Heidegger on 'Eigentlichkeit': Re-Contextualizing Authenticity

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Abstract

The Heideggerian theme of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit)* proves crucial to the task of fundamental ontology that Heidegger pursues in *Being and Time*. Clear and textually based commentary on this notion of authenticity has been sparse. Many prominent readings of authenticity fail to stay true to its purpose in the text, opting instead to render a more substantial existentialist reading than is warranted. While such readings of authenticity are fascinating as *independent* conceptions worthy of philosophical attention, they cannot be adequately ascribed to Heidegger or the project of *Being and Time*. The present essay serves as an attempt to correct this course in the scholarship, offering a textually supported account of authenticity that recognizes its role as that which makes manifest the transparency that everyday Dasein lacks—a transparency that can do away with self-concealments and assist Heidegger in his pursuit of an answer to the question of Being qua Being.

Keywords: Authenticity; Martin Heidegger; 20th Century Continental Philosophy; Existentialism; *Being and Time*.

Introduction

Heidegger's notion of '*Eigentlichkeit*,' typically translated as 'authenticity' or more literally as 'ownedness,' has elicited an ongoing debate in the secondary literature.[1] Indeed, while different interpretations abound, even a casual reading of *Being and Time* leaves one with the impression that whatever Heidegger means by 'authenticity,' it must play an essential role in his philosophical project. Given that the more substantial account of authenticity is offered in Division II of *Being and Time,* interpretations have essentially been split into two general categories—one taking Division II as an extension of Division I. Another is taking it to mark a pronounced existentialist turn, which is a deviation away from the work of Division I.

Several prominent commentaries on Division II of *Being and Time* propose that Heidegger's work contributes to the existentialist lineage that begins with Kierkegaard and runs through the thoughts of Nietzsche, Camus, and Sartre.[2] Although existentialist rhetoric and themes manifest themselves in Division II, focusing too heavily on them obscures the role that terms like 'authenticity' are intended to play in Heidegger's work. As such, the present essay will correct the overemphasis of existentialist readings of authenticity by returning it to its role within the larger framework of *Being and Time*. While existentialist renderings of authenticity are immensely interesting and important in their own right, they cannot accurately portray what Heidegger intends by the term. Simply put, *Being and Time* is not a text that calls us to 'find ourselves' and 'be who we truly are.' It is not a manual on how to be authentic, nor does it give us the tools to look at individuals and determine whether or not they are living authentically. The aim of this essay will thus be to combat such readings by offering a textually supported account of authenticity that recognizes its function as the possibility of transparency or of the openness of Being that does away with self-concealments and assists Heidegger in his attempt to address the question of Being qua Being.

In pursuing the aim mentioned above, I first begin by presenting the existentialist readings of authenticity, focusing mainly on the work of Julian Young, who, while certainly not alone in his reading of Heidegger, typifies the general category of existentialist renderings of *Being and Time*. Following this is a brief account of previous critiques of interpretations such as Young's, which focuses on the works of

Randall Havas, Kevin Aho, and William Blattner. Finally, I make clear how Havas, Aho, and Blattner, while correct in their critiques of the existentialist renderings of authenticity, ultimately need to correctly emphasize the connection of authenticity with the overall scheme of *Being and Time*.

The Existentialist Reading of *Being and Time*

Existentialist themes indeed appear to play a prominent role in *Being and Time,* and strong existentialist readings of it seem to be inspired by a desire to locate within it something pertaining to the ethical—that is, an evaluative standard for what it means to be or become a fully realized self or a 'whole' human being. One of the troubles that leads to existentialist readings of authenticity pertains to the rhetoric that Heidegger employs to characterize it—proponents of this reading experience no shortage of passages from *Being and Time* in apparent support of their position. These troubles are amplified because existentialist interpretations begin by trying to answer the question: What would one discover if they were to limit the scope of their inquiry into authenticity to only those passages that directly address and attempt to characterize it? That is, if only to read Division II and perhaps borrow a few small passages from Division I while essentially divorcing the former from the latter.

If we wanted to limit the scope of our inquiry into those things that seemed explicitly connected to authenticity, we would have first to characterize a few other notions, especially the 'they,' anxiety, death, fallenness, nullity, inauthenticity, and anticipatory resoluteness. Treating each of these with the careful attention that they deserve would necessitate the writing of a rather substantial book or books, but for our purposes, a brief presentation of the 'they' will suffice, as the other relevant themes will emerge with the consideration of Young's work.

Heidegger introduces the 'they' (*das Man*) by making a provocative claim, namely, that proximally and for the most part, "everyone is the other, and no one is himself" (*SZ*, 128).[3] Put another way, he tells us that the answer to the 'who' of everyday Dasein is the 'they.' In its everyday Being-with-one-another, Dasein itself *is* not because the possibilities of its Being have been restricted and dictated to it by the 'they.' This means that the answer to the 'who' of everyday Dasein is, in fact, the 'they.' Heidegger notes that most of our day-to-day dealings

and experiences in the world are dictated to us by others, in so far as we drive down the road as *one* drives, we speak as *one* speaks, are shocked as *one* is shocked, and even rebel as *one* rebels:

> We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* [*man*] take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise, we shrink back from the 'great mass' as *they* shrink back…. The 'they,' which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness (*SZ,* 127).

That last point, that the 'they' is nothing definite, plays a crucial role in Heidegger's use of the term. The 'they' is not some person or a group of influential people who secretly run the world and dictate how things are to be interpreted; instead, it is both everyone and no one. This might seem cryptic, but Heidegger's point is that some level of conformity is necessary for human existence. A paradigmatic example of this is language—some degree of conformity is needed in language if we are to communicate, think, and develop concepts. There is no single governing body that dictates language to us, though—it simply arises from our practices. As Young usefully notes, though, we can distinguish between conformity and conform*ism*, and the necessity of the former does *not* entail the latter. (Young, 2007, p. 483)

Despite the non-necessity of conform*ism*, it still comes to pass that the 'they' tend to operate as a type of dictatorship. Heidegger describes the 'they' as a force that 'levels down' and suppresses us by "keep[ing] watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore" (*SZ,* 127), making it so that "every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed… [and] every secret loses its force" (*SZ,* 128). Despite these suppressions, Dasein is largely seduced by the 'they' because it makes things easy for us by narrowing down our possibilities. Without such a limiting agent, one might be overwhelmed or paralyzed by the reality of their condition, but the 'they' offers us the opportunity to disburden ourselves from our existence, to neglect our responsibility for it, and to feel tranquility at home in a world of familiarity that is strongly grounded (*SZ,* 128).

From this characterization of the 'they,' we come up to speed with Julian Young's interpretation of Heidegger. According to Young, the theme of the' outsider' unites Heidegger with the likes of Kierkegaard,[4] Nietzsche, Camus, and Sartre. (Young, 2007, p. 482)

He elaborates on this theme, writing that "all of them valorize, morally and cognitively, the heroic individual who stands outside the conventionalities of bourgeois existence. In *Being and Time,* the valorizing term is 'authenticn'"(Young, 2007, p.482) He notes that for Heidegger, we are conceived of as mostly being inauthentic and that we typically conform to orthodoxies and public opinions. Why do we find it challenging to rebel to be an individual and self-owned self? Young writes that for Heidegger, the 'startling' answer is death. (Young, 2007, p. 483) In tying together the themes of death and conformity, Young succinctly captures the heart of Heidegger's position, writing:

> Individuals die. However, the One [the 'they'] lives on. So, to the extent that I think of myself *as* the One, I transcend mortality, which is the penalty of individuality, and so seem to evade the object of my most primal anxiety. (Young, 2007, p. 483)

If inauthenticity comes to be characterized by fleeing in the face of death, a fleeing that immerses one in the distractions of the 'they,' then facing up to death must be what is required for authenticity.

In Young's reading, inauthenticity is a coping mechanism that offers a perceived evasion of the "annihilating nothingness that is death." (Young, 2007, p. 483) It necessitates a type of self-deception though, what Sartre would call 'bad faith'; by confronting one's mortality, one is said to be able to see through this deception, to be 'individuated,' by allowing for an understanding of the fact that death is something one must undergo alone—it is a unique phenomenon in that others, the 'they,' cannot stand in for one. Authenticity is then born from one's confrontation and reckoning with the finite nature of their existence. It involves understanding that "my choices (even the choice to be a conformist, Sartre might interject) have to be made by *me myself.* I become (in my own, rather than Heidegger's, language) autonomous." (Young, 2007, p. 483) Furthermore, authenticity is said to *liberate* one to choose from all of the factual possibilities available to one. The idea here is that a true grasping of the fact that death is both certain and indefinite (*SZ,* 250), that death is certain for all and yet indefinite as to its when, brings about a lucidity whereby one grasps their life in its totality—as a narrative with a beginning and an end—allowing them to choose those possibilities and projects that truly matter to them and to do so with urgency. (Young, 2007, p. 484) Young refers to this urgency as 'focus,' concluding that:

> Authenticity is, then, autonomy plus focus. Better, it is *focused on autonomy*. To live such a life is to live an intense, passionate, urgent, and committed life. It is to live a life, in other words, that is intensely *meaningful*. Authenticity is early Heidegger's account of what it is to live a meaningful life. (Young, 2007, p. 484)

Under this reading, Heidegger is deemed indebted to Nietzsche, who, instead of 'focus' and 'autonomy,' offers being the 'hero' of one's life and 'free spirits,' respectively. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger is said to call for us to abandon the 'herd mentality' and to self-legislate—that is, to be the author of our own lives and to choose for ourselves what is truly important. Heidegger implores us, claims Young, to become ourselves in a new and genuinely autonomous sense.

Previous Critiques of Existentialist Renditions of Authenticity

The existential works of thinkers such as Young are genuinely fascinating and essential when considered *original* projects or a*daptations* of Heidegger's project. To put things rather bluntly, though, they cannot accurately *interpret* what Heidegger is doing in *Being and Time*. Regardless of the sympathies one has for the position espoused above and its philosophical merits as a standalone project—sympathies I, in fact, essentially share— it simply fails to take into account rather significant passages from *Being and Time*, Heidegger's later commentary on its themes, and the broader goal that *Being and Time* aimed (and admittedly failed) to achieve.[5] This much has already been made clear in the secondary literature, although strong existentialist interpretations of Heidegger's work are still plentiful.

William Blattner rightly admits that Heidegger certainly deserves part of the blame for how his work has been received, as he does, in fact, appear to endorse some aspects of Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's rhetoric at times. (Blattner, 2006, p. 129) He notes that Heidegger seems to have *wanted* to assimilate their critiques of average everyday Dasein as something lesser—that is, to make a hierarchical and evaluative assessment of these different modes of Being, but that he likely saw the philosophical difficulties that this would raise for his project, which is a hypothesis that would explain the constant moderation of his critical rhetoric; indeed, Heidegger is careful to reiterate time and again that his characterizations are *not* to be

understood as disparaging, because he is merely describing a 'positive' existential phenomenon when he speaks of Dasein's 'average everydayness' in which the 'they seduce it' and exists inauthentically. (Blattner, 2006, p. 129) Blattner further echoes the point made above pertaining to the existentialist readings of Heidegger, writing:

> Heidegger's rhetoric of …" authenticity"… might suggest an ideal of "being true to yourself." Consider the following spin on Heidegger's language: In confronting the impending possibility of your own death, you realize what is important to you. Getting clear about what is essential to you inspires you to drive out of your life the distractions… that build a wall between you and what really matters to you. In doing all this, you "choose yourself" and are "true to yourself," that is, authentic…. There is certainly something to be said for this vision of authenticity… [It] is not what Heidegger has in mind by self-ownership. (Blattner, 2006, p. 160)

We see once again that although these views of authenticity as a journey of self-discovery are exciting and perhaps of great value, they are not what Heidegger intends by *Eigentlichkeit*.

Randall Havas offers a different and more targeted critique of existentialist readings of authenticity, arguing that they go astray in (at least) two ways. (Havas, 2000, p. 39) In the first instance, they suggest, with some minor variances, that the authentic individual is one whose existence manifests an acknowledgment and appropriation of the 'groundlessness' of the way that their world has been interpreted; in Heideggerian language, this means that they have resolved themselves upon their being the "null basis of [their] own nullity" (*SZ*, 306). The idea here is that authenticity involves a response to anxiety in the face of death, a response that affirms that the everyday understanding of things afforded to one by the 'they' is *contingent*. This acknowledgment of contingency then frees us to 'choose ourselves' and, while understanding that any interpretation of affairs we arrive at will ultimately be groundless as well, resolve to build a focused and meaningful life for ourselves nonetheless—knowing full well that in the end death will dictate that we must 'take back' all of our ways of making sense of things (*SZ*, 308).

According to Havas, the first problem with this view is that it "takes for granted the intelligibility of the claim that the sense we make is

'grounded' or 'ungrounded,' 'necessary' or 'contingent,' with or without 'foundation.'"(Havas, 2000, p. 39) He does *not* mean to question the intelligibility of the notions of 'grounded,' 'contingent,' and the like, but rather to emphasize the conclusion of thinkers like Hubert Dreyfus, namely, that human beings can never find a solid foundation for their lives given that reality is relative to human practices. (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 337) Cannot itself be an *essential* truth. We cannot take it for granted that it is from a contingent point of view that we even recognize the 'groundlessness' of our existence—no 'view from nowhere' is available to us. (Havas, 2000, p. 39)

The second problem that Havas notes with views of this type is that they seem to valorize an over-coming of the masses via what Young earlier referred to as 'focused autonomy.' Heidegger is clear that we cannot escape the fact that our modes of intelligibility are derived from the cultural practices that we find ourselves 'thrown' into. The fact that our ability to make sense depends upon cultural practices does not indicate some lack of originality but rather is a positive constitutive phenomenon of our Being; indeed, something other than this is difficult to imagine, which is a point that Havas makes quite nicely: "A radically self-determining human being is not a human being at all: there is no self and no determination of it without a sense of what is worth doing." (Havas, 2000, p. 39)

Kevin Aho provides the final and perhaps most detailed rejection of the associati   of Heidegger's *Being and Time* with the works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, and Jaspers. Aho summarizes the existentialist reading, noting that its proponents are attracted to authenticity because they find "a way of being that faces and affirms the finitude and contingency of life in a godless world." (Aho, 2003, p. 5) It resonates even more strongly with them, however, in so far as it appears to allow a way for us to "sever human beings from the normative comforts and stability of public life, leaving us alone to choose and create our own singular meanings and values against the background of nothingness." (Aho, 2003, p. 5)

According to Aho, the first problem with such a reading is that it fails to follow Heidegger's rejection of the tradition of subjectivity that finds its roots in Descartes. (Aho, 2003, p. 6) Heidegger is explicit about his attempt to depart from this tradition, and he warns his readers early on in *Being and Time* that Dasein is *not* to be interpreted in terms of this traditional notion of subjectivity. Indeed, it is "one of our first tasks,"

says Heidegger, "to prove that if we posit an 'I' or subject as that which is proximally given, we shall completely miss the phenomenal content of Dasein" (*SZ,* 46). Alternative terminology, for example, 'life' and 'man,' are *explicitly* avoided when referring to that entity which each of us is (*SZ,* 46). Suppose Dasein is first conceived of as a Cartesian subject that must break away from cultural norms and live based on its own groundless values and 'authentic' possibilities. In that case, we have not taken the first step that Heidegger attempts to lead us down— namely, towards rejecting the Cartesian subject.

The second problem that Aho finds with the existentialist reading is that it limits authenticity to the discussion of our temporal finitude, which results in the type of radical freedom that one finds portrayed in thinkers such as Young. This is problematic because it fails to account for the other half of our temporal constitution that Heidegger prescribes, namely historicity. (Aho, 2003, p. 9) The possibilities uncovered by an authentic Being-towards-death are not wholly self-originating, free-floating possibilities where anything goes, so to speak; instead, they are communal—afforded to us by a shared heritage. (Aho, 2003, p. 10) Aho astutely reminds us of this point, noting that while Heidegger does indeed posit that anxiety individualizes Dasein (*SZ,* 188), he nonetheless immediately clarifies that "this existential 'solipsism' is so far from the displacement of putting an isolated subject-Thing into the innocuous emptiness of worldless occurring" (*SZ,* 233). Instead, Heidegger tells us that:

> Resoluteness, as *authentic Being-nn''s-Self*, does not detach Dasein from its world nor isolate it to become a free-floating "I." Moreover, how should it, when resoluteness as authentic disclosedness is *authentically* nothing else than *Being-in-the-world*? Resoluteness brings the Self right into its concernful being alongside what is ready-to-hand and pushes it into solicitous Being with Others (*SZ,* 298).

As seen in the passage above, Heidegger is rather emphatic in his warning that authenticity is not to be understood as an existential rebellion—that is, merely as an overcoming and separating of oneself from a world of conformity; indeed, even *thinking* of such a possibility proves incredibly difficult, because it requires thinking of a situation in which we have become disconnected from the entirety of our sense-making structure. As Aho rightly points out, the choices made by

authentic Dasein are *never* original or its *own* in the sense that the existentialists maintain, but ratherşare "already socially constituted, through the language, public practices, and cultural institutions that we grow into as historical beings. (Aho, 2003, p. 10) The appropriation in authenticity then becomes an appropriation of one's own historical past—its traditions, heritage, and heroes.

Rather than radical freedom, Aho argues that authenticity requires one's understanding of what possibilities one's own heritage has afforded to one—for it is that heritage that has provided the possible paths. It is up to her—the authentic individual—to resolve which paths are to be followed and which qualities of her heritage are to be retrieved and repeated. (Aho, 2003, p. 11) The resolutely authentic individual is thus free to choose and seize upon possibilities, but she does so by engaging her heritage; it is thus not a 'radical' or 'free-floating' freedom but a freedom to act upon those possibilities that make sense within the sense-making structure of one's historical past. This authenticity reading is endorsed mainly by Charles Guignon, who also argues that "*Being and Time* attempts to combat the 'groundlessness' of the contemporary world by uncovering enduring values and meanings within the framework of 'worldliness' and h   marfinit de." (Guignon, 1984, p. 322) Considered in this way, Heidegger is deemed to have been rejecting the nihilistic conceptions of 19th-century historicism, i.e., those that took history to be a disconnected series of eras without any enduring values or goals, (Aho, 2003, p. 13) Moreover, in his rejection, he seeks to uncover 'trans-historical' values and meanings. While the deficiencies of such a reading will be described in the next section of this essay, it does achieve an excellent middle ground as it pertains to the existential themes of *Being and Time* by both admitting the role that authenticity plays in uncovering possibilities while also rejecting the notion that authenticity entails a type of radical freedom for an isolated Cartesian subject.

Contextualizing Authenticity—A Return to the Question of Being

A strong case has already been made against the existentialist reading of authenticity presented at this essay's beginning. Because of this, one might wonder what more needs to be said—have we not already indicated the relevant deficiencies with such interpretations?

Unfortunately, even those responses that have been covered thus far, correct as they may be in their refutations of interpretations like Young's, fail to connect authenticity to the problem that *Being and Time* attempt to address. Put simply, they, too, have forgotten the question of Being that Heidegger sought to revive (*SZ,* 2). The idea that authenticity should be intimately connected with the question of Being should come as no surprise, as this is the question *Being and Time* seeks to address. As John Haugeland correctly emphasizes: "Ultimately *everything* in *Being and Time* has to do with the question of being." (Haugeland, 2000, p. 66) Before making this connection explicit, though, there are a few further points to be made against the existentialist reading of Heidegger's work.

Ultimately, if we take Heidegger at his word, such a reading must be ruled out from the start. The reason for this is his own persistent denial that this is what he was seeking to accomplish. For example, in 1930, just a few years after the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger comments on his *magnum opus*, expressing that:

> It was never my idea to preach an 'existentialist philosophy.'
> Instead, I have been concerned with renewing the question of
> ontology—the most central question of Western philosophy—
> the question of being. [6]

Heidegger also clearly denies the existentialist renditions of resoluteness that have been proposed because authentic resoluteness is essential to him in light of what it *discloses*; it is *not* an intentional choosing or weighing of alternative possibilities. Heidegger makes this point in *Being and Time* itself, writing:

> One would completely misunderstand the phenomenon of
> resoluteness if one wanted to suppose that this consists simply of
> taking up possibilities that have been proposed and
> recommended and seizing hold of them. *The resolution is
> precisely the disclosive projection and determination of what is
> factically possible at the time* (*SZ*, 299).

The above passage serves not only as further evidence against the existentialist reading but also against the historical choice advocated for by Aho. Heidegger maintains this position throughout his later works as well, explaining in 1953 that "the resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of a subject, but the opening up of

[Dasein] out of its captivity in that which is, to the openness of Being." (Heidegger, 1971, p.67) Again, if we take Heidegger at his word, then authenticity, as anticipatory resoluteness, *cannot* be encapsulated by the idea of an intentionalistic subject making deliberate and focused decisions—authenticity is not 'autonomy plus focus,' as Young argued earlier.

Given the ample evidence against the existentialist readings of authenticity and its corollary theme of resoluteness, one may question why these interpretations have remained so prevalent. They could undoubtedly thrive as original works *inspired* by Heidegger or as *extensions* of his thought, so why have they been offered repeatedly as representations of what Heidegger himself meant? Some of the blame can be attributed to the looseness of translation, particularly the translations of authenticity and resoluteness.

Beginning with the former, Heidegger explicitly warns that he intends *Eigentlichkeit* to be read in a strict sense (*SZ,* 43). Presumably, he has in mind a strict etymological sense, which would yield 'ownedness,' a translation that would avoid some of the implicit assumptions that arise concerning 'authenticity.' Ownedness and 'unownedness' (*Uneigentlichkeit)* better capture the spirit of what Heidegger means because they more closely relate to the theme of 'mineness' (*Jemeinigkeit*). In each case, Dasein is my own, in so far as it is me myself, but I can exist in this 'mineness' in different ways— ownedness and unownedness are thus two ways or modes in which Dasein can be 'mine.' Resoluteness, a translation of '*Entschlossenheit*,' also poses problems in English. Dreyfus usefully reminds readers of Heidegger that while the German term typically refers to a kind of resolve, Heidegger tends to write it as '*Ent-schlossenheit*.' (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 318) With the hyphen, it is more akin to 'unclosedness' or what we might more comfortably label 'openness.' (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 318) Understanding *Ent-schlossenheit* in this way, as a matter of unclosedness or disclosure, helps to make sense of what Heidegger means when he says that *"eee eettttt ttt ss eeecyyyyyeee iiiiiiii i e jjjj eciiee eee ee eeeetttt ffff ff wttt ff fcciiclll y iiiii iii ii iii iiee "* (*SZ*, 299).

All this work has been done to show what authenticity is *not*, but the more pressing question still needs a positive answer. What exactly is the *positive* nature of authenticity? We have clarified translation problems and hinted that it must be somehow related to the question of

Being that motivates the inquiry of *Being and Time* as a whole, but what is this relation? These are the questions that we are now poised to address.

Recall the context in which Heidegger begins to investigate Dasein in the first place. He begins with the question of Being qua Being. He first needs to find a mode of access to the question itself; that is, he needs to know what is to be 'interrogated' (*SZ,* 41). The answer to this question is, of course, we ourselves, Dasein, as it is "these entities, in their Being, [who] comport themselves towards their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. *Being* is an issue for every such entity" (*SZ,* 42). The project of fundamental ontology necessitates that the questioner herself be brought into question alongside the metaphysical question. (Heidegger, 1997, p.93) In enquiring into the Being of Dasein, however, a problem quickly rises to the surface, namely that even though Dasein is "ontically 'closest' to itself," it remains "ontologically farthest" (*SZ,* 16). This point- that in its everydayness, Dasein lacks transparency is as such because our own specific state of Being, while known tacitly, remains concealed from us mostly (*SZ,* 16).

The hiddenness of Dasein's Being is elucidated upon in Heidegger's analysis of the 'they.' Proximally and for the most part, Dasein is inauthentic—it is not itself, but the They-self (*SZ,* 129). To reiterate, though, Heidegger's acknowledgment of this is not evidence of some value-laden hierarchy; in fact, the 'they' is an *existentiale*—a primordial phenomenon that belongs to Dasein's positive constitution (*SZ,* 129). As an existential, it *cannot*, by definition, be overcome. So long as Dasein is, the 'they' is also part of Dasein's very ontological structure. Heidegger writes, "*Authentic Being-eeess-Self* does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they'; *tt ss rrrrrr rr exttteiii ell iiiiii i iii nn ff eee eeeey'— ff eee eeeey' ss nn elllllll   exttteiii eee*" (*SZ,* 130). Any characterization of the authentic individual being a 'hero' or 'one who overcomes conformity' misses the point—"inauthenticity… does not signify any 'less' Being or any 'lower' degree of Being. Rather… even in its fullest concretion, Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity" (*SZ,* 43). *Being and time* is not calling upon people to rebel against cultural norms or address a crisis of human nature because such affairs are merely ontic matters, not ontological ones. This is affirmed by Heidegger in Division I, when he addresses the topic of the corruption

of human nature, writing: "Our existential-ontological Interpretation makes no ontical assertion about the 'corruption of human Nature,' not because the necessary evidence is lacking, but because the problematic of this interpretation is *prior* to any assertion about corruption or incorruption" (*SZ*, 180).

Now, while it is true that inauthentic everyday Dasein is not being disparaged due to a value-laden hierarchy, it still poses a problem for Heidegger specifically. Proximally and for the most part, Dasein conceals its Being from itself—in order to properly gain insight into the Being of Dasein then, which is supposed to be a step that brings us closer to answering the question of Being qua Being, we need to do away with self-concealments altogether. The concealing nature of the 'they' is problematic because it hinders the pursuit of fundamental ontology. As the 'they-self,' Dasein has its finitude hidden from it, which is problematic because it is an understanding of its finite existence that allows Dasein to bring an understanding of its whole to the forefront—its whole as existence that is stretched between thrown ness and death, not as beginning and end, but as that which is determinative in each case for it. The possibility of fundamental ontology becomes predicated upon the possibility of authenticity—of authenticity, not as some normative condition towards which everyone should aspire, but as something for the *philosopher*.

The reading being advocated for here can then be succinctly characterized as follows. Authenticity, as anticipatory resoluteness, becomes the possibility of acquiring a lucidity into one's own Being— a seeing for oneself of what one truly is. A type of transparency characterizes it and is itself a disclosive mode. Such self-understanding is not something that isolates one, for, given that we understand ourselves in terms of our practices and comportments with entities of our concern and solicitude, any self-understanding necessarily presupposes an understanding of the entities among which one exists. The upshot of this type of authenticity is rendered explicitly in Section 62 of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger writes:

> When Dasein is resolute, it takes over authentically in its existence the fact that it *is* the null basis of its own nullity…. The nullity by which Dasein's Being is dominated primordially through and through is revealed to Dasein itself in authentic Being-towards-death…. When the call of conscience [the call to authenticity] is understood, lostness in the "they" is revealed.

> Resoluteness brings Dasein back to its own most potentiality-for-
> Being-its-Self. When one understands Being-towards-death—
> towards death as one's *own most* possibility—one's potentiality-
> for-Being becomes authentic and wholly transparent. (*SZ,* 306-
> 307)

Authentic understanding is thus characterized by an account of the hermeneutic 'as,' meaning that in this mode of Being, Dasein no longer takes its Being for granted as something justified, grounded, or certain, but instead realizes that it is interpretation all the way down. In other words, it understands that its understanding of the world and entities— and, by extension, even its understanding of itself—are contingent. This transparency reveals that Dasein is the null basis of a nullity and that its Being, 'in and of itself,' is groundless (*SZ,* 284).

Importantly, this insight or lucidity is different from an insight at the *individual* level. It is a lucidity of one's own Being as Dasein, but not as Jafar, Morteza, Mohammad, or some other individual entity. That is, it is a general peering into the window of the Being of Dasein *as* Dasein, not an insight into what matters to some individual. The reason for this ought to be quite clear:

> Our Being alongside the things with which we concern ourselves
> most closely in the 'world' guides the everyday way Dasein is
> interpreted and covers up ontically Dasein's authentic Being so
> that the ontology directed towards this entity is denied an
> appropriate basis. (*SZ,* 311)

Thus, it is the ontology directed towards Dasein—and towards Dasein in structural terms, not individual ones—that *Being and Time* seek to clarify in route to the larger question of Being *qua* Being. The goal is then to uncover a transcendental structure of the Being of Dasein, something that holds for all human beings throughout all of time.[7] Moreover, how could it be otherwise for Heidegger? After all, Dasein is not some radically isolated individual but always-already in the mode of Being-with-Others (*Mitsein*). As Being-in-the-world, Dasein is *essentially* Being-with-Others. Rather than some isolated cartesian subject, the 'who' of Dasein in Heidegger's ontological analysis is fundamentally tied to others.

Evidence of this is plentiful in *Being and Time*. For example, thrownness is an existential of Dasein, and as such, Dasein finds itself always-already 'in' the world; this thrownness, however, is not

something that leaves Dasein radically free to choose, as we find in the work of Sartre, but rather entails that we always find ourselves, through no act of our own, as Being-in-the-world with Others—we find ourselves thrown into a particular horizon or socio-historical heritage (*Erbe*). From this heritage alone, we are supplied with values, i.e., from a community (*Gemeinschaft*) or people (*Volk*), not from an isolated subject. Authentic resoluteness is not some radical freedom by which one creates themselves in their own image or 'becomes what they are,' but rather one with a heritage from which it is forced to draw upon. Because the Self is something culturally constructed for Heidegger, one's culture must be a supplier of values and heroes that one can emulate. World disclosure cannot happen through human choice but through our activities—our ways of Being. It cannot be a matter of preference because the possibility of making a choice is always already predicated upon there being an intelligible world—i.e., the intelligibility of the world is a pre-condition for our activities, which means that the disclosure of it is something that must be *received* (through a historical heritage that one has in virtue of Being-with-Others), as opposed to something created or chosen. We are delivered over or abandoned to a world and historical culture, and this pre-interpretation of the world determines our ontic possibilities. Choosing a radically isolated and free individual would be incoherent for Heidegger because one is already within a cultural horizon that cannot be escaped. Dasein exists *historically* as an entity thrown into a world and a historical tradition (*Überlieferung*). This feature constitutes Dasein's historicality (*Geschichtlichkeit*), from which its possibilities can be drawn in the first place.

So, rather than being necessary because of some arbitrary preference or hierarchical structure, the philosopher values authenticity for what it *discloses*—"Authentic disclosedness modifies with equal primordiality both how the 'world' is discovered… and how the Dasein-with of Others is disclosed" (*SZ,* 297). It is authentic resoluteness that brings Dasein face to face with the "*truth* of existence" (*SZ,* 307), in addition to affording us with an understanding that frees for us the "possibility of acquiring *power* over Dasein's *existence* and basically dispersing all fugitive Self-concealments" (*SZ,* 310). Such power is not to be read in the individual sense, whereby one takes power over one's own life, but rather in the general sense of gaining power via an understanding of Dasein's existence for fundamental ontology. This point is obscured, as

David Abergel notes, because many interpretations of authenticity interpret "authenticity and inauthenticity as two opposing states from which Dasein can choose." (Abergel, 2020, p. 86) Heidegger affirms that such a reading is a mistake, going on to say in the same passage from above that: "Neither does anticipatory resoluteness stem from 'idealistic' exactions soaring above existence and its possibilities; it springs from a sober understanding of what are factically the basic possibilities for Dasein" (*SZ,* 310). Given that Dasein *is,* in fact, its possibilities, understanding the possibilities for Dasein becomes tantamount to understanding its *Being*. Our understanding of the lucidity of authenticity can then be elucidated as an overcoming of the idle talk of the They, but an overcoming supplemented by an ability to understand or attune oneself to the situation of one's existence via the light of heritage.

Conclusion

Rather than providing a reading of authenticity that takes it as an existentialist after-thought utterly unconnected to the groundwork of Division I of *Being and Time*, I have offered one that returns it to its place within the context of the question of Being that the text seeks to address. The notion has thus been characterized as an extension, or rather as an integral part of this larger project, instead of a detour. Instead of treating authenticity as something valuable in itself, it has been presented as a means to the end of providing an ontological 'window' that offers an unconcealed insight into Dasein's Being, which Heidegger hoped would allow him to address and clarify the nature of Being in general. If my interpretation is correct, then authenticity does not and *cannot* necessitate an individual's breaking away from the norms of social structures. Another consequence is that we cannot look at ontic situations, for example, another person's life, and answer whether they are authentic, for such a question misses the point altogether. While existentialist readings of Heidegger on authenticity remain incredibly prominent, these authors would be better served to embrace the originality of their views rather than attribute them to the project of *Being and Time*.

End Notes

1. To conform with the majority of the vast scholarship on this topic and to maximize readability, *Eigentlichkeit* will henceforth be translated as 'authenticity,' although 'ownedness' does indeed better capture what Heidegger seems to intend by the term, as well as how he explicitly introduces it: "As modes of Being, *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* (these expressions have been chosen terminologically in a strict sense) …" (*SZ*, 43).

2. See, for example, Julian Young "Nihilism and the Meaning of Life," in *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, ed. Brian Leiter and Michael Rosen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 463–93.

3. References to *Being and Time* are noted within the text by "*SZ*," followed by the page numbers for the German edition. All translations come from the Macquarrie & Robinson version unless otherwise noted.

4. For a more in-depth existential reading of Heidegger that focuses on his relation to Kierkegaard, consider the Appendix to Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991).

5. Young is certainly not alone in his existentialist interpretation of Heidegger's work. However, he has received our focus mainly due to his clear and concise writing, making his position more accessible to capture in a brief overview.

6. Martin Heidegger, *Hegels Phanomenologie Des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980); this translation is borrowed from John Haugeland, "Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism," in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 43–77.

7. This attempt to provide a transcendental account of the Being of Dasein that holds for all of time is something that Heidegger abandons in his later work, where he recognizes ontological shifts or changes in Being that result in radically different historical epochs—that is, a collection of epochs that offer fundamentally different disclosures of the world and of Being as such.

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