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Dasein, authenticity, and choice in Heidegger's *Being and time*

This article addresses Martin Heidegger's analysis of what it means to be human, but it focuses on a narrow yet crucial part of his analysis, namely on how a human being becomes aware of his own being and its meaning. Specifically, on how Dasein becomes authentic and whether this involves choice? If authenticity does involve choice, what does this choice entail, and what are the possible repercussions of Dasein's becoming authentic?

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Furthermore, because Heidegger's goal is to ground ethics in the being of the human being, this paper deals with his proposal for the metaphysical (in this case ontological) foundation of ethics. In this sense it is a detailed analysis of Heidegger's arguments for an ontological foundation of ethics. This is not an unusual approach to ethics. For example, Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas all looked for the foundation of ethics in human nature. Even Kant, despite his determination to rid ethics of any trace of human inclinations by trying to ground it in pure reason, cannot avoid placing the foundations of ethics in the defining aspect of human nature, that is, rationality.

Even though Heidegger decries traditional views of the human being and completely rejects the traditional notions of human nature or

essence, nonetheless he believes that the only way to establish ethics is to find its ultimate basis in the human being. But for Heidegger, this entails an entirely new inquiry into the being of the human being, for which he develops his own phenomenological method.

In short, the basic premise of Heidegger's approach to the question of ethics is a thorough understanding of what the human being is, that is, what is the being of the human being. In other words, what does it mean to be human; what does it mean that I am human? Who and what am I? Heidegger is adamant about his project; he is convinced that only if we have a thorough grasp of our being, what it means to be a human being, can we begin to understand our actions in the world. And only then can we even begin to think of creating normative ethics.

According to Heidegger, there are two possible modes of Being for Dasein – inauthentic or authentic.¹ Inauthenticity denotes Dasein's everyday way of Being in the world. It is characterized by Dasein's absorption in its daily dealings and involvement in the world and its unquestioned following of the public realm (the 'they'), and in this sense, it also signifies Dasein's lack of clear understanding of its own Being. Authenticity, on the other hand, refers to Dasein's understanding the truth about itself and acting upon it. Authentic Dasein knows that it is a 'thrown project towards death' – that it is finite and must define itself.

Heidegger claims that inauthenticity is not a derogatory term and that it does not denote "any less Being,"² but that it simply refers to the way Dasein is in the world "proximately and for the most part."³ Nevertheless, authenticity must be wrested from inauthenticity. Furthermore, by claiming that Dasein not only attests authenticity but also demands it of itself, Heidegger places the power to become authentic completely in Dasein's Being and thus makes it independent of any external causes or powers. In other words, Heidegger claims that the conditions for the possibility of

¹ M. Heidegger, *Being and time* [= BT], trans. J. Macquarrie, E. Robinson, New York 1962, p. 68/43.

² BT, p. 68/43.

³ BT, p. 69/43.

being either inauthentic or authentic are rooted in the Being of Dasein itself, that is, they refer to the specific ways that Dasein can exist in the world.

Most of Part II of *Being and time* is devoted to demonstrating how Dasein can become authentic and therefore have a clear understanding of its Being. Heidegger's argument is not limited to itemizing the conditions which make authenticity possible – it is also a detailed account of how, given those conditions, Dasein does become authentic. However, Heidegger's account of how Dasein becomes authentic is potentially confusing. On the one hand, he provides a thorough explanation of how it is possible for Dasein to become authentic and how it happens. He grounds the entire process in the Being of Dasein (the ways Dasein can be in the world) and thus seems to successfully achieve his stated goal of explaining ontologically how Dasein becomes authentic. On the other hand, his account contains statements that mention choice in relation to authenticity, statements which may be interpreted as saying that becoming authentic requires a choice on the part of Dasein.⁴ Furthermore, by suggesting that choice is somehow involved in authenticity, Heidegger not only gives rise to questions about the meaning of that choice but possibly projects the issue of authenticity into the domain of ethics, which, according to him, is not an ontological but an ontical enterprise.

My goal is to address the question of choice in relation to both authenticity and inauthenticity in *Being and time*. I hope to offer an interpretation that can possibly reconcile Heidegger's seemingly contradictory statements. To this effect, I propose a distinction between Dasein's *becoming* authentic and Dasein's *continuing to be* authentic. I will argue that *becoming* authentic, defined as Dasein's original insight into the primordial truth about its Being, does not require a choice but is, instead, an inevitable result of Dasein's understanding attuned by the state-of-mind of anxiety in the face of its own death. I will then suggest, however, that *continuing to be* authentic does involve choice. *Continuing to be* authentic is a deliberate choice on the part of Dasein to keep affirming

⁴ R. Solomon *Continental philosophy since 1750: the rise and fall of the self*, Oxford 1988, p. 164; J. Golomb, *In search of authenticity from Kierkegaard to Camus*, London 1995, p. 95–98.

the disclosed truth about its Being and, as such, it also entails that Dasein makes its own choices instead of unquestioningly following the 'they.' In addition, I will suggest that a return to inauthenticity may or may not involve a choice. Dasein, having attained authenticity, may indeed willfully choose to deny the truth about its existence. By doing so, however, it also ceases to make its own choices and thus gives up being the author of its own life. Alternatively, falling back into inauthenticity does not require a conscious choice if Dasein does not willfully deny the truth about its Being but, as it gets reabsorbed in its daily life, it gradually ignores its existential truth by ceasing to assert it. This latter alternative is effectively a choice by default because, by failing to make the choice to affirm the truth, Dasein lets itself fall back into the 'they.'

Anticipatory resoluteness and authenticity

Heidegger's goal in *Being and time* is to answer the question of the meaning of Being as such. He starts his investigation with the Being of Dasein which is our being simply because, as far as we can tell, we are the only beings that ask explicit questions about our own being and being in general. We are deeply concerned about ourselves, we want to understand our place in the universe, and we wonder about the meaning of our life. In order to investigate Dasein's being, Heidegger employs a phenomenological method which he considers to be the only one appropriate to investigate being. In this method, the analysis of the Being of Dasein on the most external level, that is, of Dasein's involvement in its everyday dealing in the world, proceeds to unravel the deeper structures [modes] of Dasein's being and ultimately reveals the meaning of Dasein's Being. Understanding the being of Dasein would then allow us to grasp the meaning of being itself – what it means to be.

According to Heidegger, it is only after we have demonstrated how it is possible for us "become whole and authentic" that we are able to grasp fully the meaning of our Being. In other words, if we can understand our being in its totality then the meaning of our being will become clear to us. For example, if we have only seen pieces of an apple but never the

entire apple we have no idea what the entire apple looks like. In a similar fashion, if we are completely immersed in our individual projects and involvements we never have a clear understanding of our life and of our being. We do not see the forest for the trees, so to speak, and so we need what Heidegger calls anticipatory resoluteness that makes it possible to see our life as a whole. This notion of anticipatory resoluteness explains how Dasein can become whole and authentic and, in my analysis, provides the key to answering the question whether becoming authentic requires a choice.

Now, anticipatory resoluteness combines the two notions of anticipation and resoluteness in such a way that the latter finds its full meaning in the former. For Heidegger, 'anticipation' refers to Dasein's realization that it is ultimately finite. The state-of-mind of anxiety in the face of its own death modifies Dasein's understanding so that Dasein ceases to view its own death merely as an event which will happen at some distant, unreal future and, instead, sees death as belonging to itself as the 'ownmost possibility' of its Being.⁵ Anticipation means that Dasein holds on to the possibility of its own death precisely as a possibility and understands itself in that possibility;⁶ that is, Dasein's awareness of its own finitude is the defining element of all its decisions and actions. For example, let us say that I have been diagnosed with a terminal illness and have a limited time to live. I am forced to face the real and imminent possibility of my death. Of course, I have always known that I will die at some point in the future – everyone dies. However, this distant possibility, which until now I have been able to ignore, becomes a very real and proximate possibility. I am beset by utmost anxiety about my not being able to exist any more, by my ceasing to be. In this anxiety I am face to face with the unavoidable fact that I am dying. I am overwhelmed by the realization that the only possibility in my life I can be absolutely certain of is my own death. It is the awesome realization of my finitude, and thus of the truth about my being, the truth from which I have been running.

⁵ BT, p. 303/259.

⁶ BT, p. 306/261.

To continue, ‘resoluteness’ refers to Dasein’s understanding of itself as being ultimately responsible for its own life. Heidegger says that Dasein realizes that it is ‘guilty’ at the very basis of its Being – that it is ‘a null-basis-of-a-nullity’. This means that Dasein understands itself as ‘thrown,’ that is, it finds itself already involved in the world but it does not know of any origin or telos regarding its own Being. It also realizes that there is no one specific or prescribed way for it to be, and that there may be no ultimate reason or supernatural basis explaining its Being. In fact, it understands that it itself ‘must take over Being-a-basis,’⁷ that is, it has to become the very author of its life. Thus, ‘resoluteness’ refers to Dasein’s acknowledging the need to take responsibility for itself and to its realizing that ceding responsibility for its decisions and the unquestioning following of the ‘they’ conceals the truth of its being.

Combining these two concepts, it is only as anticipatory resoluteness that Dasein fully reveals to itself the primordial truth about its Being. The only way Dasein can understand itself as ‘thrown’ is in the anticipation of its own death – as Heidegger puts it, when Dasein discloses its Being-guilty “right to its end.”⁸ In other words, the full import of the fact that it is ‘thrown’ is grasped by Dasein only as it understands its own finitude. As anticipatory resoluteness, Dasein understands itself as a thrown project towards death – finite, abandoned to itself, and ultimately responsible for itself. As such it realizes that there is no predetermined path for it to follow and that it has to create its own destiny. This, in turn, entails coming to terms with its facticity (its environment, education, history, health, etc. – its situation) and projecting itself upon possibilities that are presented to it by its world but which are also distinctively its own. Heidegger claims that Dasein can recognize those possibilities because “[...] this Being discloses to itself what its Being is capable of [...]”⁹ that is, it always has some understanding of itself and its world. Furthermore, the understanding of its own Being previously concealed by Dasein’s

⁷ BT, p. 330/284.

⁸ BT, p. 353/305.

⁹ BT, p. 184/144.

absorption in the 'they' is now uncovered. Thus, as **anticipatory resoluteness** Dasein has **disclosed to itself the truth about its own Being**, which is also its existential truth. It sees itself as finite and thrown but it also sees itself, if not as the only author (for its factual situation does play a role), as the principal author of itself and its destiny. **Dasein has become authentic.**

Authenticity and choice

Many statements in *Being and time* point to 'anticipatory resoluteness' as the way of Being in which Dasein has attained authenticity; for example: "[w]hen, in anticipation, resoluteness has *caught up* the possibility of death into its potentiality-for-Being, Dasein's authentic existence can no longer be *outstripped* by anything."¹⁰ Or, "[o]nly in anticipatory resoluteness is the potentiality-for-Being-guilty understood authentically and wholly."¹¹ In fact, the entire section on anticipatory resoluteness¹² is entitled *Anticipatory resoluteness as the way in which Dasein's potentiality-for-Being-a-whole has existentiell authenticity*. These statements support the view that Dasein as anticipatory resoluteness has grasped the primordial truth about its existence, i.e., has become authentic. Nevertheless, there are passages in *Being and time* which, by claiming that Dasein is free either to affirm the truth about its Being or to abandon that truth, suggest that authenticity as well as inauthenticity involve a choice. Especially relevant is the following passage:

When Dasein thus brings itself back from the 'they', the they-self is modified in an existentiell manner so that it becomes *authentic Being-one's-Self*. This must be accomplished by *making up for not choosing*. But 'making up' for not choosing signifies *choosing to make this choice* – deciding for a potentiality-for-Being, and

¹⁰ BT, p. 355/307.

¹¹ BT, p. 354/306.

¹² BT, sec. # 62.

making this decision from one's own Self. In choosing to make this choice, Dasein *makes possible*, first and foremost, its authentic potentiality-for-Being.¹³

The above passage states first, that authenticity entails choosing, and second, that it entails 'choosing to make this choice.' In the first case, Dasein has to make choices and not let 'the others' choose for it. In the second case, however, authenticity requires that Dasein choose specifically the primordial truth about its Being. Thus, the above quoted passage appears to suggest that the transformation of inauthentic to authentic Dasein is accomplished through choice, that Dasein **chooses** to become authentic.

Thus far I have shown that there are two possible interpretations of Heidegger's explanation of how Dasein becomes authentic. According to the first, Dasein becomes authentic as the necessary result of the experience of anxiety in the face of its own death. The second interpretation favors choice as the requirement for becoming authentic. I propose, however, that the latter is not the correct interpretation of Heidegger's meaning. I showed earlier that Dasein becomes authentic in anticipatory resoluteness. Thus, in order to determine whether becoming authentic is a choice, we still must examine whether anticipatory resoluteness involves choice.

According to Heidegger, understanding, which is unique to anticipatory resoluteness, is made possible by the state-of-mind of anxiety in the face of death. Heidegger points out that any state-of-mind whatsoever carries with it a certain understanding, which in turn happens within some mood – there is no such thing as "mood-free" understanding. Thus, if Dasein is in the state-of-mind of anxiety in the face of death, its understanding is modified by that anxiety, which in this case means that Dasein understands itself as a thrown project towards death (it has existentiell authenticity). **Anxiety** is therefore not only the **necessary** but also the **sufficient** condition of the possibility of **becoming authentic**. Not only must Dasein be in anxiety in order to become authentic, but also when Dasein is in anxiety, Dasein becomes authentic. Heidegger says, "But this

¹³ BT, p. 313/268–9, (my emphasis in bold print).

primordial anxiety strives to exact resoluteness of itself. It moves out of the way everything which conceals the fact that Dasein has been abandoned to itself. The 'nothing' with which anxiety brings us face to face, unveils the nullity by which Dasein, in its very *basis*, is defined; and this basis itself is as thrownness into death."¹⁴

Anxiety in the face of its own death shatters any possibility for Dasein to understand itself in terms of its everyday involvements in the world.¹⁵ By temporarily robbing Dasein of its factual possibilities, anxiety throws Dasein upon the ownmost possibility of its Being – its own death – and thus discloses to Dasein the truth about its Being as thrown and finite, but also as Being-possible, that is, as having to define its Being.

Now, if Dasein's seeing the primordial truth about its Being required a choice, this would imply that Dasein would have to choose to be in the state-of-mind of anxiety; since it is only anxiety in the face of death that can break Dasein's attachment to the 'they' and attune its understanding so that it can see the truth about its Being. But according to Heidegger, anxiety belongs to Dasein's Being as its most basic and most disclosive state-of-mind. Dasein's Being is permeated with anxiety – "its breath quivers perpetually through Dasein."¹⁶ And to the extent that Dasein cannot control when it will experience anxiety, Dasein is completely powerless before it – "anxiety can awaken in Dasein at any moment... it is always ready, though it seldom springs, and we are snatched away and left hanging."¹⁷ In other words, Dasein cannot control when it experiences anxiety in the face of death, let alone whether this will even happen. Nor can Dasein calculate in advance the possibility of having this anxiety in order to avoid it; after all, most people tend to run away from such anxiety and, if they could, would avoid situations that might bring it about. This is what Heidegger means by a 'fleeing' from what anxiety reveals to

¹⁴ BT, p. 356/308.

¹⁵ BT, p. 232/187.

¹⁶ M. Heidegger, *What is metaphysics?* [= WM], trans. D. F. Krell, [in:] *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill, Cambridge 1998, p. 82–96.

¹⁷ WM, p. 93.

Dasein about its Being.¹⁸ Anxiety in the face of death happens to Dasein and, in this sense, Dasein is at its mercy. Again, Dasein has no choice with regard to anxiety. But if there is **no choice with regard to anxiety, there is no choice involved in Dasein's becoming anticipatory resoluteness nor, by extension, in Dasein's becoming authentic.**

Thus, if the "choice" Heidegger mentions cannot be the choice to become authentic, then what can this "choice" be? I suggest that the confusion about choice with regard to Dasein's authenticity can be resolved if we introduce the **distinction** between **becoming authentic** and **continuing to be authentic**. As mentioned earlier, *becoming* authentic is understood as Dasein's original insight into (disclosure of) the primordial truth about its Being.¹⁹ *Becoming* authentic does not involve a choice because it is the inevitable result of anxiety in the face of death. Choice, however, is necessary for Dasein to *continue to be* authentic. Choice to *continue to be* authentic means that Dasein consciously and willingly affirms the primordial truth of its existence and this choice has to be continually repeated because of Dasein's tendency to fall back into the "they." This interpretation helps us to reconcile the apparent contradictions in Heidegger's passages about authenticity. Viewed in this way, authenticity is a two-step process; first, it involves *becoming* authentic which is a necessary result of anxiety in the face of death, and second, it involves choice or firm resolution to continue **to be** authentic.

Not only must authenticity entail choosing but it must also entail choosing the truth of primordial existence. If authenticity entailed only choosing, then being inauthentic in so far as this can be a result of a choice (denial of the existential truth with the choice of some other self-interpretation of Dasein) would also result in authenticity.²⁰ It thus seems reasonable to suppose that when Heidegger says that authenticity means choosing, "choosing to make this choice," he must mean that Dasein once having seen the truth about its being [having become

¹⁸ BT, p. 230/186, 234/189.

¹⁹ BT, p. 354/306, 355/307.

²⁰ I will discuss the issue of choice and inauthenticity later in this paper.

authentic] is free to choose to hold on to this primordial truth about itself and so to the possibility of its death as the ownmost possibility of its Being.

But what does authenticity entail for Dasein? Having chosen to remain authentic Dasein has further choices to make. As Dasein realizes that death is the unavoidable possibility of its Being it also sees itself as incomplete (indefinite) in regard to its factual situation because it realizes simultaneously that it has not taken full responsibility for its own life. Anxiety in the face of death, having severed Dasein's absorption in the 'they,' has allowed it to see that, until now, its understanding of its existential possibilities has been governed entirely by the everyday realm. By indiscriminately following the public realm's choices and opinions, Dasein has been defining itself exclusively in terms of involvements prescribed by the 'they.' Now, as anticipatory resoluteness, Dasein understands that it does not have to follow the 'they' but can choose its own factual existential possibilities. It realizes that it itself is ultimately responsible for defining itself (for who it will become) and in order to complete itself it must act on its concrete factual situation, that is, it has to take charge of its own life – it has to become the author of its life.

Moreover, continued affirmation of the primordial truth about its own Being that has already been uncovered in anticipatory resoluteness would seem to suggest that Dasein not only makes its own existential choices, but that it also knows which choices are truly its own.

But how can Dasein know which ones are truly its own, that is, which existential possibilities to choose? As discussed above, being anticipatorily resolute means that Dasein is 'in truth' regarding its existence. According to Heidegger, this means that as Dasein reveals to itself the truth about its existence and grasps it, it is **certain** of that truth. The truth which Dasein reveals to itself in anxiety in the face of death is the truth of which Dasein is absolutely certain, namely, that its being is ultimately finite. Heidegger says that,

As resolute, Dasein is revealed to itself in its current factual potentiality for Being, and in such a way that Dasein itself *is* this revealing and Being-revealed. To any truth, there belongs corresponding holding-for-true. The explicit appropriation of

what has been disclosed or discovered is Being-certain. The primordial truth of existence demands an equiprimordial Being-certain, in which one maintains oneself in what resoluteness discloses. It gives itself the current factual situation and brings itself into that Situation.²¹

That is, in anxiety Dasein has understood the truth about about its existence – it is finite and death is its ultimate end. But this grasp of its existential truth confers on it the certainty that now it is Dasein who makes choices regarding its situation; moreover, it knows which choices to make. At the same time, Dasein is not rigidly fixed on his possible choices; after all, Dasein as anticipatory resoluteness just realized its freedom from any prescribed ways to be. Its situation, to be sure, is to some extent defined by its facticity, but at the same time the world is teeming with possibilities and Dasein is free to choose any of them. Moreover, because there are no rigid ways to be, Dasein can change its mind and choose a different path.

The situation cannot be calculated in advance... It merely gets disclosed in a free resolving which has not been determined beforehand... **What then does the certainty which belongs to such resoluteness signify?** Such certainty must maintain itself in what has been disclosed by the resolution... it simply cannot become rigid as regards the Situation but must understand that the resolution, in accordance with its own meaning as disclosure, must be *held open* and free for current factual possibility. The certainty of the resolution signifies that one holds oneself free for the possibility of taking it back – a possibility which is factually necessary.²²

As Dasein realizes that it is responsible for completing itself, it also sees which current factual possibilities to choose. This it can do because, as Being-in-the-world and Being-with, Dasein always defines its Being in terms of its involvements in the world and with others which means that Dasein already has basic familiarity with the world and has some understanding of its own capabilities. Realization of its finitude then becomes

²¹ BT, p. 355–356/307–308.

²² BT, p. 355–356/307–308.

the reference point that allows Dasein to see which possibilities are truly its own and upon which possibilities it chooses to project itself. In other words, the realization of having a limited amount of time on this earth allows Dasein to decide which factual possibilities are important and meaningful to it. The fact that it is familiar with the world and knows what it itself is capable of makes it easier for Dasein to discern which possibilities to pursue. Dasein as Being-in-the-world must choose from among the possibilities offered by the world; however, even if Dasein decides to choose factual possibilities identical to the ones pursued before it became anticipatorily resolute, the crucial difference is that now it is Dasein itself that makes these choices.

To recapitulate briefly in the first person, I experience anxiety in the face of my imminent death and thus I realize that death is the ultimate end of my being, that I am finite. I also realize that I have been 'thrown' into this world, that is, I do not know origin or the ultimate purpose of my life. And so I have *become* authentic. In becoming authentic I also realize that I am 'indefinite' in the sense that there is no prescribed pattern for me to be. But this implies that I have to take responsibility for myself. Not only should I not uncritically accept definitions of my being offered by others but I must also become the primary author of my life – I must start choosing my own possibilities of being. As a being that is intimately involved in the world, I must choose from among the factual possibilities presented to me by the world, but as Being-in-the-world I am already familiar with the world and know my capabilities. The crucial difference is that if earlier I let myself be swayed by my everyday inauthentic existence I now consciously and willingly choose my own possibilities.

Thus, if *becoming* authentic is the inevitable result of understanding attuned by anxiety in the face of death, *affirmation* of this authenticity is accomplished by choice. An inauthentic and seemingly unwilling Dasein is forced through anxiety into *becoming* authentic, and at the same time it is forced into the possibility of a choice that is required to *continue to be* authentic. Ironically, it is being forced to *become* authentic that gives Dasein the possibility of a conscious choice, which in turn, makes the affirmation of authenticity possible.

Choice and inauthenticity

The above interpretation, in which choice is not the choice to *become* authentic but rather to *continue to be* authentic, stresses the gravity of Dasein's disclosure of the truth about itself and heeds Heidegger's account of anxiety in the face of death as the state-of-mind in which this happens. This interpretation can also help clarify any confusion about the role of choice in inauthenticity. What does it mean for Dasein to choose to be inauthentic, and what kind of a choice would this be? Given what it does to Dasein's understanding of the world and of itself, anxiety in the face of death shows itself to be such a powerful experience that it is doubtful that Dasein would easily forget the truth it has disclosed to itself. It is more probable that Dasein simply avoids facing this truth either by ignoring or by denying it – by immersing itself in the business of its daily life or by accepting other interpretations about its Being.

Heidegger states that anticipatory resoluteness is not a way of escape... “it is rather that understanding that follows the call of conscience and frees for death the possibility of acquiring power over Dasein's existence and of basically dispersing all fugitive self-concealments.”²³ Undoubtedly then, Dasein as anticipatory resoluteness has understood the primordial truth about itself. But if that is the case, how is it possible for Dasein to choose inauthenticity? This would mean that Dasein, who knows the truth, willfully chooses the untruth – it denies the truth and lies to itself about the truth. Obviously, this can happen only after Dasein has already seen the truth (realized that it is finite and thrown), that is, only after Dasein has already become authentic can it choose to deny the truth about its existence. Thus, the choice to be inauthentic presupposes that Dasein has already become authentic, just as the choice to remain authentic can occur only after Dasein becomes authentic.

By choosing to affirm the untruth, Dasein may claim that it is totally determined by its factual situation (its having-been) and that its factual choices have already been handed to it and it cannot go beyond them.

²³ BT, p. 357/310.

Or Dasein may claim that it has been created by God and its destiny lies in His hands, and that even though its body will die it will live for eternity. In both cases, Dasein chooses to interpret its Being according to someone else's idea about itself. Its choice of untruth is positive in the sense that Dasein understood the truth which has been disclosed to it in anxiety, but then denied it by choosing another interpretation of its Being. However, in so doing, Dasein has relinquished its responsibility for itself and has become a follower of the 'they.' Just as Dasein was not choosing for itself but was allowing others choose for it when it was absorbed in an average everydayness, so now, by denying the truth about its Being, it also decides not to choose for itself. Thus, by accepting or resigning itself to someone else's interpretation of its Being and, therefore, by allowing others make choices for it, Dasein has willfully chosen inauthenticity. Dasein who was 'in truth' about its Being has now denied it, because not only has it accepted someone else's interpretation of its Being, but it has also let the 'they' make existential choices for it.

There is yet another way to be inauthentic which does not necessarily involve a willful denial of Dasein's existential truth. As Dasein gets re-involved in its daily activities, the impression of the original insight into the primordial truth about its Being begins to fade and Dasein begins to get re-absorbed in the public realm. As Heidegger would say, Dasein ceases to hold the possibility of its death as the ownmost possibility of its Being, and therefore falls back into the 'untruth.' Again, letting go of the truth is possible only if Dasein has already had its first insight into the truth about its Being; that is, unless Dasein had experienced anxiety in the face of death and had become anticipatory resoluteness, it would never have known from its everyday experience that it is a thrown project towards death and it would not have been able to make a choice.

I have shown that inauthenticity may result from a willful denial of the existential truth – an affirmative choice of another truth; or it may result from gradually forgetting that truth – a choice by default in that, by not willing to take responsibility for itself, Dasein falls into inauthenticity. In either case, the inauthenticity that Dasein may choose after it has

become authentic should be distinguished from the inauthenticity of the average everydayness. Until Dasein experiences anxiety in the face of its own death, it is absorbed in and unwittingly follows the 'they,' but this is because it has not yet revealed to itself the truth about its own Being. In this case, it seems unreasonable to expect Dasein to be authentic or, for that matter, to fault it for not being authentic. If, however, Dasein has become anticipatory resoluteness and has understood the truth about itself, but nevertheless denies or ignores it, then Dasein willingly or effectively chooses inauthenticity. And it is not the unintentional inauthenticity of an unaware Dasein but rather the chosen inauthenticity of a willful Dasein.

Concluding remarks

I have argued that the problem of choice in relation to Dasein's authenticity can be solved if the distinction is drawn between Dasein's becoming authentic and its continuing to be authentic. In this scenario, becoming authentic is defined as Dasein's original insight into the primordial truth about its Being as Dasein becomes anticipatory resoluteness. Remaining authentic, on the other hand, refers to Dasein's affirmation of that original insight, that is, to Dasein's continual (if not continuous) understanding of itself as finite, thrown, and having to become the author of its own life. This interpretation not only explains the seeming inconsistencies in Heidegger's account of choice with regard to authenticity, but it also addresses the problem of choice in relation to inauthenticity.

However, there is one more issue relating to choice that needs to be addressed here. The notion of choice implies freedom to make that choice, and it also implies a reason or some sort of a standard that can explain making that choice. In *Being and time*, Heidegger claims to provide the conditions that make authenticity possible and to ground them in the Being of Dasein, that is, to give a strictly ontological account of the possibility of authenticity. He seems successful in so far as his account of how it is possible for Dasein to become authentic is also an explanation of

how Dasein does become authentic in anticipatory resoluteness. Anxiety in the face of death happens to Dasein; however, when it happens, it necessarily modifies its understanding so that Dasein reveals to itself the truth about its Being. Thus, something which is independent of Dasein's Being, to the extent that Dasein cannot predict or control it, ends up belonging to its Being as its most disclosive state-of-mind. By making the state-of-mind of anxiety in the face of death the ultimate condition of the possibility of authenticity, and yet something before which Dasein is totally powerless, Heidegger seems to be able to ground becoming authentic entirely in the Being of Dasein without having to resort to external causes, for example, the grace of God.

However, by mentioning choice and the freedom to choose to be authentic, Heidegger seems to abandon an ontological discourse and projects the problem of authenticity into the realm of ethics. It is true that being authentic is not an ethical term, at least not in the normative sense. Authenticity does not require Dasein to follow any specific ethical rules; in fact, that could mean that Dasein lets the 'they' choose for it. Being authentic entails Dasein's holding on to the truth about itself as finite, thrown, and having to take responsibility for itself, which, in turn, requires that Dasein make its own choices. And even though Dasein must choose its possibilities from those offered by the world, it does not mean that Dasein must follow any given code of ethics. Being authentic does not require Dasein to choose morally, though it may do so, but only that it chooses for itself and does not let others choose for it. There is nothing in Heidegger's account that would prevent Dasein from choosing, for example, to act like Hitler or Stalin.

Nonetheless, there seems to be an ethical implication in being authentic even if it does not belong to a normative ethics. Authenticity means that Dasein affirms the truth that it is a thrown project towards death and takes responsibility for its own Being, which entails making its own choices. In this sense, Heidegger is proposing another kind of ethics – an ontological ethics. This ethics does not require following a particular moral code, but it urges taking responsibility for the truth about one's Being. Instead of denying or ignoring it, it calls for firmly holding onto

to this truth and thus allowing it to influence all other existential decisions. This, however, implies that Dasein has to decide to continue to be authentic. Even if the original insight into the truth about itself does not require a willful decision on the part of Dasein, continuing to be authentic does indeed require a choice, in which case, the question arises as to the grounds or justification for that choice. Even if Heidegger does not need to explain why Dasein should choose authenticity, he still needs to explain why Dasein should keep affirming the primordial truth of its Being instead of slipping back into inauthenticity.

The concept of Dasein as understanding is a possible candidate to explain why Dasein would affirm the truth about its Being. It explains how, in the state of anxiety in the face of death, Dasein discloses to itself the truth about its Being and also projects itself upon that truth. However, it is inadequate in that this capability on the part of Dasein to reveal to itself the truth is limited only to times when Dasein is in this state of anxiety. In other words, Dasein can make authentic decisions only in anxiety. And if Dasein falls back into inauthenticity, anxiety would be the only way to make authenticity again possible. Thus, in order for Heidegger's account to be purely ontological, Dasein's being in anxiety would always have to precede any authentic action on the part of Dasein. Is this the scenario envisioned by Heidegger? Anxiety in the face of death may be the force that pushes Dasein out of the inauthentic, everyday Being, but it seems likely that Dasein does not have to keep experiencing such anxiety in order to be able to act authentically. On the contrary, once Dasein experiences this anxiety, it is somehow able to remember the truth and continue to act authentically should it so choose. In order for Heidegger's account to be purely ontological, he would have to explain how or why it is possible for Dasein to remember or to repeat its original resolve without necessarily having to be in the state-of-mind of anxiety in the face of death. But he does not, and thus, by bringing the notion of choice into his explanation of authenticity, Heidegger projects the issue of authenticity into the domain of ethics, thereby seemingly jeopardizing the purely ontological nature of the account.

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