The Micro-University
Heidegger's *Being And Time* (*Sein und Zeit)*: A Complete Beginner's Course

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Welcome

This is the syllabus for my upcoming Micro-University Course:

Heidegger's *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit)*: A Complete Beginner's Course.

The primary goal of the course is to guide beginners through the "core" sections of *Being and Time* slowly and carefully so that they can not accurately understand Heidegger's most influential ideas, but engage in serious philosophical thinking, discussion, and life reflection.

I want to be clear that this is not just another "book club".

This is an *existential journey* — a guided philosophical encounter with your own existence.

The text is what facilitates that experience for our group.

I should warn you, though, that *Being and Time* is not just a difficult text — it's *dangerous*.

It throws you into the deep end and forces you to question:

- Who and what you think you are (especially if you are heavily influenced by Western scientific modes of thought)
- The standard worldviews that we use to make sense of our existence (and reality)
- How you are living with relation towards your own finitude (death)
- The ways in which you are living inauthentically on a day-to-day level

This course is a slow, guided journey into authenticity and existence using Heidegger's most powerful ideas.

The course is especially suited for people who:

- Feel trapped in routine or social expectations
- Crave a serious intellectual challenge
- Are tired of typical "self-help" topics and approaches
- Want depth and genuine thinking, not just "tips" and "tricks"
- Want to grow an intellectual community where *serious* thinking can flourish rather than always study philosophy *alone*.

Despite Heidegger's considerable influence on Western thought in the 20th and beyond, his ideas are rarely taught anywhere, let alone in universities.

This makes it incredibly difficult for anyone interested in philosophy to properly understand phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, and post-modernism — the traditions that have shaped modern thought and culture.

One reason that Heidegger is avoided is that he was a member of the Nazi party and never renounced his affiliations after the war. In his personal life, Heidegger displayed extreme stupidity, arrogance, and cowardice. I am completely opposed to Heidegger's Nazism.

At the same time, I believe that it is important to selectively read texts from individuals throughout history who held immoral and flat-out stupid beliefs. There is a lot to be said here, but I wanted to share two thoughts below.

First, if we tried to follow some kind of principle to *only read the works of individuals who were not immoral*, I quite honestly think that there would be very little left worth reading. Now, there are degrees of immorality and degrees of ignorance, and Heidegger's Nazism was certainly of an extreme degree. But even still, I believe it is worth studying figures like Heidegger for the following important reason.

On its surface, it is not obvious that Heidegger's philosophy has anything to do with his Nazism. Much of it seems morally neutral and far too abstract to be read as being influenced by his political or moral beliefs. But by reading and thinking seriously about figures like Heidegger, we are able to understand the ways in which immoral ethical or political beliefs can influence our thinking/worldview even in areas of thought that seem morally neutral, like metaphysics or the hard sciences. This helps us understand the world in a more nuanced way and detect infections in human thinking that lurk beneath the surface. Without this depth of understanding, human thinking is often reduced to simple binary oppositions that don't reflect the complex ways in which our worldviews are shaped by bad

ideas whose connections to other ideas are not obvious.

A simpler reason that Heidegger's works are rarely taught is that they are so obviously difficult and intellectually challenging that they are only worth studying if someone does not expect an immediate reward or pay off. Although universities should carve out much more space than they do for the intrinsic value of learning, the sad reality is that many have "instrumentalized" learning in such a way that reading a text like Being and Time is hard to justify. How can it help students get a job? How can it fit into some overarching university curriculum? The fact is that its benefits are not obvious because it is a genuinely deep and difficult work.

I am someone who believes that we should all occasionally make space in our lives for the pursuit of genuinely challenging and intellectually deep activities even if we can't immediately justify them in terms of "productivity" or career benefits.

Thanks to modern technology, it is now easier than ever for humans to organize themselves around intellectually ambitious projects without the pressure of a university schedule or curriculum (and for a fraction of the cost). We also have more freedom than is afforded in a university, since we are allowed to engage in *raw* and *authentic* discussions that go beyond the classroom and connect the ideas to *real life*.

Why should students only read profound and challenging texts between the ages of 18 and 22 while paying **$100,000 (in most cases)**?

Personally, I went $80,000 in debt to study philosophy as an 18 year old. In hindsight, I am grateful for what it has allowed me to do. But I was a first-generation, low-income student. I hated feeling punished to pursue an education in the subjects I was passionate about.

In this course, we will not just be "reading a text" or "learning what Heidegger thought" to get a grade and move on in life.

In fact, the purpose of the course is really to *stop* moving on in life. Or, as Heidegger would put it — to stop living inauthentically by simply falling through life.

Like I said above, we will be going on a challenging *existential journey*.

By following the grooves of Heidegger's thinking, you will be thrown into regions of thought which you have never encountered before. Along our journey, I will provide you with guidance and resources for understanding how these ideas can allow you to rethink your entire life and the worldview which you were previously living in.

I will provide clear explanations of difficult concepts and passages. I will avoid the use of unexplained jargon so as to not alienate anyone unnecessarily. I will always keep in mind why the ideas matter for our real lives, not just to learn things for their own sake.

In order for all of this to be possible, the text must be given enough room to breathe.

You must be given enough room to *think*.

This course rewards the following character traits:

- Patience (giving things the time they deserve)
- Courage (both personal and intellectual)
- Seriousness (about your life and relationships)
- Depth (valuing genuine depth of ideas)
- Intellectual maturity (open-mindedness/willingness to be wrong/desire to learn)
- Existential honesty (ability to question oneself and identify deep assumptions)

This course is for people who are ready to take philosophy (and hence, their life) seriously.

The Course In A Nutshell

- Guided interpretation, close reading, and discussion led by a philosophy PhD who has taught 20+ university philosophy courses at several elite universities
- No prior knowledge required
- ~15 pages of reading per week (1-2 hours)
- 60-90 minute live meeting every week
- Weekly discussion/group chat w peers
- Supplemental resources and recommendations

This course is based around a 26-week reading plan I developed for completing sections 1-65 of *Being and Time*, which are widely considered the most important and influential sections of the book. The book is divided into two parts: Division I & Division II. Although Division II is fascinating, we will save ourselves a lot of trouble by stopping at the end of Division I, which is a more polished work. Division II contains a lot of interesting content which I will draw on and reference selectively, but it is less polished due to it being unfinished.

This sounds like a lot, but if you are able to commit to reading 15 pages per week and meeting once per week, my promise to you is that by the end of this course you will:

- Have read and understood one of the most challenging and significant philosophical texts ever written (something few people will ever do)
- Gain a noticeable degree of intellectual confidence which allows you to articulate yourself more clearly and meaningfully
- Significantly improve your reading/discussion skills
- Have a deeper understanding of the history of philosophy and put yourself in an excellent position to choose what to study next
- Understand the structure of everyday inauthentic life so that you can catch yourself drifting and live more authentically
- Be an indispensable part of an intellectual community of serious thinkers who you can continue to learn and grow with

The honest truth is that not everyone should read *Being and Time*.

This course is for the people who *must*.

If you think you are up for the challenge, you can sign-up here.

My Plan For Slaying The Giant

Being and Time is one of those philosophical giants that has defeated thousands. But we are not going to let it defeat us. I have put together a plan that makes sure that beginners not only finish the most important parts of the book, but engage with the material in a way that will change their lives forever.

My learning plan is optimized for:

- Deep but sustainable reading
- Hands-on participatory learning
- Integrating philosophy with your actual life

My ultimate goal is to make sure that everyone completes the course in a way that truly changes them for the better.

1: Time Commitment

We will be reading **~380 pages** in total, but reading Heidegger is likely to be unlike anything else you have ever read. It requires patience, care, and genuine thinking. So we are going to take our time.

The weekly page average will be **~15 pages per week**, or **~2 pages per day**.

It should take you, if reading properly, between **1-2 hours per week** to read the material.

We will meet for **60-90** minutes during our **live calls**.

2-3 hours per week.

That is what you need to commit to if you want to finish one of the most profound and challenging texts in history.

My advice to avoid getting stuck?

Read very slowly and intensely for ~2 pages per day (I will teach you how to do this as we go).

The average non-fiction book club typically requires 40-60 pages of reading per week.

A graduate seminar in philosophy typically requires 50-100 pages per week.

We are going to *take our time*.

All I ask is that you read 12-18 pages per week (~15 on average).

This is *slow* philosophy — deep, reflective, not instrumentalized.

2: Class Size

I will cap the class sizes at **15 students**. If there is more demand, I will open up additional live meeting times (additionally to accommodate different time-zones).

In order to preserve depth and quality, the classes must remain small.

3: The Text

This is the standard translation: here.

4: Reading Schedule

Part I — Orientation (Weeks 1–3)

Week 1 — Why Heidegger?

- Preface
- Introduction
- Overview of Heidegger's Project In Being And Time (And Why It Matters)

Week 2 — Introduction I (§§1–4)

- The Question of Being
- Ontology vs ontic
- Phenomenology

Week 3 — Introduction II (§§5–8)

- Dasein
- Method
- Structure of the book

Part II — Division I: Everyday Existence (Weeks 4–16)

A — Being-in-the-World

Week 4 — §§9–10

- Dasein's basic structure

Week 5 — §§11–13

- Worldhood and everydayness

Week 6 — §§14–16

- Ready-to-hand vs present-at-hand

Week 7 — §§17–18

- Equipmental totality, significance

Week 8 — §§19–21

- Worldhood

B — Being-with and the They

Week 9 — §§22–24

- Spatiality and Being-with

Week 10 — §§25–27

- The They (das Man)

Week 11 — §§28–30

- Mood and attunement

Week 12 — §§31–34

- Understanding, interpretation, language

C — Care (the core concept)

Week 13 — §§35–38

- Falling, idle talk, curiosity, ambiguity

Week 14 — §§39–41

- Anxiety and the disclosure of Being

Week 15 — §§42–44

- Care

Week 16 — §§45–44 Review Week

Synthesis discussion:

- Being-in-the-world
- The They
- Anxiety
- Care

Part 3 — Division II (Weeks 17–24)

- Authenticity & Death

Week 17 — §45 (transition)

Week 18 — §§46–47

- Death as possibility

Week 19 — §§48–50

- Being-toward-death

Week 20 — §§51–53

- Authenticity through mortality
- Conscience, Guilt, Resoluteness

Week 21 — §§54–56

- Conscience (cont.)

Week 22 — §§57–58

- Guilt (ontological, not moral)

Week 23 — §§59–60

- Resoluteness
- Temporality

Week 24 — §§61–65

- Temporality as the meaning of Care (philosophical climax of the book)

Part 4 — Integration (Weeks 25–26)

Week 25 — Summary of §§66–83 (Instructor or guided overview)

- Historicity
- World-time
- Ordinary time

Week 26 — Final Integration

Discussion themes:

- What does it mean to live an authentic human existence?
- How has your understanding of self and the nature of your existence changed?
- How does temporality shape your life?
- What is your personal “resoluteness”?