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From 'Know Thyself' to 'Authenticity': A Socratic-Heideggerian Inquiry into Digital Identity Crises

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Abstract

This study aims to illuminate modern identity struggles (particularly those amplified by the digital age, social media, and algorithmic manipulation) through a philosophical synthesis of Socratic ethical introspection and Heideggerian ontological awareness. By bridging classical ethics with existential ontology, the article proposes a structural complementarity between Socrates' quest for self-knowledge (dismantling unexamined opinion through the recognition of ignorance) and Heidegger's analysis of Dasein (confronting finitude to escape the alienating conformity of das Man). While Heidegger provides the ontological depth regarding the "forgetfulness of Being", Socrates offers a practical, dialectical method for public and ethical action. Examining their respective ethico-political dimensions and responses to historical crises allows this inquiry to ground Heidegger's abstract imperative for *authenticity* in Socrates's model of active civic responsibility. Extending this classical-existential framework to the contemporary digital panopticon reveals its vital critical capacity. By uniting the Socratic method of inquiry with Heidegger's concept of authentic existence, the proposed framework offers a rigorous dialectical praxis against technological determinism and pervasive social alienation. The synthesis empowers human subjects to undertake their ethical self-constitution and sustain an authentic "Being-in-the-world".

Keywords: Authenticity; know thyself; forgetting of being; digital age; ethical-political praxis.

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1. Introduction

In the digital age, the existential struggle between authentic selfhood and unexamined social conformity has transformed into a structural, data-driven crisis. The pervasive influence of digital platforms often entangles individuals within an algorithmic version of "the They" (*das Man*), distancing them from genuine self-reflection (Dreyfus, 1991; Han, 2017). Against this contemporary alienation, this article proposes a philosophical synthesis grounded in the ethical and epistemological call for self-awareness represented by Socrates (469–399 BCE) and the ontological analysis of existence developed by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). By establishing a structural analogue between Socrates' quest for self-knowledge (recognizing one's ignorance to dismantle *doxa*) and Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* (confronting finitude to achieve *authenticity*), the inquiry bridges classical ethics with existential ontology. The maxim "Know Thyself" (γνῶθι σεαυτόν/gnōthi seautón), which became a cornerstone of Socratic philosophy, emphasizes the necessity for the individual to recognize their own ignorance and engage in a continuous practice of inquiry on the path to truth. This principle, elaborated in Plato's (428/427–348/347 BCE) dialogues such as the *Apology* and *Phaedo*, suggests that one cannot progress on the path to truth without understanding the nature of one's own being, specifically, understanding one's own ignorance and the ethical condition of one's soul.

A fundamental structural complementarity can be established between Socrates' principle of "Know Thyself" and Heidegger's existential framework. Taking into account Heidegger's critique of the Socratic-Platonic tradition (which he identifies as the source of the phenomenon of the "forgetting of Being" [*Seinsvergessenheit*]), this analysis posits that what is at play is a structural, rather than a historical, analogy, revealing a shared mechanism of awakening. Whether it manifests as "the many" (Plato, 1997b) criticized by Socrates or as the anonymous dictates of *das Man*, unquestioning conformity to social norms constitutes one of the primary obstacles to authentic existence (Plato, 1997a, 31c-32a; 1987, 483a-484a). Through this synthesis, the ethical question of 'what we must do' becomes inextricably linked with the ontological inquiry into "who we truly are". This approach aims to provide an action-oriented and grounded response to the contemporary problematic of *doxa* and the anonymity of *das Man* (Dreyfus, 1991; Han, 2017). While Socrates advocates for ethical action and civic responsibility within the shared public sphere (Plato, 1997a; 1997b), Heidegger (through a keen awareness of finitude) draws our attention to the ontological conditions that underlie 'how one is to exist' (Heidegger, 1962).

Within this structural framework, a productive philosophical complementarity emerges: Heidegger's existential analytic deepens the ontological stakes of the Socratic "Know Thyself", while the Socratic commitment to public truth can serve as a crucial ethical corrective to the vulnerabilities of Heideggerian "authenticity" (Adorno, 2004; Levinas, 1991). This synthesis addresses the prevalent disconnect between individual self-understanding and social participation. By grounding Heidegger's imperative for authentic existence in Socrates's demand for ethically responsible self-knowledge, our framework moves beyond merely understanding 'who' the self is, to actively guiding 'how' to live authentically and accountably in a shared world.

Heidegger's analysis is employed to provide a deeper ontological foundation for Socrates's ethically grounded dialectical inquiry; in this way, it becomes possible to reinterpret the injunction "Know Thyself" as *Dasein*'s confrontation with its own Being. This transformation shifts Socratic self-examination away from the pursuit of universal ethical forms (*eide*) and toward the uncovering of the fundamental structures of *Dasein* (specifically, its potentiality-for-Being and essential finitude). From this perspective, the Socratic inward gaze (the care of the soul) is elevated, in a philosophical sense, to the task of ontologically resolving *Dasein*'s "falling" into *das Man* ("the They"). As a result, ethical responsibility is grounded not in reason alone, but in an existential awareness of mortality. We approach Heidegger's framework not as a literal interpretation of the Socratic method, but as the ontological counterpart necessary to ground the ethical imperative, opening the way for its practical application in a contemporary context.

Although thinkers such as Hannah Arendt (1978, 1998) have analyzed the ethico-political tension between Socratic public engagement and Heidegger's political withdrawal, the discussion contends that, rather than resulting in a philosophical impasse, this dynamic allows for a complementary synthesis. Francisco J. Gonzalez (2009) has examined the methodological similarities between the two philosophers, particularly regarding dialogue, inquiry, and the unconcealment of truth (*aletheia*). However, such analyses typically limit their scope to fundamental ontological, ethical, or political dimensions. Moving beyond these theoretical boundaries, the present investigation situates the shared philosophical legacy of the two thinkers within the context of the contemporary technological era, an age defined by challenges such as social media, algorithmic governance, and the crisis of digital identity. This approach reveals not only their theoretical compatibility but also their practical urgency in confronting contemporary existential challenges.

As Langdon Winner argues, technology is not merely a neutral 'tool' but an apparatus that embodies deep political

values. He warns that through "technological somnambulism", society accepts these impacts unquestioningly, risking absorption into technological determinism (Winner, 2020). The following inquiry investigates how Socrates' imperative to know oneself and Heidegger's analysis of authentic being can jointly address the crises of ontological selfhood and ethical accountability in contemporary digital society. The Socratic and Heideggerian synthesis establishes the necessary foundation for an authentic dialectical praxis, offering a viable model of resistance against such determinism.

Establishing this philosophical framework demands careful conceptual demarcation. Heidegger's "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) is not a subjective moral ideal, but an ontological structure concerning the 'how' of Dasein's existence, rather than the 'what' of its choices. It is not about adhering to a predetermined set of values, but about resoluteness (the self-chosen responsibility for one's own potentiality-for-Being). Although Socrates did not employ the term "authenticity", our comparative framework addresses his critique of the 'unexamined life' as the ethical counterpart to Heidegger's analysis of 'fallenness' into *das Man*, thereby inextricably linking ethical self-responsibility with ontological awareness.

Clarifying the methodological boundaries and the foundational approach is essential here. Rather than claiming a direct historical continuity or an absolute conceptual equivalence between Socrates and Heidegger (which Heidegger's radical critique of traditional metaphysics and its Platonic origins would invalidate), this study establishes a methodological "interpretive structural analogy" between the two thinkers. The primary objective is to construct a functional, praxis-driven conceptual framework against the contemporary alienation and ontological dislocation of the digital age, operationalizing the structural parallels in both thinkers' disruptive modes of inquiry (Socratic *elenchus* and Heideggerian *Angst/Gewissen*) that trigger existential awakening.

2. Foundations of Self-Knowledge and Authentic Existence: Socratic and Heideggerian Perspectives

2.1. Socratic "Know Thyself": The Recognition of Ignorance and the Quest for Truth

The principle "Know Thyself" (γνῶθι σεαυτόν/gnōthi seautón), inscribed at the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi and serving as a cornerstone of Western thought (Plato, 2008; 1997d, 343b), transcends mere advice for introspection. It is a philosophical and existential call to awakening, requiring one to recognize one's own limitations, ignorance, and essence. This principle enjoins the individual not merely to pursue intellectual accumulation, but to attain a radical awareness of the truth of their own existence. For Socrates, this process of self-knowledge is not simply an abstract quest for wisdom; it is an indispensable prerequisite for ethical responsibility and authentic action within the world.

The dialectical method (*elenchus*), which lies at the heart of Socratic philosophical practice, compels the individual first to acknowledge their own ignorance and to shed deeply ingrained prejudices. As emphasized in Plato's *Apology*, Socrates maintained that an unexamined life (one that neglects the pursuit of wisdom and moral reflection) is not worth living (Plato, 1997a, 38a). This famous assertion reveals that self-knowledge is indispensable both for the foundation and the continued cultivation of virtue. This stems from the doctrine of Socratic intellectualism, which posits that knowledge and virtue are intrinsically linked; it maintains that one cannot truly know the good without also choosing to act in accordance with it. Consequently, continuous self-examination serves as the primary mechanism to discern the true good (*aretē*), thereby providing a basis for ethical action while simultaneously preventing moral errors (for no one errs knowingly) (Plato, 1997c; 1997d).

Socrates viewed the process of discovering truth not as the act of making direct claims to knowledge, but as the practice of refuting false beliefs through systematic questioning and critical thinking. As he states in the *Apology*, the source of his own wisdom lay precisely in his "knowing that he knew nothing", in contrast to others who, despite being ignorant, mistakenly believed they possessed knowledge (Plato, 1997a, 21d-23b). Similarly, in the dialogue *Meno*, the idea is explored that knowledge is a form of "recollection" (*anamnesis*) attained through inquiry, a process that becomes possible only when an individual acknowledges their ignorance (Plato, 1997c, 80d, 82b-85b).

This Socratic method, rooted in irony and interrogation, can be interpreted as a practice of "uncovering the hidden truth". The emergence of truth from concealment, achieved through questioning and refutation, bears a striking parallel to Martin Heidegger's concept of *aletheia* (the lifting of concealment, or disclosure). The connection lies not merely in the discovery of truth, but in the conceptualization of truth as something that emerges through a rigorous and critical process of revelation, a process that actively dismantles an established state of concealment, whether that state manifests as the Socratic *doxa* (unexamined opinion) or the Heideggerian "falling" into *das Man* (the "they"). This parallel lies directly in the ontological structure of disclosure as a 'fundamental existential/ethical task'. According to Heidegger, *aletheia* constitutes the essence of truth as the

"uncovering of what is concealed" (Heidegger, 1998c, pp. 27-33). The dialogue with the slave boy in the *Meno*, where he solves a geometry problem (Plato, 1997c, 82b-85b) can be reinterpreted through a Heideggerian lens as the "self-showing" or disclosure of truth, as the boy brings forth his own latent knowledge through dialectical inquiry. For Heidegger, questioning (*Fragen*) is the effort to open up the meaning of Being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 24).

A resonance emerges between the Socratic "knowledge of ignorance" and Heidegger's diagnosis of the modern human condition as the "forgetfulness of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*). This resonance is rooted not in a direct conceptual equivalence, but in a shared diagnostic structure: the "conceited ignorance" that Socrates critiques represents a refusal to acknowledge the limits of human understanding, whereas his own "learned ignorance" signifies a clear-eyed awareness of precisely those limits. Similarly, the everyday falling (*Verfallen*) into the anonymity of *das Man* (the "they") obscures the fundamental question of Being and actively reinforces the broader state of *Seinsvergessenheit*. These conditions, one ethical and the other ontological, are states characterized by a "lack of awareness" that precludes authentic engagement. Both thinkers call for the interrogation of structures (whether they be social norms or the objectifying systems of Western metaphysics, which culminate in Nietzschean nihilism) (Heidegger, 2001a) that prevent individuals from perceiving themselves and the world "as they are". Through his ironic method of *elenchus*, Socrates strips away superficial and erroneous beliefs, compelling the individual to confront the unveiling of truth (*aletheia*) (Plato, 1997a, 23b, 30e-31a; Heidegger, 1962, p. 164). However, this resonance also carries with it a Heideggerian caveat: as explored in *Plato's Doctrine of Truth*, this primordial "emergence" began to decline when Plato shifted his focus toward the "correctness" (*orthotes*) of vision (Heidegger, 1998e). Our synthesis actively aims to transcend this subsequent metaphysical stagnation. Rather than reading Socratic philosophy merely as a precursor to Platonic idealism, we reclaim the original, subversive power of the *elenchus*. Socratic inquiry is not a quest for theoretical correctness (*orthotes*), but a lived, existential practice that shatters dogmatic certainties and brings truth (*aletheia*) to light.

According to Socrates, most people live in a state of ignorance regarding their own true nature and values, a condition that limits their capacity to make rational and virtuous decisions. The path to overcoming this ignorance is the *elenchus*: a rigorous examination of one's own beliefs, values, and assumptions, undertaken with the aim of cultivating virtue (*aretē*) and caring for the soul. Socrates does not offer a ready-made prescription for self-knowledge; instead, he leaves behind a dialectical approach that encourages continuous questioning. This approach forms the foundation for an ongoing inquiry and an attitude of intellectual humility in the face of dogmatism (Plato, 1997a, 21b; 1997c, 80d). Such intellectual humility is a vital prerequisite for the ethical and civic responsibility that we shall examine within the context of political and social engagement.

2.2. The Heideggerian Question of Being: Authenticity, Anxiety, and the Forgetting of Being

Socratic self-knowledge operates primarily within an ethical and epistemological domain. However, diagnosing the full scope of contemporary ontological dislocation may benefit from situating this ethical imperative within a deeper existential framework. Rather than providing a general overview of *Being and Time*, the following analysis examines specific Heideggerian concepts as ontological counterparts to Socratic inquiry. In this structural alignment, "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) functions as the ontological equivalent of the Socratic pursuit of *aretē*; "Anxiety" (*Angst*) serves as the existential mechanism that compels *Dasein* to emerge from an unexamined life (Heidegger, 1962); and the "forgetfulness of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*) mirrors the Socratic critique of *doxa* (unexamined opinion). This focused reading aims to offer a two-layered framework for addressing the modern condition of inauthenticity, viewing it simultaneously as an ethical failure and an ontological evasion.

In *Being and Time* (1927), Martin Heidegger offers a radical ontological perspective on human existence, re-evaluating the understanding of the self and knowledge from a distinct ontological foundation. He achieves this by redefining the human condition within the framework of the existential structure of *Dasein* ("Being-there" or "Being-in-the-world") and its profound relationship with Being. At the heart of this existential analysis lies Heidegger's fundamental critique of traditional Western metaphysics. He argues that this tradition has systematically neglected the question of the meaning of Being (*Sein*) by conflating it with mere beings (*Seiendes*), that is, with knowable, calculable objects. By reducing Being to this level, Western thought has objectified it and entirely forgotten its primordial meaning, leading to what Heidegger terms the "forgetfulness of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*) (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 21, 24-27), a core motif of the "closure of metaphysics," a concept he later explores in greater detail as an epochal destiny of the West (Heidegger, 1998d, pp. 245-246).

This metaphysical decline finds its historical origin in Heidegger's interpretation of the Platonic tradition. While for most philosophers Western thought begins with Socrates and Plato, for Heidegger, Plato marks the inception of a metaphysical decline that finds its ultimate culmination

and end in the nihilism and "will to power" of Friedrich Nietzsche. Beginning with Plato, philosophers have lost themselves in the multiplicity of particular beings (*Seiende*) and have forgotten to attend to that which makes them all what they are, namely, Being (*Sein*). Since Being has a special relationship with language, this "forgetting of Being" manifests itself in the corruption of philosophical language itself. According to Heidegger, philosophers fail to find answers to their questions because they do not know how to pose them; therefore, a new philosophical language is required (Heidegger, 1998d; Bradatan, 2015, pp. 53-54).

According to Heidegger, Being is not an object of cognition; rather, it is disclosed within Dasein's understanding of Being (*Seinsverständnis*) and is brought to light through interpretation. Dasein, the specific mode of human existence, is defined as "being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-sein*) (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 21, 24-27, 102); by virtue of this fundamental state, Dasein is the only entity capable of questioning its own existence and establishing a conscious connection with Being itself (Pöggeler & Allemann, 1994, p. 50; İyi, 2010, p. 60). From this ontological perspective, knowledge is not primarily a mental representation of the external world; instead, it is inextricably linked to Dasein's relationship with the world and its own existential possibilities. Heidegger analyzes the essence of the human being based on its relationship to Being; the human being is the only entity capable of asking the question, "What is Being?" (Bolt, 2013, p. 114).

Heidegger also questions the traditional distinction between theory and practice. *Dasein*'s primary relationship with the world is a practical "concern" (*Besorgen*), rather than theoretical observation; we primarily grasp things as 'ready-to-hand' (*Zuhanden*), that is, as tools serving a particular purpose. When we merely gaze at something as "present-at-hand" (*Vorhanden*) from a theoretical distance, we cannot fully understand its actual being. The way to understand a thing is through practically engaging with it (Bolt, 2013, pp. 86-101). Therefore, practical behavior is not 'atheoretical' in the sense of lacking sight (Heidegger, 2008, p. 72).

Within this everyday practical world, *Dasein* inherently faces the danger of losing its "authenticity". "Thrown" (*Geworfenheit*) into the world within a specific context, *Dasein* often flees the burden of its own Being by doing as "the they" (*das Man*) do, dissolving into everyday publicness. This condition is what Heidegger calls "Falling" (*Verfallen*), an inauthentic mode of existence where *Dasein* is cut off from its own authentic possibilities and merely adapted to the "today". *In this state, the* "They-self" *(das Man-selbst) emerges as an anonymous, interchangeable entity, living entirely according to the dictates of everyday averageness* (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 163-168; Hühnerfeld, 1994, pp. 79-80, 93). As commentators summarize, this mechanism "dissolves all singularity into the publicness of the average" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 143; Safranski, 1998, p. 178). It is crucial to distinguish these existential dynamics from the broader historical destiny of Western thought. While the 'forgetting of Being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*) characterizes the epochal and metaphysical condition of Western history that reduces Being to mere beings, 'fallenness' (*Verfallen*) is the structural, existential tendency of *Dasein* to lose itself in the everydayness of *das Man*. *Dasein*'s absorption in the everyday publicness (*das Man*) is not an epochal event but an inherent ontological structure, which in turn facilitates the broader epochal forgetting of Being. This state of standardization and fallenness is particularly evident in the modern technological age, which tends to order everything as a calculable resource or *Bestand* (Heidegger, 1998b). Instead of questioning Being, human beings assume the controlling posture endemic to the technological era, and this calculative thinking (*rechnendes Denken*) leads to the concealment of truth (Heidegger, 1966; 1998b, pp. 11-15; 2001b, pp. 84-85).

The way out of this condition lies primarily in *Dasein*'s confrontation with its own finitude. The path to "authenticity" involves accepting finitude, that is, taking up the phenomenon of "Being-towards-death" (*Sein-zum-Tode*), rather than fleeing from it. Death is *Dasein*'s ownmost, non-relational possibility. Confronting death pulls *Dasein* out of the everyday publicness of *das Man*, individualizes it, and calls it to assume its own existential responsibility (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 294-314). Although frightening, this confrontation is also liberating. A fundamental mood (Befindlichkeit) that arises in this confrontation is "Anxiety" (*Angst*). Unlike "fear" (*Furcht*), which is directed towards a specific object, anxiety relates to *Dasein*'s Being-in-the-world itself, its groundlessness, and "Nothingness" (*das Nichts*) (Heidegger, 2004, p. 360). Anxiety shakes *Dasein* out of the false security of *das Man* and confronts it with the nakedness of its own existence. For Heidegger, "Nothingness" is not simple absence but the ground necessary for Being to disclose itself; the Nothingness experienced in anxiety is not a mere void, but the essential ground that lifts the veil over Being and allows truth to emerge (Cohen, 2006, p. 23; Dreyfus, 1991, p. 178; Heidegger, 1998a, p. 91; Heidegger, 2009, p. 42; Safranski, 1998, p. 215). In the Heideggerian perspective, similar to the state of aporia (impasse) created by the Socratic *elenchus*, anxiety opens the door to existential questioning and transformation.

In response to the hegemony of this "calculating thought", Heidegger proposes "meditative thinking" (*das*

besinnliche Denken) as a way to reconnect human beings with the meaning of Being. This is not a theoretical abstraction, but a return to language, the original event in which Being announces itself to humanity. In this context, language ceases to be a mere means of communication and becomes a sacred space where truth is housed and thought, as the "house of Being" in the Heideggerian sense (Heidegger, 1966, pp. 46-47; 1998c, pp. 50-52; 2001a, pp. 21-22; 1998d, pp. 239, 254). Heidegger's shift toward ontology did more than just challenge his predecessors; it initiated a new era by centering the "Question of Being" as the primary task of philosophy (Çüçen, 2006, p. 11).

The disclosure of Being (*aletheia*) is a historical process, meaning the "un-concealing of the concealed". In modern technology, however, the destining (*Geschick*) of revealing manifests as "Enframing" (*Ge-stell*),[1] a challenging-forth that orders everything as controllable resource, causing Being to withdraw into forgottenness (*Seinsverlassenheit*) (Heidegger, 1998b, p. 11; 2001b, pp. 84-85; 2001a). Yet, this destiny is not absolute; *Dasein* is free to the extent that it hearkens and responds to this destining. Freedom is the ability to correspond to the clearing (*Lichtung*) of Being (Heidegger, 1998c, pp. 27-33, 68-69).

2.3. A Comparative Assessment: Method, Truth, and Authenticity

Both Socrates and Heidegger developed methods centered on the human being's continuous self-questioning. While Heidegger regards the questioning of Being as a fundamental characteristic of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1962), Socrates saw the process of inquiry, which begins with the acceptance of one's own ignorance, as the prerequisite for attaining truth. Heidegger's "Question of Being" and Socrates' foundational acknowledgment of his own ignorance converge on a critical point: their questioning is not merely epistemological but fundamentally transformative. Socratic ignorance is the necessary starting point for dismantling the *doxa* and initiating the ethical care of the soul; similarly, the Heideggerian Question of Being is the singular act that tears *Dasein* away from its "fallenness" into *das Man* to confront its authentic potentiality. Both forms of questioning are structurally analogous acts of *disruption* that clear the ground for genuine existence, one ethically, the other ontologically.

Although they share a profound structural similarity in their methods for unconcealing truth (Plato, 1997c, 85c), their ultimate philosophical orientations operate in different domains: Socrates is driven by an epistemological and ethical objective, the pursuit of genuine knowledge and virtue, whereas Heidegger sets out with an ontological goal, questioning the meaning of Being. While Socrates prioritizes dialogue and rational argumentation, Heidegger grounds his method in fundamental existential experiences, such as anxiety, temporality, and Being-towards-death (Heidegger, 1962).

While the Socratic call to "Know Thyself" represents intellectual humility and the recognition of one's own ignorance, as an indispensable first step toward ethical life, the Heideggerian imperative focuses on a resolute confrontation with existential transience to achieve authentic existence. Moving beyond epistemological limits, the condition of *Dasein* as "Being-towards-death" (*Sein-zum-Tode*) transposes the intellectual dimension of Socratic inquiry onto a strictly ontological ground, showing that "authenticity" can only be attained by taking up this very finitude (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 284-311).

The structural analogy between these two thinkers is most evident in their respective conceptualizations of inner disruption: the Socratic *daimonion* and the Heideggerian "call of conscience" (*Ruf des Gewissens*). For Socrates, the *daimonion* is an inner, divine voice that intervenes not to dictate positive action, but to halt him when he is about to commit a moral error, effectively pulling him away from the unexamined consensus of the multitude (Plato, 1997a, 31d). In a profoundly parallel ontological register, Heidegger posits the "call of conscience" as the mechanism by which *Dasein* is abruptly awakened from its tranquilized immersion in the "they-self" (*das Man*). This call comes from nowhere else but *Dasein* itself, in its uncanny state of anxiety, summoning the self back to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being and existential responsibility (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 319-320). Both the Socratic *daimonion* and the Heideggerian *Gewissen* function as non-discursive, disruptive forces that shatter the illusion of

[1] Gestell generally means shelf, frame, skeleton, roof. It is translated as Enframing, meaning 'framing' in English. However, 'framing' here is essentially a call, even a challenging demand. It is 'gathering' (Versammelnde) in a way that reveals its secret. This demand frames because it brings together and organizes. Moreover, it includes everything it invites within a frame or formation through the organization of a use that it always re-establishes. Heidegger emphasizes the function of the German prefix 'ge' (gathering together) by putting a hyphen in between (Ge-stell) and emphasizes 'functionality' itself. This also ensures that it is remembered that modern technique is, in essence, also a 'functionalization' (For more information, see Özlem, D. (1998). Martin Heidegger: Inquiry into Technique, Istanbul: Paradigma, p. 62 (footnote)). That is, the destiny (Ge-stell) of modern technology provokes humanity to think in a calculating way. When humanity thinks in this way, the world appears as nothing more than a standing-reserve (Bestand). In short, one is action (the way of thinking), the other is the state of being that that action produces.

everyday conformity. This deep connection transforms our comparison from a mere methodological parallel into the articulation of a shared existential topography: the authentic selfhood emerges through an inner rupture that necessitates a resolute departure from the crowd.

3. Ethical and Political Dimensions: The Responsibility of Philosophy in the Face of Historical Crises

The philosophical implications of Socratic inquiry and Heideggerian "authenticity" inevitably extend from individual existence into the shared political realm. Given that contemporary identity crises manifest simultaneously as existential malaise and collective alienation, validating this theoretical synthesis requires examining its practical consequences in the public sphere. While Heidegger's analytic emphasizes individual ontological resoluteness in the face of finitude, it tends to remain largely reticent regarding political praxis. Addressing the systemic nature of modern crises demands supplementing Heideggerian ontological self-resolution with the Socratic model of collective ethical action and civic accountability.

3.1. The Public Sphere and Responsibility: Socratic Engagement and Heideggerian Reticence

Socrates practiced his philosophy in the Athenian agora, engaging directly in dialogue with his fellow citizens. For him, philosophy was a public activity and a moral responsibility. His self-description as a "gadfly" reflects his mission to awaken the Athenian society from its lethargy and provoke them to reflect upon virtue (Plato, 1997a, 30e). Socrates maintains that individual self-knowledge and virtuous living are also the foundation of a just society (Plato, 1997a, 30a-30b; 1997e, 441d-444e; 1997b, 50b). His choice to accept death by submitting to the laws (even if unjust) when he had the opportunity to escape demonstrates the tension between individual conscience and societal law, and his radical stance on paying the price for philosophical consistency (Plato, 1987, 521d-522e; 1997b, 49e, 50b, 51c). In the *Crito* (specifically 54b, 54d), Socrates explicitly argues that fleeing would violate his lifelong, tacit agreement with the Laws of Athens and would destroy the state, stating that one must 'do what one has agreed to do'. Socrates presents the abandonment of Athenian laws as a greater violation of sacred duty than disobeying one's parents, demanding that the citizen confront the dilemma of either persuading or obeying. This decision underscores his commitment to the "unexamined life" critique; prioritizing the dictates of his own examined conscience over the will of the multitude, he argues that justice is the health of the soul and preserving it remains the absolute priority (Plato, 1997b, 47e-48a, 50a, 51c).

This contrast illuminates the radical difference between the unreflective conformity of *das Man* and Socratic conscious submission. While *das Man* obeys because 'that is what one does', relinquishing individual existential responsibility to the anonymous crowd, Socrates' obedience to the law is a deliberate, reasoned choice. He remains steadfast in his commitment to the laws not out of unthinking habit, but out of a philosophical consistency that refuses to compromise his conscience. Even in his final act of submission, Socrates exemplifies the ultimate resistance against the lethargy of the multitude, grounding his resolve in the very "examined life" he spent his days defending (Plato, 1997a; 1997b).

By arguing that the true statesman is one who tries to improve the souls of the citizens, he also grounds politics on an ethical foundation. This powerful claim, articulated most clearly in the *Republic*'s discussion of the craft of the ruler, and reinforced in the *Gorgias* (521d-e) where he contends that true politics is the pursuit of virtue, fundamentally redefines political power. Socrates asserts that just as a physician's craft benefits the patient, the true ruler's craft is inherently directed toward the *benefit of the governed* (the soul's condition), not the ruler's self-interest. This radically ethical grounding of politics establishes a necessary counter-measure against the political pursuit of mere power or wealth, providing a crucial ancient analogue to the Heideggerian critique of inauthentic political structures driven by *das Man* (Plato, 1997e, 341c-342e). While Heidegger's critique of *das Man* highlights the ontological danger of mass conformity, his framework remains largely monological in its political outreach, focusing primarily on individual *Dasein*'s confrontation with existence rather than offering a model for active political resistance or civic *praxis* (Gonzalez, 2009, pp. 387-388). As Arendt emphasizes, whereas isolated inwardness risks retreating from the shared world, Socratic dialogue preserves the vital, pluralistic dimension of human freedom by anchoring consciousness in the public sphere (Arendt, 1978, pp. 210-215).

3.2. Historical Crises and the Role of Philosophy: Nazism, Technology, and Resistance

Modern "inauthenticity" is not merely a personal failing but a systemic, structural condition, exemplified by technological abstraction and political extremism. Heidegger's controversial engagement with Nazism is examined here not to provide a historical account, but to critically analyze the dangers of the "authenticity" imperative when politically misdirected. Juxtaposing this political vulnerability with his critique of technology (*Ge-stell*) as the ultimate abandonment of Being (*Seinsverlassenheit*) (Heidegger, 1998b) suggests the need to ground ontological awareness in Socratic ethical self-responsibility.

Heidegger's affiliation with the Nazi Party in 1933 and his conduct during his rectorship have raised serious questions about the ethical and political responsibility of his philosophy. Although he withdrew from active politics shortly thereafter and there were points where his philosophy fundamentally diverged from Nazism (Safranski, 1998, p. 265), his silence regarding the catastrophic human cost of the regime has rendered his stance against totalitarianism controversial (Ott, 1993, p. 342).

Heidegger's political trajectory illustrates the potential limitations of an ontological imperative: it suggests that the quest for "authenticity", when separated from Socratic ethical self-responsibility and civic participation, risks being misdirected, or even consumed, by the very mass psychology (*das Man*) it seeks to transcend. Theodor Adorno harshly criticizes Heidegger's ontological language for abstracting the horror of concrete catastrophes like Auschwitz, thereby leading philosophy into a kind of "ethical bankruptcy" (Adorno, 2004, pp. 324, 365-370). Integrating Socratic ethics with Heideggerian ontology therefore becomes a philosophical necessity for confronting modern crises.

In contrast to Heidegger's initial conformity and the "ethical bankruptcy" critiqued by Adorno, Socrates defended individual conscience in the face of the moral decline of Athens. His philosophical practice demonstrates that philosophy is a way of life that requires courage and constitutes a direct political stance against the unthinking majority. This Socratic legacy finds one of its most adept interpretations in the thought of Arendt. Arendt defines Socrates's dialogues in the agora as the purest form of thought transforming into public action (Arendt, 1998, pp. 9, 179-184, 234-237). She grounds this action in the concept of "natality", the capacity to make new beginnings that comes with every birth. This marks Arendt's fundamental point of departure from Heideggerian philosophy, which centers on the passive "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) and singular existence of the human being, thereby struggling to account for plurality and shared political agency. The absence of this Socratic act of thinking, namely, "thoughtlessness", forms the basis of the greatest political catastrophes, as she analyzed in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Arendt, 2022). Socrates's life and death, therefore, represent the most enduring philosophical challenge to "thoughtlessness", demonstrating the uncompromising burden of individual moral judgment in the face of the law.

This ethical divergence extends to their respective encounters with technological rationality. Heidegger's analysis of "Enframing" (*Ge-stell*) points to the ontological danger of modern technology, which forgets Being and reduces entities to mere standing-reserve (*Bestand*). This analysis provides a critical lens for understanding contemporary developments like algorithmic management systems and artificial intelligence. However, Heidegger struggles to propose concrete practices of resistance against this danger. Socrates, on the other hand, though not directly critiquing technology, offers a lasting ethical objection to the instrumentalization of humans and justice through his questioning of power and instrumental reason. The Socratic practice of reciprocal questioning through dialogue can serve as an antidote to the unidirectional and manipulative logic of algorithms. Whereas algorithmic systems strive for the frictionless optimization of the "answer", thereby insulating the individual within a digitalized, data-driven version of *das Man*, the Socratic *elenchus* reclaims the transformative power of the 'question,' forcing a face-to-face confrontation with the 'Other' that disrupts the automated comfort of instrumental reason. This intersubjective encounter disrupts the narcissistic closure of the "They-self" by demanding a response that evades algorithmic calculation, requiring instead an authentic, ethical commitment (Han, 2017, pp. 63-70).

Heidegger provides a radical analysis of modernity's ontological predicaments, yet Socrates offers the indispensable civic model for philosophy's ethical and political responsibility in the public sphere. Confronting contemporary crises of technological alienation and political dogmatism calls for a critical synthesis of these two legacies: the pursuit of authenticity gains ethical traction only through public dialogue and civic accountability. Philosophy's contemporary task, therefore, emerges as addressing truth not only as a matter of individual existence but also as a domain of social responsibility and ethical action (Agamben, 2004, p. 16).

4. Self-Knowledge and Authenticity in the Digital Age

The philosophical legacies of Heidegger and Socrates gain renewed urgency as algorithmic systems increasingly enclose contemporary existence, accelerating the logic of "Enframing" (*Ge-stell*). Confronting the resulting identity crises requires drawing upon an ethical framework derived from both traditions.

4.1. A Socratic-Heideggerian Framework for Addressing Modern Challenges

Digital media, contemporary social platforms and constant online presence have fundamentally affected the processes of identity formation and management (Turkle, 2011). Individuals are often directed towards presenting curated and "branded" digital personas, measured by metrics like "likes," "shares," and "follower counts" (Bauman, 2017). These dynamic risks supplanting genuine Socratic self-

examination with the relentless imperative to cultivate a marketable image. The commodification of the self perfectly exemplifies this tension and the commercial pressures of sustaining such a digital facade, revealing the potential internal conflicts and identity crises this can engender. When decision-making processes are dictated by algorithmic trends and engagement statistics rather than personal values, the Socratic imperative to "Know Thyself" is fundamentally subverted (Turkle, 2011; Bauman, 2017).

The simultaneous management of multiple curated identities across different digital platforms can cause the individual's sense of self to fragment and lose its coherence, leading to complex existential crises (Turkle, 2011). Artificial intelligence-driven personalization and recommendation systems risk confining individuals within specific thought patterns and consumption habits, creating a digital version of Heidegger's *das Man*. Algorithms trap the user within personalized content, generating "filter bubbles" that insulate the individual from dissenting views (Pariser, 2011). This algorithmic enclosure, a "digital panopticon" (Zuboff, 2019), restricts the horizon of possibilities and drives the individual toward an inauthentic mode of existence. This condition reflects a sociological diagnosis: the "expulsion of the Other" (Han, 2017). Algorithmic personalization does not merely filter information; by leveraging the principles of behavioral economics and sophisticated social engineering, these systems actively co-constitute and manipulate the user's digital identity. They deploy subtle 'nudges' that outsource existential agency to automated systems (Coeckelbergh, 2020; Reviglio & Agosti, 2020, pp. 4-5). In this hyper-connected environment, predictive algorithms function as a technologically optimized *das Man*. They subtly preempt authentic decision-making, exploiting human psychological vulnerabilities to prioritize quantifiable engagement over genuine self-reflection (Milano et al., 2020, pp. 962-963).

This dynamic represents a manifestation of Heidegger's concept of *Bestand* (standing-reserve) in the digital age. In the virtual environment, everything is reduced to an info-bit and made ready for use through an interface. The individual's identity, preferences, and even emotions become a data stock that algorithms process, manipulate, and re-present. Within this transformation, the intrinsic meaning of beings is eclipsed, and everything becomes a calculable resource serving the logic of efficiency and control (Heim, 1993, pp. 83-86).

Heidegger's concept of 'being-in-the-world' (*In-der-Welt-sein*) inherently implies a bodily and spatial existence. However, the digital realm does not merely "weaken" this corporeal presence; rather, it prompts a radical ontological reconfiguration of spatiality and embodiment. Instead of outright annihilation, the screen transforms the multidimensionality of existence into a flattened, frictionless interface, displacing the situated *Dasein* into a technologically mediated "being-on-screen". In this digital topology, the fundamental existential weight of localized 'presence' is constantly challenged by a state of continuous but dispersed connectivity. Correspondingly, Socrates' philosophy came to life in the physical square of the agora through face-to-face dialogues, a deeply embodied, vulnerable, and context-bound practice. Ultimately, this digital mediation systematically disrupts both the grounded spatiality required for Heideggerian authentic existence and the public, physical integrity necessary for genuine Socratic questioning.

4.2. Practical Strategies: Reflective Practices and Authentic Choices

To confront these digital challenges requires the translation of our theoretical framework into a lived ethical praxis. This necessitates a synthesis of two core elements: reflective practices (as the modern application of Socratic *elenchus* and the care of the soul) and authentic choices (as the lived expression of Heideggerian *Eigentlichkeit* and resoluteness). By uniting these dimensions, this synthesis demonstrates that practical resistance in the digital age must be rigorously grounded in these ethical-ontological imperatives.

4.2.1. Developing Reflective Practices

By adapting Socratic methodology, individuals are required to cultivate habits such as rigorous self-inquiry, critical media reflection, and structured dialogue to evaluate their values, motivations, and the "authenticity" of their digital engagements. Recalling Socrates' dialectical approach in works like the *Gorgias* or *Protagoras*, human subjects are compelled to question whether a given technologically mediated expression truly reflects their authentic being. The Socratic principle of acknowledging one's own ignorance—as articulated in the *Apology*—promotes a necessary awareness of the transient and performative nature of virtual identities. Rooted in this epistemic humility, a critical use of technology becomes imperative: rather than blindly following AI-driven recommendations, one must question these systems' underlying assumptions and align them with personal values, effectively repurposing algorithmic systems for ethical formation. To counter the fragmentation of the digital self, these reflective practices must be synthesized with a Heideggerian sense of "Resoluteness". When individuals question an algorithmic recommendation, they are not performing a mere technical check but engaging in a Socratic *elenchus* that disrupts the 'fallenness' of the digital *They-self* (*das Man*).

4.2.2. Embracing Authentic Existential Choices

Embracing authentic existential choices begins with conscious disconnection, requiring regular periods of detachment from ubiquitous digital frameworks to reassess priorities outside the sphere of algorithmic influence. This detachment clears the existential space necessary for the assumption of ontological responsibility, as Heidegger emphasizes. By accepting finitude and the inherent anxiety of existence, individuals can make deliberate decisions regarding their ontological projects and societal roles, refusing to yield to normative conformism or the pursuit of external validation. This commitment demands courageous expression and resistance, drawing from the Heideggerian idea that "authenticity" requires distinguishing oneself from *das Man*. As defined in *Being and Time*, Resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) is the determined self-projection toward one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being, distinct from anonymous conformity (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 297-307). In the contemporary context, digital Resoluteness does not prescribe a specific moral lifestyle or dictate a withdrawal into counter-cultural movements. Rather, it functions as a strictly ontological stance: the active capacity to recognize the inherent 'groundlessness' of one's existence and to reclaim the structural agency of decision-making from the pervasive, automated dictates of the algorithmic *das Man*. This existential path is strengthened through community dialogues, where individuals engage in intersubjective dialectic regarding finitude and shared ontological concerns, fostering an authentic Being-with (*Mitsein*) in the search for "authenticity" and aligning with Heidegger's emphasis on resolutely anticipating the anxiety of Being (Heidegger, 1962).

4.2.3. A Philosophical Approach to Education and Cultural Identity

A philosophical approach to education must transcend mere technical proficiency by instilling critical digital literacy from an early age. The modern antidote to algorithmic conformity lies in structured pedagogical frameworks, such as Philosophy for Children (P4C) and systematic problem-solving methodologies (Lipman, 2003), which serve as contemporary manifestations of the Socratic *elenchus*. Through the integration of serious games and interactive dialectical simulations into the curriculum, students can actively experience the tension between autonomous reasoning and automated suggestions. This reflective pedagogy counters the homogenizing effects of standardized digital systems. Educational models must, therefore, encourage phenomenological reflection, dialogue-based inquiries, and rigorous epistemic defense strategies to nurture individual agency against the encroaching digital *das Man*.

The construction of an authentic cultural identity requires applying Socratic introspection to question diverse cultural influences, combined with a Heideggerian resoluteness to choose narratives that reflect one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This dialectical synthesis dismantles the threat of ontological fragmentation induced by superficial interactions, cultivating a deeper connection with one's existential groundedness while navigating the structural challenges of technological mediation. The conscious cultivation of "authenticity" empowers human subjects to reclaim agency over their identity formation and ethical self-constitution.

5. Conclusion

The philosophies of Heidegger and Socrates offer enduring insights into fundamental existential challenges. By integrating Heidegger's ontological concepts of "forgetfulness of Being" and "authentic existence" with Socrates' principle of "Know Thyself" and the dialectical method, this article has aimed to construct a complementary theoretical framework.

Today, digital subjectification, social media pressures, and algorithmic manipulations necessitate both a Socratic and a Heideggerian intervention. Rather than merely diagnosing the complexities of the digital age, this synthesis offers a practical foundation for authentic self-disclosure. This framework demands regular practices of ethical self-examination combined with a steadfast ontological resoluteness against the dictates of the algorithmic crowd.

While structural technological frameworks exert immense homogenizing pressure, this study argues that the foundation of any systemic resistance must begin with human subjects who resist 'thoughtlessness' and assume their ontological responsibility.

The contemporary challenge, therefore, is not a binary choice between technological rejection and absolute conformity. Rather, it is the struggle against reducing human existence to a calculable resource (*Bestand*). Both Socrates and Heidegger warn against the same fundamental peril: the comfortable refusal to examine the ground of our own existence.

In this context, digital technology acts as the inescapable mediator of modern life. Resisting its alienating effects does not necessitate an impossible total renunciation of technology; rather, it serves as a radical invitation to reclaim human agency through a profound, vigilant engagement with the self. Ultimately, by grounding the abstract heights of Heideggerian ontological awareness in the robust civic reality of Socratic ethical responsibility, this synthesis seeks to provide a rigorous dialectical praxis. It empowers human subjects to undertake their ethical self-constitution and sustain an authentic "Being-in-the-world", remaining

resolute and accountable even amidst the pervasive algorithms of the digital era.

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