

## **Can Dangerous Sports Facilitate Authentic Living?**

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### **Abstract**

Can dangerous sports facilitate authentic living? Breivik (2010) used skydiving as an example and pointed out that as experience and ability increase, the possibility of authentic living decreases. The purpose of this study is to argue that this is not true. I argue that the possibility of authentic living does not diminish for highly-skilled dangerous sports professionals, as their expertise increases.

Firstly, I briefly extract Breivik's discussion of the distinction between skydiving novices and experts, and the inauthentic living that results from the mastery of the apparatus by skydiving experts and carpentry experts.

Secondly, I present as counter-examples two extremely skillful and dangerous sports (aerial acrobatics and free solo climbing) that do not involve the use of protective ropes; and I argue that every performance of a high-skill dangerous sport expert hovers between life and death. The focus here is not on accidental death due to some equipment problem, but on the finitude of our being.

Finally, I show how the nature of excellent high-performance dangerous sports makes them more relevant to authentic living. I will explain the principle of 'shì sǐ rú guī', which embodies Heidegger's 'being-towards-death'.

Keywords: Being and Time, Free Solo, Dasein, extreme sports.

## **Can Dangerous Sports Facilitate Authentic Living?**

### **1. Research background and purpose**

In the article "The Existence of the Void", Breivik argued that a novice skydiver's first skydive is the perfect situation to analyze the disappearance of the world and anxiety (anxiety), as high risks often make people feel anxious and the world collapses. He started from Heidegger's idea that humans are thrown into an

unfamiliar world, and anxiety may make people realize their own finitude and "existence toward death" to explore whether dangerous sports can contribute to an authentic life. He believes that when novice skydivers gradually as one becomes more experienced, the equipment environment is reestablished at a new level, and "skilled skydivers become addicted to the "skydiving world" and become less real (p. 39)" [I call this 'anti-expert'] . Therefore, this study attempts to argue that experts in highly skilled dangerous sports will not reduce the likelihood of their authentic lives due to increased professionalism.

Human beings exist toward death, and death is not only a physical event and fact that ends life, it is also one of the ultimate issues of philosophy. Through reflection on death, the true meaning of life can be revealed. In his masterpiece "Being and Time", Heidegger analyzed the human existence model and pointed out that the anxiety Dasein experienced when facing his own death and finitude was the key to authentic life. Some professionals have a profound and unique culture on the subject of death because of the dangerous nature of their professions. High-altitude stunts and free-standing rock climbing are such professional groups. These two highly skilled and dangerous professions have a strong need for protective ropes. The special culture produced also allows the issue of death in physical skills to still be preserved in this profession.

The high-altitude stunt cases discussed in this study are characterized by difficult technical challenges without the use of protective equipment, or more accurately, challenges to life. This study uses high-altitude stunts and free-handed rock climbing as examples to refute Breivik's 'anti- Two counterexamples to expert'.

There is a lack of research on Eastern body practices in sports philosophy at home and abroad. The study of death philosophy has become one of the hot topics in recent years, and the two practices of high-altitude stunts and free-handed rock climbing are techniques for facing death.

An individual's self-understanding is often revealed when facing extreme situations (such as death), so starting from high-altitude stunts and free climbing, this study further contends that these two majors embody Heidegger's "being toward death."

The second part of this study takes the philosophy of death as the theoretical focus to develop the thinking structure of how high-altitude stunt people and free-standing rock climbers connect with the philosophy of death because of their highly skilled and dangerous practices.

## **2. Anti-Expert**

Breivik drew from Heidegger's early philosophy about Dasein as "being-in-the-world". Only when the equipment fails or collapses will Dasein become aware of

world phenomena, and the entire context will be clear and bright, and the specific surroundings will be clear. The world becomes visible. He believes that experiences of anxiety and world disintegration are common in high-risk situations, but they are not as direct and concrete as a novice skydiver's first skydive experience. Therefore, he argued that during the time when a novice skydiver jumps out of the airplane and hangs on the parachute, "being in the world" becomes "being-in-the-void" (p. 35).

But Breivik doesn't stop there. He believes that 'being-in-the-void' is quite similar to what Heidegger calls 'thrownness'. Skydiving brings novice skydivers back to the original human condition, and also brings s/he towards death. (p. 34). For Breivik, skydiving is like human birth, a sudden and rupture change, different from the step-by-step and long learning process of a carpenter becoming an expert. Although the learning process of skydiving and carpentry are not the same, he believes that there is a similar temporality between skydiving and birth.

Breivik further pointed out that 'being-in-the-void' is in line with Heidegger's anxious situation. While novice skydivers face their anxiety and themselves, it can arouse the novice's deepest self, understand themselves in an authentic way, and understand themselves in an authentic way. Live authentically. On the other hand, Breivik believes that as experience increases, novice skydivers become accustomed to the void, and the void becomes the skydiving world familiar to skydiving experts, 'S/he does what one is expected to do in that world. S/he becomes guided by the One. S/he does not live from his/her own deepest and most authentic concerns. S/he no longer needs to confront anxiety and the possibility of death and dying.'(p. 39)

### **3. Risk-taking performance**

This study on the philosophy of death takes Heidegger's "Being and Time" as the scope of interpretation. In this book, Heidegger discusses the ontological basis of the meaning of existence, that is, the significance of death to understanding human existence. Death does not refer to the end of life in the natural sense, but proposes the structure of human existence from the perspective of death of the living person. What is concerned about human existence is this existence itself. "Inherent in the constitution of the being of this Dasein is the fact that Dasein understands itself in its being. What is true of this being is that it is revealed to itself by virtue of and through its being. For being The understanding of Dasein itself determines the existence of Dasein. The peculiarity of Dasein's existential identity is that it exists ontologically."

For the basic ontology "being-toward-death", Dasein (Dasein as being-in-the-world), always caring about everything in the world, and it is easy to fall into the world and find it difficult to extricate oneself. Therefore, Dasein must be able to persevere in the most extreme situations, that is, one who can truly understand the limited existence of human beings. Temporal quality - "Being-towards-death". Death

provides Dasein with the most extreme situation. Dasein's understanding of death may lead to the revelation or concealment of the possibility of its existence, forming an authentic or non-authentic way of existence. Heidegger regards Dasein's "being toward death" as an opportunity to move toward authenticity, which refers to "persistence in the most extreme situations (that is, being toward death)." The understanding of existence itself determines Dasein's Existence, the possibility of a connection between Dasein and existence. Dasein understands itself from the existence of concern, "This is only possible when an entity that is the existence of this "Da" has opened the space. The being carries this unobscuring quality with it in its most intimate existence. The word "Da" means this fundamental state of opening or unshielding. "The Da of Dasein is the space of possibility. There is space

Dasein is affected by other people and things in the world, forgetting his own existence and losing his individuality. Instead, he just follows what others say, sinking in blind pursuit, unable to focus on his own existence, and the possibility of his own existence is obscured or cut off. Fear: Dasein escapes his own existence and retreats into the familiar daily world,

Anxiety: When the familiar daily world loses its usual meaning and becomes an uncertain world, on the one hand, Dasein may retreat into the daily world because of feeling anxious, but it may also arouse Dasein to move towards the path of authentic existence and to himself. Being aware of the existence of death is a possibility that one cannot exist.

Death is not just an external event, nor is it the death of others that has nothing to do with oneself. Everyone will die. The possibility of Dasein's own existence originally includes death. The shock and urgency of death have been rediscovered by many contemporary philosophers. Reflecting on the issue of "what is philosophy?", the practical aspect of philosophy as a way of life is discussed and clarified. From Heidegger's criticism that traditional philosophy only asks about existence and forgets specific personal existence (Dasein), to Foucault's strong accusation that Western philosophers since the Renaissance have not regarded self-skill as an important philosophical topic at all, as a kind of spiritual practice. The practical philosophy of practicing with oneself is again valued.

Traditional Eastern martial arts is a physical skill that is a matter of life and death. However, with the emphasis on competition and quantification, the life-and-death martial arts has also been transformed into a competition method that can be objectively scored. In the early days, stunt families had the traditional belief of not being afraid of challenges and dying in battle (treating death as life). With the process of modernization, protective devices have become a legal norm, which also affects the belief legacy of Taiwan's stunt people. After all, no one likes or desires to

fall from a high altitude. Through this experience of death and rebirth, aerial stuntmen develop the unique sense of security in the air. The honorary tradition passed down by aerial stuntmen, and the professional belief cultivated by Taiwanese aerial stuntmen over a long period of time, allow Taiwanese aerial stuntmen to still uphold the "special" contained in the "special" of stunts when facing the high dangers of high altitudes. Every high-altitude stunt performance is a veritable "life-threatening performance". As a very distinctive cultural group, stuntmen can be said to be a group that often dances with death. Regarding the dangers of high-altitude stunts, high chair stunt people believe that springboard trapeze and trapeze involve cooperation with others, and the technical performance is highly uncertain, so it is more dangerous. High chair stuntmen must perform in a prone position, directly facing terrifying heights.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study examines two highly skilled adventure sports, high-altitude stunts and free-standing rock climbing, to demonstrate that every performance performed by highly skilled adventure sports experts is a life-threatening performance, and the challenge will not be reduced as experience and ability increase. Sex will not become what Breivik calls an unauthentic lifestyle. This article embodies Heidegger's 'being-towards-death' from the professional belief of 'shì sǐ rú guī'.

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