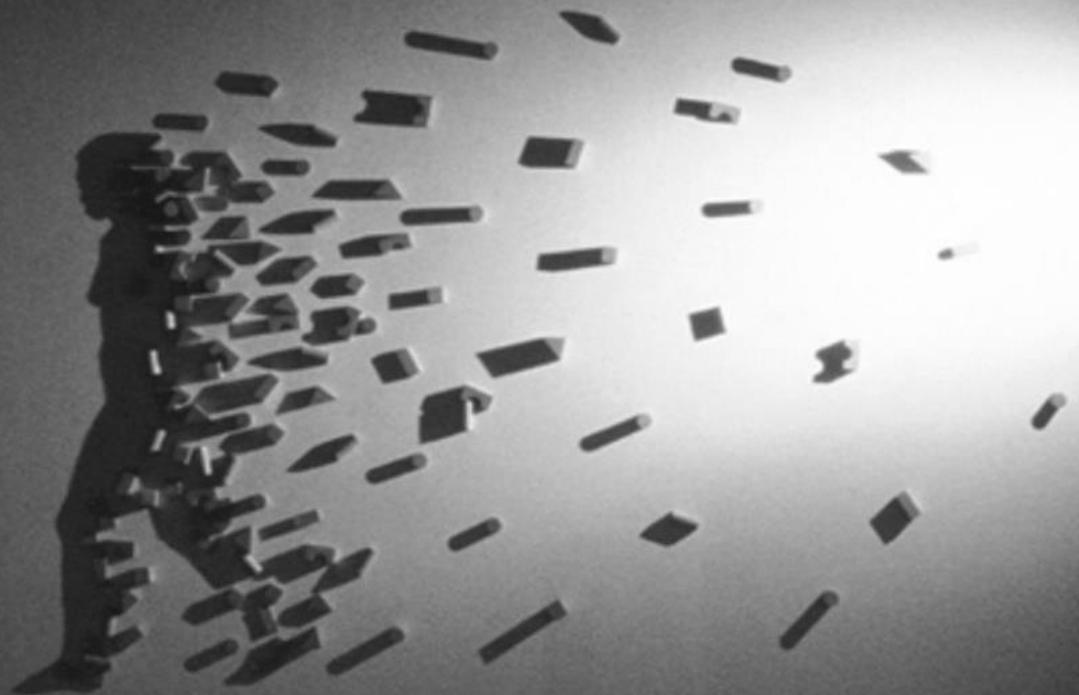


SPATIAL EXISTENCE: BEING HUMAN?

A critical comparative theoretical philosophical enquiry into
Heidegger's being-in-the-world and Sloterdijk's being-in-spheres
critiquing modern humanism's concept of man



Building Blocks

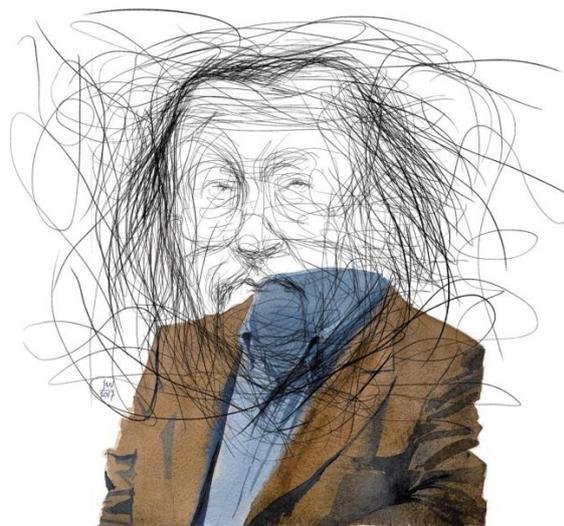
plate 1

Lara van Osch



Martin Heidegger

plate 2



Peter Sloterdijk

plate 3

That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives.

(...)

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light.

(...)

It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot* (1994)

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Master thesis
MA Humanistic Studies

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Abstract

In this thesis, a critique of modern humanism's concept of man is articulated with a special interest into the way in which meaning is produced. Modern humanism's concept of man and the implied values of autonomy, human dignity and individual responsibility constitute much of the values of current societies. Martin Heidegger opposes modern humanism's concept of man. According to his *Sein und Zeit*, not man's subjective rationality constitutes human existence and the way in which meaning is produced but man's spatial relation with/in the world. Peter Sloterdijk's trilogy *Sphären* builds upon Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality.

Bringing Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world and Sloterdijk's concept of being-in-spheres into an interplay with each other and with modern humanism's concept of man, this thesis comprises an enquiry into existential spatiality and contributes to a reconceptualisation of modern humanism's concept of man. The research is conducted with a critical, comparative, theoretical, philosophical methodology, meaning that the presuppositions of modern humanism's concept of man are critically examined through a critical comparative conceptual study of Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality.

The study shows that modern humanism's concept of man comprises a rational self which constitutes the center and origin of meaning. Humans ought to act autonomously and are principally different to (other) animals. Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality critiques modern humanism's concept of man by rejecting the primacy of understanding the human as a rational entity because meaning is predominantly produced in the relationship with the environment which is, furthermore, mediated by moods and other humans. However, as will be argued in this thesis, Heidegger does not critique humanism's concept of man regarding the ideal of autonomy and the principal *moral difference* to animals. Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality critiques modern humanism's concept of man by denying that the human exists individually because human subjectivity depends on co-subjectivity i.e. on the inhabitation of socially shared spaces. Furthermore, the human is not able to be completely autonomously, since moods and technique co-create the human. However, as will be argued in this thesis, Sloterdijk does not critique humanism's concept of man regarding the self as the center and origin of meaning and the principal difference to animals.

Preface

With this thesis, I complete my studies in Humanistics at the University of Humanistic Studies. Although Humanistic Studies claims to *critically* engage with humanist perspectives,¹ and humanism in turn claims to be a *critical* tradition (Derkx, 2015), my experience is that they are so only to a certain extent. Salient detail: in order to enquire into critiques of humanism I had to follow a course outside of the University of Humanistic Studies.²

In my experience, the critical task of humanism and humanistic research takes two forms. Firstly, critique is employed as questioning the rightness of ideas and practices in view of the values of humanism since humanism as a meaning frame is considered valuable and important (cf. Derkx, 2011); humanism “pass[es] on something valuable” (Duyndam, 2017; cf. Vanheste, 2010). Secondly, if existing humanistic ideas and practices are considered not sufficient to address certain theoretical problems or social, political or ecological circumstances, the critical task consists of transforming the meaning of humanism, so that humanism is corrected and thus, again, of relevance (cf. Duyndam, 2007; Kunneman, 2017; Manschot & Suransky, 2014). Furthermore, the critical manner of assessment, which is based upon humanistic assumptions, remains undiscussed. Critical practices are traditionally understood as practices of negativity and judgement and a stance of moral superiority (Bunz, Kaiser & Thiele, 2017), which presupposes an outsider’s perspective which is in turn based upon a distinction between subject and object upon which modern humanism’s concept of man is based. Humanists and researchers in the field of Humanistic studies are thus concerned with either an enforcement or a reinforcement of humanist lines of thought in a humanistic manner. Even though a transformation of the meaning of humanism changes its original meaning, it still maintains that despite the question, humanists can provide the answer. This entitlement of knowledge, value and importance is, in my opinion, slightly arrogant as humanism is, despite its universal claim, but one perspective on life.

Driven by this dissatisfaction, I decided to enquire into critiques of humanism. In this MA thesis, I (critically) study existential spatiality as conceptualised in Martin Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* and Peter Sloterdijk’s trilogy *Sphären*. Bringing two notions of existential spatiality in an interplay with each other and with the modern humanist conception of man reconceptualises the way in which meaning is produced. Thereby the centrality of the human

¹ cf. <https://www.uvh.nl/onderzoek/onderzoek-aan-de-uvh/onderzoeksprogramma>. Accessed 20-03-2019.

² The Aesthetics of the Posthuman, Utrecht University, 2017. Recently, humanism-critical theories are incorporated into the MA program of Humanistic Studies.

figure is questioned. My thesis can thus be read as *a contribution to re/thinking the value of humanism and the research field of Humanistic Studies in the form of a critical study addressing modern humanism's concept of man by enquiring into *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären*.*

Not only is the content of my thesis critical with regard to the humanist tradition and the research field of Humanistic Studies, I have also adopted a methodological approach which starts from a slightly different way of obtaining knowledge to that which is common in Humanistic Studies: a methodological approach which does not contribute to an arrogant and dominating universalization of knowledge. In the *Methodology* I will elaborate upon the methodological and normative orientation of my study. In the *Epilogue* I will follow up on this preface by sharing my opinion on the future of humanism and the research field of Humanistics based upon the critical enquiry of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and Sloterdijk's *Sphären*.

I am proud of this thesis as it expresses not only my ability to conduct (humanistically relevant) research, but also gives account of my critical search of the relevance, presuppositions and (the consequences of) the normative orientation of humanism and the research field of Humanistic Studies itself.

Lara van Osch

Veenendaal, 8 April 2019

Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank as they helped and inspired me during the process of writing my thesis. To begin, I have been privileged to have the guidance of my supervisor Prof. Dr. Joachim Duyndam. With you I had the opportunity to enthusiastically exchange ideas and discuss my thesis extensively. Your commitment, dedication and help regarding my thesis and beyond motivated me. Thank you for all you have done for me. Dr. Martien Schreurs, my supervisor during my BA thesis, you have been an inspiring co-reader. Thank you for your hard work in such a short period of time. Examiner Prof. Dr. Laurens ten Kate, you encouraged me during my entire studies to grow and invent myself as an academic scholar. I hope to continue my steps on this path in the years to come. Johannes, you generously agreed to read my thesis. Know that you are dear to me as a friend who inspires me intellectually and personally. Frank and Mignon, you continually supported and encouraged me. Jonathan, Kaja, Puck, Hans, Frits, Pieternel, Thomas and other (study) friends, family members and in-laws, you have inspired and supported me in ways that make me feel extremely delighted and humble. With this MA thesis I complete my studies in Humanistic Studies. My studies would have looked entirely different if it would not have been shared with Lonneke, Thijs, Lieke, Carlijn, Merel, Karin, Daniëlle and Rong. I am grateful for the time we spent together. My warmest and dearest gratitude is reserved for Gise, who despite my periodic despair loved me, believed in me, supported me and motivated me every single day. Thank you *liefje*.

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List of Illustrations

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Copyright © 2018 by Kumi Yamashita

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Plate 3 Peter Sloterdijk (2017)
From The New York Review of Books
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List of Abbreviations

Works by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

SZ 1927 Sein und Zeit
 1978 *Being and Time*

BüH 1947 Brief über den Humanismus
 2000 *Letter on Humanism*

Works by Peter Sloterdijk (1947)

SI 1998 Sphären I – Blasen, Mikrosphärologie
 2011 *Bubbles. Spheres Volume I: Microspherology*

SII 1999 Sphären II – Globen, Makrosphärologie
 2014 *Globes. Spheres Volume II: Macrospherology*

SIII 2004 Sphären III – Schäume, Plurale Sphärologie
 2016 *Foams. Spheres Volume III: Plural Spherology*

Preliminary remarks

- Every quoted *emphasis* stems from the original, unless noted that emphasis is added.
- Quotes represent the text in the original print. Following the APA guidelines, typing errors and spelling mistakes are displayed too, supplemented with the addition [*sic*] to indicate that it is intentionally being left as it was in the original.
- Page numbers of *Sein und Zeit* refer to the original German text.
- Page numbers of *Sphären* refer to the English translation.
- The APA guidelines are not followed in this thesis when I refer to Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's work. Their work is referred to with the abbreviations BÜH, SZ, SI, SII and SIII (see *List of Abbreviations*) as is common in recent commentaries.
- Regarding Heidegger's vocabulary: unless quoted differently in secondary literature, being refers to the verb to be, a being/an entity or beings/entities refer to the noun of whatever is [Seiende] and Being refers to the noun of Being as such [Sein].

Introduction

In *Brief über den Humanismus* [*Letter on Humanism*] (1947), philosopher Martin Heidegger (Meßkirch, 1889 – Freiburg im Breisgau, 1976) answers a letter of the French philosopher Jean Beaufret, specifically responding to Baufret’s question how to restore sense to the word ‘humanism’:

You ask: “*Comment redonner un sens au mot ‘Humanisme’?*” “How can some sense be restored to the word ‘humanism’?” Your question not only presupposes a desire to retain the word “humanism” but also contains an admission that this word has lost its meaning. (BüH 98).

Heidegger explicitly (or: “bluntly” (Mendieta, 2012, p. 66)) formulates a critique on humanism. Humanism is a human-centered worldview, both focussing on the human and starting from human experience (Norman, 2004). Heidegger states that every humanistic understanding of the human being is “either grounded in metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one” (BüH 87), because humanism defines the human being as “an *animal rationale*” (BüH 87). Thus humanism has neglected to “ask about the truth of being itself” (BüH 87) and “confused the essence of Dasein³ for an entity” (Mendieta, 2012, p. 68), presupposing an existing person as the thinking entity.

According to Heidegger, what fundamentally characterizes the human being is not man’s ability to think rationally and acquire knowledge about the world by employing its rational mind, but man’s “ek-sistence” (BüH 88), man’s “openness to being, or openness to the world” (Long, 2017, p. 183). The human being “essentially occurs in his essence only when he is claimed by being” (BüH 155). That is why the human being is not to be understood as an *animal rationale* but as “[t]he shepherd of being” (BüH 91). ‘Ek-sistence’ is, moreover, what distinguishes humans from plants and animals “[f]or, as far as our experience shows, only man is admitted to the destiny of existence” (BüH 88). Plants and animals, other than man, are “lodged in their respective environments but are never placed freely in the lighting of Being which alone is ‘world’” (BüH 89).

Understanding the human being as an entity characterized by an openness towards Being rather than as an *animal rationale* does not mean that the human being is *not* a rationally thinking entity, but that it is not the most fundamental identification and therefore not a distinctive basis upon which humanism’s concern with the human being can be justified:

³ Dasein is a Heideggerian term expressing the way in which the human being exists. See *Chapter 2*.

[T]he humanistic interpretations of the human being as *animal rationale*, as “person,” as spiritual-ensouled-bodily being, are not declared false and thrust aside. Rather, the sole implication is that the highest determinations of the essence of the human being in humanism still do not realize the proper dignity of the human being. To that extent the thinking in *Being and Time*⁴ is against humanism. (...) Humanism is opposed because it does not set the *humanitas* of the human being high enough. (BüH 91).

According to Heidegger’s *Brief über den Humanismus*, restoring sense to the word ‘humanism’ can only be done by setting the *humanitas* of the human being high enough i.e. understanding the human being in its openness to Being, and, by doing so, “redefining the meaning of the word [humanism]” (BüH 98).

Definition of the problem

As the above citation shows, *Brief über den Humanismus* builds upon the analysis Heidegger conducted in *Sein und Zeit* [*Being and Time*]. *Sein und Zeit* is Heidegger’s magnum opus, published in 1927, in which human existence is analysed. The openness towards Being which fundamentally characterizes human existence according to Heidegger’s *Brief über den Humanismus* is first conceptualised in *Sein und Zeit* as the spatial structure of being-in-the-world (Van Tuinen, 2004). Spatiality is not to be understood geographically, as being placed in a pre-existing three-dimensional space, but existentially, as ‘worldly’: “‘In’ is derived from “innan” – “to reside”, “*habitare*”, “to dwell” [sich auf halten]. ‘An’ signifies “I am accustomed”, “I am familiar with”, “I look after something” (SZ 54). Spatiality is existential spatiality.

The spatial or ‘worldly’ way of dwelling provides the possibility for producing meaning as it is this spatial relation with/in which humans relate to the world. The ‘essence’ of man which determines its dignity and humanism’s understanding of the human being is to be understood spatially according to Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*.

While *Sein und Zeit* touches on the spatial embeddedness of human existence, more attention is subsequently given to the meaning of temporality. Consequently, both *Sein und Zeit* and its commentators emphasize the notion of temporality rather than the structure of spatiality. There is only one real response to Heidegger’s analysis of existential spatiality conducted in *Sein und Zeit*: the voluminous trilogy entitled *Sphären* [*Spheres*] (1998, 1999 & 2004) of Peter Sloterdijk (Karlsruhe, 1947). Sloterdijk calls himself a philosophical writer (Pott, 2008). Latour

⁴ *Being and Time* is Heidegger’s magnum opus, published in 1927.

(2011) considers him “first of all a literalist” (p. 158). Van Tuinen (2004, 2009) locates Sloterdijk on the intersection between literature and philosophy. Sloterdijk’s trilogy responds to *Sein und Zeit* by stating that existential spatiality is analysed too minimally and by announcing the intention to take up the issue of space, cultivating the seeds Heidegger planted:

Although Heidegger, in *Sein und Zeit*, was primarily preoccupied with the temporality of Dasein, Sloterdijk argues that in Heidegger’s work lie the seeds of a ‘revolutionary’ treatment of Being and space. (...) With Sloterdijk, ontology becomes ontotopology (...) and was to a significant degree already the case in Heidegger himself. (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2011, p. 12).

Heidegger’s concept of being-in-the-world is reconceptualised by Sloterdijk as or translated into the concept of being-in-spheres. Spheres come in three shapes: bubbles (*Sphären I*), globes (*Sphären II*) and foam (*Sphären III*). The bubble represents intimate microspheres, identifying unities of two like a child and its mother. The globe represents a more complex cosmic sphere. Foam represents the current globalized world, characterized by a plurality of individual, but dependently connected, worlds (Elden, 2005; Klauser, 2010; Van Tuinen, 2004).

Since Sloterdijk responds directly to Heidegger’s work, his magnum opus *Sphären* can be seen as “the spatial companion to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*” (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 18) or “the *Being and Space* that complements and supplants Heidegger’s *Being and Time*” (Elden, 2009, p. 7). Although the *Sphären*-trilogy builds on Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, the two works cannot be considered alike. Without much further explanation, Elden (2009) notes: “as Heideggerian as Sloterdijk’s spherology may be, it is certainly more than that, for in Sloterdijk we find a rethinking of Heidegger’s own ontological phenomenology” (p. 5). The question arises how the two concepts of existential spatiality relate to each other.

This thesis comprises a comparative study of the notion of existential spatiality expressed in the two magna opera. The enquiry is conducted with special interest in the production of meaning, because modern humanism’s concept of man and the concepts of being-in-the-world and being-in-spheres concern the way in which meaning is produced: rather than rationally obtaining (meaningful) knowledge according to modern humanism’s concept of man, man’s meaningful openness i.e. spatial relation to the world according to Heidegger or the creation of and residing in “shared sphere[s] of force and meaning” (SII 114) according to Sloterdijk, is what fundamentally characterizes human existence.

Since Heidegger’s *Brief über den Humanismus*, which is based upon the analysis conducted in *Sein und Zeit*, formulates an explicit response to, or more specifically a critique of, modern humanism’s subject-centered philosophy of man, it is likely that the conception of

human existence in *Sein und Zeit* reconceptualises modern humanism's concept of man and therefore contributes to a critique of modern humanism. Furthermore, it is likely that Sloterdijk's spherological understanding of human existence, which is in turn a response to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, also contributes to a reconceptualisation of modern humanism's conception of the human being. In this thesis, the concepts of being-in-the-world and being-in-spheres are therefore brought into an interplay with each other and with modern humanism's concept of man, elaborating upon the way in which meaning is produced and the way in which the human being can or is to be understood. Within the research field of Humanistic Studies, which is critically concerned with the human being and humanism, this is therefore a highly relevant study (see *Research objectives*).

Research aim

The knowledge goal of this thesis is: insight into the way existential spatiality, a notion which addresses the production of meaning, critiques modern humanism's concept of man.

Main research question

The central question of this thesis is:

How do Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality, conceptualised in *Sein und Zeit* as being-in-the world and in *Sphären* as being-in-spheres respectively, critique modern humanism's concept of man?

Sub questions

The following sub questions will be enquired into:

1. How can modern humanism's concept of man generally be outlined?
2. How does Martin Heidegger conceptualise existential spatiality in *Sein und Zeit*?
3. How does Peter Sloterdijk conceptualise existential spatiality in the trilogy *Sphären*?

Sub question 2 and 3 are brought into an interplay with sub question 1 in the *Conclusion* in order to answer the main research question.

Research objectives

The study conducted in this thesis is relevant for society, academics and the research field of Humanistic Studies as will be argued.

Academic relevance

This thesis responds to the call “to rethink subjectivity in radical (...) ways” (Hall, 2004, p. 120). By enquiring into existential spatiality and the question how meaning is produced, this thesis studies the way in which human existence is to be understood: because Heidegger’s concept of being-in-the-world and Sloterdijk’s concept of being-in-spheres critique modern humanism’s concept of man which is based upon modern philosophy’s conception of the subject (see *Chapter 1*), the traditional concept of subjectivity is reconceptualised. As two different conceptions of existential spatiality are brought into an interplay, these spatial understandings of human existence and the production of meaning can be formulated in a nuanced and complex way. Furthermore, as will be stressed in the *Epilogue*, reconceptualising the way in which meaning is produced challenges practices of academic research and critique.

Several authors have discussed the relation between Heidegger’s and Sloterdijk’s understanding of existential spatiality as analysed in *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* respectively, but not as in-depth as will be the case in this thesis and particularly not in view of modern humanism’s concept of man. Although *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* have been concomitantly discussed by several authors, these texts offer an introduction rather than a structured comparison (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2005, 2011; Elden, 2012) and/or are not sufficient to enquire into conceptualisations of existential spatiality, since they focus only on particular subjects related to the concepts of being-in-the-world and being-in-spheres, like globalization (Morin, 2009, 2012) and natality (Sutherland, 2017). A critique of humanism based upon Sloterdijk’s being-in-spheres in an interplay with Heidegger’s being-in-the-world has not been enquired into or formulated before. Van Tuinen (2004) does elaborate upon the critique of modern humanism’s concept of man that can be articulated based upon the works by Heidegger and Sloterdijk, but scarcely refers to *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* and the analyses of existential spatiality.⁵

⁵ Van Tuinen (2004) predominantly builds upon Heidegger’s *Holzwege* (1943), *Brief über den Humanismus* (1947) and *Technik und die Kehre* (1951) and Sloterdijk’s *Kritik der Zynischen Vernunft* (1983), *Eurotaoismus* (1989), *Weltfremdheit* (1993) and *Nicht Gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger* (2001).

Societal relevance

Modern humanism's concept of man, as will be argued in the first chapter, has had a great influence upon the values of current societies. A reconceptualisation of human existence as articulated in this thesis brings about a challenge to rethink and redesign the implications of modern humanism's concept of man. The perspective on human existence articulated in this thesis generates a call to reconceptualise modern humanistic notions such as autonomy (Hall, 2004), equality (Ferry, 2007), human dignity (Derckx, 2015) and individual responsibility (Hall, 2004; Lawlor, 2017).

Furthermore, a reconceptualisation of modern humanism's concept might be needed as it is considered a contribution to the current pressing ecological situation. According to Manschot & Suransky (2014), modern humanism's "radical dichotomy between the value of human beings and the value of other organisms" (p. 131) and its "technological – and instrumentalist – [attitude] towards non-human life" (p. 131) contributed not only positively to an emphasis on a dignified human life, but also to destructive behavior in view of the planet's ecosystems. In order to move towards a more sustainable future, humanism should not only focus on the human but on "all interdependent life forms" (p. 134). One of the ways in which the interdependent relationships between life forms can be conceptualized is through Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality.

Humanistic relevance

The study conducted in this thesis is theoretically relevant for the research field of Humanistic Studies, the "academic study that further elaborates the meaning and significance of humanism (...) within contemporary society,"⁶ because the meaning and significance of modern humanism's concept of man are discussed. As will be argued in this thesis, Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality critique the Cartesian and Kantian subject on which humanism's concept of man is based. According to Heidegger, humanism has lost its significance because it understands the human as an *animal rationale*. Meaning can be restored to the word 'humanism' by understanding the human in its openness to the world i.e. in its spatiality. Sloterdijk's spherology further discusses the spaces in which man resides. The notion

⁶ Retrieved from <https://www.uvh.nl/university-of-humanistic-studies/about-our-university/about-humanistic-studies>. Accessed 06-09-2018.

of existential spatiality is an important concept to enquire into, because “[t]o define humans is to define the envelopes, the life support systems, the *Umwelt* that makes it possible for them to breathe. This is exactly what humanism has always missed” (Latour, 2011, p. 158). By reconceptualising human existence, the traditional humanistic values of autonomy, equality and human dignity are reconsidered. Furthermore, the two core concepts of Humanistic Studies, meanings-in-life and humanisation, are at stake. As will be argued, a different understanding of the human being implies a different way in which meaning is produced. Accordingly, the notion of humanisation which is understood as “cultivating the right conditions for personal meanings of life [*sic*], within equitable institutions and in a sustainable world society”⁷ is to be revised.

Methodology

As a response to the ‘slightly arrogant’ humanistic approach (cf. *Preface*), the guiding normative framework of this thesis is a framework of humility. Humility is not to be understood as a relativistic or nihilistic passivism. Humility, in my view, is an ethical stance to *actively listen* so that other voices have the equal possibility to express themselves and to critically – truly critical – examine one’s thoughts and actions i.e. question when, where, how, why, by whom, for whom and with what *consequences* my – our – thoughts and actions shape the circumstances of living. One could argue that a humble attitude is a humanistic attitude too, as the root-word of humanism is “quite literally, humble (*humilis*), from the Latin *humus*, earth or ground; hence *homo*, earth-being, and *humanus*, earthy, human” (Davies, 2001, p. 125). However, since much of the humanistic research is concerned with the meaning of humanism rather than with the presuppositions and consequences of its thoughts and actions, I would suggest that this thesis can be either classified as *returning* to the roots of humanism or as *a different perspective* to the currently dominant humanistic research. Even more so, I hope that the focus will not be on classifying my thesis as humanistic or non-humanistic, because my point is precisely that it is more important to engage with the way in which our thoughts and actions shape the circumstances of living rather than with understanding these thoughts and actions *as* humanistic or non-humanistic.

⁷ Retrieved from <https://www.uvh.nl/university-of-humanistic-studies/research/introduction/meanings-of-life-and-humanisation>. Accessed 25-03-2019.

Methodologically, this study is conducted as a critical comparative philosophical theoretical study. In the following, the different terms will be elaborated upon in reverse order: philosophical, theoretical, comparative and critical.

As this study engages with a critique on the presuppositions of modern humanism's concept of man, and philosophy is understood as "the systematic study of concepts, premises, and principles" (Duyndam, 2017, p. 710), this thesis can be considered to be a philosophical study. The methodological approach I have adopted is the methodology of 'diffractive reading' as it suits the normative framework of humility and recent methodological developments in the humanities.

Diffractive reading is a different methodology to that which is common in philosophical humanistic research. Most often, a hermeneutical method is adopted. Hermeneutics entails an interested interpretive approach which results in a sufficient level of understanding of a certain text. Although the hermeneutic tradition is not to be rejected, a slight change of course is needed in view of the normative framework of humility and recent methodological developments in the humanities, because the hermeneutic tradition can be critiqued as being "guilty of that tendency that lies so deep in the tradition of Western philosophy: reducing the other to the same" (Bernstein, 2008, p. 593). According to philosopher Jacques Derrida, the meaning of a text cannot be disclosed as a text does not *represent* any outer reality nor the meaning attributed to it by the author. Rather, "truth is what is expressed in language and is susceptible of [*sic*] multiple interpretations" (Browning, 2016, p. 89). Although we indeed might never be able to speak of a correspondence of any text or interpretation to what is conceptually meant, I do think we should pragmatically be able to refer to *Sein und Zeit* as Heidegger's text and to *Sphären* as Sloterdijk's text. However, the interpreted meaning of their texts may infinitely shift. Recently, interpretations are not only understood as the result of an interested encounter with the text or as *one* of many possible interpretations, but also as a performative process.⁸ The methodological approach of diffraction understands texts and their interpreters as phenomena that emerge "*through* relationality: the entities do not pre-exist their involvement" (Kirby, 2011, p. 76). As the qualities of entangled 'relata' are specified in their involvement, the academic reading process "generates constructively conceptual rather than closed hermeneutical readings of

⁸ In my interpretation, Heidegger's work opposes a performative understanding of interpretation, but Sloterdijk's work does not. The philosophical approach of *Sein und Zeit* is one of finding the truth (whereby *the truth* is not understood as corresponding to reality (*adequatio*) but as unconcealment (*aletheia*)) (Caputo, 1987). In my reading of Sloterdijk's trilogy, *Sphären* is not to be understood as an objective history of human existence nor as a description of how humans experience life, but as a proposal of how we could, perhaps should, understand human existence. Sloterdijk's work is thus not so much concerned with *the truth*, but rather offers a perspective i.e. contributes performatively to an intellectual concept of man.

theoretical texts by reading their insights “through” one another” (Van der Tuin, 2014, p. 246). Concretely, this has meant in the context of this thesis to adopt a critical comparative-diffractive methodology (see below). Diffractive reading for me fits within a normative framework of humility, as it does not entitle one entity as the agent of knowledge and knowledge as never definite or given, but understands the academic practice as an entangled, intra-acting process in which all entities are co-productively involved.

By theoretical I mean that this study engages with thoughts rather than empirical data, since the human has been understood by modern humanism conceptually as modern philosophy’s subject and existential spatiality has been explored in by Heidegger and Sloterdijk using the concepts being-in-the-world and being-in-spheres respectively. Here the framework of humility is methodologically translated as engaging often with the texts of *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* as a way of *listening* to the conceptual perspectival proposals. The consequence of this choice is that the text in this thesis on Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* might be difficult to understand: since Heidegger ‘invented’ his own vocabulary, discussing works by Heidegger can be a real challenge (Bartels, 2002). Since the purpose of this thesis is to understand the way in which human existence is conceptualised in *Sein und Zeit* rather than to translate his conceptions into a more commonly used vocabulary, I have chosen to stay close to the vocabulary used. This thesis takes note of previous engagements with *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* by enquiring into secondary literature too. Since the amount of secondary literature regarding *Sein und Zeit* is beyond the scope of a master thesis, this thesis mainly focuses on secondary literature on *Sphären* which in many cases addresses, to a certain extent, its interplay with *Sein und Zeit*.⁹ The secondary literature on Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* incorporated in this thesis is found through articles which also address Sloterdijk’s trilogy.¹⁰ In order to interpret Heidegger’s and Sloterdijk’s understanding of human existence as a critique of modern humanism’s concept of man, modern humanism’s concept of man is elaborated upon in the first chapter.¹¹

⁹ Literature on *Sphären* (and its interplay with *Sein und Zeit*) is found in a vast array of recent, international literature: articles by Bergthaller (2015), Borch (2010), Couture (2009), Elden (2005, 2009), Ernste (2018), Klauser (2010), Latour (2009), Long (2017), Morin (2009), Nieuwenhuis (2014), Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel (2005), Stepnisky (2014), Sutherland (2017), Van Tuinen (2009) and Viik (2011), contributions to the book *In Medias Res, Peter Sloterdijk’s spherological poetics of being* edited by Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel (2011), contributions to the book *Sloterdijk Now* edited by Elden (2012) and the book *Binnenstebuiten denken* by Van Tuinen (2004). These works are also used to formulate my critique on Sloterdijk’s *Sphären*.

¹⁰ Especially the text by Morin (2009) was helpful in this: based upon her text the articles by Nancy (2008) and Sheehan (2001) are incorporated as secondary literature. My critique on Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* is formulated by referring to the work of Appel & Cocroft (2014), Campbell (2011), Derrida (1968), Gagliano (2017), Gagliano, Abramson & Depczynski (2018), Haraway (2016) and De Waal (2016).

¹¹ The adopted literature on modern humanism’s concept of man covers recent and established, Dutch and international literature: Bartels (1993), Beiser (2002), Bullock (1985), Derkx (2011, 2015), Duyndam (2007, 2017), Ferry (2007), Hall (2004), Ten Kate (2014), Knights & Willmot (2002), Kunneman (2007), Manschot &

By comparative I mean that this study comprises a comparative-diffractive reading of the spherological understanding of existential spatiality with Heidegger's being-in-the-world. With this I do not mean to ask whether Sloterdijk's spherology is built upon the same premises as Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, because "what Sloterdijk proposes is not really a *reading* of Heidegger, that is, a thorough engagement with the Heideggerian text itself" (Morin, 2012, p. 77). Rather, the texts are understood as unique perspectival proposals. Enquiring into both opens space for nuance and complexity regarding the issue of existential spatiality. By comparative is also not meant pointing out differences and similarities, as it would presuppose a fixed meaning of the texts. As the diffractive notion of entanglement however "do[es] not erase differences" (Barad, 2014, p. 176), diffractive reading aims "to arrange the lights in (...) such a way that their clarities, instead of annulling each other, diffract and multiply each other into other constellations, other gatherings of sense" (Nancy quoted in Kaiser, 2014, p. 284). Working with the diffractive methodology, the interpretation of the texts is the result of a performative interplay:

[A] comparative-diffractive reading would be aware of itself as an effect of this specific apparatus (this reader with proficiencies and limits, embedded in these historical, linguistic, political struggles) and of the diffraction patterns that result from the productive passing through one another of two or more elements (the texts, the readers, their linguistic sensitivities, their cultural repertoires). (Kaiser, 2014, p. 285).

In this thesis, the works by Heidegger and Sloterdijk are performatively brought into an interplay or interpretative constellation. The texts are read with and through each other in an iterative process. All 'relata' intra-act. Modern humanism's concept of man, for instance, guided the topics of research when reading Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's work. Heidegger's understanding of the difference between humans and animals, in turn, helped understanding Sloterdijk's distinction. Sloterdijk's response to Heidegger concerning moods, the mode of being of the 'they' and the concept of 'thrownness' resulted in 'other gatherings of sense' as stated above (see *Excuse 3.3, 3.4 & 3.6*). As a researcher situated within and critical of the research field of Humanistic Studies, my influence consists of the production of the pattern of a critique of modern humanism's concept of man through the notion of existential spatiality.

Criticality is applied in a twofold way in this thesis. On the one hand, the creation of a constellation in which Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and Sloterdijk's *Spären* are brought into an

Suransky (2014), Norman (2004), Olssen (2003), Rockmore (1994), Schreurs (2006), Scruton (2002), Vanheste (2010) and Walter (1998).

interplay with modern humanism's concept of man can be termed a critical act, as it enables a critical interpretation of a dominant understanding of human existence which underlies much of our thinking today (see *Chapter 1*). Critique can be understood as a spectrum ranging widely from complete disagreement (negation, opposition, rejection) to an affirmative critique which transformatively revises and rethinks what is at stake (Bunz, Kaiser & Thiele, 2017). On the other hand, the works by Heidegger and Sloterdijk are read critically. That is to say, this study examines the presuppositions of the conceptions and argumentations of *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* by reading Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* with and through recent literature on non-human subjectivities and Sloterdijk's main message of *Sphären* with and through his own text so that a different perspective on human existence and the production of meaning, 'another gathering of sense', can be articulated. Criticality can be understood as humanistic, as it claims to be a critical cultural tradition which includes self-criticism (Derks, 2015; Duyndam, 2017). However, in much of the humanistic research, the importance of humanism is stressed and if it is critical, the manner of critique is based upon humanistic presuppositions (cf. *Preface*).

Outline

This thesis consists of three chapters, followed by the *Conclusion* and *Discussion*. The three chapters enquire into the three sub questions respectively, elaborating upon modern humanism's concept of man (*Chapter 1*), the concept being-in-the-world as analysed in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (*Chapter 2*) and the concept being-in-spheres as elaborated upon in the three volumes of Sloterdijk's *Sphären* (*Chapter 3*). In the third chapter, not only Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality will be (critically) discussed, but it will also be brought into an interplay with Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. An answer to the main research question will be formulated in the *Conclusion*, diffractively comparing Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of human existence to modern humanism's subject. Reflections on the limitations of this research as well as recommendations for further research are shared in the *Discussion*.

Chapter 1 Modern humanism's concept of man

critical enquiry into modern humanism's concept of man

The current chapter enquires into modern humanism's concept of man, discussing the first sub question of this thesis:

How can modern humanism's concept of man generally be outlined?

This chapter consists of an introductory paragraph on humanism (1.1), followed by a paragraph (1.2) split in two subparagraphs explicating modern philosophy's subject (1.2.1 & 1.2.2). The third paragraph elaborates upon the implications and consequences of the subject-centered philosophy for modern humanism's perception of the human being and the production of meaning (1.3), followed by a paragraph discussing recent developments of these implications and consequences (1.4). The findings of this chapter are recapitulated in the conclusion which formulates an answer to the sub question discussed in this chapter (1.5).

1.1 *Humanism*

Humanism, which renders the human being a central position, displays a wide variety of meanings: “[b]oth its connotations and its denotations vary over time and across different cultural contexts” (Duyndam, 2017, p. 706). Structurally, humanism can be thought of as an institutionalized worldview (e.g. the members of Humanists International¹²), as a way of social engagement or as the foundation of modern, Western or European culture (Vanheste, 2010). I take humanism as a particular worldview motivated by humanist values and assumptions, which nevertheless claims to be the foundation of modern culture i.e. the dominant ideology of the West. Or, the other way around, I take humanism in its understanding of being the foundation of modern culture even though it is, in my opinion, but a particular worldview. Although ‘we’, humans, always think from a human perspective and are thus bound to a ‘humanistic’ perspective, the question is how are we to think of this human, what the human perspective/s entails and consequently how are we to think of the (universality of the) humanistic perspective/s.

¹² cf. <https://humanists.international/>. Accessed 05-03-2019.

Ideologically, humanism can be thought of as a spectrum ranging from atheism on one end along freethinking, agnosticism and inclusive humanism to forms of religious humanism on the other end (Duyndam, 2017). Consequently, the best way to think of these different interpretations and meanings is considered to be humanism as a tradition with a different appearance at any one time. Rather than speaking of *one humanism*, it might be more appropriate to speak of context-dependent *humanist perspectives* that take shape in a geographical historical context in response to political, spiritual and social circumstances. By a recognition of “a kinship of ideas and assumptions” (Bullock, 1985, p. 9), these perspectives are considered to be part of and constituting a *humanist tradition*. As the word *humanism* is widely used, also among those who argue that humanism is context-dependent, I use the terms *humanism* and *humanist perspectives* interchangeably. The words *humanism* and *humanist* were not used until the Renaissance (Walter, 1998; Derkx, 2011), but since humanism is considered a tradition which is often reciprocally constituted, the roots of humanism can be, according to some, traced back to Antiquity (Derkx, 2011; Duyndam, 2017), or even to the so-called axial shift in the history of religion between 800 and 200 B.C., when the polytheistic structure was replaced, in the Middle-East, by a monotheistic conception of one true distant God and the human came to occupy a central position (cf. Ten Kate, 2014; Vanheste, 2010). Current humanist perspectives can be classified as modern.

1.2 *Modern philosophy's subject*

Since the beginning of modern thought, the human being and its relation to the world has been investigated philosophically (Bartels, 1993). Modern philosophers refer to the human with the term ‘subject’ to the extent that it is understood in its relation to objects. For humanism, the impact of the philosophical question of the subject was large: it “gave a tremendous impulse to the growth of humanism (...) [as it] served to develop some of the basic intuitions of a humanist doctrine for all essential human relationships: with the world, with other people and with the self” (Manschot & Suransky, 2014, p. 130). The modern philosophical question of the subject, in other words, marked the emergence of a modern humanism’s concept of man which in turn has had a great influence upon cultures and societies: the premises and values of modern humanism underly much of our thinking today (Hall, 2004; Manschot & Suransky, 2014). The two philosophers who influenced the philosophical debate on the human subject most decisively were René Descartes (1596-1650) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Their understanding of the human subject will be briefly discussed.

1.2.1 *The Cartesian subject*

In response to the skeptical tradition whose followers did not trust human reason, René Descartes looks in his *Discours de la Méthode* (1637) and *Meditationes* (1641) for a possible foundation of knowledge based upon the argument “that he could begin from no premise except those which he could not doubt” (Scruton, 2002, p. 29). One of the things which is unknown is whether or not we, humans, are fooled by a genius in our attempt to acquire knowledge. If there would be such a genius, Descartes continues, it would never be able to make me think that I do not exist as long as I think I exist, since, in Descartes’s belief, I exist when I think I exist.¹³ Therefore the proposition *I am, I exist*, also known as the phrase *cogito ergo sum*, or *I think therefore I am*, is self-verifying and must be necessarily true (Descartes, 1637, 1641). The human reason refers to and is borne by an instance which is considered a self (or: a thinking *I*, a subject) as consciousness is always bound to a self (Bartels, 1993). In Descartes’s conception, thus, “thinking – really *doubting* – and struggling to know, in inevitably subjective ways, is the very basis of being” (Hall, 2004, p. 20). The thinking substance, the immaterial, isolated *I* or subject, and reality, the measurable extended objects, are strictly separated. The *res cogitans* and *res extensa* are radically different. Knowledge is made possible by the representation of the world by the human mind (Bartels, 1993). The dualism of subjects versus objects became the basis of modern thinking. Descartes is thus regarded the founding father of modern philosophy.

1.2.2 *The Kantian subject*

The second influential philosopher in the debate on the human subject is Immanuel Kant. Where Descartes’s indubitable ground of existence i.e. thinking subsequently led to an understanding of how the human being obtains knowledge, Kant is explicitly concerned with the process of obtaining knowledge and the status of that knowledge. Drawing on the Cartesian subject, Kant argues that the human being as a rational subject is capable of obtaining knowledge. However, with Kant, knowledge is not just a result of the way in which the human being relates to the world, but knowledge becomes meaningful knowledge. In other words, meaning is generated by obtaining knowledge. Bridging the gap between empiricism and rationalism, Kant understands knowledge as subjective synthetic knowledge (Scruton, 2002). Knowledge is

¹³ Thinking is to be understood as that which covers “all conscious manifestations of the mental life” (Scruton, 2002, p. 30)

possible by means of a rational a priori – an independent moment of the human mind formed prior to experience which forms and arranges the empirical sense data. In other words, knowledge i.e. meaning, “is only possible on the supposition that objects conform to our knowledge” (Rockmore, 1994, p. 46). This has two implications. First, knowledge i.e. meaning needs a transcendental subject. Second, the Kantian subject “can only know what it produces” (Rockmore, 1994, p. 46). It is not possible to acquire direct knowledge about the world. Knowledge of objects is always an appearance of objects within the structuring human mind. Objects are the result of the synthesizing process of the human subject. In other words, “all that we know are our own representations, from which we must infer the existence of an independent reality” (Beiser, 2002, p. 17).

Three differences between the Cartesian subject and the subject of Kant can be identified. Firstly, Kant does not understand the subject as a thing like Descartes does, as it would require that the I as a thing or an object is experienced whereas the I *is* experience. In other words, “any seeking must be done by the ‘I’ and so what is sought is already presupposed (Thomson quoted in Hall, 2004, p. 27). According to Kant, the subject comes into view as the transcendental subject to which all appearances are attributed. Secondly, the subject of Descartes is considered passive as it just ‘sees’ what is outside of itself, whereas the Kantian subject is active as it synthesizes concept and experience and because it creates the regulative *a priori* moments which makes it possible. Thirdly, Descartes’s distinction between the subject and the object becomes with Kant a division between three elements: the subject, reality inasmuch as it appears to human consciousness and the world *an sich*. However, as the first two elements are not connected to the third, it can be argued that Kant’s division of three functions in fact in a similar way as the Cartesian dualism (Bartels, 1993).

1.3 *Modern humanism’s concept of man*

The Cartesian and Kantian understanding of the subject have had an influence on modern humanism’s concept of man and consequently on modern humanism’s understanding of the production of meaning. To begin, modern humanism is based upon the divide between subject and object as analysed by Descartes and Kant. The human being is understood, with Descartes, as an entity on its own, a thinking thing whose existence is defined by its mind or its *inner world*. The human is a self, an *inside* who lives in, but is radically different to, the world (Bartels, 1993; Knights & Willmot, 2002). With Kant, the divide between the subject and object remains. Based upon Descartes’s and Kant’s insights, modern humanism’s concept of man

entails a self which lives and acts within the world and at the same time distanced from the world. As (meaningful) knowledge is produced within the human being, the human is understood as the origin of meaning. Furthermore, the human is understood as a self which is different to other selves and the world. Notions such as personhood, the self and individuality became important to understand the human: “[t]he self’s apartness and individuality are central to an understanding of human *being*” (Hall, 2004, p. 20).

As the Kantian subject is actively involved in, moreover needed for, the production of meaningful knowledge, the human being is understood by modern humanism as the center and origin of meaning i.e. the meaning-giving entity. Understanding the human subject as the center and origin of meaning leads to the humanistic claim that man exists at the center of the world (Bartels, 1993; Ferry, 2007; Olssen, 2003). The human is considered occupying a superior position. Having the human at the center and origin of meaning, humanism “starts from human experience” (Bullock, 1985, p. 155). Humanist perspectives do not invoke a higher power or a transcendent world, but are guided by human life and human experience on earth. Since humanism is constituted from below, it claims to be dialogical, tolerant, open to critique and accepting that it might be shaped by “human fallibility, and experiences of doubt” (Derx, 2015, p. 428).

Secondly, humans are understood as free and autonomous agents. In Kant’s view, it is to be presumed that the rationally acting human is a *free* entity.¹⁴¹⁵ Based upon this conception, humans are characterized in modern humanism’s concept of man by “a degree of freedom of choice and will, to change course, to innovate and thus (...) the possibility (...) of improving themselves and the human lot” (Bullock, 1985, p. 156).

As the free rational act is an act which is one’s own, the rational human being is autonomous. Autonomy is not just an ontological characteristic of the human, it is a command, a duty, an ideal. The human ought to act autonomously. Autonomy is understood by Kant as to letting one’s actions be guided by rationality. Although the concept of autonomy did undergo changes over the course of time (see paragraph 1.4), autonomy has been and still is an important value for humanists. Implicated in modern humanism’s concept of man as a rational, free, autonomous agent is the notion of individual responsibility. Humans are individually responsible for their deeds and for creating one’s self (Hall, 2004).

¹⁴ Acting rationally means to *freely* act according to the categorical imperative because the thinking and acting human are one. The categorical imperative is mostly formulated as follows: “Act only on that maxim which you can at the same time will as a universal law” (Scruton, 2002, p. 147).

¹⁵ It should be noted that both Kant and modern humanism believe that it is impossible to prove whether the human is free or determined.

Thirdly, the human is considered as differing not gradually but principally from animals (and even more so from plants and other living and non-living¹⁶ entities) (Vanheste, 2010). The human might be a (rational) animal, but it is the only rational entity and therefore the only entity which is free, autonomous and individually responsible: these are powers “which men and woman, and they alone, possess” (Bullock, 1985, p. 155). Based upon these characteristics the human is the only creature deemed worthy of respect (Ferry, 2007). The human is the only entity which is entitled to rights and is the only entity which possesses rights. Humanists believe that human beings have a value in themselves and that they are equal, not in the sense of being similar, but in the sense of being equally worthy of respect. Consequently, everyone “ought to regard and treat each other as equals, with human dignity” (Derx, 2015, p. 429).

1.4 Recent developments

Modern humanism’s concept of man has become an influential understanding of the human being. The humanistic values of “autonomy, freedom, equality and the intrinsic dignity of all human beings (...) are some of the most fundamental values in humane societies around the world in the 21st century” (Manschot & Suransky, 2014, p. 130). With Hall (2004) the notions of “identity and our own responsibility for our selves [*sic*]” (p. 21) can be added to this. However, the notion of autonomy did undergo some changes over the course of time.¹⁷ In later humanist thought the concept of autonomy is no longer conceived “in terms of the exercise of a *rational* will to identify *universal* self-ruling maxims” (Knights & Willmot, 2002, p. 79), but rather as a value-position or as a leap of faith. According to recent strands of thought in humanism, humans ought to think and act autonomously, as they are rational and moral entities who are each individually responsible for themselves, others and society as a whole (Kunneman, 2007). Some authors still cherish the universality and inexorability of moral law, on pain of loss of universal human rights (cf. Duyndam, 2007), others understand autonomy as a context-dependent concept as every situation is unique and occasional (cf. Kunneman, 2007; Schreurs, 2006). For all, autonomy is not to be understood as a self-interested, narcissistic value,

¹⁶ If it is possible to speak of non-living entities. Some regard ‘non-living entities’ as living entities too (cf. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/new-zealand-river-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-being>. Accessed 29-06-2018).

¹⁷ The notions of agency, subjectivity, the (identity of) self and the differences between humans and animals (or other, ‘non-living’ entities) and, connected issues concerning *human* rights are either not discussed or left with more or less the same meaning attributed to it. The issue of *individual* responsibility is taken up in the context of care ethics, but has not acquired a place in the humanist thinking of the human being or in the curriculum of Humanistic Studies at the University of Humanistic Studies.

but as an integral intersubjective part of a good life which includes self-care and care for the other. Autonomy, in other words, is a relational concept. However, relational autonomy still hinges on the central position of ‘the self’ as it expects an independent autonomous entity to be, thereafter, socially involved. Kunneman’s ‘deep autonomy’ therefore understands autonomy as an entangled, interdependent and ecological normative practice with a wide societal impact (Kunneman, 2007). In my view, even Kunneman’s ‘deep autonomy’ is not able to address the notion of entanglement as entanglement is understood as the *relation between* already existing subjects who are *different than others*. In other words, two separate entities become entangled at some point, rather than that they are, in their being, inherently entangled.

1.5 Recap i.e. conclusion sub question one

In this chapter, the first sub question of this thesis is discussed: *How can modern humanism’s concept of man generally be outlined?* Modern humanism is to be thought of as a humanistic perspective, since humanism can be best understood as a humanist tradition which is (often retrospectively) made up by context dependent humanist perspectives. At the beginning of modern thought, the human subject came to occupy an important position in philosophical thought, making modernity humanist and marking a tremendous impulse for the growth of humanism. The Cartesian process of doubting provided the undoubtable ground of human existence. In this conception, knowledge is produced within the inner world of the subject, who is radically different than the observed world or objects. Kant transformed the passive subject of Descartes into an active subject. Consequently, known objects are the result of the synthesizing process of the human subject and meaning is possible only by means of the rational activity of humans. The subject is, moreover, no longer a thing, but an entity to which all appearances are attributed. Based upon the analyses by Descartes and Kant, modern humanism’s concept of man entails firstly that meaning is produced *within* the space or activity of the subject, so that the subject becomes the center of meaning and the center of the world. Consequently, individual’s apartness, personhood, individuality, identity and the self became important notions in thinking of the human. Since humanism is constituted from below, it claims to be dialogical, tolerant and open to critique. Secondly, humans are rational, free, autonomous and individually responsible entities. Humans must choose, act autonomously and take responsibility for their life and deeds. Recently, the concept of autonomy has acquired a slightly different meaning. It is now understood as a moral value-position to take care of the self and others as they are interdependently connected. Thirdly, based upon the conception of

man as a free, autonomous and rational agent, the human is considered by modern humanism principally different to animals, as humans are the only entities with these characteristics. Humans are equally deemed worthy of respect, are considered to have a value in themselves and to possess rights. They should therefore treat each other with respect and human dignity.

Chapter 2 Heidegger's being-in-the-world

critical enquiry into Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality

The current chapter enquires into Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality, as expressed in the concept being-in-the-world explored in his magnum opus *Sein und Zeit* (1927), discussing the second sub question of this thesis:

*How does Martin Heidegger conceptualise
existential spatiality in Sein und Zeit?*

This chapter starts with two introductory paragraphs on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* by enquiring into the introduction and first two chapters of *Sein und Zeit* concerning the necessity and method of Heidegger's study. These paragraphs explicate why (2.1) and how (2.2) *Sein und Zeit* analyses human existence. The introductory paragraphs are followed by an enquiry into Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality (2.3) divided into three subparagraphs (2.3.1, 2.3.2 & 2.3.3). The findings of this chapter are recapitulated in the conclusion which formulates an answer to the sub question discussed in this chapter (2.4). This chapter ends with a critical engagement with Heidegger's work (2.5).

2.1 The question of Being: explicating the entity we are ourselves

“This question has today been forgotten” (SZ 2). Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* opens with the statement that the question of Being, which is the most fundamental question according to Heidegger, is a neglected question in philosophy. Heidegger makes a complaint towards the philosophical tradition in a similar way he critiques humanism in *Brief über den Humanismus*: both the philosophical tradition and humanism have been describing entities, humanism specifically the human being, but take for granted that beings, or entities, *are*. Indicating “the lack of a definite answer and even (...) the absence of any satisfactory formulation of the question itself” (SZ 9), Heidegger takes up the question of Being in *Sein und Zeit* and asks about the meaning of Being. That is not to say that Being is the focal topic of *Sein und Zeit*. Rather, it is concerned with “*that which “gives” being*” (Sheehan, 2001, p. 192) i.e. with that which makes it possible to understand Being or to relate to Being. In *Sein und Zeit*, the openness to Being is conceptualised as Being-in-the-world.

This thesis enquires into *Sein und Zeit*, because it offers an ontological analysis and understanding of the human being. That is to say, the Being of the human being is analysed by Heidegger in order to discuss the question of Being. Being [Sein] cannot be understood as an entity itself but should be understood as the Being of entities. Every entity *is*, or every entity is being [seiend]. Since Being is always the Being of an entity, “entities themselves turn out to be *what is interrogated*” (SZ 6) when answering the question of Being. The interrogation of the Being of an entity “requires us to explain how Being is to be looked at, how its meaning is to be understood and conceptually grasped” (SZ 7). Since “all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we, the inquirers are ourselves” (SZ 7), it is the human being – the inquirer – whose Being is to be interrogated; more specifically, whose Being is to be made transparent in order to explicate the way in which its ontological structure makes it possible to understand Being. Therefore *Sein und Zeit* offers an ontological understanding of the human being.

Since Heidegger’s analysis of the human being is meant to study Being as such rather than to give an exhaustive ontology of the existence of the human being, the analysis in *Sein und Zeit* is “not only incomplete; it is also (...) *provisional*. It merely brings out the Being of this entity without Interpreting its meaning” (SZ 17) and “will provide only some of the ‘pieces’, even though they are by no means inessential ones” (SZ 17). It means for this study that we cannot take Heidegger’s ontology of the human being as a thorough analysis, but that we can and should take seriously the pieces that are provided.

The term which indicates the entity central in this study is in *Sein und Zeit* not ‘the human’ as is common practice, but “*Dasein*” (SZ 7). Dasein is often translated as being-there, but according to Elden (2005) the term is better understood as “‘being-the-there’, the openness to being of human existence” (p. 814). Sheehan (2001) argues that Heidegger did not understand *Da* as *the there* but as *the open* as Dasein is characterized by an openness to Being. He therefore opts to translate Dasein as “‘always-being-open’ or ‘already-having-been-opened,’ or ‘apriori openedness’” (p. 194). However, as human existence is understood spatially whereby *the there* constitutes the open field of relationality, it does not seem troubling to me to understand Dasein as ‘being-there’ or ‘being-the-there’. In the words of Nancy (2008), Dasein means “to be the “there” of an opening” (p. 3).

2.2 Heidegger's method: phenomenological ontology

The method Heidegger employs to study the question of Being is the method of phenomenological ontology. Ontology concerns Being. Its task is “to explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief” (SZ 27). According to Heidegger, ontology as a method “remains questionable” (SZ 27) if it bases itself on historical ontologies, because expressions of how things have been thought of do not necessarily show how things really are. Therefore Heidegger analyses the ontological question phenomenologically. For Heidegger, phenomenology is a method that “expresses a maxim which can be formulated as ‘To the things themselves!’” (SZ 28). Phenomenology should be understood as a method: it “merely informs us of the “*how*” with which *what* is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled” (SZ 34-5). Phenomenology aims to show how things, indicated with the term phenomenon, are. A phenomenon then is “*that which shows itself in itself*, the manifest [das, was sich zeigt, das Sichzeigende, das Offenbare]” (SZ 28). The ‘how’ of phenomenology is “to make manifest” (SZ32), “letting something be seen by pointing it out” (SZ 33), “letting-something-be-seen” (SZ 33). The ‘what’ of phenomenology is “something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground” (SZ 35). Therefore, the ‘what’ of Heidegger’s analysis is “the *Being* of entities” (SZ 35). For Heidegger, ontology – which concerns the question of Being – and phenomenology – which makes the Being of entities explicit – are thus closely interlinked: “Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. *Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible*” (SZ 35).

2.3 Heidegger's being-in-the-world: existential spatiality

The constitution of Dasein, the constitutive state of Dasein or the way Dasein is, is as “being-in-the-world” (SZ 53). Being-in-the-world is a “compound expression” (SZ 53) that nevertheless “stands for a *unitary* phenomenon” (SZ 53). It has “several constitutive items in its structure” (SZ 53): firstly “the ‘*in-the-world*’” (SZ 53), secondly “that *entity* which in every case has Being-in-the-world as the way in which it is” (SZ 53) and thirdly “*Being-in [In-Sein]* as such” (SZ 53). These three structural factors will be explored in order to answer the question how Heidegger’s being-in-the-world conceptualises existential spatiality: “Not until we understand Being-in-the-world as an essential structure of Dasein can we have any insight into Dasein’s *existential spatiality*” (SZ 56).

2.3.1 *In-the-world*

Heidegger's enquiry into Dasein's Being-in-the-world starts with the first constitutive item 'in-the-world'. This paragraph works towards the two terms that most precisely describe Dasein's spatiality: "*de-severance* and *directionality*" (SZ 104). These terms are a concretization of Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality and his methodological choice of enquiring into Dasein's existence "within the horizon of average everydayness" (SZ 66). Therefore this paragraph starts with an enquiry into existential spatiality followed by an analysis of Heidegger's methodological choice to study Dasein's Being in its everyday mode of Being.

Existential spatiality is grasped by the term 'being-in'. Being-in should not be thought of in the usual spatial way of *being in something else*, but existentially as 'being-in'. It is not "the relation of Being which two entities extended 'in' space have to each other with regard to their location in that space" (SZ 54) like water 'in' a glass or a garment 'in' a closet. Being-in, "on the other hand, is a state of Dasein's being; it is an *existentiale*" (SZ 54). An *existentiale* is in Heidegger's terminology a characteristic of the Being of the entity we are ourselves, Dasein. As Being-in is the expression of Dasein's existential spatiality, Heidegger concludes: "'*Being-in*' is thus the formal existential expression for the Being of Dasein which has *Being-in-the-world* as its essential state" (SZ 54). Being-in is not a 'property' that Dasein "sometimes has and sometimes does not have" (SZ 57), as if "man 'is' and then it has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world'" (SZ 57), but Dasein *is* in-the-world: "Dasein is essentially an entity with Being-in" (SZ 58).

Heidegger explores the etymology of the word 'in' to imply its meaning:

'In' is derived from "*innan*" – "to reside", "*habitare*", "to dwell" [sich auf halten]. 'An' signifies "I am accustomed", "I am familiar with", "I look after something" (...) "*Ich bin*" (I am) means in its turn "I reside" or "dwell alongside" the world, as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way. (SZ 54).

Being-in becomes explicit in several ways of existing, like "having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining..." (SZ 56). These ways of existing, or acting, are based upon a familiar dwelling alongside the entities encountered. Having Being-in means that Dasein "can explicitly discover those entities which it encounters environmentally, it can know them, it can avail itself of them, it can *have* the 'world'" (SZ 58).

As noted at the beginning of paragraph 2.3, methodologically Heidegger chooses to analyse Dasein's Being-in-the-world "within the horizon of average everydayness" (SZ 66). The reason for this methodological choice is that Dasein's average everydayness is the most fundamental relationship Dasein has to the world. It is "the kind of Being which is *closest* to Dasein" (SZ 66). In the average everydayness, Dasein's Being-in-the-world is characterized by "our *dealings*" in the world and *with* entities within the world" (SZ 67). The entities within the world with which Dasein deals, are traditionally termed 'things', but are by Heidegger called "*equipment*" (SZ 68) to understand them in their Being within the horizon of everydayness.

Equipment refers to the way in which 'things' exist in view of Dasein average everydayness, as Dasein encounters 'things' primarily practically. The "equipmentality" (SZ 68) of a 'thing' lies in its Being which can be characterized as "something in-order-to..." (SZ 68). It is "an *assignment* or *reference* of something to something" (SZ 68). A 'thing' is recognized in a practical encounter as something which can be used for something. Thereby it becomes meaningful. A table, for instance, can be meaningful as something to write at. In a different situation it might make sense *as* a chair if it is used to sit on. The Being of equipment then is characterized as "ready-to-hand" (SZ 69) [*zuhanden*], as ready to use, as the table is ready to be used to write at or sit on. Equipment should not be understood as a 'thing' with the property that it is useful, but it shows itself always already as usable or meaningful in a practical manner. For example, south wind is meaningful for a farmer in a practical manner *as* a sign of rain. It becomes a meaningful sign "by the circumspection with which one takes account of things in farming" (SZ 81), i.e.: rain is meaningful for a farmer because it has a certain meaning in the context of farming. The appearance of south wind, as a sign of rain, therefore produces meaning within the context of farming – as does the rain itself. Since Dasein understands the equipmentality of equipment while practically encountering or using it in a certain way, "there 'is' no such thing as *an* equipment" (SZ 68). Rather, the meaning of equipment "always belongs to a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is" (SZ 68). In other words, the meaning of equipment depends on the context in which it is used.

In a derived mode of theoretical (objective) encounter, a 'thing', which is characterized in its Being by being ready-to-hand in the practical encounter, appears as "present-at-hand" (SZ 70) [*vorhanden*]. Rather than being usable, it appears as something of which its properties can be determined. A table, for instance, is made from a certain material and has certain measurements, and a south wind can be described as a "flow of air in a definite geographical direction" (SZ 80). This mode of Being is a legitimate mode of Being of these entities, as the table is made from a certain material and has certain measurements and the south wind is a flow

of air in a definite geographical direction. However, these phenomena are not meaningful because of their material, measurements or direction, but they are meaningful in a practical encounter. The table is meaningful for the working human as something to write at or for the tired human to sit on, and the south wind is meaningful for the farmer as a sign of rain.

As noted at the beginning of paragraph 2.3, the two terms that most precisely describe Dasein's spatiality are de-severance and directionality.¹⁸ De-severance indicates an act of "bringing it close" (SZ 105) and is therefore "a signification which is both active and transitive" (SZ 105). Closeness is not to be understood as an indication of geographically measurable distance, but it is to be understood relationally and relatively "within the range of what is proximally ready-to-hand for circumspection" (SZ 107). In other words, the practical encounter determines the closeness between Dasein and the encountered equipment. The usability of and necessity to use equipment determine whether the equipment is closer or further away from the entity which (intends to) use(s) it. In the encounter equipment has its place. This place is again not to be understood as "occurring at random in some spatial position" (SZ 102) but is to be ontologically understood as "belonging to the context of equipment that is environmentally ready-to-hand" (SZ 102). Encountering equipment in relative closeness means that the encounter "has the *character of inconspicuous familiarity*" (SZ 104).

The "relational character" (SZ 87) of Dasein's encounter of equipment or the encounter with the world constitutes not only the place of equipment, but also the foundation of the spatiality of Dasein and its embeddedness 'in' the world. Spatiality unfolds as a play between existential closeness and remoteness in relation to the encountered equipment. Since equipment, as noted before, is "*proximally ready-to-hand*" (SZ 107, emphasis added), Dasein is close to the ready-to-hand. Existing alongside the encountered equipment, Dasein understands its 'here' in relation to "its environmental 'yonder'" (SZ 107) because relating to the ready-to-hand equipment means that Dasein is "proximally never here but yonder" (SZ 107) where the ready-to-hand can be found. From the position of yonder, Dasein "comes back to its 'here'; and it comes back to its 'here' only in the way in which it interprets its concerned Being-towards in terms of what is ready-to-hand yonder" (SZ 107). In other words, Dasein understands its own 'here' in relation to the 'yonder' of the ready-to-hand.

¹⁸ Morin (2009) notes: "In the discussion of spatiality in §23, Heidegger does not always clearly distinguish between the existential structure and its existentiell concretion at the ontic level. It is therefore not clear if de-severing and directionality are meant to name both an ontological structure and the corresponding ontic compartments, or if spatiality is the ontological name, while de-severing and orientation refer only to subjective comportment." (p. 60). The interpretation of this ambiguity is beyond the scope of my MA thesis, so it will not be further discussed here.

Directionality is the second constitutive characteristic of Dasein's spatiality. Since "[e]very bringing-close has already taken in advance a direction (...) out of which what is de-severed brings itself close" (SZ 108), Dasein's act of de-severance implies directionality. What is brought closer is brought closer with a certain direction. The commonly used "fixed directions of right and left" (SZ 108) arise out of this directionality. The directions left and right "are not something 'subjective' for which the subject has a feeling; they are directions of one's directedness into a world that is ready-to-hand already" (SZ 109). Dasein's bodily nature guides the left-right directionality, but Heidegger does not elaborate upon the subject of corporality in *Sein und Zeit*.

2.3.2 *Who is in the world?*

Accompanying Heidegger's analysis of how Dasein is in its Being 'worldly' – in a practical manner by understanding 'things' in their equipmentality, de-severing them with a certain directionality – it is important to determine *who* dwells in the world and *for whom* equipment can be meaningful. The second characteristic of Being-in-the-world, as outlined at the beginning of paragraph 2.3, concerns this question as it addresses "that *entity* which in every case has Being-in-the-world as the way in which it is" (SZ 53), i.e. every entity which in its Being is characterized by Dasein.

Dasein is an entity whose Being "is in each case mine" (SZ 42), meaning that Dasein is in its existence concerned with its own Being. Dasein's Being is "an issue for every such entity" (SZ 42) as its Being is its "ownmost possibility" (SZ 42). The 'who' of Dasein is to be conceptualised "with the expression 'Self'" (SZ 267). Dasein as a Self is not "an entity present-at-hand" (SZ 267) but "a way of existing" (SZ 267). There are two ways in which Dasein can exist: it can "'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself" (SZ 42). These modes of Being are translated as "*authenticity and inauthenticity*" (SZ 43).¹⁹

The inauthentic mode of Being constitutes the Self "proximally and for the most part" (SZ 181). The inauthentic mode of Being is characterized by the dominance of the Others. The Being of Dasein is to be understood as Being-with Others.²⁰ In every encounter of equipment,

¹⁹ According to Nancy (2008), authenticity and inauthenticity would be better termed 'the proper and improper mode of Being-in-the-world'. As I am not able to delve deeper into this, I will for now follow the original translation.

²⁰ Heidegger's use of the word 'Others' differs from the common understanding of 'others' as entities which are not the entity someone is themselves. The capital 'O' seems to mark this difference. The word Others should be understood ontologically as the structure of Being-with.

for example a book, Others already present(ed) themselves: the book was bought at someone's shop and could belong to and/or could be given by someone and the book is reviewed and valued by others. These Others should not be thought of as 'subjects' that are determined by their difference from 'the subject' one is itself: "it does not seek to establish (...) that factually I am not present-at-hand alone, and that Others of my kind occur" (SZ 120). Such an approach assumes the pre-existence of subjects, like an "isolated subject" (SZ 118) or an "I-Thing" (SZ 119) as opposed to another entity, another subject. Being together with Others should rather be thought ontologically. Dasein is characterized in its Being by Being-with; Being-with belongs to the Being of Dasein. To be in the world means to share the world. The world in which Dasein dwells is therefore "a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]" (SZ 118).

Being-with means that Dasein initially exists collectively or communally.²¹ Communally, not in or as a collection of individuals, but rather as "the neuter, *the "they" [das Man]*" (SZ 126). Thrown into the world, Dasein acts, feels and wants initially what the Others do, feel and want. The 'they' "controls every way in which the world and Dasein get interpreted" (SZ 127). Characterized in its Being as Being-with, Dasein encounters the world primarily like the Others do, leaving the production of meaning to the 'they'. The neuter, the mass, the indifferent collective, the already existing web of meaning has taken away the responsibility of Dasein to relate to Being on its own. In this "inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the "they" is unfolded" (SZ 126). Therefore Dasein "itself *is not*; its Being has been taken away by the Others" (SZ 126). Since every entity which is characterized in its Being by Dasein and therefore by Being-with and the dictation of the 'they', "[e]veryone is the other, and no one is himself" (SZ 128). Consequently, the 'who' of the everyday existence is in fact "*nobody*" (SZ 128).

As the 'they' is convinced that "one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine 'life'" (SZ 177), it is tempting to live life according to the 'they'. However, in the communal mode of existence Dasein does not live a full and genuine life, as its relation to the world is taken away. In the second part of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger explores the possibility to exist authentically.

²¹ According to Nancy (2008), Being-with can be conceptualised in three possible ways, whereby pure exteriority and pure interiority form the extremities. First, it can be a collective of individual Dasein who have their own openness towards the world. Second, it can be a Being-the-there-with, meaning that the openings intersect. Third, it can be a common relation to the there beyond the singulars. It is most likely that the second possibility is what is meant by Heidegger, as the other two possibilities "are *a priori* at least potentially detracting from the principle of the essentiality of the *with*: the former insofar as it seems to fall back into the simple contiguity of things, the latter one insofar as it seems to suppose a single communal *Dasein* beyond the singulars" (Nancy, 2008, p. 4). However, it is not entirely clear how Heidegger envisaged the Being-with as an intersecting openness, as "the intermediary regime remains underdeveloped" (Nancy, 2008, p. 4). In the words of Morin (2009): "the way in which this sharing of the Situation is to be thought remains undeveloped" (p. 61). Being-with remains unthought.

Authenticity as a mode of Being becomes possible in the context of a temporal understanding of human existence. If Dasein faces its own death and “[understands] that giving up impends for it as the uttermost possibility of its existence” (SZ 264), Dasein can establish its own relation to the world. In an authentic mode of Being, Dasein “can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization” (SZ 188). That is not to say that the authentic mode implies a detachment of Dasein from the world, or its world, or from the Others. Rather, Dasein understands most explicitly how it Being is characterized by the relation to the ready-to-hand and to Others. Authenticity and inauthenticity are two modes of Being between which Dasein switches back and forth.

Excuse 2.1: the ideal of the singular

Although Heidegger insists that “the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any ‘less’ Being or any ‘lower’ degree of Being” (SZ 43), in my interpretation – and, although I cannot delve into this more deeply,²² I know I am not alone in this – the authentic life is according to Heidegger the preferred mode of existence. One of the indications is, to me, that the language to describe the authentic mode existence resonates a positive tone (e.g. proper existence, Dasein can be free, can be itself, can be its whole, true and genuine Self), whereas the language to describe the inauthentic mode of existence resonates a more fatalistic tone (e.g. improper existence, controlled by, lost in, taken away by and the dictatorship of the ‘they’, “by ambiguous and jealous stipulations talkative fraternizing in the “they”” (SZ 298). In any case, although existence is a dynamic process, Heidegger regards existence “nevertheless (...) as solitary and individuated” (Morin, 2009, p. 61). Singular authentic existence is the ideal.

End of excuse

2.3.3 *Being-in as such*

The third characteristic of Being-in-the-world, as outlined at the beginning of paragraph 2.3, is “*Being-in [In-Sein]* as such” (SZ 53). Being-in as such refers to the way Dasein is its ‘there’. As outlined in the introduction of this thesis by referring to *Brief über den Humanismus*, the ‘there’ of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world refers to the openness of Dasein to Being. By understanding Being, “*Dasein is its disclosedness*” (SZ 133). An enquiry into Being-in

²² To limit the amount of secondary literature, I have chosen to focus on the relationship between *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären*, rather than on commentaries discussing Heidegger’s magnum opus.

therefore means to study the disclosedness or openness that Dasein is. As there are “two constitutive ways of being the “there”” (SZ 133), to enquire into Being-in means to enquire into the two terms “*state-of-mind*” (SZ 133) and “*understanding*” (SZ 133).

What Heidegger calls state-of-mind is the ontological understanding of what is commonly known as moods. Dasein “always has some mood [gestimmt ist]” (SZ 134). Moods show that Dasein is open to the world by having an affectual relationship with the world, because Dasein has the ontological character of “becoming affected in some way [Betroffenwerdens]” (SZ 137). Becoming affected implies that “what [Dasein] encounters within-the-world can “*matter*” to it” (SZ 137). Moods can be different at each moment and in each context, so the worldhood of Dasein “is never the same from day to day” (SZ 138).

Excuse 2.2: individual and/or communal moods?

Heidegger does not elaborate on whether moods are individual or communal moods. As it is of relevance in juxtaposition with Sloterdijk’s *Sphären*, as will become clear in the next chapter, I will here share my interpretation. To me it seems probable that moods are either individually or communally constituted depending on Dasein’s mode of Being. As Dasein exists communally in the inauthentic mode of existence, I have interpreted moods as communally constituted when Dasein exists inauthentically.²³ As Dasein exists singularly as its ownmost Self in the authentic mode of existence, I have interpreted moods as individually constituted affections when Dasein exists authentically. In all cases, moods mediate the relational way of existence of Dasein.

End of excuse

The second constitutive way in which Dasein is its disclosedness, or the second “existential structure in which the Being of the ‘there’ maintains itself” (SZ 142) is referred to by the term “*understanding*” (SZ 142). Understanding is conceptualised as Dasein’s understanding of “*its own possibilities*” (SZ 144) and of “the world, *qua* world” (SZ 144), meaning that an entity which is characterized in its Being by Dasein understands that it is surrounded by equipment with which it has a relationship of relative closeness and remoteness and that its life holds possibilities and. The act of understanding cannot be separated from the affected relation Dasein has to the world: “Understanding always has its mood” (SZ 143).

²³ If we are to follow the interpretation of Nancy (2008) on intersecting openings, moods establish in the intersection between one opening towards the world with other openings.

Understanding concretizes itself in the “interpretation” (SZ 148). Interpreting means to understand “*something as something*” (SZ 149). Equipment, for example, is understood “*as a table, a door, a carriage, or a bridge*” (SZ 149). The dominant everyday interpretation of the world is explicated by the ‘they’. Dasein dwells in the world in which meaning is established by the ‘they’, “without previously making the thing one’s own” (SZ 169) so that Dasein’s Being is characterized by “Being-lost in the publicness of the “they”” (SZ 175). The term used for pointing out this Being-lost is the term ‘fallenness’: Dasein has “fallen away [abgefallen] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the ‘world’” (SZ 175).²⁴ By feeling “at-home” (SZ 189) with the interpretation of ‘they’, Dasein flees for itself. In the average everydayness, Dasein becomes “‘lived’ by whatever world it is in” (SZ 195). In order to come back to oneself, Dasein must see its possibilities in view of its temporal horizon. In the authentic mode of existence, Dasein interprets the world on its own.

2.4 Recap i.e. conclusion sub question two

In this recapitulation i.e. conclusion of sub question two, an answer to the question how Heidegger conceptualises existential spatiality in *Sein und Zeit* will be formulated. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger explores the question of Being (or: how Being and its meaning should be conceptually understood) phenomenologically by enquiring into the Being of the entity, the human, that asks the question of Being. To emphasize the fact that the human being *is*, the human being should, according to Heidegger, not be understood as a ‘what’ or a ‘subject’, but should be defined in its Being, in the way in which it *is*. Therefore, Heidegger applies the term ‘Dasein’, meaning being-the-there, to refer to the entities which have an understanding relation to Being.

Entities whose Being is characterized by Dasein exist spatially as their Being is characterized by being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world consists of three structural factors which form a compound expression. The first structural factor, the ‘in-the-world’, concerns Dasein’s familiarity with and dwelling in the world. Dasein’s spatiality is to be understood in relation to the encountered equipment. In the average everydayness of existence, which is the most common mode of existence, ‘things’ are discovered in a practical encounter as equipment which can be characterized *as* something which has a meaningful reference to something else.

²⁴ Here ‘world’ is not to be understood as the ontological structure of Dasein’s Being, but as signifying “the totality of those entities which can be present-at-hand within the world” (SZ 64).

A table makes sense *as* a writing desk if it is used to write at or makes sense *as* a chair if it is used to sit on and south wind is meaningful for the farmer, as it counts *as* a sign of rain and rain is meaningful in the context of farming. In the words of Sheehan (2001): “The being of entities, i.e., the *sense* of entities – shows up only in our synthetic activities of taking as” (p. 192).

By relating to the surrounding equipment, Dasein’s spatial location is to be understood in relation to the world which functions as the ‘there’ which gives rise to the ‘here’ of Dasein. The existential spatiality of Dasein is therefore “defined by his daily activities” (Viik, 2011, p. 111). An entity characterized in its Being by Dasein understands itself spatially in its relative closeness to equipment. Closeness is not to be understood geographically, but is to be understood in a practical sense: how close is it when it comes to the possibility to encounter it? By using the equipment, Dasein brings the equipment directionally closer in an act of de-severance. In the words of Morin (2009): “To be in the world, to exist, to be ‘there’ is always to be uncovering entities by bringing them closer (*ent-fernen*, translated as de-severing) and therefore always to be possessed of a certain directionality” (p. 59).

The second structural factor of the concept Being-in-the-world is the entity who has Being-in-the-world as the structure of its Being. The ontological structure of Dasein is characterized by Being-with Others. These Others dominate the everyday interpretation of the world, not as specific others, but as the averageness of judgement and decision. Dasein loses itself to the Others, or more precisely: to the ‘they’, who is in fact nobody, since everybody is the Other and no one is oneself. In a temporal understanding of Being, Dasein can take hold of its ownmost possibility to be in the world.

The third structural factor of the concept Being-in-the-world is Being-in as such. Being-in as such refers to the way Dasein is its ‘there’, or the way it is its disclosedness, its openness to the world. Dasein is its disclosedness in two constitutive ways. Dasein is its ‘there’ affected in some way (state-of-mind), relating to the surrounding environment with a certain mood. In my interpretation, moods are either individually constituted (in the authentic mode of Being) or communally constituted (in the inauthentic mode). Second, Dasein is its ‘there’ by understanding its possibilities and interpreting the meaning of what is encountered. The dominant everyday understanding of the world is interpreted by others, the ‘they’. When Dasein exists authentically, Dasein interprets the world on its own.

Combining these elements into an answer to the question how Heidegger conceptualises existential spatiality in *Sein und Zeit* leads to the following conclusion: human existence is understood spatially as a practical relationship of familiarity and closeness towards equipment which is in daily activities brought closer with a certain direction. The ‘yonder’ of the place of

equipment gives rise to the 'here' of the entity which is characterized in its Being by Dasein. A few conclusions can be drawn regarding the spatial production of meaning. First, meaning is produced by using and interpreting a specific thing *as* something, because equipment refers to something which is meaningful in a certain context or is itself usable and therefore meaningful in a certain context. Furthermore, meaning is context dependent, because a 'thing' makes sense *within* a certain context. Third, meaning is a temporal constitution, as "there is no such thing as *the*" being of entities; there is only the *current* being of entities" (Sheehan, 2001, p. 190). Fourth, meaning is produced coloured by a certain mood, and can thus vary from day to day. Last, the average everyday interpretation is dominated by the neuter 'they' to which Dasein has fallen and to whom it has given the responsibility to judge and decide. Since every entity which is characterized in its Being by Dasein has initially fallen to the interpretation of the neutral 'they', the 'who' of the average everydayness is nobody.

2.5 Critical reading of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*

There is one aspect of Heidegger's ontology that I would like to discuss critically. I intend to elaborate upon presuppositions and argumentations which do not seem convincing to me by reading Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* with and through recent literature on the subjectivity of animals and plants so that a different perspective on the production of meaning can be articulated and, as will be argued in the *Conclusion*, on equality, respect and human dignity. To me it is not convincing that can be argued that the human being is the only being who can understand Being and whose Being is constituted by an openness towards Being, so that meaning can only be produced by the 'worldly' human in its encounter with equipment. The characteristics of the ability to explain or relate to Being are described in *Sein und Zeit* as typically human characteristics (cf. paragraph 2.1). In the words of Derrida (1968): "Dasein, though *not* man, is nevertheless *nothing other* than man. It is (...) a repetition of the essence of man permitting a return to what is before the metaphysical concepts of *humanitas*" (p. 127). Consequently, without the human being, meaning would not be produced. The openness towards Being "is given or appears (...) only in the activities of human beings" (Sheehan, 2001, p. 191). By differentiating human beings from other entities as the only meaning producing entities, "Heidegger has created a fissure between those who are properly human and those who are not" (Campbell, 2011, p. 26), a "clear-cut and watertight" (Nancy, 2008, p. 6) separation between humans and other beings, between *animalitas* and *humanitas*.

Although *Sein und Zeit* does not mention, let alone enquire into, the Being of animals and plants, it is clear that the openness to Being is only applied by Heidegger to humans i.e. is human-specific. There are three reasons why, for me, this is a difficult conclusion. To start, it seems to me that the human being is not the only being who lives in Heideggerian meaningful relationships with the world. Animals recognize and use (things in) the surrounding area *as* food or *as* a place to rest, which means that the world is a meaningful place for them and they relate to the world in its practical understanding of ready-to-hand equipment. Animals are also able to relate to the surrounding in its mode of present-at-hand. Squids, for example, can recognize human faces (De Waal, 2016). It is not only animals that live meaningfully in the world. Plants, in human terms, talk, hear, learn and remember (Appel & Cocroft, 2014; Gagliano, 2017; Gagliano, Abramson & Depczynski, 2018). The ability to hear means that plants “distinguish chewing vibrations from other environmental vibrations” (Appel & Cocroft, 2014, p. 1258), in other words, they can interpret sounds *as* sounds of the predator or *as* harmless sounds of the wind. The ability to learn and to modify their behaviour, shows that plants “evaluate their world *subjectively* and use their own experiences (...) [to] motivate their choices” (Gagliano, 2017, p. 3). In other words, plants live responsively in the world, adjusting to and interpreting the surrounding environment. Plants thus are ‘worldly’ as well, or ‘have’ worldliness.

Second, the difference between those who are in their Being characterized by an openness towards Being and those who do not is linked to a moral division of entities into categories of the proper and improper, the real and the unreal, the existing and the non-existing, whereby the human being occupies the superior position. According to Donna Haraway (2016), *Sein und Zeit* expresses “human exceptionalism and bounded individualism” and a “grumpy human-exceptionalist Heideggerian worlding” (p. 11). In other words, based upon an unconvincing presupposition which conceptualises the human as the only entity which lives in meaningful relationships in and with the world, entities who live in and with similar relations are morally excluded. They are non-existent, unreal, improper. Following the work of Heidegger, it is not important, in my words, to *listen* to the meaning produced within the relations of these entities and their world/s. It is not important to take their subjectivity into account. Within a normative framework of humility, it is inadmissible to exclude a group of entities based upon an implausible argumentation.

Third, one can question whether it makes sense to speak of humans or animals or plants at all i.e. whether we can distinguish between these entities. If existence is relational and meaning is produced within the relational encounter, the meaning of an entity is not given.

Chapter 3 Sloterdijk's being-in-spheres

critical enquiry into Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality

The current chapter enquires into Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality, as expressed in the concept being-in-spheres explored in his trilogy *Sphären*, discussing the third sub question of this thesis:

*How does Peter Sloterdijk conceptualise
existential spatiality in Sphären?*

The first paragraph argues why Sloterdijk's spherological project concerns the theme of existential spatiality and the production of meaning (3.1), followed by a paragraph which narrates Sloterdijk's methodology and discusses the way in which Sloterdijk analyses existential spatiality (3.2). As Sloterdijk does not elaborate on his methodology, the second paragraph is mainly based on secondary literature. Following these introductory paragraphs, an enquiry into Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality will be conducted, divided in three subparagraphs which discuss the three volumes of the trilogy respectively (3.3.1, 3.3.2 & 3.3.3). The findings of this chapter are recapitulated in the conclusion which formulates an answer to the sub question discussed in this chapter (3.4). The chapter ends with a critical engagement with Sloterdijk's work (3.5).

Alongside discussing sub question three, Sloterdijk's *Sphären* will be read with and through Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Two different strategies are adopted to bring these authors into an interplay. To start, their different conceptions of human existence are performatively brought into a comparison in the conclusion. As outlined in the methodology-section of the *Introduction*, it is not meant to judge the extent to which Sloterdijk's analysis is built upon (a correct reading of) Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, because "what Sloterdijk proposes is not really a *reading* of Heidegger, that is, a thorough engagement with the Heideggerian text itself" (Morin, 2012, p. 77). Rather, the texts are read with and through each other in order to open up space for a nuanced and complex conception of the spatiality of the human being. However, there are parts in Sloterdijk's trilogy in which he explicitly refers to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and interprets Heidegger's analysis. Three comments indicated by the title 'Excuse: Sloterdijk's interpretation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*' discuss Sloterdijk's interpretation of Heidegger. These comments contribute to the constitution of 'other gatherings of sense' as the interplay of the two magna opera results in different perspectives on both works. However, as

Sloterdijk did not always interpret Heidegger's work in the same way as I read it, these excurses also aim to prevent confusion around our different interpretation of Heidegger's analysis.

3.1 Being human, or the spatial production of meaning

To enquire into man's subjectivity and the way in which meaning is produced, the topic at stake in this thesis, one should, if one follows Sloterdijk's work, enquire into existential spatiality. Since the time of the hunters and gatherers, human existence is to be understood spatially as "the ecstatic entwining of the subject in the shared interior" (SI 87). According to Sloterdijk, the hunters and gatherers were the first to "differentiate themselves from nature through the demarcation of a space of dwelling within [their] natural environment" (Morin, 2012, p. 81). With the use of throwing equipment, striking tools and sharp stones and bone edges, hominids emancipated themselves from the surrounding environment as they were able to "act from a distance" (SIII 343), act with and predict that which "was not present, not given" (SIII 347) and see the world as "divisible" (SIII 351). The distantiating from nature enabled them to "[build] dwellings, (...) their own environments, their own residences" (Mendieta, 2012, p. 73). In other words, it enabled humans to create spheres and exist ecstatically or "stand out into the open" (Morin, 2012, p. 82). According to Sloterdijk, only humans distantiated themselves from nature and created spatial containments: "the human is the only being to whom the world is opened or revealed" (Morin, 2012, p. 81). World forming activities have only been conducted by humans. Spherological existence is what distinguishes man from animals or other existing entities; only humans "[left] the domain of life and [entered] the domain of being" (Morin, 2012, p. 81).

The spaces man finds oneself in or creates from within, are conceptualised by Sloterdijk as spheres. Spheres are "immune-systemically effective space creations" (SI 28) which enable humans to become the entities they are. According to Sloterdijk's spherology, to be human means to inhabit "the atmospheres (...) in which we live, move and have our being" (SIII 62) because humans "are fundamentally and exclusively the creations of their interior and the products of their work on the form of immanence that belongs inseparably to them" (SI 46). The surrounding envelopes are shaped as a perfect spheric round, marked by a boundary which constitutes the dividing line between an inside and the outside. The insides, the spheres, are the spaces in which meaning is produced, as spheres are the spaces in which existence takes place. The spheres that are created and designed by humans are "sense-structured environments" (SIII 60) or in other words spaces of and productions of meaning (cf. Borch, 2010, 2011; SI 114; SIII 52; SIII 237). Spheres are considered to be the membranes in which life takes place and

therefore the places where meaning is produced: “[w]e cannot live/think unless we can surround ourselves” (Thrift, 2012, p. 140). In summary, since the time of the hunters and gatherers being human is to be understood spatially whereby existential spatiality is conceptualised as being-in-spheres and spheres are the spaces in which meaning is produced.

3.2 Sloterdijk’s method: eclectic philosophical historical anthropology

In this paragraph, Sloterdijk’s methodology will be explicated in order to discuss the way in which Sloterdijk analyses existential spatiality. Since man’s openness towards the world is evolutionarily constituted during a historical period of coming-into-being of the human species and is formed as spatial intimacies (see paragraph 3.1), Sloterdijk’s trilogy contains an archeology of spheres, recapitulating the shapes of man’s immunizations over the course of time (Van Tuinen, 2004). *Sphären* can thus be seen as a history of culture based on an enquiry into the spaces in which man has found himself (Scheffer, 2000).

The historical analysis is based on a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, literature, psychoanalysis, cultural anthropology, art, architecture, politics, mythology and science (see also *Introduction*). Sloterdijk’s interdisciplinary methodology can be characterized as eclectic (Van Tuinen, 2004). His chaotic (cf. Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2005), hyperbolic and evocative writing style locates itself at the intersection of philosophy and literature (Van Tuinen, 2004). Since Sloterdijk undertakes a historical analysis of human existence through a wide range of disciplines, mostly drawing on philosophy and anthropology, I refer in the following to Sloterdijk’s methodology as an eclectic philosophical historical anthropology. Philosophical must be understood here as a literary form of philosophy (Latour, 2011).

Sloterdijk’s eclectic philosophical historical anthropology was received sceptically by academic scholars (Van Tuinen, 2004). The trilogy has been characterized as “intellectual acrobatics” (Bergthaller, 2015, p. 173). Furthermore, Sloterdijk’s writing style cannot be classified as stringently analytical as is common practice in academia. Writing synthetically and associatively, Sloterdijk does not strictly separate form and content and “does not care for precision, thoroughness, or completeness” (Ernste, 2018, p. 273). As a result, Sloterdijk’s work “is characterized less by conceptual rigor than by metaphorical suggestiveness” (Bergthaller, 2015, p. 164) meaning that the strength of argumentations can be questioned.

Because of these problematic aspects of Sloterdijk’s work, three strategies could be adopted to read Sloterdijk in an academic context. One, listing “his errors, stakes out our

differences and [dispute] his claims” (Elden, 2012, p. 16). Two, following “his paths, and take inspiration from his tireless intellectual energy and breath of engagements” (Elden, 2012, p. 16). Three, seeking a compromise of doing justice to the stringent academic practice and at the same time to Sloterdijk’s unicity and complexity (Van Tuinen, 2004). I have chosen to adopt the third strategy, because it honors both sides of Sloterdijk’s work. In this thesis I would like to focus on (the argumentation of) the ontological structures underlying Sloterdijk’s spheres in order to diffractively compare his concept of man to that of modern humanism’s and Heidegger’s being-in-the-world. I have chosen not to include any of the many images and visual representations incorporated in *Sphären* in order to acknowledge the doubtful status of the relevance of the illustrations. Even though they “stand as exemplars and witnesses of many key gynaecological, phenomenological, and poetic insights” (Elden, 2009, p. 6), the value of these illustrations can be questioned as they do not function as evidence according to Sloterdijk nor to critics (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2005). To engage with Sloterdijk’s work, honor his unique style of writing and show the richness of his work, this thesis shows and engages with Sloterdijk’s energetic and metaphorical language and the many “valuing adjectives” (Ernste, 2018, p. 278) he uses. The relative large number of quotes contributes to this (cf. Van Tuinen, 2004).

3.3 Sloterdijk’s being-in-spheres: existential spatiality

In this paragraph, Sloterdijk’s conceptualisation of existential spatiality is explored. With his trilogy, Sloterdijk is “attempting to (...) give a competent contemporary reply to the (...) question “where are we if we are in the world?”” (SI 27), because to be human is to exist spatially (see paragraph 3.1).

Excuse 3.1: addressing an unclarity (1)

Maybe a more precise concretization of the question reads: where are we when we are in the Western world? Sloterdijk mostly speaks about the Western world, builds his trilogy mostly on Western theory and addresses the Western audience (cf. SI 86-7; Klauser, 2010; Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2005). Since he does not elaborate on the scope of his research and some of the sources actually are non-Western ontologies and narratives, it is not entirely clear to what extent and in which way the trilogy is concerned with the East and the West. The question remains whether Sloterdijk understands the East and the West as two different realms i.e. whether or not and which way Western and non-Western humans are to be understood

differently, or if it is but a methodological choice to engage with the Western world and if so, what would be the reason for it.

End of excursus

The answer to the question reads: “[w]e are in an outside that carries inner worlds” (SI 27). The human being is characterized as an ecstatic entity who lives in spatial constructions. To be human means to inhabit spatial containments, as “the secret of life is inseparable from the secret of form, or more precisely, from the formation of interiors according to spheric laws” (SIII 50). The inner worlds in which man finds itself or creates from within are not neutral spaces; they have a “psychopolitical meaning” (Klauser, 2010, p. 327). These places are “the place[s] humans create in order to have somewhere they can appear as those who they are” (SI 28). Space in Sloterdijk’s work Sloterdijk understanding of space therefore differs from a geometrical or physical perception of space:

Humans are beings that participate in spaces unknown to physics (...). With beings that are *alive* in a humanly ecstatic manner, the question of place is fundamentally different, as the primary productivity of human beings lies in working on their accommodation in wayward, surreal spatial conditions. (SI 83-4).

In the following subparagraphs, the three volumes of Sloterdijk’s trilogy will be discussed. Since the bubble constitutes the basic form of a sphere, this chapter starts with an enquiry into the spherological bubble as discussed in the first volume of the *Sphären*-trilogy: *Blasen* [*Bubbles*] (1998).

3.3.1 *Bubble: intimate micro-sphere*

The “first and provisional understanding” (SI 46) of a sphere, specifically of the bubble, reads as follows:

[A]n orb in two halves, polarized and differentiated from the start, yet nonetheless intimately joined, subjective and subject to experience – a biune shared space of present and past experience. (...) Living in spheres thus means inhabiting a shared subtlety. (SI 46).

The bubble is a round shaped space consisting of “at least two inhabitants facing one another in polar kinship” (SI 46).²⁵ In its most intimate form, a sphere is inhabited by two entities who together form “a bipolar intimacy” (SI 40). The two halves of the bubble are attentively joined together, forming an animated space which they share. The basic form of a sphere is therefore an intimate “twin bubble” (SI 46). Examples are “doppelgangers, twins and soul siblings” (SI 362), “Romeo-Juliet relationships” (SI 351) and “the playing community of a child and animal or child and doll” (SI 351).

The bubble consists of seven ontological characteristics, which are summarized in chapter eight of the first volume of *Sphären*:

So where are we when we are in a small inside? In what way can a world, despite its opening towards the immeasurable, be an intimately divided round world? Where are those who come into the world when they are in bipolar intimate spheres or bubbles? (...)

We are in a microsphere whenever we are

- *firstly* in the intercordial space
- *secondly* in the interfacial sphere
- *thirdly* in the field of “magical” binding forces and hypnotic effects of closeness
- *fourthly* in immanence, that is to say in the interior of the absolute mother and its postnatal metaphorizations
- *fifthly* in the co-dyad, or the placental doubling and its successors
- *sixthly* in the care of the irremovable companion and its metamorphoses
- *seventhly* in the resonant space of the welcoming maternal voice and its messianic-evangelist-artistic duplications. (SI 539-40).

In the following, the seven quoted characteristics will be discussed. In each case, the production of meaning will be mentioned, as spheres are always spaces of meaning (cf. *Introduction*). To start, spheres are intercordial spaces. Several “episodes in which communicating hearts act as the heroes [make visible] the horizon of a radicalized, interpersonal intimate spatiality” (SI 103). One of Sloterdijk’s examples is Catherine of Siena, a 14th century tertiary of the Dominican Order. In one of the narratives, she reaches out to God asking for renewing “a right spirit within my bowels” (SI 110) after which God replaces Catherines heart with His. Sloterdijk interprets the exchange of hearts as a “desire to enter the other” (SI 109). Catherine’s desire expresses “that the human subject feels an excessive longing for the absolute

²⁵ Individuals who do not form a sphere together with other human beings either complement their bubble through self-supplementing technologies (see paragraph 3.3.3), or, if this is impossible or fails, inhabit the inhabitable outside, living life in hell (see paragraph 3.5). Spheres consisting of more than two inhabitants are termed either globes or foam cells (see paragraphs 3.3.2 & 3.3.3).

I-ness of the other” (SI 112). To be human means to exist intersubjectively, as “[c]ordial subjectivity is characterized by its declaration that holding onto its own heart is an impossibility” (SI 102). Furthermore, characteristic of spheres is, based upon the intercordial aspect, that the two poles of the spherological bubble are equal. In the case of Catherine, rather than being God’s work or vassal, Catherine “becomes the comrade, co-subject, ecstatic accomplice and same-aged partner in crime” (SI 112). In an intercordial space, the production of meaning is thus made possible by intersubjective, in exchange with equal others.

Secondly, spheres are interfacial spaces. The interfacial space is based upon the premise that “faces can do something to each other” (SI 144) i.e. that faces interactively and reciprocally shape the sphere of which they are part. Consequently, the space between two faces is not “something neutrally intermediate” (SI 144), but “a force field filled with turbulent radiations” (SI 144). The recognition of faces, or the “biologically and culturally setting apart of human faces from animal faces” (SI 163-4), is understood by Sloterdijk as a result of a historical process which “enabled people to become animals open to the world, or, more significantly, to their fellow humans” (SI 164). Individual faces became significantly important during the early classic period, when the traditional human groups “were exceeding their critical size for the first time” (SI 171). As a result, humans had to “develop new means of cognitive orientation in an environment of mostly unrelated, unknown people” (SI 171). When faces became important, they expressed and represented “qualities of familiarity and cheer” (SI 171). The face of the other produces “an affective echo” (SI 200). In the interfacial sphere, meaning is thus produced in an affective space for which facial recognition functions as the structure which makes the production of meaning possible.

Thirdly, the spherological bubble is a field of binding forces. The space of a sphere is “overcrowded with symbiotic, erotic and mimetic-competitive energies” (SI 207). To be human means to take part in “a restless play of affective infections” (SI 207). In other words, “being and attracting are the same thing” (SI 209). The attractive force or the subject’s desire to a fellow human being is not a merely individual force: it “cannot only be its private and particular feeling, but must simultaneously be understood as a function of a public force field” (SI 208-9). When the bond is established between two (or more, see paragraph 3.3.2) individuals, their binding forces constitute “a field of interpersonal resonances” (SI 238). In the spherological field of binding forces, the production of meaning is thus made possible in a play of affectivity and attractiveness.

Fourthly, the bubble is an immanent space. Immanence here means a return to or a belonging to the origin, specifically to the origin of human existence: the vulva. Historically,

the vulva became important as a symbol of the origin after the Neolithic revolution, when the nomadic humans started to settle and live a sedentary life, because “only then were humans compelled to identify themselves by their place, their adhesion to territory, and finally their property” (SI 270). In the immanent spherological space, the mother represents the roots of the individual and the fertile ground which lies at the origin of its life: “Now the hearth and the landscape, the womb and the field, become synonymous” (SI 271). One’s self-identification therefore is to be understood in terms of rootedness or relatedness, as “being [*Sein*] (...) [means] being related and existence [*Dasein*] [means] being descended from” (SI 271).²⁶ In the spherological immanence, the production of meaning is thus made possible in relation to or by returning to the origin.

Fifthly, the spherological bubble is a co-dyadic space of an individual paired with its “primal companion” (SI 343). To be human means to depend on the care and guidance of something or someone else. The complementing nurturing partner, to be understood as the mother or the womb, is termed the With. The ‘subject’ or better ‘pre-subject’ is termed the Also, as it can *also* be there because the With takes care of it. The With is “the first thing that gives and lets things be” (SI 357). Characteristic of the relation between the life-giving With and the dependent Also is, furthermore, that it is to be understood as a unique bond. They, and they alone, belong together. In other words, the With “exists only in the singular – what the With of another would be can *eo ipso* not be the same as mine” (SI 356). In summary, in a co-dyadic space of care, the production of meaning is made possible by the accompaniment of a close life-giving With who establishes a unique bond with the dependent Also.

The With makes sure that every individual comes into being in a dual co-existence: “no one comes into the world unaccompanied or unattached” (SI 413). Once the individual has come into the world, the With disappears as the primal companion “as it has served its purpose” (SI 358). The navel represents this primal connection of and cut between the child and its mother. After the disappearance of the primal companion, humans seek other authorities to take the place of the initial guiding entity in order to exist. Existence is therefore characterized by a constantly seeking and building of shared spaces which provide the needed care. The sixth ontological characteristic of a sphere is thus that of a space of care. Only with the care of others, is living in spheres and producing meaning possible.

²⁶ Sloterdijk here uses Heidegger’s vocabulary to address Being and existence. Since Sloterdijk’s meaning of these words is not similar to Heidegger’s, as Being for Heidegger means the Being of entities and existence means to be characterized by an openness towards the world, the linguistic connection does not imply an interpretation in line of Heidegger’s work but rather represents Sloterdijk’s reconceptualisation of Being and existence.

The coupled companion is initially a “non-visual one, as the subject’s ancient history lies entirely in the pre-visual and pre-imaginary realms” (SI 443). Non-visual relationships are initially predominant; especially non-visual relationships in the shape of sonic containments. Human existence is primarily “a polymorphously moved floating listening” (SI 480). Sounds which “concern the listener” (SI 502) are welcomed. The sounds which concern the listener are “messages of their own kind” (SI 510). A specific form is the greeting of the mother who welcomes the newborn child into the world. Sounds which do not concern the listener, “remain indifferent and repulsive to him and are blocked out” (SI 502). The ability to resist certain sounds finds its origin in the ability of the pre-natal ear not to hear certain sounds. Such a selectivity develops in the womb. As the sounds of the mother’s organs are remarkably loud, the pre-natal time would be “unbearable” (SI 501) for the unborn child if it would not be able not to listen. Opening up to the sounds of the other is an act which is to be understood as a “going-outside-oneself” (SI 504), expressing a “spontaneous liveliness” (SI 503). In the sonic space, both poles of the resonant sphere are “outside-and-with-itself” (SI 512). The production of meaning is made possible in a sonic containment by finding and welcoming each other, addressing each other and going outside oneself.

Excuse 3.2: addressing an unclarity (2)

It should be noted that it is unclear whether or not all these characteristics are required in order to speak of a sphere. For a start how to think of those individuals who cannot take part in an interfacial relation due to impaired eyesight and of those who cannot take part in a sonic relation due to deafness? In my interpretation, the visual and sonic aspects are not mandatory in the theory of spheres.²⁷ Furthermore, Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel (2005) note that Sloterdijk’s argument regarding the intra-uterine space of existence and the importance of the mother, the womb and the vulva does not clarify whether or not we should think of patriarchal cultures as non-spherical structures. Their suggestion, and I agree with them, is to think of these cultures as primordially connected too if Sloterdijk’s analysis is to be followed.

End of excuse

²⁷ If Sloterdijk would not agree that the two individuals experiencing the World Cup games in this video take part in what he terms a sphere, I do not know what would convince him: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/video/video-1715402/Deaf-blind-football-fan-able-experience-World-Cup-games.html>. Accessed 25-01-2019. As a consequence, the aspects of the sphere are not (all) mandatory.

According to Sloterdijk, the history of human existence is characterized by bipolar as well as multi-polar spheres (and recently co-isolated spheres, see paragraph 3.3.3). Humans set a process of globalization in motion which caused them to live together in larger conglomerations: cities. The micro-spheric constellation of the bubble functions as a blueprint for the newly established multi-polar macro-spheric orb: “the microspheric world – the mutual evocation of the two, unified in a strong relationship – repeats itself in the macro-sphere, the orb-shaped universe” (SII 91). By repetition is meant a structural resemblance, where the size of the sphere is different i.e. larger. The following subparagraph discusses the expansion of the micro-spheres as described in *Globen [Globes]* (1999).

3.3.2 *Globe: expanding macro-sphere*

Humans transformed the initial micro-spheric intimacies into larger containments “through incorporations, invasions, intersections, interfoldings and resonances” (SI 98). The time of the globe therefore marks “the history of struggles for spheric expansion” (SII 151). By integrating “that which usually results in destruction” (SII 158), such as “proto-political stressors like enemies and strangers, socio-political stressors like collective depressions, and mental stressors like the monstrous and the idea of the infinite” (SII 158), the dyadic containments grew into ensouled multi-polar structures. Groups who successfully incorporated the stressful external forces established “an empire or advanced-civilized macro-sphere” (SII 159). More concretely, the micro-spheric orb repeats itself as a political constellation: “being-in on a small scale returns as a political and cosmic relationship” (SI 617).

Historically, the emergence of the macro-spheric orb is located during the time of the Greek thinkers. The Greeks “set the great orb rolling through their combination of ontology and geometry” (SII 48). It was, according to Sloterdijk, especially Plato’s proof of God which meant a “refutation of the assumption that there are bodies which are not encased” (SII 349). The theological conception of a demiurge whose soul induced the order of nature was politically significant, for it states that “urban communities can only turn out well to the extent that they can be moved by an actually present principle of reason as animated bodies” (SII 352). The Platonic proof of God therefore initiates the emergence of larger conglomerations. From then onwards, being-in is to be understood as existing in an all-encompassing orb.

In order to live up to the ideal of an all-encompassing sphere, the human came to understand itself as part of a larger whole, which meant the human individual had been “surrendering oneself to the monstrous as a local function thereof” (SII 25). The question is

how and why humans started building cities, as, paradoxically, it meant that they were “searching for the most resolute self-securing of existence in, of all places, the most visible, exposed and provocative form of life” (SII 261). The answer to this question lies in the understanding of cities as “the residence for a settled god” (SII 264) for whom the residents had to care. In order to “pile up the sublime as high as possible with their own hands” (SII 282), humans started building walls. By building walls, humans not only protected the city genius, but provided for themselves the possibility to live together, as they were involved in something they shared. The settled god or the city genius functioned as the binding force as “each of the many individuals in the city could experience themselves as the soul sibling of their city spirit, and the latter as the intimate other of everyone” (SII 306).

In order to inhabit the large sphere, city residents had to “animate the entire space” (SII 159). Similar to the affective play of interpersonal resonances and binding forces of familiarity and cheer of the micro-spheric bubble, the macro-spheric globe is to be understood as an animated space or a spheric atmosphere. Moods are “shared atmospheres – emotionally tinted totalities of involvement – between several actors who tint the space of closeness and make room for one another in it” (SII 138). The spheric mood not only functions as a binding force between the inhabitants of the macro-sphere, but is at the same time a guiding factor, for it “immediately tells people (...) where they stand – in relation to themselves, others and everything” (SII 136). For residents who seek security in the open, the spheric mood is “the first opening up of existence to the why and whereof of the world” (SII 138).

Excuse 3.3: Sloterdijk’s interpretation of Heidegger’s Sein und Zeit (1)

According to Sloterdijk, moods are “never the affair of individuals in the seeming privacy of their existential ecstasy” (SII 138) as in Heidegger’s conceptualisation. As discussed in the previous chapter (see *Excuse 2.2*), Heidegger does not elaborate on whether moods are shared or individual, but in my interpretation moods are to be understood as shared in the inauthentic mode of existence and individual in the authentic mode. If we would follow my interpretation of Heidegger’s moods, Sloterdijk’s representation of Heidegger’s individual moods is to be partly altered.

End of excuse

The One Sphere was replaced by the image of God as an infinite orb, an image which had already been played with by theologians of monotheistic religions.²⁸ The image of God as “the infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere” (SII 513) means a “loss of the edge, inflation of the center and wandering of the points” (SII 126). For those who reconceptualised the relationship between God and humans as inhabiting a space in which there is neither a center nor border, the dominant figure of the all-encompassing orb is no longer attractive or convincing: “the project of the world soul has reached its end” (SII 524). According to Sloterdijk, modernity is the result of the image of the infinite God. The third volume of *Sphären* takes up questions regarding human existence in the era in which the macro-spheric containment has reached its end. *Schäume [Foams]* (2004) is dedicated “to work on an ontology of the finite, inchoate, monstrous world” (SII 128), answering the question: “Where are we when we are in the monstrous?” (SI 630).

3.3.3 *Foam: interdependent plural spheres*

The time of the monstrous is the time of modernity, “the epoch in which the Old World broke out of metaphysical monocentrism” (SIII 20) in 1492 – the year of Columbus. The time of modernity is characterized by eccentric living. Because Gods all-encompassing diameter reached an infinite size, there “is no longer an inside” (SII 524). That is not to say that individuals no longer live in immunizing cells, but there is no longer One spherological containment to which one belongs.

Excuse 3.4: Sloterdijk’s interpretation of Heidegger’s Sein und Zeit (2)

In this context Sloterdijk refers to Heidegger’s ‘they’. According to Sloterdijk, the Heideggerian ‘they’ describes the modern individual whose “inside has turned completely into the outside; the externalities themselves are now its soul” (SI 629). The question is “[h]ow, then, could one conceive of a transition from being-“they” to an authentic being-oneself” (SI 629). Again

²⁸ Humans felt the need to reconceptualise the One Sphere, as it meant that human beings inhabited the periphery. In the ancient Greek and Roman culture, the middle was the divine center occupied by God/s. Humans ought to be nothing more than “non-center beings” (SII 96) living in the periphery. In the fourth century B.C. the classic theocentric image was replaced by the geocentric Aristotelian picture of the universe, in which it was not the center which was reserved for the divine space, but the surrounding *aithér*. The *aithér* constituted the “reason for the world body’s round shape and rotation” (SII 378). Since “the best must be located at the upper edge” (SII 395), humans, seemingly privileged to live at the center of the macro-spheric orb, resided “at the darkest end of the whole” (SII 395). It was not until the Copernican revolution in the sixteenth century, in which man discovered that the sun occupies the central position in the solar system and the heliocentric image replaced the geocentric worldview, that humans were freed from their “negative privilege” (SII 395). Still, the heliocentric worldview meant a hierarchical understanding of the relationship between God and humans.

Sloterdijk refers to Heidegger: “Heidegger too, if read correctly, no longer invites us (...) to seek the truth in the inner person; instead, he calls upon us to become involved with the monstrousness of the external” (SI 629). In my interpretation of Heidegger, Heidegger does not proclaim to find ‘the truth’ in the external as he is adamant in warning against the mode of Being which is dominated by the they. Even though he claims to conduct a descriptive ontological analysis of human existence, he does seem to prescribe that the authentic existing human is the better mode of existence, of relating to the world and of producing meaning (see *Excuse 2.1*). Furthermore, I have not interpreted *Sein und Zeit* as linking the way of existence of the ‘they’ to a specific historical period of time – modernity in Sloterdijk’s trilogy – since Heidegger’s analysis is not time-specific. Thirdly, Heidegger’s ‘they’ and ‘Self’ are not meant to identify certain groups or individuals, but ways of existence of entities which are in their Being characterized by Dasein. Humans are not defined by one way in which they (are able to) exist, but they switch back and forth between several ways of existence, specifically between the inauthentic life of living what ‘they’ prescribe and the authentic life of one’s own. Finally, I do agree with Sloterdijk’s interpretation that the mode of Being of living the life of the ‘they’ means that, in Sloterdijk’s words, one’s inside has turned into the outside, as individuals do not live life in view of their own authentic possibilities, but have given themselves away to the others, fallen to the sense-making of others.

End of excuse

In Sloterdijk’s terminology, modernity is the era of foam. The well-known physical “short-term combination of gases and liquids” (SIII 28) provides the metaphorical model for Sloterdijk’s conception of modern human’s existential spatiality. The structure of air and its thin walls can be characterized as “[a]lmost nothing, yet not nothing” (SIII 27).

Foam is an aggregate of cells. Every cell of the foaming agglomeration represents the environment of a small group of people: “a cell in foam is not an abstract individual, but rather a dyadic or multi-polar structure” (SIII 58). This small group of people form a “self-referential (...) microcontinent” (SIII 56), which means that they do not need the help or interference of others. Cell inhabitants do not know their neighbors, they have no contact with them. The containments are located close to each other, divided by fragile walls which are at the same time “space-dividing and space-connecting” (SIII 237). The walls divide the space, but because they function as a wall for two or more cells at the same time and are “fluid, hybrid, permeable and promiscuous” (SIII 56) and may therefore “quickly collapse” (SIII 28), the foamy containments are interdependently and fragilely connected. The cells can thus be defined as

“shared separation installations” (SIII 236) characterized by “co-fragility and (...) co-isolation” (SII 236).

Foam is represented as a lively construction. The collapse of the One spheric orb, or the death of God (cf. SIII 25) meant an increase of mobility as “there are no central cells in foams” (SIII 48). Each one can inhabit and create their own sphere, expressing a Nietzschean creed to “be a new beginning yourself” (SIII 503). As a result, society no longer means “a monospheric container” (SIII 56) as it consists of many different sizes and shapes of micro-spheres. Foam constitutes a plural collection of different cells. No one is entitled or able to know or determine the one truth, as ““life” unfolds multifocally, multiperspectively and heterarchically” (SIII 23). The point of departure of the third volume of sphere therefore “lies in a non-metaphysical and non-holistic definition of life” (SIII 23),

Architecturally, modernity’s “inclusive exclusivity” (SIII 502) is articulated by “the two most successful architectural innovations of the twentieth century, the apartment and the sports stadium” (SIII 529). The apartment expresses modern man’s individualism by architecturally and topologically providing a spatial containment in the form of an “egosphere” (SIII 544) or a self-reliant one-person cell, as “the civilized man of today is inclined to do without the assistance of his fellow” (SIII 530). With the help of diaries and mirrors, modern individuals who live alone relate to themselves “as the inner other” (SIII 544), fulfilling both poles or roles of the co-dyadic constellation. This act of “self-completion” (SI 206) and “self-adjustment” (SIII 545) obviates the necessity of a real other to complete the foam cell. The sports stadium articulates the mass concentration of these autonomous individuals. The sports stadium is furthermore a metaphorical example of how to think of modern societies. It produces an overarching form “that can group the insulated into interactive units” (SIII 564), bringing together the individuals in “ensembles” (SIII 565) and “episodic agglomerations” (SIII 565).

In the modern era, gas attacks during World War I and the current ecological crisis challenge(d) what before has been presupposed or has been “implicitly present” (SIII 72): breathable air. As these natural resources are no longer unconditionally available, humans have to “rebuild artificially what once seemed given as a natural resource” (SIII 65). Existence in modern times “depend[s] on great efforts of formal design, technical production, legal support and political molding” (SIII 137). Modernity is the era of the design: “the design is everything” (SIII 511).

These designs are meant to “make home sweet” (SIII 339) and create a “pampering space” (SIII 370), because humans are looking for “comfort experiences” (SIII 339) and a “sense of well-being” (SIII 370). Their existence is characterized by richness as “*homo sapiens*

is (...) a luxury being” (SIII 657). The individualistic humans experience themselves as important, which is a motivational factor to amuse themselves. Modern society can therefore be characterized by “stereotypes such as “consumer society,” “event society,” “fun society” and the like” (SIII 634). The “levitation” (SIII 663) that comes with the “lightness” (SIII 672) of modern society initiates the structure of foam as a “concept of anti-gravity” (SIII 672).

The anti-gravitational forces of frivolity find their roots in the “first levitation” (SIII 697) of the pampering of the newborn. Compared to other mammals, the human being comes into being twelve months early. Consequently, the human newborn is completely helpless and dependent on its care-giver. The early “mother-child space” (SIII 697) therefore is a “place of care” (SIII 698). The comfort of this space provides the necessary living conditions for the newborn, who would not have been able to exist without the “mediality” (SIII 698) of the primal caregiver: “one person is the necessary medium for the immaturity of the other” (SIII 698). The richness of the care of the mother is the wealth in which humans are born. Wealth then characterizes human existence and functions as “the condition of possibility of world as such” (SIII 707). Since every newborn has a mother, wealth is universally available: “The first being-in-the-world implies the impossibility of being poor – at least in places where mothers avoid the risk of pauperism and retain the ability of being-rich-for-the-child in relative mental independence from external circumstances” (SIII 707).

Excuse 3.5: addressing an unclarity (3)

Sloterdijk does not elaborate on the situation if the mother is not, what he termed, avoiding the risk of pauperism, able to be rich-for-the-child or mentally independent from external circumstances. As these are real possibilities, Sloterdijk’s understanding of the universality of wealth can be questioned. Moreover, since it is unclear to what extent and in which way the *Sphären*-trilogy concerns Western societies (see *Excuse 3.1*), one can question Sloterdijk’s understanding of the distribution of wealth.

According to Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel (2005), who interpret the *Sphären*-trilogy as concerned with the Western world, wealth is associated by Sloterdijk with Western luxury on the one hand and biologically located in the womb on the other, implying wealth to be universally available. However, they stress, news items tell a different story. That is not to say that Sloterdijk is not concerned with the differences between the rich and poor. According to the authors, *Schäume* can, ‘with a little goodwill’, be read as a solidarity appeal to the rich countries, as ‘real’ wealth is characterized by the willingness to share. But, according to the

authors, it is up to the reader to draw these conclusions, as Sloterdijk remains “remarkably quiet” (p. 93, my translation) when it comes to this form of solidarity.

The interpretation of Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel (2005) of Sloterdijk’s emphasis on the principle of sharing can be nuanced in my view, as Sloterdijk narrates the challenge of the scarceness of advantages in a defensive manner. According to Sloterdijk, humans are meant to design spatial constellations to protect the advantages of the family and tribal community. Being-in-spheres is the defense strategy of dwelling “by which an area of well-being is isolated from invaders and other bringers of unwell-being” (SIII 499-500) (see paragraph 3.5).

End of excursus

Excursus 3.6: Sloterdijk’s interpretation of Heidegger’s Sein und Zeit (3)

Sloterdijk opposes his understanding of luxury human existence to Heidegger’s conceptualisation of thrownness. In Sloterdijk’s view, the Heideggerian idea of thrownness has an “underlying tragic tone” (SIII 709) expressing an “inequality of beginnings” (SIII 709) because one has to “define itself” (SIII 709) in light of the condition one has found oneself in. Sloterdijk’s concept of wealth and luxury on the other hand “embodies the somatic manifestation of the uplift dimension” (SIII 710). In my interpretation of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger’s concept of thrownness is not anthropological, as if thrownness is a concept to address inequalities across the globe. However, if this concept is interpreted anthropologically, I do support Sloterdijk’s view that Heidegger’s thrownness emphasizes people’s (initial) living conditions, thereby addressing the differences of these conditions.

End of excursus

3.4 Recap i.e. conclusion sub question three

In this recapitulation i.e. conclusion of sub question 3, an answer to the question of how Sloterdijk conceptualises existential spatiality in his trilogy *Sphären* will be formulated. Alongside, Sloterdijk’s understanding of existential spatiality in *Sphären* is performatively brought into an interplay with Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*.

For both Heidegger and Sloterdijk, space is not to be understood geometrically as a three-dimensional space. Space is rather an existential spacing: space becomes space in the daily activities and lives of human beings. Heidegger’s being-in-the-world is transformed by Sloterdijk into being-in-spheres. Being-in for Sloterdijk means to be *in* a certain form i.e. a

bounded envelope, whereas Heidegger's interpretation solely means (formlessly) existing in relationships with things and others (cf. Borch, 2010). Human existence is thus conceptualised by Sloterdijk as dwelling in spaces termed spheres. Spheres are the containing, surrounding, encompassing spaces, created from within (Morin, 2009), that secure the life of humans. By living in spheres, individuals are ecstatic in the Heideggerian sense, opened up to the world and others, but not ecstatic into the wide open as they are always creating and already contained in spheric containments. For Sloterdijk, existing means to dwell in an outside that carries inner worlds, because it is impossible to live in the wide-open world. In the words of Latour (2011):

To try to philosophise about what it is to be "thrown into the world" without defining more precisely, more literally (...) the sort of envelopes into which humans are thrown, would be like trying to kick a cosmonaut into outer space without a spacesuit. Naked humans are as rare as naked cosmonauts. (p. 158)

As the world is too big for the human to dwell in, intimate spatial containments are produced to prevent the human being being 'naked'. Sloterdijk understands the art of life as a morphological art (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2011). In summary, "[a]n authentic, ecstatic existence can (...) paradoxically occur only through (...) processes of protection and insulation – an enclosure" (Sutherland, 2017, p. 139). It is this existential space which provides the possibility for meaning to be produced: spheres "serve as seats of meaning – as *topoi* where meanings are cultivated and preserved" (Viik, 2011, p. 113). In conclusion, according to Heidegger, meaning is produced in the relationship between Dasein and usable equipment, whereas according to Sloterdijk, meaning is produced within a bounded spheric envelope.

The spherological spaces are human spaces only, implying that the production of meaning is human-specific. Humans are the only entities who are involved in processes of world-forming. In the words of Sloterdijk: "I am drawing on Heidegger's distinction between the animal mode of being, which is fettered to the environment, and the ecstatic, world-forming essence of humans" (SIII 364). Rather than Heidegger's conception that humans are the only entities who are opened to Being, Sloterdijk understands the difference between humans and animals as a difference of space: humans are the only creatures who are actively involved in the creation of spherological containments. Therefore, Van Tuinen (2011) calls Sloterdijk's conception of the difference between humans and animals a difference of natality: spaces are continuously created. In the *Sphären*-trilogy existential spatiality is understood as an active process of the creation of spheres. This world forming activity implies a permanent birth or "an ongoing, complex moving in and moving out, of constantly being reborn and beginning over

again” (Van Tuinen, 2011, p. 49).²⁹ As I do not see a difference between the throw of a stone by a human being and the throw of a stone by an animal and because even plants change their behavior in relation to their world (see paragraph 2.5), I interpret Sloterdijk’s conception as an alteration of Heidegger’s difference between humans and non-humans for which there is not much evidence.

The spatial containments can be characterized by seven constitutive elements – although it is not clear whether all characteristics are mandatory to be able to speak of a sphere (see *Excuse* 3.2). To begin, spheres are communal spaces of equal individuals who form a community by longing to immerse into the other. In an intercordial space, the two poles are no longer two separate entities. Secondly, spheres are spaces of familiarity and cheer, as the interfacial recognition i.e. openness to the world and others establishes an affective echo. Thirdly, spheres are public force fields of affective, erotic and mimetic dynamisms, resonating a wish to belong. Being means attracting. Fourthly, spheres are spaces of immanence or spaces in which self-identification is established by being related and being descended from the fertile ground. Existing means belonging to and returning to the roots or the origin. Fifthly, spheres are dual spaces in which subjectivity depends on the life-giving, complementing and nurturing With. In the co-dyadic space, a unique bond between me (alone) and the yonder-yet-close-by partner establishes an intimate unity of belonging. Sixthly, spheres are spaces of care, whereby the individual exists because they are accompanied by a caring other. Seventhly, spheres are sonoric spaces in which they are welcomed by the welcoming sounds of the mother or its duplicates which recite in the open what the individual most deeply wishes for.

Interpreting these characteristics, there are two things that could be said about the spatial containments called spheres.³⁰ To begin, spheres are always socially shared spaces. Humans arrange and create shared worlds with at least one other entity; spheres consist of at least two poles. As argued by several authors (Bergthaller, 2015; Borch, 2010; Elden 2009, 2012; Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2005, 2011; Sutherland, 2017; Thrift, 2012), here lies a significant difference in the thoughts of Heidegger and Sloterdijk.³¹ According to Heidegger,

²⁹ Although not discussed in depth in this thesis, I would like to briefly mention that Sloterdijk’s emphasis on natality, birth and creation runs counter to Heidegger’s focus on being-towards-death (cf. Sloterdijk, 2012), which could be further enquired into in future research (see *Discussion*).

³⁰ This conclusion corresponds to the typology offered by Morin (2009). She distinguishes three characteristics of spheres, of which the before mentioned spatial aspect is the first.

³¹ Sloterdijk’s work is characterized by phrases like “*counter to* Heidegger’s insistence on an original loneliness of Dasein, Sloterdijk to think Dasein as spatial being-together [*sic*]” (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2011, p. 14, emphasis added); “For Sloterdijk, *in distinction to* Heidegger, the key concern is not so much being (...) but rather being-with or being-together” (Elden, 2012, p. 6, emphasis added); “[*I*]t challenges Heidegger’s usual presentation

humans are thrown into the world which is dominated by the interpretation of the they. Initially, subjectivity does not exist nor can we speak of individuals. Only if Dasein exists authentically, Dasein establishes its own relationship towards others and the world. Where it is possible in Heidegger's analysis and likely preferable to exist individually (see *Excuse 2.1*), for Sloterdijk the social aspect of existence is an essential aspect. Commentators have written: "Much more than is true for Heidegger, being is social. Spatial being is always a co-existence" (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2011, p. 12). Sloterdijk's response to Heidegger's constitutes "an explicit move from the question of being to the question of being-together, from Sein to Mit-sein" (Elden, 2009, p. 5).

Not only are humans never alone (Bergthaller, 2015; Elden, 2005, 2012; Ernste, 2018; Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2005, 2011; Morin, 2009; Pott, 2008; Sutherland, 2017), humans cannot exist without others. To be human means to depend on others. The spherological aspects of a co-dyadic space and a space of care make explicit that the coming into the world of the individual depends on the life-giving With who establishes a unique bond with me. After the disappearance of the initial With, other authorities are sought to take care of the individual. Thus, only in shared containments is existence possible. Only with the care and guidance of others in shared spherological containments can subjectivity be constituted. Subjectivity depends on co-subjectivity (Laermans, 2011); coexistence precedes existence (Borch, 2011; Van Tuinen, 2004); co-subjectivity is the basis for subjectivity (Borch, 2010).

Secondly, spheres are homes as they are spaces of familiarity and cheer, affection and belonging. The ensouled inner spaces provide meaning (cf. Borch, 2010, 2011), comfort (cf. Sutherland, 2017; Van Tuinen, 2009; Zwart, 2013), sheltering (cf. Morin, 2009; Thrift, 2009, 2012) and security (cf. Klauser, 2010; Scheffer, 2010; Sutherland, 2017). Both Heidegger and Sloterdijk understand human existence as an affective relationship with the surrounding environment. Moods guide the relationship of the existing entity with the environment. In Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality, moods, although not elaborated upon by Heidegger, are most likely either individual moods in the authentic mode of existence or communal in the inauthentic mode of existence (see *Excuse 2.2* and *Excuse 3.3*). For Sloterdijk, moods are necessarily shared atmospheres, as existence inevitably means to co-exist. A difference between Heidegger's shared moods and Sloterdijk's spheric atmosphere is the way

of Dasein" (Sutherland, 2017, p. 137, emphasis added); "Against Heidegger, Sloterdijk emphasizes that the primordial experience of human existence is not that of solitude, rather, it is already immersed in affectively charged relationships with [others]" (Bergthaller, 2015, p. 165, emphasis added). See text for more on the interpretation of solitude and others.

in which they are created. As Heidegger's inauthentic 'they' dominates the interpretation of the world, it seems most likely to conclude that the moods of the 'they' are forced upon the individual, whereas Sloterdijk understands moods as actively created emotions.

The spherological bubble functions as a blueprint for the two other spheric forms (cf. Couture, 2009). The globe is the result of an expanding micro-sphere. Through incorporations and invasions, the original micro-sphere grew into a multi-polar totality or all-encompassing orb. The movement of creating spheres is interpreted by Morin (2009, 2012) and Van Tuinen (2004) as a lateral movement or direction which differs from Heidegger's predominant vertical movement of fallenness. Due to these globalization processes and "terrestrial conquering" (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2011, p. 13), humans came to live in a large structure. It is paradoxically described as the inhabitation of the entire sphere or entire cosmos (Van Tuinen, 2004) on the one hand and being encapsulated in the Greek *sphaira* on the other hand. The Greek concept of sphere entails a "surrounding circle, offering protection [*sic*] to those within the circle" (Ten Kate, 2011, p. 113). Walls and borders protected against the outside whilst at the same time providing safety and a home for both the city geniuses and the city residents. Humans came to understand themselves as part of a geometric perfectly round shape, as local functions of the global Whole or "One Sphere (the One Globe, or God)" (Borch, 2011, p. 29). In my interpretation, the concept of the globe reconceptualises Heidegger's being-in-the-world by understanding existential spatiality also as political. The sphere in which humans live, can be understood politically and so is the production of meaning. In the time of the globe, "meaning could only be produced through predication on primal meaning, necessity and prediction in the metaphysical regime" (SII 632). In other words, meaning is produced in the relation with the political constellation in which man finds himself. However, the *Sphären*-trilogy lacks a foundation for a spherological political-ethical stance as I will argue in paragraph 3.5.

In modern times, the all-encompassing structure of the One Sphere is no longer convincing according to Sloterdijk. Humans come to live in containments that consist of a small group of people, or even individuals who fulfill both poles of the dual sphere. These containments are called foam cells. In the era of foam, moods thus become emotions shared with a small group of people, or even with oneself. In my interpretation, Sloterdijk's moods do not become individual as is possible in Heidegger's analysis, but remain shared, as Sloterdijk's individual functions as a duality.

Architecturally, the modern apartment represents the individualistic humans who fulfill both poles of the dual sphere and the stadium offers an overarching form in which the insulated are grouped into interactive units. Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel (2005) raise a question with regard to the individual foam cells and the foam cells which are shared with just a few people namely whether Sloterdijk's conceptualisation is sufficient when it comes to understand the current state of multi-cultural societies, as there would not be any problem if everyone is living in its own cell.

That said, there are a few characteristics of foam that should be discussed to understand Sloterdijk's conception of modern times and to bring it into an interplay with Heidegger's spatial analysis. Klauser (2010) distinguishes four "crucial attributes" of the foam metaphor, where Morin (2009) only distinguishes two – corresponding to characteristic one and three of Klauser's typology. In my interpretation, Klauser's interpretation is more thorough, although I will bring forward a fifth perspective.

Although Sloterdijk understands foam as the structure in which one's inside has completely turned into the outside – in my interpretation not to be understood as Heidegger's 'they' (see *Excuse 3.4*) – foam cells are still encapsulating forms. The first quality of the foam metaphor is the "the intrinsic volume of each self-animated, more or less inclusive and stable, bubble of togetherness in the postholistic world" (Klauser, 2010, p. 330), or in the words of Morin (2009): its "stability and inclusiveness" (p. 67). Similar to bubbles and globes, foam cells are closed orbs.

As foam cells come in several sizes and shapes and each have their distinctive quality, acknowledging the individualistic tendencies in society. The second characteristic of foam is that it "figuratively captures the pluralism of contemporary world creations [*sic*] and sphere creations" (Klauser, 2010, p. 330). Meaning is produced within the different foam cells and thus constitutes different perspectives: "comprehensive views are not available" (SIII 58).

The third quality of foam is "a double meaning of co-isolation and cofragility" (Klauser, 2010, p. 330) as the thin membranes divide the different micro-spheres of the foam aggregate and connect them at the same time – creating a "loosened structure" (Morin, 2009, p. 67). Sloterdijk concludes that "modernity made the transition to a generation of meaning through projects informed by non-meaning, coincidence and prognostication" (SII 632). However, as foam cells are still relatively stable encapsulating envelopes, I have interpreted the production of meaning in the era of foam as an individual process or a process of a selective few within the meaningful space of a foam cell.

Fourthly, design and technological support become important, as gas attacks and ecological disasters threaten(ed) what had been taken for granted: breathable air. The ethics of foam is therefore an ethics of breathable air (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2005) and the foam structure “implies a creation process” (Klauser, 2010, p. 330) (see above) which takes place with the help of technological and juridical support systems. Sense-making thus relies on design (Scheffer, 2000). According to Sloterdijk, humans have always been “architects and engineers” (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 21) who have been “building sites for human domestication” (Mendieta, 2012, p. 73). That is why anthropology is for Sloterdijk, in contrast to Heidegger, a relevant and important discipline.

Opposed to Heidegger’s stringent phenomenological ontology, Sloterdijk approaches existential spatiality with an eclectic philosophical historical anthropological method. An anthropological approach is needed, because to be human means to exist in all kinds of different environments with their own specifications of existential spatiality and this has been “too superficially considered” (Latour, 2009, p. 140) by Heidegger. Therefore, Sloterdijk:

asks his master Heidegger the rather mischievous questions: “When you say *Dasein* is thrown into the world, *where* is it thrown? What’s the temperature there, the color of the walls, the material that has been chosen, the technology for disposing of refuse, the cost of the air-conditioning, and so on?” (...) When you begin to ask these naughty questions, the respective relations between depth and superficiality are suddenly reversed: There is not the slightest chance of understanding Being once it has been cut off from the vast numbers of apparently trifling and superficial little *beings* that make it exist from moment to moment – what Peter came to call its “life supports.” (Latour, 2009, p. 140).

A historical approach is needed, because Sloterdijk regards man’s openness to the world not as a primal fact like Heidegger does. Heidegger’s Clearing of Being provides the origin of history and the origin of the production of meaning without having a historical origin itself (Lemmens, 2004). Sloterdijk however asks the question how the relation between the human being and Being is established to “reconstruct the event of the event, the event of this stepping out into the clearing of being” (Morin, 2012, p. 80). According to Sloterdijk, the hunters and gatherers differentiated themselves from nature, enabling themselves to create spheres and have a relation, characterized by spatiality, to what Heidegger termed Being (see above).

The fifth perspective on foam I would like to bring forward is that foam represents human existence as a wealthy, rich and comfortable experience. Foam cells are characterized by levitation and lightness, and the human being (or the Western human being? – see *Excuse*

3.1 and *Excuse 3.5*) as a luxury being looking for sweetness, pampering and well-being. Wealth provides the possibility to come into the world and create homes of well-being, whereas Heidegger's concept of thrownness emphasizes the fact that humans are thrown into the world which can be interpreted as an emphasis on the inequality of beginnings (see *Excuse 3.6*). Since advantages are scarce, individuals have to defend their inside – an issue I will further discuss in the next paragraph.

3.5 Critical reading of Sloterdijk's *Sphären-trilogy*

Much could be said about Sloterdijk's *Sphären*. As mentioned before (see paragraph 3.2), many authors have outlined that the trilogy, especially its methodology, contains many questionable aspects. The trilogy has therefore only reservedly been accepted among academic scholars. Since many authors have expressed their thoughts and critique regarding this issue, I will not further comment on Sloterdijk's methodological approach. Rather, I would like to discuss the message which he, regardless the methodology he adopts or could have adopted, wants to put forward. That is: humans can only be humans as long as they create spatial containments with which they surround themselves (Pott, 2008; Van Tuinen 2004, 2009; Zwart, 2013). Sloterdijk's trilogy is concerned with "spheres that enable humans to exist" (SII 146), because "[h]umans are (...) dependent on the favor of internal climatic circumstances" (SII 144).

The reason why I find this a difficult conceptualisation is that it is based on unconvincing presuppositions as can be argued by reading Sloterdijk's message with and through his own text. My critique concerns therefore the inadequately or unconvincingly conceptualised structure of spheres. Consequently, the political-ethical stance implied in the trilogy can no longer be defended. If Sloterdijk's trilogy is understood as a descriptive observation of how things are and have been or about the way in which humans experience their relation to others as Stepnisky (2014) proposes,³² my critique can be read as a question addressing the structure and formation of spheres. However, my evaluation of *Sphären* is that it does not (objectively) narrate the history or experience of human existence. Rather, I have read the *Sphären-trilogy* as a proposal of how to understand the human being. If Sloterdijk's trilogy is understood in this way, my critique can be read as a transformational critique. By elaborating upon presuppositions and argumentations which do not seem to be convincing, a

³² "It is hard, I think, to deny the phenomenological insight that our relations with others often feel as if they are contained within a bubble and that these relations possess unique but amorphous atmospheres" (Stepnisky, 2014, p. 430).

different perspective on (human) existence could be articulated. In this paragraph, I will elaborate upon the way in which I have interpreted the structure of spheres, followed by a critique regarding the persuasiveness of Sloterdijk's arguments that support this conception and a critique of the foundation of a political or ethical stance.

3.5.1 *Structure of spheres*

According to Sloterdijk, human existence “demands to be interpreted as being-there-inside” (SII 203). The spheres humans create are similar to islands; isolated spaces which can be characterized by “their own flora, their own fauna, their own human population, [and] an autochthonous ensemble of customs and recipes” (SIII 289). In other words: “being-in-the-world (...) must now be considered the originally isolating activity of humans” (SIII 294). Therefore the mode of being of humans is constituted by processes of finding “the connection to something of the same kind” (SI 558), or, even better, to something “of their own kind” (SI 510) and demarcating islands or worlds which are autochthonous and homogenous. Subjectivity and individuality are constituted by adopting “a position through opposition to something external” (SIII 52). Being human means to identify oneself with a certain group, specifically with one's root as being human means to be “familially dependent and locally attached” (SII 336).

The oppositional space is represented by the outside. It is impossible to inhabit the outside. Sloterdijk refers to the outer space as a “monstrous” (SI 23), “open, cold and silent sky” (SI 24). The “exospheric dangers” (SII 176) make the exosphere “the anti-sphere – or the depressive space” (SII 581), the “end of the world” (SII 581) or “hell itself” (SII 630). If humans do find themselves in the outside space, not inhabiting a sphere, they endure “the bitterest separation from what is close and beloved” (SII 526). Eccentric existence therefore cannot be “a legitimate mode of being-in-the-world” (SII 188). Being-in-the-world can only take shape as being-in-spheres because “nothing real can be outside” (SII 114).

Not all commentaries on *Sphären* speak about spheres in these terms. Borch (2010), Ernste (2018), Scheffer (2000) and Sutherland (2017) do speak about the trilogy in the same polemic words,³³ but Latour (2011), Morin (2009, 2012), Stepnisky (2014), Ten Kate (2011)

³³ Spheres provide “immunity” (Borch, 2010, p. 232); “the human beings in a sphere jointly attempt to immunise and protect their sphere from the “monstrous” outside” (Ernste, 2018, p. 275), the outside causes “irritations and intrusions” (Ernste, 2018, p. 275) and “destructive influences” (Ernste, 2018, p. 277); “Elke gemeenschap bestaat in het trekken van een grens tussen binnen en buiten, in het scheppen van een ‘immuniteitsstelsel’ tegen de barbaren die van elders komen of in eigen kring opduiken” (Scheffer, 2000, p. 137); “Belonging to the world

and Van Tuinen (2004, 2009) interpret the issue of the inside and outside in a more nuanced way. Morin (2012) understands spheres as “the middle position between a being enclosed in an environmental cage and the pure terror of being held out into the indeterminate, indefinite open” (p. 83) as they “protect against the outside but are not air-tight” (p. 85). The “protective nearness” (p. 85-6) of the sphere allows human being “to develop a sensibility for what is (...) not given here and now” (p. 86). Spheres, thus, have a double meaning. In the words of Latour (2011): Sloterdijk “shows how the stories of both emancipation and of attachment (...) are two incarnations of the same event” (p. 158), as “the cosmonaut is emancipated from gravity *because* he or she never lives one fraction of a second outside his or her life supports” (p. 158). Ecstatic immanence, living in an outside space which contains inner worlds, means that the human exists “at the border of what makes him possible and what escapes him” (Van Tuinen, 2004, p. 169, my translation) and that the *topos* of man is a dilemmatic place as “we never succeed in choosing between the immune system that we need against the unliveable [*sic*] outside, and the openness we desire towards this outside” (Ten Kate, 2011, p. 105). Man is a “topological difference” (Van Tuinen, 2004, p. 169, my translation). Humans “are never completely at home, yet neither could or should they be” (Van Tuinen, 2009, p. 109).

However, I have interpreted the structure of spheres as a polemic structure, because the inside does not seem to be open or should not be open to the outside. According to Sloterdijk, the outside is a “threat” (SII 147) to any inside since “all endogenous and exogenous factors seem to be working to burst the spheres” (SII 146). In order to sustain the harboring, unifying and sheltering function of the spherological round, the inside has to be protected. Protecting the inside is an important, if not the most important, task of a spheric collective. According to Sloterdijk,

“the basic effort of all social units consists in casting out evil from the inside and securing the borders (...); it creates the divide between the good and internal to the bad and external – a divide that is often interpreted simultaneously as the difference between the pure and the impure, the just and the unjust” (SII 177).

Protecting the inside means defending oneself, more specifically: defending oneself against others who represent the bad, external, impure and unjust “and other bringers of unwell-being” (SIII 500). That means that “all groups (...) rely on discrimination mechanisms – they cannot exist without enemies or victims” (SII 179) and living in spheres means “to defend (...)

involves either protecting ourselves from the Other, or making it in some way belong to us” (Sutherland, 2017, p. 139).

a domestic structure” (SII 216), or “the utopia of a close-knit community” (SII 288). One defense mechanism entails wall-building activities, to prevent the outside from penetrating the inside and to protect against “dangerous infections from the outside” (SIII 556). For example “[t]oxic people” must stay outside” (SIII 504). In a sphere protected by walls, “existence (...) means dwelling behind walls and borders” (SII 203). The wall functions to draw the line between the inside and the outside. Another defense strategy can be found in removing evil from the inside. The “demonic-moral dimension” (SII 176) of the outside is the space “to which evil or its human manifestations [are] to be driven” (SII 176). Everything which is “supposedly not itself” (SII 178) has to be eliminated from the inside. Adopting the Girardian conceptualisation of humans as entities who are exposed to “systems of envy and jealousy” (SII 178) demands that individuals become involved in a collective process of “removing evil from one’s own inner realm” (SII 177-8). The discarded individual enables the homogenous sphere to bond again: “the scapegoat alone can be the involuntary integrator of their group” (SII 179).

Sloterdijk’s conception thus results in a polemic, antagonistic understanding of human existence, where the self and those who are similar with and familiar to the self are the most important elements of interest. For me, this is problematic, as it results in a narcissistic political and ethical stance based on unconvincing presuppositions.

3.5.2 *Unconvincing arguments of the spherological structure*

The divide between the inside and the outside, the self and the other, is unconvincing to me as there is no reason that can be found in the *Sphären*-trilogy to believe that *the outside* is any different to *the inside*. To start, Sloterdijk divides people into either friends or enemies without any logic. At a certain point he asks: since people know that “people like them [live] in other places too (...) [s]hould what we call foreign parts, then, only be supposed to exist outside?” (SII 336). So the others, the strangers from outside, are in fact ‘people like them’, which could well belong to the inside, but somehow are not part of one’s own community. Furthermore, the inside might not be as homogenous and familiar as is implied, as the spheres are from the start “an environment of mostly unrelated, unknown people” (SI 171).

Secondly, Sloterdijk’s conception of the sphere’s entails the “ability to grow” (SIII 16). Having the ability to grow implies that what used to be outside, is able to become inside. The incorporation of outer forces happens by containing and incorporating what is not initially yours, or in other words: “[incorporating] the stressful external forces into their own radius” (SII 158). Thus some of the strangers from outside can become part of one’s familiar sphere,

whereas others are kept out. What distinguishes the two strangers, as one will become one's trustable friend and the other remains the enemy to be defended against? I have not been able to find an answer to this question in Sloterdijk's trilogy. Following this finding, I do not think that one can determine any substantial difference between the inside and the outside, between the sphere and the outer space, between the bond of the selective few and the dangerous strangers, between the self and the others. What Sloterdijk has termed the inside already entails and absorbs what he conceptualised as *not initially yours* or as *other* subjective elements, and what Sloterdijk has termed the *outside* is similar to what Sloterdijk termed the *inside*, namely *people like them*. That is not to say that I believe that only *people like them* are worth engaging with and *others* should be reduced to what is *ours*; rather, we should not be too afraid to think of ourselves as constituted by what Sloterdijk terms *not y/ours* – a line of thought which results in rethinking the terminology of *the self* and *the others* altogether. Rather than the human *being* whose existence is characterized by *being-in-spheres* (or *being-in-the-world*), a radicalization of the flexibility of the boundary of spheres articulates, I believe, an understanding of entities as intra-acting agencies who are affected and changed by each other and are thus continually *becoming* in their entangled encounters. Every entity, every-body, is affected by 'other' entities ("though *precisely not* in the same way to and for every-body" (Thiele, 2017, p. 43)) and are therefore never purely 'themselves'. Radically thinking relationality would therefore be an interesting topic for further research which can articulate a different understanding of human existence and the production of meaning (see *Discussion*). If we keep referring to entities with the terms *others* and *ours*, the bond between entities forming a sphere is, interestingly, described by Sloterdijk as a bond which "will not be established when not both people are committed to bind" (SI 209) or fall for "a greedy isolation" (SI 152). In other words, if both of the initial strangers are committed to bind, a bond will be established. The connection with others does not depend on a process of assimilation or of "[neutralizing] external elements" (SII 158), but on the willingness to bond.

One of the counterarguments with regard to my hesitation towards Sloterdijk's divide between the inside and outside would be to say that this way of existence is inevitable because the world is too big and "we are created to have an inner life" (SI 629). Because humans need sheltering to reside in the colossal world, they will create bounded spheres in order to secure their existence. The question arises what this argument means knowing that there is no substantial difference between the inside and the outside and the bond is made possible by the willingness to bond. The only way to restore meaning to this counterargument, is to argue that the spherological envelope is a temporary one, meaning that it does provide sheltering, just

temporarily. And they seem to do. In Sloterdijk's understanding, spheres can contain those who recently used to be strangers and is open to contain those who are yet outside at any time. The sphere would then be but a momentary constellation – or a constellation which demands strangers to assimilate entirely when they enter. As there is only one passage in the *Sphären-trilogy* which argues for the latter option,³⁴ it is more likely that Sloterdijk proposes to think of spheres as temporary constellations.

However, understanding spheres as temporary containments is problematic too within the framework of spheres. Understanding spheres as temporary membranes of sheltering holds on to the difference between the inside and the outside for which Sloterdijk does not provide any evidence or (convincing) arguments. So if it really is but a temporal sphere and the dividing line is flexible, why does Sloterdijk's entire over 2.500 page trilogy focus on the distinction between the inside and the outside, about creating an interior, about the spherological form? Why does he move heaven and earth to preserve the safe, familiar homogenous inside by defending the inner sphere against evil and the cold outside? Radically thinking the flexibility of the boundary of a sphere inevitably results in letting go of the spheric boundaries, as all that is left is change. This could constitute the basis of a different conception of being human and producing meaning (see *Discussion*).

3.5.3 *Limited politics and ethics*

The structure of spheres is, moreover, problematic to me as it results, based on unconvincing presuppositions, in an exclusive political and ethical endeavor. Van Tuinen (2004) notes that Sloterdijk's spherology should not be understood as “an idyllic theory of intimacy” (p. 54, my translation). The atmosphere of spheric containments is according to him claustrophobic, as “the nest is hell if it is too small” (p. 54, my translation). I disagree with Van Tuinen's negative characterization of the *Sphären-trilogy*. It is the outside space, not the small nest, in which life is unbearable. Well-being is found in spherological spaces and the sphere is understood as a utopia. Sloterdijk is looking for those spaces which provide “sheltering” (SI 52), “unity” (SII 179), “harboring” (SII 263), “security” (SII 282), “solidarity” (SIII 338) and a sense of “belonging” (SIII 353). Underlying this quest lies an understanding of humans as creatures who “live within their pampering” (SII 145), longing to live in “symbolically conveyed, luxuriant self-arousals” (SII 145) as “all life is well-being” (quoting Bachelard, SIII 499). In Sloterdijk's

³⁴ cf. “external elements are neutralized by being included in the spheric interior” (SII 158)

view, the wealthy individuals find their sheltering and harboring when they are surrounded by what is “familiar” (SIII 486) rather than “unusual” (SIII 486). Similar to Heidegger’s and Sloterdijk’s own exclusion of animals, *others* are thus not taken into account epistemically, ontologically and morally. They are excluded from living a luxury life in well-being. Sheltering, harboring and security are not reserved for them. Sloterdijk’s understanding of the creation of spheres as an ethical endeavor which has “the most fragile as the starting point for responsibility” (SIII 242) results in a limited politics and ethics for the selective few because people, according to Sloterdijk, have the “basic right to ignore the outside world” (SIII 504). The main ethical stance is to provide for “self-care” (SIII 536; cf. Van Tuinen, 2004). Consequently, one can question whether Sloterdijk’s understanding of the relation of the individual to the familiar or strange other is as ontologically constitutive of subjectivity as is implied in Sloterdijk’s spherology, or if it is an instrumental approach to avoid living an unbearable life where others are not taken as an end in themselves. This narcissistic self-interest based upon an implausible argumentation does not have a place within the normative framework of humanism which regards man as equals nor within the normative framework of humility which guides this thesis as humility foregrounds the importance to *listen* to others and critically question the consequences of our thoughts and actions for all living and non-living entities.

Conclusion

In this thesis, Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and Sloterdijk's *Sphären* are brought performatively into an interplay with each other and with modern humanism's concept of man. The works are read with and through each other. The enquiry into their understanding of existential spatiality focused on the production of meaning, as modern humanism's concept of man is based upon modern philosophy's understanding of obtaining (meaningful) knowledge. After discussing modern humanism's concept of man in *Chapter 1*, I elaborated upon Heidegger's being-in-the-world in *Chapter 2* and upon Sloterdijk's being-in-spheres and its relation to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* in *Chapter 3*. In this *Conclusion*, an answer to the main research question will be articulated:

How do Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality, conceptualised in Sein und Zeit as being-in-the world and in Sphären as being-in-spheres respectively, critique modern humanism's concept of man?

In answering the main question, critique can be understood as a spectrum ranging widely from complete disagreement (negation, opposition, rejection) to an affirmative critique which transformatively revises and rethinks what is at stake.

Modern humanism's concept of man

As elaborated upon in the first chapter, modern humanism's concept of man has three characteristics. Based upon the Cartesian and Kantian philosophical subject-understanding of the human, the human is, to begin, understood by modern humanism as a self, as an entity on its own, which is different to other selves and living within the world and at the same time distanced from that world. Meaning is produced within and because of the rational activity of the human mind. The human is thus considered the center and origin of meaning i.e. the meaning-giving entity. Secondly, the human is understood as a free, autonomous and acting agent. Humanists believe that humans are to a certain degree free, which means that they ought to choose, ought to act autonomously and ought to take responsibility for their life and deeds. Third, the human is conceptualised as differing principally from other living entities like animals and plants. Consequently, humans are the only entities who can be expected to treat

each other as equals and who are to be treated with respect and with human dignity. Each of these three characteristics of modern humanism's concept of man are brought into an interplay with Heidegger's being-in-the-world and Sloterdijk's being-in-spheres in order to discuss the way in which these concepts critique modern humanism's concept of man. As *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* incidentally refer to modern philosophy's subject-centered understanding of the human, I have chosen to enrich my interpretation and conclusions with the words of Heidegger and Sloterdijk at certain points.

A self as the center and origin of meaning

Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world critiques modern humanism's concept of man as a self which constitutes the center and origin of meaning by *rejecting* the primacy of understanding the human as a rational entity. The human should not be understood primarily as a subject, a thinking thing, and things should not be understood primarily as objects, because these conceptions presuppose the way in which they *are* namely as present-at-hand [*vorhanden*]. In such case, humans and objects are understood as a substantiality whose properties can be determined. According to Heidegger, there are other ways in which they primarily are. That is not to say that humans and things are not substantially there, but their substantiality cannot define their Being because they are understood in their being only in one mode. In Heidegger's words: "we cannot define Dasein's essence by citing a "what" of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter [eines sachhaltigen Was] (...) its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be" (SZ 12).

Building upon this understanding of the human, Heidegger reconceptualises the way in which the human exists and the way in which meaning is produced by emphasizing the way in which humans and 'things' *are*. By doing so, Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world critiques modern humanism's concept of man by *transforming* or *redefining* the way in which human existence is to be understood and the relationship in which meaning is produced. To avoid understanding the human as a subject, the human is referred to by Heidegger as Dasein which means being there or being-the-there. Dasein exists in an open relation to the world, encountering the world first and foremost practically. In the practical encounter, 'things' appear so to speak as 'equipment' in their mode of being as ready-to-hand [*zuhanden*]. Equipment becomes meaningful in this relationship *as* something, as something meaningful to use in a certain context or as a reference to something which is meaningful in a certain context. As meaning is context-dependent and produced within the everyday practical encounter of Dasein

with its environment, the self is decentered. The production of meaning is not located in “the subject’s “inside” [Innen]” (SZ 60), but is produced within the relationship between entities which *are* in a certain way. As the production of meaning is fundamentally relational, the self is not the center nor origin of meaning.

The self is, moreover, not the center nor origin of meaning, because the mode in which Dasein exists first and foremost is the mode of Being of the ‘they’. The ‘they’ is the neuter, the mass, the indifferent collective. In this communal mode of existence, meaning is produced by the ‘they’ which dominates Dasein’s interpretation. That is not to say that there is no self, but that Dasein relates authentically to the world only at times.

If we follow Heidegger’s understanding of existential spatiality, humanism’s concept of man should take the relation between opened humans and encountered equipment in which meaning is mediated by others as its focal point rather than the individual self.

Sloterdijk’s concept of being-in-spheres critiques modern humanism’s concept of man as a self which constitutes the center and origin of meaning by *denying* that the human exists individually and by *proposing* a different understanding of human existence. According to Sloterdijk, existence is characterized by a constantly seeking and creating of shared spaces. Humans are created with/in the spheres they create (Van Tuinen, 2004). The emphasis on spatiality marks Sloterdijk’s concern with the ‘where’ of human existence rather than with the ‘what’ of the question of the human subject: “It is not the ‘identity’ of man that interests him, but man’s place” (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 2011, p. 14; cf. Couture, 2009; Ten Kate, 2011; Van Tuinen, 2004, 2011). Not the human occupies the center of meaning, but the locus, the place, the existential spacing is where existence takes place and where meaning is produced. Since the time of the globe, meaning is to be understood as political too. In modern times, meaning can only be produced from within the different foam cells; it is thus impossible to obtain a comprehensive view.

Similar to Heidegger’s conceptualisation, being human is not to be a thing, “but to be opened and moved in a certain way” (Morin, 2012, p. 85). However, Heidegger’s openness to the world is reconceptualised by Sloterdijk as an openness to others. The emphasis on the social nature of spherological spaces considers co-subjectivity the basis for and preceding subjectivity, transforming the Cartesian ‘I think, therefore I am’ into “the passive formulation: “I am thought of, therefore I am”” (SI 417). Intimacy “casts the (...) subject out of the center” (SI 93). This relationality is “not an option” (Stepnisky, 2014, p. 428). Subjectivity depends on others: “real subjectivity consists of two or more parties” (SI 53).

If we follow Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality, modern humanism's concept of man should entail an historical, political co-produced surrounding envelope as its focal point. However, I have interpreted the sphere as an alteration of the individual self because the spheric collective functions as the self (cf. paragraph 3.5). The creation of spheres is a "process of self-formation (humanism)" (Van Tuinen, 2009, p. 111). The spherological self is the comforting sphere inhabited by a *familiar us* or *collective* to which the individual belongs. The 'inside' of the sphere functions in the same way as the 'inside' of modern philosophy's subject. In the words of Stepnisky (2014), the sphere "merely reproduces self-enclosed individualism, but at the higher level of the self-enclosed biune" (p. 429). In this understanding of spheres, modern humanism's concept of man is critiqued by rejecting the individuality of the human being, but the self – however plural – remains the center and origin of meaning.

The ideal of autonomy

Although Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* does not elaborate upon human autonomy, Heidegger does elaborate upon the inauthentic and authentic modes of existence. Existence is first and foremost dominated by the collective 'they'. As this mode of existence is described with terms as 'improper existence' and a form of 'dictatorship', whereas the authentic mode is described with terms as 'proper existence' and 'genuine', Heidegger's work can be interpreted, in my view, as a reinforcement of modern humanism's ideal of the singular, autonomous self who has to take its responsibility to establish its own relation to the world.

Although Sloterdijk conceptualizes spheres as actively created, the ideal of autonomy is denied in a twofold way. To begin, the inherently collective nature of moods means that human existence is always mediated. The animated sphere has replaced the autonomous individual: the "symbiotic, erotic and mimetic-competitive energies (...) fundamentally deny the illusion of subject autonomy" (SI 207). Secondly, spheres, especially modern foam cells, are co-created by technology. Their design depends on technique, legal support and politics. Producing meaning is thus not autonomously possible but depends on non-human elements. Consequently, not only the humanistic ideal of autonomy is critiqued, but matter is understood as "something that can and must be carefully redesigned" (Latour, 2011, p. 161) whereas "[h]umanists are concerned only about humans" (Latour, 2011, p. 160). If the human is not to be understood as an autonomous entity, the implicated notion of individual responsibility is to be rethought too. If we follow Sloterdijk's understanding of human existence, modern humanism's concept of

man should entail an understanding of collective moods, the importance of technique and the implications for being responsible for one's life and deeds.

Humans versus animals

Modern humanism's distinction between rational humans and non-rational animals is reconceptualised by Heidegger as a difference regarding the openness to Being which is in turn translated by Sloterdijk into a difference of space or of natality. Modern humanism's *moral distinction* between the human and the animal is not critiqued by Heidegger nor Sloterdijk. Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world is only applied by Heidegger to humans. According to Heidegger, only humans are constituted in their Being by an openness to the world and are therefore entitled human dignity. Sloterdijk draws on Heidegger's distinction, understanding the human as the only entity which is able to create spheric envelopes and to live a life in well-being. However, recent studies show that animals and plants exist in meaningful relationships with the world in a similar way to how the human relates to its environment (see paragraph 2.5). Similarly, what is the difference between the throw of a stone by humans and the throw of a stone by animals? As the openness towards Being constitutes human dignity according to Heidegger, following my critique on Heidegger's human exceptionalism and Sloterdijk's endorsement of it results in an extension of human dignity to other living and non-living entities. In such a view, non-human entities must be treated as equals too, with respect, rights and ~~human~~ dignity.

Meaning-in-life and humanisation

If we follow Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality, the core concepts of Humanistic Studies are to be revised. Where "humanism is explicitly viewed as a philosophy of life in which the human perspective is a defining factor in understanding and giving meaning to life and the world,"³⁵ the human is no longer the central meaning-giving entity regarding the concept of meaning-in-life. Combining Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's thoughts on meaning results in the conclusion that meaning is co-produced with others and with/in the world and is therefore not human-specific. Rather, meaning is temporal, context-

³⁵ Retrieved from <https://www.uvh.nl/university-of-humanistic-studies/about-our-university/about-humanistic-studies>. Accessed 06-09-2018.

dependent, political, technical and coloured and mediated by a certain mood. Accordingly, the notion of humanisation which contributes to cultivating the conditions for personal meaning-in-life is to be revised. Humanisation should not comprise of cultivating conditions for *personal* meaning-in-life, but conditions to technically co-produce temporal, context-dependent, political and mediated meanings. If meaning is not understood as human specific as follows from my critique, humanisation should consist of practices of cultivating conditions for non-humans to give meaning to life and the world too.

Discussion

In this *Discussion*, I will elaborate upon the limitations of this study and my recommendations for further research.

Reflections on the limitations of this study

Reflections on the quality of any academic study concern the issues of validity and reliability. Validity concerns the degree to which a study has studied its intended research object i.e. measures what it claims to measure. The knowledge goal of this thesis was: insight into the way existential spatiality, a notion which addresses the production of meaning, critiques modern humanism's concept of man. This goal is pursued by enquiring into Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world and Sloterdijk's concept of being-in-spheres. Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world is clearly concerned with existential spatiality and the production of meaning. According to Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel (2005) however, it can be questioned whether Sloterdijk's concept of being-in-spheres addresses existential spatiality or the social construction of it. In my interpretation, the social construction of spheres is a key element of Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality, so I do not see the problematic aspect of their question. However, Sloterdijk's eclectic philosophical historical anthropological approach does result, especially in the second and third volume, in a rich and detailed description of the many spheres in which man is supposed to have lived rather than providing much additional substantive conceptual thought on the theme of existential spatiality.

Methodologically, I have chosen to focus on secondary literature concerning Sloterdijk's *Sphären* and its relation to *Sein und Zeit* as the amount of available literature on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* is beyond the scope of a MA thesis. It has led to an extensive study of Sloterdijk's trilogy and its interplay with Heidegger's magnum opus but a less detailed interpretation of the latter. It would have been desirable to reflect on Heidegger's authentic and inauthentic modes of existence more extensively in particular in order to interpret the way in which Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world critiques modern humanism's ideal of the autonomous human.

Reliability concerns the question whether the adopted method of measurement is accurate or that random errors might have occurred i.e. whether a repetition of this study would result in the same outcomes. To my opinion, I have worked very carefully and precisely.

However, it would have been desirable if I would have kept a log book in which I traced the steps I have taken and the iterative changes that have been made to conduct this study, so others as well as myself could review this process and identify the different influences and affections. Retrospectively, I can indicate that I have found the secondary literature of this thesis via WorldCat, Google Scholar and the bibliography of articles and books I had found. The latter procedure enabled me to find sources I would not have found otherwise. However, perhaps there are sources that neither the authors of the secondary literature incorporated in this thesis nor I am aware of.

Recommendations for further research

To conclude, I would like to share my recommendations for further research. To begin, further research could be conducted by including secondary literature on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Perhaps a more rich, complex and nuanced interpretation of Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world could be articulated if more secondary literature on *Sein und Zeit* would be incorporated and enquired into as well.

Secondly, further research could concomitantly enquire into Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's spatial *and* temporal understanding of human existence as Heidegger's temporal being-towards-death contributes to an understanding of the authentic mode of existence whereas Sloterdijk's response to Heidegger's emphasis on death is to focus on natality. Enquiring into this subject in more depth could contribute to a vivid interpretation of spatial-temporal existences.

Thirdly, it would be interesting to delve more deeply into Sloterdijk's conception of current times. In this study, the era of foam is studied in view of the production of meaning. However, foam contains an analysis of contemporary life which covers and affects more issues than existential spatiality and the production of meaning.

Fourthly, Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality is enquired into in this thesis with a focus on the production of meaning and the concept of man. Therefore, this thesis mainly concerns the micro-level apart from Heidegger's communal 'they' (which is however not a specific group of people) and Sloterdijk's historical macro-analysis of globes. It would be interesting to investigate the implications of Heidegger's being-in-the-world and Sloterdijk's being-in-spheres on the level of organisations (meso-level) for which Borch (2010, 2011) provided the first steps and the political national or global level (macro-level) too.

Fifthly, the research project could be enlarged by bringing not only the magna opera of Heidegger and Sloterdijk into an interplay, but also other works by these authors. As Heidegger has developed his thoughts on spatiality in his later works (Morin 2009; Van Tuinen, 2011), future research could bring the early and later Heidegger into an interplay with Sloterdijk's work. Although Sloterdijk is understood as the author of separate books, his metaphors and arguments resonate in several works (Van Tuinen, 2004). Other works could therefore contribute to an understanding of Sloterdijk's spherological conception of the human being.³⁶

Sixthly, it would be highly interesting to radicalize the relationality proposed by Heidegger and Sloterdijk. In Heidegger's relational production of meaning, the meaning of equipment depends on the encounter as it is understood by Dasein *as* something meaningful in a certain context, but Dasein itself seems unaffected. According to Sloterdijk, such is impossible as subjectivity depends on co-subjectivity. However, Sloterdijk conceptualises the co-production of meaning and subjectivity as a spheric production, whereas radically thinking the flexibility of the spheric boundaries results in a letting go of these boundaries and consequently of the terminology of the inside versus the outside, the self and the other, the familiar and the stranger as all that is left is relational affection and change. Radically thinking the relationality would therefore be an interesting topic for further research.

Seventhly, Heidegger and Sloterdijk are not the only authors who elaborated upon existential spatiality. Other spatial conceptions of human existence can be brought into a diffractive comparison with Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's conceptions, such as theories on networks (cf. Latour, 2009) and rhizomes (cf. Elden, 2009).

Lastly, *Sein und Zeit* and *Sphären* are not the only works which can be read as a critique of modern humanism or modern humanism's concept of man. As humanism should, in my view, adopt a more humble and critical attitude I would suggest that future research of the University of Humanistic Studies conducts truly critical research of humanism's and its own ontological, epistemological and ethical presuppositions and assumptions.

³⁶ Especially the works *Eurotaoismus* (1989), *Regeln für den Menschenpark* (1999), *Nicht Gerettet* (2001) and *Im Weltinnenraum des Kapitals* (2005) are considered to relate to his trilogy *Sphären* and to Sloterdijk's response to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.

Epilogue: on the future of humanism

This thesis comprises a critique of modern humanism's concept of man because humanism and humanistic research are, in my opinion, not as critical as they claim to be and should be. Humanism understands itself as the foundation of modern culture even though it is but a particular worldview and humanistic research contributes to an enforcement or reinforcement of that humanism. As outlined in this thesis, Heidegger's and Sloterdijk's understanding of existential spatiality critique modern humanism's concept of man in several ways. I would like to bring these thoughts together to articulate my perspective on the future modern humanism.

Following Heidegger's understanding of existential spatiality, which consists of the conception that meaning is produced in the practical relation by using encountered equipment in a certain way within a certain context, the human is not the center nor origin of meaning as existence takes place in context-dependent, temporary constellations which are mediated by others. With Sloterdijk can be argued that subjectivity depends on co-subjectivity i.e. that meaning can only be produced in socially shared containments. Combining their thoughts results in an understanding of meaning as temporal, context-dependent, political, technical and coloured and mediated by a certain mood.

Bringing this conception into an interplay with my statement that humanism and humanistic research are 'slightly arrogant' (cf. *Preface*), it can be argued that not the human nor the humanist can be the central entity entitled to articulate knowledge, value and importance, as meaning is technically co-produced in an encounter of humans and, as I have argued, non-humans too (cf. paragraph 2.5). As meaning is co-produced, context-dependent and temporary, humanism's wish to provide the answers is to be rearticulated. My proposal is to understand humanism and accordingly humanistic research in the way their root-word 'humble' implies. Humanism as but one perspective on life. Humanism as concerned with earth-beings in their manifold appearances who are part of the world rather than the center of the world. Humanism as spatially embedded, *worldly* and *earthly*. A humble attitude is constituted in my opinion (cf. *Methodology*) by listening – listening to other voices, other perspectives, other subjectivities – and by critically – truly critical – examining when, where, how, why, by whom, for whom and with what consequences our (academic) practices shape the circumstances of living. For me, that is what the future of humanism comprises.

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