Authenticity and Death in *Being and Time*

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My dissertation offers a critique of the concept of authenticity that Martin Heidegger develops in *Being and Time*. The concept of authenticity has been critiqued for many reasons—mainly for political, moral, and ideological reasons. My dissertation develops, on the other hand, a conceptual critique: I argue that the concept of authenticity is a paradoxical concept. I argue, more precisely, that it is paradoxical, as the concept of authenticity proposes, for a person to confront, transparently and determinedly, his or her own death, while, at the same time, being able to be an individual—understanding him or herself as an individual, and making autonomous choices. In offering this critique, I provide interpretations of some of the basic concepts in *Being and Time* that break from conventional interpretations or are new. For example, I interpret the concept of inauthenticity from the perspective of the psychoanalytic idea of mania. Ultimately, however, I provide philosophical, or conceptual reasons to resist a concept with clearly problematic moral and political implications.
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Dedication

To J. S.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation offers a critique of the concept of authenticity (Eigentlichkeit) that Martin Heidegger develops in *Being and Time*.¹ I will claim that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical. The concept of authenticity brings together two phenomena, and in a peculiar way. On the one hand, according to the concept of authenticity, the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death. On the other hand, the authentic person anticipates his individuality. And, according to the concept of authenticity, the authentic person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and his anticipation of his individuality are identical to one another. For the authentic person to anticipate the authentic experience of death is for him to anticipate his individuality. The paradox is this: the two anticipations that the concept of authenticity identifies with one another are incompatible with one another. If a person anticipates the authentic experience of death, then he is not, in that anticipation, able to anticipate his individuality. For this reason, however, by identifying these two anticipations, a paradox is found at the heart of the concept of authenticity.

In this introduction, I will give a preliminary account of the concept of authenticity and the paradox that emerges at its heart. The foregoing description of the concept and its paradox is inadequate, of course, because it is composed of the sophisticated and not at all straightforward concepts that Heidegger develops in *Being and Time*—anticipation, the authentic experience of death, individuality, among others. I

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therefore will (1) give a brief overview of those concepts, in order to give an initial picture of the concept of authenticity and its paradox. I will also (2) look at a critique of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity with which my own critique shares certain features; I will point out how the critique that I offer in this dissertation is distinct from that critique. Finally, I will (3) give an outline of the plan of this dissertation.

1. The concept of authenticity and its paradox

I will here, then, try to bring into view the concept of authenticity and its paradox. For this, it is necessary to look at the basic concepts in which, in Being and Time, it is involved. I can note here that, in many of the following chapters in this dissertation, I will be offering interpretations of these basic concepts—for example, the concept of care (chapter 3) and the concept of death (chapter 5). I will also give a comprehensive interpretation of the concept of authenticity itself (chapter 6). This discussion will therefore be introductory and provisional, in the sense that not all of the relevant features of the concepts to be discussed will be addressed; questions that may arise in relation to them will be deferred to later chapters; and I will anticipate many of the conclusions at which, in later chapters, I will arrive.

For Heidegger, authenticity does not indicate what it might at first indicate in common English—the genuineness of an object, over against its simulacra; a “real thing” as opposed to a “fake thing.” The reason for this is that, for Heidegger, authenticity is not a qualification of objects or things. In Being and Time, Heidegger makes a basic distinction in relation to the ontological character of different kinds of beings. The “ontological” character of beings, however, does not indicate, for Heidegger, the “ontic”
character of beings. Whereas the ontic character of beings is what they are in terms of their particular properties—a particular table has four legs, is brown, and so on—the ontological character of beings is *how they are insofar as they are*. Therefore, the ontological character of a table will not be comprised by its particular properties, but rather by how the table is, insofar as it is. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes three kinds of these ontological ways of being among beings: “presence-at-hand” (*Vorhandenheit*), “readiness-to-hand” (*Zuhandenheit*), and existence (*Existenz*).

For a being to have the ontological character of readiness-to-hand, means that it can be *used*, or is *available*; in human beings’ practical activity, it can perform some kind of function in order to carry out some kind of work. For a being to have the ontological character of presence-at-hand, means that the properties that it possesses it possesses *presently*—they are *fully present* in it. Thus a particular table has four legs and is brown. But as present-at-hand, this possession of four legs, and this brownness, are fully present in it: the table *is*, presently, four-legged and brown. Finally, for a being to have the ontological character of *Existenz*, means that what it is, it is *possibly*. In other words, a being which exists is not what it is in terms of what it *presently* is, but rather in terms of what it *possibly* is. What it *possibly* is Heidegger calls its “possibilities” (*Möglichkeiten*). These possibilities, however, are not modal or categorial possibilities— in other words, what is possible for a being to be insofar as what it possibly could be is not be inconsistent with what is the case or with what is known to be true. Rather, these possibilities are a being’s *abilities*: what a being is *able* to be, through, for example, the exercise of its practical understanding, its use of worldly beings in its world, and its

2 *BT*, 10 ff. [12 ff.].
3 *BT*, 67 [71].
pursuit of some kind of self. Heidegger therefore uses the term “ability-to-be” (Seinkönnen) coextensively with “existence.” A doctor who exists is a doctor in the sense that he is able to be a doctor. And, indeed, it should be clear that the particular being whose ontological character is that of existence is the human being. Heidegger refers to this being, the human being, whose being is existence, with the terminological designation “Dasein.” “Da-sein,” Heidegger writes, “is always its possibility.” Lastly, it should be pointed out here that, for Heidegger, the being whose being is existence, or the ability-to-be, is the being whose being is “care” (Sorge). Care is, for Heidegger (and I will return to this in the third chapter) the ontological essence of Da-sein, that is, of the human being. Care is, therefore, not an apprehensive concern over something, which the English word, but also the German Sorge, might suggest. Nor is care what Heidegger calls Besorgen and Fürsorge—taking care of particular worldly beings, or taking care of particular others; these are, for Heidegger, modalities of care, but neither is care itself. Rather, care, as the ontological essence of the Da-sein or the human being, is the basic way in which Da-sein or the human being is. Care, therefore, indicates what existence and the ability-to-be indicate: that the human being is what he is able to be.

Authenticity, then, is not the authenticity of the “genuine” thing as opposed to the “fake” thing. If that were the case, then authenticity would characterize objects or things,

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4 I will discuss further, in the third chapter, why “abilities” can be divided into these three types.  
5 William Blattner has especially stressed that, for Heidegger, the being of the human being is best understood as Seinkönnen, or, as he translates it, the “ability-to-be.” See William Blattner, Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Stambaugh (as well as MacQuarrie and Robinson) translates “ability-to-be” as “potentiality-of-being.” This translation is infelicitous, since it suggests an ontological category, that of potentiality, which, since Aristotle, has applied to present-at-hand objects; but Seinkönnen refers, for Heidegger, strictly and only to Dasein, that is, a being that is not a present-at-hand object but that exists. I will therefore, in my text, use Blattner’s translation.  
6 BT, 40 [42]. Stambaugh renders Heidegger’s “Dasein” as “Da-sein.” I will preserve this in quotations of her translation; but in my own text, I will refer to “Dasein” as “Dasein.”
in other words, beings whose kind of being is presence-at-hand. For Heidegger,

authenticity always qualifies a being whose being is existence, or whose being is the

ability-to-be, or whose being is care. Heidegger writes:

Da-sein is always its possibility. It does not “have” that possibility only as a mere attribute of something objectively present. And because Da-sein is always essentially its possibility, it can “choose” itself in its being, it can win itself, it can lose itself, or it can never and only “apparently” win itself. It can only have lost itself and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is essentially possible as authentic…\(^7\)

Only a being whose being is that of existence, the ability-to-be, or care, can be authentic.

But then what, specifically, is it for a person—a being whose being is existence, the ability-to-be, or care—to be authentic? As I suggested above, authenticity brings together two phenomena, and in a peculiar way. According to the concept of authenticity, the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and anticipates his individuality; and, for the authentic person, these two anticipations are identical to one another: a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of his individuality. Let me look at each of these elements of the concept of authenticity in more detail.

First, the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death.

Heidegger writes:

Becoming free for one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging themselves upon us, so that the factical possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen.\(^8\)

\(^7\) _BT_, 40 [42-3].

\(^8\) _BT_, 244 [264].
But what is it to “anticipate” the authentic experience of death? And what is the “authentic experience of death”? I will begin with the latter first. Death (Tod), for Heidegger, is not organic death, or the conclusion of a person’s life. He calls these two kinds of death “perishing” (Verenden) and “demise” (Ableben) respectively.\(^9\) Death, rather, is a person’s being-toward-death (Sein zum Tode): not the event of death, but the way in which a person relates to his death. Heidegger therefore proposes the term “dying” (Sterben) as coextensive with his use of the word “death”; dying, a person is relating to his death.\(^10\) But it must be emphasized again that, for Heidegger, being-toward-death is not being-toward the event of death—perishing or demise. Being-toward-death (or just simply “death” or “dying”) means, for Heidegger, that a person’s possibility is impossibility. Heidegger writes that death is “the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general” (die [Möglichkeit] der Unmöglichkeit der Existenz überhaupt)\(^11\) and that death is “the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence” (die Möglichkeit der maßlosen Unmöglichkeit der Existenz).\(^12\) Now, the general formulation of death as “the possibility of the impossibility of existence” presents a number of difficulties, all of which I will look at in detail in the fifth chapter. Here I want only to offer a provisional explanation of the formulation. By “possibility,” as I suggested above, Heidegger means ability. And, as I will explain in more detail in the third chapter, by “ability” Heidegger fundamentally means a person’s projection into his abilities. “Projection,” (entwerfen), for Heidegger, indicates that practical skill or know-how by which a person is able to exercise his skills, is able to use worldly beings, and is able to

\(^9\) BT, 223-4 [240-1]; 229 [247].
\(^10\) BT, 229 [247].
\(^11\) BT, 242 [262], emphases removed.
\(^12\) BT, 242 [262].
pursue a possible kind of self. By projecting, a person is able: he exercises his skills, he uses worldly beings, and he pursues a possible kind of self. Death, then, is a person’s projection—he projects into abilities. But as the “possibility of impossibility,” death is that projection in which that into which a person projects is his impossibility. This “impossibility” must be understood, however, in the same non-modal or non-categorial way as “possibility”: it therefore does not indicate that some state of affairs is not consistent with what is the case, or with what is known to be true. “Impossibility” indicates that a person does not have any particular abilities. The “possibility of impossibility” therefore means that a person projects, or projects into abilities, but in this way: that he projects into no particular abilities.

Death is a person’s projection into no particular abilities. However, for Heidegger, this projection into no particular abilities can be experienced. I will, in the fifth chapter, discuss in detail the sense in which death can be experienced; I will here only give an initial presentation of the sense in which it can be experienced. For Heidegger, a person is always dying: it is always the case that he is projecting into no particular abilities. “Factically,” Heidegger writes, “one’s own Da-sein is always already dying, that is, it is in a being-toward-its-end.” But a person can experience his always dying in two distinct ways. A person can experience it authentically, or inauthentically. Inauthentically experiencing his death, a person, Heidegger suggests, is in a “flight” (Flucht) from death. In a “flight” from death, a person denies his dying: he experiences his death, not as what it is, but as what it is not. A person does not experience his death, in other words, as his

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13 BT, 235 [254].
projection into no particular abilities, but rather “reinterprets” it… and veils it.”\textsuperscript{14} I will, in the fifth chapter, consider precisely how a person “reinterprets” and “veils” his death. Alternatively, however, a person can experience his death authentically, or, as Heidegger says, can “experience” (erfahren) death in a “genuine sense” (genuinen Sinne).\textsuperscript{15} The authentic experience of death is that experience of death in which a person experiences it as what it is, namely, as the projection into no particular abilities. The authentic experience of death can therefore be said to be the explicit, not fleeing, experience of projecting into no particular abilities.

But what, then, is the “anticipation” of authentic experience of death? “Anticipation” (Vorlaufen), for Heidegger, is not merely expecting or predicting; in fact, Heidegger resists both these senses of the word. Expecting or predicting, Heidegger suggests, can only relate to events whose way of being is presence-at-hand; to expect or to predict is to expect or predict that something will be present.\textsuperscript{16} Anticipation, on the other hand, is the anticipation of something whose way of being is characterized by existence, the ability-to-be, or care. What is anticipated is the authentic experience of death: anticipation is the anticipation of death (Vorlaufen zum Tode), or the anticipation of a person’s authentic experience of death. Still, however, anticipating the authentic experience of death is not a mere awaiting of the authentic experience of death. By anticipating the authentic experience of death, Heidegger writes, a person does not “think” or “brood” over it (denken and bedenken).\textsuperscript{17} Rather, by anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person courageously, determinedly, and transparently seizes it.

\textsuperscript{14} BT, 235 [254].
\textsuperscript{15} BT, 222 [239].
\textsuperscript{16} BT, 242 [262].
\textsuperscript{17} BT, 241 [261].
the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, Heidegger writes, “[t]he more clearly this possibility is understood, the more purely does understanding penetrate to it as the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general.”

Whereas “anticipation” is Stambaugh’s (as well as MacQuarrie and Robinson’s) translation of “Vorlaufen,” other translations that can be given for “anticipation” are “forerunning” or “running up into.” Whereas these translations are, I believe, inadequate because they must only be understood metaphorically, they nevertheless capture the dimension of the transparent and determined seizure of the authentic experience of death that Heidegger means to evoke by Vorlaufen zum Tode. In anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person seizes, runs up into, his explicit experience of projecting into no particular abilities.

Second, however, according to the concept of authenticity, the authentic person anticipates his individuality. To restrict myself to the quote I gave above:

Becoming free for one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging themselves upon us, so that the factical possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen.

A person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is also a person’s anticipation of his authentic understanding of his own factical abilities, and, even more, his own factical abilities which are “lying before” that death. Furthermore, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of choosing those abilities, which he understands to be factical, and lying before his death. I will give, in the sixth chapter, a full discussion of the “individuality” that is anticipated by the authentic person; here I wish only to give an initial sense of what it is.

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18 BT, 242 [262].
19 BT, 244 [264].
By anticipating his abilities in such a way that those abilities are understood to be \textit{factual}, and to be \textit{lying before death}, a person anticipates his abilities in such a way that they are understood to be \textit{individual}. For they are, according to Heidegger’s understanding of “facticity” (\textit{Faktizität}) (which I will also describe fully in the fourth and sixth chapters), understood to be those abilities by which a person is, as the particular individual he is, constituted.\textsuperscript{20} And they are, as anticipated as lying before death, understood to be what Heidegger calls a “whole” (\textit{Ganze}),\textsuperscript{21} and, as a whole, constitutes a person in his limited, particular, individuality.

Additionally, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is his anticipation of his \textit{ability to choose}, and, indeed, his ability to \textit{make individual choices}. As I will explain in the sixth chapter, in anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person is placed in the mood of anxiety (\textit{Angst}), since anxiety is that mood in which death is authentically experienced.\textsuperscript{22} But in the mood of anxiety, a person, Heidegger writes, “reveals himself” as “being free for the freedom of choosing and grasping itself.” Even more, the anxiety experienced in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death “brings Da-sein \textit{before its being free for}… (\textit{propensio in})…, the authenticity of its being…”\textsuperscript{23} In the anxious anticipation of the authentic experience of death, therefore, a person anticipates his ability to make \textit{individual} choices. Later, I will say more about these individual choices. Here, however, I only want to note how this ability to make individual choices fills out the individuality that is anticipated by the authentic person.

The authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and anticipates his

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{BT}, 127 [135].
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{BT}, 244 [264].
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{BT}, 245 [265]; \textit{BT}, 232 [251].
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{BT}, 176 [188].
individuality, in this sense: he anticipates his understanding of himself in terms of limited and factical abilities; and he anticipates his ability to make individual choices.

Third, and lastly, according to the concept of authenticity, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and a person’s anticipation of his individuality, are identical with one another. One can glimpse this identity in the quote that I have already provided twice:

Becoming free for one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging themselves upon us, so that the factical possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen.24

In a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, a person’s factical abilities, limited by death, are disclosed, so that they can first be authentically understood and chosen. A person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and a person’s anticipation of his individuality, are the same.

This identity becomes even clearer if one refers to the role of anxiety in a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality. As I suggested, it is in the mood of anxiety that death is authentically experienced. But, for Heidegger, in anxiously anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person does not only experience an anxiety that explicitly discloses that a person projects into no particular abilities. Also, and even, at the same time, in anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person experiences an anxiety that discloses a person’s individuality:

24 BT, 244 [264].
In [anxiety], Da-sein is taken back fully to its naked uncanniness and benumbed by it. But this numbness not only takes Da-sein back from its ‘worldly’ possibilities, but at the same time gives it the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being.\(^{25}\)

The mood of anxiety not only (\textit{nicht nur}) discloses a person’s “naked uncanniness,” or, according to Heidegger’s understanding of “uncanniness,” the loss of worldly abilities, so that a person finds himself absolutely not “at home.”\(^{26}\) The mood of anxiety also, and, more precisely, \textit{at the same time} (\textit{zugleich}), is that mood in which a person is given the ability to be an individual. Or, again:

\begin{quote}
Together with the sober \textit{Angst} that brings us before our individualized potentiality-of-being, goes the unshakable joy in this possibility.\(^{27}\)
\end{quote}

The anxiety experienced in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death is “sobering” because, as the mood in which a person explicitly experiences death, it attends to the collapse of those abilities with which a person ordinarily fills his life. As Heidegger says, anxiety “fetches” a person out of those embracing abilities.\(^{28}\) But anxiety is also, \textit{together with} (\textit{zusammen mit}) this sobriety, a mood of “unshakeable joy” (\textit{gerüstete Freude}): it is in this that a person is also given the ability to be an individual.

It might be suggested that this identification of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality only holds true, for Heidegger, in the case of a person’s anxious anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and that it therefore need not hold true in the case of the anticipation of the general, not necessarily anxious, authentic experience of death. But this suggestion assumes that, for Heidegger, there can be an anticipation of the authentic experience of death.

\(^{25}\) \textit{BT}, 316 [344].  
\(^{26}\) \textit{BT}, 176 ff. [188 ff.].  
\(^{27}\) \textit{BT}, 286 [310].  
\(^{28}\) \textit{BT}, 176 [189].
death without the mood of anxiety, which, however, is not the case.\textsuperscript{29} Heidegger neither equivocates about nor qualifies his identification of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, with a person’s anticipation of his individuality. As Heidegger writes, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death “frees for death the possibility of gaining power over the existence of Da-sein and of basically dispersing every fugitive self-covering-over.”\textsuperscript{30} A person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is that anticipation by which his own self is uncovered.

In the seventh chapter, I will give a detailed argument about why I believe this concept of authenticity is paradoxical. I will, however, briefly state my claim here. As I suggested, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of his explicit experience of projecting into no particular abilities. However, as I also suggested, a person’s anticipation of his individuality is his anticipation of understanding himself in terms of limited and factical abilities, and making individual choices. This latter anticipation appears to require, however, that a person anticipates his projection into particular abilities: for how else could he understand himself in terms of limited and factical abilities, and anticipate his ability to make individual choices? But if, according to the concept of authenticity, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of his individuality, then, according to the concept of authenticity, a person’s anticipation of his projection into no particular abilities is his anticipation of his projection into particular abilities. And this is a paradox.

\textsuperscript{29} According to Heidegger, “thrownness into death,” or a person’s “ownmost nonrelational potentiality-of-being not to be bypassed”—a person’s death—is revealed “more primordially and penetratingly in the attunement of Angst” (\textit{BT}, 232 [251]). A person authentically experiences death in the mood of anxiety. Or, again, “the attunement which is able to hold open the constant and absolute threat to itself arising from the ownmost individualized being of Da-sein is Angst” (\textit{BT}, 245 [265]).

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{BT}, 286 [310]), emphases not added.
Still, if the concept of authenticity is a paradox, this does not necessarily mean that it needs to be discarded, or entirely rejected. In the seventh chapter, in which I try to show that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical, I will therefore consider a way in which the concept of authenticity can be rethought, in such a way that it does not present a paradox. Perhaps there is a way of thinking about how we relate to our deaths, in such a way that we can relate to ourselves as individuals, that does not involve a simultaneous anticipation of the projection into no particular abilities, and the projection into particular abilities.

2. *The heroism critique of authenticity*

In the second chapter, I will review some criticisms, as well as some defenses, that the concept of authenticity has received in the scholarly literature. My aim will be to show that the kind of criticism that I offer in this dissertation has not yet been offered, and to show that sympathetic defenses of the concept of authenticity interpret it in such a way that a paradox, in it, is conspicuous. Here, however, I would like to consider one criticism of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity which, in many ways, resembles my own. I would like to indicate the way in which my criticism differs from this criticism. This criticism can be found in the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Simon Critchley.31

Levinas and Critchley have taken issue with what can be called the “heroic” view of death found in *Being and Time*. Critchley suggests that Heidegger’s concept of authenticity shares certain features with the idea of “tragic heroism,” especially as it was

articulated in post-Kantian German philosophy. According to this idea of “tragic heroism,” the tragic hero is fated to die. However, this fatal fate, his death, is, in fact, his possibility of achieving his individuality. For example, Antigone wins her conscience by burying herself alive. This tragic heroism is not limited only to the action of tragedies. I can mention that, in the Romantic interpretation of Socrates, it was the identity of an encounter with death and an encounter with the virtuous, individual self that was emphasized:

Perhaps [Socrates] did not imagine, however much he must have been aware of the true dignity both of his own character and of the cause of truth and virtue in which he suffered, that that character and that cause would in after ages derive new reverence and dignity, from the example of resolution and steadfastness which he set before his friends and disciples in the manner of his death.32

For Critchley, this tragic heroism is fully present in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. “Tragic-heroic thematics of authenticity are powerfully at work”33 in Being and Time, Critchley writes, insofar as “through an anticipatory relation to its death, Dasein can freely assume its fate, its historicity, and achieve the individual union of freedom and necessity.”34 This conclusion agrees with how I interpreted the concept of authenticity just above. By anticipating the authentic experience of death, the authentic person anticipates his individuality; by heroically seizing his death, the authentic person heroically seizes himself.

Levinas and Critchley try to undermine this understanding of death, according to which a person can relate to it in such a way that, at the same time, he can achieve his individuality. And they undermine this understanding of death by developing their own

33 “Comedy and Finitude,” 111.
34 “Comedy and Finitude,”, 111.
conceptions of what a person’s relation to his death genuinely is. I can point out here, however, that Levinas and Critchley, in writing about a person’s relation to his death, do not make all of the distinctions that I made above; they do not write about a person’s “authentic experience” of death, and do not always write about a person’s “anticipation” of the authentic experience of death. But if the relation to death of which they write resembles any of the relations to death which I have described, it is the authentic experience of death: it is a person’s explicit, and not fleeing, experience of death, in terms of what it genuinely is.

Levinas therefore understands the authentic experience of death as the experience of the other, and Critchley understands the authentic experience of death as comic experience. I will not, here go into the details of how, exactly, the authentic experience of death should be understood to be the experience of the other or comic experience: I only want to indicate what is essential for understanding Levinas’s and Critchley’s critique of Heidegger. For Levinas, the authentic experience of death is an experience in which suffering attains its purity, where there is no longer anything between us and it [death], [and] the supreme responsibility of this extreme assumption turns into supreme irresponsibility, into infancy. Sobbing is this, and precisely through this it announces death. To die is to return to this state of irresponsibility, to be the infantile shaking of sobbing.\(^{35}\)

And, for Critchley, “death is that in the face of which the subject is not able to be able.”\(^{36}\) Critchley and Levinas therefore understood the authentic experience of death in a way that is similar to the way in which I explained the authentic experience of death above. To be sure, Critchley understands the authentic experience of death as an experience in

\(^{35}\)Time and the Other, 72.
\(^{36}\)”Comedy and Finitude,”, 112.
which a person “is not able to be able,” which is different from understanding the
authentic experience of death as an explicit experience of the fact that a person is able,
that is, does project, but projects into no particular abilities. And Levinas, for his part,
does not specifically understand death as projecting into no particular abilities. Still, both
Levinas and Critchley evoke an authentic experience of death in which, as Levinas says,
a person experiences that he is entirely irresponsible, or, as Critchley says, is unable.

But, for Levinas and Critchley, if the authentic experience of death is understood
in these ways—as an experience of irresponsibility or inability—then it does not make
sense to understand the authentic experience of death as an experience in which a person
is able to be an individual. In other words, this understanding of death destroys the tragic-
heroic paradigm, according to which the hero, in confronting his death, “wins,” as it
were, his individuality. As Levinas writes, in view of his understanding of the authentic
experience of death, that authentic experience of death marks the end of the subject’s virility and heroism. The now is the fact that I am
master, master of the possible, master of grasping the possible. Death is never
now. When death is here, I am no longer here, not just because I am nothingness,
but because I am unable to grasp. My mastery, my virility, my heroism as a
subject can be neither virility nor heroism in relation to death.37

And, similarly, Critchley writes, as a consequence of his understanding of the authentic
experience of death, death “is not something that can be heroically assumed in a free
fatefulness, but is rather something radically ungraspable, a weaker and ever-weakening
conception of finitude.”38

37 Time and the Other, 72.
38 “Comedy and Finitude,”, 112.
What the criticism I offer in this dissertation shares with Levinas’s and Critchley’s critiques is the idea that, in a person’s relation to his death, a person cannot relate to himself in such a way that he can be an individual. I have been inspired by Levinas’s and Critchley’s work to pursue this path, even though I think that their pursuit of it faces certain obstacles—obstacles which are related to their understanding of the authentic experience of death as the experience of the other and as comic experience, analogies which, I believe, recreate the very problem which, in Heidegger, they mean to critique. There are, however, two key differences that I wish to point out between our respective critiques.

First, what I am critiquing is the identification, proposed by the concept of authenticity, between a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and a person’s anticipation of his individuality. As I suggested, Levinas and Critchley generally avoid the concept of anticipation. So there is a sense in which I am critiquing an entirely different problem from the one that Levinas and Critchley are critiquing, even if the two problems are, in a general way, similar. They are *generally similar*, insofar as both critiques consider, *generally*, whether a person’s relationship to death can facilitate a *relationship* to himself in which a person is an individual. But they are different in terms of how that relationship to death, and to a person himself, is understood.

Second—and this is the major difference—Levinas and Critchley both develop their own conceptions of the authentic experience of death, that is, they develop conceptions of the authentic experience of death that do not mean to present how Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, understands the authentic experience of death, or a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death. They believe that, if the
authentic experience of death is understood in the ways that they propose, then it becomes clear that a person who authentically experiences death cannot, in that experience, be able to be an individual, or a “tragic hero.” I wish to show how a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death cannot be identified, as the concept of authenticity proposes, with a person’s anticipation of his individuality. But I believe that these two anticipations cannot be identified with one another, because of the meaning that Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, gives to them. My critique is therefore an immanent critique, not an external critique, of the concept of authenticity in *Being and Time*. I believe that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical; but that it is paradoxical because it itself articulates a paradox. In this light, the concept of authenticity, and its tragic heroism, self-destructs.

3. *The plan of this dissertation*

The plan of this dissertation is as follows.

*Chapter 2.* I will here consider some criticisms and defenses of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity in the scholarly literature. I aim to show that critiques have not, in large part, focused on the problem of a paradox in the concept of authenticity; and that defenses, in interpreting the concept of authenticity, give evidence to a paradox of which, however, they are more or less unaware.

*Chapter 3.* I will here give an interpretation of Heidegger’s concept of care, a concept whose meaning must be established in order adequately to understand the concept of authenticity. I will argue that Heidegger defines care as a structure, consisting in three types of abilities that belong to ontological essence of Dasein, or the human
being. I will also show how my interpretation of care makes sense of Heidegger’s ontological understanding of Dasein or the human being as, essentially, the “ability-to-be,” or as a being whose being consists in abilities.

Chapter 4. I will here give an interpretation of Heidegger’s concept of inauthenticity, a concept whose meaning must, like that of care, be established in order to understand the concept of authenticity. I will resist the common interpretation according to which the anonymity that belongs to the inauthentic person is reducible only to the inauthentic person’s conformity to das Man, “the one,” “the they,” or, as I will put it, the impersonal crowd. I will give an interpretation according to which the inauthentic person’s anonymity also is explained by what I call the inauthentic person’s “existential mania.” As a heuristic, I will draw on the psychoanalytic understanding of mania, in Freud, Melanie Klein, and D.W. Winnicott.

Chapter 5. I will here consider some preliminary problems in the interpretation of Heidegger’s understanding of death. I will first consider in what sense, for Heidegger, death can be experienced, and in what sense death can be authentically experienced. I will then consider one of Heidegger’s fundamental descriptions of death—that it is the “possibility of impossibility.” I will discuss some of the apparent difficulties this formulation gives rise to, possible ways to resolve them, and the interpretation of the formulation that I believe is correct.

Chapter 6. I will here give an interpretation of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. I will first look in more detail at what, for Heidegger, is involved in the authentic experience of death. I will then look at how, for Heidegger, the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death. And I will finally look at how, according to
the concept of authenticity, the authentic person anticipates his individuality, and how this anticipation of his individuality is identical to his anticipation of the authentic experience of death.

Chapter 7. I will here offer a critique of the concept of authenticity: I will try to show that it is a paradoxical concept. I will claim that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death cannot be identified, as the concept of authenticity proposes, with a person’s anticipation of his individuality. I will also raise a related problem posed by the concept of authenticity, namely, that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is nonsensical. Finally, I will consider a way of rethinking the concept of authenticity that can relieve it of a paradox. But I will also present reasons why the concept of authenticity should not be rethought, so that, ultimately, from its paradox, there is no relief.
Chapter 2: Critiques and Defenses of the Concept of Authenticity

The concept of authenticity is one of the central concepts of Being and Time, and, naturally, it has given rise to much scholarly debate. The concept of authenticity has been attacked from a number of perspectives: primarily—and beginning in the mid-twentieth century—it has been attacked on account of its moral and political consequences, and its status as ideology. However, recently, the concept of authenticity has been defended, and from an equivalent variety of perspectives. It has been understood to be a version of Kant’s ethics of autonomy; an account of how a person can overcome a dispersed life, and lead a life that is coherent and integrated; and as an account of how a person achieves responsibility.

I will here give an overview of these critiques and defenses of the concept of authenticity. My purpose in this overview is to show how the critique of the concept of authenticity that I will offer in this dissertation has, on the one hand, been overlooked, and, on the other hand, is partially motivated. On the one hand, the moral, political, and ideological critiques of the concept of authenticity do not find it to be paradoxical. In fact, they imply that it is not paradoxical. On the other hand, the defenses of the concept of authenticity pose the problem of a paradox in that concept: in their elaborations of the concept of authenticity, that concept can be seen to be paradoxical. But these defenses are, more or less, unaware of that paradox.

One last note should be added here. In the following, I will not address one type of critique of the concept of authenticity. This is the critique according to which the concept of authenticity rests on assumptions that belong to German Idealism’s
“metaphysics of the subject,” or on the view of the human being as autonomous and self-transparent. In a number of texts, including *Being and Time*, Heidegger gives a systematic and compelling critique of this metaphysics of the subject.\(^{39}\) One could even characterize Heidegger’s philosophy as a whole as a critique of this metaphysics:

Heidegger wishes to undermine the view of the human being as self-originating. If the concept of authenticity depends on this metaphysics—if it suggests that the human being is autonomous, self-transparent, or self-originating—then it is clearly problematic. A good presentation of the relation between the concept of authenticity and this metaphysics of the subject, and of how Heidegger, in his later work, developed views that avoided a similar kind of reliance on the metaphysics of the subject, has been given by Bret Davis\(^ {40}\) and Fred Dallmayr.\(^ {41}\)

I will therefore (1) look at critiques of the concept of authenticity in order to show that they do not indicate that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical; and (2) look at defenses of the concept of authenticity in order to show that their accounts of the concept of authenticity indicate that it is paradoxical, without, in the main, their being aware of it.

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1. *Critiques of the concept of authenticity*

Three types of critique of the concept of authenticity can be identified: (A) a moral critique, (B) a political critique, and (C) an ideological critique. I will look at each in turn.

A. Many critiques see in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity what Leo Strauss understood to characterize Heidegger’s philosophy as a whole, when he commented that “Heidegger has learned the lesson of 1933 more thoroughly than any other man.”[^42] The problem with the concept of authenticity is that it is immoral. But why is it immoral?

In the first chapter, I gave a preliminary characterization of the concept of authenticity: the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and, identical to that, anticipates his individuality. I did not, however, give a full characterization of the individuality that the authentic person anticipates. I will give that full characterization in the sixth chapter. Here, however, it is necessary to say something about it. For Heidegger, a person anticipates his individuality insofar as he, among other things, anticipates his ability to make *independent choices*. For Heidegger, these choices are “independent” because they are not dependent on what Heidegger calls “das Man”—“the one,” or the “they,” or, as I will put it, the impersonal crowd, whose norms for acting and understanding a person generally follows. This impersonal crowd, for Heidegger, generally determines the specific *type* of possibilities that a person chooses—and therefore accounts, among everyone, for a general condition of “averageness” (*Durchschnittlichkeit*). And it also determines *that* each a person chooses these average

possibilities. Each person therefore suffers, for this reason, a “disburdening” (*Entlassen*) of his own, independent, ability to choose.\(^{43}\)

On the other hand, the authentic person *burdens* himself with his own, independent, ability to choose. This is related to the fact that the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death. As I will explain more fully later, for the person who anticipates the authentic experience of death, the impersonal crowd is unable to disburden him of his own ability to choose. According to Heidegger, “any being-with the others fails when one’s ownmost potentiality-of-being is at stake.”\(^ {44}\) In other words, insofar as a person anticipates the authentic experience death (that experience in which a person’s “ownmost potentiality-of-being is at stake”), then any “being-with” others—the carrying out of that kind of care that the impersonal crowd carries out—can no longer occur. But this implies, for Heidegger, that if a person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and if a person anticipates making any choices, then these choices must be made by *the person himself*. Heidegger therefore writes that “[a]nticipation of its nonrelational possibility forces the being that anticipates into the possibility of taking over its ownmost being of its own accord.”\(^ {45}\) A person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death—the “anticipation of [the person’s] nonrelational possibility”—*compels* a person to anticipate making his own choices, or to make choices “of [his] own accord.”

Again, I will return this dimension of authenticity later. Relevant here is the fact that, for Heidegger, the authentic person anticipates the ability to make choices that are

\(^{43}\) *BT*, 119-120 [127].
\(^{44}\) *BT*, 243 [263].
\(^{45}\) *BT*, 243 [263].
not determined by anyone but himself: what and that the authentic person anticipates choosing, is not determined by the prescriptions of the impersonal crowd, but only by himself. And this dimension of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity has given rise to the charge that it involves a highly problematic, because immoral, decisionism.

The concept of authenticity has been linked to decisionism at least since Count Christian von Krockow’s Die Entscheidung (1958), which grouped Heidegger together with Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger as three exemplary decisionist thinkers.46 Of course, it is Schmitt who is generally thought to be the primary and clearest representative of decisionism. Schmitt argued in his Political Theology that certain situations obtain, in which legally-binding rules are no longer able to be enforced.47 Schmitt was referring, in particular, to the state of war, or to the “state of exception” (Ausnahmezustand). In these situations, according to Schmitt, a sovereign is able to emerge who determines binding laws. But the fact that these laws are binding cannot be traced back to already established legal rules—since those rules are in suspense. Their bindingness is due, rather, only to the fact that the sovereign has decided on them. Schmitt viewed his decisionism as a theory of sovereignty, in the tradition of Bodin or Hobbes (“Sovereign is he who decides on the exception”48) as well as a response to a legal philosophy, like that of Hans Kelsen, which holds that the bindingness of legal rules is self-sustained, or is not dependent on any personal resolution that they be enforced, but rather can be derived from a fundamental legal rule. The reception of Schmitt’s theory of decisionism, however, has mainly emphasized something else: that with a theory of a sovereign who is capable, like an

46 Christian Graf von Krockow, Die Entscheidung: eine Untersuchung über Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger (Campus Verlag, 1990). It is unpublished in English.
48 Political Theology, 5.
absolute god, of creating binding rules without any reason but his own decision, Schmitt was promoting an immoral morality. For Schmitt can be understood to be celebrating, or fetishizing, the individual’s act of decision itself, without any concern for whether this decision follows any social or rational constraints.

Heidegger’s understanding of authenticity as a person’s ability to make choices independently of the prescriptions of the impersonal crowd has been understood along the same decisionist lines. Herman Philipse has given a rigorous presentation of the decisionism in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, in a long response to Frederick Olafson’s contention that it is possible to ground generally binding moral prescriptions on Heidegger’s analyses of Dasein in *Being and Time*. Philipse believes that if there is any normative proposal in *Being and Time*, then it is concentrated in the concept of authenticity, and, in particular, in the authentic person’s ability to make choices independently of the prescriptions imposed by *das Man*. Philipse stresses that, for this reason, these choices must not be determined by any general rules: a person is able to be authentic, only in a vacuum of social or rational normative guidelines. From this, Philipse draws the plausible implication that Heidegger’s concept of authenticity entails an anti-morality. For a person can be authentic only if he frees himself from any social or rational constraint. The concept of authenticity therefore *prescribes* that a person resist any social or rational prescription; it prescribes the dissolution of prescription. This is why it is immoral. It can be added that, for Philipse, Heidegger’s inheritance of the sins of decisionism does not end here. Philipse suggests that because of the heightened possibility of conflict and disorder in circumstances in which no general rules are

acknowledged, Heidegger’s concept of authenticity leads to authoritarianism. In these circumstances, only a general law, or what Philipse not too subtly calls a *Gleichshaltung*, which is backed merely by authoritarian fiat, can and must guarantee order.\(^{51}\)

B. Many critiques have also understood the concept of authenticity to have dangerous *political* effects. Though this kind of critique of the concept of authenticity is similar to the ideological critique that I will describe just below, it should be separated from it. It does not claim that the concept of authenticity is a philosophical concept that merely lends the veneer of philosophical legitimacy to a political program that was already underway, in order to perpetuate it. Rather, it claims that the concept of authenticity is simply politically dangerous.

This critique is the most straightforward. As I have suggested, the concept of authenticity identifies a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death with a person’s anticipation of his individuality. But this means that the pathway to a person’s individuality goes through a person’s encounter with death. The concept of authenticity thereby valorizes death. Just as the religious ethics of martyrdom gives death the significance of the means to salvation, so too Heidegger’s concept of authenticity gives death the significance of the means to individuality. But by valorizing death, Heidegger also valorizes that kind of politics that valorizes death—primarily, that kind of politics that celebrates war.

Adorno especially critiqued the concept of authenticity from this perspective. In *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Adorno was actually less concerned with the mystification of

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\(^{51}\) A similar line of reasoning, that connects Heidegger to decisionism, and that links this decisionism to authoritarianism, can be found in Reiner Schürmann’s attempt to identify Heidegger’s thought with anarchism. See *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, trans. Christine-Marie Gros (Indiana University Press, 1987).
the language that Heidegger uses in order to describe authenticity—he largely limits that critique to its popular publicists. Adorno was more concerned with the militarism that the concept of authenticity promotes. For Adorno, Heidegger’s concept of authenticity is “a regression to the cult of death” and “from the beginning [has] gotten along well with military matters.” Even more, for Adorno, Heidegger gives death the obligatory force of Kantian morality. Heidegger “cracks the whip when he italicizes the auxiliary verb in the sentence, ‘Death is.’ The grammatical translation of the imperative in a predication makes the imperative categorical. This imperative does not allow for refusal, since it no longer at all obliges like the Kantian imperative, but describes obedience as a completed fact.” Like a military commander, the concept of authenticity makes death a privileged state, and even makes death obligatory.

C. The concept of authenticity has also been criticized as ideology. This critique is not entirely separate from the moral and political critiques. For the ideology critique, the concept of authenticity is immoral, and, indeed, immoral because it evinces a decisionism; additionally, it encourages militarism. However, for this critique, the immorality and militarism in the concept of authenticity only reflect and perpetuate a group of fateful political and cultural ideas which, at the time of the publication of Being and Time, already had currency in Weimar Germany.

Karl Löwith, who was a student of Heidegger’s at the University of Freiburg, was one of the first critics of Being and Time who claimed that its concept of authenticity is ideological. According to Löwith, the identification of a person’s anticipation of the

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53 The Jargon of Authenticity, 88.
authentic experience of death with a person’s anticipation of his individuality is not materially distinct from the Nazi regime’s injunction to blind sacrifice:

“Freedom toward death,” which in Being and Time is printed in italicized boldface, and on the basis of which the Dasein which is always one’s own and is individuated unto itself achieves its “capacity-for-Being-whole,” corresponds in political decisionism to the sacrifice of one’s life for the total state in the exigency of war. In both cases the principle is the same: the radical return to something ultimate, namely the naked that-ness of facticity, i.e., the return to what remains in life when one does away with every kind of inherited life-content or what-ness.54

Furthermore, what the “specifically German sense of Heidegger’s notions of Dasein” makes clear is that

existence and resoluteness, Being and capacity-for-Being, the interpretation of this capacity as one of fate and Having-To, the insistence on the (German) capacity-for-Being which is “always one’s own,”… all reflect the catastrophic manner of thinking characteristic of almost all people in Germany during the time following the war… All these concepts and words were fundamentally expressions for the bitter and hard resoluteness of a willing which asserts itself in the face of the Nothing and which is proud of its contempt for happiness and humanity.55

Löwith finds in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity what can be called a “heroic nihilism.” A person can become something, can become an individual, through an throwing himself into an experience in which he is nothing: death. Like Adorno, Löwith believes that Heidegger’s articulation of this heroic nihilism motivates political militarism. However, Löwith views it primarily as a rhetoric that works to conscript readers and listeners into militaristic policies that were already being pursued. After

Löwith, and in Germany, this critique has especially been elaborated by Jürgen Habermas.⁵⁶

More recently, Richard Wolin has extended this ideology critique in order to show that the concept of authenticity, as well concepts associated with it in Being and Time, promoted not merely a political militarism, but a more general Weimar cultural sensibility that endorsed violence and transgression, and was contemptuous toward democratic values. A philosophical mirror of this sensibility, the concept of authenticity, and Being and Time as a whole, is an invitation to live dangerously. The concept of authenticity reflects, for example, the “aestheticization” of death familiar from Weimar art (for example, Dix), as well as from modern and Weimar conservative political thought (for example, Jünger’s group). Death is understood to disrupt, in a liberating way, the alienating rigidity and mechanicity of uniform daily life:

[Striking in Heidegger] is what one might describe as a shared disposition, mood, or aesthetic sensibility [with Weimar “conservative revolutionaries”]; a general fascination with “limit-situations” (Grenzsituationen) and extremes; an interest in transposing the fundamental experiences of aesthetic modernity—shock, disruption, experiential immediacy; an infatuation with the sinister and forbidden, with the ‘flowers of evil’—to the plane of everyday life, thereby injecting an element of enthusiasm and vitality in what had otherwise become a rigid and lifeless mechanism.⁵⁷

Additionally, for Wolin, the isolation of the authentic person—as I suggested above, the authentic person’s anticipation of his individuality is dependent on his freedom from

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submitting to the prescriptions of the impersonal crowd—reflects an elitism that is “distrustful of a democratic sensibility”\textsuperscript{58}.

The “hero-worship” proposed by Heidegger—the search for an archetypal exemplar of human greatness—is suggestive of Nietzsche’s Übermensch. Both the Übermensch and Heidegger’s authentic Dasein manifest their “superior natures” by their scorn of moral convention. The hero (along with the “bohème,” to whom neither Nietzsche nor Heidegger accords much interest) is the quintessential antibourgeois. Whereas for the bourgeois, life is a matter of calculation, utility, and narrow self-interest, for the hero, glorious acts of self-affirmation count alone, and utilitarian concerns are beneath contempt\textsuperscript{59}.

A number of points about these moral, political, and ideology critiques can be made. First, it may be correct to find in the concept of authenticity an immoral decisionism. And it may be correct to find in the concept of authenticity a “heroic nihilism,” or a “regression to a cult of death” that promotes militarism. But these critiques do not question the validity of Heidegger’s arguments that justify this heroic nihilism or militarism. In other words, these critiques do not question the validity of Heidegger’s arguments concerning authenticity, namely, that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is identical to a person’s anticipation of his individuality. Rather, they employ a polemical language (nihilism, regression, and cult) in order to describe the concept of authenticity in such a way that makes it look by turns frightening and embarrassing. These critiques can be called the “status quo” critiques of the concept of authenticity. They merely point out its deviation from generally accepted moral and political beliefs, and find it problematic merely on account of this deviation. This may be rhetorically effective. But it is a philosophically ineffective means of combating a concept that, clearly, carries dangerous implications. With the ideology critique, the

\textsuperscript{58} The Politics of Being, 46.
\textsuperscript{59} The Politics of Being, 63.
situation is the same. The concept of authenticity is associated with facets of a cultural sensibility that we no longer share and wish to share. However, through this ascription of guilt-by-association, the justifications for and coherence of the concept of authenticity go unchallenged. François Fédier, in commenting on ideology critiques of Heidegger’s philosophy that identified it as the sophisticated propaganda of National Socialism, rightly pointed out that these ideology critiques can preclude an actual criticism of that work itself: “one realizes immediately that there is also a means to prevent ab limine the possibility of objective appraisal: namely, by moralistically sealing off access to his work.”

The relevance here, however, of the fact that none of these critiques question the justifications for or the coherence of the concept of authenticity, is that, as a consequence, none of these critiques raise the question whether the concept of authenticity is paradoxical. These critiques even imply that the concept of authenticity is not paradoxical. To be sure, what is paradoxical can be morally and politically dangerous, as well as ideologically effective—in the Marxist sense, all ideology must articulate contradictions; and Kierkegaard knew, in Fear and Trembling, that his exposition of Abraham’s paradoxical faith could lead to baseless murder. But to identify the concept of authenticity with a decisionism that was actually realized during the Nazi era, and that continues to be realized today; or to understand it as promoting a regression to a cult of death, something that must be able to be realized since the cultic behavior to which a person regresses did in fact occur in the past; or to view it as a concept that reflects the

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tastes and practices of the “anti-bourgeoisie,” tastes and practices which, necessarily, must have been realized if the historical category of the “anti-bourgeoisie” is to make any sense—all of this is to imply that the concept of authenticity is not paradoxical. If it were paradoxical, then its conceptual content—the identification of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality—could not be realized in decisionism, in a regression to a cult of death, or in the tastes and practices of the anti-bourgeoisie.

Ultimately, the good intentions of the moral, political, and ideology critiques can be more effectively carried out by a demonstration that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical. And part of my own intention in trying to demonstrate that it is paradoxical is to show that the decisionism and militaristic politics that it proposes are impossible, and that if it is ideology, it is unpersuasive as ideology. For putting the legacy of *credo quia absurdum est* aside, what is paradoxical is both impossible and unpersuasive.

2. **Defenses of the concept of authenticity**

The concept of authenticity has also received a number of sympathetic interpretations that try to defend it. I will look at three representatives of these defenses here: (A) a defense of the concept of authenticity as a version of Kant’s idea of autonomy; (B) a defense of the concept of authenticity as an account of how a person can lead a coherent life; and (C) a defense of the concept of authenticity as an explanation of how a person achieves responsibility. My aim is to show how, in each of these defenses, the concept of authenticity presents a paradox, but how, in each of these defenses, this paradox goes more or less unacknowledged. The paradox in the concept of authenticity is a problem
that sympathetic interpretations of authenticity invariably pose; yet they have not yet confronted this problem either explicitly or critically.

A. As I already suggested, the concept of authenticity involves a person’s anticipation of the ability to make independent choices. The fact that the concept of authenticity involves this anticipation of the ability to make an individual choices has led many interpreters to recognize in it a commitment to the value of autonomy, and therefore to understand authenticity as a Kantian moral concept, and even one which remedies certain problems in Kant’s own account of autonomy.

For Heidegger, the authentic person possesses the autonomy of being able to anticipate making independent choices. But the anticipation of this ability primarily involves a resistance to following the prescriptions of das Man, the impersonal crowd. In order to anticipate this ability, a person only needs to resist the prescription, by the impersonal crowd, of that and what he chooses. According to Steven Crowell, therefore, in *Being and Time*

[...]he kind of subject who can be an agent while being absorbed in the world is a self whose identity is normatively achieved not by overcoming the passivity in its nature in order to constitute itself as a unified person, but rather by overcoming its anonymity to take responsibility for its own self as a task.62

Therefore, while Heidegger’s concept of authenticity explains how a person is autonomous, nevertheless this autonomy does not derive, as it derives for Kant, from a problematic noumenal self which is supposed to produce events in the world that contravene and cannot be explained by its causal laws. It only derives from a person’s claiming responsibility for himself, over against a condition of everyday anonymity.

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Sonia Sikka has especially tried to understand the concept of authenticity as a version of Kant’s idea of autonomy. For her, just as Kant divides the human being into freely acting, moral self, and a mechanically acting, empirical self, in *Being and Time*, “Dasein also has two ‘selves,’ or possible ways of being, one of which involves an unsteady being driven about by daily concerns, and the other a self-possessed choosing to be responsible.”63 For Sikka, while there is not a substantial difference between the moral self and the authentic self, Heidegger describes phenomenologically what Kant tries to deduce *a priori*:

*Being and Time*, I believe, attempts to uncover the phenomenological basis for Kant’s view that the property of person’s, in virtue of which they are worthy of respect, is freedom… Furthermore, “authenticity” is Heidegger’s version of autonomy. Like Kant, he presents it as being the result of a decision whose motivating source appeals without compelling, and is identified as the self rather than any alien authority. The result is a description of self-regulation that is supposed to represent a realization, rather than a compromise, of autonomy, and is a necessary condition for any form of morality.64

Sikka is correct that Heidegger’s phenomenology of authenticity does describe a state of the person quite close to Kantian autonomy. Even if that state does not, as Heidegger carefully specifies, include guidance by universalizable subjective maxims or by an internal court of justice,65 nevertheless the authentic person is able to anticipate making choices that are not coerced, and can, as a consequence, “regulate” himself in such a way that he is responsible for his own actions.

But it is important to emphasize that, despite this parallel, Sikka is aware that Kant, in describing the origins and the exercise of autonomy, says nothing about death,

64 “Kantian Ethics in *Being and Time*,” 319.
65 *BT*, 270 [293].
and that, for Heidegger, and as I mentioned in the introduction, authenticity is inextricably linked to death. As I suggested in the introduction, and as I will describe in greater detail later, a person’s anticipation of the ability to make independent choices is identified, by Heidegger, with a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death. Sikka recognizes this distinction. “There is no parallel, in Kant’s thought,” Sikka writes, “to the central place Heidegger assigns to the awareness of death.”66 But while Sikka thus admits that it is a notable, if not the central difference, between the two accounts of autonomy, she does not raise the question of the meaning, explanation, and effects of this difference. Nor, in her own description of how Heidegger’s authenticity evinces Kant’s autonomy, does she give any “place” to it in Heidegger’s account. I will return below to the significance of the fact that while Sikka acknowledges the “place” that death has in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, she does not substantively discuss that place at all.

B. The concept of authenticity has also been understood to give an account of how a person is able to lead a coherent life. Charles Guignon, in a number of texts, has especially defended the concept of authenticity from this perspective. It should be pointed out that this defense is particularly sensitive to the connection between the concept of authenticity and Stoic ethics, which exhorts a person to live, against the arbitrariness and disorder of everyday life, a self-collected life that is directed toward a singular aim. It is also sensitive to another parallel between the concept of authenticity and Stoic ethics. For Stoicism, a self-collected life partially originates in the anticipation of death, the *praemeditatio futurorum malorum*. Similarly, according to this interpretation of the

66 “Kantian Ethics in *Being and Time*,” 315.
concept of authenticity, a person’s ability to lead a coherent life is rooted in what Guignon calls a “confrontation” with death. Unlike Kantian defenses of the concept of authenticity like Sikka’s, then, this defense of the concept of authenticity does not shy away—or apparently does not shy away—from discussing the “central role” that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death plays.

For Guignon, the reason why Heidegger claims that a person is, in an everyday way, not authentic, is due to a condition of self-dispersion. For Guignon, the “tendency to fall into mundane activities catches us up in the ‘turbulence’ of life and tears us away from the possibility of taking hold of our existence in a coherent, integrated way.” The problem with “mundane activities” is not that they are banal or uninteresting. The problem, rather, is that they have no immanent order or purpose. To live in an everyday way is to be in a state of distraction in one’s practical life. But just as distraction is a kind of negative state of mind in which one’s thinking is a thinking which has no purpose, or an indeterminate thinking, an inauthentic practical life is a life which has no purpose, or an indeterminate living.

For Guignon, however, intruding into this self-dispersion of inauthenticity is the realization that one will die. “Confronted with our being-toward-death,” or “forced to confront our own finitude,” “the roles we have been playing suddenly seem anonymous, and we are faced with the demand to own up to our lives.” By “confronting” death, a person recognizes that his time is not infinite, and he is led to consider whether he is engaging in his, so to speak, “real priorities” or what, so to speak, is “really important.”

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68 Ibid., 282.
Additionally, the specific finitude of a person’s life that death displays unfolds before a person a delimited, defined life that stands in contrast to the indefinitely extensive life presented by everyday self-dispersion. The “confrontation” with death therefore allows a person to live a coherent, purposeful, and whole life. “Facing death, one is pulled back from the dispersal, distraction, and forgetfulness of everydayness. The result is the ability to live with a clear-sighted grasp of the temporal continuity and future-directedness of one’s own life-happening. This lucidity leads to a way of living we might call ‘self-focusing.’”69 “Authentic self-focusing, understood as a resolute reaching forward into a finite range of possibilities, gives coherence, cohesiveness, and integrity to a life course.”70

The interpretation of the concept of authenticity as a person’s ability to lead a coherent life therefore acknowledges the “central role” that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death possesses in Heidegger’s account of authenticity in Being and Time. It is only because a person’s confrontation with death intrudes on his dispersed, distracted, purposeless life, that a person is able to order his life in such a way that it has a definite goal, and is able to understand it to be a whole bounded by definite limits. For Guignon, “as Heidegger describes it, the path to [a] deeper involvement in the public world passes through a radical breakdown of our complacent absorption in everydayness.”71 I will, however, come back below to a question that is very significant in evaluating this interpretation of authenticity. According to Heidegger’s understanding of a person’s anticipation of death, does that anticipation in fact give a person the ability

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to understand his life purposefully and coherently? Does the anticipation of death, an “encounter” with death, display to a person a purposeful and coherent life?

C. Finally, François Raffoul has given an interpretation of the concept of authenticity that stresses the close connection between a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death—or what Raffoul also calls a person’s finitude or facticity—and the constitution of his responsibility. Generally, through his interpretation, Raffoul wants to develop an idea of responsibility that is independent of the closely related concept, “accountability,” which, for him, has dominated the philosophical tradition, and which suggests that a person is responsible for his actions only so long as he is the undetermined cause of his actions—or only insofar as he lacks any relation to death, finitude or facticity, experiences in which, according to Raffoul, a person is not the undetermined cause of his actions.

For Raffoul, the concept of authenticity shows that it is only through the relation to experiences, like those of death, finitude, or facticity, which fundamentally undermine a person’s responsibility, that a person’s responsibility is constituted. Raffoul’s interpretation is therefore a representative of a perspective that sees in the concept of authenticity the beginning of a tradition of thinking about responsibility which is especially prevalent in recent French thought, and which can be found in all of the major French thinkers of the twentieth century, like Levinas, Bataille, Lacan, Derrida, and Nancy. A person’s responsibility—or more broadly agency or freedom—is constituted through experiences or conditions in which that responsibility is radically placed in

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suspense. Heidegger’s concept of authenticity understands that the radically improper experience of death—that is, an experience in which a person experiences what falls outside his own self—is that experience in which a person comes to appropriate himself, or constitutes his own selfhood. As Giorgio Agamben writes, for Heidegger,

dead, considered as a possibility, is absolutely empty; it has no particular prestige. It is the simple possibility of the impossibility of all comportment and all existence. Precisely for this reason, however, the decision that radically experiences this impossibility and this emptiness in Being-towards-death frees itself from all indecision, fully appropriating its own impropriety for the first time.73

But how, then, does Raffoul understand the concept of authenticity to explain how an experience in which a person’s responsibility is radically undermined, to be that experience in which a person’s responsibility is constituted? For Raffoul, in an experience of death, finitude, or facticity, a person experiences some event74 whose existence the person has not chosen, and whose character is such that it excludes the exercise of that person’s choice. However, Raffoul claims that it is only to the extent that a person experiences an event which he has not chosen, and which cannot be seamlessly integrated into a person’s voluntary choices, that a person can, in fact, become responsible for that event. For it is only this kind of event that can be a task or a challenge that a person must explicitly, and willfully, try to resolve. It is only this kind of event that a person can be responsible for. A person’s experience of death, in Heidegger’s sense, is a paradigm of the experience of such an event. Therefore, a person exercises for the first time his own responsibility, to the degree that he experiences, and takes responsibility

74 Raffoul himself seems to suggest that what is experienced in an experience of facticity or finitude is an “event”; it is far from certain, of course, that Being and Time would allow this.
for, his own death—even if, or precisely because, it is impossible for him to take responsibility for that experience of death. Raffoul therefore writes that “[t]he primordial sense of responsibility is hence: the appropriation of the inappropriable, *as inappropriable*” and that “what I have to appropriate, ultimately, is the inappropriable itself… I am responsible because I am thrown in an existence that I have to answer for. So that to be thrown (facticity) and to be called (responsibility) are one and the same phenomenon.”

In evaluating these defenses of authenticity, I want to begin with Raffoul. For Raffoul explicitly recognizes an implication of his defense of the concept of authenticity that I wish to claim is present in the other two defenses, even though those other two defenses do not acknowledge it. Raffoul is aware that with his interpretation of the concept of authenticity, as “the appropriation of the inappropriable, *as inappropriable,*” he has walked pointblank into the territory of the paradoxical. Raffoul admits that the connection that he draws between a person’s experience of death, finitude or facticity, and the constitution of responsibility might seem at first paradoxical: the very motif of facticity could indeed be seen as a challenge to the very possibility of responsible agency, as it opposes the traditional values and ideals of modernity, its model of the absoluteness and transparency of subjectivity. More precisely, does facticity, with its senses of opacity, finitude, and expropriation, not challenge the very *possibility* of a free self-assumption of subjectivity in responsibility, since it represents precisely not only what I am not responsible for but also what I cannot in principle appropriate?76

However, Raffoul raises this specter of paradox (“might *seem* at first paradoxical”) *before* he affirms that “[t]he primordial sense of responsibility is hence: the appropriation

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75 “Heidegger and the Origins of Responsibility,” 212.
of the inappropriable, *as inappropriable*” and that “what I have to appropriate, ultimately, is the inappropriable itself.” In other words, Raffoul does not conjure away, but materializes, this specter of paradox. He *affirms* that, in light of the concept of authenticity, the constitution of responsibility is a paradoxical constitution, or that a person becomes responsible only when he enjoys an experience—that of death, finitude, or facticity—in which his responsibility is undermined. In still other words, Raffoul *affirms* that the concept that he interpreting, the concept of authenticity, is paradoxical.

A closer look at the Kantian defense of authenticity reveals the same presence of paradox. I mentioned above that Sikka acknowledges that Heidegger, unlike Kant, gives a “place” to what she calls the “awareness” of death in his understanding of autonomy—that is, in his understanding of authenticity. But Sikka, in describing how the authentic person realizes autonomy, makes no mention at all of what “place” the “awareness” of death has in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. *Effectively*, in Sikka’s interpretation, the “awareness” of death has *no place* at all in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. And Sikka has good reason for this, so to speak, “utopianism of death,” or this assigning to death *no place* in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. For according to Heidegger, the “awareness” of death (a word that Heidegger never uses) possessed by the authentic person is the anticipation of the authentic experience of death in which, as I suggested above, a person transparently, and determinedly, seizes the fact that he projects into no particular abilities. The anticipation of the authentic experience of death is therefore the seizure of a devastating experience. As Heidegger writes, in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, a person finds himself “primarily unsupported by concern
taking care of things” (*auf die besorgende Fürsorge primär ungestützt*)\(^{77}\); that is, in the anticipation of the experience of death, a person finds that he is unable to care for particular other people, and is unable to take care of particular worldly beings.

But if a person’s “awareness of death” is *this*, then to what extent is it compatible with a person’s realization of the ability to make autonomous choices, or a person’s realization of “self-regulation”? Is it not paradoxical that a person have an “awareness” of death—that is, anticipate the authentic experience of death—and, *also*, realize his autonomy, make autonomous choices, and actively “regulate” himself? It can be conceded that Sikka never interprets the concept of authenticity as identifying a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and the realization of a person’s autonomy. Sikka only claims that the anticipation of the authentic experience of death has a “place” in Heidegger’s account of authenticity. It would therefore be incorrect to claim that Sikka’s defense of the concept of authenticity is paradoxical in the strict sense that it identifies the anticipation of the authentic experience of death with a person’s realization of autonomy. But if it is not paradoxical in this strict sense, then it is paradoxical in a looser or more conventional sense. At the very least, a crucial step is missing from Sikka’s account. How can such an anticipation of the authentic experience of death *lead to* the realization of autonomy and self-regulation? Can such a step exist? Would not such a step falter? For very good reason, Kant did not give a central “place” to the “awareness” of death in his understanding of autonomy. Giving a central place to the anticipation of the authentic experience of death in the realization of autonomy displaces

\(^{77}\) *BT*, 245 [266].
that autonomy from its very possibility. The anticipation of the authentic experience of death immerses a person in an experience in which autonomy cannot be exercised.

Guignon’s interpretation of the concept of authenticity as a person’s ability to lead a coherent life faces a similar dilemma. It can be recalled that for Guignon, intruding into the self-dispersion of the inauthentic person’s life is a person’s “confrontation” with death; confronting the fact of this death allows a person to live his life in a coherent, purposeful, way. Death, a “radical breakdown,” is, as Guignon writes, “the path to [a] deeper involvement in the public world.” “Confronted with our being-toward-death,” “forced to confront our own finitude,” “the roles we have been playing suddenly seem anonymous, and we are faced with the demand to own up to our lives.” But in what sense can a person’s “confrontation” with death be understood as “path”; and in what sense is this path a path insofar as it, so to speak, voices a “demand to own up to our own lives”? I would suggest that while Guignon does—and unlike Sikka—incorporate a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death into his interpretation of the concept of authenticity, he incorporates it by consuming it.

For Heidegger, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is not the disclosure of “path,” and it is, especially, not the disclosure of a “path” because it places a “demand” on a person. I can here refer to what I briefly explained above, and will explain in greater detail in the sixth chapter. Heidegger understands the anticipation of the authentic experience of death as an anticipation which brings a person into the mood of anxiety. But Heidegger writes that anxiety is numbing: in anxiety, “Da-sein is

78 The interpretation of death as a kind of “path” is also a common interpretation of the concept(s) of death worked out in Heidegger’s later work. See Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 64-73, and Carol White, *Time and Death: Heidegger’s Analysis of Finitude* (Ashgate, 2005).
taken back fully to its naked uncanniness and benumbed by it.”  

The rendering, in this passage, of Heidegger’s “von ihr benommen” as “benumbed by it” is peculiar to Stambaugh, and is not used by MacQuarrie and Robinson, who translate “von ihr benommen” as “fascinated by it.”  

But that anxiety “benumbs,” or is numbing, has a straightforward plausibility. If a person is “taken back fully to [his] naked uncanniness,” or is immersed in a situation in which, in no way, a person is “at home,” that is, has no familiar self to pursue, skills to exercise, and worldly being to use—and this is the authentic experience of death—then a person is numbed. Anxiety is a mood of disorientation, and it is a mood that is disoriented: it is numbness. In anticipating the authentic experience of death, then, a person experiences this numbness, or this disorientation.

But how then could a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, an experience of anxiety, numbness, and disorientation, be equated, as Guignon equates it, with the disclosure of a path, a path that is a demand, and, in particular, a demand to live a coherent, purposeful, life? Anxiety, numbness, and disorientation would appear to disclose, in fact, only that no paths open up before a person, and that no demands can be heard and responded to. This explains why, while Guignon does not, like Sikka, simply pass over the anticipation of the authentic experience of death in his defense of the concept of authenticity, he nevertheless suppresses part of that anticipation. He suppresses the fact that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is, for Heidegger, an anticipation of anxiety, numbness, and disorientation. He suppresses this dimension of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death for good reason.

79 BT, 316 [344].
80 BT/MR, 394.
For were a person’s “confrontation” with death understood as the anticipation of anxiety, numbness, and disorientation, then it would be strictly paradoxical that this “confrontation” with death be an “confrontation” that opens up a path for a person, or that places a demand on a person. However, this is precisely how Guignon understands a person’s “confrontation” with death: as, on the one hand, a “confrontation” with that which voices a clear demand that a person “own up” to his life, and a “confrontation” with a “pathway” through which a person’s “deeper involvement” in the world is made possible; but, on the other hand, as an “confrontation” with what Guignon rightly calls a “radical breakdown,” or, understood rigorously, a “confrontation” with a death in the face of which a person is anxious, numbed, and disoriented. These two hands are cuffed together in an incoherent knot.

My purpose is not, however, to criticize any of these interpretations of authenticity as interpretations of authenticity. These interpretations of authenticity are, in fact, correct. They all pose the problem of a paradox at the heart of the concept of authenticity. But they all pose this problem of a paradox because they are correct. Putting aside one or two exceptions, they try to do justice to the side of the concept of authenticity according to which a person is able to be responsible, autonomous, or live a coherent life; they try to do justice to the side of the concept of authenticity according to which the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death; and they try to do justice to the fact that these two sides of the concept of authenticity are identified with one another. But this constellation of elements in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity articulates a paradox, and, therefore, sympathetic interpretations of the concept of authenticity inherit, and suffer the paradox in the concept that they interpret. They may
not acknowledge that paradox, or they may try, in certain respects, to cover that paradox up—for example, by not discussing what one of those sides in fact involves. A critique of these interpretations should not, therefore, critique these interpretations *themselves*. Rather, it should critique what they correctly interpret: Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. This is what I now propose to do.
Chapter 3: The Structure of Care

In this chapter, I will give an interpretation of one of the central concepts of Being and Time, and a concept which is crucial to understand in order to critique Heidegger’s concept of authenticity: the concept of care (Sorge). By “care,” Heidegger does not mean the psychological state or attitude of “concern,” the opposite of the psychological state or attitude of indifference, in which a person relates to a state of affairs in apprehensiveness. As Heidegger writes, “as a primordial structural totality, care lies ‘before’ every factual ‘attitude’ and ‘position’ of Da-sein, that is, it is always already in them as an existential a priori.” Nor does Heidegger simply mean what he calls Besorgen and Fürsorge—a person’s taking care of particular worldly beings, or a person’s caring for particular others. Besorgen and Fürsorge are modalities of care; however, they are not care itself. Care, rather, indicates the kind of being (Sein) of Dasein, that is, the kind of being of the human being. Dasein, the human being, is, as care. Heidegger therefore gives his primary discussion of care in a section entitled: “The being of Da-sein as care.” “Care,” therefore, is coextensive with what Heidegger calls “existence” (Existenz) that is, the type of being that Dasein, the human being, possesses, as opposed to the kind of being things and worldly tools possess—kinds of being he calls, respectively, presence-at-hand (Vorhandenheit) and readiness-to-hand (Zuhandenheit). “Care” is also coextensive with what Heidegger calls a person’s “ability-to-be” (Seinkönnen), a designation of a person’s being whose significance I will discuss below.

81 BT, 180 [193].
82 BT, 178 [191].
83 BT, 39ff. [42ff.].
But if care is the being of the human being, then the question that must be asked is: What is this care that is the being of the human being? In the following, I will offer what I call a “structurally differentiated” view of care. For this structurally differentiated view of care, care, for Heidegger is *the unity of certain basic elements which, together, constitute the structure of the being of the human being*. Heidegger states explicitly that care indicates such a differentiated structure. The section in which Heidegger introduces his discussion of care is entitled: “The Question of the Primordial Totality of the Structural Whole of Da-sein.” And at the end of his discussion of care, Heidegger writes that “[t]he whole of the constitution of Da-sein itself is not simple in its unity, but shows a structural articulation which is expressed in the existential concept of care.” A structurally differentiated view of care will, then, focus on the elements by which this structure is articulated, and their unity—since it is this “which is expressed in the existential concept of care.” I will argue that three basic elements can be identified: what I will call the “possible self,” a person’s “skills,” and the “facilitating world.” I will explain in greater detail below why I use these terms, what, in particular, these three structural elements are, and why, together, they constitute a unified structure.

Primarily, I will, in this chapter, give a structurally differentiated view of care. However, viewing care as a structure carries two implications that I want to emphasize. On the one hand, the claim that Heidegger defines care as a structure involves a slight but notable departure from the common way in which interpretations understand Heidegger to define care. For these common interpretations, Heidegger defines care as the being of the human being, but, beyond that, the being of the human being according to which

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84 *BT*, 169 [180].
85 *BT*, 186 [200], emphasis added.
things are “at issue” or “matter” for the human being. I will discuss, in the following, what being at “issue” or “mattering” means. There is no question that things being “at issue” or “mattering” does provide a preliminary and general sense of what Heidegger means by “care.” However, these concepts do not allude to any kind of structure. In the following, I will therefore want to emphasize that, while things being “at issue” or “mattering” does provide an initial orientation to what care is, nevertheless it is ultimately and specifically a structure that defines what care is. Second of all, viewing care as a structure allows one of the most salient aspects of what, for Heidegger, the being of the human being is, to be seen: the fact that the being of the human being is the ability-to-be (Seinkönnen), or consists in abilities (Möglichkeiten), or, more precisely, as I will discuss in the following, a projection into abilities. William Blattner, in Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism,\(^{86}\) has especially emphasized this; and my interpretation of care is strongly dependent on this book. The three elements of the structure of care—the possible self, skills, and the facilitating world—all ultimately indicate three different kinds of abilities. In the following, I will therefore want to emphasize how this structurally differentiated view of care helps understand the being of the human being in terms of abilities.

As I suggested just above, I do not offer this interpretation of the concept of care only because it is one of the central concepts of Being and Time. The concept of care, rather, underlies the primary concepts involved in the critique of the concept of authenticity that I wish to offer. Primarily, it underlies the concepts of inauthenticity and authenticity—the two concepts that are the themes of the following two chapters. Heidegger makes it very clear that a person’s care underlies a person’s inauthenticity and

\(^{86}\) See Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism.
authenticity. Both inauthenticity and authenticity are ways in which a person “is” —
neither, as I suggested above, can qualify an object — and therefore both must be
understood on the basis of that particular way in which a person “is.” But if a person “is”
as that which cares, or — to use the designations that are coextensive with “care,” or that
also designate a person’s being — that which “exists,” or that which “is its possibility,” or
that which, as Heidegger says, is characterized by “mineness” [Jemeinigkeit], then it is
only on the basis of a person’s care, existence, being-as-possibility, or mineness, that a
person’s inauthenticity and authenticity take their respective shapes. Heidegger writes:

Dasein is always its possibility. It does not “have” that possibility only as a mere
attribute of something objectively present. And because Da-sein is always
essentially its possibility, it can “choose” itself in its being, it can win itself, it can
lose itself, or it can never and only “apparently” win itself. It can only have lost
itself and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is essentially possible as
authentic, that is, it belongs to itself. The two kinds of being of authenticity and
inauthenticity — these expressions are terminologically chosen in the strictest
sense of the word — are based on the fact that Da-sein is in general determined by
always being mine. But the inauthenticity of Da-sein does not signify a “lesser”
being or a “lower” degree of being. Rather, inauthenticity can determine Da-sein
even in its fullest concretion, when it is busy, excited, interested, and capable of
pleasure.

Therefore, I give this interpretation of care with the intention of being able to show, in the
following two chapters, what inauthenticity and authenticity are, and, ultimately, with the
intention of preparing my critique of the concept of authenticity.

I will, then, (1) look at the common interpretation of care according to which it
consists in the fact that things are “at issue” or “matter” for a person; and (2) offer my
own structurally differentiated view of care; and I will (3) explain in what way a

87 These three latter concepts are used by Heidegger to describe the being of Dasein or the human
being, at the very beginning of Being and Time; only later does he add that the being of Dasein or
the human being is care. See BT, 39 ff. [42 ff.], and BT, 178 ff. [191 ff.].
88 BT, 40 [42-3].
structurally differentiated view of care allows the being of the human being to be understood to comprise a person’s ability-to-be or abilities.

1. Care as things being “at issue” or “mattering”

I would first like to consider an interpretation of care which, currently, is very widespread. Care is understood as the being of the human being. Care is the ontological character of the human being, what distinguishes the way in which the human being is, as opposed to the way in which objects or worldly beings (for example, tools), are. Care, then, is not what Heidegger calls an “ontic” characterization of the human being—it does not express a property or properties of the human being that other beings do not possess (for example that it is a “featherless biped”). Care, rather, is the way in which the human being is—regardless of the specific properties it might possess. In Heidegger’s terminology, care is an ontological, or existential characterization of the human being, not an ontic, or existentiell characterization of the human being.89

This is all correct, and it will be the starting point of my own interpretation. What I would specifically like to consider here is the interpretation that care, as the being of the human being, consists in the fact that, for the human being, things are “at issue” for it, or things “matter” to it.90 For this interpretation, then, regardless of whatever specific properties characterize the human being, the human being is in such a way that what

89 BT, 10 ff. [12 ff.], 41 [43-4]
90 It may be objected that I am conflating two different interpretations of care into one; after all, the passages in Being and Time in which this language (in translation) can be found are (with one exception—see below) different, and treat different themes. This is especially the case if the interpretation of care as things “mattering” is based on Heidegger’s discussion of attunement and moods—which does not discuss things being “at issue” at all. However, in interpretations of care as things being “at issue” or “mattering” for a person, these two concepts do not seem to mean anything substantially different from one another. In any case, whether they are two interpretations or one should not change whether my objections are correct.
things *are*—what either worldly beings, or the human being itself *are*—makes a

difference to how the person, himself, is. (This relation, it can be noted, is also present in
the person’s relation to things characterized by “indifference,” insofar as this *indifference*
to things can and does indeed “make a difference” to how the person, himself, is.) To
give only two examples—since this view is very widespread—William Blattner writes:

By “care” Heidegger does not want to refer to the particular emotional
phenomena of worry and devotion, but rather to a constitutive or *existential*
condition of human life, on that characterizes a carefree and/or detached person as
much as one committed to service to others. To care about one’s being is for it to
matter to one, to make a difference to who one is… Our lives *matter* to us, they
*concern* us, even when they matter by being negligible or irrelevant, whereas non-
human things have no concern with anything at all. They cannot even experience
their existence as irrelevant.  

And Charles Guignon writes:

Heidegger… [says that] what is distinctive about Dasein is that its *being*—that is,
its life as a whole—is *at issue* for it. In other words, we are beings who *care* about
what we are: we care about where our lives are going and what we are becoming
in our actions. Because our being is at issue for us in this way, we are always
taking a *stand* on our lives in what we do. To say that I take a stand on my life
means that I do not always act on my immediate desires and basic needs, for I
have second-order motivations and commitments that range over and affect the
sorts of first-order desires I have.  

Now, there is no question that this interpretation of care gives a good sense of
what it is. That care involves things being “at issue” or “mattering” for a person is, in
fact, unavoidable. As some passages that I will quote in the following will show, that
things are “at issue” or “matter” for a person is an essential part of the being of the human
being, and, if care is the being of the human being, then things being “at issue” or

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“mattering” for a person is part of care. Even more, this interpretation explains why Heidegger uses the word “care” (Sorge) to begin with: he is writing about that very general feature of human practical existence by virtue of which humans are capable of comporting themselves toward beings, a world, and themselves, in such a way that beings are significant, that world matters, and they themselves have a point. For this reason, this interpretation is more than adequate as a preparatory point of access to what care is: that things are “at issue” or “mattering” familiarizes and orients us to care.

What I only would like to suggest here is that Heidegger, in writing about things being “at issue” or “mattering” for a person, is not defining what care is, in the sense that to define what care is, is to give a precise and comprehensive specification of what it is. Alternatively, when he writes about care as a structure, it is abundantly clear that he is defining what care is in this sense. I here then will briefly review those textual areas in which Heidegger discusses things being “at issue” or “mattering,” in order to show that, in these discussions, Heidegger does not mean to give a definition of care.

The formulation of things being “at issue” and the idea of things “mattering” for a person are found in the MacQuarrie and Robinson translation, at the very beginning of Heidegger’s analyses of the being of the human being, in the section entitled “The Theme of the Analytic of Dasein.” The passages run as follows:

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93 At least I think that interpretations of care as things “mattering” mean partially to rely on this passage, and specifically on the sentence beginning “To entities such as these…” But I may be wrong; interpretations that understand care as things “mattering” for a person provide sparse textual justification.

94 The formulation of something being “at issue” also appears in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of a passage that begins Heidegger’s consideration of the human being’s temporality (“Dasein exists as an entity for which, in its Being, that Being is itself an issue,” BT/MR, 458 [406]). I will not consider it in detail, because what I say about the passages that I quote in the main body of my text applies to it as well.
We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine*. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves towards their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. *Being* is that which is an issue for every such entity. [Das Sein ist es, darum es diesem Seinden je selbst geht.]

That Being which is an *issue* for this entity in its very Being [Das Sein, darum es diesem Seinden in seinem Sein geht], is in each case mine. Thus Dasein is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities as things that are present-at-hand. To entities such as these, their being is a “matter of indifference”; or more precisely, they “are” such that their Being can be neither a matter of indifference to them, nor the opposite [Diesem Seinden ist sein Sein “gleichgültig,” genau besehen, es “is” so, daß ihm sein Sein weder gleichgültig noch ungleichgültig sein kann]. Because Dasein has *in each case* mineness, one must always use a personal pronoun when one addresses it: “I am”, “you are”.

Furthermore, in each case Dasein is mine to be in one way or another. Dasein has always made some sort of decision as to the way in which it is in each case mine. That entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue, comports itself towards its Being as its ownmost possibility.

I will not dispute the appropriateness of translating *gehen… um* in such a way that it means that its object is “at issue” for its subject. Nor will I dispute the appropriateness of translating *gleichgültig* and *ungleichgültig* as “matter of indifference” and its “opposite,” that is, something which positively matters. So I will, then, acknowledge that Heidegger is stating that, for beings with the being of Dasein, that is, beings with the being of the human being, things are at issue, and things matter. But the question that I want to raise at this point is: where here is Heidegger announcing that he is *defining care*?

It does not appear that he is defining care. In fact, “care” is not mentioned in these passages. To be sure, if one refers to Stambaugh’s translation, it comes *close* to being mentioned in these passages. She renders “Das Sein ist es, darum es diesem Seinden je selbst geht” as “It is being about which this being is concerned.” But it should be emphasized that it only comes *close* to being mentioned, since “to be concerned” is not

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95 BT/MR, 68 [41-2].
96 BT/MR, 68-9 [42].
“care,” Sorge. In fact, Stambaugh uses “concern” to translate Fürsorge, which, as I suggested above, is not identical to care, Sorge, even though it is a modality of care.

Even more, since she introduces “concerned” into this passage through the translation of gehen…um, “concerned” is introduced into this passage only if being “at issue,” which is what this passage is supposed to define care to be, is eliminated from it.

It may perhaps be replied that, in these passages, Heidegger is defining the being of the human being, and, as he later says, that being is care. If this is the case, then when these passages state that things are “at issue” or “matter” for a person, it is defining care, even while care, the term to be defined, is in absentia (a curious procedure). I can concede this for the moment. But then it becomes clear that Heidegger is listing a number of defining properties of care—not only does care entail that things are “at issue” or “matter” for the being whose being is care, but that being whose being is care is characterized by “mineness,” by being “delivered over” to itself, by comporting itself toward itself, by using personal pronouns, by making a decision in respect to itself, and by comporting itself toward its ownmost possibility (which, later, will be defined as that being’s comporting itself toward its own death97). If, then, in this passage, Heidegger is defining care, why is it the case that only things being “at issue” or “mattering” are highlighted, rather than, say, the use of personal pronouns, or the fact of self-comportment?

There is another possible textual source for this definition of care—namely, Heidegger’s discussion of attunement (Befindlichkeit). According to Heidegger, attunement, along with understanding, are both constitutive of “the there” (das Da); and

97 BT, 232 [250].
insofar as “the there” refers to the *being that is there for the human being*, they are constitutive for the human being’s *being there*, that is, the human being’s very being. (“The being which is essentially constituted by being-in-the-world *is* itself always its ‘there.’”98) But whereas understanding discloses the there in terms of *abilities* upon which it can *project*—that is, discloses possible *uses* of worldly beings whose *use* that understanding allows99), attunement discloses, and through specific “moods” (*Stimmungen*), “how one is.”100 However, “how one is” is not, for Heidegger, a simple internal feeling that can be accessed introspectively. “How one is,” for Heidegger, is a general way in which the world shows up. Heidegger’s analysis of bad moods shows this:

In bad moods, Da-sein becomes blind to itself, the surrounding world of heedfulness is veiled, the circumspection of taking care is led astray… Mood assails. It comes neither from “without” nor from “within,” but rises from being-in-the-world itself as a mode of that being. But thus by negatively contrasting attunement with the reflective apprehension of the “inner,” we arrive at a positive insight into its character of disclosure. *Mood has always already disclosed being-in-the-world as a whole and first makes possible directing oneself toward something.*101

Heidegger then explicitly identifies this general showing-up of the world with things “mattering.” As attuned in moods, a person’s “being-in,” that is, a person’s disclosure of the “there,”

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98 *BT*, 125 [132]. Hence “there” is not the “there” of “over there”; it is not a place or discreet space. As Heidegger says, the human being *is* its there: the there *is* therefore the understanding, attuned disclosure of being. Of course, Heidegger smuggles into this rather idiosyncratic conception of the “there” the ordinary spatial significance of “there.” For a human being to be there is not only to be disclosing being in an understanding and attuned way; it is also to be disclosing being in an understanding and attuned way *here and now, at this moment and at this place*. Hence this understanding and attuned disclosure of being is “factical.” It is always at a “there,” or Heidegger’s idiosyncratic “there” is “over there” or “over here.”

99 *BT*, 134 ff. [143 ff.].

100 *BT*, 127 [134].

101 *BT*, 128-9 [136-7].
is existentially determined beforehand in such a way that what it encounters in the world can *matter* to it in this way [in dieser Weise… angegangen werden kann]. This mattering to [Diese Angänglichkeit] is grounded in attunement, and as attunement it has disclosed the world, for example, as something by which it can be threatened. Only something which is the attunement of fearing, or fearlessness, can discover things at hand in the surrounding world as being threatening. The moodedness of attunement constitutes existentially the openness to world of Da-sein.\textsuperscript{102}

In light of these passages, it must be acknowledged that, for Heidegger, things “mattering” for a person is part of a person’s very being, and therefore is part of care. But, again, it is not clear why, here, Heidegger, in indicating the role of things “mattering” in a person’s being, is understood to be *defining* what care is. Similar to Heidegger’s initial discussion of things being “at issue,” or things being a “matter of indifference” or the “opposite” of a “matter of indifference,” care, *Sorge*, is not mentioned in these passages. One would assume that if Heidegger were defining care in these passages, then he would use the word, and indicate that he is defining it; and, again, it will become clear that, when Heidegger does define care, he is very explicit that he is defining care. Additionally, I can again concede that Heidegger is, here, defining care. But it is again not clear why *this* particular property of care is understood to be the *only* or the *primary* property of care. That things “matter” to a person is due to the fact that a person’s being is always characterized by attunement. However, as Heidegger points out, attunement is only one dimension of a person’s being. In particular, it is complemented by a person’s understanding. (“We see the two equiprimordially constitutive ways to be the there in *attunement* and *understanding*”\textsuperscript{103}). Why then should a property that belongs

\textsuperscript{102} BT, 129 [137].
\textsuperscript{103} BT, 126 [133].
to a person’s attunement, that things “matter,” fundamentally define a person’s being or care, rather than, for example, a property that belongs to a person’s understanding?

On the other hand, one reason that does clearly explain why Heidegger is understood to define care as the fact that things “matter” to a person, is that this concept of care has been interpreted in light of Harry Frankfurt’s understanding of care in his influential article “The Importance of What We Care About.” Marlène Jouan has written about the analogies between these two concepts of care. Jouan describes Frankfurt’s understanding of care in the following way:

according to Frankfurt, to care about something is to guide oneself, both in particular courses of action and in life generally, in light of something which is important to us, to such a point that the object of our care is constitutive of what we are. From this definition it is already manifest that the concept of care applies to two main theoretical issues… First a metaphysical one, or the issue of personal identity or self-constitution: the concept of care is meant to provide the conditions of possibility for being a self or a subject…

What is particularly interesting about this definition of Frankfurt’s concept of care is its proximity to the interpretation of Heidegger’s concept of care that I have been discussing. Care amounts to the fact that something is “important” to a person—that something “matters” to a person; and care underlies the very being of a person (it is a “metaphysical” issue). However, Jouan proceeds to characterize Heidegger’s definition of care in the following way:

What about Heidegger’s concept of care? There are two passages in Being and Time which are directly and mainly devoted to this concept: chapter 6 from the first section, where the concept qualifies the Dasein’s being as grasped in the

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104 Harry Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About,” The Importance of What We Care About (Cambridge University Press, 1988).
unity or the whole of its various existential structures, and chapter 3 from the second section, where Heidegger raises the question of the meaning (Sinn) of care… At first approximation, the following definition of care can be given: to care (about/for), as far as the Dasein is concerned, is to be committed to some possibility of himself or herself as the specific form of its always already achieved relation to the world and of its self-understanding within it. Ontologically, this means that care defines the a priori constitution of the Dasein that governs the various ways for him or her to be concerned with other and with the “things” ready-to-hand in the world. Care is thus the articulated core ground in which all the existential characters of the Dasein find their unity, and in reference to which the various “existential” ways of managing oneself in the world can be explained.107

In characterizing Heidegger’s definition of care, Jouan emphasizes that Heidegger defines the concept of care as the unity of all of the structural aspects of a human being’s being: “the concept qualifies the Dasein’s being as grasped in the unity or the whole of its various existential structures.” “Care is thus the articulated core ground in which all the existential characters of the Dasein find their unity.” While, therefore, there may be a sense in which, for Heidegger, care involves something like Frankfurt’s importance, nevertheless, from the perspective of precisely defining what care is, what is relevant is not this importance—or things mattering—but rather a structure.

Let me reiterate that my aim here has not been to minimize the relevance of things being “at issue” or “mattering” for a person for understanding what care is. All of the passages that I have considered show, in fact, that things being “at issue” or “mattering” for a person are deeply involved, for Heidegger, in the being of the human being, and therefore in care. I merely wanted to show that they cannot be understood to define care, in the sense that a definition provides a precise and comprehensive specification of what care is. But what then defines care?

107 “Harry Frankfurt’s metaphysics of care,” 762.
2. A structurally differentiated view of care

In fact, I believe that Jouan’s interpretation of how Heidegger defines care is correct. In other words, I would like to suggest that, for Heidegger, care is, specifically and comprehensively, \textit{a unity of certain elements that makes up a structure, and this structure is the being of the human being}. This view of care can be called the “structurally differentiated” view of care, and I will here give an interpretation of care from its perspective.

Although Hubert Dreyfus does himself offer the interpretation of care as things being “at issue,” he nevertheless views care in this structurally differentiated way. Quoting Heidegger’s statement that care is “the formal existential totality of Dasein’s ontological structural whole,” Dreyfus states that “[c]are unifies the various structural aspects of Dasein’s way of being.” And there is an abundance of evidence within \textit{Being and Time}.

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\item[108] Stephen Mulhall, in his interpretation of the concept of care, gives the Frankfurt-inspired interpretation, but at just that moment at which he identifies Heidegger’s ultimate definition. Mulhall writes that it is Heidegger’s “overarching tripartite characterization” of the being of the human being—which Mulhall enumerates as projecting, being thrown, and being-in-the-world—that “reveals the essential unity of Dasein’s Being to be what Heidegger calls care.” Mulhall then quotes Heidegger’s definition of care as “ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in (-the-world) as Being-alongside (-entities-encountered-within-the-world). This Being fills in the signification of the term ‘care’.” (Mulhall uses the MacQuarrie and Robinson translation.) Mulhall then comments that the “proliferation of hyphens indicates that these provisionally separable elements of Dasein’s Being are ultimately parts of a whole. And, by labeling that whole ‘care’, Heidegger evokes the fact that Dasein is always occupied with the entities it encounters in the world—concerned about ready-to-hand present-at-hand entities, and solicitous of other human beings… The world and everything in it is something that cannot fail to matter to it.” In other words, Mulhall correctly perceives that care \textit{names a unity} (a “whole”) of structural elements (its “parts”). But he then writes that the word care “evokes” something apart from this unity, which, he says, it “labels”—namely, that the “world and everything in it is something that cannot fail to matter to it.” See Stephen Mulhall, \textit{Heidegger and Being and Time: Second Edition} (Routledge, 2005), 112.
\item[109] Hubert L. Dreyfus, \textit{Being-in-the-World: A Commentary of Heidegger’s Being and Time}, \textit{Division I} (MIT Press, 1991), 238-9. Dreyfus’s evidence for his interpretation that “[c]aring, understood ontologically, is ‘making itself an issue,’” is the following passage (which he takes from Macquarrie and Robinson’s translation): “Dasein exists as a being for which, in its being, that being is itself an issue. Essentially ahead of itself, it has projected itself upon its ability to be
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and Time that suggests that care, for Heidegger, is just this. The first section in which Heidegger introduces the chapter entitled “Care as the Being of Da-sein” is itself entitled “The Question of the Primordial Totality of the Structural Whole of Da-sein.” He states that, in this chapter, “the structural whole of the being we seek [the being of Dasein, of the human being] must then come to light in an elemental way.” In the section in which he explains how care is the being of the human being, he begins by stating that “[i]n the unity of the determinations of being of Da-sein that we have mentioned, this being becomes ontologically comprehensible as such.” He characterizes care as a “primordial structural totality.” He says that “[t]he expression ‘care’ means an existential and basic ontological phenomenon which is as yet not simple in its structure.” He speaks of “the unity and totality of the structural manifold of care.” He concludes the section on the being of Dasein or of the human being as care by stating that “[t]he whole of the constitution of Dasein itself is not simple in its unity, but shows a structural articulation which is expressed in the existential concept of care.”

before going on to any mere consideration of itself. In its projection it reveals itself as something which has been thrown. It has been thrownly abandoned to the ‘world,’ and falls into it concernfully. As care—that is, as existing in the unity of the projection which has been fallingly thrown—this entity has been disclosed as ‘there.’” Therefore, Dreyfus, on the one hand, quotes a passage in which Heidegger explicitly states that care designates a unity (“As care—that is, as existing in the unity…”) but then, on the other hand, arrives at the conclusion that care has to do with “making itself an issue.” Now, this is a phrase which does appear in the passage that he quotes. But it appears, in the passage, independently of Heidegger’s explicit statement about care. And—if one were selecting phrases from this passage in order to define care, simply because they appear in this passage—it is a phrase which appears alongside other phrases that could just as much be taken as definitions of care (“Essentially ahead of itself,” “it has projected itself upon its ability,” “it reveals itself as something which has been thrown”).

10 **BT**, 169 [180].
11 **BT**, 170 [182].
12 **BT**, 178 [191].
13 **BT**, 180 [193].
14 **BT**, 183 [196].
15 **BT**, 183 [196].
16 **BT**, 186 [200].
Heidegger, care is a *unity of elements*, which makes up a particular *structure*, and this structure is the being of the human being. And, therefore, an interpretation of care must interpret care in such a way that (a) it shows the elements of the structure that is care, and (b) it shows how those elements are unified.

I will focus here on the first part (a) since, in discussing the elements of the structure of care, how they are unified will become clear. But what are the elements that make up the structure that is care?

Heidegger gives an explicit enumeration of these elements. He writes that “[t]he formal existential totality of the ontological structural whole must thus be formulated in the following structure: The being of Da-sein means being-ahead-of-oneself-already-in (the world) as being-together-with (innerworldly beings encountered). This being fills in the significance of the term care…”¹¹⁷ (As I suggested above, in looking at the view of care according to which it means that things are “at issue” or “matter” to a person, Heidegger is very explicit when he is defining care.) He repeats this enumeration of unified structural elements elsewhere. He writes that “[t]he characterization of care as ‘being-ahead-of-itsel-in-already-being-in’—as being-together-with—makes it clear that this phenomenon, too, is yet structurally *articulated* in itself.”¹¹⁸ He repeats it elsewhere too: The “primordial constitution of being of care” is “being-ahead-of-itself—already-being-in-a-world—as being together with innerworldly beings.”¹¹⁹ And Heidegger provides confirmation that it is these particular elements that constitute the structure that is care, and gives a slightly more specific description of them, in discussing how, as he

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¹¹⁷ *BT*, 179-80 [192].
¹¹⁸ *BT*, 183 [196].
¹¹⁹ *BT*, 188 [202].
says, the “underlying totality of care shows through in the phenomenon of willing.”\(^{120}\)

What “shows through” in the phenomenon of willing is, he says, “the previous disclosedness of the for-the-sake-of-which in general (being ahead-of-oneself), the disclosedness of what can be taken care of (world as the wherein of already-being), and the understanding self-projection of Da-sein upon a potentiality-for-being toward a possibility of the being “willed.””\(^{121}\)

In Heidegger’s enumeration of these elements, what is particularly conspicuous is his emphasis on their temporal senses. In the first three enumerations that I considered, care involves being “ahead-of-oneself,” which involves the future; being “already-in (the world),” which involves the past; and “being-together-with,” which indicates the present.\(^{122}\) In the fourth enumeration, however, this temporal dimension becomes confused; while the first two elements again indicate the future and past, respectively, the third element now no longer appears to indicate the present, but rather the future.\(^{123}\) I will not try to tease out here the specific temporality of care that Heidegger is trying to show in these specific enumerations; it is clear that Heidegger is foreshadowing his later discussion of how care is fundamentally dependent on the three temporal ecstases.\(^{124}\)

\(^{120}\) *BT*, 181 [194].

\(^{121}\) *BT*, 181 [194].

\(^{122}\) Mulhall, in enumerating the elements of the structure of care, especially emphasizes this temporal dimension: “Dasein’s thrownness (exemplified in its openness to states-of-mind) shows it to be already in a world; its projectiveness (exemplified in its capacity for understanding) shows it to be at the same time ahead of itself, aiming to realize some existential possibility; and its fallenness shows it to be preoccupied with the world. The overarching tripartite characterization reveals the essentially unity of Dasein’s Being to be what Heidegger calls care.” *Heidegger and Being and Time*, 112.

\(^{123}\) On the other hand, in the fourth enumeration, the second element also may be taken to indicate the present, although, in the parentheses, Heidegger reaffirms that it indicates the past.

\(^{124}\) *BT*, 297ff. [323ff.].
What, rather, I want to focus on are the three basic kinds of abilities that these enumerations specify in the structure of care. Why exactly these three elements specify abilities will only emerge in the following. But it can provisionally be seen that the first element that Heidegger enumerates, “being-ahead-of-oneself” or “for-the-sake-of-which,” indicates a kind of self which a person purposefully pursues and therefore is able to be. And the second element that Heidegger enumerates, “already-being-in-the-world” or “what can be taken care of,” indicates the world, or worldly beings, which can be cared for, that is, which a person is able to care for. And the third element that Heidegger enumerates, “being together with innerworldly beings,” or “the understanding self-projection of Da-sein upon a potentiality of being,”\(^ {125}\) indicates a person’s ability to be with innerworldly beings, or an ability, by virtue of understanding, to pursue a potentiality-for-being or a possibility.

What I would like to do here is to consider each of these three elements of the structure of care in turn. I will not, however, immediately highlight the sense in which each of these elements of the structure of care are abilities; I will discuss that in the following section. I will, for each of these elements, introduce special, and I hope clarificatory, names. Why I choose these particular names will become clear in the course of my discussion. I will call the first element “the possible self,” the second element “the facilitating world,” and the third element “skills.” I will, however, for the sake of a

\(^{125}\) In the enumerations, this third element seems to change senses. In the first three enumerations, Heidegger writes about being with innerworldly beings; in the fourth enumeration, Heidegger writes about projecting upon a potentiality-for-being, which refers, not to innerworldly beings per se, but rather to the for-the-sake-of-which. I cannot explain this change of sense; it might be related to the fact that Heidegger is trying to show how the structure of care makes sense of willing. In any case, significant for me is only the abilities that these enumerations allow to be identified in the structure of care.
clearer exposition, look at the possible self first, skills second, and the facilitating world third.

A. The possible self. Heidegger’s first characterization of what he calls the “for-the-sake-of-which” or “being-ahead-of-itself,” or what I am calling the “possible self,” makes clear its connection to classical teleology. Just as, for Aristotle, every specifically human undertaking, every technē and every praxis, aims at, or holds before itself in anticipation, some good, so too, for Heidegger, something toward which a person’s action can ultimately aim stands out before him in each of his actions. After describing the “world” as an interlocking network of beings that perform some work (a performance of some work that Heidegger calls “relevance,” Bewandtnis, or “what-for,” Wozu; I will return to this below) Heidegger introduces the possible self as not just another work-to-be-performed, or relevant what-for, but rather as a “for-the-sake-of-which” (Worum-willen):

The total relevance itself, however, ultimately leads back to a what-for which no longer has relevance, which itself is not a being whose being is defined as being-in-the-world, to whose constitution of being worldliness itself belongs. This primary what-for is not just another for-that as a possible factor in relevance. The primary “what-for” is a for-the-sake-of-which.

The possible self duplicates or plays the same position as Aristotle’s “good.” Each worldly activity, or each use of a worldly being, is undertaken for the sake of some specific possible self. (And there is a difference between “the” possible self and “some specific possible self,” which I will comment on in the next paragraph.) Heidegger

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126 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1094a.
127 BT, 78-9 [84].
therefore writes that the uses of worldly beings are “anchored” in the for-the-sake-of-
which.\textsuperscript{128}

But the proximity of the possible self to the good of Aristotle’s practical teleology
is complemented by a specific distance. Heidegger’s possible self is not an abstract
“goodness”—an abstract goodness that Aristotle critically attributes to Plato\textsuperscript{129} but which
is still preserved in his own interpretation of the good as happiness. Rather, it possesses a
particular shape. It is a \textit{self}, and that it is a self explains why I am calling this element the
possible \textit{self}:

Da-sein is a being which is concerned in its being about that being. The “is
cconcerned about…” has become clearer in the constitution of… being toward its
ownmost potentiality-for-being. This potentiality is that for the sake of which any
Da-sein is as it is. Da-sein has always already compared itself, in its being, with a
possibility of itself.\textsuperscript{130}

John Haugeland has given a useful account of how this aimed-at self should be
understood.\textsuperscript{131} Haugeland calls it a “role.” He understands a “role” as a set of normative
expectations, which can be publicly articulated, and to which a person finds himself
accountable.\textsuperscript{132} These normative expectations should not be understood as imperative
obligations, but rather as specifications of a type of life to which a person tries to
conform. It should be noted, however, that the possible self \textit{itself} does not take the form
of a \textit{specific} kind of self—it itself is not any kind of \textit{specific} possible self. The possible
self is “ontological,” not “ontic.” Nevertheless, in a person’s concrete activity, a person

\textsuperscript{128} BT, 179 [192].
\textsuperscript{129} Nicomachean Ethics, 1096a.
\textsuperscript{130} BT, 179 [191].
\textsuperscript{132} For example, according to Haugeland: “[w]e call a sort which is involved in many interrelated
norms a \textit{role}—e.g., the role of the king in chess” (“Heidegger on Being a Person,” 17); and “what
a unity of accountability is accountable for is a function of its official rank—or, more generally,
its various social and institutional roles” (“Heidegger on Being a Person,” 21).
does pursue a specific kind of possible self. The possible self will be instantiated, as the case may be, by a broad diversity of “roles,” such as those of a doctor, a teacher, and so on. A person’s practical activities in the world are directed toward the fulfillment of the normative expectations of some specific possible self.

But the quality that sheds the most light on the meaning of the possible self is not its teleological nature, nor the fact that it is a self, but rather the fact that is always possible. This explains why I am calling it the possible self. This “possibility” must, however, be understood in a specific sense. The possible self is not “possible” in the familiar metaphysical and epistemological senses. That is, it is not a state of affairs that is not inconsistent with what is the case or known to be true. Rather, the possible self is possible insofar as it belongs to the future:

When one understands oneself projectively in an existentiell [that is, some particular] possibility, the future underlies this understanding, and it does so as a coming-toward-oneself from the actual possibility as which Da-sein always exists.133

Or, again, the “schema in which Da-sein comes back to itself futurally, whether authentically or inauthentically, is the for-the-sake-of-itself.”134

What is this “futurity” of the possible self? This futurity must be understood in a specific sense. Heidegger does not understand time to be composed of moments, discreet “presents,” which succeed one another, and which can be quantitatively “added up.” For Heidegger, this is a “vulgar” understanding of time.135 If, for this reason, the possible self is futural, its futurity cannot be understood as a future moment to which a present

133 BT, 309 [336].
134 BT, 333 [365].
moment ineluctably passes. The futurity of the possible self is, rather, a futurity of *availability*. The possible self *stands open* as a determinate kind of self that a person is *able* to direct himself toward. Insofar as the possible self is “futural,” Heidegger suggests, “‘future’ does not mean a now that has not yet become ‘actual’ and that sometime *will be* for the first time, but the coming in which Da-sein comes toward itself.” Or, again, the future self is a “potentiality [that] lets Da-sein come towards itself in its heedful being together with what is to be taken care of.”

The contribution of a person’s possible self to the structure of care can, in this perspective, be understood in the following way: The possible self holds open, as available, some specific self, for which a person’s worldly actions aim.

B. *Skills*. But how does a person manage to pursue some specific kind of possible self, or, to shorten the expression, a possible self? Even if, for Heidegger, a person never will “realize” a possible self, in the sense that it will become a completed object, a person *does* manage and is *able* to move toward it. This suggests that, in the structure of care, the possible self must be complemented by *skills* on whose basis a possible self can be pursued. What I am here calling “skills” describes that element in the structure of care that Heidegger calls “being together” with innerworldly beings, or the “understanding self-projection” of the human being, and it is this “being together” with innerworldly beings, or this “understanding self-projection,” which allow a person to act in such a way that some kind of possible self can be pursued.

I use the term “skills” for a specific reason. For Heidegger, the “understanding” (*Verstehen*) of the “understanding self-projection,” for which I am using the term “skills,”

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136 *BT*, 299 [325].
137 *BT*, 310 [337].
does not primarily refer to a faculty of representation or cognition that displays, to the
mind, objects with particular properties. For Heidegger, this kind of “theoretical”
understanding is secondary to a more fundamental kind of understanding.\(^\text{138}\) Heidegger
writes that

[s]peaking ontically, we sometimes use the expression “to understand something”
to mean “being able to handle a thing,” “being up to it,” “being able to do
something.” In understanding as an existential, the thing we are able to do is not a
what but being as existing.\(^\text{139}\)

“Understanding” means to “be able to do something,” to “handle a thing.” Heidegger
therefore introduces the concept of “projection” (entwerfen) or “project” (Entwurf) in
order to indicate the fundamental character of understanding.\(^\text{140}\) A “project” is the
understanding of some possible action, or some possible use of a worldly being, that
allows that action to be performed, or that allows that worldly being to be used. For this
reason, Heidegger writes that understanding “throws” possibilities “before” (vorwirft) a
person: “the project character of understanding means that understanding does not
thematically grasp that upon which it projects… in projecting project throws possibility
before itself as possibility, and as such lets it be.”\(^\text{141}\) This is why I use the term “skills” in
order to describe this structural element of care. A person’s involvement with
innerworldly beings, or understanding self-projection, consists in the exercise of some

\textit{skills} that allows a person to \textit{act}.

This conception of understanding as skills explains why it is, for Heidegger, along
with the possible self, an element of the structure of care. A person can pursue some kind

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\begin{itemize}
\item \(^\text{138}\) See also BT, 56ff. [59ff.].
\item \(^\text{139}\) BT, 134 [143].
\item \(^\text{140}\) BT, 136 [145].
\item \(^\text{141}\) BT, 136 [145].
\end{itemize}
of possible self because a person has some set of skills whose exercise enables him to pursue some kind of possible self. Heidegger writes that

> formulated primordially and existentially, understanding means: to be projecting toward a potentiality-of-being for the sake of which Da-sein always exists.

Understanding discloses one’s own potentiality of being in such a way that Da-sein always somehow knows understandingly what is going on with itself. This “knowing,” however, does not mean that it has discovered some fact, but that it holds itself in an existentiell possibility.142

A person pursues some kind of possible self. But a person’s understanding allows him to have some set of skills, through which he understands what is “going on” with himself, so that he can project toward a possible self, or “hold himself” in specific possibilities so that he can move toward a possible self. Heidegger therefore writes that a person’s skills “entrusts” a person to himself, or “frees” a person for a possible self:

> As a potentiality for being which it is, it has let some go by; it constantly adopts the possibilities of its being, grasps them, and goes astray. But this means that Da-sein is a being-possible entrusted to itself, thrown possibility throughout. Da-sein is the possibility of being free for its ownmost potentiality of being.143

By, so to speak, “picking up” (and, so to speak, “dropping”) certain skills, a person is “freed” for his “ownmost potentiality of being,” in other words, is freed to pursue a possible self (and, in this case—for reasons which are connected with Heidegger’s use of the word “ownmost,” and which I will explain later—a possible self that is authentic).

This, then, is the contribution that a person’s skills makes to the structure of care: it is only on the basis of a person’s skills, that a person can pursue some kind of possible self.

C. The facilitating world. The structure of care includes the possible self, and skills; a person, whose being is characterized by care, is able to pursue some kind of

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142 BT, 309 [336].
143 BT, 135 [144]
possible self, and is able to exercise some set of skills by virtue of which that self is pursued. However, for Heidegger, this pursuit of a possible self, and this exercise of skills, does not occur in a vacuum. It occurs in a world. The possible self is a worldly possible self; and skills are skills that are deployed in a world. Alongside these first two elements of the structure of care, therefore, Heidegger adds the element of the world, and I will call this element of the world the “facilitating world,” a designation whose meaning will become clear momentarily.

Two features of this facilitating world should especially be emphasized. First, for Heidegger, the world—which, like the possible self, and a person’s skills, is not any particular world; it is a type of structure by which any particular world is organized—consists of worldly beings. But these worldly beings are not an agglomeration of dense, individual, substances, “objects” or “things” whose being is “presence-at-hand” (Vorhandenheit). Rather, they are beings which are “ready-to-hand” (Zuhandenheit), or ready to be practically used.144 Worldly beings are materials, on which work can be performed, and from which other beings that can be used can be developed;145 worldly beings are instruments, or beings with which work can be performed;146 and worldly beings are beings that are produced from materials and through instruments, and which can, in turn, be used for further work.147 As Mark Okrent has shown very well, they are beings whose basic character is their functional use in human activity.148 The fundamental way in which these worldly beings exist can therefore be called

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144 *BT*, 67 [71].
145 *BT*, 66 [70].
146 *BT*, 65 [69].
147 *BT*, 65 [70].
“anthropotechnic.” They are articulated in just that way such that human work and action are supported, or facilitated, by them. “What is at hand,” Heidegger writes, “is discovered as such in its serviceability, usability, determinality.”

Second, these worldly, facilitating beings, enjoy relations of reference (Verweisung) with one another. These referential relations should not be understood in light of the concept of reference common to the philosophy of language. For Heidegger, material beings are “referred to” to the instrumental beings that work on them in the sense that they can, in an appropriate manner, be worked on by them. Instrumental beings are “referred to” the beings that they work to produce in the sense that they can, in an appropriate manner, be worked with, so as to produce those beings. And those produced beings can become material and instrumental in turn, and therefore can be “referred” again to instrumental and produced beings. In other words, worldly beings are related referentially to one another because one use of a worldly being leads directly to, or further facilitates, another use of a worldly being. For this reason, Heidegger says,

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149 The world is technological in the sense that the way in which it is articulated supports human work and practice. But the world is “anthropotechnic” insofar as it is characteristically human technique that this technical articulation allows: human technique uses materials, uses instruments, and produces beings through materials and instruments, and worldly beings are meaningful in just that way, that material-use, instrument-use, and production, can take place. In this sense, an anthropotechnical world is not what is commonly understood to be a “technical” world. A “technical” world (if it even deserves the name “world”) can be compared to an anthropotechnical world in the way that Heidegger, in The Question Concerning Technology, compares the way in which being is disclosed technologically, as “standing reserve” and in the “frame,” to the way that being is disclosed according to the four Aristotelian “causes.” See Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, trans. William Lovitt (Harper & Row, 1982), 8. There is no question that Heidegger preserves the “technicity” of the four Aristotelian causes; they disclose a way in which beings come to presence through techne. However, each of these technical causes possess a meaning in which human action—here, for Heidegger, primarily poeisis—can understand itself, and support itself. Heidegger therefore uses the concept of “indebtedness” to describe the relation to the causes, a concept that makes the causes intelligible in just that way that human practice can be “at home” (in the sense of “oikos”) in them.

150 BT, 135 [144].

151 BT, 78 [83-4].
worldly beings have “relevance” (Bewandtnis). The world is not, then, an exhaustive set of individual substances, things, or objects, but rather a network of mutually facilitating beings, each of whose uses facilitates the uses of other beings.

I call this element of the structure of care the “facilitating world” because, in the ready-to-hand character of worldly beings, and in the referential relations between worldly beings, this world facilitates its own use. Worldly beings are such that they can be used, and they are such that the use of one being allows other beings to be used.

The fact that the facilitating world is facilitating in these ways shows its connection to the other two structural elements of care. A person can pursue some kind of possible self because the ready-to-hand character of worldly beings and the referential relations between worldly beings facilitates the pursuit of some kind of possible self. If a person pursues a possible self of a doctor, then his specific world facilitates that pursuit; he has materials, tools, and products, using which, independently and together, he can be a doctor. And a person can exercise some kind of skills, in order to pursue some kind of possible self, because the worldly situations in which he exercises those skills is composed of beings whose ready-to-hand character and referential relations facilitates that exercise. A person can skillfully pursue a possible self of a doctor because his specific world facilitates the exercise of his skills: its materials, tools, and products, can be used by the exercise of his skills.

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152 BT, 78 [84]. “Beings are discovered with regard to the fact that they are referred, as those beings which they are, to something. They are relevant together with something else…. To be relevant means to let something be together with something else. The relation of ‘together… with…’ is to be indicated by the term reference.”
3. Care and ability

It is possible now to understand more precisely Heidegger’s statement that “[t]he being of Da-sein means being-ahead-of-oneself-already-in (the world) as being-together-with (innerworldly beings encountered). This being fills in the significance of the term care…” “Care” is the structural whole consisting in these three elements: the possible self, a person’s skills, and the facilitating world. And these elements are unified with one another, insofar as by the exercise of some kind of skills, a person pursues some kind of possible self, and this pursuit, and this exercise, are facilitated by some kind of facilitating world. When, therefore, in the following, I speak of a person’s care, I mean to indicate the being of the human being that consists in these three unified elements.

Ontologically—that is, in terms of a person’s very being—a person is characterized by the possible self; by skills; and by being in the facilitating world. And, ontically—that is, in terms of the particular properties that a particular person possesses—a person has a specific possible self, a specific set of skills, and is in a specific facilitating world.

However, I want, lastly, to point out a feature that all of the differentiated structural elements that compose care—the possible self, skills, and the facilitating world—share in common. They all refer to a person’s abilities. The possible self is a self that a person is able to pursue—as available to a person, it is a self that a person is able to become. A person’s skills are skills that a person is able to exercise, and, by exercising, are those skills by which a person is able to pursue a possible self. And the facilitating world is a facilitating world because it consists in worldly beings which are able to be used—in other words, in their ontological character, they are able to perform some work,

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153 BT, 179-80 [192].
and are able to be referred to one another, so that, in their own use, other world beings
are able to be used.

Care, the being of the human being, is therefore a structure that essentially
comprises a person’s abilities, or, more generally, what Heidegger calls a person’s
“ability-to-be” (Seinkönnen). And that it is in terms of a person’s abilities that, in
particular, a person’s authenticity must be understood is clear from the passage in which
Heidegger explicitly links authenticity to the being of the human being:

Dasein is always its possibility. It does not “have” that possibility only as a mere
attribute of something objectively present. And because Da-sein is always
essentially its possibility, it can “choose” itself in its being, it can win itself, it can
lose itself, or it can never and only “apparently” win itself.¹⁵⁴

To be sure, in Stambaugh’s translation, which I am using in this dissertation, the words
“ability” and “abilities” are not used. She renders Heidegger’s “Möglichkeit” and
“möglichkeiten” as “possibility” and “possibilities”; additionally, she renders
“Seinkönnen” not as “ability-to-be,” but as “potentiality-of-being.” These translations,
however, are misleading, and while I will preserve them in quotations that I give, in
referring, in my own text, to the concepts of Möglichkeit, Möglichkeiten, and Seinkönnen,
I will refer to them as “ability,” “abilities,” and “ability-to-be.” The reason is
straightforward. In English, the word “possibility” primarily signifies modal or categorial
possibility—what could be the case or could be true insofar as it is not inconsistent with
what is the case or is known to be true. But what Heidegger means to refer to with
“Möglichkeit” is not this kind of “possibility,” but rather, precisely, a person’s ability—
what a person is able to be, insofar as he pursues a possible self, exercises skills, and uses

¹⁵⁴ BT, 40 [42].
worldly beings. Similarly, the “können” in “Seinkönnen” is misleadingly rendered as “potentiality,” since “potentiality,” like “possibility,” suggests modal or categorial possibility—what a being can be just insofar as it is not inconsistent with what is the case or is known to be true. But by “können” Heidegger means to indicate what a being can be insofar as it is able to be what it can be—that is, what it can be insofar as what it can be are just its abilities:

Da-sein is always what it can be and how it is its possibility [ability]. The essential possibility [ability] of Da-sein concerns the ways of taking care of the “world” which we characterized, of concern for others, and always already present in all of this, the potentiality-of-being [ability-to-be] itself.\(^{156}\)

The structure of care, then, ultimately indicates a structure consisting in a person’s abilities (Möglichkeiten) or ability-to-be (Seinkönnen). One last qualification, however, should be added to this. A person’s abilities, and likewise a person’s ability-to-be, should not be understood as static things that inhere in a person, like the color red, or a certain weight, inhere in a person. But this is not merely because a person’s abilities comprise a person’s care, that is, a person’s very being, and therefore cannot be understood as simple properties of a person’s being. Rather, and primarily, they do not inhere in a person’s being because they do not have, for Heidegger, the ontological character of presence-at-

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\(^{155}\) There is also an etymological argument for preferring “ability” over “possibility” in translating “Möglichkeit.” The English “possibility” is derived from the Latin “possibilitas.” The German “Möglichkeit” is unrelated to “possibilitas”; and its root, “mögen,” has a sense that “possibilitas” lacks: what might be insofar as it is at a person’s pleasure or disposal. “Ability” therefore captures this latter meaning in “Möglichkeit” much better than “possibility.” However, it can be pointed out that the same problem does not obtain in the translation of “Seinkönnen” as “potentiality-of-being.” “Potentiality” derives from the Latin “potentia,” that is, might, force or power; and so, etymologically, “potentiality” preserves a sense of ability that “possibility” does not. But while this might be the case etymologically, the philosophical history of “potentia” or “potentiality” covers over that sense of ability, and so the word “ability” is preferable for the “können” in “Seinkönnen.”

\(^{156}\) BT, 134 [143]. Translation amended.
hand. They are therefore not present. They are, rather, abilities: they “are” only insofar as they are what a person is able to be. This means, however, that if a person is his abilities, this is not due to the fact that those abilities, so to speak, “stand” in him, as substantial, self-subsistent things—as when, for example, a table with four legs, is a table with four legs, because these legs “stand” beneath the table, as substantial, self-subsistent things. Rather, for Heidegger, what supports the fact that a person is his abilities is the fact that a person is projecting into his abilities.

“Projection” (entwerfen) is a concept to which I referred above. As I explained, it indicates the understanding of the human being, but, in particular, that understanding by which a person throws before himself (vorwirft) some ability. The concept of projection can now be expanded in the following way. It indicates the understanding by which a person throws before himself, or, as I will say, projects into, some ability: that is, throws before himself, or projects into, some possible self, or some worldly being. In this throwing-before-himself of, or projecting into, some possible self, or some worldly being, that possible self or worldly being is a person’s ability: a person is able to pursue a possible self, or able to use a worldly being, because, projecting into them, understands how to pursue a possible self, or he understands how to use a worldly being. However, for this reason, projection does not merely support a person’s abilities insofar as it projects into those particular abilities which are a person’s possible self or worldly beings. Even more, it itself is an ability. I initially introduced the concept of projection in order to account for that structural aspect of care which is a person’s skills, and, as I explained, a person’s skills also indicate a person’s ability: a person is able to exercise his skills, so that he is able to pursue a possible self, and is able to use worldly beings. A person’s
projecting, therefore, is that *ability* by which a person is *able* to pursue a possible self, and is *able* to use worldly beings.

In the following, then, when speaking of a person’s care, I therefore mean to refer to a structure, whose elements comprise the possible self, a person’s skills, and the facilitating world. But these three structural elements ultimately consist in a person’s *abilities*—a person’s *ability* to pursue a possible self, a person’s *ability* to exercise skills, and a person’s *ability* to use worldly beings. But, finally, as consisting in a person’s *abilities*, a person’s care can be understood as his *projecting into abilities*: his ability, or skill, to project into a possible self, and worldly beings, so that a possible self is able to be pursued, and worldly beings are able to be used.
Chapter 4: Inauthenticity as Existential Mania

In this chapter, I will give an interpretation of Heidegger’s concept of inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*). My aim is to prepare an understanding of the concept of authenticity, which I will interpret in the sixth chapter. However, in this chapter, I will say little about the concept of authenticity. My interest is to make clear what, in many ways, is its contrary, so that, in the following chapter, the nature and significance of its own properties can be more clearly seen.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger consistently distinguishes authenticity from inauthenticity. They are two mutually independent kinds of existence by which a person is characterized. In his discussion of guilt, Heidegger writes that Dasein “always maintains itself in this being as either authentic or inauthentic existence.” For Heidegger, authenticity and inauthenticity are distinguished, in particular, in relation to a person’s ability to be an individual. Heidegger differentiates what he calls the

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157 To be sure, it is unclear whether the condition of authenticity is truly the “contrary” of the condition of inauthenticity, in the sense that the person who is inauthentic is *not* authentic at all, and the person who is authentic is *not* inauthentic at all. Heidegger does, often, speak this way—for example, in the quote that I give just below, Heidegger says that a person relates to his guilt in “either authentic or inauthentic existence” (emphasis added). Also see *BT*, 80 [86]: “In understanding a context of relations, Da-sein has been referred to an in-order-to in terms of an explicitly or inexplicitly grasped potentiality-of-its-being for the sake of which it is, which can be authentic or inauthentic.” And see *BT*, 345 [376]: “Da-sein always exists as authentically or inauthentically historical.” However, Heidegger writes that that the condition of authenticity is a modification of the condition of inauthenticity (*BT*, 122 [130]); and he also writes that the condition of inauthenticity is a modification of the condition of authenticity (*BT*, 293 [317]). Putting aside the question of incoherence in the text, this suggests that they are not separable from one another like contraries, but are interwoven. I only want to note that for the purposes of my own critique of the concept of authenticity, I do not have a horse in this race. That the concept of authenticity is paradoxical is true whether or not the authentic self is a modification of the inauthentic self, or vice-versa. This question has been primarily addressed in a debate over whether inauthenticity is an inescapable condition. See Taylor Carman, “Must We Be Inauthentic?,” *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus: Volume 1*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (MIT Press, 2000); *Being-in-the-World*, 141ff.

158 *BT*, 283 [306].
“inauthentic self” from the “authentic self, the self which has explicitly grasped itself.”

And, as Heidegger writes in relation to a person’s understanding, “[u]nderstanding is either authentic, originating from its own self, or inauthentic.”

A person who is inauthentic has neither grasped himself, nor does his understanding—and, as I will show, his abilities in general—originate from his own self; on the other hand, a person who is authentic grasps himself, and his understanding—and, as I will show, his abilities in general—do originate from his own self. The inauthentic person, then, is a person who is anonymous—not “anonymous” insofar as he is, so to speak, “unknown by others,” but anonymous in the sense that he can neither grasp himself as the individual that he is, nor play an originating role in respect to himself.

In the following, I will give an interpretation of why the inauthentic person is anonymous that supplements the reasons given by the common interpretation of inauthenticity. For this common interpretation, which I will call the “conformity” interpretation, the inauthentic person is anonymous because the inauthentic person conforms his abilities and understanding to the kind of abilities and understanding characteristic of what Heidegger calls das Man, “the one,” “the they,” or, more straightforwardly (and the formulation I will use in the following), the impersonal crowd. The kinds of abilities that the inauthentic person understands and chooses, and the very fact that the inauthentic person makes choices at all, is determined by the impersonal

159 BT, 121 [129].
160 BT, 137 [146].
161 As I will explain, and against Heidegger’s own statement that I just quoted, this “origination” must not be understood as a pure origination, as though what is originated were created by a person’s own self.
crowd. The impersonal crowd exercises a “dictatorship” (*Diktatur*)\(^{162}\) over the life of the inauthentic person, who, as a result, is anonymous.

This interpretation is correct, but I believe that it overlooks a crucial part of Heidegger’s account of inauthenticity and the anonymity that belongs to it. Namely, it overlooks the fact that the inauthentic person is characterized by what I will call “existential mania,” that is, is characterized by the fact that he understands his abilities as *limitless* and *not factual*, and that he is *perpetually acting*. For Heidegger, I will argue, these three properties of the inauthentic person explain, as much as the inauthentic person’s conformity to the norms that regulate the action and understanding of the impersonal crowd, why the inauthentic person is anonymous. Significantly, in a lecture course given before the publication of *Being and Time*, it is primarily this existential mania that Heidegger emphasizes in discussing what, in *Being and Time*, will become inauthenticity. I will refer to what Heidegger says in this lecture course in my interpretation of inauthenticity in *Being and Time*.

It is also significant that the connection between mania and anonymity can be found in a group of psychoanalytic texts that address the psychological condition of mania—texts by Freud, Melanie Klein, and D.W. Winnicott. This psychoanalytic conception of mania has deep and interesting parallels with Heidegger’s conception of what I am calling existential mania. As I will show, for the psychoanalytic conception, the manic person is in a perpetual “flight” from anxiety and death, takes his libidinal possibilities to be unlimited, but does not understand the real libidinal possibilities that he possesses, and is perpetually acting; significantly, as a result, the manic person’s

\(^{162}\) *BT*, 119 [126].
understanding of himself as an individual is severely diminished, and he becomes incapable of any genuine, individual concern. I will, therefore, in the following, give a brief account of the psychoanalytic conception of mania, in order to bring into view some of the ideas and connections between ideas that will be relevant in looking at Heidegger’s understanding of inauthenticity.

However, it should be stressed that I do not want to claim that the existential mania that Heidegger describes should be *identified*, in any way, with the psychological mania that the psychoanalysts describe. This would ignore Heidegger’s fundamental contention in *Being and Time* that the *ontological* dimensions of human life that he is describing, for instance inauthenticity, cannot be equated with the “facts” that the human sciences describe, for example, the facts that psychologists describe. ¹⁶³ Therefore, the psychoanalytic conception of mania will serve here only as a useful heuristic for introducing and becoming attentive to themes that are overlooked in interpretations of Heidegger’s conception of inauthenticity.

I will therefore (1) look at the common conformity interpretation of inauthenticity, and of why the condition of inauthenticity is a condition of anonymity; (2) look at the psychoanalytic conception of mania; and (3) show how, apart from conformity, the reason why the inauthentic person is anonymous is the existential mania by which Heidegger characterizes him.

¹⁶³ *BT*, 42ff. [45ff.].
1. The conformity interpretation of inauthenticity

The inauthentic person is anonymous—he neither “explicitly grasps” himself as an individual, nor is his individual self the “origin” of his understanding and activities. The common interpretation of this anonymity, which I am calling the “conformity” interpretation, is that it is due to the fact that the inauthentic person, in his abilities and understanding, conforms to the kinds of abilities and understanding characteristic of what Heidegger calls “das Man,” which is commonly translated as “the they” or “the one,” and which I will also call “the impersonal crowd.” But what, more precisely, is das Man?

For Heidegger, the being of the human being is always a being which is a “being-with” others: “Dasein,” being-there, is always “Mitda-sein,” being-there with. These others, with whom a person exists, are neither objects, nor facades behind which one must infer an human intentionality just like one’s own, nor tools. They are “completely different from tools and things.” Rather, they are beings who have the being of human beings—they are beings who exist, or whose being is care. The others “are like the very Da-sein which frees [discloses] them—they are there too, and there with it.” On the other hand, these others do not compose a group of distinct individuals. These others are distinct only in their indistinction: they mesh together into a crowd in which no one is distinct from any one else. In this crowd, “[e]veryone is the other, and no one is himself. The they [das Man]… is the nobody…” Being-with others, a person is with das Man, the impersonal crowd.

164 BT, 111 [118].
165 BT, 111 [118].
166 BT, 120 [128].
According to the conformity interpretation of inauthenticity, the inauthentic person is anonymous because this being-with others of the inauthentic person, is, so to speak, a being-like others. The others who compose das Man are beings whose being is care; but being-with this impersonal crowd means that a person’s own kind of care conforms to its kind of care. Charles Guignon therefore writes that the abilities in which the inauthentic person’s care consists become just those abilities in which the impersonal crowd’s care consists:

For the most part in our everyday lives, we are dispersed into They-possibilities, doing what “one” does as anyone might do such things. Being a “They-self” in this way promotes a mode of existence Heidegger calls “inauthentic.” The German word for “authentic,” eigentlich, comes from the stem eigen which means “own,” so an inauthentic life would be one that is unowned or disowned. As inauthentic, my life is not my own but rather that of the They.167

And Stephen Mulhall adds that the kind of understanding that is part of the inauthentic person’s own care only replicates the understanding that is part of the impersonal crowd’s care:

the average everyday mode of Dasein is inauthentic. Its mineness takes the form of the “they,” its Self is a they-self – a mode of relating to itself and to others in which it and they fail to find themselves and so fail to achieve genuine individuality… if Dasein typically loses itself in the “they,” it will understand both its world and itself in the terms that “they” make available to it, and so will interpret its own nature in terms of the categories that lie closest to hand in popular culture and everyday life; and they will be as inauthentic as their creators.168

But if a person’s abilities and understanding are just those abilities and understanding that the impersonal crowd possesses, then a person’s self will be just the self that characterizes each, indistinct “individual” in the impersonal crowd. As

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168 Heidegger and Being and Time: Second Edition (Routledge, 2005), 68.
Heidegger writes, “Initially, ‘I’ ‘am’ not in the sense of my own self, but I am the others in the mode of the they. In terms of the they, and as the they, I am initially ‘given’ to ‘myself.’” Therefore, according to William Blattner, “immersion in the social world also involves a certain abdication of selfhood. Immersed in the social world, I do not own myself, but rather am, in Heidegger’s language, ‘dispersed’ in the public. Heidegger contrasts such dispersal with self-ownership, ownedness [authenticity]…”

Heidegger introduces two concepts which further elaborate why the inauthentic person’s conformity to abilities and understanding characteristic of the impersonal crowd amounts to a condition of anonymity. These are the concept of “averageness” (Durchschnittlichkeit) and “disburdening” (Entlassen). Drawing on Kierkegaard’s well-known discussion in A Literary Review of the equalization of individuals’ life-possibilities in modernity, Heidegger writes that by conforming to abilities and understanding characteristic of the impersonal crowd, each person loses the ability for idiosyncrasy and exceptionality. Each person becomes only an average, fungible, version of the next:

the they maintains itself factically in the averageness of what is proper, what is allowed, and what is not. Of what is granted success and what is not. This averageness, which prescribes what can and may be ventured, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore… The care of averageness reveals, in turn, an essential tendency of Da-sein, which we call the leveling down of all possibilities of being.

Hubert Dreyfus has especially emphasized the role that averageness plays in the inauthentic person’s anonymity. For Dreyfus, the impersonal crowd establishes

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169 BT, 121 [129].
170 Heidegger’s Being and Time, 40.
171 BT, 119 [127].
normative standards of beliefs and practices, which are binding on each individual
person, and which, even more, become the condition of possibility of the belief and
action of each individual person. What a person believes and does, then, merely repeats
and perpetuates these average norms, cutting him off from anything novel or unique in
the world or in himself:

Dasein yields to the pull of the world it is absorbed in and the seduction of
language as the source of average intelligibility, so as to let itself be turned away
from what is primordial in the world and in itself... The idea is that average
intelligibility, belonging to the structure of the one [das Man], is out of touch with
the primordial.\textsuperscript{172}

Dreyfus adds:

falling in with the public leads Dasein to fall away from... In short, since norms
are shared practices, the kind of life one lives and what one does at any given
time will be just what anyone would do in that sort of situation.\textsuperscript{173}

But, for Heidegger, conformity to the impersonal crowd not only prevents a
person from choosing abilities that are outside of what is merely average; conformity to
the impersonal crowd also prevents a person from making choices itself. Not only does
the impersonal crowd prescribe the specific abilities that a person will possess; the
impersonal crowd also prescribes the very fact that an individual will choose these
abilities. The impersonal crowd, Heidegger suggests, disburdens a person of the faculty
of individual choice:

The they is everywhere, but in such a way that it has always already stolen away
when Da-sein presses for a decision. However, because the they presents every
judgment and decision as its own, it takes the responsibility of Da-sein away from
it... The they always “did it,” and yet it can be said that “no one” did it. In the

\textsuperscript{172} Being-in-the-World, 233-4.
\textsuperscript{173} Being-in-the-World, 235.
everydayness of Da-sein, most things happen in such a way that we must say “no one did it.”[174]

Disburdening results in a kind of general moral impotence, and even in a kind of moral farce. An individual, whose autonomy has been ceded to the impersonal crowd, cannot find any individual power of choice in himself. However, the members of the impersonal crowd, who constantly refer responsibility to one another, cannot find the power of choice in themselves, either. Everyone is anonymous, because what would constitute each person’s individuality—that a person can make individual choices—is passed around like a hot-potato, until, through wear, it crumbles into nothing.

The conformity interpretation of inauthenticity therefore makes the anonymity belonging to the inauthentic person very clear. The inauthentic person is anonymous because, in being-with, he is being-like, or his kind of care is just that kind of care of the impersonal crowd. Even more, the inauthentic person follows the average norms of the impersonal crowd, and therefore is not, in any way, unique. And the inauthentic person is disburdened of any autonomy, and therefore does not have an individual power of choice. In the following, my intention, therefore, is not to criticize this interpretation of inauthenticity, but rather to supplement it. I would like to argue that it overlooks one of the primary ways in which Heidegger explains the inauthentic person’s anonymity: what I want to call “existential mania.”

2. The psychoanalytic conception of mania as a heuristic

However, before I describe what this existential mania is, and what its relation to the inauthentic person’s anonymity is, I want briefly to review a conception of mania

[174] BT, 119-20 [127].
developed by three psychoanalytic thinkers—Freud, Melanie Klein, and D.W. Winnicott. (It should be noted that the psychological mania that these three thinkers describe is distinct, in important respects, from the current psychiatric conception of mania, which understands it in light of bipolar mood disorders—a nosological entity that did not exist when these psychoanalysts developed their understanding of mania.) The psychological mania which they describe shares important features with the existential mania that Heidegger describes. For them, mania is a state in which a person denies death, destruction, and anxiety; understands his libidinal possibilities to be unlimited; cuts himself off from the reality of his own thoughts and fantasies, as well as the reality of other people; acts in such a way that his activity never comes to a stop; and, significantly, loses the capacity for a full appreciation of who he is, and for a genuine concern for others and for himself. Many of these characteristics of mania appear in the existential mania that Heidegger describes. A look at the psychoanalytic conception of mania can, therefore, serve as a useful heuristic in order to see more clearly Heidegger’s existential mania.

I want to emphasize, however, that the parallels that can be seen between the two conceptions of mania are only parallels; the two conceptions are not identical to one another. The existential mania that Heidegger describes is, precisely, an existential mania: Heidegger means to point to features of a person’s existential constitution, or to features of a person’s being, which, according to him, are distinct from and more fundamental than the psychological facts which, for example, psychoanalysts describe.

This psychoanalytic conception of mania can best be understood by looking at each psychoanalyst’s conception of mania in turn. I will therefore look at (A) Freud’s
conception; (B) Klein’s conception; and (C) Winnicott’s conception. I will primarily emphasize the unique aspects of their contributions to the understanding of mania.

A. Freud did not in fact write very much about mania (Manie) at all—especially compared to other pathological conditions like hysteria or obsessional neurosis. His most comprehensive treatment of mania is in his article “Mourning and Melancholia,” which, as the title indicates, is not even primarily about mania. It is telling, however, that it is an article about mourning and melancholia, two phenomena that are related directly to death and loss, that he does treat mania at length.

In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud understands mania as a pathological state of “joy, exultation, or triumph,” as well as the “readiness for all kinds of action.” Additionally, he understands it as a part of what he calls “circular insanity.” In certain cases of melancholia—which Freud characterizes as a state in which a person loses all interest in the world and, above all, finds himself worthless; this would now be understood as depression—a manic state supervenes. However, the person then returns from this manic state to a melancholic state, but only then to return to a manic state again. This oscillation is continually repeated. Freud approaches mania from the perspective of this “circular insanity.” Mania is a state which removes a person from an already existing melancholic state. However, that melancholic state remains, even if it is not consciously experienced, and so, once the manic state is exhausted, the person falls back into the

175 Apart from “Mourning and Melancholia,” the other text in which Freud treats mania at length is “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.” I will not review this latter text insofar as “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” effectively repeats Freud’s view on mania from “Mourning and Melancholia,” except for the new contention that, in mania, the ego and the superego have “fused together.” See “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII.


177 “Mourning and Melancholia,” 252.
melancholic state. As Freud writes, “the content of mania is no different from that of melancholia… both disorders are wrestling with the same ‘complex’, but… in melancholia the ego has succumbed to the complex whereas in mania it has mastered it or pushed it aside.”

But why, and how, do manic states “master” or “push aside” melancholic states? For Freud, a person becomes melancholic after a person (or an abstract idea) he loves has died or is lost. However, the melancholic does not mourn this loss, or does not perform that “work” in which, Freud says, a person is able to acknowledge that the loved object is dead or lost, and can turn toward his present world in order to find new objects to love. Rather, the melancholic “identifies” with the dead or lost loved object; he takes himself to be identical to it. The loved object therefore is preserved—as the melancholic himself, and the melancholic can continue to love it. Obviously, however, this love will not be perfect. For it is a dead or lost object that the melancholic loves, and, therefore, this love will be interwoven with profound hatred. It is on this basis that Freud explains what for him is the defining symptom of melancholia—the fact that the melancholic directs toward himself ruthless self-criticisms. “If the love for the object—a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up—takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering.”

The melancholic finds himself worthless because, in order to preserve his love, he identifies

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178 “Mourning and Melancholia, 253.
180 “Mourning and Melancholia, 243.
181 “Mourning and Melancholia,” 248.
182 “Mourning and Melancholia,” 250.
himself with something that is dead or lost; but, because what he loves is dead or lost, he hates that with which he identifies himself, or hates himself.

Mania “masters” or “pushes aside” this melancholia through renouncing any connection to such an object that is loved but also, because it is dead or lost, is hated. For Freud, mania is a “liberation” from such objects: the “manic subject plainly demonstrates his liberation from the object which was the cause of his suffering, by seeking like a ravenously hungry man for new object-cathexes.”183 In other words, mania is a state in which the objects that are loved are understood to be unable to die or be lost, and therefore cannot be hated; it is a state in which a person’s love is understood as pure, uninhibited love, because nothing in the objects of that love can impede it, or give rise to hate. This explains the defining symptoms, for Freud, of mania: it is defined by “joy, exultation, or triumph,” and a “readiness for all kinds of action,” because the manic person experiences his ability to love as omnipotently free and indestructible. This also explains the very interesting and, to my mind, provocative similarity that Freud discovers between mourning (which Freud does not understand as a pathology) and mania: “normal mourning, too, overcomes the loss of the object.”184 For through the work of mourning the person becomes convinced that his dead or lost object no longer has a place in reality (“the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists”185) and therefore becomes capable of loving that which is entirely unaffected by loss or death—that is, becomes capable of loving new objects of love.

183 “Mourning and Melancholia,” 254.
184 “Mourning and Melancholia,” 254. This similarity is not, in my eyes, commented on enough.
185 “Mourning and Melancholia,” 254.
B. Melanie Klein’s account of mania elaborates many of Freud’s initial insights, but rethinks them from the perspective of her own, original ideas—ideas which gave her the reputation of rejecting the Freudian orthodoxy, and which created her own school of psychoanalysis.¹⁸⁶ Klein’s account of mania is one of the most comprehensive, and influential, in the psychoanalytic literature.

Like Freud, Klein viewed mania in the context of melancholia, or depression (unlike Freud, she relies heavily on the term “depression” in her writings). The two primary articles in which she discusses mania are entitled “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States” and “Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States.” Mania is a defense against depression, or, more specifically, a defense against what is one of Klein’s major theoretical innovations, what she calls the “depressive position.” Unlike Freud’s “libidinal stages,” Klein’s “positions” (apart from the “depressive position,” she also speaks of the “paranoid-schizoid position”¹⁸⁷) are constellations of specific desires, fantasies, and beliefs, which are not necessarily identical to a moment in the process of psychological development, and are not specific to the mental life of infants. They can be true of adults, and can be availed of at any time by adults for defensive reasons, independently of regression to developmental fixation. The depressive position is a position in which a person identifies with a loved, or “good” object; but, at the same time, recognizes that this object is also “bad,” and directs sadistic, destructive, hatred toward it. For Klein, the depressive position marks an achievement of

maturity, because the loved object is the person himself, or an ego that has matured, and
the loved object is a “whole” and “real” object—it is both good and bad, and not only
good or only bad. On the other hand, the depressive position is also a site pregnant with
pathology. Klein writes that in the depressive position, the person has

a fuller identification with the loved object, and a fuller recognition of its value,
for the ego to become aware of the state of disintegration to which it has reduced
and is continuing to reduce its loved object. The ego then finds itself confronted
with the psychical fact that its loved objects are in a state of dissolution—in bits—
and the despair, remorse and anxiety deriving from this recognition are at the
bottom of numerous anxiety situations.

In the depressive position, a person wishes to destroy what he loves, and this loved
object, which he wishes to destroy, is himself.

For Klein, mania is an “escape” from the depressive position. Mania is a state in
which a person’s desires and beliefs, directed toward and about himself and other people,
are organized in such a way that the depressive position is not experienced. Klein gives,
far more than Freud, a rich and comprehensive description of this manic state. The manic
state is, first of all, characterized by denial. The “manic subject denies the different forms
of anxiety,” denies “dread” and “the most overpowering and profound anxiety of
all”—the destructibility of himself. Connected with this, Klein writes that the manic
state is characterized by a belief in omnipotence: the manic person believes that nothing
that he can do can destroy an object, and that every activity that he enjoys with an object
is an activity by which that object is kept alive. The manic person’s libidinal possibilities

188 Melanie Klein, “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” The
189 “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of the Manic-Depressive States,” 124.
190 “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 132.
191 “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 133.
192 “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 132.
are therefore understood to be limitless. Klein writes, in “Mourning and Manic-Depressive States,” that hypomania—a condition similar to mania, but lacking psychosis and compatible with normal functionality—is characterized by a “tendency to conceive of everything on a large scale, to think in *large numbers,* all this in accordance with the greatness of [the manic person’s] omnipotence…”\(^{193}\) For this reason, however, the manic person displays a kind of perpetual activity. Mania is a condition of “over-activity” and an “excess of activity”\(^{194}\) in which there is a profound “hunger for objects.”\(^{195}\) The manic person’s activity never comes to a stop, since he never confronts his own ability to cause destruction, and never confronts a situation in which he does cause destruction. Klein writes that the manic person is in a state of “suspended animation”: the manic person is always acting, in order to prove to himself that he always gives rise to life, and that his objects are always alive. For the manic person, according to Klein, everything and anything can be “immediately called to life.”\(^{196}\)

Particularly interesting in Klein’s conception of mania is the connection that she draws between it and what can be understood to be loss of personhood. Klein places particular emphasis on the depressive position not only because, to her mind, so much psychopathology is due to defense against it. Even more, it is in the depressive position that a person becomes capable of recognizing his own individual reality, and also becomes capable of caring for himself and for others in light of that reality. Klein therefore attributes

\(^{194}\) “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 132.
\(^{195}\) “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 133.
\(^{196}\) “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 133.
to the depressive position a central role in the child’s early development. For with the introjection of the object as a whole the infant’s object relation alters fundamentally. The synthesis between the loved and hated aspects of the complete object gives rise to feelings of mourning and guilt which imply vital advances in the infant’s emotional and intellectual life.\footnote{Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms,” 178.}

A person who is able to work through the depressive position—who is able to identify, successfully, with an object that is \textit{both} good and bad, and therefore both love \textit{and} hate himself—is able to fully recognize the real ambivalence in his own character: that he is both lovable and not lovable, and that he both loves and hates. Even more, a person who is able to work through the depressive position is able to recognize the destruction that he can cause. For this reason, he is able to have a genuine concern for objects in light of that destruction that he does cause—he is able to perform acts of reparation; and he is able to have genuine concern over himself in light of the destruction that he can cause.\footnote{“A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 144.}

Alternatively, for Klein, the manic person who defends himself against the depressive position is not capable of fully recognizing himself, or fully recognizing his affective abilities. He does not understand himself to be good \textit{and} bad, but takes himself to be \textit{only} good. And he does not understand himself to love \textit{and} to hate, but takes himself \textit{only} to love. This inability to recognize himself severely diminishes his self-understanding. Even more, the manic person cannot have any genuine “concern” for objects, since he denies that they can be destroyed,\footnote{“A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 134.} and the manic person cannot have any genuine concern for himself, since he refuses to recognize his own guilt in wishing to bring about the destruction of objects. Klein therefore characterizes the manic state as a state of general “detachment.”\footnote{“A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States,” 134.}
C. Winnicott adopted Klein’s view of mania. He understands mania as a defense against the depressive position; manic states are “organized in respect of the anxiety belonging to depression.”\(^{201}\) I only therefore want to note an interesting extension that Winnicott makes to Klein’s understanding of mania. Winnicott suggests that manic states are *facilitated by a certain kind of social world*, and even can be said to be *normal* in respect to the norms of a certain kind of social world.

Apart from Klein’s understanding of mania, Winnicott’s view of mania is influenced by a concept proposed by Nina Searl, the “flight to reality.”\(^{202}\) For Searl, it is incorrect to view mental pathology simply as the acceptance of an internal fantasy such that an external reality, which cannot be acknowledged, is repressed. Rather, in certain cases, there is an acceptance of an external reality such that an internal fantasy, which cannot be acknowledged, is repressed. For Winnicott, an implication of this “flight to reality” is that the acceptance of external reality assumes characteristics normally associated with delusion. For example, a person who flees to the reality of his loving parents, and thereby represses fantasies in which he does not have loving parents, or a person who flees to the reality in which his life is full of adventure, and thereby represses fantasies in which he cannot be adventurous, enjoys a fantasy of omnipotence. He enjoys a fantasy of omnipotence because the reality that he affirms is a reality in which he is omnipotent, and he represses what really undermines that fantastical omnipotence—which, it so happens, is contained in internal fantasy. Winnicott therefore says, abruptly and startingly, “[o]ne finds in this defence a flight to omnipotent fantasy, and flight from


some fantasies to other fantasies, and in this sequence a flight to external reality. This is why I think one cannot compare and contrast fantasy and reality.\textsuperscript{203}

Winnicott approaches mania from the perspective of this flight to reality. The manic person harbors internal fantasies in which he is sadistically attacking his good objects, and the good objects with which he identifies—for example, internal representations of a loving mother, or his own ego that has identified with a loving mother. This accounts for a fundamental depression. However, for Winnicott, the manic person begins to participate in certain possibilities that allow him to repress that fundamental depression; what results is a manic state in which “we are more likely to feel elated, happy, busy, excited, humorous, omniscient, ‘full of life’, and at the same time we are less interested than usual in serious things and in the awfulness of hate, destruction, and killing.”\textsuperscript{204}

Significantly, however, for Winnicott, the possibilities in which the manic participates are possibilities \textit{afforded by a real social world}. It is by fleeing to the \textit{real possibilities} of a \textit{real social world} that mania is supported. There is, first, a participation in the \textit{theatrical, performative} social world:

For instance, one is at a music-hall and on to the stage come the dancers, trained to liveliness. One can say that here is the primal scene, here is exhibitionism, here is anal control, here is masochistic submission to discipline, here is a defiance of the super-ego. Sooner or later one adds: here is LIFE. Might it not be that the main point of the performance is a denial of deadness, a defence against depressive “death inside” ideas, the sexualization being secondary.\textsuperscript{205}

\textsuperscript{203} \textit{“The Manic Defence,”} 129. \hfill \textsuperscript{204} \textit{“The Manic Defence,”} 131. \hfill \textsuperscript{205} \textit{“The Manic Defence,”} 130.
Theatrical performances—and other situations in which people are allowed to perform fictional roles, and to express a range of emotions and desires they are not normally permitted—are a part of real social world. Participation in them is therefore normal. But the reality that they constitute is a reality in which only “LIFE” reigns, and in which “deadness” is denied. Therefore, while participation in them is normal, nevertheless the person who participates in them is manic. Similarly, Winnicott discusses participation in modern urban cities:

What about such things as the wireless that is left on interminably? What about living in a town like London with its noise that never ceases, and lights that are never extinguished? Each illustrates the reassurance through reality against death inside, and a use of manic defence that can be normal.206

The interminable busyness of cities, the fact that “the lights never go off,” of which, for example, New Yorkers are so fond, describes the real social world of modernity. A person who recognizes this world, and participates in it, is normal: he adapts to the life of urban cities. At the same time, however, he is manic: by participating in this real social world, he seeks the fantastical reassurance that death does not exist.

What I want to emphasize here is that, for Winnicott, a person can recognize, and can act in respect of possibilities, characteristic of a certain kind of real social world, and while this recognition and action will be make the person normal, it will also support mania. He will be normal because he does recognize reality, and does successfully adapt his action to it; but he will be manic because, in that recognition and adaptation, he will hold onto the fantasy of the omnipotence of life—its indestructibility—and deny the possibility of death—the destructibility of life. Winnicott therefore writes that, in the case

of mania, the distinction between the normal and the pathological may be inappropriate (and the inappropriateness of this distinction is closely connected to the inappropriateness of the other distinction that Winnicott discussed, between fantasy and reality, and which he also, *avante la lettre*, deconstructed). “The truth is, one can scarcely discuss *in the abstract* whether such devices are a normal reassurance through reality or an abnormal manic defence; one *can* discuss, however, the use of the defence that we meet with in the course of the analysis of a patient.”

Let me try to summarize this psychoanalytic picture of mania. Mania is a state that responds to death or loss: primarily the death or loss of that which a person loves, and identifies with—his own life. The possibility of this death or loss gives rise to anxiety and dread. Mania is a state which is a flight from this death or loss, and its anxiety and dread. The manic person denies that this destruction could occur, understands himself to have a limitless life in which destruction never occurs, and lives this limitless life in a kind of perpetual activity. At the same time, mania is a state which can, in certain circumstances, be understood to be normal: a person can participate in certain real social worlds that facilitate manic states. Finally, however, mania diminishes “personhood.” The manic person has a severely attenuated understanding of himself, and his world—he does not recognize what is destructive of life, in either himself or his world; and he cannot have concern for himself, and for others, in light of this possibility of the destruction of life.

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3. Inauthenticity as existential mania

Heidegger’s concept of inauthenticity consists, I believe, not only in a person’s conformity to the impersonal crowd that the conformist interpretation emphasizes, but also in a person’s mania. And the reason, for Heidegger, why the inauthentic person is anonymous, is due just as much to a person’s mania as to a person’s conformity. This mania, however, is not the psychological mania that the psychoanalysts describe, but rather what I want to call an “existential mania.” While, in many respects, it resembles the psychological mania that the psychoanalysts describe, it is grounded in ontological characteristics that belong to the being of the human being.

The existential mania of the inauthentic person can most clearly be seen in Heidegger’s discussion of “falling” or “falling prey” (Verfallen and Verfallenheit). Falling, for Heidegger, “reveals” “a basic kind of the being of everydayness”—that is, it describes the everyday way in which a person cares, or is able to pursue a possible self, is able to exercise skills, and is able worldly beings. For Heidegger, however, falling also directly describes a person’s inauthenticity. “What we called the inauthenticity of Da-sein may now be defined more precisely through an interpretation of falling prey.”

Significantly, Heidegger’s thematic discussion of inauthenticity-as-falling prey is separate from his thematic discussion of das Man, or the impersonal crowd. In his section on the impersonal crowd, Heidegger discusses being-with, the character of the impersonal crowd itself, and the inauthenticity of the person who conforms to it. Alternatively, in his section on falling, Heidegger discusses the way in which certain everyday ways in which a person cares—what he calls “idle talk” (Gerede), “curiosity”

208 BT, 164 [175].
209 BT, 164 [175].
(Neugier), and “ambiguity” (Zweideutigkeit)—render a person inauthentic. Falling, Heidegger writes, is “tempting” (versucherisch), “tranquillizing” (beruhigend), and “alienating” (entfremdend); it “closes off to Da-sein its authenticity and possibility.”

I will here look more closely at Heidegger’s discussion of falling in order to identify a source of the inauthentic person’s anonymity that is separate from conformity to das Man and consists in existential mania. I will also refer to a lecture course that Heidegger gave, on Aristotle, in 1921-22, and which focuses on remarkably similar themes. I will argue that Heidegger describes falling, or inauthenticity, as a condition in which a person’s abilities are understood to be (A) limitless and (B) non-factual and in which (C) a person is perpetually acting; and this existential mania (D) results in a person’s anonymity.

A. Understanding abilities as limitless. For Heidegger, the inauthentic person understands his abilities—or, more precisely, and following what I said in the third chapter, his projection into abilities—to be limitless. This becomes especially clear in Heidegger’s description of one of the central characteristics of falling, curiosity.

Curiosity, for Heidegger, is not an isolated, intellectual attitude, but rather a modality of a person’s very care, in which a person seeks out novel abilities in himself, and novel possibilities in the world:

[Curiosity] seeks novelty only to leap from it again to another novelty. The care of seeing is not concerned with comprehending and knowingly being in the truth, but with possibilities of abandoning itself to the world. Thus curiosity is characterized by a specific not-staying with the world. Consequently, it also does not seek the leisure of reflective staying, but rather restlessness and excitement from continual novelty and changing encounters… The two factors constitutive for curiosity, not-staying in the surrounding world taken care of and distraction

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210 BT, 166 [178]; emphasis Heidegger’s.
by new possibilities, are the basis for the third essential characteristic of this phenomenon, which we call *never dwelling anywhere*. Curiosity is everywhere and nowhere. This mode of being-in-the-world reveals a new kind of being of everyday *Da-sein*, one in which it constantly uproots itself.\(^{211}\)

By straying from ability to ability, by not dwelling anywhere, the curious person is *everywhere*. In this sense, he understands himself to possess a limitless number of abilities.

In Heidegger’s 1921-22 lecture course on Aristotle, he also emphasizes how, as part of a person’s “factual life”—that kind of life, characterized by abilities, and by which a person is constituted—a person takes himself to possess a limitless number of abilities. (In *Being and Time*, Heidegger again will link curiosity with a person’s “facticity.”\(^{212}\)) Heidegger writes that factual life “holds before itself” an “infinite abundance” of abilities:

> [in factual life, the] very multiplicity of possibilities, however, always implies an increase in the possibilities of mistaking oneself in ever new ways. Factical life in itself, *qua* factual, thereby brings to maturation a distantlylated interminability of possible mistakes, and insofar as these *interminable mistakes* are all of the character of meaningful things in which, as meaningful-worldly objects, life lives, this interminability becomes what is formalistically characterized as infinity and infinite abundance, inexhaustibility, that which can never be mastered, the “always more of” life, and the “always more than” life. This infinity is the disguise factual life factically places upon and holds before itself or its world.\(^{213}\)

I will come back below to the significance of the fact that, in this factual life, a person “mistakes himself.” Here, however, Heidegger describes, in more detail, the being “everywhere and nowhere” of the curiosity that he describes in *Being and Time*. A person’s worldly abilities are understood to be “interminable” and “inexhaustible”; those

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211 *BT*, 161 [172-3].
212 *BT*, 167 [179].
abilities never come to an end; there is “always more of” and “always more than” life. A person understands himself, in this condition, to be “infinite.” This infinity is not an abstract infinity, like the infinity of Hegel’s “bad infinity.” The inauthentic person is not a Brahmin. Rather, it is a “concrete” infinity: it is a person’s meaningful worldly objects, or meaningful worldly abilities in which his own abilities can be exercised, that are understood to be infinite, or are understood to be limitless.

Heidegger returns to a person’s understanding of his concrete abilities as infinite, or limitless, in Being and Time, in his discussion of the alienation characteristic of falling:

Alienation cannot mean that Da-sein is factically torn away from itself. On the contrary, this alienation drives Da-sein into a kind of being intent upon the most exaggerated ‘self-dissection’ which tries out all kinds of possibilities of interpretation, with the result that the “characterologies” and “typologies” which it points out are themselves too numerous to grasp. Yet this alienation, which closes off to Da-sein its authenticity and possibility, even if only that of genuinely getting stranded, still does not surrender it to beings which it itself is not, but forces it into its inauthenticity, into a possible kind of being of itself.

Heidegger again makes clear that the limitless or infinite abilities that a person understands himself to possess refer to a person’s concrete, worldly abilities: it is the possibilities of interpretation—and therefore a person’s abilities in understanding himself, which lies in a person’s own being or care—which are taken to be infinite. However, Heidegger also makes clear that this self-understanding of abilities as limitless or infinite is directly connected to the condition of inauthenticity. Heidegger writes that a person’s alienation, a person’s self-estrangement, just is this understanding oneself as possessing limitless abilities. It is this self-understanding which “closes off to Da-sein its authenticity and possibility,” and “forces it into its inauthenticity.”

214 BT, 166 [178].
B. Understanding abilities as non-factual. Heidegger additionally writes that a central characteristic of falling is a person’s not understanding himself in terms of his factual abilities, or, to put it another way, a person’s only understanding himself in terms of non-factual abilities. “Facticity” is a central concept of Being and Time, and I will, in the sixth chapter, give a more comprehensive discussion of it. For now, it can suffice to say that by “facticity,” Heidegger means to indicate the fact that a person’s being, or a person’s care, is constituted, and is specific: a person is factical insofar as he is constituted by specific abilities, or by specific worldly situations in which those specific abilities must be exercised.215 “Facticity,” therefore, does not refer to what is commonly thought of as “facts”—states of affairs of which propositions are true. “Facticity” refers to a dimension of a person’s being or care; it is an existential category.216

But what then is it for a person to have a non-factual self-understanding? Heidegger discusses this non-factual self-understanding in relation to the alienation characteristic of falling. In falling, a person

develop[s] the supposition that the disclosedness of Da-sein thus available and prevalent could guarantee to Da-sein the certainty, genuineness, and fullness of all the possibilities of its being. In the self-certainty and decisiveness of the they, it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic, attuned understanding. The supposition of the they that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine “life” brings a tranquillization to Da-sein, for which everything is in “the best order” and for whom all doors are open.217

Heidegger’s concept of “tranquillization” therefore does not refer to the effects of a mood drug, or a state of emotional relaxation. A person who is tranquillized understands his abilities never to be threatened. A person who is tranquillized presumes to enjoy only

215 BT, 127-8 [134-5], BT, 275-6 [299].
216 BT, 127 [135].
217 BT, 166 [177].
those abilities in which an undisturbed, full life consists. Heidegger refers to this same kind of self-understanding in describing curiosity; he writes that curiosity provides a person “with the guarantee of a supposedly genuine ‘lively life.’”\textsuperscript{218}

A person who is tranquillized does not understand himself in terms of his factical abilities because, for Heidegger, it is only when a person loses his tranquillization, or the assurance of a \textit{lively} life, a life that is \textit{not} threatened, that he can understand his own factical abilities. Heidegger makes this especially clear in the lecture course on Aristotle, in a passage that clearly foreshadows his discussion of tranquillization in \textit{Being and Time}:

Life seeks to assure itself by looking away from itself. This looking is primary and provides the basic view, the way life sees itself. Life thereby develops its own self-searching, which, in falling, changes into carefreeness (\textit{securitas}). Carefreeness is a mode of care, a mode of the concern of life for itself. Carefreeness then shapes the world and, in order to be satisfying, must increase; it becomes hyperbolic and grants an easier concern and fulfillment, i.e., the conserving and preserving of existence. At the same time hyperbolic existence proves to be elliptical: it eludes that which is difficult, that which can be attained only \textit{monaxos}, in only one way (not haphazardly), it recognizes no fixed limits…\textsuperscript{219}

Like tranquillization, carefreeness, for Heidegger, describes a mode of care. But it is a mode of care, or a mode in which life is concerned for itself, in which life \textit{guards} life itself, or in which life protects life itself, and protects life against anything that would threaten it. Carefreeness is concerned with “the conserving and preserving of existence.” However, carefreeness is carefreeness because carefreeness does not need to care about what would be, so to speak, “very concerning”—what would threaten its secure life. Carefreeness thus turns away from what is difficult, or what limits its easy existence. But

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textit{BT}, 162 [173].
\item \textit{Phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle}, 81.
\end{footnotes}
it is precisely this in which a person’s factical life consists: by being carefree, life “seeks to assure itself by looking away from itself.”

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger returns to the theme of carefreeness in his discussion of idle talk. For Heidegger, idle talk, generally, is a kind of carefree understanding—an understanding in which a person is not concerned with whether what he has understood is genuinely understood. However, idle talk never genuinely understands because it is concerned with protecting itself from danger, or from being “stranded”:

Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without any previous appropriation of the matter. Idle talk already guards against the danger of getting stranded in such an appropriation [Das Gerede behütet schon vor der Gefahr, bei einer solchen Zueignung zu sheitern]. Idle talk, which everyone can snatch up, not only divests us of the task of genuine understanding, but develops an indifferent intelligibility for which nothing is closed off any longer.²²⁰

Heidegger repeatedly emphasizes that is the exigency of being stranded, or of failing or of collapse (*sheitern*) that idle talk guards itself against. Idle talk, therefore, is not only not a simple carefree chattiness, nor a simple mode of understanding, but a basic way in which a person cares. Idle talk is idleness. However, for Heidegger, this means that a person only understands himself in terms of those abilities in which he can be idle, or in terms of those abilities in which he will be protected and secure. But because he understands himself in terms of *these* abilities, he will not understand himself in terms of his *factual* abilities. “Idle talk discloses to Da-sein a being toward its world, to others and to itself—a being in which these are understood, but in a mode of groundless floating.”²²¹

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²²⁰ *BT*, 158 [169].
²²¹ *BT*, 165 [177].
C. Perpetual activity. Finally, Heidegger characterizes falling as a state in which a person’s activity is perpetual. At the end of his section on falling, Heidegger writes that “[f]alling prey is an ontological concept of motion.”\(^{222}\) This “motion,” however, is not the motion of any object—or any present-at-hand or ready-to-hand object, a thing or a tool. This “motion” expresses the motion of a being whose being is care. Therefore, it is a motion that is characteristic of a person’s very care. A person’s pursuit, exercise, and use of his abilities is therefore in motion in a peculiar way.

Heidegger describes this motion as a “plunge” (Absturz). “Dasein plunges out of itself into itself, into the groundlessness and nothingness of inauthentic everydayness.”\(^{223}\) Heidegger also calls this movement “eddying” (Wirbel),\(^{224}\) which can also be translated as a gyre or vortex. In describing tranquillization, Heidegger gives a picture of this movement. Tranquillization “does not seduce one into stagnation and inactivity, but drives one to uninhibited ‘busyness.’ Being entangled in the ‘world’ does not somehow come to rest.”\(^{225}\) The movement characteristic of falling is a movement of constant, impulsive, busyness. A person’s abilities are always, constantly, being exercised. In falling, therefore, a person’s activity is perpetual. In his lecture course on Aristotle, Heidegger describes perpetual activity as a fundamental part of factical life. He writes:

The involvement with the world of care is apparently, in apprehension, a seriously adopted task, one which allows no rest, day or night, and to which life has supposedly committed itself in full, and yet actually (for apprehension itself, ‘still at times’) it is a mere letting oneself be pulled along, letting oneself be transported, such that thereby every clarification is renounced…\(^{226}\)

\(^{222}\) *BT*, 168 [180].
\(^{223}\) *BT*, 167 [178].
\(^{224}\) *BT*, 167 [178].
\(^{225}\) *BT*, 166 [177-8].
\(^{226}\) *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, 102.
In light of the other aspects of falling that I have already discussed, that falling is a movement of perpetual activity should not be surprising. A person who understands himself in terms of limitless abilities, and a person who understands himself in terms of non-factual abilities, or those abilities in which he is never stranded, will precisely be “uninhibited” in his activity, and will never “come to rest.” For in this self-understanding, there are neither any limits, nor factual situations that rupture the easy exercise of a person’s abilities, to bring a person’s activity to a stop.

D. Existential mania and anonymity. Heidegger, then, describes inauthenticity as a condition of existential mania. The falling that characterizes inauthenticity is a condition in which the person understands his abilities—or, again, his projection into abilities—as limitless and non-factual, and in which the person’s activity is perpetual. But, then, is it possible to understand the inauthentic person’s anonymity on the basis of this existential mania? Is it possible to understand the inauthentic person’s anonymity outside of his conformity to the impersonal crowd—outside of the fact that his self is the self of the impersonal crowd, that his abilities are average, and that he suffers a disburdening of his power of choice?

What is particularly interesting about the existential mania that Heidegger describes is that, on its basis, and apart from any reference to conformity, the averageness of a person’s abilities, and the disburdening of the power of choice, it is possible to understand the inauthentic person’s anonymity. A person who understands his abilities as limitless will not understand himself to possess limited abilities. (Or, again, a person who understands his projection into abilities to be limitless will not understood his projection into abilities to be limited.) But he will therefore only understand himself as a diffuse,
indefinite self. Heidegger points to this diffusion of the self in describing curiosity. He writes that, because the curious person is “everywhere,” the curious person is precisely “nowhere,” and that, by pursuing novel ability after novel ability, the curious person is “uprooted.” Without any limits placed on a person’s abilities, a person cannot understand himself as an individual. Heidegger therefore states, in his lecture course on Aristotle, that the presumption of possessing an infinity of abilities is “the disguise factical life factically places upon and holds before itself or its world.”

Similarly, in his lecture course on Aristotle, and in describing a person’s self-understanding as non-factual, Heidegger refers again to the fact that a person cannot understand himself within limits. Heidegger states that “hyperbolic existence proves to be elliptical: it eludes that which is difficult, that which can be attained only monaxos, in only one way (not haphazardly), it recognizes no fixed limits.” Here, however, these limits are, specifically, the limits imposed by a person’s facticity: what is eluded is what is difficult, those abilities that a person confronts as already constituted. In the same way, Heidegger, in Being and Time, writes that a person, because he guards against understanding himself in his own facticity, cannot achieve a genuine understanding of himself. “Idle talk already guards against the danger of getting stranded in such an appropriation” and therefore “divests us of the task of genuine understanding.” In order to arrive at a genuine individual, self-understanding, a person must be able to confront his own facticity—those abilities, or projection into abilities, by which a person is constituted.

Finally, a person whose activity is perpetual will be deprived of the ability to make his own, individual choices. As I suggested above, the movement characteristic of
falling, “plunging,” is a movement of impulsive, constant, activity. The person who plunges is in an eddy or vortex of activity. Heidegger writes that “Da-sein plunges out of itself,” and is “sucked into” this eddy (hineingewirbelt). This suggests that the person who plunges loses his capacity for deliberate choice. A comment that Heidegger makes about curiosity is pertinent here. Curiosity seeks novelty only to leap from it again to another novelty. The care of seeing is not concerned with knowingly being in the truth, but with possibilities of abandoning itself to the world. Thus curiosity is characterized by a specific not-staying with what is nearest. Consequently, it also does not seek the leisure of reflective staying, but rather restlessness and excitement from continual novelty and changing encounters.227

Restlessness and excitement (Unruhe und Aufregung) lead to leaping or hurtling (abspringen) between novelties, and abandoning oneself (Sichüberlassen) to the world. Heidegger here uses a vocabulary that describes kinds of action in which a person is not in control of the actions that he performs. In the eddy of perpetual activity, a person’s individual self—his ability to direct himself deliberately through choice—is drained out of his own action.

Existential mania therefore gives rise to anonymity. It gives rise to a self-understanding in which no limited, and no factical, and therefore, ultimately, no individual self is understood; and it gives rise to a kind of perpetual activity in which no deliberate, individual choices can be made. It can be pointed out that this anonymity, based on existential mania, is structurally similar to the anonymity that is grounded on the inauthentic person’s conformity to the impersonal crowd. The conforming inauthentic

227 BT, 161 [172].
person is anonymous because his abilities are average, that is, his abilities are not individual, and because his power of choice is disburdened, that is, he cannot make any individual choices. The existentially manic inauthentic person is anonymous for the same reasons: the abilities that he understands himself to possess are not individual, and he lacks the power of individual choice.

In this perspective, Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, takes two perspectives on the constitution of inauthenticity, and on the anonymity that belongs to it. There may be a temporal reason for the simultaneity, in *Being and Time*, of these two perspectives. The lecture course on Aristotle, given six years before the publication of *Being and Time*, presents an account of what, in *Being and Time*, will become inauthenticity, but primarily from the perspective of existential mania. In *Being and Time*, while the account of inauthenticity preserves many of the conclusions that Heidegger reached in the lecture course on Aristotle, it mainly focuses on the inauthentic person’s conformity to the type of abilities and understanding characteristic of das Man. Heidegger therefore appears to have moved away, in *Being and Time*, from an account of inauthenticity that emphasizes existential mania, to an account of inauthenticity that focuses on conformity. I cannot here begin to try to explain what motivated this change, although I believe that there are systematic reasons behind it.

On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that Heidegger tries to *integrate* his two approaches to inauthenticity. It may be incorrect to suggest that the interpretation of inauthenticity from the perspective of existential mania is really *independent* of the interpretation of inauthenticity from the perspective of conformity. Heidegger writes that
falling, that characteristic of the being of the human being in which existential mania becomes especially clear, is always a falling that falls into the impersonal crowd:

Da-sein has initially always already fallen away from itself and fallen prey to the "world." Falling prey to the "world" means being absorbed in being-with-one-another as it is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity… [Inauthenticity] constitutes precisely a distinctive kind of being-in-the-world which is completely taken in by the world and the Mida-sein of the others in the they.228

Therefore, it may only be because a person conforms to the impersonal crowd, that a person becomes existentially manic. For example, tranquillization, or a person’s self-understanding according to non-factical abilities, arises from the “supposition of the they that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine ‘life.’”229 And, Heidegger writes, a person’s perpetual activity, a person’s plunging and eddying, always takes place “within the groundlessness of inauthentic being in the they.”230 On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that Heidegger’s descriptions of curiosity, or a person’s understanding of his abilities as limitless, generally do not mention any dependence of that self-understanding on conformity to the impersonal crowd. This kind of inauthentic, and anonymous self-understanding appears to be an individual’s own initiative.

I will, then, leave this question open: is the person’s existential mania, the fact that a person understands his abilities as limitless and non-factical, and acts perpetually, due to the fact that the person conforms to das Man? Perhaps Winnicott’s conception of mania may be of some help. Winnicott understands mania like Klein—as a set of psychological defenses in which a person denies the destructibility of his life, understands himself to be omnipotent, and is always undertaking new endeavors. These

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228 BT, 164 [175-6].
229 BT, 166 [177].
230 BT, 167 [178].
psychological defenses are independent of any social norms to which a person may conform. On the other hand, Winnicott shows how certain social realities—the theatre, the modern city—facilitate these defenses: there are certain realities of the social world which allow a person to deny the destructibility of life, to understand himself omnipotently, to always be busy, and so on. Even more, these social realities especially facilitate mania because a person’s manic participation in them will be normal: it is through recognizing, and acting in light of, these social realities, that a person becomes manic.

Perhaps this is one way to understand Heidegger’s account of inauthenticity. The person can become inauthentic, and anonymous, through existential mania; and yet that existential mania is facilitated by certain social norms, prescribed by the impersonal crowd. The person’s conformity to the impersonal crowd will therefore institute an existential mania, that, as is the case with conformity in general, only leads to each person’s own anonymity.
Chapter 5: Issues in Heidegger’s Understanding of Death

I would now like to examine Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, in order to critique it. As I suggested, the concept of authenticity brings together two phenomena, and in a peculiar way. On the one hand, the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death; and, on the other hand, the authentic person anticipates his individuality. And, according to the concept of authenticity, this anticipation of the authentic experience of death and this anticipation of individuality are identical with one another. I gave a characterization of these two anticipations, and their identity, in the introduction, and, in the following chapter, I will give a full account of them. In this chapter, however, I would like to raise some issues about one crucial element in Heidegger’s concept of authenticity: what I called just above the authentic experience of death. I gave a brief characterization in the introduction of what this authentic experience of death is, and, in the following chapter, I will discuss it in its full detail. Here, I would like to address some preliminary problems that an interpretation of Heidegger’s understanding of the authentic experience of death poses. There are, primarily, two of them.

First of all, by speaking of an “authentic experience of death,” death is understood to be an “experience.” However, there is a long philosophical tradition that claims that death cannot be an “experience.” And, even, there are interpretations of Being and Time that claim that, by death, Heidegger cannot mean something that can be experienced. I will therefore here look at why, for Heidegger, death is something that can be experienced, and in what sense it is experienced. Second of all, and as I pointed out in the first chapter, Heidegger describes death with the formula “the possibility of the
impossibility of existence.” This formulation of death as “the possibility of the impossibility of existence” poses its own problems. Above all, it might seem as though this formulation is a paradox. (There are other issues with this formulation that I will look at.) Death is a person’s possibility. But it is a possibility of impossibility. But how can a possibility be of impossibility? I will therefore here try to show how death, as the possibility of the impossibility of existence, does not present a paradox. Showing this relies on identifying very precisely the meaning, in the formulation that Heidegger gives, of “possibility” and “impossibility.”

A remark here should be made about the use of the word “authentic” in the expression “the authentic experience of death.” I will, in the following chapter, interpret the concept of authenticity, according to what I suggested just above: the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and, identical to that, anticipates his individuality. However, the word “authentic” in the expression “the authentic experience of death” does not refer to this authenticity. Rather, it refers to an experience of death that is merely an explicit experience of death, one in which a person does not, as Heidegger says, and as I will explain in more detail below, “flee” from it. A person can have, therefore, an authentic experience of death, without anticipating it, as the authentic person does, and in the way that I will explain in the following chapter. Therefore, in addressing the first problem that the interpretation of Heidegger’s understanding of death poses—how death is an experience—I will discuss the “flight” from death, and I will also discuss in what sense the authentic experience of death is an “explicit” experience of death. But it is very important that this “authentic experience of death,” while it is a part of the concept of authenticity—the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of
death—be separated from it. One could say that the use of the word “authentic” in
“authentic experience of death” is a structural use of that word: it merely indicates that a
person’s experience of death is genuine, in the sense of explicit and transparent; whereas
the use of the word “authentic” in “authenticity” is a normative use of that word: it
indicates a kind of relationship toward death which a person should strive to achieve.

I will, then, (1) look at why and in what sense death, for Heidegger, is an
experience, and define more precisely what “the authentic experience of death” is; and
(2) look at some of the problems posed by Heidegger’s formulation of death, as “the
possibility of the impossibility of existence,” and the precise sense in which this
formulation should be understood.

1. *Is there an experience of death?*

First of all, common sense, and a prominent philosophical tradition, answers the question
whether death can be experienced in the negative. Both Stoicism and Epicureanism
provided a consolation for death by claiming that it cannot, in fact, be experienced. It is
that event which, once it occurs, marks the end of all experience: what then is there to
fear? And this is how death is commonly understood: when death occurs, consciousness,
among other things, comes to an end, and therefore the occurrence of death is precisely
the occurrence of the impossibility of all experience. Could it then be correct for
Heidegger to claim—or for an interpretation of *Being and Time* to claim that Heidegger
claims—that a person is able to experience death?

It is here important to be clear about what, for Heidegger, death is not. For
Heidegger, death (*Tod*) is not organic death, what Heidegger calls “perishing”
(Verenden)—that state of any biological being in which it loses all organic functionality. Nor, for Heidegger, is death what he calls “demise” (Ableben)—that event which concludes a human being’s life, and which, for example, is commemorated and legally ascertained.\textsuperscript{231}

In fact, a conflation between Heidegger’s death and organic death or the conclusion of a person’s life has led many interpreters to claim, incorrectly, that Heidegger’s discussion of death in Being and Time is incoherent. Paul Edwards, for example, claims that Heidegger “interiorizes” death, or makes an “external” event like death, which a person cannot experience personally, a personal experience.\textsuperscript{232} In other words, for Edwards, Heidegger understands a normal and perfectly reasonable phenomenon, a person’s “concern” about organic death, in such a way that this concern also involves that a person endures, and experiences, that organic death. Death therefore becomes an incoherent and impossible phenomenon: a death whose meaning is that it cannot be experienced becomes, simultaneously, an object of experience.

This critique would be correct if Heidegger meant to speak about a person’s organic death. In this case, it would be true that Heidegger “interiorized” organic death, and incoherently, and impossibly, understood it as an object of experience. But Edwards overlooks the fact that Heidegger never says that a person can experience a organic death. Heidegger specifically says that the death of which he speaks “can become visible only by distinguishing” it “from the ending of a living thing,” that is, only by distinguishing it from perishing.\textsuperscript{233} In order to designate the death that he will address, Heidegger therefore

\textsuperscript{231} BT, 223-4 [240-1]; 229 [247].
\textsuperscript{233} BT, 224 [241].
introduces the term “dying” (sterben).\textsuperscript{234} Death, for Heidegger, is dying, that is, not the event of death, organic or the conclusion of life, but that way in which “Da-sein is toward its death”\textsuperscript{235}—that is, that way in which a person experiences death.

But it may be claimed at this point that Heidegger has performed a sleight-of-hand. He separates his idea of death from perishing or demise by calling death “dying,” or “being-toward” death. But then is it not the case that “dying” involves perishing or demise, insofar as, while dying is not the event of perishing or demise, it is just the being toward, or the experience of, perishing or demise? But was not the original issue that if death is understood in these ways—as perishing or demise—then it cannot be experienced, or a person cannot be “toward” it? Heidegger’s distinction between dying and perishing or demise is therefore a false distinction, and he asserts, with the concept of dying, precisely what is contested: that there can be an experience of, or a being-toward, perishing or demise.

This objection is correct. However, it relies on the assumption that what, in dying, a person experiences, or is toward, must be perishing or demise. However, for Heidegger, what a person experiences, or is toward, in dying, is not perishing or demise, but rather what he calls, as I suggested above, “the possibility of the impossibility of existence,” or what he elsewhere calls “the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein”\textsuperscript{236} ([die] Möglichkeit der schlechthinigen Unmöglichkeit des Daseins) or “the absolute impossibility of existence” (die schlechthinige Unmöglichkeit der Existenz).\textsuperscript{237} By “the possibility of the impossibility of existence,” “the possibility of the absolute impossibility of

\textsuperscript{234} BT, 229 [247].
\textsuperscript{235} BT, 229 [247].
\textsuperscript{236} BT, 303 [329], Stambaugh’s translation amended to include the genitive, which is in the German, but not in her translation.
\textsuperscript{237} BT, 245 [265].
of Da-sein,” or by “the absolute impossibility of existence.” Heidegger indicates that possibility in which a person faces the impossibility of his being. William Blattner, has, very persuasively, tried to understand death from this perspective. For Blattner, Heidegger understands a person’s death as a person’s possibility of being “unable to be,” or, in other words, as the possibility of an “existential death.”

Blattner writes:

> Death is the condition in which Dasein is unable to be-there, because it is unable to exercise its ability to determine who it is. This is to say that death is a limit-situation in which the ability-to-be is stifled, in the way in which the ability to see is stifled by the absence of light. This situation occurs when Dasein is beset by anxiety, in which none of its possibilities matters to it differentially, in which all are equally irrelevant to it.

If the being of Dasein is its ability-to-be—as I explained above, its care, or its projection into abilities—then death is the possibility of not being able-to-be, or of, in some way, not being able to project into abilities. (And I write “in some way” because, as I will explain below, this “impossibility of existence” must be understood in a very specific sense.) This existential death is what Heidegger means by “death,” and this existential death is an object of experience.

Heidegger gives a picture of the kind of experience of this existential death in discussing anxiety. Anxiety is, for Heidegger, that attunement which “hold[s] open the constant and absolute threat to itself arising from the ownmost individualized being of Da-sein.” The intentional content that the mood of anxiety discloses is precisely death. In anxiety, therefore,

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239 The concept of death in Being and Time,” 62.
241 BT, 245 [265]; emphases eliminated.
the world in which I exist has sunk into insignificance, and the world thus disclosed can set free only beings that are not relevant. The nothingness of the world in the face of which Angst is anxious does not mean that an absence of innerworldly things objectively present is experienced in Angst. They must be encountered in just such a way that they are of no relevance at all, but can show themselves in a barren mercilessness. However, this means that our heedful awaiting finds nothing in terms of which it could understand itself, it grasps at the nothingness of the world.242

I will, in the following, discuss anxiety in more detail. Pertinent here is the fact that, in describing the intentional content of anxiety, Heidegger gives a picture of a perhaps extreme and unfamiliar, but nevertheless robustly possible, experience. In anxiety, a person experiences that his existence is impossible. He experiences that he is unable to pursue any particular possible self—a person “finds” that there is “nothing in terms of which to understand himself. A person experiences that he is unable to exercise any particular skills—he “grasps at the nothingness of the world.” And a person experiences that particular worldly beings are unable to be used—worldly beings “show themselves in a barren mercilessness.” If death comprises these inabilities, then death can be experienced.243

It should finally be stated that Heidegger himself uses the concept of experience in order to describe a person’s relation to his death. Heidegger notes that the relation a

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242 BT, 315 [343].

243 The emphasis on a “death” that can be experienced, over against organic death, can also be found in Kierkegaard’s The Sickness unto Death. Kierkegaard defines the theme of the Sickness unto Death, despair, as a kind of death, but notes that what primarily accounts for the despair of this death is that it is not organic, and that it can and must be experienced. “Despair is the sickness unto death…to die and yet not to die, to die death itself. For to die means that it is all over, while to die death itself means to live to experience dying. And if one can live to experience this for a single moment, then one lives to experience it for ever… Far from its being any comfort to the desiparer that the despair doesn’t consume him, on the contrary this comfort is just what torments him; the very thing that keeps the sore alive and life in the sore. For what he—not despaired but—despairs over is precisely this: that he cannot consume himself, cannot be rid of himself, cannot become nothing. This is the heightened formula for despair, the rising fever in this sickness of the self.” Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, trans. Alastair Hannay (Penguin Classics, 1989), 48-9
person bears to the death of which he speaks is not a relation to the already dead, the deceased. But he adds that “[t]he more appropriately the no-longer-being-there of the deceased is grasped phenomenally, the more clearly it can be seen that in such being-with with the dead, the real having-come-to-an-end of the deceased is precisely not experienced” (solches Mitsein mit dem Toten gerade nicht das eigentliche Zuendegekommen sein des Verstorbenen erfährt). In other words, it is the experience of death that Heidegger is trying to describe which is not given by simply being with the deceased. This implies that Heidegger does indeed believe that a person can experience death—just not the death of others. Indeed, Heidegger adds that “[w]e do not experience the dying of others in a genuine sense; we are at best always just ‘there,’ too” (Wir erfahren nicht im genuinen Sinne das Sterben der Anderen, sondern sind höchstens immer nur “dabei”).

For Heidegger, then, death can be experienced. And what is experienced is not organic death, or the conclusion of a person’s life, but rather existential death: “the possibility of the absolute impossibility of existence.” I will, momentarily, address how this formulation should be understood. I want here, however, to note two ways in which Heidegger understands this experience of death, and indicate which of those ways will be focused on in the following chapters. For the experience of death on which I will focus is, specifically, the authentic experience of death.

As I suggested, one of the ways in which Heidegger indicates that death is an experience is that, for him, death is being-toward death (Sein zum Tode). Death is not an organic event, or the conclusion of a person’s life, but a person’s being-toward, his

244 BT, 222 [238-9].
245 BT, 222 [239].
relation to, his own death. Now, for Heidegger, a person is always being-toward-death. Heidegger writes that “[f]actually one’s own Da-sein is always already dying, that is, it is in a being-toward-its-end.”\footnote{\textit{BT}, 235 [254].} In this sense, one can say that death is always being experienced. But there are many ways of experiencing, or being-toward, death. This is clear from everyday life. One can be in the grips of despair over death; or one can speak incidentally, in passing, and in perfect equanimity, about the death of others, and even one’s own death. For Heidegger, there are two primary ways in which death can be experienced: there is what he calls a “flight” (\textit{Flucht}) from death; and there is the authentic experience of death. I will look at each of these in turn.

For Heidegger, the experience of death as a “flight” from death involves, primarily, the acknowledgment that death exists, and yet exists in such a way that it affects no one in particular, and, especially, does not affect a person himself. Death is therefore experienced as a “public event.” It is of concern to everyone, and yet, personally, to no one. “‘Dying,’” Heidegger writes, “is leveled down to an event which does concern Da-sein, but which belongs to no one in particular.”\footnote{\textit{BT}, 234 [253].} For Heidegger, that death is a public event, in this sense, is the way in which death is experienced insofar as \textit{das Man}, the impersonal crowd, determines how death is experienced. “The public interpretation of Da-sein says that ‘one dies’ because in this way everybody can convince him/herself that in no case it is I myself, for this one is no one.”\footnote{\textit{BT}, 234 [253].} But this way of experiencing death is, for Heidegger, a flight from death, because it entails that death will not be experienced authentically: that is, not as what it genuinely is. This way of “[b]eing
toward the end has the mode of evading that end—reinterpreting it, understanding it inauthentically, and veiling it.”249 In the flight from death, the object, so to speak, of a person’s experience of death is death itself. And yet, in this flight, a person experiences it as what it is not: for death is not a public event.

Alternatively, for Heidegger, a person can experience death as what it is. That is, a person can experience death without fleeing from it, without evading it, reinterpreting it, and veiling it. A person can have an authentic experience of death, or can experience death explicitly. The authentic experience of death is an experience of death that does not flee from it, evade and veil it, but rather is an experience of death as, explicitly, what death itself is.

I cannot, at this stage, give a comprehensive description of what the authentic experience of death is. I will give that comprehensive description in the following chapter. But one example of this authentic experience of death may be given. For Heidegger, in the flight from death, a person treats death as though it were merely an event in the world—a thing, whose kind of being is, therefore, the being of an object, presence-at-hand.250 However, as I have already noted, and as I am about to look at in more detail, death is the possibility of the impossibility of existence. As the possibility of the impossibility of existence, death has the being, not of a thing, but rather of Dasein. Death must, for this reason, be understood on the basis of a person’s care or abilities. Therefore, to experience death as a thing is to flee from it precisely by not understanding it in terms of a person’s care or abilities, but rather as a thing. On the other hand, the authentic, explicit experience of death is an experience of death in which it is experienced

249 BT, 235 [254].
250 BT, 234 [254].
in terms of a person’s care or abilities: a person understands death, not as an event, but rather as the possibility of the impossibility of existence.

Again, I will return, in the next chapter, to what the authentic experience of death is. I will show how the authentic experience of death involves an experience of death in which a person explicitly understands death as his “ownmost,” his “unsurpassable,” and his “non-relational” possibility, and discloses this death to himself in the mood of anxiety. Here, however, I only want to indicate that it will be this authentic experience of death with which I will be concerned in the following, and not that experience of death in which a person flees from death.

2. Death as “the possibility of impossibility”

The second problem that I would like to discuss bears on one of Heidegger’s characterizations of the authentic experience of death. As I suggested just above, and as I will explain in the following chapter, Heidegger understands the authentic experience of death as a person’s authentic experience of his ownmost, unsurpassable, non-relational, possibility, which is disclosed in the mood of anxiety. But he also, and primarily, understands the authentic experience of death as the authentic experience of the possibility of the impossibility of existence.

This description of death is repeated in a number of places; for example, and as I have already indicated, that death is “the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general,”251 that death is “the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence”252; Heidegger also adds that death is “the possibility of the impossibility of every mode of

251 BT, 242 [262], emphases removed.
252 BT, 242 [262].
behavior toward..., of every way of existing” (Er [Der Tod] ist die Möglichkeit der Unmöglichkeit jeglichen Verhaltens zu..., jedes Existierens). These descriptions of death can be condensed into the following formulation: death is the possibility of impossibility, since, as I will explain in a moment, “impossibility” means to be unable, and, since “existence,” as I have already suggested, means for a person to be able, “impossibility of existence” signifies what “impossibility” alone signifies.

But this is a startling description of death. For how are we to think of a “possibility” that is “of” an “impossibility” (Möglichkeit der Unmöglichkeit)? Is not this paradoxical? Even more, if a “possibility” is “of” an “impossibility,” then might it not be a “possibility” at all, but rather just an “impossibility”? Additionally, if “impossibility” is something in which “possibility” itself is not “possible,” then might “possibility of impossibility” really mean “impossibility of possibility”? I want here to try to untangle these questions, and to untangle this formulation. And, as will become clear, this untangling bears directly on the question of what, precisely, for Heidegger, death is.

Figuring out what death, as “the possibility of impossibility,” means, is dependent upon first understanding what “possibility” and “impossibility” mean. First of all, and as I have suggested, possibility and impossibility do not indicate, for Heidegger, modal, or categorical possibility and impossibility: that something is not or is inconsistent with what is the case or is known to be true. Furthermore, and related to this, possibility and impossibility do not indicate the possibility or impossibility of a coming event, as when we say “it is possible that the sun will rise tomorrow” or “it is impossible that the sun will rise tomorrow.” For, in this case, “possibility” and “impossibility” would be employed in

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253 BT, 242 [262].
254 BT, 135 [143].
their modal or categorial senses: it is not inconsistent with what we know, or it is not inconsistent with what is the case, that something will come; or it is consistent with what we know, or it is consistent with what is the case, that something will not come. Even more, understanding possibility and impossibility in relation to coming events is to understand them in relation to things, that is, things whose being, for Heidegger, is presence-at-hand. However, for Heidegger, possibility and impossibility relate to a person’s existence, and, as I have already suggested, a person’s existence is precisely not a thing, or something whose being is presence-at-hand.

As I explained at the end of the third chapter, possibility and impossibility must be understood in relation to a person’s abilities. A person’s “possibilities” (Möglichkeiten) are those abilities in which his care consists: his ability to pursue a possible self; his ability to exercise skills; and his ability to use worldly beings. As I also suggested, this pursuit, exercise, and use all refer to “abilities” because, at the basis of them, is a person’s projection into abilities—namely, that “know-how” by which a person projects himself toward a possible self—and is therefore able to be a possible self; and projects his use of worldly beings—and is therefore able to use worldly beings. A person’s projection is, therefore, Heidegger writes, at the basis of a person’s “ability-to-be” (Seinskönnen). In this light, then, “the possibility of impossibility” must be understood as a person’s projecting into not projecting, or a person’s being able to be unable.

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255 BT, 135ff. [144ff.].
But understanding “possibility of impossibility” in this way poses two distinct issues. First, it appears paradoxical: how can a person project that he does not project; or how can a person be able to be unable? And, second, it appears that the formula should be reversed. If “possibility of impossibility” means that a person projects that he does not project, or is able to be unable, should the expression not be rephrased as “impossibility of possibility,” in other words, a person’s not projecting that he projects, or a person’s being unable to be able? I will here address both of these issues. They are connected with one another. I will begin with the latter issue first.

First of all, a person’s “possibility of impossibility” is not equivalent to a person’s “impossibility of possibility.” According to the first formulation, a person does project or is able. What he does project, however, is his own not projecting, or he is able, but to be unable. According to the second formulation, however, a person does not project, and is not able. For this reason, indeed, the second formulation is paradoxical, or simply nonsensical. For what it fundamentally means is that a person cannot project that he can project; or that a person is not able, but, somehow, to be able.

If, then, the first formulation—which, after all, is Heidegger’s own formulation—is accepted, then a person’s authentic experience of death is a person’s authentic experience of the possibility of impossibility, namely, of the fact that he projects that he cannot project, or is able to be unable. But at this point a paradox seems to appear. For how can a person project that he cannot project? How can a person be able to be unable? This apparent paradox can be resolved. However, it is important to see in what way it is

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256 It should be mentioned that the paradox that this appears to raise is not the paradox that I am criticizing in this dissertation.
resolved. There is one potential type of resolution that is tempting, but that is, in fact, unsatisfactory.

The following may be proposed. A person does project, or is able. And what he projects, or that of which is able, is not projecting, or being unable. And he can do this by projecting or being able in such a way that he finds, at the, so to speak, “horizon” of his projection or ability, the fact that he cannot project, or is unable. So a person, for example, pursues the possible self of a doctor, exercises the skills of a doctor, and uses the worldly beings of a doctor. But he does this while grasping that, at the “horizon” of this being a doctor, he will not be able to be a doctor. This not being able to be a doctor is a person’s death, his possibility of impossibility: it is a person’s projecting that he cannot project, or his ability to be unable. Indeed, Heidegger speaks of death in just this sense: he says that death has the character of “imminence” (or something that is imminent: ein Bevorstand).257

There are a number of problems with this way of resolving the apparent paradox. First, it threatens to treat a person’s impossibility as something which is “possible” in that sense of something that possibly comes, and therefore according to the modal or categorial sense of possibility. In other words, a person’s impossibility, that he does not project or is unable, is something which he grasps can happen, in the sense that it is something which can, after or during the course of one’s life, happen. However, this “can happen” is a “can happen” appropriate only to events which are possible in the modal or categorial sense of “possible,” that is, which are not contradictory with what is known, or what is the case.

257 BT, 231-2 [250].
But it could be replied here that this “can happen” of a person’s impossibility is not a “can happen” of a more or less probable exigency, but rather a “can happen,” or, more precisely, a “can be” in Heidegger’s sense of “possibility.” That a person does not project or is unable “can be” in the sense that any of a person’s abilities “can be.” If a person is able to be a doctor, then he “can be” a doctor in the sense that he will be a doctor. Similarly, a person’s impossibility “can be” in this sense: a person “can be” unable in the sense that he will be unable. Therefore, by speaking of “the possibility of impossibility,” Heidegger means to indicate that a person can and thus will be impossible. A person who authentically experiences death therefore authentically experiences that he projects, or is able, but projects, or is able, in such a way that he projects his own I can and will not project or be able. So, a person, who authentically experiences death, is a doctor. He is able to pursue the possible self, exercise the skills, and use the worldly beings, of a doctor. But he projects, also, that he can and will not be a doctor, that is, that he can and will not be able to pursue the possible self, exercise the skills, and use the worldly beings, of a doctor.

The problem with this way of resolving the paradox is that it overlooks the fact that, for Heidegger, a person’s authentic experience of death, of his possibility of impossibility, is not compatible with a person’s projecting in a meaningful way. I use the word “meaningful” here in the following sense (and this is my own, and not Heidegger’s, sense of “meaningful”): that there are particular abilities onto which a person projects. Therefore, for a person to project in a meaningful way, means that he has particular abilities into which to project, that is, a particular possible self to pursue and particular worldly beings to use, and that he projects into these with his particular skills. A person
who is a doctor projects in a meaningful way, since he has a particular possible self to pursue—that of a doctor; has particular skills to exercise—the skills of a doctor; and has particular worldly beings to use—the worldly beings that a doctor uses.

A person’s authentic experience of death, or a person’s authentic experience of his possibility of impossibility, is not compatible with a person’s projecting in a meaningful way, because the possibility of impossibility is just the possibility of impossibility. A person’s death is, for Heidegger, and as I mentioned above, “the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general,” “the possibility of the impossibility of every mode of behavior toward…, of every way of existing,” and “the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence.” If a person’s possibility is of impossibility, but of impossibility in general and measurelessly, then a person cannot project meaningfully. For if a person’s possibility is of impossibility in general, or of measureless impossibility, then there can be no particular abilities into which a person can project. However, it is just this meaningful projection that the latter way of resolving the apparent paradox ascribes to a person whose possibility is impossibility. For, according to this way of resolving the apparent paradox, a person who authentically experiences that his possibility is of impossibility is able to project into particular abilities—for example, he is able to pursue the particular possible self of a doctor, exercise those particular skills of a doctor, and use those particular worldly beings of a doctor.

But how then is the apparent paradox resolved? In fact, the means to resolve it have just been made available. The authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of the possibility of impossibility. The person who authentically experiences
death therefore experiences that he is possible: he does project, or is able. However, he does not project meaningfully. But, therefore, the person who authentically experiences death experiences that he does project, but that he projects into no particular abilities.

Heidegger describes a person’s authentic experience of death in just this way. He writes that the person who authentically experiences death is “primarily unsupported by concern taking care of things.”258 In other words, a person who authentically experiences death is not able to be concerned with particular others, or to take care of particular worldly beings. Furthermore, and as I explained above, in describing the mood of anxiety, that mood in which death is authentically experienced, Heidegger writes:

[t]he world in which I exist has sunk into insignificance, and the world thus disclosed can set free only beings that are not relevant. The nothingness of the world in the face of which Angst is anxious does not mean that an absence of innerworldly things objectively present is experienced in Angst. They must be encountered in just such a way that they are of no relevance at all, but can show themselves in a barren mercilessness. However, this means that our heedful awaiting finds nothing in terms of which it could understand itself, it grasps at the nothingness of the world.259

In the mood of anxiety, a person projects into abilities. He pursues a possible self; he exercises skills; he uses worldly beings. But he projects in such a way that he projects into no particular abilities. For the person whose mood is anxiety, there are no particular worldly beings to use: they are only mercilessly barren. And there is no particular possible self to pursue: there is nothing, no particular possible self, in terms of which a person can understand himself. And a person can exercise skills, and yet this exercise grasps at nothing—there are no particular skills to exercise.

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258 BT, 245 [266], emphasis removed.
259 BT, 315 [343].
The paradox is therefore resolved in this way: a person’s authentic experience of death, of the possibility of impossibility, is a person’s authentic experience of projecting, in such a way that he has no particular abilities into which to project. It is in this sense that a person is able to be unable.
Chapter 6: The Concept of Authenticity

I will here give an interpretation of the concept of authenticity—the concept which, in this dissertation, I mean to critique. Authenticity is a complex concept. It brings together two phenomena, and in a peculiar way. As I have suggested, it does not indicate, for Heidegger, what it most familiarly indicates in English—that a thing is “real,” as opposed to being fake or an imitation. Authenticity indicates a way of being of the human being; that is, it describes a way of being of a being that is characterized by care. “Because Dasein is always essentially its possibility, it can ‘choose’ itself in its being, it can win itself, it can lose itself, or it can never and only ‘apparently’ win itself.”

I will argue here that the authenticity of the authentic person consists in this: on the one hand, the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and, on the other hand, he anticipates his individuality. And, finally, for the authentic person, this anticipation of the authentic experience of death is identical to, or simply is, this anticipation of own individuality. For the authentic person to anticipate the authentic experience of death is for the authentic person to anticipate his individuality.

It is clear that at the center of the concept of authenticity is the concept of anticipation (Vorlaufen), a concept that Heidegger links to the concept of “resoluteness” (Entschlossenheit): the authenticity of the authentic person is what Heidegger calls “anticipatory resoluteness” (vorlaufende Entschlossenheit). I will, in the following, explain what “anticipation” and “resoluteness” mean in more detail. Here I only want to give an initial orientation to the concept of authenticity.

260 BT, 176 [188].
Heidegger writes that anticipatory resoluteness, the authenticity of the authentic person,

is not a way out fabricated for the purpose “overcoming” death, but it is rather the understanding… that frees for death the possibility of gaining power over the existence of Da-sein and of basically dispersing every fugitive self-covering-over.  

Heidegger adds:

We defined anticipatory resoluteness as authentic being toward the possibility that we characterized as the absolute impossibility of Da-sein. In this being-toward-the-end, Da-sein exists authentically and totally as the being that it can be when “thrown into death.”

The authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death. But in this anticipation of the authentic experience of death (“in this being-toward-the-end”) the authentic person is also able to reveal a self that is otherwise covered over—that is, the authentic person is also to anticipate his individuality. Heidegger additionally writes:

Becoming free for one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging themselves upon us, so that the factical possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen.

The authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death: he becomes “free for” death. But the authentic person is also able to anticipate his individuality—that is, he is able to understand and choose the factical, individual self that he is. Heidegger therefore states that the authentic person, who anticipates the authentic experience of death, “can

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261 *BT*, 286 [310].
262 *BT*, 303 [329].
263 *BT*, 244 [264].
be individualized in individuation of [his] own accord,” or is “free for the freedom of choosing and grasping [himself].”

But the concept of authenticity not only involves these two sides—a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and a person’s anticipation of his individuality. It identifies these two sides. According to the concept of authenticity, in other words, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of his individuality. This becomes clear in Heidegger’s discussion of anxiety, the mood in which, as I have suggested, discloses the authentic experience of death.

Heidegger writes that in anxiety,

Da-sein is taken back fully to its naked uncanniness and benumbed by it. But this numbness not only takes Da-sein back from its ‘worldly’ possibilities, but at the same time gives it the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being.

In anxiety, a person authentically experiences death—a person is taken back fully to his naked uncanniness, that is, authentically experiences the fact that he absolutely is not “at home,” which, as I will explain below, is very much a part of the content of the authentic experience of death. However, in anxiety, a person is given, at the same time (zugleich), “the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being” (die Möglichkeit eines eigentlichen Seinkönnens), that is, the ability to be an individual. Heidegger therefore writes that “[t]ogether with the sober Angst that brings us before our individualized potentiality-of-being, goes the unshakable joy in this possibility”; that is, together with

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264 BT, 176 [188].
265 BT, 316 [344].
266 BT, 176 ff. [188 ff.].
267 BT, 286 [310].
(zusammen mit) the sobriety of anxiety, which discloses the authentic experience of
death, is the joy (Freude) in a person’s ability to be an individual.268

In this chapter, then, I will (1) explain in more detail what the authentic
experience of death is—that is, beyond what I said about it in the last chapter, that it is
the authentic experience of “the possibility of the impossibility of existence.” And I will
(2) explain how, according to the concept of authenticity, a person’s anticipation of the
authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of his individuality.

I lastly want remark here that there will be a specific limitation on the following
interpretation of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. In the following, I will avoid
Heidegger’s description of authenticity as “anticipatory resoluteness.” Since this is a
frequent and even definitive description of authenticity, this deserves an explanation. My
reason for avoiding this description is that I would like primarily to focus on how
Heidegger understands authenticity as a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience
of death and, what is identical to that, a person’s anticipation of his individuality. This
understanding of authenticity is captured, specifically, by Heidegger’s concept of the
“anticipation of death” (Vorlaufen in den Tod or Vorlaufen zum Tode).269 It is not

268 I want to note that this duality of the mood of anxiety is also especially apparent in Sartre’s
account of “anxiety” or “anguish” (“angoisse”) in Being and Nothingness. See Being and
Nothingness, trans. Hazel Barnes (Citadel, 2001), 65 ff. For Sartre, anxiety is a state in which
pathological sources of action—desire and fear—break down, and conventional moral standards
cannot be appealed to in order to motivate action. For this reason, the anxious person finds
himself unable to act. However, for Sartre, because of this, and at the same time, the anxious
person discovers that his own self can and must be the source of his action. Sartre therefore writes
that “it is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is
the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of it is being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in
its being, in question for itself” (65).

269 Heidegger uses the expressions “Vorlaufen in den Tod” and “Vorlaufen zum Tode,” both of
which Stambaugh translates as “anticipation of death” (for an example of the former, see BT, 282
[305]; for an example of the latter, see BT 246 [267]). Because the German dative “zum” and
accusative “in” is closer to the English accusative “in” than to the English genitive “of” because
specifically captured by Heidegger’s concept of resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*). For resoluteness is a person’s acknowledgment of, or “self-projection upon,” his own guilt (*Schuld*), namely, the fact that he is a “null ground of a nullity,” or has not chosen his own factical abilities, and, by choosing certain factical abilities, makes other factical abilities impossible.

The relationship between the anticipation of the authentic experience of death and resoluteness is complicated. Heidegger appears to suggest that only insofar as a person anticipates the authentic experience of death, can a person become resolute: “resoluteness becomes a primordial being toward the ownmost potentiality-of-being of Da-sein [that is, a self-projection upon guilt] only as anticipatory. Resoluteness understands the ‘can’ of its potentiality-for-being-guilty only when it ‘qualifies’ itself as being-toward-death.”

To be honest, I do not have a clear idea of what this relationship really is. However, the object of my critique is Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, *insofar* as that concept of authenticity proposes that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of his individuality. I will therefore not look at how the concept of authenticity involves resoluteness, but this oversight should not affect whether my critique is correct or not.

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of its directionality and sense of movement, “forerunning into death” has certain merits as a translation.

270 *BT*, 272ff. [295 ff.].
271 *BT*, 261 [283].
272 *BT*, 262 [284].
273 *BT*, 283 [306].
1. *The authentic experience of death*

First, then, I want to look in more detail at what the authentic experience of death is. In the last chapter, I looked at one dimension of the authentic experience of death. It is the authentic—or, as I suggested in the last chapter, explicit and not fleeing—experience of a person’s possibility of impossibility, which means the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities.

But apart from describing death as the possibility of impossibility, Heidegger also describes death as a possibility which is a person’s “ownmost” (*eigenste*), which is “unsurpassable,” (*unüberholbare*), and which is non-relational (*unbezügliche*). In fact, Heidegger defines what he calls the “existential-ontological structure of death” (*der existenzial-ontologischen Struktur des Todes*) in these terms: the ontological structure of death is death as a person’s ownmost, unsurpassable, and non-relational possibility. The authentic experience of death, then, is a person’s explicit, not fleeing, experience of his ownmost, unsurpassable, and non-relational possibility. I here, then, want to describe in more detail what the authentic experience of this ownmost, unsurpassable, non-relational possibility is.

Additionally, I will also describe Heidegger’s account of the mood of anxiety (*Angst*). Anxiety, Heidegger says, is “able to hold open the constant and absolute threat to itself arising from the ownmost individualized being of Da-sein,” that is, it is that mood which holds open, which explicitly discloses, death. Even more, “[t]hrownness into death reveals itself to it more primordially and penetratingly in the attunement of

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274 *BT*, 231 [249].
275 *BT*, 245 [265].
Angst,” 276 that is, it is in anxiety that a person most genuinely, or with the least distortion, experiences death. Anxiety is therefore an inextricable part of a person’s authentic experience of death. Even more, if every understanding of an experience has its mood, and a mood that contributes its own content to that experience, 277 and anxiety is the mood in which death is authentically experienced, then anxiety contributes a unique content to a person’s authentic experience of death, and ought to be treated as a part of it.

A preliminary comment about a person’s authentic experience of his ownmost, unsurpassable, and non-relational possibility should be made. These characteristics of death are, for Heidegger, possibilities, just as the characteristic of death, that it is the “impossibility of existence,” which I looked at in the last chapter, is a possibility. Therefore, what I said about the meaning of “possibility” in the last chapter applies to these possibilities. Possibility indicates an ability, or a person’s projection into abilities. Just as, then, the possibility of impossibility indicates that a person projects into a particular kind of ability—he projects into no particular abilities—so too a person’s ownmost possibility, or a person’s unsurpassable possibility, or a person’s non-relational possibility, all indicate that a person projects into a particular kind of ability. So, for example, a person’s non-relational possibility means that a person projects into an ability that is non-relational. And, therefore, the authentic experience of death will be (among other things) an explicit, not fleeing experience of the projection into a non-relational ability.

A. The authentic experience of death is, first of all, the authentic experience of a person’s ownmost possibility. Heidegger writes:

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276 BT, 232 [251].
277 BT, 245 [265].
Death is a possibility of being that Da-sein always has to take upon itself. With death, Da-sein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-of-being. In this possibility, Da-sein is concerned about its being-in-the-world absolutely. Its death is the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there. 278

In this passage, "ownmost" (eigenste) indicates what is most one’s own (eigen), what is proper to a person, or what is an essential part of a person’s very self. And, therefore, the authentic experience of death, as the authentic experience of a person’s ownmost possibility or ownmost potentiality-of-being (ability-to-be), is the authentic experience of that ability that is most a person’s own, the authentic experience of that ability that is most proper to a person, or the authentic experience of that ability that is an essential part of a person’s very self. In a person’s authentic experience of death, a person comes, therefore, into the fullness of himself: he authentically experiences that most his own, most proper to himself, and most essentially himself.

This is correct. Yet it means the opposite of what it suggests. It suggests that a person’s authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of the full expression of himself—the ability to pursue that self that most expresses himself, that ability to exercise those skills that most expresses himself, that ability to use worldly beings in such a way that a person most expresses himself. In the authentic experience of death, a person is at the height of his life—he authentically experiences that he is able to be that kind of person, that doctor, teacher, and so on, that he most is.

Yet this is precisely the wrong interpretation. Heidegger states that the authentic experience of death, as the authentic experience of a person’s ownmost possibility, is the authentic experience of that “possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there” (Sein Tod

278 BT, 232 [250].
ist die Möglichkeit des Nicht-mehr-dasein-können). The authentic experience of a person’s ownmost possibility is therefore that experience in which a person is not able to “express himself” at all. It is that authentic experience of a person’s not being able to be a doctor, not being able to be a teacher, and so on, because it is the authentic experience of no longer being able-to-be. A person’s authentic experience of death is, indeed, an experience of what is most a person’s own, most proper to a person, and most a part of a person’s self. But what is most a person’s own, most proper to a person, and most a part of a person’s self, is that a person is no longer able-to-be.

What does it mean for a person to have, as his possibility, no longer being able-to-be? As I have already suggested, a person’s being “able-to-be” (Seinskönne) is coextensive with “existence” and “care”: it is a person’s being. Therefore, not being able to be indicates that a person no longer is able to be in that way in which a person is. It indicates that a person’s being, his existence or care, is impossible. This understanding of death as a person’s ownmost possibility therefore only indicates the meaning of death that I looked at in the last chapter. It can be recalled here, in its various formulations: death is “the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general,” death is “the possibility of the impossibility of every mode of behavior toward…, of every way of existing,” and death is the “possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence.” As I suggested above, these descriptions of death can be condensed into the formulation of death as “the possibility of impossibility,” and this means that a person projects into no particular abilities. The authentic experience of death, then, as the authentic experience of a person’s ownmost possibility, is just the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities.
B. Second of all, the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of an unsurpassable possibility. But it should immediately be pointed out that death is not an unsurpassable possibility in the sense that organic death might be thought to be “unsurpassable”—that it is inevitable that we all die. For to reduce the unsurpassability of death to its organic inevitability is to understand death as organic death, that is, as perishing, Verenden, from which, however, Heidegger separates the existential death which he means to describe. The reason for the unsurpassability of death must therefore be sought elsewhere.\(^\text{279}\)

It must be sought, in particular, in the facticity of a person’s experience of death. For Heidegger, “facticity” (Faktizität) is a basic aspect of the being of the human being. It indicates that a person is constituted as the kind of being that he is—that he is constituted as a being that cares, or a being that is able to pursue a possible self, able to exercise skills, and able to use worldly beings. For this reason, Heidegger states that “facticity” does not refer to what is normally understood to be facts—states of affairs of which propositions are true; it is not “the factuality of the factum brutum of something objectively present.”\(^\text{280}\) Rather, facticity expresses, in relation to Dasein, “that it is and has to be.”\(^\text{281}\) As factical (faktisch), a person must, then, be able to pursue a possible self,

\(^{279}\) I must admit here that I am not entirely convinced that the unsurpassability of death is entirely unrelated to the unsurpassability of organic death, Verenden. I say this as a qualification to the interpretation that I am about to give, which, however, is faithful to Heidegger’s explicit intentions. But there is a very ordinary sense in which death is unsurpassable—that is, we all die, we all must die, or death is inevitable; but the death to which this ordinary sense of the unsurpassability of death refers is, clearly, organic death. Can the unsurpassability of existential death be understood outside of this unsurpassability (inevitability) of organic death? This would seem very difficult. The interpretation that I give is one way; but it does not capture what immediately suggests itself in Heidegger’s use of the concept of unsurpassability, namely, inevitability.

\(^{280}\) *BT*, 127 [135].

\(^{281}\) *BT*, 127 [135].
must be able to exercise skills, and must be able to use worldly beings. For this reason, according to Heidegger, the facticity in the being of the human being displays the “thrownness” (Geworfenheit) of the human being: that it is thrown into, or, as he writes, “delivered over” (Überantwortung) to its being.\(^{282}\) Even more, however, a being that is factical is always thrown into or delivered over to a specific kind of care, or specific abilities. A person has to be able to pursue a specific possible self, has to be able to exercise specific skills, and has to be able to use particular worldly beings. Heidegger therefore writes that a person is “delivered over” “as that being…which it, existing, has to be.”\(^{283}\) Thrown into or delivered over to its being, the human being cannot get away from itself, or cannot get over itself. Facticity therefore expresses what can be called “the force of circumstance”:\(^{284}\) that a person must confront, and engage with, the specific worldly situations in which he finds himself, must confront, and engage with, the specific skills that he possesses, and must confront, and engage with, the specific possible self that he pursues.

Heidegger understands the unsurpassability of death in light of facticity. Just as a person is thrown into those factual abilities by which his life constituted, so too a person is thrown into death. Heidegger writes that a person is “thrown into death” (geworfen in den Tod);\(^{285}\) that “Da-sein itself is as thrownness into death”;\(^{286}\) that a person is “thrown into being-toward-death”;\(^{287}\) and that a person is “thrown being-toward-death.”\(^{288}\)

\(^{282}\) \textit{BT}, 127 [135].
\(^{283}\) \textit{BT}, 127 [135], emphasis not added.
\(^{284}\) I would like to thank Taylor Carman for this phrase.
\(^{285}\) \textit{BT}, 303 [329].
\(^{286}\) \textit{BT}, 285 [308].
\(^{287}\) \textit{BT}, 319 [348].
\(^{288}\) \textit{BT}, 316 [344].
Therefore, if death is the possibility of impossibility, or a person’s ownmost possibility, then this impossible, ownmost possibility is *factual*. A person *must* project into no particular abilities: he must die. In this light, Heidegger’s statement that “one’s own Da-sein is always already dying, that is, it is in a being-toward-its-end”\(^ {289}\) gets its full sense and justification. A person is *always* dying because, since death is factual, a person *must* die. Heidegger’s full phrase therefore states: “*Factically* one’s own Da-sein is always already dying, that is, it is in a being-toward-its-end.”\(^ {290}\) The authentic experience of death is therefore the authentic experience of this “must”: that it is “has to be,” that it is a “force of circumstance,” that a person projects into no particular abilities.

C. A person’s authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of a *non-relational* possibility. However, the non-relationality of death should not be understood as the simple indifference of the character of a thing to the character of other things, as when one says a table is “unrelated” to the moon, or the concept of a dog is “unrelated” to the concept of a mountain. The non-relationality of death must be understood, rather, in the context of the peculiar relationality which, according to Heidegger, human beings, whose being is care, enjoy with others.

As I discussed in the fourth chapter, Heidegger understands the being of human beings as a *being with* others. For a person to care is for a person to care *with* others who care. And, even more, it is to care in a *way like* the way that others care. If others possess certain abilities, then a person conforms his own abilities to those abilities; and if others understand their own abilities in a certain way, then a person conforms his own understanding of his abilities to that way. In this sense, a person is “related” to others

\(^{289}\) *BT*, 235 [254].
\(^{290}\) *BT*, 235 [254], emphasis added.
insofar as his kind of care is involved with the kind of care of others: involved with them, not because a person becomes entangled with others in, so to speak, “knots” of competing and interdependent passions and endeavors, but because a person’s very way of being a human being, or very way of caring, is dependent on the others’ very way of being or caring.

The non-relationality of death indicates that death is not a possibility—a projection into an ability—that can be involved with the abilities of others in the sense described just above. Heidegger writes:

> Death is the ownmost possibility of Da-sein. Being toward it discloses to Da-sein its ownmost potentiality-of-being in which it is concerned about the being of Da-sein absolutely. Here the fact can become evident to Da-sein that in the eminent possibility of itself it is torn away from the they, that is, anticipation can always already have torn itself away from the they.\(^{291}\)

Death “tears” (entreißen) a person away from the impersonal crowd. And it tears him away from the impersonal crowd for a specific reason. Heidegger begins this passage by noting that a person’s death is a person’s ownmost possibility, that is, as I have suggested, a person’s projection into no particular abilities. But this kind of care—projecting into no particular abilities—cannot be a kind of care that can conform to the type of care of the impersonal crowd’s care. For in order to care in that way in which others care, a person must be able to project into particular abilities. For this reason, projecting into no particular abilities tears a person away from the impersonal crowd. Heidegger therefore adds:

> The ownmost possibility is nonrelational… Death does not just “belong” in an undifferentiated way to one’s own Da-sein, but it lays claim on it as something

\(^{291}\) *BT*, 243 [263].
The nonrelational character of death understood in anticipation individualizes Da-sein down to itself... It reveals the fact that any being-together-with what is taken care of and any being-with the others fails when one’s ownmost potentiality-of-being is at stake.\textsuperscript{292}

A person’s death entails that any care for particular worldly beings “fails” (“alles Sein bei dem Besorgten… versagt”). But that is not all that “fails.” Additionally, all of a person’s being with others fails as well (“jedes Mitsein mit Anderen versagt”). This is why death is a possibility that is non-relational: it is a projection into abilities—the projection into no particular abilities—that must be independent of the kind of care of others.

D. Finally, the authentic experience of death is an experience in the mood of anxiety. Anxiety, for Heidegger, is an attunement (Befindlichkeit) or mood (Stimmung). It is, then, not a psychological affect—for example, bothersome uneasiness. As I suggested in the third chapter, moods, for Heidegger, are a part of the way in which the human being discloses the “there” to itself—the human being’s disclosure of the full structure of his care: a possible self that he is able to pursue, worldly beings that he is able to use, and skills that he is able to exercise. But, as I also suggested in the third chapter, moods disclose, and prior to any understanding disclosure, “how one is and is coming along.”\textsuperscript{293}

For example, in a bad mood, a person himself and the world itself will, so to speak, “show up” in a specific way. Even more, this disclosure in a mood is not the disclosure of a simple affect; rather, it is a disclosure of way in which the world itself and a person himself matter—even, and for example, as not mattering.\textsuperscript{294}

Anxiety is, then, such a mood. But the particular character of anxiety is given by its specific intentional content: anxiety is, for Heidegger, anxiety over death. Heidegger

\textsuperscript{292} BT, 243 [263].

\textsuperscript{293} BT, 127 [124].

\textsuperscript{294} BT, 129 [137].
writes that “the attunement which is able to hold open the constant and absolute threat to itself arising from the ownmost individualized being of Da-sein is Angst,” and adds that “[t]hrownness into death reveals itself to it more primordially and penetratingly in the attunement of Angst. Angst in the face of death is Angst ‘in the face of’ the ownmost nonrelational potentiality-of-being not to be bypassed.” Insofar, then, as a person has an authentic experience of his “ownmost nonrelational potentiality-of-being not to be bypassed,” a person is in the mood of anxiety. “Being-toward-death,” Heidegger writes, “is essentially Angst.”

But what, then, specifically, does anxiety contribute to a person’s authentic experience of death? How does the mood of anxiety allow death to “show up”?

Heidegger writes:

that in the face of which one has Angst is not encountered as something definite to be taken care of; the threat does not come from something at hand and objectively present, but rather from the fact that everything at hand and objectively present absolutely has nothing more to ‘say’ to us. Beings in the surrounding world are no longer relevant. The world in which I exist has sunk into insignificance, and the world thus disclosed can set free only beings that are not relevant. The nothingness of the world in the face of which Angst is anxious does not mean that an absence of innerworldly things objectively present is experienced in Angst. They must be encountered in just such a way that they are of no relevance at all, but can show themselves in a barren mercilessness. However, this means that our heedful awaiting finds nothing in terms of which it could understand itself, it grasps at the nothingness of the world.

Relevance, as I discussed in the third chapter, is the involvement that worldly beings have with one another—namely, that by using one worldly being, other worldly beings can be used. In the mood of anxiety, therefore, particular worldly beings are unable to be used.

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295 BT, 245 [265], emphases removed.
296 BT, 232 [251].
297 BT, 245 [266].
298 BT, 315 [343].
with one another. Particular worldly beings have no use. In this sense, they do not “speak” to us any longer: they suggest to us no use. They are simply “there” — and there, like refuse, or as irrelevant. Even more, in anxiety, a person’s particular possible self shows up in a particular way — as nothing: “our heedful awaiting finds nothing in terms of which it could understand itself.” Because a person is unable to use worldly beings, there is no particular worldly possible self through which a person can understand himself. There is, consequently, no particular worldly possible self that a person is able to pursue. And, finally, in anxiety, a person’s particular skills show up in a particular way. Unable to use worldly beings, and unable to pursue a possible self, a person “grasps at the nothingness of the world”: grasping at nothing, a person finds himself unable to exercise particular skills.

In this perspective, and as Hubert Dreyfus has emphasized,299 what the mood of anxiety discloses is strikingly close to the content of a person’s experience of death insofar as death is a person’s ownmost possibility. As I discussed above, death, as person’s ownmost possibility, is a person’s projecting into no particular abilities. This is,

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299 See Being in the World, 311. Dreyfus describes what is experienced in anxiety as a presentation of what would be experienced in dying if, according to Dreyfus, death could be experienced (he does not think it can be). “Death shows us in a specific case that Dasein can have no possibilities that define it and its world… Thus the anxiety at the moment of dying when I have no possibilities left, the world recedes, and everything is seen to be meaningless, can be an analogon for living lucidly in such a way that the world is constantly seen to be meaningless and I am constantly owning up to the fact that Dasein is not only the null basis as revealed in the anxiety of conscience but also is a nullity in that it can make no possibilities its own… Ordinary death is a perspicuous but misleading illustration of Dasein’s essential structural nullity, viz., that Dasein can have neither a nature nor an identity, that it is the constant impossibility of being anything specific.”
however, just what Heidegger describes the mood of anxiety to disclose. Anxiety is that mood which *discloses* that a person projects into no particular abilities.\(^{300}\)

If anxiety is that mood that discloses to a person that he projects into no particular abilities, then one of the defining features of the mood of anxiety becomes clarified. For Heidegger, anxiety, unlike fear, so to speak “has no object”:

> How is what *Angst* is anxious about phenomenally differentiated from what fear is afraid of? What *Angst* is about is not an innerworldly being. Thus it essentially cannot be relevant. The threat does not have the character of a definite detrimentality which concerns what is threatened with a definite regard to a particular factical potentiality for being. What *Angst* is about is completely indefinite.\(^{301}\)

Anxiety is never about any particular worldly being: what anxiety is about is not a relevant worldly being, which could injure a person’s activity in a specific way. But anxiety “has no object,” not because anxiety is a gazing at the world in its general meaninglessness, as though it were a chaos in which relevant objects cannot be individuated, or in which nothing can, as it were, “make sense.” Rather, anxiety “has no object” because it discloses that a person cannot project into particular abilities. For in this case, a person cannot “have” particular worldly beings that he can use, through the exercise of his particular skills, and in pursuit of a particular possible self.

> Anxiety is the *mood* of the authentic experience of death: therefore, in the mood of anxiety, a person authentically, explicitly, without fleeing or distortion, experiences that he projects into no particular abilities. With this, a complete description of a person’s authentic experience of death can be given. It is a person’s authentic experience of his

\(^{300}\) Heidegger makes clear that the mood of anxiety discloses death in just this sense in another passage as well. He writes: “The insignificance of the world disclosed in *Angst* reveals the nullity of what can be taken care of, that is, the impossibility of projecting oneself upon a potentiality-of-being primarily based upon what is taken care of” (*BT*, 315 [343]).

\(^{301}\) *BT*, 174 [186].
ownmost possibility—the authentic experience of the fact that a person projects into no particular abilities. It is a person’s authentic experience of his unsurpassable possibility—that this projection into no particular abilities is factical, that his projection into no particular abilities “has to be,” or that his projection into no particular abilities has the “force of circumstance.” It is a person’s authentic experience of his non-relational possibility—that, insofar as a person projects into no particular abilities, he is no longer is able to conform his kind of care to the kind of care of others. And this authentic experience of death is disclosed in the mood of anxiety.

2. Authenticity as the anticipation of death and the anticipation of individuality

I now want to look, directly, at the concept of authenticity. Authenticity, as I have suggested, is a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and the anticipation of his individuality. Even more, according to the concept of authenticity, these two sides are identical to one another. The anticipation of the authentic experience of death is, for the authentic person, the anticipation of his individuality.

Heidegger therefore writes that the anticipation of the authentic experience of death “is not a way out fabricated for the purpose ‘overcoming’ death, but it is rather the understanding… that frees for death the possibility of gaining power over the existence of Da-sein and of basically dispersing every fugitive self-covering-over.”³⁰² In a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, death is powerful (mächtig). And this power is a power that frees the possibility that a person’s own concealment of himself be destroyed (Die vorlaufende Entschlossenheit… dem Tod die Möglichkeit freigibt… jede

³⁰² BT, 286 [310].
flüchtige Selbstverdeckung im Grunde zu zerstreuen”). Or, again, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death “brings [Da-sein] face to face with the possibility to be itself… to be itself in passionate anxious freedom toward death which is free of the illusions of the they, factual, and certain of itself.”

The person who anticipates the authentic experience of death is, in that experience—in passionate anxious freedom toward death—certain of himself (ihrer selbst gewissen), and has the possibility to be himself (die Möglichkeit… es selbst zu sein).

What I want to show here, then, is how the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and, in that anticipation, anticipates his individuality. But two specific concepts, which I have not as yet explained in any detail, need here to be clarified. What specifically is “anticipation,” and what specifically is a person’s “individuality”?

The sense of a person’s individuality will, in the following, especially become clear. I can here give an overview of what I will, in the following, explain. For Heidegger, in a person’s anticipation of his individuality, a person anticipates the ability to understand himself in terms of abilities which are limited and factual. That is, a person anticipates the ability to understand himself according to particular abilities which, as he says, “lie before” (vorliegen) death, and therefore constitute a whole (Ganze). And a person anticipates the ability to understand himself according to particular abilities which, following Heidegger’s understanding of “facticity,” a person is constituted as possessing, and which he therefore “has to” be. Even more, by anticipating his individuality, a person is able anticipate the ability to choose those limited, factual

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303 BT, 245 [266], one order of emphasis removed.
abilities independently—that is, to choose them independently of the choices that the impersonal crowd compels. And a person anticipates the ability to choose those abilities individually, or deliberately, in a sense that I will further explain below. The anticipation of a person’s “individuality” is therefore a person’s anticipation of this individuality: a self-understanding in terms of limited and factical abilities, and the ability to make independent and individual, deliberate choices.

Anticipation (Vorlaufen), for Heidegger, is a way in which a person relates to the authentic experience of death, and to his individuality. By translating Vorlaufen as “anticipation,” I follow Stambaugh. Another common translation of Vorlaufen is “forerunning,” or “running ahead into.” “Anticipation” has its advantages and disadvantages. What it loses in its vagueness—etymologically, it means “taking in advance”—it gains in avoiding the problematic literal meaning of “forerunning” or “running ahead into.” Vorlaufen does not mean, literally, “running” or “running ahead into,” as though Vorlaufen were a matter of physical movement. At the same time, Vorlaufen does not mean “to anticipate,” in the common sense of the word, that is, to expect, to await, or to predict. In fact, in discussing the meaning of anticipation, Heidegger explicitly excludes this latter group of meanings. “Expecting” (Erwarten), Heidegger suggests, means to relate to something possible, and yet to relate to something possible with a view to its actualization:

To expect something possible is always to understand and ‘have’ it with regard to whether and when and how it will really be objectively present. Expecting is not only an occasional looking away from the possible to its possible actualization, but essentially a waiting for that actualization. Even in expecting, one leaps away from the and gets a footing in the real. It is for its reality that what is expected is
expected. By the very nature of expecting, the possible is drawn into the real, arising from it and returning to it.\textsuperscript{304}

Anticipation is not expectation because what is anticipated is not something that either is meant to be actualized, or even could be actualized. What a person anticipates in anticipation is his authentic experience of death, and his individuality. But neither the authentic experience of death nor a person’s individuality are things which could be realized. They are, rather, abilities, which, as I have explained, do not have the ontological character of things, and therefore not of something that could be actual or objectively present.

Anticipation, then, is a relation to abilities. And, for Heidegger, it is a relation to a person’s abilities in which a personseizes them. It is for this reason that the translations of Vorlaufen as “forerunning” and “running ahead into” are particularly helpful, despite what they literally suggest. In respect of the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, Heidegger writes:

But does not this mode of behavior [anticipation] contain an approach to the possible, and does not its actualization emerge with its nearness? In this kind of coming near, however, one does not tend toward making something real available and taking care of it, but one comes nearer understandingly, the possibility of the possible only becomes “greater.” The nearest nearness of being-toward-death as possibility is as far removed as possible from everything real. The more clearly this possibility is understood, the more purely does understanding penetrate to it as the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general.\textsuperscript{305}

Anticipation, then, is a relation to abilities—in this latter case, the authentic experience of death—by which a person comes as near to them as possible, penetrates them as purely as possible, and, therefore, presents them, as abilities, as greatly as possible. Anticipation

\textsuperscript{304} BT, 242 [262].
\textsuperscript{305} BT, 242 [262].
is the *seizure* of abilities. In anticipation, a person determinedly and courageously takes a firm and clear hold of those abilities as the abilities which they are. In the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, therefore, a person determinedly, courageously, firmly and transparently, seizes the authentic experience of death as his ability; and in the anticipation of his individuality, a person takes a person determinedly, courageously, firmly and transparently seizes his individuality as his ability.

There are four respects in which, for Heidegger, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is identical to a person’s anticipation of his individuality. I will look at each in turn: (A) a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is the anticipation of understanding his abilities as *limited*; (B) a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is the anticipation of understanding his ability as *factual*; (C) a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is the anticipation of his ability to make independent choices; (D) a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death as it is experienced in the mood of anxiety is the anticipation of his ability to make independent, deliberate choices. It can be noted that the person who anticipates his individuality in these foregoing respects arrives at a comportment that is the precise contrary of the anonymous comportment of the inauthentic person, as I interpreted that comportment in the fourth chapter.

A. I showed above how, for Heidegger, a person’s authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of his ownmost possibility. It is the authentic experience of the fact that a person is “no-longer-able-to-be-there,” that is, of the impossibility of a person’s existence. And this means that, in the authentic experience of death, a person authentically experiences that he projects into no particular abilities.
But if a person’s authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities, then, for Heidegger, *anticipating* this authentic experience of death carries a *lesson*. Heidegger writes:

> Becoming free *for* one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging themselves upon us, so that the factual possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen.  

This passage is significant in a number of respects, and I will also return to it below. What should be emphasized here is that Heidegger identifies the *anticipation* of the authentic experience of death—becoming “free *for* one’s own death”—with the anticipation of abilities which are understood to be “lying before” (*vorgelagert*) that death. The connection between these two anticipations can be explained in the following way. A person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is the anticipation of a person’s projecting into no particular abilities. But, for Heidegger, it is therefore the anticipation of the *ending* of a person’s projection into particular abilities. “The ending that we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify a being-at-an-end of Da-sein, but rather a being toward the end of this being.”  

By anticipating the *ending* of a person’s projection into particular abilities, a person is therefore able to anticipate his projection into particular abilities in such a way that this projection is understood to be *ended* by that end.

But by anticipating the projection into particular abilities as *ended*, a person is able to anticipate a highly significant form of self-understanding. Heidegger writes that a person who anticipates his projection into particular abilities as lying before or ended by

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306 *BT*, 243 [264].  
307 *BT*, 228 [244].
death, anticipates his projection into particular abilities in such a way that they are understood to constitute a whole:

Because anticipation of the possibility not-to-be-bypassed [death] also disclosed all the possibilities lying before it, this anticipation includes the possibility of taking the whole of Da-sein in advance in an existentiell way, that is, the possibility of existing as a whole potentiality-of-being.\(^{308}\)

In the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, a person anticipates his projection into particular abilities in such a way that this projection into particular abilities is understood as a whole, or, to put it another way, in such a way that this projection into particular abilities is understood to be limited. A person anticipates his projection into particular abilities in such a way that those abilities are understood to comprise a limited, whole set of abilities. It can be recalled, however, that one of the central elements of the inauthentic person’s anonymity is his understanding himself in terms of limitless abilities. The inauthentic person does not understand himself to be an individual, because he does not understand his abilities to be limited in any way. In this light, therefore, it can be seen that the person who anticipates the authentic experience of death, anticipates understanding himself as an individual. For what he anticipates is, precisely, his projection into particular abilities, but in such a way that this projection into abilities is understood to be limited. The anticipation of the authentic experience of death is, therefore, the anticipation of a person’s individuality.

B. I showed above how the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of a unsurpassable death: a death which is factical. A person who authentically experiences death authentically experiences that he must not be able to

\(^{308}\) BT, 244 [264].
project into particular abilities. For this reason, however, the anticipation of the authentic experience of death teaches a person another lesson: it allows a person to anticipate his abilities in such a way that they are understood to be factical.

In discussing the anticipation of the authentic experience of death as the anticipation of an unsurpassable possibility, Heidegger writes:

The ownmost nonrelational possibility [death] is not to be bypassed [is “unsurpassable”]. Being toward this possibility lets Da-sein understand that the most extreme possibility of existence is imminent, that of giving itself up. But the anticipation does not evade the impossibility of bypassing death, as does inauthentic being-toward-death, but frees itself for it. Becoming free for one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging themselves upon us, so that the factical possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen. 309

A person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is, here, identified with a person’s anticipating in such a way that he is freed from “chance” abilities, and freed for factical abilities. A person anticipates his unsurpassable death—that he must die, that he must not be able to project into particular abilities. But, in this anticipation, a person is freed for those factical abilities by which his life is constituted—that is, he is freed for the projection into particular abilities in which he understands his life to factically consist. In other words, in anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person anticipates his own projection into particular abilities, but in such a way that these abilities are understood to be factical. Another way to put the point is the following. A person who anticipates the authentic experience of death becomes sensitive to his facticity: he anticipates an unsurpassable death, that he must not project into particular abilities. But this anticipation allows a person to become sensitive to the projection into particular

309 BT, 243 [264].
abilities in which his life factically consists: it allows a person to become sensitive to the fact that he must project into the particular abilities in which his life factically consists.

The anticipation of projecting into particular abilities which are understood to be factical implies, however, that the authentic person anticipates his individuality. It can be recalled that part of the inauthentic person’s anonymity is that he does not understand his abilities to be factical. The inauthentic person does not understand himself as an individual, because he cannot understand himself in terms of his own factical abilities. In the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, however, a person is precisely able to anticipate his abilities in such a way that they are understood to be factical. Heidegger therefore writes that authenticity does not stem from “idealistic” expectations soaring above existence and its possibilities; but arises from the sober understanding of the basic factical possibilities of Da-sein. Together with the sober Angst that brings us before our individualized potentiality-of-being, goes the unshakeable joy in this possibility. In it Da-sein becomes free of the entertaining ‘incidents’ that busy curiosity provides for itself…

A person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death therefore provides a “sober understanding of the basic factical possibilities of Da-sein.” And sober understanding is, specifically, of a person’s “individualized potentiality-of-being,” since what a person anticipates in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, is his individuality, or his projection into particular abilities which are understood to be factical.

C. I discussed above how a person’s authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of a non-relational death. For Heidegger, a person’s being is always being with: a person cares in such a way that he cares with others who also care. But being with

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310 BT, 286 [310].
these others who also care is, for Heidegger, being like these others who also care: a person cares in that specific way in which the others care. On the other hand, the person who authentically experiences death does not conform to the impersonal crowd. The authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities. But, in order to conform to the impersonal crowd, a person must be able to project into particular abilities. As Heidegger writes, “any being-together-with what is taken care of and any being-with the others fails when one’s ownmost potentiality-of-being is at stake.”

For Heidegger, however, if the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of not being able to conform to the impersonal crowd, then anticipating the authentic experience of death is also the anticipation of a very significant ability. It is the anticipation of the ability to make choices independently of the prescriptions of the impersonal crowd. Heidegger writes:

The nonrelational character of death understood in anticipation individualizes Da-sein down to itself… It reveals the fact that any being-together-with what is taken care of and any being-with the others fails when one’s ownmost potentiality-of-being is at stake. Da-sein can authentically be itself only when it makes that possible of its own accord… Anticipation of its nonrelational possibility forces the being that anticipates into the possibility of taking over its ownmost being of its own accord.

Since, in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, a person anticipates that he cannot conform to the impersonal crowd, in anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person anticipates the necessity, or even the compulsion, to make his own, independent choices. A person anticipates a situation—death—in which his choices

311 *BT*, 243 [263].
312 *BT*, 243 [263].
cannot be compelled by the impersonal crowd, and therefore anticipates a situation in which his choices must only derive from himself. And, indeed, Heidegger writes that the anticipation of a person’s authentic experience of death (the “anticipation of its nonrelational possibility”) forces a person to anticipate “taking over” his own being of his “own accord” (“Das Vorlaufen in die unbezügliche Möglichkeit zwingt das vorlaufende Seiende in die Möglichkeit, sein eigenstes Sein von ihm selbst her aus ihm selbst zu übernehmen”).

The anticipation of the authentic experience of death therefore allows a person to anticipate an ability that, specifically, is denied to the inauthentic person. As I explained above, the inauthentic person, who conforms to the impersonal crowd, suffers a “disburdening” (Entlassen) of his own power of choice. Not only does a person choose those abilities that the crowd chooses—and therefore chooses abilities characterized by “averageness” (Durchschittlichkeit)—but a person’s very power of choice itself is ceded to the impersonal crowd:

The they is everywhere, but in such a way that it has always already stolen away when Da-sein presses for a decision. However, because the they presents every judgment and decision as its own, it takes the responsibility of Da-sein away from it… In the everydayness of Da-sein, most things happen in such a way that we must say “no one did it.”

By contrast, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is also the anticipation of the burdening of a person with his own, independent, power of choice. And a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is, therefore, a person’s anticipation of his individuality, insofar as, in this anticipation, a person anticipates

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313 BT, 119-20 [127].
making his own independent choices, independent of the compulsion of the impersonal crowd.

D. Finally, I showed above how a person authentically experiences death in the mood of anxiety. The mood of anxiety discloses to a person that he cannot project into particular abilities: that he is unable to use particular worldly beings (they are “irrelevant”), that he is unable to pursue a particular possible self (there is “nothing” in whose terms a person can “understand himself”), and that he is unable to exercise particular skills (“our heedful awaiting…grasps at the nothingness of the world”).

A significant implication of this mood of anxiety is that a person’s perpetual activity, characteristic of his inauthenticity, comes to a stop. A person is anxious over the fact that there is no particular possible self to pursue, no particular skills to exercise, and no particular worldly being to use. As Heidegger writes, “[i]n accordance with its existential meaning, Angst cannot lose itself in what can be taken care of.” Anxiety, for this reason, can be said to be “paralyzing,” but not in the ordinary psychological sense in which the affect of anxiety freezes a person in terror. Anxiety is paralyzing because it is the mood of a person’s being unable to project into particular abilities.

However, for this reason, in the anxiety that a person experiences in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, a person can anticipate his individuality, and in a specific sense. Heidegger writes:

Angst discloses Da-sein as being-possible, and indeed as what can be individualized in individuation of its own accord. Angst reveals in Da-sein its being toward its ownmost potentiality of being, that is, being free for the freedom

314 BT, 316 [344].
of choosing and grasping itself. Angst brings Da-sein before its being free for… (propensio in)…, the authenticity of its being…

In anxiety, a person discloses his not being able to project into particular abilities. But this anxious disclosure of his not being able to project into particular abilities implies, for Heidegger, that a person discloses his pure ability. A person understands his abilities as abilities, and as nothing else: “Angst discloses Da-sein as being-possible.” This means, for Heidegger, that a person, in experiencing anxiety in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, is able to anticipate making individual, deliberate choices. These choices are “deliberate,” not in the sense that they issue from weighing the benefits and costs of making them, but rather because they issue from a person’s own resolved, composed, decision. The anxious person, no longer perpetually acting, and anticipating his own pure ability, is able to resolve, decisively, on that pure ability. In anxiety, and understanding himself as “being-possible,” a person becomes “free for the freedom of choosing and grasping [himself]” (Die Angst offenbart im Dasein… das Freisein für die Freiheit des Sich-selbst-wählens).

The anxiety that is experienced in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death is therefore both that mood which discloses that a person projects into no particular abilities, and, at the same time, that mood which discloses that a person is able to make individual, deliberate choices. Heidegger therefore writes that, in the mood of anxiety,

Da-sein is taken back fully to its naked uncanniness and benumbed by it. But this numbness not only takes Da-sein back from its “worldly” possibilities, but at the same time gives it the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being.

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315 BT, 176 [188].
316 BT, 316 [344].
In the mood of anxiety, a person is not only (nicht nur) immersed in his uncanniness—his not being “at home,” or his not being able to pursue a familiar possible self, exercise familiar skills, or use familiar worldly beings\(^{317}\)—but, at the same time (zugleich), is holds before himself the ability to make individual choices (“Diese Benommenheit… gibt [Dasein] zugleich die Möglichkeit eines eigentlichen Seinkönnens”).

Heidegger writes that “[w]hen Da-sein, anticipating, lets death become powerful in itself, as free for death it understands itself in its own higher power, the power of its finite freedom…”\(^{318}\) The foregoing interpretation of the concept of authenticity can make sense of this sentence. Let me try to summarize what this interpretation has tried to show. Authenticity is the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, but also, identical to that, the anticipation of a person’s individuality. In anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person anxiously anticipates his ownmost, unsurpassable, non-relational possibility. But in anxiously anticipating this authentic experience of death, a person is able to anticipate his abilities in such a way that they are understood to be limited and factual, and therefore, in this anticipation, can understand himself as an individual. And, in anticipating this authentic experience of death, a person is able to anticipate his ability to make independent and individual, deliberate choices: he is again able to anticipate his individuality.

\(^{317}\) BT, 176 ff. [188 ff.].

\(^{318}\) BT, 351 [384].
I will here offer a critique of the concept of authenticity. This critique is based upon—and therefore presupposes—the meaning of the concept of authenticity, as I interpreted it in the last chapter. In fact, in the last chapter, certain problems that belong to the concept of authenticity emerged. However, I did not explicitly point them out. Here I will. I will focus on one primary problem that belongs to the concept of authenticity: that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical. And I will also discuss a secondary but connected problem: that part of the concept of authenticity is nonsensical.

It can be recalled that according to the concept of authenticity, for Heidegger, the authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death; and anticipates his individuality; and this anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and anticipation of individuality, are identical to one another. For a person to anticipate the authentic experience of death is for him to anticipate his individuality.

The two problems that emerge in this concept of authenticity are as follows.

1. The concept of authenticity appears to be paradoxical. I can note here that this paradox is not the paradox that I discussed in the fifth chapter, namely the paradox that the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of the possibility of impossibility. I showed that it is not a paradox for there to be a possibility which is of impossibility. The paradox belonging to the concept of authenticity does not, strictly speaking, concern Heidegger’s understanding of what death is, but, rather, concerns the

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319 William Blattner has tried to show that this understanding of the authentic experience of death is not paradoxical; however, in showing that it is not paradoxical, he neither mentions the possibility that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical, nor tries to show that the concept of authenticity is not paradoxical. See “The concept of death in Being and Time.”
nature of the concept of authenticity itself. The paradox can be stated in the following way. The concept of authenticity proposes that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is a person’s anticipation of his individuality. But the anticipation of the authentic experience of death is the anticipation of projecting into no particular abilities; whereas the anticipation of individuality is the anticipation of projecting into particular abilities. These two kinds of anticipation cannot, consequently, be identified with one another. Their identification, therefore, which is precisely what the concept of authenticity proposes, is paradoxical.

2. Additionally, one of the sides of the concept of authenticity—the anticipation of the authentic experience of death—appears to be nonsensical. If the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities, then how is a person supposed to anticipate this authentic experience of death? How is a person supposed to “seize” it, “forerun” or “run up ahead” into it? Is it not nonsense to think that a person can seize his projecting into no particular abilities? This problem is related to the first problem: it is symmetrical to it. The first problem points to an incompatibility between the anticipation of individuality and the anticipation of the

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320 I would like to make a comment on this word “nonsense” by way of an autobiographical note. For better or worse my first exposure to Heidegger was in a philosophy of science class, in which one of Heidegger’s formulations (I believe it was “the nothing nothings” or “the world worlds”) was written on the board along with a phrase of Hegel’s (which I do not remember). The professor explained that these statements were “nonsense” because they could not be empirically verified or falsified. No sooner had anyone blinked their eyelids, than everyone agreed with this. Whatever the merits of this epistemology or this understanding of what is “nonsense,” there is a well-known perspective on Heidegger in contemporary philosophy that much of what he writes is “nonsense.” My criticism that the “anticipation of death” is “nonsense” is not made from this perspective and should not be taken to be any kind of support for it. This perspective is misguided for an ironic reason, which is that it is offered mainly because its proponents have not taken the time or do not have the patience to consider the “evidence” on which it is based, so that, in a very basic way, it itself can neither be “verified” or “falsified.”
authentic experience of death. This problem points to an incompatibility between anticipation itself and the authentic experience of death.

In this chapter, I will look at each of these problems in more detail. I will also, however, look at a way in which the concept of authenticity may be rethought, in order to avoid the first problem. I will therefore (1) look at the paradox in the concept of authenticity; (2) look at the nonsensicality of one of the sides of the concept of authenticity; and (3) discuss a way in which the concept of authenticity can be rethought, in order to avoid these problems.

I would like to mention one last point. As I showed in the second chapter, most of the criticisms of the concept of authenticity that have been offered are focused on its political and moral consequences, and its status as ideology. I suggested that these critiques are flawed, not so much because of their intentions—there are many ways in which the concept of authenticity is politically and morally dangerous, and there are also many ways in which it can be understood to be ideology—but because of their execution of these intentions. They do not consider Heidegger’s justifications for the concept of authenticity, or whether it is coherent. The critique that I will offer, however, does ask about these justifications, and, primarily, about its coherence. However, asking about the concept of authenticity’s coherence, and, ultimately, claiming that it is not coherent, is connected in a very direct way to the three other kinds of critiques. Showing that the concept of authenticity is incoherent allows a politically and morally dangerous concept to be resisted, but with philosophical means. And it also gives evidence for its ideological status, insofar as ideology is frequently incoherent, since ideology is thinking that aims for something other than rationality.
1. The paradox in the concept of authenticity

I would here, then, like to argue that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical. Let me first try to bring all of the relevant features of the concept of authenticity into view.

Authenticity is a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and, identical to that, a person’s anticipation of his individuality. The anticipation of the authentic experience of death is the anticipation of the explicit and not fleeing experience of the possibility of impossibility, that is, a person’s ownmost, unsurpassable, non-relational possibility, all of which is disclosed in the mood of anxiety. The anticipation of individuality is a person’s anticipation of understanding himself in terms of limited and factual abilities, and his anticipation of his ability to make independent choices, and individual, deliberate choices. “Anticipation” means here that, in relating to the authentic experience of death, and in relating to his individuality, a person *seizes* both, that is, he determinedly, courageously, and transparently takes hold of these abilities.

Now, I want to claim that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical, or that it is paradoxical that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is identical to a person’s anticipation of his individuality. If one looks at what the two anticipations, which the concept of authenticity identifies with one another, mean, then it can be seen that they cannot be identified with one another. Before, however, trying to show this paradox in detail, I first would like to address a possible misunderstanding of what it means to say that the concept of authenticity is paradoxical, insofar as it entails that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death *is* a person’s anticipation of

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321 As I explained in the previous chapter, ownmost possibility indicates what the possibility of impossibility indicates.
individuality. This possible misunderstanding is highly significant, since its consequence is the avoidance of the very paradox that I wish to point out.

When I say that it is paradoxical for the concept of authenticity to identify a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality, I mean that it is paradoxical for it to identify a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality, *in the sense in which I have been speaking up to this point about a person’s individuality*. The paradox emerges, in other words, when the anticipation of individuality is understood as a person’s anticipation of understanding himself in terms of limited and factical abilities, and of being able to make independent, and individual, deliberate choices.

But a person’s anticipation of his individuality can be understood in another sense. In fact, it can be reduced to the bare meaning of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death. As I have discussed, in anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person anticipates his ownmost possibility, and his non-relational possibility. Both these characteristics of the authentic experience of death evince a kind of “individuality.” Death is a person’s ownmost (*eigenste*) possibility, as I explained, insofar as death is what is *most* a person’s own, or insofar as death is what is *most appropriate* to a person. And death is a person’s non-relational possibility, insofar as, projecting into no particular abilities, a person *cannot* conform to *das Man*, the impersonal crowd. As the authentic experience of a person’s non-relational possibility, the authentic experience of death is therefore a person’s authentic experience of being “alone,” in the sense that he explicitly finds that he does not *share* any abilities with others.
In this light, the authentic experience of death could be understood to be the authentic experience of a person’s individuality. What a person authentically experiences is what is most his own; and it is a kind of solitude, in which he shares no abilities with others. For this reason, however, a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death could be understood simply to be a person’s anticipation of his individuality: it just is the anticipation of what is most a person’s own, and a person’s solitude, or his not sharing abilities with others.

This way of understanding a person’s anticipation of his individuality would undermine, or, more precisely, preempt, the claim of a paradox in the concept of authenticity. The reason for this lies in its reduction of the meaning of a person’s anticipation of his individuality to the bare meaning of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death. For how could there be a paradox in identifying two types of anticipation which, however, are not two types of anticipation, but are, rather, simply the same anticipation?

I agree with this. However, the identification, which the concept of authenticity proposes, and in which, I would like to claim, lies the paradox, is not the identification between a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of that individuality, whose meaning is simply reducible to the bare meaning of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death. Rather, the paradox to which I would like to draw attention lies in the identification of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death with a person’s anticipation of his individuality, understood as a person’s anticipation of understanding himself in terms of limited and factual abilities, and of making independent, and individual, deliberate choices. This
latter kind of anticipation of individuality has a meaning entirely distinct from that of the anticipation of individuality which is simply reducible to the bare meaning of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and therefore is itself not simply reducible to the bare meaning of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death.

I can note here, however, that if the first problem that I will discuss, the problem of a paradox in the concept of authenticity, is preempted by understanding a person’s anticipation of his individuality to be simply reducible to the meaning of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, nevertheless the second problem that I will discuss, the problem of the nonsensicality of one of the sides of the concept of authenticity, is not preempted. The second problem, as I suggested, is that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is nonsensical. But if a person’s anticipation of individuality is understood to be simply reducible to the meaning of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, then this kind of anticipation of individuality will be nonsensical, too.

Let me then try to establish that the concept of authenticity contains a paradox. This paradox is not, in truth, difficult to establish. One must only focus on a specific aspect in both a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and a person’s anticipation of his individuality. This aspect is the way in which each anticipation is an anticipation of a projection into particular abilities or of a projection into no particular abilities.

In a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, what is anticipated, essentially, is a person’s projection into no particular abilities. This is clear if one looks at
the various ways in which Heidegger characterizes the authentic experience of death. It is the possibility of impossibility. But, as I showed in the fifth chapter, this means nothing else than that the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities. Heidegger’s understanding of the authentic experience of death as a person’s ownmost, unsurpassable, and non-relational possibility, demonstrates this as well. As I showed in the last chapter, by understanding the authentic experience of death as the authentic experience of a person’s ownmost possibility, Heidegger means to capture just what he captures by understanding the authentic experience of death as the authentic experience of the possibility of impossibility: that it is the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities. Furthermore, that the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of a non-relational possibility is, as I showed in the last chapter, dependent upon the fact that it is the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities. The reason why the authentic experience of death is of a non-relational possibility is because, insofar as a person does not project into particular abilities, he is unable to conform his abilities to the type of abilities enjoyed by the impersonal crowd, and therefore his choice of his abilities therefore cannot be compelled by the impersonal crowd. And, finally, while Heidegger’s understanding of the authentic experience of death as the authentic experience of an unsurpassable possibility indicates that the facticity of death is authentically experienced, what, in particular, is authentically experienced as factual in the authentic experience of death is just the projection into no particular abilities. In the authentic experience of an unsurpassable, factual death, that a person must project into no particular abilities is authentically experienced.
On the other hand, in a person’s anticipation of his individuality, what is anticipated is, essentially, a person’s projection into particular abilities. This is clear if one looks at how Heidegger understands the individuality that is anticipated. It can be recalled that Heidegger writes:

Becoming free for one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging themselves upon us, so that the factual possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen.\(^{322}\)

What is anticipated in a person’s anticipation of his individuality is his understanding himself in terms of his limited and factual abilities: his “factual” abilities which are “lying before” his death. In anticipating his individuality, a person therefore anticipates his projection into his limited and factual abilities, that is, his projection into particular abilities. This is especially clear in Heidegger’s characterization of the “whole” that the limited abilities which a person anticipates constitutes. It can be called that Heidegger writes:

Because anticipation of the possibility not-to-be-bypassed [death] also disclosed all the possibilities lying before it, this anticipation includes the possibility of taking the whole of Da-sein in advance in an existentiell way, that is, the possibility of existing as a whole potentiality-of-being.\(^{323}\)

The whole which, in anticipating his individuality, a person “takes in advance” (\emph{Vorwegnehmens}), is a whole taken in advance in an “existentiell” way. For Heidegger, “existentiell” indicates a kind of understanding of the being of the human being, an understanding of the being of the human being in terms of the particular abilities that a person possesses—the particular possible self that he pursues, the particular worldly

\(^{322}\) \textit{BT}, 244 [264].  
\(^{323}\) \textit{BT}, 244 [264].
beings that he uses, and the particular skills that he exercises."\(^{324}\) "Da-sein always already understands itself factically in *definite* existentiell possibilities."\(^{325}\) A person who "takes in advance" the "whole" of Dasein in an "existentiell" way therefore anticipates understanding himself in terms of his *particular abilities*, that is, he anticipates understanding himself in terms of his *projection into particular abilities*. Additionally, following the first quotation that I provided just above, these existentiell projections into particular abilities, which constitutes a whole, are none other than the factical abilities in terms of which a person, in anticipation, understands himself. Therefore, those factical abilities *are also* comprised of a person’s projection into particular abilities. The self-understanding that a person anticipates, then, in anticipating his individuality, is a self-understanding in terms of his limited and factical *projection into particular abilities*.

That a person’s anticipation of his individuality involves the anticipation of projecting into particular abilities also can be seen by looking at a person’s anticipation of his individuality as the anticipation of the ability to make independent, and individual, deliberate choices. The ability to make independent and individual, deliberate choices, which is anticipated, is the ability to *choose*, independently and individually, *to project into particular abilities*. Heidegger, in fact, already indicates this in his description of a person’s anticipation of his individuality as the anticipation of understanding himself in terms of limited and factical abilities. For what is anticipated is not merely a self-understanding according to limited and factical abilities, but also a *choosing* of those abilities which are understood as limited and factical. “Becoming free for one’s own death in anticipation frees one from one’s lostness in chance possibilities urging

\(^{324}\) *BT*, 10-11 [12].

\(^{325}\) *BT*, 288 [312], emphases added.
themselves upon us,” Heidegger writes, “so that the factual possibilities lying before the possibility not-to-be-bypassed can first be authentically understood and chosen” (verstehen und wählen).326 What a person anticipates in anticipating the ability to make independent choices is his choice of his abilities, which he understands to be limited and factual, but a choice which is not compelled by the impersonal crowd. And what a person anticipates in anticipating his ability to make individual, deliberate choices is his ability to make a choice of his abilities, which he understands to be limited and factual, but a choice which is individual in the sense that it is deliberate: it is clear-sighted, determined and resolved. But insofar as the abilities which a person understands to be limited and factual are a person’s projection into particular abilities which are understood to be limited and factual, what a person anticipates, in anticipating his ability to make independent and individual, deliberate choices, is his ability to make independent and individual, deliberate choices of his projection into particular abilities.

A paradox, however, can therefore be seen to emerge at the heart of the concept of authenticity. For how, as this concept proposes, can a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and a person’s anticipation of his individuality, be identified, if the former anticipation is a person’s anticipation of projecting into no particular abilities, and the latter anticipation is a person’s anticipation of projecting into particular abilities? The two sides of authenticity are, therefore, incompatible with one another, and yet the concept of authenticity proposes that they are identical. This is a paradox.

326 Emphasis added in translation.
This paradox can be clarified by looking more closely at the role of anxiety in the authentic person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and his anticipation of his individuality. In fact, it is especially in relation to anxiety that the paradox becomes conspicuous. Anxiety, as I explained in the last chapter, is the mood in which the authentic experience of death is disclosed. Therefore, in anticipating the authentic experience of death, the authentic person experiences anxiety. At the same time, however, as I also explained, by experiencing anxiety, the authentic person discloses his pure ability, and, by disclosing his pure ability, he discloses his ability to make individual, deliberate, choices. It is for this reason that a person’s experience of anxiety is not only the disclosure of the authentic experience of death, but also, at the same time, a person’s disclosure of his ability to be an individual. Heidegger draws together these two sides of the anxiety experienced in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, and, indeed, into an identity, in the following passage. In anxiety, Heidegger writes,

Da-sein is taken back fully to its naked uncanniness and benumbed by it. But this numbness not only takes Da-sein back from its “worldly” possibilities, but at the same time gives it the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being. Heidegger here states that in the experience of anxiety, a person is indeed “taken back fully” (völlig zurückgenommen) to his naked uncanniness. In other words, in mood of anxiety, a person is taken back fully” to the fact that he projects into no particular abilities. But, for Heidegger, at the same time (zulgeich), the mood of anxiety also “gives” (gibt) a person “the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being,” in other words, a person also is able to be an individual, or able to project into particular abilities.

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327 BT, 316 [344].
But how can the experience of anxiety, in a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, fulfill both of these roles? How can a person experience anxiety in such a way that he is “numbed,” or “struck” or “captivated” by the fact that he can project into no particular abilities, but, at the same time, experience anxiety in such a way that he discloses to himself his ability to project into particular abilities? Without presenting the problem in Heidegger’s terminology, one could say that, for Heidegger, a person can, in the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, experience an anxiety in which he is overwhelmed, stunned, and not able to “go on” with his life—basically experience despair—but this, at the same time, is an experience of an anxiety in which he becomes able to seize his particular life, in a transparent, and determined, way. This is astonishing. But the astonishment is due to the fact that the experience of anxiety only reflects and concentrates the paradox in the concept of authenticity itself: that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is, and is at the same time, a person’s anticipation of his individuality.

There is another way to understand this paradox in the concept of authenticity. One could say that there is a gap, in the concept of authenticity, between the two types of anticipation that it involves. The authentic person anticipates the authentic experience of death: his projection into no particular abilities. But this anticipation of the authentic experience of death is, for the authentic person, his anticipation of his individuality: his projection into particular abilities. One could ask here, however, what explains the transition from the authentic person’s anticipation of the projection into no particular abilities to the authentic person’s anticipation of the projection into particular abilities. In fact, this transition appears to be inexplicable. It is as though Heidegger has, with the
concept of authenticity, performed a kind of magic trick: he has, with the concept of authenticity, produced something out of nothing. The authentic person’s anticipation of the projection into particular abilities emerges, \textit{ex nihilo}, out of his anticipation of the projection into no particular abilities. This way of stating the problem, however, only reaffirms that the concept of authenticity contains a paradox. The transition is inexplicable because the two ends of the transition stand opposed to one another, and yet are supposed to flow into one another seamlessly.

2. \textit{The problem of the anticipation of the authentic experience of death}

I would here like to point to another problem in the concept of authenticity, that is closely related to the foregoing problem of a paradox. I will only briefly describe this related problem; it is not the problem to which I primarily wish to draw attention in this dissertation.

It is paradoxical that a person anticipates the authentic experience of death, and, identical to that, anticipates his individuality. A person cannot, as the concept of authenticity proposes, anticipate his projection into no particular abilities, and, identical to that, anticipate his projection into particular abilities. A related problem emerges, however, if one looks only at the idea that the authentic experience of death itself can be \textit{anticipated}. For is it possible for a person to \textit{anticipate} the \textit{authentic experience of death}?

As I have explained, the authentic experience of death is the authentic experience of projecting into no particular abilities. The \textit{anticipation} of the authentic experience of death is a person’s \textit{seizure} of this authentic experience of death. In anticipating the authentic experience of death, a person seizes, in a transparent, determined, and
courageous way, the fact that he experiences, explicitly, that he projects into no particular abilities. But can a person thus transparently, determinedly, and courageously seize an explicit experience of projecting into no particular abilities? For *what is there*, in the authentic experience of death, *to seize*? There appears to be *nothing* to seize. And, indeed, it is central to the authentic experience of death that, in this experience, a person cannot seize anything. As I have explained, anxiety-ridden, the person who authentically experiences death discloses to himself the fact that his abilities are empty—that he has no particular possible self to pursue, that he has no particular worldly beings to use, and that he has no particular skills to exercise. However, *anticipating* the authentic experience of death would seem to require that, indeed, there be *some particular abilities* to seize: namely, some *ability* to pursue a particular possible self, some *ability* to exercise particular skills, and some *ability* to exercise particular skills.

The problem presented by the idea of the anticipation of the authentic experience of death is therefore symmetrical to the problem of a paradox in the concept of authenticity itself. The paradox in the concept of authenticity itself emerges because a person’s anticipation of individuality, or of his projection into particular abilities, cannot be identified with a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, or of his projection into no particular abilities. Here, however, it appears as though *anticipation itself* requires that a person anticipate projecting into particular abilities, so that, in this anticipation, there are particular abilities which a person can seize. But the authentic experience of death, which is supposed to be anticipated, entails that a person authentically experience that he projects into *no particular* abilities. What therefore is to be anticipated—the authentic experience of death—resists anticipation itself.
Rather than understanding this problem as a paradox in the idea of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death, this problem rather should be understood as a problem of nonsensicality in the idea of a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death. I called the problem in the concept of authenticity a paradox because the concept of authenticity explicitly identifies what cannot be identified. However, Heidegger does not explicitly identify anticipation and the authentic experience of death, or at least does not explicitly identify them as he explicitly identifies a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality. He brings together anticipation and the authentic experience of death in the syntagm “anticipation of death” (Vorlaufen in den Tod or Vorlaufen zum Tode). But if anticipation requires the seizure of the projection into particular abilities, and the authentic experience of death entails that no particular abilities are projected into, then this syntagm is nonsense.

3. Rethinking the concept of authenticity

I would here like to return to the problem of a paradox in the concept of authenticity, and to ask the question whether the concept of authenticity can, in light of the fact that it contain a paradox, be rethought in such a way that it is not paradoxical.

The concept of authenticity identifies a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality; but this is paradoxical, insofar as the former anticipation involves a person’s anticipation of projecting into no particular abilities, and the latter anticipation involves a person’s anticipation of projecting into particular abilities.
In order to relieve the concept of authenticity of a paradox, therefore, one must either (a) understand a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death in such a way that it does not involve the anticipation of the projecting into no particular abilities; (b) understand a person’s anticipation of his individuality in such a way that it does not involve the anticipation of projecting into particular abilities; (c) understand the concept of authenticity in such a way that these two anticipations are not identified with one another.

I will here pursue (a). Clearly, (b) cannot be pursued, since one cannot understand a person’s anticipation of his *individuality* without understanding that anticipation as an anticipation of a person’s projection into *particular* abilities—anticipating the projection into what is *not* particular abilities is, after all, the anticipation of the authentic experience of death, which is precisely what a person’s anticipation of his individuality is *not*. And (c) cannot be pursued, insofar as the basic intention of the concept of authenticity is to identify a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death and a person’s anticipation of his individuality. While (c) would offer a way of understanding something like the concept of authenticity in a non-paradoxical way, it would present a concept too dissimilar to the concept of authenticity to qualify plausibly as a rethinking of it.

What, then, I would like to try to do is to understand a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death in such a way that it is *not* the anticipation of a person’s projection into no particular abilities. Toward this end, I will follow a specific train of thought. One can think of a person’s anticipation of his individuality in connection to a person’s relation to the authentic experience of death as though on a spectrum. This spectrum will present the possibilities of a person’s anticipating his individuality and, at
the same time, his relating, *in varying degrees*, to the authentic experience of death. At one end of the spectrum will be a person who anticipates his individuality with a *full* relation to the authentic experience of death, and, at the other end of the spectrum, will be a person who anticipates his individuality with an *empty* relation to the authentic experience of death. And, in the middle of the spectrum, will be a person who anticipates his individuality with a *moderate* relation to the authentic experience of death. In order to clarify what I mean, I will describe this spectrum in more detail. I will first present the extreme ends, and then the middle.

1. At *one* extreme end of the spectrum will be a person who anticipates his individuality, while, at the same time, possessing a *full* relation to the authentic experience of death. By this I mean that he will *anticipate the authentic experience of death*. He will seize the fact that he projects into no particular abilities, and, in this seizure, he will anticipate his individuality. This end of the spectrum corresponds, therefore, to Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. It can be noted, also, that, for this reason, by “full relation to the authentic experience of death” I do not mean that “absolute” relation to death—being biologically dead. “Death” is here understood according to Heidegger’s understanding of death; and so *being* dead cannot mean being *biologically* dead. Here, then, the “full” relation to the authentic experience of death, is the anticipation of the authentic experience of death.

2. At the *other* extreme end of the spectrum will be a person who anticipates his individuality, while, at the same time, possessing an *empty* relation to the authentic experience of death. By this I mean that a person will not anticipate the authentic experience of death at all, but rather, will *ignore* it. This other extreme end of the
spectrum corresponds, therefore, to Heidegger’s conception of a person’s *flight* from the authentic experience of death, which I discussed in the fifth chapter. As I suggested in the fifth chapter, a person is, always, dying; in other words, he is, always, projecting into no particular abilities. However, this can be authentically experienced—a person can explicitly and transparently understand himself as projecting into no particular abilities—or, on the other hand, this authentic experience can be *fled from*—a person can *resist* explicitly and transparently understanding himself as projecting into no particular abilities. This is what I mean by “ignoring” the authentic experience of death. One could also say that, at this other extreme end of the spectrum, a person *denies* the authentic experience of death. He goes about life as though he *does not die* (in the sense that Heidegger gives to “death”: this is a kind of immortality, existentially understood).

3. Finally, at the middle of the spectrum will be a person who anticipates his individuality, while, at the same time, possessing a *moderate* relation to the authentic experience of death. Significantly, this “moderate relation” has no basis in *Being and Time*. It can be understood in the following way. A person has a *constant sensitivity* to the fact that, at any time, his projection into particular abilities can fall apart. This constant sensitivity should not be understood as “anticipation”; a person does not “seize” the fact that his projection into particular abilities can fall apart. Having a constant sensitivity to the fact that, any time, his projection into particular abilities can fall apart, this person can *still* go on with his life; in other words, he is still able to project into particular abilities. He only relates to his projection into particular abilities with an awareness of their fragility.

This spectrum provides a possibility of rethinking the concept of authenticity in
such a way that it is not paradoxical. Of course, the two extreme ends of the spectrum do not provide that possibility. The first extreme end depicts the concept of authenticity itself—the authentic person who anticipates the authentic experience of death, and, identical to that, anticipates his individuality. This is paradoxical. The other extreme end is not paradoxical: a person can seize his individuality, or his projection into particular abilities, while ignoring or denying his authentic experience of death. But while this other extreme end is not paradoxical, it is not any candidate for rethinking the concept of authenticity. At this extreme end, a person ignores his own death. But the concept of authenticity means to show how a person can anticipate his individuality while, at the same time, relating in an explicit way to the authentic experience of death.

The middle of the spectrum, on the other hand, does offer a plausible way in which to rethink the concept of authenticity. At the middle of the spectrum, a person does have an explicit relation to the authentic experience of death. But he does not relate to it in the sense that he anticipates it. He does not seize the fact that he projects into no particular abilities. Rather, he is sensitive to the fact that he could project into no particular abilities. This “could” is not the modal or categorial “could” that describes an event that could happen. Rather, this “could” is the “could” that describes a person’s abilities: that a person is able, and therefore, can, project into no particular abilities. But sensitive to the fact that he could project into no particular abilities, he, so to speak, “goes on living,” in the sense that he does project into particular abilities. However, it is because of this sensitivity to the fact that he could project into no particular abilities, that this person is able to anticipate his individuality. Sensitive to the fact that he could project

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328 I discussed this distinction at greater length in the fifth chapter, to which I refer the reader if further clarification is needed.
into no particular abilities, and therefore sensitive to the fact that his current projection into particular abilities could come to an end, he might, for example, relate to his current projection into particular abilities in a more meaningful way. After all, they can be lost, and what can be lost is more valuable and precious. Understanding he only has finite resources—his life—he, so to speak, spends his life wisely. (More could be said about this spending one’s life wisely on the basis of the limited resource which is one’s life.) Relating to his abilities in a more meaningful way, he has a greater understanding of them in their individuality; and he has a determination to choose them, independently, individually, and deliberately.

This middle of the spectrum therefore gives a way to rethink the concept of authenticity so that it is not paradoxical. A person does relate, in a substantial way, to the authentic experience of death; he is sensitive to the fact that he could project into no particular abilities. And this sensitivity is identical to his anticipation of his individuality. However, there is no paradox: this person does not anticipate the authentic experience of death, and, at the same time, anticipate his individuality, or does not anticipate his projection into no particular abilities, and, at the same time, anticipate his projection into particular abilities.

But there are perhaps two reasons not to rethink the concept of authenticity at all, that is, to acknowledge that from its paradox there should be no relief. First of all, there is the point stressed by the critiques which emphasize the concept of authenticity’s dangerous moral and political consequences. The concept of authenticity valorizes the authentic experience of death insofar as a person’s anticipation of it is understood to be
identical to a person’s anticipation of his individuality. Death is the pathway to individuality. However, even when authenticity is rethought in such a way that a person’s anticipation of the authentic experience of death is replaced by a person’s sensitivity to the authentic experience of death, the authentic experience of death might be, once again, valorized. This valorization does not entail, of course, any Todeswunsch. But the authentic experience of death still possesses a positive valence: it is sensitivity toward death that enables a person to achieve individuality. And if the concept of authenticity valorizes death, and if concepts which, faithful to the spirit of the concept of authenticity, rethink it, also valorize death, then we might want simply to admit that the concept of authenticity is a paradox, and leave it at that.

Secondly, there may be a certain problem in the basic idea that in any kind of relation to the explicit, authentic experience of death—whether in anticipation, or through sensitivity—a person’s anticipation of his individuality is made possible, or, more broadly, his ability to be an individual is made possible. It is worth considering whether there is a sense in which any kind of relation to the authentic experience of death does away with a person’s ability to be an individual. Evidence for this was indicated above, in relation to the nonsensicality of the idea of the anticipation of death: how can a person seize an authentic experience of death whose very meaning is that he cannot project into particular abilities? How can a person, so to speak, make the motions of individuality—make individual choices, project into particular abilities—in the defacing face of an experience whose very meaning is that such motions of individuality cannot be made?

In this perspective, the authentic experience of death is like the despair of which Kierkegaard writes in The Sickness unto Death: it is a person’s being unable to choose to
be himself. In this perspective, also, the authentic experience of death is like a kind of
hell, present, however, as Marlowe’s devil says, here and now. (“Tell me where is the
place that men call hell?” “In one self place; for where we are is hell, and where hell is
there must we ever be.”) The idea, however, that in our relationship to this death-hell—
either in anticipation, or in sensitivity to it—we could better be able to be individuals,
would therefore appear to be problematic. The problem could be put this way. It does
injustice to hell, or injustice to death. For it gives to us a power to *make of death*, in our
relation to it, something advantageous to us. I can understand this—it is a natural wish to
make of what is worst what it is not. This is testified, in philosophy, by the spirit of
reconciliation: finding in negativity something positive. But perhaps this reflects a certain
blindness toward death, and toward the possibility that it harbors in itself a negativity
beyond repair. This blindness would be a blindness that darkens the night, in which all
sorts of things that we could not imagine become visible:

> Whichever stone you lift—
you expose,
those who require the protection of stones:
naked,
they now renew the entanglement.  

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329 Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*, 1.5, 116-123.
Stefan Reichert (Suhrkamp, 1983), 129. ("Welchen der Steine du hebst—  / du entblöst, / die des
Schutzes der Steine bedürfen: / nackt, / erneuern sie nun die Verflechtung.")
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