is an inevitable part of our journey, we can live more meaningfully and with greater purpose. We ought to strive against what Heidegger referred to as the “Concealment” in everyday life. Succinctly put, we often conceal the reality of death, treating it as a distant reality or event. This avoidance is what prevents us from fully understanding and embracing our own mortality. It prevents individuals from making choices that can distinguish them from mere animals that act based on instincts. Heidegger’s exploration of death is a profound part of his existential philosophy which encourages us to reflect on our existence and live more authentically and more responsibly. Consequently, the reality of death becomes golden; death becomes rather a light that illuminates our life on earth by keeping us ever conscious and alert of doing the right thing and taking the right decisions. And in the words of Jean-Paul Sartre: “Death becomes the meaning of life as the resolved chord is the meaning of the melody.”⁵³

⁵³Sartre, Jean-Paul (1956). *Being and Nothingness*. New York: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 532.