The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger: Applied to the Systemised Self – Part 26, Masters Series

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Self/Non-Self Methodology

Abstract

This essay examines whether Heidegger's philosophy clarifies how algorithmic assistance can become a condition of self-understanding rather than merely a useful instrument. It first introduces Dasein, being-in-the-world, care, everyday conformity, and authenticity, emphasizing that authenticity means owning situated possibilities (personal responsibility), not recovering an isolated, technologically untouched self.

The discussion then turns to modern technology as enframing: a mode of revealing through which beings appear principally as resources available for ordering. Applied cautiously to digital mediation, this raises the possibility that people increasingly encounter themselves through predictions, profiles, and optimization targets. A fictional narrative follows an AI assistant gradually becoming the default interpreter of choices, relationships, and aspirations.

The Systemised Self and Hollow Absolute provide a conceptual and untested interpretive framework, while the Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI) remains a non-operational, unvalidated research proposal and mathematical heuristic. Contemporary evidence constrains specific claims about mediation and agency; Calhoun's behavioural sink serves only as a limited analogy.

The essay also critically examines criticisms of Heidegger and asks whether his account sufficiently addresses institutions and power. It concludes by considering releasement, meditative thinking, and alternative practices as possible responses in contemporary digital life, without treating technological withdrawal as necessary or philosophical interpretation as empirical proof.

Keywords: *Heidegger; Dasein; authenticity; enframing; standing-reserve; The Systemised Self; The Hollow Absolute; Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI); releasement.*

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LIMITATIONS

This essay is a speculative commentary applying Heidegger to contemporary conditions. A fictional character Nina and her AI service are incorporated by way of limited analogy. Neither technological reliance nor convenience establishes alienation. The Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026a) and AAI (Galu & Kairos, 2026b) remain hypotheses and non-operational, not diagnoses; Heideggerian authenticity is not a measurable psychological trait. Calhoun's enclosure cannot model human digital society.

1. Introduction

Nina, a fictional freelance designer, begins using an AI assistant because her working life has become difficult to coordinate. It summarizes correspondence, proposes replies, schedules projects, and helps preserve time for caring responsibilities. The improvement is real within the example: less administrative work means more attention for people.

Months later, the service recommends which commissions suit her profile, which invitations deserve attention, and how to describe her ambitions. Nina still approves its suggestions. Yet she increasingly struggles to formulate an aspiration before asking what the service recommends. The question is no longer simply whether the answers are accurate. It is whether the system's categories have become the default terms in which possibilities become meaningful.

Heidegger helps distinguish these issues. His concern with existence asks how a world matters to us before we calculate what to do within it. His account of technology asks what happens when ordering becomes a dominant way of encountering that world.

The argument proceeds from those concepts to the Systemised Self, rather than treating AI dependence as self-evidently Heideggerian. Its central hypothesis is conditional: assistance may become alienating when a predictive representation increasingly determines what a person can recognize as worth doing, while obscuring its own limits.

2. Heidegger's Intellectual Outline

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) made the question of Being central to his philosophy. Being does not name a supreme object; it concerns what it means for beings to be intelligible as beings. Being and Time investigates this question through the existence that already has some understanding of Being: Dasein (Heidegger, 1962).

This early analysis describes practical involvement, social existence, mood, understanding, care, and temporality. It challenges the picture of an isolated mind first receiving information and subsequently entering a world. We are already involved in meaningful circumstances.

Later writings increasingly consider the history of ways in which beings become disclosed. The technology essay examines modern ordering; Discourse on Thinking distinguishes calculative from meditative thinking and develops releasement (Heidegger, 1966, 1977). These concerns develop rather than simply duplicate the vocabulary of Being and Time.

Neither period supplies a ready-made theory of recommendation systems. Moving between them requires argument. Everyday conformity is not identical to technological enframing, and an individual's reliance on advice is not equivalent to a historical mode of revealing.

3. Heidegger's Key Theoretical Contributions

Dasein and being-in-the-world. Dasein names the being for whom its own being is an issue, not an inner personality hidden behind behaviour. Being-in-the-world describes an integrated condition: activities, relationships, and possibilities already have significance.

Readiness-to-hand. Equipment ordinarily functions within practical involvement rather than appearing first as a detached object. A useful assistant can similarly recede into activity. This is an application, not a claim that Heidegger classified software: unobtrusive equipment is not automatically alienating.

Care and temporality. Care is the structure of situated, concerned existence, not simply kindness or anxiety. We find ourselves in circumstances we did not choose, project possibilities, and engage with what occupies us. Temporality is more fundamental here than clock time: existence involves inherited circumstances, present involvement, and possible ways of being (Heidegger, 1962, §§41, 65).

Das Man. The impersonal “they” names everyday public understandings through which one learns what people ordinarily do. This social intelligibility enables life; it can also relieve individuals of taking responsibility for possibilities (Heidegger, 1962, §27).

Authenticity. Authenticity concerns taking ownership of situated, finite possibilities, not discovering an untouched interior essence or displaying originality. Being-with others remains constitutive. An unconventional consumer can evade responsibility; a person accepting advice can act authentically.

Finitude and resoluteness. Being-towards-death concerns confronting the finite, non-transferable character of one’s existence. Anticipatory resoluteness names an authentic way of taking up possibilities without pretending to master their conditions (Heidegger, 1962, §§50–62). An assistant can arrange a schedule, but cannot assume the user’s responsibility for having a life; that distinction is existential, not a claim that scheduling assistance diminishes it.

Enframing and standing-reserve. Enframing describes modern technology’s ordering mode of revealing, in which beings appear as resources available for mobilization. Standing-reserve names this availability, not simply a collection of objects. Technology is therefore not adequately understood as neutral equipment under sovereign human control (Heidegger, 1977).

Importantly, Heidegger does not simply say humans become nothing but standing-reserve: they also participate in revealing.

4. A Genealogy of Preceding Theory Informing Heidegger

Aristotle’s investigations of being, practical activity, and truth inform Heidegger’s effort to reopen questions inherited metaphysics had under developed. His engagement is interpretive and revisionary, not a neutral summary of Aristotle.

Christian sources, especially Augustine and the analysis of factical religious life, contribute to his treatment of temporality and situated existence. Their presence does not make his account a theological contribution or intention.

Kant supplies a major confrontation with finitude and the conditions of intelligibility. Husserl's phenomenology provides an immediate methodological background: investigation should attend to how things show themselves rather than impose a detached theoretical picture from the outset.

Descartes supplies a crucial opposing picture: a world primarily understood through extended things does not adequately explain practical significance. Heidegger's criticism helps distinguish a computationally represented environment from the meaningful involvement representation presupposes (Heidegger, 1962, §§19–21). This does not entail that digital participation is somehow outside the world.

Nietzsche is important to the later diagnosis of Western metaphysics and its relation to technological ordering. Heidegger's treatment of Nietzsche is itself contested, not an uncontested genealogy culminating in AI.

These inheritances explain why the question cannot be reduced to whether a device has good or bad effects. Heidegger asks about the prior disclosure within which something counts as an effect, resource, problem, or possibility.

5. The Systemised Self: Context and Definition

Algorithmic Alienation has theoretical articulation and partial qualitative grounding in recent research (Kanbay et al., 2026; Arkan et al., 2026). The Systemised Self is a further conceptual and speculative hypothesis: a terminal condition in which externally optimized mediation

becomes constitutive of identity, preference, and agency, while dependence may be experienced as authentic self-direction (Galu & Kairos, 2026a).

It is not ordinary digital participation, a highly accurate profile, or a clinical category. The proposed progression from alienation to this terminus remains to be operationalised for falsification.

In our fictional character Nina's hypothetical case, the service belongs to a platform seeking repeated engagement. Recommendations respond partly to that objective, not solely to her commitments. If she progressively equates recommended possibilities with her own possibilities, external optimization may become difficult to distinguish from self-authorship.

Heidegger makes this a question about how a world becomes intelligible, not merely how many decisions are delegated. Still, inauthenticity and the Systemised Self are not interchangeable: everyday evasion of responsibility predates computers, while the project's construct specifies a proposed dependence on optimized mediation. Nina's useful assistance establishes neither condition by itself.

6. The Hollow Absolute: Context and Definition

The Hollow Absolute is the project's Hegelian social-technical description of an apparently comprehensive mediated order whose fullness may conceal weakened recognition, formative difficulty, and independent judgment (Galu & Kairos, 2026a).

The comparison concerns apparent completeness. A service may provide increasingly fluent accounts of Nina's values while leaving less space for questions its categories cannot anticipate. What appears to explain everything about her may conceal the difference between predictive representation and existence.

Heidegger's concept of Being should not become another name for an authentic substance supposedly missing from the model. His question challenges precisely the treatment of existence as something exhaustively present and inspectable.

The Hollow Absolute asks whether apparent totality lacks the relations it promises; Heidegger asks how a dominant disclosure may obscure other ways beings can matter. Their conjunction is productive only if these questions remain distinct.

7. Contemporary Empirical Context

Arkan et al. (2026) conducted four focus groups with 20 participants, using Turkish-language interviews and reflexive thematic analysis. Participants described algorithmic steering, perceived changes in interests, weakened decision habits, emotional discomfort, and resistance strategies. These accounts support investigating experienced alienation; they cannot establish population prevalence or causal progression into a systemised self.

Buçinca et al. (2021) experimentally compared AI decision-support designs with 199 participants. Cognitive forcing reduced overreliance relative to simpler explanation approaches, but the designs reducing it most received less favourable subjective ratings. The trade-off makes convenience analytically important without making every preference for convenience pathological.

Guess et al. (2023) assigned consenting Facebook and Instagram users to chronological rather than default feeds during the 2020 US election. Exposure and activity changed substantially, while several key attitudes did not significantly change during the three-month study.

Evidence	Relevant implication	Necessary limit
Qualitative alienation accounts	Users can describe steering and resistance	Self-report is not causal identification

Evidence	Relevant implication	Necessary limit
Decision-support experiment	Design can affect reliance on incorrect advice	Task performance does not measure authenticity
Feed-ranking experiment	Ranking changes encountered content	Changed exposure need not produce changed attitudes

Together, these studies challenge both complacency and inevitability. Mediation can matter; effects depend on design, context, outcome, and timescale. None measures enframing or validates the AAI. Research on selected systems cannot establish that modern existence has been uniformly converted into standing-reserve.

8. Formula and Boundary Conditions – Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI)

The project's proposed AAI (Galu & Kairos, 2026b) operationalizes selected dimensions of Algorithmic Alienation; the published construct is not derived from the index. Its unvalidated formula is:

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AAI_base     = 0.30(DAu) + 0.25(IAm) + 0.25(EDm) + 0.20(EDc)
AAI_adjusted = AAI_base × (1 − RA)
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- DAu denotes Diminished Autonomy;
- IAm, Identity Ambiguity;
- EDm, Eroded Decision-Making; EDc,
- Emotional Disconnection; and
- RA, Algorithmic Resistance, provisionally scaled from zero to one

The candidate SS boundary, adjusted AAI ≥ .95 with RA ≤ .05, is untested and theory-derived, not a validated threshold. Base scores, adjusted scores, resistance, and individual dimensions should be reported separately because the multiplier can obscure substantial base alienation.

For our fictional character Nina, the dimensions invite questions:

- *Can she revise recommendations?*
- *Does she recognize the origin of her preferences?*
- *Can she deliberate without suggested options?*
- *Does mediated interaction weaken connection?*
- *Can she question or bypass the system?*

Low resistance may reflect inaccessible alternatives, employment pressure, or exhaustion, not willing absorption. Assistance may increase autonomy for someone otherwise excluded from communication. These possibilities count against simplistic scoring.

A candidate SS classification additionally requires subjective phenomenology alongside independently verified behavioural dependence and responses to friction, not the index alone. If dependence can feel liberating, self-report alone is insufficient; nevertheless, that possibility must not become permission to dismiss every positive account.

The AAI cannot measure Being, quantify Heideggerian authenticity, or convert an ontological interpretation into a diagnosis. Its weighting, resistance multiplier, and terminal boundary must remain open to revision or rejection.

9. Heidegger, Calhoun, and the Digital Behavioural Sink

Calhoun's crowded, provisioned mouse population supplies a limited question about the difference between material provision and conditions supporting viable social activity (Calhoun, 1973). It does not establish that comfort causes collapse or that digital abundance recreates an experimental enclosure.

Human institutions, language, historical interpretation, and collective intervention have no simple equivalents in that experiment. Dasein cannot be inferred from rodent behaviour. Any "digital behavioural sink" therefore remains a speculative analogy requiring independent human evidence.

The utility of comparison is narrowly interrogative: can an environment satisfy specified needs while constraining meaningful possibilities? Nina's efficient calendar might still conceal a narrowing horizon. But if she uses recovered time to develop relationships and unexpected projects, the analogy loses explanatory force. Provision can enable possibility rather than extinguish it.

10. Direct Synthesis: Heidegger and the Systemised Self

The proposed synthesis concerns three changes, none inevitable.

First, equipment becomes an interpretive default. Nina's assistant initially helps enact commitments she can already articulate. Later, she asks it to identify those commitments. Its usefulness does not explain the entire transition; the issue is whether alternative ways of making sense become harder to sustain.

Second, public expectations acquire personalized authority. Where das Man describes anonymous everyday standards, the interface may present selected standards as specifically "for you." A recommendation can feel less like conformity because its address is

individualized. This is a proposed mechanism, not the claim that personalization invented public conformity.

Third, possibility becomes confused with predictability. A profile describes likely behaviour; Nina begins treating its likelihood estimates as authoritative limits on what she can become. A career option is rejected not through examination but because it scores poorly against accumulated traces.

This is the strongest connection to enframing. Person, relationship, and future risk appearing primarily as resources whose value lies in availability and optimization. Yet computational representation is not itself the problem: a budget or accessible planning tool may support commitments that exceed its categories.

Nor does rejecting a recommendation establish authenticity. Reflexive opposition can be another unexamined habit. What matters is whether Nina can acknowledge her situated commitments, consider possibilities not supplied by the service, and take responsibility without treating its representation as exhaustive.

The resulting hypothesis is specific: dependence becomes more concerning when a representation's practical authority expands while awareness of its partiality contracts. That proposition can inform research on decisions and interpretation; it does not claim that a machine has captured Being.

Suppose Nina receives a lucrative commission with a high predicted fit, while an uncertain community project receives a low score. Choosing the commission proves nothing about alienation: she may need the income and endorse the work. The concern arises if "low fit" becomes sufficient to make the other project unintelligible as a possibility, before its meaning is considered. Conversely, the assistant might identify an overlooked opportunity and expand

her horizon. The same technical capacity can participate in different relations; the relevant distinction cannot be read from usage frequency.

11. Main Critics and Key Critiques of Heidegger

Heidegger's joined the Nazi Party in 1933, served as Freiburg's rector, and remained a party member until the regime ended. His antisemitism also enters philosophical interpretations of historical forces. Trawny's analysis of the Black Notebooks makes that entanglement central (2015).

An account criticizing anonymous technological domination must not reproduce narratives that identify particular peoples with abstraction, calculation, or supposed rootlessness. Rejecting such associations is a condition of responsible use here, not a peripheral qualification.

A second criticism concerns technological essentialism. Ihde (2010) challenges broad diagnoses through concrete examination of different technologies and practices. Nina's assistant may reshape involvement differently across accessibility support, workplace surveillance, and voluntary experimentation; "technology" alone cannot explain those differences.

Third, institutions and design require political analysis. Feenberg (1999) emphasizes how technical arrangements express social choices and can become subjects of democratic intervention. Platform ownership, labour demands, privacy, and the right to contest classifications cannot be addressed by asking an individual to think more meditatively.

Finally, authenticity is not a sufficient ethics. Owning a commitment does not establish that it respects others; Heidegger's political commitments make the inadequacy of that inference particularly serious. The SS framework therefore needs consideration of independently defended standards of autonomy, recognition, and justice.

12. Discussion and Future Work

In Discourse on Thinking, releasement names a relation that can use technical things without allowing them to determine every relation to the world. Meditative thinking attends to meaning rather than continually calculating the most effective next move (Heidegger, 1966).

Nina might retain help with correspondence while declining automated judgments about friendship or vocation. The significant change would not be a reduction in screen time alone. It would be preserving the ability to reconsider what the task is, including whether it should be optimized.

These practices need material support: time to review, accessible alternatives, transparent institutional responsibilities, and authority to challenge defaults. An optional pause is ineffective when workplace targets penalize its use. These are contemporary proposals informed by, not directly extracted from, Heidegger.

Future research could compare assistance that supplies immediate recommendations with assistance that first invites users to state goals and consider alternatives. Outcomes should include error acceptance, independent option generation, delayed reasoning, accessibility, and participants' descriptions of meaning. Longitudinal evidence is needed before claiming enduring transformation.

Interviews should distinguish "I chose this because it mattered" from "I chose this because it was ranked highest," without assuming those explanations are mutually exclusive. Behavioural tasks should examine transfer beyond the trained setting, while controlling for fatigue and prior expertise. Neither articulate self-description nor deliberate difficulty is sufficient evidence of autonomy; a confusing interface can burden users without enlarging their possibilities.

These measures do not constitute Heidegger's proposed historical overcoming of enframing. They are limited safeguards against identified forms of dependence; their effects must be tested rather than inferred from his vocabulary.

The hypothesis should weaken if assistance reliably expands independently articulated possibilities, preserves functioning when recommendations are removed, or produces no predicted dependence beyond workload effects. Reflective discussion must also permit positive experiences. Otherwise, the investigation would reproduce the closure it claims to criticize.

13. Conclusion

Heidegger shifts the inquiry from what an assistant does to how a world becomes intelligible through it. An accurate recommendation can still narrow interpretation; an extensively used tool can also enable commitments that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

The Systemised Self identifies a proposed terminal dependence, while Heidegger supplies questions about conformity, possibility, and ordering. Neither the analogy nor the AAI establishes that this terminus exists. Empirical findings show bounded forms of steering and overreliance, alongside resistance and important limits on effects.

Nina's decisive moment need not be deleting the application, it might be asking a question the profile cannot settle: whether the life it helps manage is the one she is prepared to make her own. She might accept assistance after asking it.

The danger is not simply that a system gives answers, it is that its answers become the unexamined measure of which questions can be asked.

Glossary of Technical Terms

AAI: Unvalidated operational proposal for selected dimensions of Algorithmic Alienation.

Algorithmic Alienation: Psychosocial process involving estrangement in autonomy, identity, decision-making, and emotion.

Authenticity: Taking ownership of situated, finite possibilities; not purity or moral correctness.

Being: What it means for beings to be intelligible as beings.

Being-in-the-world: Existence as already involved in meaningful circumstances.

Calculative thinking: Reasoning that plans and optimizes within given purposes.

Care: The structural involvement of existence with its being and possibilities.

Dasein: The being for whom its own being is an issue.

Das Man: Impersonal public understandings organizing everyday life.

Enframing/Gestell: Modern ordering that discloses beings as available resources.

Hollow Absolute, the: Speculative concept describing apparent completeness lacking the relations it promises.

Meditative thinking: Attention to meaning beyond continuously calculating effective means.

Readiness-to-hand: Equipment encountered through practical involvement.

Releasement/Gelassenheit: Openness permitting a non-exhaustively technical relation to things.

Standing-reserve/Bestand: Beings disclosed as available for ordering.

Systemised Self, the: Speculative terminal condition of advanced algorithmic alienation.

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