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Heidegger's Philosophical Anthropology and its Application to the Police in the UK: A Realistic Reflection

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ABSTRACT

This paper is written from an 'insider' and decades-long practitioner-based set of experiences whilst the author was working as an academic director of studies at the UK Police College, Bramshill. It begins by briefly identifying and characterising the College as a particularly distinct cultural institution. It underlines the fact that the academic staff found themselves constantly coping with the challenging realities presented to them during their encounters with experienced police officers attending residential courses of management and leadership development at the College. The idea of people as 'coping' beings constitutes a central and fundamental aspect of Martin Heidegger's philosophy; consequently, in a relatively substantial section, and aided by several scholarly analyses, the paper moves on to provide a detailed outline of some key features of his philosophy; this includes an ongoing 'realistic reflection' on how Heidegger's celebrated 'philosophical anthropology' and his analysis of the 'technological understanding of being' serve as a way of illuminating and theorising the conduct of the police at the Police College, their wider situations of practice - and the overall 'being' of people in general. Heidegger's suggestion about how to resist the alienating effects of the quest for efficiency through the 'saving power of insignificant things' is noted - and which links Heidegger's thinking with aspects of non-western philosophy and culture, including 'Wabi Sabi', and certain holistic works of anthropology. The paper concludes by providing a brief answer to the question, 'Does a Heideggerian analysis of police culture suggest ways in which that culture could be improved?'

Keywords: Heidegger's philosophy; Philosophical anthropology; Existentialism; Cultural studies; Reflective practice; Police culture

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1. Introduction

Before taking up the post as an 'academic director of studies' at the UK National Police College, in 1976, I had worked as a psychologist and psychotherapist in the UK prison service. The latter experiences had begun to sharpen my sensitivity towards institutional cultures and the often profound adaptations, made by staff and inmates alike, to the situations of practice in which they found themselves. Prior to working in the prison service, my earlier education had included the theory and practice of cultural anthropology - and had equipped me with the methods and techniques of participant observation, field work and ethnographic analysis [1–3]; this had enabled me to adopt an anthropological point of view and the capacity to profile different cultural settings. I was soon to learn that the Police College presented its academic members of staff, with a unique, challenging and very particular cultural configuration: to survive its ethos and meet its demands, it necessitated, on my part, a very considerable personal and professional adjustment. This was not only due to the unusual culture of the institution and the complex eclectic nature of its courses, but also because many experienced police officers who attended the College were disinclined to reflect on the level of their professionalism or to address the question concerning how best to police in a liberal democracy.

After two years of intense engagement with police officers, I would, from 1978 onwards, often meet with an academic colleague, the educational and moral philosopher Neil Richards, in order to discuss our shared experiences at the College; influenced by the work by Peters (1966) on ethics and education, we considered how best to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the management and leadership courses [4]. During one of those conversations Richards remarked that, in his view, the two greatest achievements of the 20th Century were those of feminism on the one hand, and the positive influences stemming from advances in social and cultural anthropology, on the other. I did not disagree.

In fact, my own earlier degree studies in philosophy had included a focus on 'existentialism'; through this, I had become aware that the philosophy of Martin Heidegger had contributed very significantly to the development of the more distinctively human aspects of anthropology. Both Richards and I had now come to share the view that an appreciation of Heidegger's 'philosophical anthropology' might serve as an illuminating and useful way to theorise the situations of policing - both within and outside their organisation(s) - as well as facilitating an understanding of the psychological development of police officers [5, 6].

In this paper I will first outline, in the briefest of terms, the unique cultural context characterising the UK's National Police College. In so doing, I will highlight some of the psychological and educational challenges I, along with my fellow academics, faced - challenges which have been well-documented in my earlier analysis of our struggle to develop an effective 'ethics' educational experience for middle-and-senior ranking police officers [7–9]. The first part of the paper is designed to disclose a number of the unsettling realities my colleagues and I faced at the College. This preliminary account serves to foreground a basic and central aspect of Heidegger's anthropology, namely, his conceiving all persons as 'coping' beings facing often complex and demanding concrete situations of practice. This paves the way for a subsequent focus on the main objectives of the paper which may be stated as follows: thus, in the light of the relatively few references to Heidegger in the academic literature on police, the account presented here is primarily concerned to demonstrate how an understanding of certain aspects of Heidegger's philosophy and its association with the development of existentialism might a) facilitate an informed appreciation of the personal and social being and the conduct of police officers, b) suggest concerns about the impact features of the police organisation and the quest for efficiency might have on police officers, and c) provoke discussion about ways to develop police culture.

Overall, the paper, through a considered philosophical and 'realistic reflection' on Heidegger's philosophical anthropology in relation to the police, hopes to offer an improved general and more empathic understanding of policing in the UK and beyond. In order to do this, the account will necessarily include a focus on Heidegger's depiction of the nature of our 'being in the world'. It will then underline the significance of the fact that our situations of practice 'precede' our being, the implications of which oblige us to consider what effects police practices have on their well-being and social-psychological development. Finally,

the paper considers how a Heideggerian perspective on the police might be deployed in order to improve police culture.

I should note that the account presented in the paper blends a personal narrative with that of a narrative ethnology [10]; it draws from the theory and practice of the 'reflective practitioner' [11], is informed by the principles of existential anthropology [12], and interprets personal and shared experiences in terms of selected aspects of Heidegger's philosophy.

2. The founding of a Police College in the UK and its cultural characteristics

A Police College had first been constituted in 1948 for the specific purpose of training and developing the present and future leaders of the Police Service in the United Kingdom; at the time of its inception the British, in the main, thought well of their police service and prized the fact that it was an unarmed body of men and women seemingly committed to upholding the rule of law and the exercise of their duties through the use of minimum force [13, 14]. It was also held in high esteem internationally. The College moved to its site known as 'Bramshill' in 1961, the symbolic centre of which was a vast Jacobean mansion; architecturally, in relation to both its exterior and interior, this building enjoyed and projected the mystique of an English stately home [15]; Villiers (1998), in his history of the Police College, acknowledged that any person, on seeing the mansion and its setting, would experience an unmistakable feeling of awe [16].

The mansion served as a monumental presence around which the rest of the working life of the College variously constellated. The wood-panelled studies of the most senior staff - the leader of whom was the 'Commandant', its 'top team' of police officers, and the Dean of Academic studies - were exclusively located in its gracious interior. The status-based nature of the institution was made plain in the different, but more functional buildings and syndicate rooms in which the majority of the official content of the courses took place: the higher the rank, the better the facilities - and the more highly esteemed the people who actually contributed to those more senior course(s). On top of this, the hierarchical nature of police organisations throughout the UK was mirrored and emphasised by the fact that the management and leadership or 'command' courses also proceeded largely independently of each other.

Anthropologically, the College was unusually complex. The fact that it was a police institution meant that it practised a particular type of 'welfare culture'; it provided everything (material, social, educational and even psychological) for its experienced police officer students and police professional staff (but not for the academic or the civilian-support staff). The welfare of the students even extended to the reports written about each individual officer on completion of his or her course: forms of language were used to disguise any suggestions of inadequacy or incompetence. The least impressive students were, at worst, damned with faint praise.

In contrast to the often deprived contexts, banalities or sheer ugliness of the practical world of actual policing, the College approximates (or shared aspects of) a 'Total institution' [2]. It always bore, to a greater or lesser extent, a family resemblance to an asylum - or the kind of 'city of refuge' that Derrida (2001) had in mind in his work on 'Cosmopolitanism and forgiveness' [17]. The resemblance lay in the fact that the College was, in virtue of its isolation in vast landscaped grounds, almost completely removed from the visible signs of an outside urban world. And, very significantly, this contributed to one conventional discourse, shared by many police officers: it held that the College afforded the apparent 'safety' of not being part of the 'real world'; however, this latter perception of the psychological remoteness and apartness of the College and its consequent alternative and separated other-wordly 'reality' served as a leitmotif which repeatedly subverted and undermined the work of the academic staff.

Despite the appearance of a quasi-military organisation, of officers belonging to a disciplined service, of formality, and of 'professionalism', the actual overall cultural ethos of the institution was in many ways quite different: it was convivial, almost casual and, in recognition of the adversarial nature of the 'police world', disinclined to place experienced police officers under any real pressure.

In both the general cultural milieu of the College and the more specific contexts of the courses as they un-

folded in both the syndicate rooms and tutorials, patterns of conduct and language forms revealed repetitive modal expressions and features - as well as distinct degrees of heterogeneity. By way of summary, the modal tendencies included acute rank-consciousness, direct or indirect expressions of power and control, bonhomie and apparent camaraderie, language forms that were often crude but also pretentious, a dislike of the legal profession, of local and national politicians, of social workers and the media. The access by police to the backstage regions of people's lives (and the 'unmasking' of citizens) allied to more general policing experiences, had created what might best be described as a post-Nietzschean perception that, at bottom, we, the people, were 'human, all too human'. Nonetheless, experienced police officers appeared to embrace widely cultural-shared intuitive moral principles - amongst which were the importance of charity, deference and civility. Often judgemental, they frequently described any moments of offensive or offending behaviour as 'way out of order'; they also reflected wider British cultural norms including the use of humour and jocularity - along with ironic or wry observations - which were used to defuse interpersonal situations that might provoke discord or dissension. They were inclined towards selective displays of kindness, generosity, care, and indulgence. They were always ready to sense criticism of the police and would generally react by 'closing ranks' along with the display of other forms of defensive behaviour.

However, the presence of aggregations of police officers and their in-group 'chumminess' clearly overrode any actual resemblance to the more usual forms of academic institution. An overall counter-productive power imbalance permeated the reality of the College: police social norms, their in-group interactions, personality styles and value preferences appealed more to them than the more academic forms of inquiry - as well as the associated painstaking application of critical theory. One colleague summed up the situation by asserting that there was a straightforward 'culture clash' between the practical utilitarian outlook of police officers and the rational inquiry-based theories of the academic. Indeed, the same colleagues underlined the power-imbalance at the College by remarking that any attempt to include an actual study of senior police officers' actual capacity to inspire their juniors through the use of oratory and rhetoric would simply be resisted and that 'they would refuse to do it'.

The syndicate system (comprising around a dozen officers) also facilitated and supported the expression of police norms; and, amongst these, it was a readiness on the part of many officers to adopt an adversarial and dismissive attitude towards the academic staff. In fact, it is rare to read anything authored by experienced police officers (who attended the College from its earliest days until its eventual closure in 2015) that acknowledges its contribution to their personal and professional development. Mead (2001), by way of example, offers an illuminating case study that includes a report of his negative experiences at Bramshill whilst he was a student on one of its lengthy courses during the mid-1970s [18]. More generally, Stallion (2024), in his recent review of the literature on police education and training in the UK, mentions that:

'Many police officers' memoirs from the 1950s onwards contain accounts, usually

uncomplimentary, of their time at force or district training schools' [19].

From the very beginning of my encounter with groups of police officers at Bramshill it was made plain that 'academics' (like me) were not only liable to be 'out of touch with reality' but that many officers had already formed a defiantly sceptical or negative outlook towards the content of courses offered by the College. Therefore, both myself and other members of the academic staff continually found ourselves doing our best to cope with the often dismissive or abrasive conduct of course members [20]. My attempts to develop and present a valued ethics education for police leaders and managers bear witness to our shared difficulties [8, 9].

It was the simple fact that we were in essence 'coping' with our situation(s) of practice that led me first to reflect upon and then theorise our situation - as well as that of the police generally - in the conceptual terms of Heidegger's philosophy. It is to this that I now turn.

3. Heidegger's 'Being and Time' and 'The question of technology': some fundamentals of existence

In May 1976, the New York Times published an obit-

uary to the philosopher Martin Heidegger [21]. Written by their education correspondent Fiske, the obituary included an informed outline - a glimpse - of Heidegger's philosophy and thought; Fiske succinctly noted that Heidegger's response to a major conflict in western thought between excessive idealism and the crisis of nihilism (provoked by Nietzsche) had been a robust insistence on restoring confidence in our ability to ask the 'big' questions about the nature and meaning of existence. Heidegger attempted to show that we could access, retrieve and restore what he considered a more authentic way of being that had been erased or lost over the course of human history. Fiske then underlined the fact that Heidegger had been a distinct and powerful critic of social trends and especially the now deeply established disposition to master and dominate the world - along with everything in it.

Heidegger's analysis proposed that a way of understanding being - all being - had come to overpower and dominate western (and western-influenced) thinking [22]. As a result, everything - including people and their institutions (and therefore the police) - had come to be seen as types of resource to be used and exploited. In response to this, Heidegger set out to reveal a way of understanding our intrinsically time-bound mortal selves that radically countered what he called 'technological being' along with the associated and long-standing preeminence that had been granted to rationalism. In a sense Heidegger wished to re-enchant humanity and offer us the possibility of restoring to ourselves something that we had lost.

His original writings are notoriously difficult to understand but accessible clarifications of his work are provided by scholars such as Steiner (1978), Barrett (1978), Dreyfus (1987), Blattner (2009), Riis (2008), and Wheeler (2011) [5, 6, 23–26]. Together, these writers surface, by implication, a number of significant issues for police and policing; in the works by Heidegger (1927), ways of thinking about the human situation of policing emerge which primarily emphasise the sheer power of its particular and distinct situations, along with its typical norms and practices [27, 28]. They also make salient various enduring phenomena such as conformity to group norms and the spectre of inauthenticity and, by extension, ask how best to give meaning to a life spent, for example, as a member of the police service. This is a basic question sooner or later faced by all police officers - and some of Heidegger's suggestions for restoring profundity and purpose to our existence - such as turning away from a negative alienating materialism - were, in fact, explicitly practiced by certain officers who attended the College. In so doing, they signalled the unavoidable fact that instead of finding their work enriching or fulfilling it was often profoundly disappointing and alienating. They reported several reasons for this. These included the fact that within their hierarchical organisation they were obliged to follow what they referred to as the 'diktats from on high'. As a result, they felt reduced to little more than 'pond life'. They also had to be permanently mindful of falling foul of the discipline code. In addition, they regularly and increasingly found themselves disconnected from the public - from the very people that they were supposed to protect and serve. On top of this, certain aspects of police work - such as the need to keep a meticulously accurate written record of their encounters with the citizenry and the fact that, in the main, there was a 'rules and procedures' organisation which further depleted their morale [29].

Heidegger's philosophy also raises a number of questions including whether or not the term 'culture' has inadvertently deflected attention away from a focus on the way the concrete real-life formal and informal practices of police constrain and construct the 'being' of its officers and, separately, whether or not policing and police training have succumbed to an unsatisfactory and alienating 'technological' understanding of being.

In our work at the Police College, I thought it sensible to begin an appreciation of Heidegger's philosophy by first attending to Steiner's (1978) summary of Heideggerian thought [5]. In his densely erudite text, Steiner proceeded to identify Heidegger's main phases of intellectual development and achievements as follows: he noted the deep level of scholarship and reflection that characterised Heidegger's 'creative silence' the outcome of which was to appear in the ground-breaking work, 'Sein und Zeit' in 1927 [28]. This period of creative silence (between 1916 and 1927) was marked by several discernible influences. Paramount among them was his mastery of the mental discipline of Husserlian phenomenology and his close attention to 'the radical psychologising theology of Kierkegaard', along with the works of, among others, Augustine and Luther, Hegel and Lukacs. At the same time, Heidegger was

clearly influenced by Dilthey's 'attempt to define the true relations between human consciousness and historical fact' and here Steiner notes that:

'It is from Dilthey that Heidegger seems to derive his fundamental and surely evaluative distinction between the technical (ontic) truths of the exact and applied sciences, and the orders of authentic insight aimed at in the historical and 'spiritual sciences' [5].

Dilthey was, in part, the catalyst for Heidegger's concern to embed our human identity - our very being - in history, and therefore (with echoes of Marx) in the actual concrete conditions, practices, language events, stories and ways of seeing into which, from birth onwards, a person (any person) is thrown. However, it is also clear that Heidegger was attuned to the mysterious realm of 'truths' ostensibly revealed in, through or by different traditions of 'spirituality'. This aspect of Heidegger's thinking was to find serious expression in his ultimate and devastating critique of modernist culture and society. Steiner thinks - with good reason - that Heidegger was inevitably influenced by the catastrophic events of the First World War as well as the hedonistic libertarian moral expressions and the economic debacle of Weimar Germany. In consequence he embraced Spengler's 'crepuscular vision' of the fatal decline of the West, a vision which was finding 'violent echo and analogy in the art and poetry of expressionism'. It was both Dostoyevsky and Van Gogh that Heidegger came to identify as the 'ultimate masters of spiritual truth' along with their vision - their ability - to pierce into the very depths of Being. Steiner, in essence, selectively echoed far earlier conclusions of Tolstoy in relation to the appalling irrationality of the Napoleonic wars, by observing that:

'… the fact of an insanely destructive internecine European war, and of its revolutionary aftermath, justified … the notion of man and of culture in extremis, of final inauthenticity, of a descent into nihilism' [5].

There was plenty of evidence that various psychological moods and dispositions relating to the emergence of a Western 'cultural belief in nihilism' were expressed by many police officers whilst on courses at the Police College. Vick (1981), for example, identified a pervasive police 'pessimism' [30]; Richards (1985) drew attention to the generalised loss of a positive outlook on the part of many police officers [31]; this was echoed in Villiers' (1998) reflection on his experiences at the College whilst Adlam (2000) documented some of the deep scepticism expressed by several police officers in relation to the emergence and promulgation of a police code of ethics [8, 16].

The idea that the West was facing an existential crisis brought about by a distortion of human being was to find expression in the unique 'Sein und Zeit' (translated as 'Being and Time'). Not long after Heidegger's philosophy appeared its impact was considerable.

First, it effected a complete break from and rejection of the long tradition in philosophical thinking stemming from Descartes and culminating in Husserl's 'Logical Investigations': this tradition had proceeded on the basic assumption that there existed two separated realities: the perceiving experiencing subject (the isolated ego) in contrast to the outer 'world' of perceived objects. Against this, and using some everyday examples, Heidegger pointed out that there was, as Dreyfus (1987) convincingly outlines, no such subject-object divide [6]; instead, he began 'from the situation in which we actually find ourselves' and attended to 'the way … ordinary, average human beings are concretely in the world' [23]. Countering the objection that the majority of us already know a great deal about how we 'are' in the world, Barrett points out that 'it is the familiar that usually eludes us in life' [5].

Second, Heidegger's 'Sein und Zeit' was the catalyst for the subsequent philosophical and cultural movement of existentialism [27]. This emphasised the practice of making conscious and explicit our actual, real and genuine experiences of self and others - and foregrounded the phenomena of alienation, anxiety and inauthenticity, the concepts of freedom and responsibility, and the challenge of facing up to the one inevitable certainty in life, namely death, especially, one's own death. Existential thinking underpinned all the related advances in the field of humanistic psychology, the human potential movement, radical developments in education, feminism and feminist consciousness-raising from de Beauvoir (1953) onwards, and the illuminating revelations of post-colonial theory [32–39]. It has also made itself explicit in 'existential anthropology' and the renewed attempt to do justice, in academic research and writing, to 'the irreducibility and multi-sidedness of the person' and the full range of human experiences - experiences that are 'fixed and fluid, coherent and wild' [12]. Existentialist phi-

losophy, in essence, placed the height, breadth and depth of human being, and the various modes in which we exist, at its centre. It derived from Heidegger because he was primarily grappling with the question: 'What is it to exist?'

4. The emergence of a technological understanding of being

Heidegger's early thinking imagined that certain aspects of human being were true for all times and at all places. However, in his later work, Heidegger came to realise that our western understanding of 'being' has a history and that originally he had been focusing mainly on characterising human being in the modern epoch. In consequence, he began to trace the different ways in which, from the pre-Socratic Greeks through the orthodoxies of the Christian world and on, through modernism, 'things showed up' during these various periods of human history. Initially, for example, in the time before Plato, he found that the Greeks attuned themselves to the world in such a way that things 'showed up' for them as produced by man and by nature which they received with respect and appreciation. In sharp contrast, and partly in response to the unsatisfactory, dubious and often taxing outcomes of modernism, Heidegger came to think that we are beginning to understand everything, even ourselves, as resources to be enhanced and used efficiently [25]. He concluded that we have now reached a point in human history that is given over and wedded to a 'technological understanding of being'. This particular argument was set out in his essay entitled 'The question concerning technology' (Heidegger, 1953), the implications of which are deeply problematic not least for police [28].

Heidegger began his analysis with the usual everyday way of thinking about technology; on this account technology consisted of the vast repository of artefacts, tools, devices, instruments, machines, etc. that humans have developed, invented, constructed, elaborated and built in order to be used and exploited. Technology - ranging from the needle of the dressmaker, to the handcuffs of the police, to the streamlined automobile - was, fundamentally, something inextricably connected with use and something we controlled. However, Heidegger considered that although this account of technology is, in its way, correct, it provided only a limited 'instrumental and anthropological definition'. This is because it constrains and limits the understanding of technology as both a means to an end (instrumental) and as a product of human activity (anthropological). The everyday common-sense account fails to address the true essence of technology. For Heidegger, as Riis (2008) points out, the essence of technology is a process that frames the way we interact, think about, and visualise the world [25]. How then can we grasp this true essence of technology? Riis (2008) and Wheeler (2011) answer this by noting that Heidegger referred to the way things or entities were (and are) revealed and identified as mattering and the:

'… revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology… [is]… a challenging… which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such' [25, 26, 49].

Starkly put, the mode of revealing characterising the essence of modern technology understands phenomena in general (from the inorganic substances of rock and air to everything constituting the natural and cultural world) including human beings and our associated artefacts - to be no more than what Heidegger calls 'standing-reserve', that is, resources to be used as means to ends. Even the places, spaces and things that have not been subject to exploitation exist 'technologically' as potential resources. Steiner (1978) pithily summarises Heidegger's belief about the wretched consequences of 'technology' so understood as follows:

'Technology has ravaged the earth and degraded natural forms to mere utility. Man has laboured not with but against the grain of things. He has not given lodging to the forces and creatures of the natural world but made them homeless' [5].

Heidegger's famous particular example used to illustrate his concept of technological being - its way of seeing - and its obliteration of alternative ways of encountering reality - was that of a hydroelectric dam over the river Rhine. He argued, almost vituperatively, that this construction transformed an understanding of the Rhine from that of a phenomenon apprehended in appreciative co-existence with ourselves to that of a prized resource to be set upon in order to yield its further use-value. In fact, Heidegger considered the dam an example of sheer 'monstrousness' in comparison with the mode of apprehension extended towards a much earlier wooden bridge that had spanned

the river for many years and which could be unhesitatingly experienced as harmonising with the natural environment of the Rhine. He rejected the counter argument that, despite the presence of the dam, the river Rhine was still appreciated as an example of natural beauty; instead, he persuasively argued that the technological understanding of being had come to view all nature as a resource to be exploited through operations such as mining or as material phenomena for the tourist industry; in more recent times it may be added that nature has been so comprehensively seized upon that it has now been turned into an artificialised and spectacular hyper-reality through the medium of travel shows as well as the more earnest programmes about conservation, environmental protection and everything to do with the 'natural' world. Nature is, in essence, now at our disposal.

Additionally, the technological mode of understanding 'being' has clearly made its presence felt in human social affairs. For example, people are put to use when an affable conversation is turned into 'networking' [50]. Employees have come to be re-classified in organisations as 'human resources'; the insistence, in both the private and public sectors, on apparently enhanced but formulaic customer service, the demands for continuous improvement and the techniques of surveillance for the purposes of monitoring and evaluative feedback have consolidated the trend. For Wheeler (2011), the general point is clear:

'… according to Heidegger, technological revealing is not a peripheral aspect of Being. Rather, it defines our modern way of living, at least in the West' [26].

In short, as Dreyfus remarks, 'we are becoming resources in a … society where to be real is to be used as efficiently as possible'. However, Heidegger recognises that despite the emergence of such a technological understanding of being it is always possible to escape, even momentarily, its way of seeing and its pressures; the means to do this, he proposed, was through an appreciation of non-efficient practices - which he referred to as the 'saving power of insignificant things'. Here he appears to have in mind moments of friendship, conviviality, craftsmanship, gazing up at the stars, accessing altered states of consciousness and contemplating works of art - as well as any number of physical activities - as long as they are valued not as means to some end but as pleasing in themselves. These practices, according to Dreyfus, are 'marginal precisely because they are not efficient'. Instead, they are intrinsically worthwhile. More recently, Dreyfus and Kelly's (2011) acclaimed text has revisited Heidegger's suggestion about the potential to recover a sense of wonder in the local and particular through the 'saving power of insignificant things' [51]; they argue that reading great works of literature can help us to rediscover the reverence, gratitude and amazement that prevailed in Homeric times. These qualities, they believe, can be cultivated to defend against the ravages of 'nihilism' and the sense of meaningless which appears, on their account, to have pervaded so many 'modern' lives.

Heidegger's analysis also serves to raise a question about how a technological understanding of being has (or has not) emerged and determined a systematic trend in the treatment of police: in short, have the police increasingly come to be revealed technologically? Are they understood as a form of 'standing reserve' to be operated on in the quest to yield maximum value (or output) from minimum input - all in the pursuit of greater efficiency? Almost certainly I think this is the case. Thomas (1989), in her under-referenced analysis of the history of British Public Administration, finds that the hunt for efficiency in the public services was a long-established primary goal [52].

Aligned to this, and bit by bit, through the various developments in management theory and its practical applications, as well as the social scientific promise (and its ideology) of prediction and control, it seems that the police in the UK have become subject to the consequences of technological being (and revealing). It may be that Lubans and Edgar's (1979) 'policing by objectives' was an obvious and fairly early manifestation of such a technological understanding [53]. Home Office circular 114 of 1983 and its demand that the police be efficient and effective was another [54]. 'Performance indicators' as part of the Quality of Service Committee's (1992) culture-change initiative reprised the same theme. This emphasis was underlined in, for example, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, 2011. In addition, there has been the emergence of the new managerialism and the subsequent principles and stipulations expressive of the 'new public management' [55–57]. The spectre of technological revealing and its associated practices is obliquely captured by Heslop (2011) and his perception of a 'Macdonaldization' that has befallen

the British police [58]. Even the allure of 'professionalisation', the doctrine of evidence-led policing and the standardisation of training materials can be understood and theorised in terms of the drive to achieve maximum output from minimum input. (One striking example of the consequences of the technological understanding of being and the valuing of efficiency in relation to the police occurred when a very carefully designed 'Accelerated Promotion Course' for relatively small numbers of police officers (who had passed a stringent assessment centre) and which began to be implemented in 1985 at the former Police Staff College was evaluated. The lengthy course was firmly based on the theory and practice of personal development and self-managed learning for leadership and organisational effectiveness. It was informed and guided by some of the main ideas of existentialism and humanistic psychology. In the mid-1990s and onwards, I was Director of the course. However, a regime change at the College occurred which was resolutely determined quite explicitly to 'measure' the leadership and management of the course and the 'delivery' of the course itself - and duly initiated an evaluation process. This process applied a training model of evaluation which overlooked or ignored the actual fundamental rationale underpinning the radical developmental nature and ethos of the course; inevitably the application of such a model meant that the course would be found wanting: it never set out to achieve any of the standard elements typical of training per se - such as pre-defined objectives. Instead, it aspired to create a learning community and focused on how individuals grappled with self-and-group dynamics and all the arationality of human beings. Nothing about its implementation could ever possibly have appeared merely 'efficient'. The worthwhile achievements and a proper appreciation of the course were lost in the failure to take full account of its history and its governing rationale.)

However, once people are viewed under the aspect of technological being and therefore not as ends in themselves but rather as means their sense of responsibility is diminished and, as Gyollai (2024) highlights, the experiences of inauthenticity are amplified (Treating persons as means is discussed at length in Kerstein's sophisticated review) [40]. It is hardly surprising that in order to preserve their well-being in the face of these widespread, apparently rational but often oppressive, cultural practices, police officers would describe to me the special things that gave them real pleasure within or outside the police organisation. These modes of being ranged from contemplating, from an elevated vantage point far removed from anything to do with policing, the sunrise during an early morning shift - to drinking a glass or two of bourbon in the company of a colleague, whilst 'chewing the cud' about the big questions in life while listening to the blues music of Muddy Waters or Howlin' Wolf.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that amongst these alternative ways of either resisting inauthenticity or alienation, of resisting being turned into means rather than ends, some officers might quietly and unobtrusively adopt non-western ways of experiencing reality; amongst these was the Japanese appreciation of 'Wabi Sabi' - which includes the recognition of impermanence, roughness and asymmetry, and the liberating acceptance of imperfection including the imperfections of the individual self [59, 60]. By adopting the perspective of Wabi Sabi, for example, it restored, to some, a freedom to experience and view their lives as evolving 'works in progress'. Another such source was provided by Heider's (1985) study of the 'Tao of leadership' and his specific proposals in relation to leading 'a simple life' [61]. I should add that many experienced police officers were very willing to confront problems of stress and personal trauma when they were given the opportunity to do so on courses of study at the Police College. Those who did often reported benefits from engaging with the variety of transcendental practices used to access altered states of consciousness - such as 'extraverted witnessing' - detailed in Heron's (1980) work on the techniques and methods of transpersonal psychology [62]. In fact, a comprehensive range of personal development and spiritual resources was (and is) available which can be understood as directly or indirectly derived from Heidegger's philosophy - especially that aspect concerned with the real-world existential conditions confronting all human beings.

5. Conclusions

Thousands of officers - originally mainly in the rank of Inspector or above - passed through the former Police College at Bramshill. For many - and probably a majority - their favoured form of communication was anecdote

and storytelling. Through the stories they told and heard their established beliefs, behavioural norms and theories were often strengthened. They shared their 'insider knowledge' which itself reflected their original and primordial understanding of parts of the police world [24]. Sometimes, in relation to their position in the hierarchical and constraining realities of that police world, they would make self-derogating remarks and wryly refer to themselves as 'pond-life' or merely 'a pawn in the game'. However, their stories also used the rhetorical device of classification and re-classification to open up new ways of seeing and doing [63]. It was on those courses dealing less with training officers in technical skills or with understanding how to apply new legislation but more to do with certain of the enduring experiential aspects of humanity (the domain of interpersonal and people skills, as well as group dynamics) that very personal material dealing with the human situation - with human being and becoming - would often touch them the most and impact on their self-conceptualisations and personal feelings. It might even be fair to suggest that something more of their humanity was restored and that a sense of perspective was recovered. Certain educational resources were effective in virtue of their ability to access something profoundly human and absolutely basic to a life spent working in the field of often adversarial or distressing human relations. In this paper an attempt has been initially made to illustrate how a grasp of some of the content of Heidegger's philosophy might serve as a catalyst for understanding and considering - with care - some of the most basic realities of policing. His philosophy offers a way of illuminating the shared problems of our personal and social being and invites us to recognise the liberating fact that nothing has to remain the way it is.

One very underused and under-referenced but valuable source of particular case studies which tell stories about how different officers adjust and develop as a result of their policing experience is provided by Ker Muir's (1977) sensitive and sophisticated accounts in which he contrasts the 'professional police officer' with the 'enforcer', the 'reciprocator' and the 'avoider' [47]. His account suggests that the practices of storytelling may themselves shape and determine the energies, perceptions and moods of the police. It may therefore be time to place less emphasis on the term 'culture' - a catch-all term that has, for several decades, been used as a general explanation for the conduct of the police - and focus instead on the concrete realms of practice (the particular situations) in which police performances manifest themselves.

To underline the contrast between two different realms of practice and the obvious disconnect between them an example was provided during a very recent encounter I had with a retired police officer who had spent thirty years serving in a county force. In the course of our conversation, I asked him what sort of a relationship he had had with 'headquarters'. He paused and looked at me with a puzzled expression: a short silence ensued. After a while he replied, 'Relationship'? And then he declared: 'Relationship? There wasn't one. I didn't have any relationship with headquarters. They did what they did, whatever it was, and I did what I had to do. The vision and mission stuff we came across sounded as if we were heading for a promised land. Well, there was no promised land. There is no promised land'. A similar motif was made explicit by an officer who articulated his response to the arrival of what was to become known as the 'blue book' - that is, the work by Newman and Laugharne (1985): it was for him a colligation and concatenation of mere 'intellectual ramblings'; and although he 'flicked through it out of loyalty', he had no real use for it and added that, 'sadly, like many change programmes before and since, it died on the vine because most people just wanted to do what they had always done' [64].

Finally, if it is the case that a technological understanding of being has come to dominate the ways people generally, and the police more particularly, are conceived, it may also be necessary to adopt or install some strategies of resistance - and to take seriously Heidegger's charming recommendation to engage with 'the saving power of insignificant things'.

However, in drawing this paper to a close a key question remains: Does a Heideggerian analysis of police culture suggest ways in which that culture could be improved? An initial response suggests that there is little doubt that it can change police culture for the better. There are several ways in which this has already and quite demonstrably occurred. These changes continue to remain realistic and suggest practical strategies for future development.

First, the necessity to make practical changes in both

the procedures and conduct of police officers has been brought about by the emergence of developments in the law. One clear example that has already been mentioned is the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) along with its subsequent revisions; this fairly wide-ranging piece of legislation, dealt inter alia with police powers to search an individual (or premises) and the treatment of suspects once they were placed in custody. The act included a number of codes of practice which specifically determined the way officers were to conduct themselves in relation to, for example, the making of an arrest and the keeping of accurate and reliable criminal records. Little by little these changes enhanced the practical professionalism of the police. Police practices were also gradually influenced by the successive Race Relations Acts. Thus, the Race Relations Act 1965 set the tone and banned racial discrimination in public places and also made promoting racial hatred a crime. This Act was strengthened by a subsequent Race Relations Act 1968, which extended the legislation's remit to cover employment and housing. Then, the Race Relations Act 1976 finally extended the definition of discrimination to include indirect discrimination - that is, any practice that disadvantaged a particular racial group. However, despite these changes in the law the Macpherson Report (1999) concluded that the Metropolitan Police force was 'institutionally racist' [65]. It tolerated attitudes and working practices which disadvantage minorities. By way of response, the force was forced to confront stereotyped assumptions about a) Black and Ethnic minority persons, b) gang members and c) drug dealers. Similar changes in the law with respect to sex discrimination exerted a significant effect on police culture and obliged many officers to rethink their attitude and behaviours towards women in general and their female colleagues in particular. Health and Safety legislation has also required all ranks within the police organisation to take those steps necessary to observe its prescriptions. In short, in the face of these and other legal changes, the police are thrown into new practical realities with which they have to cope.

Second, another trend in the construction of the very identity of the police has also influenced their concrete practices. From the beginning of the establishment of a Police College and up to the present time, the police have been subject to processes of professionalisation. From a Heideggerian point of view, the police have therefore been subject to a great variety of discourses ranging from analyses of the principles up which the police of the UK are founded to those of research-based conclusions concerning 'best practice' and 'evidence-based' policing. In addition, the police have been the recipients of (and increasingly exposed to) developments in the overall academic study of police. Together these discourses have come to define the wide-ranging specialist knowledge that is commensurate with filling the role of a professional police officer: these range from the quite specific practical guidelines for dealing with aggressive or distressed people to the much more abstract ways of framing police-citizen interactions in terms of the concept of policing-by-consent. As the educational levels of the police have improved they have come to achieve what Peters (1966) referred to as 'differentiations of consciousness' stemming from the concrete situations of both formal and informal educational and training practices [4].

Third, wider cultural and societal discourses have also helped to transform aspects of the police culture. One trend in the UK has seen the emergence of the widespread privileging of diversity, difference and an individual's human rights. A consequence has been the now-obvious phenomenon of what might loosely be called 'giving people a voice'. In the wake of the post-colonial critique of British culture, of feminism and the recognition that all kinds of 'otherness' have been devalued or undervalued, contemporary times have seen the rise of various types of individual storytelling and forms of personal disclosure - many of which have revealed the suffering and distress experienced by those who get to tell their story. These often-hidden stories have also become part of police development courses and constitute a part of their sensitivity training. It is within a socially-shared practical context that something about the reality of others and their suffering is revealed and which works towards establishing new norms - norms of empathy and tolerance - in the governance of police conduct.

Fourth, Heidegger, as Dreyfus (1987) points out, paid particular attention to the importance of language and the way it could bring states of affairs into being [6]. In so doing, Heidegger encourages an analysis of what might be referred to as the 'micro-language' practices and the various forms of verbal exchange between police officers; one

such category of verbal exchange is the well-known phenomenon of banter. Whilst banter and bantering can serve as a means to achieve a type of in-group solidarity and meet the social need of belonging, it can err on the side of bullying and have other negative consequences such as consolidating bias and prejudice [66]. In more general terms, an Heideggerian perspective on police culture invites a careful evaluative scrutiny of all its rituals, the manner and matter of its language forms, and, its patterns of reward and disapprobation.

Finally, perhaps the most radical implications of Heidegger's philosophical anthropology would be the recognition that within the police organisation there are significantly different types, modes and locales of discourse. The most apparent is the obvious contrast between the strategic discourses of senior management and those of the 'front-line' practitioners who actually perform the specific acts of policing. To paraphrase Didion (1997), at the most fundamental level, Heidegger's analysis of police culture raises the unsettling question, 'Should policy be made by what was seen and reported by those 'on the ground' or by what was thought and wished for by those in the separate psycho-geographies of head-quarters' [67]? There is, as Villiers (2000) remarked in a summary of his experiences in teaching ethics to police officers, an 'often fantastic disparity' between what is officially supposed to happen according to the discourses of police leadership and what actually happens at street level (personal communication).

However, an application of Heideggerian thought also throws into sharp relief those aspects that may have a profoundly negative impact on police culture. Changes in the law can also mean that the police are reduced to following rules that are made by forces external to themselves. As the advances in the field of humanistic psychology underline, the consequences of this are feelings of alienation and demoralisation. The professionalisation of police - with its emphasis on rationality and the elaboration of models of best practice - can overlook the pervasive levels of arationality which define and characterise our actual humanity. The police officer always has to find ways of proceeding in the always-unpredictable situations of actual practice and not those of the 'ideal' or of the instruction manual. And the exposure of police officers to those trends in the wider culture which find themselves imported to the police organisation can readily appear as little more than the superficial adherence to 'the latest flavour of the month' or the expanding catalogue of 'buzz words'. Moreover, police officers have become acutely aware of a wider 'victim culture' - and suspect that among its participants are those who are pursuing the hidden agenda of gaining some form of financial compensation, rather than the telling of any genuine truth. In addition, unless handled with great care, the emergence of pressures to use only acceptable forms of language in order to avoid the slightest hint of sexism or racism carries with it the risk of even further alienation and inauthenticity.

Overall, it is unrealistic to expect the police to be somehow more than human. An analysis of their situation clearly shows that they are, as Heidegger contended, primarily personal and social 'beings' coping with a huge range of practical, social and legal problems. They have, as the philosopher Neil Richards pithily observed, the taxing problem of 'making the law work'. The analysis presented in this paper hopes to have highlighted the need, for all those within and external to the police organisation, to appreciate more fully, the testing realities faced by police officers in liberal democracies.

On the 'realistic reflection' presented here - based on more than three decades of educational work at the National Police College in the UK - I should conclude this paper by noting that the emerging holistic anthropology detailed by Tsing (2015) and the existential anthropology of Jackson and Piette (2015) have, as perspectives on our personal and social being and our various apprehensions of the world around us, certain features in common with Heidegger's philosophy [1, 68]. Together, they have much to offer all citizens - and especially those embedded in our contemporary highly developed societies.

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