Existential Philosophy for Times of Change and Crisis:
Difference, disability, diversity
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ABSTRACT BOOKLET

9:10-10:00   **Katarzyna Gurczynska-Sady**: Perfect human beings; Why eugenics myths cannot come true?

The problem of eugenics, like in a lens, brings together the great ills not only of industrial-type societies, but also - and perhaps to a greater extent - post-modern societies. The exhibition of the different, disabled, unable to cope and therefore constituting a burden for society threatening its other citizens. The "construction" of a new, better human being in a situation where man - and not nature – "has to take matters into his own hands" combined with an attempt to build a space of prosperity and security for those who socially "useful", constitute the ideas close to the hearts of the builders of post-eugenic reality. The very idea of repairing society is undoubtedly one of the oldest ones. The problem with eugenics, however, is that the concept of new, better people and a new, better world created by them is not so much impossible to introduce into the living body of society - for sociotechnical reasons it is feasible and has been done many times - but not thought out to the end. It is naively assumed that there is a better man, that it is possible to fix man in existential terms and thus create a better world. Meanwhile, the consequence of the lack of concern for the proper understanding what this betterness could be is the emergence of a philosophically defective viewpoint, which does not take into account the complexity of the human being, does not notice the degree of complexity of the processes leading to his/her prosperity. The happiness that is to arise as a result of the introduced order is not the happiness of human beings, but the satisfaction of humanoid, healthy and vital animals. The task that I set for myself in my speech is to unmask both the naive anthropology that lies at the basis of eugenic-type reformist intentions, and the primitivism of the concept of an ideal world, a world without those who are different, disabled, and strange.

10:00-10:50   **Larissa Kolias**: Western Ableism and the Logic of Purity

In this presentation, I examine the ways in which broader systemic forces underpin the oppression of the physically disabled from a self-phenomenological perspective. Appealing to the work of María Lugones (2003), I argue that Western ableism is a function of the "logic of purity." According to Lugones, systems of Western oppression create two coexisting logics—the logic of purity and a curdled logic. Under the logic of purity, subjects are split and separated from different aspects of their identities. This split-separation leads to two distinct kinds of subjects: the "unified subject" and the "fragmented subject." In accordance with the Classical image of man and Enlightenment ideals, the unified subject is the privileged subject—one who is, for instance, white, able-bodied, and cis-gendered male—and he is defined not by his bodily features but by a singular, unifying and supposedly universal trait: his rational capacities or reason. As corollary, the unified subject produces the oppressed fragmented subject, where one is split-separated in a way that reduces one to an impure, "Other" identity, such as the supposed impurity of those who have a marked, non-white racial identity or those who are not cis-gendered male. Lugones, however, rejects the logic of purity, arguing that within the logic of purity is an impure "curdle-separation," which Lugones refers to as the "logic of curdling." By fragmenting the subjectivities of the oppressed, the logic of purity simultaneously generates a cohesive multiplicity of subjectivities. As I will demonstrate, and applying Lugones to the work of Elizabeth Barnes (2016), ableism is a

function of the logic of purity. Under the logic of purity, the physically disabled are conceived as having only two fragmented identities: their "actual" disabled-self and their "ideal" abled-self. These subjects are, through the meaning that is assigned to them, reduced to their disabled identity, yet they are expected to reject this identity in an effort to achieve the idealized identity of the abled-bodied. However, as I will argue, this dichotomy between the abled and disabled is false, and within the structure of ableism is an implicit framework of identity cohesion. I conclude by looking at the ways movements for the liberation of the physically disabled make this framework of identity cohesion explicit as means to dismantle ableism and its structural underpinnings.

11:00-11:50 **Jörg Disse**: Levinas's Other or the absolute respect of diversity

In contrast to Adorno's view, the danger is not to make the singular individual the most important determinant of human life. On the contrary, socio-political problems are often badly solved because the singular individual is not valued enough. The philosophy of Levinas reminds us of the irreducible value of every single other by working out the idea of a non-intentional relationship to the other that precedes whatever we intentionally think or do. Levinas understands intentional acts as acts of taking possession of what they are directed to, as acts of reduction of the otherness of the object to something we understand, we can use, we can make ours. There is one relationship that escapes intentionality: a kind of basic relationship to the other as our fellow human being. It is a relationship in which we are not intentionally directed to the other but the other reveals himself of his own accord to the subject related to him. He reveals himself as a face and in speech. This is not meant as a revelation of any kind of content, of anything that constitutes the identity of the other, but as the revelation of 1) somebody completely other beyond all determinability and possession taking on the part of the subject related to him, and as 2) somebody that is encountered by the subject related to him "from above" (French: "de la hauteur"), i.e. the other is encountered as revealing his "infinity" (Levinas following Descartes' understanding of infinity). This revelation of infinity is equivalent to an experience of the value of the other. In other words: the relationship to the other is an ethical relationship. This relationship underlies everything human beings think, feel or do in relation to themselves, others or their environment; i.e. it is the dimension underlying all our intentional acts, a dimension the individual is constantly called upon not to lose sight of. It is in particular the dimension that ought to underlie all socio-political considerations of whatever kind. And it is also immediately clear that this relationship includes a call to absolute respect for every single individual independently of his identity, no matter what he or she is, wants to be or represents (diversity) and a call not to leave out any individual in our consideration of what a society ought to be and to do (inclusiveness).

12:00-12:50 **Mélissa Fox-Muraton**: Autistic (Un)Masking and the Challenges of Authentic Self-Disclosure

Masking and unmasking are key themes in contemporary discussions and advocacy work within autistic and (more generally) neurodivergent communities today. 'Masking' refers to the variety of ways in which individuals consciously or unconsciously modify their spontaneous and natural reactions, behaviours, communication and expression to fit with neurotypical norms and expectations, either through the suppression of reactions and behaviours or the adoption of specific behaviours, in order to 'fit in' and be accepted, or

perhaps more rightly stated to avoid exclusion, discrimination and harassment. Research and medical literature often define masking as coping mechanisms, adaptive or compensatory strategies. This positive view of masking as a 'tool' or 'technique' enabling autistic individuals to integrate society by conforming to societal norms contrasts however with the experience of autistic individuals themselves, and the high toll in terms of physical and mental health consequences of masking, but also to the loss of identity, sense of self and autonomy that masking entails. They point to the importance of learning to unmask and be (or become) their authentic selves, but also the challenges of discovering one's authentic self after a lifetime of masking. In this paper, I wish to explore the notion of unmasking as a dynamic, relational and existential process of self-disclosure, both to oneself and to others. Autistic individuals, especially late-diagnosed individuals who have spent a lifetime unconsciously masking their traits and difficulties, face multiple challenges and questions regarding unmasking: How do I know when I am masking? Who am I behind the mask? Am I masking even when I am by myself? How do I communicate my authentic self to others when (part of) what I am masking are communication differences? While these questions might appear problematic if we assume that authentic selfhood is something everyone essentially possesses, a more dynamic and relational understanding of authenticity, and its grounding in social and linguistic practices, offers perspectives for rethinking authentic self-disclosure. I aim to work through these notions drawing upon Sartre's reflexions on authenticity and communication in *Notebooks for an Ethics,* suggesting that the opposite of authenticity should not be thought of as inauthenticity or pretending; rather, the opposite of authenticity is oppression.

12:50-13:40   **Lisa Haase**: Language Games as a Resource. A Wittgensteinian perspective on neurodivergent communication

Phenomenology opens up how phenomena between self and world show up in human experience. Wittgenstein states that we cannot investigate phenomena *as* phenomena, but merely their *description* or *conversation* (BF I § 53, II § 16). With "Phenomenology is Grammar" (TS 320) he equates the *method* of phenomenology as linguistic research with the structure of its *objects*. For him, "phenomena" are something to be experienced, *linguized*, and *language* as a whole (PI § 79, 108). Human experience is (explicable as) linguistic experience, to be described and not explained, not nominalistically, but in *use* (*Gebrauch*) or embedded in *situation* (PI § 180, § 383; cf. Rentsch 2003, pp. 12, 14). Wittgenstein calls concrete modes of use and the play of language as a whole *"language games"* (*Sprachspiele*, PI § 7). These cannot be defined, but are experienced and learned, characterized by *manifoldedness* (*Mannigfaltigkeit*) as part of a *form of life* (*Lebensform*), and include behaviors or gestures (PI § 77, 23, 669). Wittgenstein exemplifies or *practices his theory* – and posits: "You could say of my work that it is 'Phenomenology'." (Drury 2017, 106)
With Wittgenstein, we can explore human experience *phenomenologically* through linguistic use in social contact. Many of his examples relate to communication of sensory impressions and needs (e. g., color/pain perception: BF, PI § 245f.). Essentially, language *works* because people *share* ideas about language games. Communication and mediation *work* as we are linguistically *similar*. Individuals on the spectrum of neurodivergence experience limitations and special needs in sensory, gestural and linguistic communication. They experience that (social) contact *does not work,* but often cannot identify any concrete clues. Their human experience shows up as a specifically *manifold* linguistic experience. In my contribution, I discuss how Wittgenstein's concept of language games can be related to neurodivergent

communication patterns, particularly to differentiate ways of mediating sensual impressions, and what resources may be tapped through considerations of *breaking language games* for the encounter with neurodivergent people. To discuss the relation of language and experience, I refer to considerations of "factual circularity" by Heidegger (1927) and Rentsch (2003).

14:30-15:20   **Matthew Coate**: Repetition as Resolution vs. Repetition as Ritual: an existential analysis of OCD

It appears that repetition can be both the most positive and the most problematic of all phenomena. In the phenomenon of resolution, we find a sort of repetition that has been analyzed by Kierkegaard and Heidegger and that can legitimately be deemed the source of every lasting positive change in our established behavior, while in our established and habitual forms of behavior, we find forms of repetition that often constitute what is most unhealthy and unethical in our lives. In the compulsive ritualized behaviors that characterize Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, however, this ambivalence of repetition only deepens, for in these behaviors we find a form of repetition that is certainly unhealthy but that, upon analysis, can be difficult if not impossible to distinguish from the phenomenon of resolution itself. In this paper, I'll present a description of the compulsive rituals that characterize OCD and will demonstrate that these behaviors in fact constitute a botched form of resolution produced by individuals who, at some deep-seated level, take themselves to be fundamentally flawed and attempt to enact some alteration to "fix" themselves through the compulsion. To demonstrate this, I'll explicate the existential-phenomenological analysis of resolution, including its relationship to anxiety and the way that resolution "goes back" to an ideal that the resolute subject is to repeat, before I describe the phenomena of OCD and the sense of self-loathing and worthlessness that appears to underlie this condition. After discussing both resolution and OCD, I'll then demonstrate that OCD rituals do constitute a form of resolution, undertaken by those afflicted by endemic self-loathing, that attempts to "go back" and repeat something of value for the subject while dissociatively excluding everything connected with the subject's feelings of worthlessness—a resolution bound to fail, and thus eliciting its incessant repetition as long as such feelings continue.

15:20-16:10   **Sasha Simon**: 'Who' Are You? The Role of Objectification in Arendt's Thought and Possibilities for Political Change of Oppressive Systems

ABSTRACT NOT AVAILABLE

16:20-17:10   **Oliver Norman**: Diversity and Marginality: Drag as an Existential Aesthetic. Towards a Phenomenology of Drag Performance

With each passing year of the last decade it has seemed as if drag has become a more and more widespread practice. Visibility has been such that it has caused moral outcry in certain parts of the United States and Europe. However, philosophy has rarely interacted with it. Gender studies have, and still do, question the nature of drag performance and its relationship to gender constructs. But a phenomenological analysis of drag has not been given. This seems all the more surprising when we consider that Judith Butler herself is well versed in phenomenology and her works lead to such a misinterpretation of drag that she had to write the chapter « Gender is Burning » in *Bodies That Matter*. Drawing on contemporary phenomenologists such as Maldiney and Grosos, this talk will attempt to show that drag, just

as any other art form, operates a paradigm shift in our relation to the world and to ourselves: in art, talking becomes singing, walking becomes dancing… If drag is art and art is the realm of a revolution in our relation to ourselves, then drag must also participate in this revolution. Drag therefore becomes a performance, which, like all performances structurally modifies our relationship to what it means to be a self. That self, while being opened up through a transformative encounter, exposed and revealed at the same time, does it still bear the trace of its marginal origin or is it a pure blank slate? Does drag allow us to transgress all norms or are there certain stigmata which cannot be faked? In other words, we must press RuPaul's own paradox, navigating between the idea that drag is a universal art form as RuPaul would have us believe (« We are all born naked and the rest is drag ») and that it must remain art for minorities by minorities (talking about *Drag Race*, RuPaul calls it: « A show by queer people, for queer people »). Tackling these questions is essential for any existential philosopher for it places us in risky territory: can we speak of all existences the same way, do we yield to a certain degree of relativity of experience and social prejudice, do we condemn philosophy to abstraction once again? If drag is an existential aesthetic and not a mere Pascalian *divertissement*, it opens not only the self, but philosophy as well to its problematic grounds.

17:10-18:00   **Maddie Youngman**: What Lesbian Relationship Dynamics can teach us about love and individual freedom

This paper presents the significant influences and limitations the sexual hierarchy imposes on our understanding of our relations with others within the framework of phenomenology. On this basis, I argue that by exploring lesbian embodiment and relationships, we can pose a potential solution to Simone de Beauvoir's notion of the paradox of the woman in love, as lesbians avoid the traditional subject/object dynamic through a reorientation and unlearning of harmful power structures. I suggest that the harmful gender roles and subsequent power structure found within heterosexual relationship ideals, limit both individuals freedom and possibilities within their relationship. In this paper, (1) I begin with a discussion of Beauvoir's analysis of the woman in love, which relies on unbalanced expectations of activity and passivity between the heterosexual couple through habit, thus, creating a historical naturalization of the compulsory dynamic. (2) Next, I investigate a potential solution through Beauvoir's analysis of the lesbian, and how she utilizes the notion of double sensation by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, embracing ambiguity and communion, in opposition to the Sartrean dynamic. (3) Although I acknowledge that there are challenges that present themselves to lesbians because of their socialization as women and unwelcoming social environment, they can overcome these difficulties and can achieve subject status in their ambiguity and relations. (4) I conclude by suggesting that through exploring lesbian existence and desire, feminist thinkers and heterosexual people could utilize these tools to unlearn this compulsive objectification and attempt to dismantle the dominant sexual hierarchy and expectations of heteronormative behavior in our society.

10:00-10:50   **Hanna Nasielska and Maceij Kaluża**: Inability or disability? An analysis of the subject's inadequate response in Cioran and Camus

In the first part of our presentation, Hanna will look at two themes from Cioran's philosophy. The first aspect we would like to reflect upon is the antinomy observed by the philosopher between two desires in human beings, evolving into a constant dialectics of contradictions. This leads to a situation, depicted by Cioran as a "paralysis of will". Cioran argues that willing is not a natural state of human will. This appears to be strongly in contrast to the existentialist (Sartrean especially) conception of human will. In the second part of the presentation, Maciej will interpret Camus' *Fall* in context of Cioran's remarks. The interpretations of the book often treat Clamence, the protagonist, as a person, being in full, almost absolute power to change his own situation. Camus draws a "Sartrean" image of the person, who is free – or rather, who thinks he is free and has the power to act. In such reading, his failures (not reacting to the fall of a woman on a bridge, not reacting to being hit in the face during a street quarrel) seem to lead us to think that he is unable to react. That he could, had he the moral strength and courage, change his fate, save the girl, become the virtuous person he dreamt of being. But what if we look at Clamence through the lens of the "paralysis of will" Cioran wrote about? What if we think that Clamence was not unable, but "disabled" ? Going from specific to general, from literature to philosophy: agreeing to see a person's disability to respond to circumstances, how does this impact our moral judgement?

10:50-11:40   **Michał Wróblewski**: "The Philosophy of Freedom" after the age of Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, who had a profound impact on existentialism, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis and post-structuralist thought and was described by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) as fighter of freedom. Steiner is known as a founder of anthroposophy. This esoteric movement has been recognized as a path of spiritual initiation, alternative knowledge established on intuitional thinking in the context of utopian attempts, known as "healing civilization". His genuine creativity In multiple fields identified him as an example of the idea of Superman – derived from Nietzsche's philosophy. In the light of the Western research of esotericism, Steiner has been often considered as the most important German member of The Theosophy Society founded by Helen Blavatsky, but rather forgotten as a philosopher and foremost expert in natural-scientific writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Steiner's major and fundamental work is "The Philosophy of Freedom", anticipated his way to esotericism. It was published twice, first edition in 1893, was a development of his Anti-Kantian doctoral dissertation titled "The Truth and Knowledge". For the second time, in 1918, when anthroposophical society was established, it became rather an inspiration for New Age Movement than existential philosophy. Despite of such historical circumstances taken from twentieth century, in contemporary times Steiner's ideas about freedom became an issue for philosophers. On the one hand, they connected his thought with German idealistic philosophy (Johann Gottlieb Fichte, George Wilhelm Hegel), on the other hand with existentialism (Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre), which is often connected with "philosophy of life".

11:50-12:40   **Daniel Milewski**: Heidegger, Wittgenstein and authenticity — from
              everydayness and ordinariness to contingency and diversity

In an attempt to add to the discussion of authentic self-understanding, I employ the concept of authenticity as mapped out by David Egan, a representative of a modest but recognizable tradition of combining the thoughts of Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Egan develops a reading of both philosophers, presenting their similar concerns for the question of authenticity. Heidegger in Being and Time (1927) and Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations (1953) orient themselves toward the philosophical analysis of down-to-earth, mundane human life — the former investigates the phenomena of everydayness, and the latter inspects ordinary language usage. Both philosophers regard this sphere of ordinariness or everydayness as a proper arena of thought and life. In Egan's understanding, authenticity is closely tied to this sphere as it is "the mode in which we inhabit the everyday without denying or rejecting it". Further, authenticity relates to living one's life without ready-made solutions to the questions regarding the meaning of one's existence; it requires getting to terms with something that Lee Braver (another important Heideggerian-Wittgensteinian scholar) calls "original finitude"—an orientation towards life that absolves itself not only from the need for the so-called God's eye view but also from any notion of something other than everydayness. Such understood, the path of authenticity may be seen as one underscoring the sphere of contingency present in life. Without the recognition of unquestioned validity of seeking the ultimate ground, a monolythic grand narrative seem to be loosening its grip. Re-establishing the sensitivity to that what is contingent (via the pathway of authenticity) may serve as a promising direction on a way toward appreciation of plurality and diversity.

12:40-13:30   **Jakub Marek**: Drifting on Social Media. On the Phenomenon of Scrolling
              from an Existential Perspective

Scrolling is a ubiquitous, albeit controversial phenomenon. "Doom scrolling" and addiction come up frequently as the consequence of heavy Internet use. But what is scrolling, really? In my presentation, I wish to analyse the temporal structure of scrolling and relate it to Heidegger's notion of boredom. Scrolling has to do with distraction, but distraction seems to have - according to Pascal as well as Heidegger - a deep root in human nature/Dasein. This link deserves a closer examination.

14:30-15:20   **Tessa Murthy**: Toward an existential hermeneutics of addict experience: the
              role of *Grenzsituationen* in "watershed experiences"

Where does existentialism leave addicts—people disabled and particularly vulnerable to exploitation in virtue of non-normative relationships to particular substances or activities? It is often assumed that on the existentialist account, addiction must constitute an attempt to dull the pain of the human condition. Karl Jaspers's *Grenzsituationen* or "boundary situations" are sometimes invoked, but in ways that I assert are incorrect. Substance use is taken as itself a boundary situation or as a response to being faced with one. Such accounts, created by nonaddicts trying to understand addiction, leave aside the question of whether existentialism can help *addicts themselves* share their interiority in ways that are intelligible to nonaddicts. It is crucial that we address the challenges facing addicts in communicating their lived experience, given that clinical settings are often governed by theories that presuppose nonaddict sensibilities and relationships. I argue that in this regard, addict activism and

liberation can be promoted through existentialist phenomenology. In particular, *Grenzsituationen* can help addicts describe the experience of "spontaneous remission" from addiction. Drawing from addict testimony, I describe a feature of remission narratives that I call "watershed experiences": seemingly uncaused emotional reactions to common circumstances. Watershed experiences are often mischaracterized as "the straw that broke the camel's back" or as mere rhetorical devices. A better characterization draws from *Grenzsituationen*. These strong emotions create opportunities for reflection, choice, and self-conception in ways previously unimaginable, thereby making remission an unfolding possibility in the addict's future life. Appeal to Jaspers's concept captures the relevance of watershed experiences in narrative choice and decision-making without undercutting their functional locus in addict identity and liberation. This case study exemplifies how existentialist phenomenology can be useful in developing a hermeneutics of addict interiority and overcoming the disconnect between addict and nonaddict experience.

15:20-16:10   **Stefan Bolea**: Cioran and 20th century antihumanistic literature

The most important theme of this paper is the problem of *antihumanism*, a concept I use in a slightly different sense than Michel Foucault's. The French philosopher spoke of the death of a certain concept of humanity following the demise of God: "Man would be erased like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea." However, poets such as Baudelaire and Lautréamont and philosophers such as Stirner, Nietzsche and Cioran add misanthropy – dislike of mankind – to their antihumanistic project. While Foucault alluded to the downfall of man understood in a certain type of way, and to the arrival of a non-humanistic system of reference, some post-Romantic poets and philosophers see themselves as agents of destruction – of what Nietzsche called 'active nihilism' – and would like to finish with the saga of humanism altogether through a Schopenhauerian process of universal death. Moreover, Nietzsche spoke of the *Übermensch* ['overman' or 'superman'] as an overcoming of the traditional man, a sort of transgression of normal humanity, and Cioran referred to the *not-man* – a psychological mutation of the species, a being that is human only from a biological perspective. The *Übermensch* and the not-man can both be seen as possible paths for humanity's evolution. They are also metaphors for the current impasse of humanism: the feeling that the human species is in a certain biological sense dying, and that biotechnological enhancement in the near future will transform humanity to the core. I will sketch the portrait of Cioran's *not-man*, using a couple of different novels, *No Longer Human* (1948) by Osamu Dazai, and *Frost* (1963) by Thomas Bernhard, two literary works that circle around suicide and antinatalism.

16:20-17:10   **Alycia LaGuardia-LoBianco**: Selfhood, Authenticity and mental illness

What does it mean to be true to yourself when you have a mental illness? Can symptoms of a mental illness ever be part of one's authentic self, or does mental illness occlude the authentic expressions of self by definition? Consider a choice that some with mental illness may face: whether to take medication as part of treatment. When effective, medications alter symptomatic moods or behaviors, for instance by neutralizing compulsive, anxious thoughts. But though these symptoms can be undesirable, some agents can nonetheless identify with them as an important part of who they are. For these agents, psychopharmaceuticals that alter or eradicate their symptoms can also alter or eradicate (part of) their selves. Yet for others, the very same concern of maintaining one's self can count in favor of medications. If one feels a

mental illness has altered who one is, turning one into 'someone else', medication allows for a return to one's self. Though it is tempting to determine which sort of state (symptomatic or treated) is 'really' authentic, I argue that we should resist privileging either type of self as *the* authentic self; neither recovery nor illness are categorically authentic states. Additionally, we should take patients' self-reports as starting points to understanding authentic selfhood rather than viewing them as phenomena to be explained away. We should recognize the possibility that mental illness can be part of one's authentic self for some agents, but not for others. To do this, I motivate an existentialist notion of authenticity according to which authentic selfhood is an active, situated, and relational construction; authentic selfhood indicates those self-constructions that the agent freely and responsibly chooses and which are enacted and disclosed in the world. This view allows for an appreciation of differences in authentic selfhood that can help destigmatize mental illnesses.

17:20-18:10 **Emily Martone**: The Eccentric Subject: A Kierkegaardian Deconstruction of Identities

My paper aims to indicate in Kierkegaard's theological notion of *Eiendommelighed* a fruitful means to deconstruct the 'political ontology' based on an 'identity paradigm'. In so doing, I will confront the Danish term with the Heideggerian *Eigentlickheit*. Notwithstanding Heidegger's anti-essentialist purpose, the concept of authenticity remains within the semantics of the ego and sameness. Resolution (*Entschlossenheit*) by which Dasein relates authentically to itself turns out to be – as Adorno pointed out – a monological self-positing of the autonomous, self-conscious subject. If so, the Heideggerian notion repeats the identity dynamics of the idealistic ego and its socio-political consequences. Just as the ego asserts itself against the non-ego and includes the non-ego as a necessary negative moment of self-identity, all political and social entities are likewise defined by 'exclusive inclusion'. Therefore, the identity paradigm works through similarities based on dissimilarities: the social-political entity defines its identity against those who do not share the set of properties composing the communal essence. The social space is therefore broken down into opposite pairs: citizen/stranger, sane/sick, rational/mad, in short, between the same and the different. Identity is not a morally or biopolitically neutral concept. Rather, it has an inherent normative dimension, resulting in the closure of the public space for the different ones. On the contrary, by understanding human subjectivity as *Eiendommelighed* – which I translate as 'peculiarity', and 'eccentricity' – Kierkegaard undermines the process of constructing fixed social-political identities. His notion indicates the constitutive heterogeneity of the subject itself: its being an 'inappropriable property.' For the self, the condition of possibility of self-relation and other-relation turns out to be a paradoxical condition of impossibility. Therefore, the movement of becoming itself is rather a kenotic process, by which the subject is radically exposed to the other as it is completely self-emptied of its identity and authenticity. It is, therefore, eccentricity (being radically outside oneself) rather than authenticity, that defines human beings and enables new ways of sociality (a self-emptying one) within the contemporary social-political space fragmented between different, non-identical voices.

18:10-19:00 **Mariah Partida**: Heidegger and Garland-Thomson: Uncanniness, Misfitting, and Disability

This presentation explores the relationship between Heidegger's concept of *Unheimlichkeit*, "uncanniness," or "not-being-at-home-in-the-world" and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's critical concept of "misfitting." For Heidegger, uncanniness is an ineliminable aspect of our being-in-the-world. Moreover, his notion of the "self" or "individual" is anti-Cartesian such

that *Dasein* ("being-there") is always-already immersed in a world of practical involvement. Yet, Heidegger's account of skillful coping in *Being and Time* fails to make room for the everyday experiences of disabled individuals who encounter environmental barriers that disallow a sense of moving through the world with ease. Here is where the notion of "misfitting" comes into play. In "Misfitting," critical disability studies scholar Garland-Thomson proposes the term *misfit* as a keyword that aims to defamiliarize and reframe conventional understandings of disability. While "fitting" refers to an encounter between two things in which they come together harmoniously, "misfitting" describes "an incongruent relationship between two things: a square peg in a round hole." Garland-Thomson argues that the problem with a misfit is not located in either of the two things, but rather in their juxtaposition. For example, the problem of a misfit between a wheelchair user and a flight of stairs inheres not in the wheelchair user or in the stairs, but rather in their disjunctive relationship. Similarly, Heidegger's claim that Dasein is immersed in a world of practical involvement implies a relational understanding of selfhood. He discusses tool breakdown, and even existential death, in terms of a more general Dasein. However, Garland-Thomson addresses difference in a way that this more general account of Dasein does not. Specifically, her emphasis on the relationship between misfitting and disability shows how an environment that fails to make room for difference can greatly exacerbate the sense of "misfitting" or "uncanniness" experienced by individuals with minority bodies.

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