AUTHENTICITY AND IDEOLOGY

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2001
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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

AUTHENTICITY AND IDEOLOGY

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May 2001

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Major Department: Political Science

This dissertation addresses the issues of being true to oneself, i.e., the problem of authenticity. It proceeds according to several convictions. First, we (post)modern Western subjects suffer an ongoing authenticity crisis, initiated by the collapse of social hierarchies of ascribed identity, frequent geographical displacement, and lifestyles increasingly emphasizing individual choice. The project's first half summarizes philosophical reactions to the problem of authenticity from Descartes to Heidegger, arguing (secondly) that each of these philosophical formulations underestimates the central role of ideology to any aspiring authentic. Reformulating the Marxian definition of ideology to include hermeneutical and phenomenological insights, Chapter 3 shows that ideology not only subordinates the subject to dominant power but provides the subject with indispensable existential grounding. To recognize which power is enabling and which is exploitive is an essential, ongoing struggle for the aspiring authentic.

The project's second half investigates the theories of authenticity of two contemporary political philosophers, Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor, who offer competing accounts of authenticity. Taylor's model is based in the hermeneutical mode of discovery, where the aspiring authentic must be sincere to its embeddedness in social,
ethical, and historical conditions it does not choose. Taylor advocates that we attune ourselves to our situation in order to become who we already are. Rorty, a postmodern, advances an *ironic* mode of authenticity that sees the subject’s promise in detachment and the restless search for novelty. Taylor’s and Rorty’s formulations, however, also ignore ideology, at the expense of the critical faculties of their aspiring authentics.

The dissertation’s conclusion revisits the question of critical self-consciousness in terms of the controversy between postmodern and hermeneutical epistemologies. We ask whether it is possible to examine one’s situation in an immanent hermeneutical mode, or whether one must leave one’s situation altogether, as postmoderns insist, in order to gain any distance from it. The question is settled by a recollection of Taylor’s dynamic philosophy of language, which contends that one can manifest progressive self-knowledge through the steady re-examination and rearticulation of one’s commitments.
This dissertation is a theoretical discussion of the problem of authenticity, i.e. being true to oneself. In contemporary society, many people have more life choices than ever, no longer having their identity ascribed to them by family occupation and social status. Indeed, today it is difficult to avoid the ecstatic and frightening challenge of creating—or discovering—a self to be true to. This project first surveys philosophical responses to this problem, from the 17th to the 20th Centuries. It then compares the theories of two contemporary political philosophers who propose contrasting models for authenticity. Richard Rorty presents an authenticity of irony, a playful, artistic re-creation of oneself. Charles Taylor, on the other hand, prescribes a sincere mode where we discover who we already are. It is hoped that this theoretical discussion can help inform the existential struggles of the aspiring authentic in all of us.
PART I
SYNOPSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF
AUTHENTICITY AND IDEOLOGY
INTRODUCTION TO PART I

I think, my good sir, that it would be better . . . that the mass of mankind should disagree with me and contradict me than that I, a single individual, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict myself.

--Socrates, Gorgias

How you gon' win
When you ain't right within?

--Lauryn Hill

Authenticity is the promise and curse of modernity. With increasing frequency, the modern human--the free chooser, the wage seeker, the frequent mover--must worry about "being true to oneself." Such a condition is concurrently liberation and obligation. As affluence spreads, and as race and gender exclusions in educational and employment opportunities diminish, fewer of us will able to avoid the ecstatic and terrible responsibility of finding and creating a self to be true to.

There is no denying the vitality of the ideal of authenticity in the contemporary, affluent West. Americans jealously esteem such opportunity. Clearly, we are a country fond of individualism. Founded on the bold if ambiguous idea of Liberty, we believe in self-rule and inviolable individual rights. This ethic of individualism also has a powerful economic footing, animated by the seemingly inescapable force we call "self-interest." Contemporary social critics point out that in our "therapeutic" culture, we pursue a narcissistic self-assertion aimed at personal happiness and release at the expense of commitments to others.¹ Our "first language" is that of individualism, and more specifically, of individual rights. Self-fulfillment has eclipsed commitments to others,

while individual rights, claimed ever more vehemently, drown out requisite responsibilities. Other large-scale forces—mainly economic—continue to dilute traditional community and family life. All of this conjures a powerful admixture of individualism to which we Americans are firmly beholden.

All these forms of self-assertion, one might argue, spring from the impulse to be authentic. We insist on drawing up our own blueprint instead of having to live by someone else's design. Authenticity is a main theme of the American Dream, phrased in terms of the right to be oneself, where personal assertion wages war on Old World, pre-modern doctrines of ascribed status. Of course, in actuality we haven't achieved even a semblance of equality of opportunity. The freedom to be true to oneself depends too often on the privileges enjoyed by, or the chains burdening one's class, race, religion, gender, etc. Yet authenticity remains a central American ideal on the individual and collective level. Just as each individual wants to "be real," American democracy aspires to be true to its constituents. In theory, democracy is the medium for collective authenticity, where the people, attempting to rule themselves, must first know themselves.

Some individuals have a strong impulse to self-create, while others would rather follow orders. Yet in the process of maturation, each of us must confront the issues of personal identity. Cursed with the ability for self-knowledge and the responsibility for self-creation, we cannot help but ask the questions "Who am I" and "Who do I want to be?" In fact, being authentic, i.e., unique, the "real thing," true to oneself, has been an existential and ethical challenge unavoidable for many people since the advent of Western modernity. In Chapter 2, we examine the problem of authenticity as it arose for the newly-arrived city dweller in the swelling European metropolis of the 17th century. For the first time, people found themselves anonymous, deprived of the steady identity previously ascribed by class, occupation, family, and region. This is also our condition today in late

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modernity. From the ghettos to the suburbs, we contemporary creatures also suffer authenticity anxiety.

Above I counterposed a statement from the West’s most famous philosopher-citizen of 2500 years ago with a lyric of contemporary American pop music, sung by a descendant of African slaves. What is displayed by both is the impulse to self-reflect. Both implore us to evaluate the quality of our actions, insisting that moral self-interpretation is central to "the good life," any good life. During his *apologia*, Socrates asks his fellow Athenians, "Are you not ashamed that you care for having as much money as possible, and reputation, and honor, but that you neither care for nor give thought to prudence, and truth, and how your soul will be the best possible?" Such reflection, Socrates insists to the merchants, laborers, and politicians, should be a part of everyday life. Contrary to Socrates' wishes but comporting to those of his great heir Plato, the Socratic dialogues would be appropriated and guarded by "high culture," taking their place among the "Great Books" read by the educated few. Until the 20th century, such high culture, and the reflection on the nature of the good life which accompanied it, was reserved for those free from the material toil of everyday life. The "happiness" (*eudaimonia*) which Aristotle extols in his *Ethics* is a state not of pleasure but moral education and practice, activities considered beyond the ken of those chained to the realm of material and human reproduction.

Something has significantly changed in the Christian, democratic, bourgeois epoch. Here, in the "People's Century," happiness and fulfillment are to be found in this life, amid our everyday concerns. We no longer live for the sake of the King or the Glory of England. We exercise the drive to righteousness by assuming the burden of personal salvation, for each soul is equally worthy in God's eyes. The street-preacher, gadfly to popular prejudice, is no longer an anomaly. With worldwide distribution, hip-hop singer Lauryn Hill excoriates her loose girlfriend who professes to be a Christian, while enjoining

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"The sneaky silent men/the punk domestic violence men/The quick to shoot the semen/stop acting like boys and be men." Indeed, this drive to self-reflect and judge the worth of our actions spans the entire 2500-year history of Western thought. Despite neo-conservative lamentations to the contrary, the moral impulse permeates contemporary Western culture both "high" and "low."

Moral reflexivity is at the heart of what we call human agency, notes contemporary political philosopher Charles Taylor, a central informant to this project. As "self-interpreting animals" we live in a space that is largely constituted by moral evaluations, where we judge whether our actions are creating the type of person we want to be. Of course, such moral reflexivity is not inherently a life-affirming activity; moral sources do not always "empower," as Taylor contends. A rigid moral code based in proscription, as Nietzsche argued, is the weapon of the herd against the unique individual, and encourages conformity, resignation, and resentment. As we will see, the ability not only to reflect morally but to position oneself vis à vis the moral code of one's community are crucial exercises for the authentic subject.

Authenticity, then, is reflection on the question of being true to oneself. Acting authentically makes one ask the monumental questions, "To whom and to what am I currently being true?" and "To whom and to what do I want to be true?" One might ponder the degree to which one should accept the roles and meanings provided by the social group(s) into which one is born. How should I approach the perspectives, expectations, and valuations which my upbringing has bequeathed to me? This project will address the issue of established roles and meanings in terms of ideology: the idea structures which, as media for power, help order our existence.

Why should we take ideology seriously here in the liberal, democratic age? After all, the sovereign individual rules as the rational chooser, indisputably the superior judge of

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4Lauryn Hill, "Doo Wop (That Thing)," The Miseducation of Lauren Hill (Ruffhouse/Columbia LP, 1998).
its own best interests. Indeed, in such a climate any mention of "false consciousness" is an affront to the intelligence of the self-interested consumer and voter. Yet we live in a world of manipulations and expectations, where the individual is frequently not the engineer of meaning and purpose. As we will discuss, ideology assumes multiple incarnations, media for inculcation and manipulation. I am encouraged to believe that buying that new 4x4 truck will offer me strength and excitement; that being a righteous wife means always deferring to the wisdom of my husband; that achieving the American Dream means working just a little harder and continuing to play by the rules. The forces manipulating us to buy and believe are manifest and multiple.

We also have myths, the "stories we tell ourselves" like the American Dream, the honesty of Abe Lincoln, the United States as the world's torch for democracy, or the imperative for economic growth. These myths supply purpose to actions and cohesion for groups. Ideology also takes the form of belief systems or creeds which result from (supposed) conscious choice. Religions and political persuasions, seen as ideologies, provide important structures for understanding the world, so we might act in it. In addition, Chapter 3 explores the phenomenology of ideology as "situation": the affiliations which we do not choose, such as nationality, gender, class, ethnicity, etc. Such ontological grounding provides portals to reality without which we could not function in everyday life. Indeed, to see at all, we must have our feet planted somewhere.

The authentic self must engage all of these ideological forms in order to negotiate within and without ideology. Clearly, the aspiring authentic must be somewhat adept at discerning which representations and idea structures are serving the project of being true to itself. In Chapters 4 and 5, we examine the ability of different agents, those portrayed in the work of Charles Taylor and Richard Rorty, to combat the meanings which might mitigate against the authentic cause. But before that, in Chapter 1, we visit some important moments in the history of ideology critique with the presumption that critical awareness of ideology is essential to any project of authenticity, including Taylor's and Rorty's. Since
Marx and Engels, the idea structures which legitimate the exploitative status quo have been cast in terms of ideology. Perhaps this association with Marxism has deeply polluted the concept of ideology. For many, thanks to the bankruptcy of its political incarnations and its eclipse by post-structuralism among academic radicals, the philosophy of Marx is too tainted to touch. I do not happen to believe this, and here try to redeem (part of) Marx and Engels' theory of ideology. Later in Chapter 3, I argue that the current of phenomenological and hermeneutical thought, manifested through Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, is quite instructive for Marxian ideology critics. While ignoring the questions of power which preoccupy Marxists, phenomenologists' focus on "being-in-the-world," where "fore-structures" provide the irreducible ontological grounding for the "natural attitude," is also indispensable for the aspiring authentic.

Through the course of these arguments, we will see that the exercise of authenticity cannot avoid being political. In the first place, personal attempts to achieve authenticity must confront power, specifically that of the group over the individual. For many political analysts, any exercise of power is enough to qualify a phenomenon as political. Yet even if one doesn't accept such a wide definition of politics, authenticity percolates with political relevance. For it is an open and interesting question whether, how, and which of these struggles should be conducted through the political "system," narrowly defined. In addition, the political nature of authenticity is ensured by its social component. Once we reject the atomist ontologies which undergird various forms of non-participatory liberalism, we recognize that democratic citizenry demands that we exercise the social side of our being and deliberate about "we-intentions." As such, democracy is the medium for collective authenticity.

The general structure of the project is as follows. Chapter 1 surveys the nexus of theory, ideology, and authenticity. All three of these stand close to one another, sharing enough common strands to stymie any attempt to articulate them in isolation. This initial chapter has several origins. First, while I was writing the philosophical survey which was
becoming Chapter 2, I discovered that I could not keep talking about the authentic self without addressing its opposite, what Hegel called the “heroism of dumb service.”

Certainly the obstacles to authenticity, frequently phrased in pejorative terms like superstition, habit, and tradition, are as important in the authentic equation as its positive components. The aspiring authentic has to know what it is up against and where it comes from; thus a discussion of myth and ideology became unavoidable. Theory also became important, for the Western intellectual tradition typically has cast myth as the antipode to theoria. Theory not only attempts to see things with abstract clarity, but it contains interpretive and normative components which make it a potentially powerful tool of the aspiring authentic. My interest in commenting on theory was also spurred by my own insecurity as a political theorist. Throughout my graduate study I have been dogged by the query "What good is theory?" Here I have been fortunate enough to formulate an answer which has become inextricable from my abiding obsession with authenticity.

Chapter 2 is an attempt to offer some insight into the historical problem of authenticity. We address it as an existential as well as a philosophical problem. I trace its "origin" to the first waves of immigration into the great cities of Western Europe in the 17th Century. Deracinated from ascriptive markers like family, region, and occupation, a stable identity could no longer be unproblematically inherited. Yet the public sphere demanded the presentation of identity, and insincerity and dissimulation became imperative for the new urbanite. With deception the norm, where was the true self? The second segment of Chapter 2 surveys philosophical responses to this new crisis of authenticity. There we visit the thought of René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the English Romantic Poets, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger, categorized into Enlightenment, Romantic, Post-Romantic, and Existential stages.

Chapter 3 revisits ideology, infusing the Marxian concept with phenomenological and hermeneutical insights. We examine the ontology of ideology, arguing that awareness and negotiation of situative spheres is absolutely crucial to any project for authenticity. We
will cast the Marxian and phenomenological-hermeneutical conceptualizations of ideology as complementary rather than contradictory. Where Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer open our eyes to the ontological indispensability of ideology in offering situative, constitutive, and enabling functions, we must maintain the critical sensibility of Marx. For without the ability to discern exploitive power exercised through ideology, any attempt at authenticity is surely in jeopardy.

The second half of this project, Chapters 4 and 5, explores two contemporary philosophical models of authenticity, those of Charles Taylor and Richard Rorty. Though drawing deeply from some of the same thinkers, Taylor’s and Rorty’s projects for authenticity embark in different directions. Ultimately they arrive at contrasting models for the authentic subject: sincerity and irony. Where Taylor endorses a sincere authenticity based in connection, attunement, and ontological awareness, Rorty advocates an ironic subjectivity, one which can playfully exchange modes of being, never taking itself too seriously. In the course of addressing key questions about subjectivity and agency (What constitutes the self? What is agency? How can the agent negotiate ideology?), we explore which mode best serves authenticity.

We will identify a similar shortcoming in Rorty’s and Taylor’s account of authenticity: each short-circuits the critical abilities of their aspiring authentics, albeit in different ways. Taylor’s emphasis on the necessity for his “strong evaluator” to recover its moral sources leaves the agent without a well-developed critical faculty. While sublimely applying a Heideggerian ontology of agency, Taylor seems to succumb to this common weakness of Being as attunement. We inquire, however, whether Taylor’s dynamic, hermeneutic philosophy of language ultimately rescues him from the charge of complaisance. Because for Taylor, recovery also means rearticulation, where the constitutive and expressive qualities of human language ensure that upon examination, feelings and thoughts are not simply represented and endorsed, but reconstructed.
Rorty, emphasizing the Freudian and Nietzschean nature of subjectivity, at times seems to cut ontological possibility out from under his ironist. The Nietzschean "strong poet" incessantly seeks self-expansion driven by the restlessness of drive, impulse, and the homelessness it cannot escape. Freud further decenters Rorty’s subject, insisting that the unconscious and the "blind impress all our behavings bear" subvert traditional attempts to hierarchize and master the self. While Rorty makes a compelling case for authenticity as self-enlargement, he does so at the cost of denying its ontological infrastructure. We will see how Rorty’s hypercritical ironist cannot do without some significant attunement as recommended by Heidegger and Taylor.

The project’s Conclusion reasserts the importance of Heideggerian ontology—specifically moods, the call of conscience, and modes of care—for both Rorty’s ironist and Taylor’s sincerist. However, not content to conclude unconditionally with Heidegger, we revisit the problem of critical self-consciousness. How might the aspiring authentic achieve critical distance, given the impossibility of transcending its situation through traditional rationalist detachment? Counterposing Rorty’s and Stanley Fish’s postmodernism with Taylor’s hermeneuticism, we address some of the epistemological issues at stake in the debate over critical self-consciousness. While quite sympathetic to the postmodern argument based in Nietzsche and Foucault, we ultimately conclude that Taylor’s Heideggerian hermeneuticism offers the aspiring authentic a superior strategy for both attunement and criticism.
CHAPTER 1
THEORY, IDEOLOGY, AND AUTHENTICITY

All universities worthy of the name have always been centers of social protest. If American universities ever cease to be such centers, they will lose both their self-respect and the respect of the learned world.

--Richard Rorty

This is a doctoral dissertation in political theory. But I have not been able to confine my discussion of the main theme of this project, authenticity, to the theoretical realm. For authenticity to be a justifiable theoretical problem, it must first be an actual, empirical one. Though the pure realm of theory is sometimes a fantastic place to be, it can be highly antagonistic to the activity which it strives to guide. Contemporary political theory, though committed to a self-definition that is fundamentally normative, i.e., advocacy-based, remains remarkably detached from political life. Whether it is academic disdain for political personalities and the simplistic ideologies they advance, or a division of labor which encourages separation between the two realms, the gulf between theory and practice continues to gape.

Thus the first task of this chapter is to address the question of what role theory might rightly play in our personal and political lives. Though theory may need no defense, I assume that it does, for it suffers more often than not from solipsism and irrelevance. In the section immediately below, we first discuss the traditional, classical conception of theory as advanced by Aristotle and Plato, a formulation still very much alive in the West. Reviewing its self-definition, we focus on its perceived relationship to practice and myth. I then engage several 20th-century manifestations of cultural-political theory, namely "critical theory" and "cultural studies," also to sketch their self-image and approach to practice and myth. Since Marx, such discussion of myth has been articulated in terms of ideology--the
space where deceptive idea structures serve the dominant class, contradicting truth and transparency. The epistemology based in the dualism of deceptive, ephemeral appearance versus true, permanent essence, embraced by Plato through Marx, underwent serious revision in the 20th Century. "Perspectivism" and "constructivism" validate views and ways of being which do not conform to traditional definitions of virtue and reason, seriously undermining metaphysical notions of Truth. Yet many philosophical dilemmas remain: for one, we are still struggling to discriminate among truth, myth, and ideology. This chapter scratches away at this problem by means of a narrative which traces the development of our theoretical understanding of the concept of ideology, documenting its changing definition and employment.

We will see that theory receives further legitimation for its role in the struggle of the aspiring authentic. This initial chapter attempts a self-standing meta-theoretical argument which concludes that philosophy is an essential part of the reflective life, serving to ground "positive" ideologies which allow us to interpret, criticize, prescribe, and act in the world around us. Might we reinvigorate the philosophical impulses of existing political ideologies, improving their function as existential compasses? In addition, the theoretical enterprise receives defense in the historical and philosophical investigations of authenticity which follow in the remaining chapters of the project. All the various models for authenticity to be examined (in Chapters 2, 4, and 5) presuppose the willful, reflective activity which the mode of theory greatly facilitates. Undoubtedly, reflexivity is critical to authenticity.

Yet we are far from knowing what authenticity means. Does "being true to oneself" require breaking free of conventional thought, resisting one's insertion into received meaning and roles, and creating oneself completely anew? Or is authenticity composed of an acceptance of one's embeddedness, staying true to the commitments and roles into which we are born and do not choose or will? Further, does authenticity demand self-control through a commanding faculty such as reason or will, or is authenticity to be won
through self-abandonment, relinquishing control to the energies of our "natural drives"?
The remainder of this project will attempt to refine these questions, exploring the tension within authenticity among creation and discovery, control and relinquishment, choice and acceptance. Forestalling these issues for a moment, let us first illuminate the intersection of theory, ideology, and authenticity.

**Theory and the Contemporary Academy**

Richard Rorty's sustained criticism of the Marxist Left, most recently articulated in his *Achieving Our Country*, shares a fundamental question with this chapter: What good is theory? *Achieving Our Country* is a series of lectures offered on the current state of the American Left, which, Rorty contends, is a crucial gauge for the state of the nation. This is because "the Left, by definition, is the party of hope."¹ Lincoln's Republicans and FDR's New Dealers really did realize some of the country's (rather utopian) ideals: equality and freedom were actualized in ways unprecedented in our peoples' history. We made recognizable progress, he observes, realizing the meritocratic, progressive, social democratic visions of Jefferson, Emerson, Whitman, and Dewey--if only imperfectly and partially. But the current, most visible manifestation of the Left is letting us down. What he calls the "cultural Left," nurtured and insulated within the university, no longer sees a relation between democratic politics and philosophy. Obsessed with a "pseudo-politics" of a perpetually self-correcting theory, the academic Left is not seriously interested in the actual political discourse of democratic nations.² Rorty's main targets are the purveyors of "cultural studies" within literature departments, and increasingly throughout the disciplines of philosophy, political theory, and sociology. In the wake of Marx, Nietzsche, and Foucault, increasingly more energy has been poured into analyzing the intricacy of the iron

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cage of the hegemonic socio-economic-political structure. As a result, "Hopelessness has become fashionable on the Left--principled, theorized, philosophical hopelessness."\(^3\)

Such analytic insistence, precision, and hopelessness, Rorty maintains, has turned the left into *spectators rather than actors*. For these theorists, what Americans believe has become an object of study rather than an object of manipulation. The academic left no longer has any recommendations for politics; our situation, it seems, is too far gone. Rorty denounces this position as "a failure of nerve."\(^4\) For it has done nothing to relieve the widely recognized harshness of the (post) modern condition:

> Once we have criticized all the self-deceptive sophistry, and exposed all the "false consciousness," the result of our efforts is to find ourselves just where our grandfathers suspected we were: in the midst of a struggle for power between those who currently possess it . . . and those who are starving or terrorized because they lack it. Neither twentieth-century Marxism, nor analytic philosophy, nor post-Nietzschean "continental" philosophy has done anything to clarify this struggle.\(^5\)

Perhaps Rorty's heaviest charge against contemporary theory is that it is, ultimately, "scientistic." Ironically, while chiding the will to "totalize" and insisting that we should always "historicize," Rorty contends that it forsakes a core tenet of its own Marxian-Nietzschean-Foucauldianism. Somehow, the acknowledgment of the ontological ubiquity of contingency gets eclipsed by the aspirations of traditional theory, the metaphysical impulse to "see everything steadily and see it whole."\(^6\) According to Rorty, the "cultural politicians" are unwilling to truly accept, like good Deweyan pragmatists (and post-Nietzschean Foucauldians), that all this is but provisional and experimental. Contingency rules, not law nor structure. Reality cannot, therefore, be reductively absorbed into a logic of the totality. Contemporary theory's meticulous analysis of contemporary culture, Rorty claims, is akin to the classical metaphysicians' "attempt to rise above the plurality of appearances in the hope that, seen from the heights, an unexpected unity will become

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\(^3\) *Achieving Our Country*, op. cit., p. 37.
\(^4\) Ibid.
evident—a unity which is a sign that something *real* has been glimpsed, something which stands behind the appearances and produces them.\(^7\)

Rorty’s main target is the body of theory which combines the dystopic outlook of the Frankfurt School (minus Habermas) and the Foucauldians, with the scientistic and totalizing tendencies of Marx. The unifying penchant of this cultural left, despite the intricacies of their different theoretical configurations, is a conviction that theory can actually make sense of the "whole." In this mindset, theory is a special place altogether different than, say, literature and other humanities. Rorty not only equates philosophy with poetry, but demands, with Bacon, that "Of all signs there is none more certain or more noble than that taken from the fruits, for fruits and works are as it were sponsors and sureties for the truth of philosophies."\(^8\) Rorty expresses well-founded frustration at a situation where,

> Enormous ingenuity and learning are deployed in demonstrating the complicity of this or that institution, or of some rival cultural politician, with patriarchy or heterosexism or racism. But little gets said about how we might persuade Americans who make more than $50,000 a year to take more notice of the desperate situation of their fellow Americans who make less than $20,000.\(^9\)

As a committed pragmatist, Rorty is imploring progressives to refashion their relationship of theory to practice. Obviously, I think that much of his criticism is on the mark. Few people would argue with the observations that the academic Left is not the active force it once was in national politics, and currently fails to provide America with substantial and credible visions of hope. What I do wish to explore further is whether Rorty's charge of spectating is as damning as he makes it sound. Are observation and interpretation so useless, and thus condemnable as "pseudo-politics"? Below I would first like to revisit the traditional self-image of theory. What has theoretical life tried to accomplish? How has it seen its link to practice? What is its relationship to myth? Ultimately, with the advantages

\(^7\)Ibid.
of centuries of commentary on the theoretical enterprise, and a sympathetic ear to Rorty's critique, might we reassert the value of philosophical thought for everyday life?

**Ancient Theory and Practice**

In the ancient Greek context, theory (*theoria*) described the activity of the *theoros*, who was a spectator at athletic games. The verb *theorein*, therefore, meant to watch or look at. Originally, *theoros* was the name for an envoy sent to consult an oracle, and *theoria* was the title given to the official ambassadors sent to attend the festivals of a neighboring polis, which frequently included athletic competitions. *Theoros* also came to refer to an interloper sent to learn about another city's customs and laws.\(^{10}\) Rorty, seizing on the history of the concept, appropriately employs "spectators" as an epithet for the cultural left, *spectare* being the Latin translation of *theorein*. To Rorty's mind, spectating should not substitute for action.

Yet is passive spectating really the main activity of theorists? At this point, we should make some distinctions between different types of theory. In ancient Greece, the difference between a philosopher (a lover of wisdom, *sophia*) and what we now call a "scientist" was not meaningful. For example, both Plato (a "philosopher") and Anaxagoras (today's "natural scientist") were said to be living a general life of contemplation and study. Aristotle, himself the quintessential composite of the philosopher-scientist, calls this mode of life "*theoria*."\(^{11}\) *Scientia*, first coined in Latin, was a general term for knowledge; today, thanks to the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, "science" is a specific form of knowledge and a concomitant mode of procedure. One recent commentator summarizes modern science as "a body of related physical laws combined with trusted methods for obtaining and testing such laws. These laws pertain to the regular, recurrent, and ideally invariant associations between and among events and things within the natural world."\(^{12}\)

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\(^{10}\)Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice*, op. cit., p. 6.
\(^{11}\)Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1177b, and *Politics*, 1325b.
Any theory which calls itself "scientific" takes the natural sciences as a model, and aspires to the systematic study of regularized, repeated behavior. Ideally, the scientist's spectatorship is "objective": the objects under scrutiny should do all the speaking, rather than the subject who is observing. To observe and codify is to be able to predict—the stage of scientific theorizing which yields considerable power for the automobile designer, the astro-physicist, the food chemist, the hydro-electric engineer.

Humans, as a mix of mind and matter, appear an insoluble combination of predictability and chance. The "mind-body problem," with which philosophy has struggled since Plato, has never been settled. We know that the body works as a machine at some levels (say the chemistry of cell growth or the physics of joint moment), but our unpredictability in other behavior (e.g., in the throes of romance, politics, or war) has defied the logic of "regular, recurrent, and ideally invariant associations." The "laws" of human behavior are relatively few, and certainly do not exist with the regularity that would allow codification and prediction. Humans are magnificently complex and frequently mysterious creatures, exhibiting social and moral capabilities beyond any life form we know. Despite Americans' individualist pretensions, we do not and cannot exist in isolation, but in various social milieux of meanings and expectations. In addition, we are moral creatures, with the ability to judge the worth of our thoughts and behavior. "Social scientists," while modeling themselves on the natural sciences, have never really surpassed the spectating stage of their enterprise. Human behavior, especially in social settings where moral discriminations are being made, is simply not law-abiding and predictable to the same degree as natural phenomena. Our "free will," passions, and tastes—in short, the unique biological and cultural constitution of each and all—affect behavior to a radical extent. Therefore, to theorize scientifically our social, political, and cultural behavior is simply not an option.

So what can we expect from social, political, and cultural theory? The theoros sent as an envoy to observe a foreign city does not have luxury of passively spectating, kicked
back in front of the game like a couch potato. As Leslie Paul Thiele notes, his job was not only to watch, but to interpret, i.e., to translate what he saw into terms that his compatriots could understand. Unlike scientific theory, there is no rigorous experimental design and replicable procedure. Rather, interpretive theory "is validated not by experimental verification but by its meaningfulness, that is, by the resonance it produces with its self-interpretive audience."\(^{13}\) Meaning, as contemporary political philosophers such as Alisdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor have emphasized, is based in understandings which are, by definition, shared.\(^{14}\) Meaning not only has its social component; it is also infused with moral discriminations. To explain a neighboring polis' politics, laws, and customs, one must not only let the phenomena speak, but speak for the objects. What practices are of quality, deserve close attention, and might be worthy of emulation?

Thus political, social, and cultural theory is not only interpretive, but normative. To ascribe importance we must judge, i.e., ask how the phenomena under observation compare to certain standards that we have recognized as our own. Thiele reminds us that the root of "normative" is the Latin norma, signifying a carpenter's square. Therefore, "normative theory is concerned with the way things measure up. It seeks to understand not simply the way things are but also the way things ought to be."\(^{15}\) This is true for Plato's Republic, commonly regarded as the first work of political theory, as well as the contemporary post-Nietzschean and post-Marxian endeavors Rorty criticises. Where Plato's advocacy for the ideal polis is explicit in its design, Jameson's or Foucault's commentary on the present order is equally normative in advocating the overthrow of current hegemonies cultural and political.

Theory, then, in all its social, cultural, and political manifestations, means to speak to, and within reality. Neither this impulse nor the controversy between theory and practice

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 14.


\(^{15}\)Thiele, op. cit., p. 20.
are recent phenomena. Indeed, we find the controversy between theory and practice at the origin of Western thought. Plato's legendary metaphysics exalt the activity of contemplation and the realm of reason to an extreme: reason produces virtue, rules over the spirit and the appetites, and perceives the Forms. The privileging of thought and the denigration of the life of the masses, mired in appetite, is a reliable Platonic theme. In addition, the rigid segmentation of the soul into reason, spirit, and appetite segregates the activity of thought from the rest of existence. Only the life of the mind can partake in the ultimate reality, that of the eide, which are of supreme value to Plato, being of infinitely greater value and reality than the transient material manifestations of everyday life. The life of the mind, of intellecction, was the path to all things good, and Plato institutionalizes this conviction by making philosophers the rulers of his ideal republic.

At times, Aristotle seems to echo his teacher in positing the complete superiority of the life of contemplation and study. Of the three types of life—of gratification (hedone), politics (praxis), and study (theoria)—he only deems the last two worthy of consideration. For, "the many, the most vulgar" who choose the life of pleasure "appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals." Later in the Ethics, he calls the life of theoretical study "the best" and "god-like," for "this activity is supreme." "We ought not to follow the proverb-writers," he proclaims, "and 'think human, since you are human,' or 'think mortal, since you are mortal'. Rather, as far as we can, we ought to be pro-immortal, and go to all lengths to live a life that expresses our supreme element; for however much this element may lack in bulk, by much more it surpasses everything in power and value." Other ways of life are "happiest in a secondary way," for their virtues are distinctly human.

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16 As Socrates asserts in Book IX of the Republic, "the three primary classes of human beings are ... three: wisdom-loving, victory-loving, [and] gain-loving" (581c). In the Phaedo, the philosopher, i.e. the practitioner of the "contemplative life," is contrasted with the "lover of the body," who is in turn a "lover of power and fame" or a "lover of riches" (68 B-C).
17 Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, 1095b17.
18 Ibid., 1178a.
19 Ibid., 1178a10.
Importantly, Aristotle notes that each mode of life has its moral component, and insists, contra Plato, that knowing the good is not sufficient to make one just. Rather, justice is a proportion and a contextual judgement; for Aristotle, one becomes just by doing just acts, by practicing, not by intellecting the Forms of virtues. Indeed, Aristotle offers the first great salvo at Platonic metaphysics by insisting on a material component to the Forms, while denying their universality and relevance to ethics. That justice is a "mean," dependent on context, leads Aristotle to extol practical wisdom (phronesis) as central to life's purpose, i.e., the search for happiness (eudaimonia). The good, ethical life, then, is immanently linked to practice, for it is only through action that the good can be known.

The link between theory and practice is also made explicit in a well-known passage in the Politics, where Aristotle is discussing the several ways to live the good life. "One is the school which eschews political office, distinguishing the life of the individual freeman from that of the politician, and preferring it to all others. The other is the school which regards the life of the politician as best; they argue that men who do nothing cannot be said to 'do well', and they identify felicity with 'well-doing'." Both are right, he concludes: happiness is a state of activity; eudaimonia "consists in 'well-doing', [and] it follows that the life of action is best." Notice that it is "free men," and not exclusively the philosopher-kings of Plato's republic, which engage in the life of study. In addition, for Aristotle, thought is action. The life of action need not consist of public action with others, as politicians claim. On the contrary, "thoughts with no object beyond themselves, and speculations and trains of reflection followed purely for their own sake, are far more deserving of the name of active." This is not simply a self-congratulation of the thinker's life. For Aristotle, theory, like ethics, is integrally tied to practice: "we ought to examine

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20See Book V. of the Ethics.
21See, e.g., Ethics, 1096a-b.
22Politics, 1325a23.
23Of course, this status is still a woeful minority of the population, excluding all those who, like women and slaves, are subjected to a life of toil, and do not have the leisure necessary to cultivate the good life. See Politics, 1278a.
24Ibid., 1325b8.
what has been said by applying it to what we do and how we live; and if it harmonizes with what we do, we should accept it, but if it conflicts we should count it as mere words." Aristotle's spectator must speak truths to everyday life.

Ultimately, Plato and Aristotle seem to offer quite different descriptions of theoria. Plato unequivocally endorses the philosophic life, i.e., the life of a lover of wisdom. Only those few who are ruled by reason can lead this life in pursuit of the ultimate Good, the alignment of the mind with the Ideas. Where knowledge is virtue, practice is of minimal value. Aristotle's "free men," while perhaps as small a slice of the population as Plato's guardians, are asked to live a different form of life. They are to deliberate and habituate; judgement and practice are essential to their pursuit of the Good. For Aristotle, theory is epistemologically deficient without the input and exercise of practice. So though we certainly must be educated in justice, mere knowledge leaves the just man incomplete.

Perhaps we find in Aristotle the dialectic between theory and practice that has been forsaken by the contemporary American cultural Left, despite their fondness for Marx. His enjoinder for the philosophical ages, that "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however is to change it" is clearly a conviction that theoretically informed practice can, literally, transform the world and ourselves in concert. Today, however, both Marx and Dewey have been banished from the soul of the university. It is cruel irony that "Critical Theory" has left the contemporary academy looking increasingly like a Platonic retreat.

**Ancient Theory and Myth**

Besides enjoining us to rearticulate theory and practice, Rorty is also posing a question which has received much less attention, and will serve as fuel for the remainder of this introduction: the relationship between theory and hope. Hope is, by definition, an

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25 *Ethics*, 1179a30.
imaginary. It is a repository of values and wishes that we project into the future. Rorty is undoubtedly correct in seeing an eclipse of hope in contemporary America—a process with which many commentators, liberal and conservative, show concern. It is a truism that American national purpose is at a low water-mark: neither the dream of social-economic justice, the defense of democracy, nor even triumphalistic imperialism, captures our imagination to any remarkable extent. Repeatedly lamenting our lack of national heroes, we founder on the shoals of ambiguity without leadership, doubting whether a "we" exists in any meaningful form. In the thaw of the Cold War, Americans even have a hard time construing convincing enemies, foils through which we might gain unity and purpose. Who are we and Who do we want to be?, are questions which Americans find increasingly difficult to answer.

The causes for the eclipse of hope are undoubtedly multifarious. The process is "overdetermined," and thus focusing on any number of the many causes could sufficiently explain the phenomenon. Here I want to concentrate on a process which theorists, since the ancients, have deliberately encouraged: the destruction of myth. Plato's submission of myth to the imperatives of the just city is notorious, evincing a sophisticated pragmatism which would be embraced by many political thinkers of the Modern period. In his republic, knowledge shall be the touchstone and measuring-stick for all cultural production. Homer and his followers will be banished if they insist on being "imitators," three degrees removed "from what is," i.e., the Forms revealed by philosophers.27 Earlier, Plato insists on censoring all previous myths which contains lies about the gods—that they are not thoroughly good but are the cause of evil to anyone--or untruths about human action—that happy men are unjust or that justice is unprofitable. Lies, promulgated by the correct persons in the appropriate circumstances, however, are "useful to human beings as a form of remedy." The sickness of immoderation and the mixing of classes, "vice entire,"

necessitate rulers acting as doctors, "while private men must not put their hands to it." The "one noble lie," the myth of the metals, is thereby a justifiable fiction proffered to ensure the justice of the city.

Aristotle’s relation to myth is most salient in his confrontation with Herodotus, employed in his comparison of history, poetry, and philosophy in the Poetics, the Rhetoric, and the Metaphysics. The problem with history, as represented by Herodotus, is that it puts credence in popular myth. Enjoying the dual reputation of “the father of history” and the “father of lies,” Herodotus committed some infamous foibles, for example claiming that the semen of Ethiopians is black, due to their skin color. Yet Herodotus’ History has proven quite valuable for historians, as it is an account of belief as much as “fact.” By accepting “hearsay,” Herodotus “The mythmaker” (ho mythologos), as Aristotle called him, treated the stories people tell about themselves as if they actually mattered. As one commentator puts it, “For Herodotus, the accretions of conscious and mythical discourse which build up around the actual moment of action in an event in time past are that event insofar as it affects and reveals a community of the present. ‘History’ is not the event but the explanations given the event.” Such sensitivity and appreciation for popular meaning would be reproduced, we will see, in some late 20th century cultural theorists. For Aristotle, Herodotus’ activity was not history but fable making. Such activity is below Aristotle’s exalted purpose of knowledge-building. Thus, “into the subtleties of the mythologists, it is not worth our while to inquire seriously.”

Thucydides, too, is quick to distinguish Herodotus’ method from his own. He prefaces The Peloponnesian War insisting that “it must be admitted that one cannot rely on

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28 Republic, 389b-c and 444b.
29 See ibid., 415a-c.
31 Thompson, op. cit., p. 32.
32 Aristotle, Metaphysics 1000a18, quoted in ibid., p. 32.
every detail which has come down to us by way of tradition.” His evidence is “better” than that of both the poets, who tend toward exaggeration, and the prose writers, who are sensationalist, have unverifiable sources, and “whose subject-matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly lost in the unreliable streams of mythology.” As we will see in Chapter Two, Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and René Descartes also insist on overcoming custom and "superstition," in order to develop not only true knowledge, but personal autonomy and authenticity.

The general thrust of the Enlightenment, of course, was to shed light on the shadowy mysteries maintained by theology and superstition. The scientism which Rorty attributes to contemporary theory is in part an extension of this all-out war on myth, traceable, as we have seen, to the very origins of philosophy and science. In the section below, I want to take a closer look at the "cultural Left" which so enflames Rorty, to investigate the relationship of contemporary theory to myth. Specifically, we will engage the 20th-century theoretical impulses, deeply influenced by Marx, which operate under the rubrics of "critical theory" and "cultural studies."

We will see that despite Rorty's indictment, critical theory, like traditional theory, is fundamentally engaged in interpretation and advocacy. Given their Marxism, critical theorists are also concerned with their link to practice. Inspired by Rorty's criticisms, below I will ponder critical theory's pretensions to political relevance. Is this form of spectatorship really as useless and anti-pragmatic as Rorty contends? There is no doubt that most purveyors of cultural studies and critical theory rigorously condemn myth, conceptualized in terms of "hegemonic ideology." What good is "ideology critique" and what is its effect on hope? What is theory's appropriate relation to ideology? Might theory, both traditional and critical, play a positive role in our (political) narratives of everyday life?

Critical Theory, Ideology, and Myth

In the course of a polemic written early in their careers against rival Hegelians, Marx and Engels produced a materialist theory of ideas which would fuel generations of critics to follow. *The German Ideology* rejects the notion of independence of thought in the realms of philosophy and everyday consciousness, insisting that all reality is an expression of the material, productive forces of society. In the modern epoch, we are subject to the capitalist mode of production, overseen by capitalism's ruling class, the bourgeoisie. How we make things (mode of production) makes us who we are; the effects of production emanate far beyond the factory and the fields. Denying a rigid distinction between mental and manual labor, a division crucial to the autonomous life of the mind championed by rationalists and moralists of many colors, Marx and Engels insist that:

Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms.34

For Marx, all society's institutions—law, politics, religion, etc.—are part of an "ideological superstructure" which "expresses" the material forces and social relations of production. Said differently, the mode of production and the division of labor it produces "condition" the institutions of education, religion, politics, law, etc. The values which undergird such institutions—bourgeois ideals such as negative freedom, political equality, and the protection of property—create "false consciousness." As Louis Althusser phrases it, "Ideology, then, is for Marx an imaginary assemblage, a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence."35

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The secretion of ideology is a natural product, as it were, of the class war inherent in the capitalist mode of production. As such, the ideological superstructure is fully dependent for its form and content on the material base, which for Marx is the ultimate, true reality.

To Marx and Engels' mind, the state is nothing more complex than the "executive committee of the bourgeoisie," as they put it in the Manifesto. The ruling class controls the legitimate means of coercion--i.e., the law, the courts, and the police. But the bourgeoisie does not rule by force alone. As they famously state: "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it."[36] Individual perspectives, philosophical doctrines, or a society's ideals are deemed ideological if they serve dominant interests by veiling contradictions in the prevailing order. Thanks to dominant ideology, the ruling class' sectarian interests can be presented as universal, exploitative social structures can be portrayed as conforming to natural laws, and conflict between classes is condemned as an aberration in the harmonious order instead of the underlying tendency of history. To the contrary, Marx asserts, for behind its veil of ideology, capitalism suffers manifest unfreedom, inequality, and exploitation. Ideology creates false consciousness, where the true workings of these processes are hidden to the rest of us. Thereby, the masses become passively receptive to the ruling ideas of an epoch. Paraphrasing Marx's famous formulation in Capital: "they do not know it, but they are doing it."

The epistemological assumptions contained herein are significant. Marx maintains that ideology will disappear once the proletarian revolution has abolished the classes and the struggle between them. The new, revolutionary reality will be fully transparent, for there will be no contradictions to smooth over and naturalize:

Let us now picture ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined

labour power of the community . . . The social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but to distribution.\(^{37}\)

The notion that reality ultimately will become immediate and transparent is central to Marx's vision, one that places him, if not squarely, with at least one foot firmly in the current of Enlightenment modernism. Ultimately, for the Marxist revolutionary, there are correct and incorrect representations of reality. We must therefore consider the possibility that the entirety of the "ideological superstructure"—manifestations cultural, political, religious, legal, etc.—are farcical, essentially tools in hands of the ruling class without any existential value or reality.

It is with this hunch that mid-20th century phenomenon of "critical theory" approached the phenomena of contemporary culture. The rise of "mass culture" in historically unprecedented terms meant that the conduits for ideology had multiplied exponentially. The advanced, American-style ideology quite impressed the old-world dialecticians Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who, as exiles in Los Angeles during the 1940s, pioneered critique of what they termed the "culture industry." That *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was written under the decadent Southern California sun is evidenced, perhaps, in the contrarian pessimism of the authors' perspective. Within the "iron system" which "impresses the same stamp on everything," the flourishing of humanity (and all the progressive promises of the Enlightenment) demand that everything extant must be negated.\(^{38}\) Capitalism had become entrenched to the point where critique was not only suppressed easily, but appropriated into an ever-expansive totality. The extent of domination drove Adorno to claim that "the whole is the untrue."\(^{39}\)

From this perspective, the theorists of the "Frankfurt School" offered innovative expressions to the changing forms and functions of both theory and ideology. As the


\(^{38}\)Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), p. 120.

revolutionary vitality of the 1910s and 20s became an increasingly distant memory, the new
tasks of critical theory were perceived a decade later by Herbert Marcuse:

If the proletariat no longer acts as the revolutionary class . . . it no longer furnishes
the "material weapons" for philosophy. The situation thus reverts: repelled by
reality, Reason and Freedom become again the concern of philosophy. The
"essence of man," his "total liberation" is experienced [only] in thought. Theory . . .
again not only anticipates political practice, runs ahead of it, but also upholds the
objectives of liberation in the face of a failing practice. In this function, theory
becomes again ideology—not as false consciousness, but as a conscious distance
and dissociation from, even opposition to, the repressive reality. And by the same
token, it becomes a political factor of utmost significance.40

Evidencing an expanded understanding of ideology, Marcuse acknowledges a potential
collaboration between critical theory and ideology. Echoing Lenin, who called for the
formation of a proletarian ideology to counteract capitalist domination, Marcuse here
proposes a critical edge to ideology to which we will later have recourse. Here, ideology
can become a necessary, positive tool for political struggle. In the climate of bourgeois
domination and working-class passivity, distance, too, becomes necessary for any critical
theory. As Marcuse sees it, theoretical detachment is the only way to keep progressive
ideals alive when they are absent in practice.

Yet, the notion of false consciousness is far from discarded in the Frankfurt
critique. Marcuse, for one, makes a rigid discrimination between true and false forms of
consciousness. "True" consciousness is "represented by correct theory, which transcends
the form of the production process in the direction of its content," while false
consciousness "remains on this side of such transcendence and considers the historical
form of the production process to be eternally valid."41 For their part, Horkheimer and
Adorno significantly update Marx and Engels' account of the ideology which creates false
consciousness. More than a drape in the epoch of mass culture, ideology becomes a
horrifying demiurge: it is able to impress the same stamp on everything, obliterating any
resistant details. In their words, ideology enacts a "striking unity of microcosm and

40Herbert Marcuse, Soviet Marxism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 106, quoted in David Held,
41Herbert Marcuse, Negations (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 84.
macrocosm [which] presents men with a model of their culture: the false identity of the general and the particular." Mass culture displays an unprecedented power: "Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part."42 In such a setting, dominant ideology has intensified and extended its reach. Mass marketing and consumption means that "The socially conditioned false consciousness of today is no longer objective spirit; it is not . . . crystallized blindly and anonymously out of the social process, but rather is tailored scientifically to fit the society."43 As postulated by Marx and Engels, the "expression" of the material base into the ideological superstructure takes the form of an "objective," rather mechanistic, "natural" law. In mass culture and the consumerism it produces, ideology becomes far more dynamic than a mere "reflection" of productive forces. A self-interested and replicating organism, contemporary ideology is expert in "classifying, organizing, and labeling consumers. Something is provided for all so that none may escape."44

As a result, ideology's transformation and extension create profound implications for individuality—what we will later call authenticity. Horkheimer and Adorno argue vehemently that the free individual is singing its swan song in the inpenetrable fog of consumerist ideology. To their mind, the culture industry enacts a cruel inversion in the face of resistance to its norms, where deviations are transformed into calculated mutations which further bolster the credibility of the system. Indeed, the system's powers of appropriation are seemingly infinite. Individuality is actually transformed into a resource for the forces of capital and homogenization:

In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned. Pseudo individuality is rife: from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality. What is individual is no more than the generality's power to stamp the accidental detail so firmly that it is accepted

42Dialectic of Enlightenment, op. cit., pp. 120-21.
44Dialectic of Enlightenment, op. cit., p. 123.
... The peculiarity of the self is a monopoly commodity determined by society ... individuals have ceased to be themselves and are now merely centers where the generals tendencies meet.\textsuperscript{45}

No doubt the appropriation of rebellion proceeds apace. Where Horkheimer and Adorno point to the filmmaker Orson Welles, the decades following the 1940s offer innumerable examples of the commodification of individuality. From James Dean to River Phoenix, Elvis Presley to the Sex Pistols, Chuck Berry to Ice-T, Richard Pryor to Chris Rock, through the bourgeoisification of revolutionary painters the likes of Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso, and Andy Warhol, rebellion has become a safe, bankable theme. When "extreme" becomes a marketing niche, we have good reason to worry about the omnipotent appropriative powers of "the system" as portrayed by the Frankfurt theorists.

Very importantly, critical theory offers a method for counteracting these machinations, which it terms "immanent critique." Focusing on the disjunction between theory and practice, this form of ideology critique aims to evaluate present reality using the dominant ideology's own standards. This is criticism from the inside; instead of referring to transcendent values which the position being criticized has failed to invoke, the immanent critic examines whether the system's already-posed ideals are being actuated. As Horkheimer phrases it,

If subjected to such an analysis, the social agencies most representative of the present pattern of society will disclose a pervasive discrepancy between what they actually are and the values they accept. To take an example, the media of public communication, radio, press, and film, constantly profess their adherence to the individual's ultimate value and his inalienable freedom, but they operate in such a way that they tend to forswear such values by fettering the individuals to prescribed attitudes, thoughts, and buying habits. The ambivalent relation between prevailing values and the social context forces the categories of social theory to become critical and thus to reflect the actual rift between the social reality and the values it posits.\textsuperscript{46}

Critical theorists see their form of ideology critique in a profoundly negative sense. This "negation is double-edged--a negation of the absolute claims of prevailing ideology and of the brash claims of reality." Yet this struggle against the false syntheses of the capitalist

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., pp. 154-5.

dialectic contains a strong redemptive impulse. "We are driven," Horkheimer states, "to attempt to salvage relative truths from the wreckage of false unities." There is no mistaking, however, that this activity is fundamentally revolutionary, not reformist.

Much of critical theory takes immanent criticism a step farther. Not only are bourgeois claims to propagate justice, freedom, and equality shown to fall short of reality. Immanent critique is also able to see these ideals becoming their opposites: "Fair exchange into a deepening of social injustice; a free economy into the domination of monopolies; productive labour into the strengthening of relations which hinder production; the maintenance of society's life into the impoverishment of the people's." In such a climate, the whole becomes the untrue, and the current manifestation of reality must be rejected in its entirety. Only a revolutionary politics can fill this breach, critical theorists contend. As Marcuse phrased it, "such world cannot be change piecemeal, but only through its destruction." Theory, for its part, can help people wake up, to see clearly the contradictions pervading the whole which ideology works so hard to conceal. The means to transfer this critical edge to popular consciousness, however, is simply not addressed by the Frankfurt theorists.

Marcuse, too, sees the ideals of the dominant ideology represented as their opposites in reality under capitalism. His One Dimensional Man and Negations are sustained broadsides on the thoroughgoing false consciousness created by bourgeois civilization. In "The Affirmative Character of Culture," an essay in the latter work, Marcuse contrasts the meaning of culture in the Bourgeois and Ancient eras, claiming that bourgeois capitalism has successfully integrated the loftiest of ideals--freedom, beauty, happiness--into a reality which consistently denies them. Plato and Aristotle, as we remember, reserve the pursuit of the good life for those who are free from toil. The rest--women, slaves, mechanics, merchants--are forever strapped to the realm of reproduction,

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necessity, and unfreedom. For the Ancients, beauty, freedom, happiness, and virtue were the exclusive purview of the few, those with leisure.

The bourgeois epoch turns this notion of "culture" for the few on its head, as it were. Happiness and virtue become universally valid; the intellectual and spiritual realms lose their independence and exclusivity, and instead are inserted into material existence. Marcuse observes that the bourgeois individual's relations to God, beauty, goodness, and truth become immediate, and thus democratized: "As abstract beings, all men are supposed to participate equally in these values." Mass culture is by nature everywhere, and becoming increasingly aestheticized, it bears values previously reserved for a realm beyond. Now, "By their very nature the truth of a philosophical judgment, the goodness of a moral action, and the beauty of a work of art should appeal to everyone, relate to everyone, be binding upon everyone." Charles Taylor has called this "affirmation of everyday life" one of the most influential and widespread notions of the modern period.

The catch, Marcuse notes, is that these values are to be realized within; they are the stuff of the soul, where "freedom, goodness, and beauty become spiritual qualities." Marcuse reminds us that these values--freedom, fulfillment, happiness--are potentially revolutionary, for they point in the direction of transcending the present order. In response, bourgeois capitalism enacts the most brilliant of ruses, "exalt[ing] the individual without freeing him from his factual debasement." In this way, bourgeois culture affirms the present state of affairs--permeated by exploitation, servitude, and want--by injecting a resigned, impotent idealism into the hearts of all. "To the need of the isolated individual it responds with general humanity, to bodily misery with the beauty of the soul, to external bondage with internal freedom, to brutal egoism with the duty of the realm of virtue." As such, affirmative culture is the ultimate bulwark against revolution.

50Ibid., p. 94.
52Marcuse, Negations, op. cit., p. 103.
53Ibid.
54Ibid., p. 98.
Marcuse, like Horkheimer and Adorno, emphasizes the omnipresence of false consciousness. In a mass culture that is affirmative and consumption-oriented,

The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe.\(^5\)

This existence is so shot-through with ideology-as-false-consciousness that "Men can feel themselves happy even without being so at all." He admits that "this illusion has a real effect, producing satisfaction."\(^6\) Even though this might be the greatest sense of satisfaction that we have ever known, part of life "much better than before," Marcuse denies its legitimacy.

Marcuse's rigid demarcation between "appearance" and "essence," between what is the product of ideology and what corresponds to the "analyzable structure" of "the totality" serves as a utter condemnation of life under capitalism. Here Marcuse is following his precursor Georg Lukács, who, in accordance with Marx's yet unpublished Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, phrased his postulations of ideology in terms of estrangement and reification. In Lukács' highly influential History and Class Consciousness, the commodity relation is identified as "the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects." As Marx argued in Capital, we suffer from "commodity fetishism" and "reification" when relations between people take on the character of relations between things. When we fail to recognize that the result of our labor, an object, is fundamentally a social product, we suffer the enchanting spell of the commodity structure. Thereby, we lend the commodity a "phantom objectivity": because it claims a certain price in the market, we tend to think that it is the object itself that bears value. In truth, the

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\(^6\)Negations, op. cit., pp. 121-22.
commodity is the result of a specific mode of production with corresponding social relations; its value is a direct result of labor power, employed under a specific regime, where the worker’s labor becomes the owner’s property and is incarnated in the worth of good. If we do not see that a commodity’s value is fundamentally a social relation, we become commodity fetishists within a thoroughly reified existence, what Lukács terms "second nature."

Lukács emphasizes the totality of the commodity relation: “At this stage in the history of mankind there is no problem that does not ultimately lead back to that question and there is no solution that could not be found in the solution to the riddle of the commodity-structure.”57 What distinguishes Marxist from bourgeois thought is not the primacy given to economic forces, Lukács contends, but the “all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts.”58 As such, the totality of the commodity structure produces a level of reification, “second nature,” demanding “the subjugation of men’s consciousness to the forms in which this reification finds expression.”59 Reification has both “objective” as well as “subjective” manifestations. Objectively, the commodity is created, adhering to its own laws emitting “invisible forces that generate their own power.” For human subjects, reification's toll is devastating: “a man’s activity becomes estranged from himself, it turns into a commodity which, subject to the non-human objectivity of the natural laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer article.”60 As human labor gets turned into a commodity, qualitative activity is abstracted into quantity; when sold on the market, the worker's labor becomes independent and alien. Dominating all existence, the totality of the commodity structure alienates humans from their very selves, what Marx called the "life-activity" of the "species-being."61

58Ibid., p. 27.
59Ibid., p. 86.
60Ibid., p. 87.
61See the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, in Tucker, op. cit.
The purpose of critical theory, of course, is to lay these reified relations bare, to penetrate to the real, essential workings of the process which produce false consciousness. Lukács' hope is that the proletariat will transform itself from a "class-in-itself" (an sich) existing as an object of capitalist processes, to a "class-for-itself" (für sich), the conscious, self-aware being of the revolutionary program discussed by Marx in *On the Jewish Question*. Lukács contends this will effect a profound epistemological transformation:

Above all the worker can only become conscious of his existence in society when he becomes aware of himself as a commodity. As we have seen, his immediate existence integrates him as a pure, naked object into the production process. Once this immediacy turns out to be the consequence of a multiplicity of mediations, once it becomes evident how much it presupposes, then the fetishistic forms of the commodity system begin to dissolve: in the commodity the worker recognizes himself and his own relations with capital.62

Given the ubiquitous and omnipotent nature of ideology, we should certainly be skeptical of any suggestion that revolution of such magnitude could be instantaneous. Theory, thus, has a lot of work to do. Undoubtedly, Lukács and the Frankfurters reserve quite important tasks for their theory: in Marcuse's words, "aiming at overcoming this distortion, [it] has the task of moving beyond appearance to essence and explicating its content as it appears to true consciousness."63 Theory, subjected to a temporarily triumphant bourgeois capitalism, must anticipate political practice, run ahead of it, upholding the ideals of liberation in the face of a deficient reality. As such, theory is the sole bearer of the torch of a progressive humanity. All other ideals—those propagated in the justice system, religion, education, the family—have been debased into pure hypocrisies which fool the masses into accepting, even enjoying the status quo.

Yet what should theory's tactics for creating "true consciousness" be? Besides advocating the correct application of scientific Marxian analysis, we are spared these details. Are legions of Marxian missionaries to blanket the nation, "consciousness-raising" the plebeians out of their ideological stupor? Or is a revolutionary avant-garde to seize the

state and the all the means of ideological production (including the entire culture industry), transforming popular consciousness from the top down? Upon waking from such fantastic dreams, the revolution demanded by critical theory has a long way to go, indeed. Perhaps we should question the presumption that revolution must be total. Lukács and the Frankfurt theorists require a revolution not only material, i.e., economic, but epistemological. For Adorno, the ubiquitous extension of ideology, reducing every particular to the logic of the whole, means that the "whole is the untrue." Marcuse likewise states that "such world cannot be changed piecemeal, but only through its destruction."64 The affirmative character of culture means that the one-time progressive ideals of freedom and happiness are shorn of their transformative power. Once ideology conquers, in the form of false consciousness, reification, and second-nature, theory remains as the only repository of true consciousness and, ultimately, the only hope of transcending the current order.

Has ideology so completely vitiated the fulfillment we feel in life under capitalism? Is all happiness illusory in our current state? According to Marcuse, the "miracle of reification," makes us "happy without being so at all."65 This notion strikes me as epistemologically and politically suspect. Epistemologically, it displays one of the profound paradoxes of (early) Marxian materialism. While condemning "the sheer estrangement of all the senses" caused by private property, Marx explains how our bodily senses develop in direct proportion to their reception of the material world. As he puts it, "For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses--the practical senses (will, love, etc.)--in a word, human sense... comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of humanized nature. The forming of the five senses is a labor of humanized nature,... a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present."66 In this radically materialist

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64Ibid., p. 99.
65Ibid., p. 122.
and constructivist account, Marx says that both "direct organs . . . [and] social organs develop in the form of society."67 We can only have sensed what there is to sense, and our body grows only in response to those stimuli. Just as "the care-burdened man in need has no sense for the finest play; the dealer in minerals sees only mercantile value but not the beauty and the unique nature of the mineral."68 Regardless of the regime under which we live, we are profoundly products of our material surroundings.

Yet at the same time, Marx is able to claim that the institution of private property has thoroughly corrupted all of our senses; that they are completely unlike their future manifestation under a different mode of production and property regime. Towing the Frankfurt theorists in his wake, Marx condemns this reality as profoundly illusory. The utopian character of revolutionary Marxism demands the condemnation of all there is. By claiming that life enjoys an ideal incarnation on another post-revolutionary plane of existence, critical theory displays a curious idealism within its oft-proclaimed materialism. Marxian critical theory claims all that we have felt, seen, smelled, tasted, and touched has been at the behest of the particular shape of the material world. Where, then, do we get the power to imagine their "real" (but quite otherworldly) manifestations? Indeed, how do we radically-constructed beings develop these criteria to discern fraudulence from reality, appearance from essence? I have serious doubts about this idealist face of critical theory. How can we say that there is an altogether other happiness in the realm beyond, when the only happiness we have known has risen out of actual activity in the here and now? As Walter Benjamin put it, "Our image of happiness is thoroughly colored by the time to which the course of our own existence has assigned us. The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed."69

67Ibid., p. 107.
68Ibid., p. 109.
So I press this epistemological point against revolutionary Marxists: How can we say that all that we have known is false? There is no doubt that immanent critique is a potentially revolutionary tool in the sharpened minds of people. To criticize current reality with an eye to our ideals is the very definition of self-interpretation, the ability reserved for *zoon logon echon*, we animals who possess reasoned speech. But once we drain all legitimacy from current instantiations of our ideals, what leverage can be marshaled by immanent critique? Pure ideals rarely resonate, for they are the fleeting stuff of fantasy. Rather, it is only those ideals which *refer to experience* which are alive, paired in a dialectical tussle with actual, material conditions.

Contrary to the Frankfurt diagnosis, I contend that affirmative culture can regain its progressive potential. Its revolutionary force lies precisely in our critical ability to exploit the gap between ideality and actuality. By believing that our ideals can become at least partially realized in the here and now, we animate the transformation of the status quo. But what is to be done when under consumer capitalism, critical theorists find ideals perverted to the point where they turn into their opposites? In such a forsaken climate, how is an epistemological revolution germinated? Where, without having breathed it in, is happiness to find its spirit and critical wherewithal? Drowned in reification, the "real meaning" of fulfillment, justice, and freedom have not a foothold in the real world, and recede into the unpalpable realm of fantasy. If we have no concept of the real to which to refer, how can we know that an ideal is not living up to its "real meaning"? In short, we cannot. It is the palpability of ideals that supplies human activity with transformative force.

On a political level, such an epistemology breeds hopelessness, if not anti-politics. Positive political action must be fueled on people's experience, with what they have known and felt, lost and yearned for. In altering the world (as politics always aims to do), our knowing who we want to be must necessarily refer to who we are and who we have been. To refuse legitimacy to all that *is*—to insist that all happiness, fulfillment, and freedom under capitalism is illusory—is defeatist idealism, deprecatory of worldly life. However
such disengaged spectatorship might dress itself up in revolutionary, materialist colors, it is thoroughly nihilistic and ironically theological in its total refusal of this earthly plane of existence.

**Cultural Studies, Ideology, and Myth**

Let us revisit, for a moment, Rorty's condemnation of what he sees as the pseudo-revolutionary spectatorship of the cultural Left:

Recent attempts to subvert social institutions by problematizing concepts have produced a few very good books. They have also produced many thousands of books which represent scholastic philosophizing at its worst. The authors of these purportedly "subversive" books honestly believe that they are serving human liberty. But it is almost impossible to clamber back down from their books to a level of abstraction on which one might discuss the merits of a law, a treaty, a candidate, or a political strategy. Even though what these authors "theorize" is often something very concrete and near at hand—a current TV show, a media celebrity, a recent scandal—they offer the most abstract and barren explanations imaginable. These futile attempts to philosophize one's way into political relevance are a symptom of what happens when a Left retreats from activism and adopts a spectatorial approach to the problems of its country. Disengagement from practice produces theoretical hallucinations.\(^70\)

The activity which Rorty calls "problematizing" (using the current theoretical vernacular) is the latest incarnation taken by the form of ideology critique which finds its formative practitioners in the Frankfurt School, and its original inspiration in Marx and Engels' postulations on ideology. In this section I want to briefly review the major movements within the field of "cultural studies." By doing so, we will also be able to trace the evolution of the concept of ideology, for as one observer notes, "ideology is without doubt the central concept in cultural studies."\(^71\)

In addition, I want to be able to say something about the value of this form of spectatorship. What good is such an intricate theoretical understanding of the world? In each of its American, English, and Australian variants, cultural studies attempts a rigorous theoretical understanding of culture--its structures, mechanisms, and meaning. I have little


doubt that this critical edge applied to the status quo is a healthy impulse. Yet, we will find that critical theory and cultural studies fall far short from activating the type of epistemological revolution they advocate.

Gradually, we will be able to discern the "neutralization" of Marx and Engels' original conception of "negative" ideology. In the hands of cultural studies, ideology comes to mean not the illusory representations serving the ruling class but the general process of production of meaning within society. With such a transformation, the willingness and ability of theorists to make epistemological truth-claims on behalf of any worldview diminishes dramatically. This updated view of ideology, rather than functioning on an axis of truth/falsity, instead makes judgements according to whether a certain meaning is in the service of dominant or oppositional forces. As a result, the cultural studies concept of ideology fails to resemble Marx and Engels' in substantial ways. Within cultural studies, one does not ask if a representation of reality is true or false; rather, the relevant question becomes where and how power which supports the hegemonic class/race/gender is being exercised, and where and how resistance to this dominance is being formulated.

As we will see, when meaning and truth become direct functions of power, theory loses much of its normative punch and becomes spectatorial, "scientific" and "objective"--in this case entrusted with tracing power's manifestations in all quarters. This reluctance to judge the legitimacy of representations signals an epistemological shift to perspectivism which significantly expands the scope of ideology. No more considered as the false representations serving dominant interests, ideology comes to signify meaning in the service of power--both of dominant and dominated groups. Below, we will visit some of the major contributors to this reorientation of ideology critique under the rubric of cultural studies. Ultimately, I will try to re-energize and vindicate ideology as "positive," i.e., as a

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72I borrow the concept of "neutralization" from John Thompson, Ideology and Modern Culture (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1990). It is this ability to see ideology as a necessary, irreducible phenomenon which we will be developing in Chapter Three.
valuable tool epistemological and political. But first we will need to see how the concept of ideology becomes "neutralized" within the sphere of cultural studies. As ideology critique becomes generalized to mean cultural critique, it is no surprise that the definition of ideology loosens up, widening to signify the production and promotion of all meaning.

The impetus for the explosion of British cultural studies in the 1960s was a sweeping redefinition of the word "culture." The two thinkers to which the origin of cultural studies is usually attributed, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart,73 both arose out of English Literature departments where culture had long been defined narrowly and exclusively, i.e., as a standard of excellence. "Culture" was the best that a society or nation had written, painted, sung, sculpted, etc. This is what has come to be known as "high culture," not unlike the realm the ancient Greeks reserved for those few who were liberated from material toil. Williams was to appropriate a new meaning for "culture" from anthropology, greatly widening and democratizing the concept, redefining it to mean "a particular way of life whether of a people, a period or group."74 Rebuking the orthodoxy of Third-International Marxism, Williams and Hoggart studied texts of English working-class life such as group singing, pigeon fancying, holiday customs, and pub life in unprecedented fashion. In this innovative expansion of the school of British criticism associated with F.R. Leavis, cultural forms previously considered unworthy of scholarly attention would newly come under analysis.

In the wake of Williams' and Hoggart's pioneering efforts, cultural studies turned to the Continent to innovate its enterprise. What was missing, in the words of one commentator, was "a method that could more appropriately analyse the ways in which such cultural forms and practices produced their social, not merely their aesthetic, meanings and pleasures."75 In other words, despite its Marxist sympathies, early cultural studies had no

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recourse to a theoretical conception of the whole which would allow comprehensive understanding of each constitutive part. Unlike the orthodox Marxists of the period, cultural theorists took culture seriously, i.e., they recognized that it was more independent and substantial than a mere mechanical reflection of the economic base. A creature of its time, cultural studies embraced structuralism. Structuralism has assumed multiple incarnations in numerous fields; here we can simplify it to mean a fundamental focus on "the systems, the sets of relationships, the formal structures that frame and enable the production of meaning." Thus the scope of culture studies radically expanded: the popular songs and pub customs of Williams' world were to be understood in terms of their place within the totality. In addition, the 1960s spawned mass cultural forms on an unprecedented scale; the unique parochialism of working-class subcultures was gradually and resoundingly being swamped by a centralized consumer culture propagated from afar.

Enjoying tremendous momentum thanks to Claude Levi-Strauss' anthropological analyses of the structurally-dictated consciousness of "primitive" cultures, structuralism took a linguistic turn in the late 1960s, led by Frenchman Roland Barthes and his early 20th-century precursor Ferdinand de Saussure. A "semiological" cultural studies would aspire to read all signs produced in culture, especially those propagated through modern mass media. In his Course in General Linguistics, Saussure called for a "science which would study the life of signs within society." This science, termed semiology, "would teach us what signs consist of, what laws govern them." The underlying presumptions were several. First, Saussure contended that meaning was not a function of individual words corresponding to concepts, but rather of system of differences working at the level of the sentence. Thus, a word's meaning is dependent on its specific context. Second, semiologists recognized that language was profoundly more powerful than a simple tool for

76 Lukács' insistence on totality would have supplied such a notion; however, it is notable that the important works of unorthodox Marxists such as Lukács, Benjamin, Goldmann, and Sartre were not available in English until the 1960s.
77 Turner, op. cit., p. 12.
the expression of the willful agent. Semioticians reject a "designative" philosophy of language, which claims that words innocently name the things of the world, standing in for concepts whose reality is beyond that of the sentence. In contrast, language is seen here as "expressive," as constitutive of concepts rather than representative of them.\(^79\) To semioticians (and as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, to hermeneuticists and pragmatists as well), language is an irreducible, inescapable milieu which functions "to organize, to construct, indeed to provide us with our only access to, reality."\(^80\)

Barthes' germinal work of semiotic cultural studies puts these concepts to work in unprecedented fashion. As he explains, his *Mythologies* is a two-fold enterprise:

on one hand, an ideological critique bearing on the language of so-called mass culture; on the other, a first attempt to analyze semiotically the mechanics of this language... [for] by treating 'collective representations' as sign-systems, one might hope to go further than the pious show of unmasking them and account *in detail* for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature.\(^81\)

Barthes calls myth "a type of speech"; it is a "mode of signification, a form."\(^82\) Myth works as a "second-order" semiotic system: on top of the signs that make up everyday speech, it becomes a "meta-language" which mediates our interaction with mere, designative language. Unlike his later intricate, surgical operations like *SZ*, *Mythologies* muses rather unsystematically on pop culture from professional wrestling to children's toys and Einstein's brain. In the book's theoretical chapter, Barthes practices ideology critique on a magazine cover he is offered at the barber shop:

A young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.\(^83\)

\(^79\) These are Charles Taylor's terms; see *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1995), especially chapters 4 and 6.
\(^80\) Turner, op. cit., p. 13.
\(^82\) Ibid., p. 109.
\(^83\) Ibid., p. 116.
This image, undoubtedly supporting dominant interests, is noteworthy to Barthes because of the clarity with which meaning is affixed to the signs on display. If meaning attaches itself in a regularized, systematic fashion to specific signs, "myth" is created. Importantly, Barthes' use of the term "myth" is not a condemnation of falsity; rather, myth is simply the form by which the world is explained to us. There is no mistaking Barthes' Marxism, however. He leaves little doubt that myth overwhelmingly supports the dominant power of the bourgeoisie.

During the 1970s and 80s Barthesian semiology was complemented with an important strand of structural Marxist theory which would further animate cultural theory: Louis Althusser's revision of Marxian epistemology and redefinition of ideology. Althusserian structuralism is important in our context because it is a major event in the transformation of ideology from Marx and Engels' "negative" conception to a more "neutralist" view. This is not to say that he entirely discards the notion of negative ideology. His conception of "ideological state apparatuses" (ISAs) might be seen as simply an expansion of Marx and Engels' view that ideology is the system of representation which smooths the contradictions of capitalism and serves its ruling class. But what Althusser terms ISAs, such as the school, the church, the family, the media, culture, and even trade-unions, do more than create a veil of deception. All serve a crucial epistemological function: they teach a mode of competency, a method to relate to the world. Evincing his strong commitment to the Marxist Weltanschauung, Althusser contends that such "know-how" is cast in a particular way:

... in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'. All the agents of production, exploitation and repression, not to speak of the 'professionals of ideology' (Marx), must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'—the tasks of the exploited (the proletarians), of the exploiters (the capitalists), of the exploiters' auxiliaries (the managers), or of the high priests of the ruling ideology (its 'functionaries'), etc.84

Importantly, Althusser considers ideology an ineliminable secretion of every society, "an organic part of every social totality." Signifying a significant shift in Marxian epistemology, he insists that we "cannot conceive that even a communist society could ever do without ideology." Ruling ideology is still ideology, even when propagated by a government of the workers.

In a process concurrent with this reformulation of ideology, the academic Left in France and Britain shifted allegiance from a modernist, Marxist, representationalist epistemology to a post-modern, constructivist, language-based one. A central premise of semiology, we will remember, is Saussure's conviction that language--despite its ubiquity and near omnipotence--only provided a, rather than the access to the world "out there." In other words, perfect representation of reality is impossible; language may be a tool for this representation, but it is also constitutive of reality in a way that can never achieve perfect correspondence. Language may be our best access to the real, but as such it is both an imperfect and irreducible medium. Likewise, Althusser insists that ideology is a necessary medium for obtaining access to reality, an access, crucially, which can never be completely transparent and immediate. As he famously states, "It is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that men 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there." In this way, Althusser radically obfuscates Marx's dualist epistemology, which maintains that, as one critic states, "reality is 'outside the head' and truth consists in getting our mental transcriptions to correspond with this reality." Instead of advancing such representationalist notions, Althusser charges ideology with providing access to reality in a relationship that is irreducible. Borrowing psychoanalytic diction from his contemporary Jacques Lacan, Althusser invokes the terms "Imaginary" and "Real" to convey his

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86 Ibid., emphasis in original.
87 Ibid., p. 164.
epistemological renovation. Thus, "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." Althusser is contending that the imaginary is a necessary function of the real; that there is no direct access to the real which does not also partake of the imaginary. The "real," for Althusser, is the mode of production, which must reproduce itself through the relations of production and the "legal-political and ideological superstructure."

But the real never presents itself in unadulterated immediacy. Fredric Jameson nicely illustrates this epistemology while discussing the phenomenon of the market:

The ideology of the market is unfortunately not some supplementary ideational or representational luxury or embellishment that can be removed from the economic problem and then sent over to some cultural or superstructural morgue, to be dissected by specialists over there. It is somehow generated by the thing itself, as its objectively necessary afterimage; somehow both dimensions [ideology and reality] must be registered together, in their identity as well as their difference. They are . . . semiautonomous; which means . . . that they are not really autonomous or independent from each other, but they are not really at one with each other, either.

Jameson's understanding of ideology is clearly Althusserian. In this view, ideology is an ineradicable element of reality. Indeed, Althusser contends that "man is an ideological animal by nature."

In a move that we will see displayed by other purveyors of a more "neutral" conception of ideology, Althusser equates ideology with common sense. In his formulation, ideology provides ontological grounding: it is what makes the elements of our everyday world obvious. Crucially, ideology supplies the notion that we are discrete subjects, with a certain position in the world. As he phrases it, "all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects."

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94Ibid.
"elemental effect" is to create "the 'obviousness' that you and I are subjects." Althusser calls this effect "hailing" and "interpellation," recognizing that such action occurs in language, and is subject to a social structure beholden, in turn, to the mode of production. Ideology supplies the organization for our daily lives, what Althusser terms our "lived relations" with the "real," i.e., the economic infrastructure.

Even though Althusser calls humans ideological animals, he is emphatic in establishing a realm separate from ideology. For Althusser, being a Marxist means being a scientist, and throughout his work he asserts that theory and science are autonomous, self-regulating, and non-ideological. When one is within scientific (i.e., theoretical) discourse, one is outside ideology. Importantly, it is only through scientific theory that we can know the whole. Althusser's holy grail is the solution to the mystery of causality: "By means of what concept, or what set of concepts, is it possible to think the determination of the elements of a structure, and the structural relations between those elements, and all the effects of those relations, by the effectivity of that structure?" What he calls "Marx's immense theoretical revolution" is the notion that causality is neither mechanical nor "expressive"--as Cartesians and Hegelians contend, respectively. Rather, causality is "complex" and multi-dimensional, to be traced to a demiurgical and motive force behind all appearance. This is "structural causality," i.e., "the determination of the phenomena of a given region by the structure of that region." For Althusser, this is what is meant by "Darstellung," the term Marx uses to designate the effect of the base on the superstructure. Translatable as "representation" and "performance," Darstellung is described as "the key epistemological concept . . . whose object is precisely to designate the mode of presence of the structure in its effects, and therefore to designate structural causality itself."

95Ibid., p. 172.
96See Althusser's discourse on the "scientific revolution" of Marx's historical materialism in Reading Capital, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1970); for his comments on the autonomy of science, see especially pp. 51-69.
97Ibid., p. 186.
98Ibid.
99Ibid., p. 188.
This conceptualization structural causality—that "the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects"—is remarkable in its wide dimensional scope and strong claims to potency. In attempting to uncover the effect that the whole has on its parts, Althusser pushes the activity of theorizing to the extreme. Ultimately, scientific activity can produce, through its autonomy and objectivity, an entire knowledge of the totality. According to skeptics of many ilks, including Rorty, this is where structuralism goes all wrong. For there is little doubt that an intense structuralism such as Althusser's is subject to charges of functionalism, reductionism, and scientism. To claim that the structure "is nothing outside its effects" results in a non-falsifiable postulation: all relevant phenomena are reducible to effects of a system, as flexible as it is omnipresent, which transmorgifies in tandem with these phenomena. Such totalization seeks the abolition of contingency and ambiguity; no effect accidental nor oppositional is to escape the "concept" of the whole. Consisting precisely of its effects, the notion of structural causality explains nothing as it explains everything.

If interpretation is one of the central tasks of theory, traditional and critical, it seems to me that most of the work is still to be done, namely the hermeneutic engagement and reflection which would allow us to comment meaningfully about our surroundings. Althusser's is a fantastically abstract enterprise, a self-conscious meta-theory which claims to be inherently aware of its own mechanisms while being internally consistent and autonomous, serving as "its own criterion." As such, it makes little pretense to be relevant to everyday practice. Althusser's spectatorship is not replicable by many minds, and his normativism is, like the Marxists of the Frankfurt School, limited to an underarticulated leitmotif whispering prophesies of total revolution.

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100 Ibid., p. 189.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid., p. 59.
Althusser's epistemological revision\textsuperscript{103} and aspirations to analytical objectivity were reproduced in the next wave of cultural studies, which found substantial theoretical guidance in the postulations of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci on hegemony. Continuing to follow Althusser and Barthes, these analysts present ideology as the inescapable milieu where meaning is affixed to signifiers. Heavily steeped in semiotics, this formulation sees ideology working primarily at the level of connotation, creating a "reality effect" which enables common sense, "naturalizing" certain relations and assumptions. As Stuart Hall phrases it, ideology provides "maps of meaning," which "cover the face of social life and render it classifiable, intelligible, meaningful."\textsuperscript{104} Challenging the strong truth-claims made by Marx and Engels' imputations of false consciousness, the hegemony current within cultural studies accepts Althusser's assertion that epistemologically, we cannot do without ideology.

Yet, these theorists contend, ideology is a realm of activity, even competition. Expanding on Williams' definition of culture as a "way of life," hegemony theorists insist on the political nature of their enterprise. Distinguishing themselves from both cultural studies' tradition and mechanical Marxist orthodoxy, they conceive culture "not as an organic expression of a community, nor as an autonomous sphere of aesthetic forms, but as a contested and conflictual set of practices of representation bound up with the processes of formation and re-formation of social groups."\textsuperscript{105} A hegemony-oriented cultural studies gains its political character from studying this "arena of consent and resistance," for this is where power is created, exerted, and subverted.\textsuperscript{106} As another commentator explains it, "The point of doing this is not only academic—that is, as an attempt to understand a process

\textsuperscript{103}Of course, this is not at all Althusser's revision, who is simply the messenger who first articulated this notion to the province of Marxism. It is Nietzsche, of course, who deserves our greater oblations. It is also clear that Althusser has been exposed to existential phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

\textsuperscript{104}Hall, Stuart, "Culture, the Media, and the 'Ideological Effect'," quoted in Dick Hebdige, "From Culture to Hegemony" in During, ed., op. cit., p. 364.

\textsuperscript{105}John Frow and Meaghan Morris, in Storey, op. cit., p. 2.

or practice--it is also political, to examine the power relations that constitute this form of everyday life and thus to reveal the configuration of interests its construction serves.\textsuperscript{107}

Scribbling away in prison under Mussolini, Gramsci struggled to account for Italians' willful relinquishment of their liberties to fascism. Some fifty years later, hegemony theorists within cultural studies likewise strove to understand the willing consent of the popular classes enjoyed by the dominant ideology. By the mid-1980s, Althusser's formulation was seen as too structural and deterministic; "interpellated" by the structure, the Althusserian agent is reduced to a passive resident in a prescribed "subject position."

Hegemony theorists, in contrast, focus on the active process of ideological struggle, and frequently document "subcultures" of resistance to dominant modes of signification. They contend that ideological power is always contested: instead of being the exclusive weapon of the dominant class, meanings and representations which originally serve ruling interests are frequently contested by popular appropriation and reformulation. Thus, hegemony theorists illuminated how youth movements such as the Mods or Punks of the 1960s and 70s, and even mainstream television viewers, actively participate in creating their own use-value for the products of mass culture.

Underlying this conviction is a recognition of contingency and "polysemy" absent in the epistemology of classical Marxism. Hegemony theorists acknowledge that representations are never fully univocal or unequivocal, and frequently suffer not only from ambiguity but multiple meanings. The notion that a drape of false, negative ideology effortlessly envelops all proletarian consciousness was completely forsaken by the 1980s. Instead, cultural theorists focused on the \textit{competition} inherent in every struggle for ideological dominance. Ideology was seen as exercising "relative autonomy" from the class structures rising out of the relations of production. Hall states that as a result, "one could not read off the ideological position of a social group or individual from class position, but that one would have to take into account how the struggle over meaning was

\textsuperscript{107}Turner, op. cit., p. 6.
conducted." Whereas Marx and Engels' formulation emphasizes the one-way proffering of ideology from an active bourgeoisie to a passive proletariat, hegemony theorists insist that hegemony is not an omnipotent, monolithic, nor steady state. Coming in the form of cultural leadership rather than class domination, it is a "moving equilibrium," a negotiated affair where the masses must offer their active support to the dominant regime. As one commentator summarizes it, "In Gramsci's view, pop culture is a battleground upon which dominant views secure hegemony; further, it is a permanent battleground, the parameters of which are partly defined by economic conditions, but that specializes in political struggle expressed at an ideological representational level." By association, cultural theorists deem their activity as political. By studying the play of power in the form of the struggle of the forces of hegemony and opposition, the (self-justifying) reasoning goes, cultural studies is a fundamentally political enterprise.

By the late-1980s, the focus on popular resistance to dominant representations gained such intensity that some theorists threw into question the notion of a prevailing ideology altogether. In this "populist" current of cultural studies, the failures of, and resistance to dominant ideology enjoyed the attention formerly enjoyed by the (re)production of the status quo in earlier hegemony theories. One well-known exemplar went so far as to call television a "semiotic democracy" which allows viewers the chance to make what they might from the pleasures being offered therein. Such reorientation signaled a sea change in cultural studies' conceptualization of ideology. In the form of populist cultural studies, theorists extended to its logical extreme the animus for the entire field--the rejection of Marx and Engels' conception of ideology as too "top-down" and "mechanistic." Becoming increasingly ethnographical, populist cultural studies shone its analytical light on "the practice of everyday life," focusing on popular appropriation of

109 Hebdige, op. cit., p. 365.
110 Turner, op. cit., p. 194.
meaning and subversion of dominant interests. Contending that the populace "makes-over" cultural products, populist cultural studies has a decidedly celebratory tone, drawing attention to the many ways dominant ideology fails to achieve its goals. In this perspective, ideology gets obscured in the wings as the multiplicity of meaning and the agency of subjects stand prominently front and center.

This current has certainly found its detractors, who worry that the result has been "an uncritical celebration of mass-popular cultural consumption." We should, no doubt, condemn any blind affirmation of all use, where unequal power relations are ignored. While disapproval to such affirmative populism within the ranks has been strong, the uniqueness of populist cultural studies is a difference of degree, not kind. In a sense, it is the appropriate and logical culmination of the perspectivist epistemological revolution which has informed cultural studies all along. Rejecting a supreme, objective reality, cultural theorists have become increasingly reluctant to judge representations with standards of truth and falsity—to evaluate whether one group's view of the world conforms accurately with the way "it really is." Thus, ideology becomes the stuff of power rather than truth. Within a cultural studies so normatively disengaged, there is little wherewithal to resist might making right.

In concert with the rise of perspectivism, another trend of the cultural studies enterprise has matured within the recent populist variant: what Rorty condemns as "scientism." Indeed, there is little mistaking the intense scientistic tone of semiological cultural studies. This is not an activity which desires to proffer ideology or theory: instead, semiological cultural studies instructs us through the rather positivistic analytical categories of code, content, format, address, context, difference, value, synchrony, diachrony, metaphor, metonymy, narrative, discourse, embodiment, mediation, etc. As

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114 Thwaites et al., op. cit. Though the authors do an admirable job of streamlining their principles of analysis, it is difficult to ignore the ethos of scientism therein.
creatures of the postmodern era, they would deny any charges that their enterprise aims at totalization or a comprehensive knowledge map. Yet the will to understand in a "scientific" and "objective" manner drives contemporary cultural studies—the very same impulse which motivated the 20th-century social sciences now condemned as positivistic. This postmodern sensibility of cultural studies does not diffuse its scientistic intensity.

As a basic impulse, the motivation to understand structure and totality is surely healthy. It displays a drive to understand that must necessarily precede transformation. To be able to apply a critical gaze to our reality is essential for we humans, as deliberative, moral creatures. The more often we can pierce the self-serving cover story of those in power, the better. Additionally, the fact that comprehensive knowledge of the social world is impossible (a point with which cultural theorists would agree), means that we cannot wait to act until we have reached some advanced stage of understanding the whole. The struggle waged through ideology, if it isn’t to be repeatedly lost, must be conducted everyday.

To be sure, cultural studies has provided some important maps for the understanding of power and culture. The foremost purpose of such activity is analysis rather than advocacy. Yet, we must ask, at what cost does such analytical rigor exact the normativism which we earlier identified in both traditional and critical theory? Stuart Hall, one of the founders and luminaries of the cultural studies movement, contemplates this issue while reflecting on his career:

Cultural studies has to . . . mobilize everything that it can in terms of intellectual resources in order to understand what keeps making the lives we live, and the societies we live in, profoundly and deeply antihumane in their capacity to live with difference. Cultural studies' message is a message for academics and intellectuals but, fortunately, for many other people as well. In that sense, I have tried to hold together in my own intellectual life, on one hand, the conviction and passion and the devotion to objective interpretation, . . . to rigorous analysis and understanding, . . . and to the production of knowledge that we did not know

115John Frow and Meaghan Morris, e.g., claim that cultural studies "incorporate[s] in its object of study a critical account of its own motivating questions" and eschews all "dreams of producing an extensive knowledge map" or a "transcendental space" for theory. See "Australian Cultural Studies," in Storey, ed., op cit, p. 354.
before. But, on the other hand, I am convinced that no intellectual worth his or her salt, and no university that wants to hold up its head in the face of the twenty-first century, can afford to turn dispassionate eyes away from the problems of race and ethnicity that beset our world.\textsuperscript{116}

Certainly a normative tenor radiates through cultural studies. Yet like the critical theorists' not-so-subtle advocacy of total revolution, cultural studies' normativism is sadly underarticulated. Their impulse is unmistakably progressive: to scrutinize the machinations of symbolic power is to suggest that dominant power might be challenged. Yet the emphasis given to rigorous, objective analysis profoundly enervates cultural theorists' impulse to \textit{criticize} ideology--for the latter is being judged in terms of the objective power it marshals, not its accuracy nor righteousness. Such a lack of normativism, however, is in another way an important intervention on behalf of perspectivism. The epistemological and ontological notions behind perspectivism (that truth and being are irreducibly plural), and the political advocacy of toleration that should follow, are progressive ideas still far from achieving popular hegemony, and need all the help they can get.

Not to be discounted, cultural theorists who are university instructors are teaching some college students critical thinking, enabling them to problematize dominant representations and their own common sense. This is all good, but how political is it? Do we concur with Rorty that the self-proclaimed political character of cultural studies is fundamentally spectatorial? Having an object of study whose currency is power does not mean that one is engaged in the political power struggle. Given the complexity of cultural studies' analytical formulae, one wonders to whom they are supposed to appeal. To be sure, cultural studies' success within American, British, and Australian academia has meant that many university students have been exposed to their methods for criticizing popular culture. There is no doubt that giving students the tools and disposition to conduct ideology critique is crucially important to the development of the deliberative democratic

\textsuperscript{116}Stuart Hall, "Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies," in Storey, op cit., p. 343.
citizen. We should consider such training of future "influentials" a positive political act. But as progressive as collegiate consciousness-raising might be, it is abashedly small potatoes for revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{117} The task of putting such tools in the hands of the general populace is a different question altogether, one which semiological cultural studies seems ultimately willing to leave unattended.

In all, a neutralized understanding of ideology is a blessing and a curse. As mentioned above, the post-Marxist perspectivist epistemology to which cultural studies subscribes is a political act in itself. To accept a plurality of truth claims is the cornerstone of any substantial, sustainable ethic of tolerance. This moral imperative, which follows a pluralist ontology, indeed might become the West's greatest gift to the world. As such, cultural studies offers a fine moral: that my ideology is just the way I see the world, and must necessarily share space with other portals to reality. With its populism, cultural studies also chips away at the ugly dualist metaphysics of essence and appearance, still haunting us in both academic and religious incarnations. But due to scientism and academicism, the impact of cultural studies, and the critical theory that preceded it, has surely been slighter than it might have been. In the remainder of this chapter I will focus back onto the issue of theory's interface with practice. How can cultural studies convey its message to people other than academics and intellectuals? How to turn their spectatorship into action? These are crucial questions for the aspiring authentic, who, in order to succeed in the project of being itself, must be able to recognize and judge the content of ideology.

\textbf{Theory and Positive Ideology}

To propose that the future of political theory lies in its infusion into political ideology may very well be judged as naïveté or truism. It is true that political ideologies--the "isms" currently proffered by political parties, think-tanks, and internet cranks--bleed

\textsuperscript{117}In spite of the increasing, and laudible democratization of American tertiary education, the actual number of students who might take a course in cultural studies is discouragingly small in comparison with total population. Besides, to contain such activity to the universities is a classic hegemonic appropriation of revolutionary energies. How better to deradicalize agitators than to institutionalize them!
with idealistic platitudes, simplistic reasoning, and (if actually vying for power) insincere expediency. Clearly, these are not the virtues of philosophy, and to see such a wasteland as ripe for the intervention of political theory is to will philosophy's vulgarization--in other words, its destruction--by the plebes. Yet a different first glance might surmise that since ideology is defined by the translation of ideas into action, our political life cannot do without normative theory. To fulfill our potential as moral beings, we need the interpretive and normative lenses which traditional and critical theory offer. If these ideas are ever transformed into action in a democracy, their application will require engagement with the popular mind.

I will be contributing here on behalf of this latter position. Indeed, I believe that political theory and political ideology are interdependent in the most urgent manner. The case I will try to make is that theory and practice can and should meet in ideology. Ideally, theory and actuality are dialectically engaged with one another: opposites embodying their other at the heart of their identity. Practices lose their dynamism when they are no longer articulated in terms of an ideal which they pursue. In the same way, theoretical configurations are lifeless unless they can refer to life beyond theory, to practice and experience. When these two dialectical opposite are reflexively intact, we have an incarnation of ideology I call "positive." Unlike the "negative" ideology of Marx and Engels, positive, political ideology can be used as an existential tool, as way of seeing which enables us to make sense of the world in ways that are not inherently "false." A positive conception of ideology confirms, with Althusser, that we are all "in ideology." But political ideology can do so much more than provide access to reality in the manner which proponents of "neutral" ideology describe. For political ideology also empowers us to act constructively in our world. Ideally, positive, political ideologies display the ontological understanding of plurality conveyed by cultural theorists with the interpretive and normative capabilities which are the purview of traditional theory. Transformed into a political program, political ideologies might not only interpret the world, but change it.
Not a revolutionary notion this, for it is basically the ideal picture of political ideology presented in introductory textbooks on the subject. There, we get a description of political ideologies--anarchism, liberalism, socialism, conservatism, feminism, etc.--as "the translators of ideas into action" which "bridge the gap between theory and practice."\(^{118}\) In this rendering, political ideologies are ontologically and normatively aware, providing "a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be."\(^{119}\) Political ideology is "a fairly coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that explains and evaluates social conditions, helps people understand their place in society, and provides a program for social and political action."\(^{120}\) The narrative presented in most ideology textbooks is one where philosophical ideas and social conditions push and complement one another: The Wars of Religion compel Locke's liberal letter on toleration; Locke and Rousseau vehiculate the American and French Revolutions; the Reign of Terror inspires Burke's coinage of conservatism in his "Reflections on the Revolution." This story stars the dialectical interplay between ideas and action.\\

Also presumed is the link between ontology and advocacy. Classical liberal ideology, for example, is based in the ontology of philosophers Locke, Smith, and Kant among others, all who see the individual as the basic unit of social, economic, and political organization. Our fundamental being is as individuals; therefore the products of our artifice should reflect and complement this ontology. Thanks to the lens offered by positive, political ideology, we are able to judge whether the status quo conforms with our ideal view of the world. The debate between liberals, then, is which political arrangement will enable the greatest fulfillment for the individual. We are then in the position to inquire whether our extant policies on welfare reform, military spending, income tax, or affirmative action are consistent with our view of human nature and our ideal of whom we


want to be. For liberals, political order should assume that we are independent, rational, self-determining beings and protect us as such. As such, advocacy follows ontology.

Or it should. It is acknowledged by some textbook writers that ideologies are "inevitably highly simplified, and even distorted, versions of the original doctrines." Upon examination, one is struck by the absence of recognizable ontology in the positions articulated by mainstream political parties and think tanks. The disjunction between ontology and advocacy gapes in most contemporary political ideologies: there is little articulation of foundational principles, little connection between pictures of human nature, ideality, and political prescription. Instead, political ideologies' ontological and normative components are reduced to platitudes like "opportunity, responsibility, and community." These are the "values" that Americans share, it is contended; yet discussion of said values--their whence, whither, and why--never occurs. Their connection with policy is lost in a landslide of expediency and "common sense."

We are beginning to take note of the impoverishment of our political discourse over the last 40 years or so. Citizens are significantly less knowledgeable about candidates and issues, vote in smaller numbers, and read (and watch) less news than they did in 1960. Politics are televised on cable TV, newsmedia proliferate wildly, and yet our discourse is worse off than it has ever been, suffering from superficiality and fragmentation. It has been noted that the average "soundbite" for presidential candidates dropped precipitously from 42.3 seconds in 1968 to 9.8 seconds in 1988. Candidates have learned to alter their speech according to the medium; their rhetoric is reduced to platitudes and catchphrases. Negative campaigning has become necessary, and attack ads are now a reliable staple of all serious contenders. When political ideas must conform to the 30-second format of the television commercial, political discourse is ill indeed.

A renewed, philosophized ideology would push the textbooks' already ambitious model of ideology a couple of steps farther. Ideally, political ideology would continue to enable interpretation, orientation, and advocacy. I worry, however, that this picture of ideology does not demand that political ideologies be sufficiently critical. As cultural studies theorists contend, people need to be aware of the forces trying to manipulate them into buying products and supporting policies that are shortsighted or amnesia-stricken. This ideal political citizen would display a sharpened skepticism, endowed with some tools for understanding and criticism.

We might look to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, remembering the concepts of immanent critique and affirmative culture. The only way to achieve the happiness we expect out of this life is first to compare our actuality with the ideals it purports to embody. Instead of the Marxists' "great refusal," which insists that capitalism is irredeemable, we could appeal to Michael Walzer's notion of the internal social critic. Instead of seeking the detachment of the scientist, the "connected critic" is "one of us," who employs local principles because he is not content merely to "wish the natives well, [but] he seeks the success of their common enterprise."\(^{124}\) Indeed, I contend that we must know ourselves in order truly to rule ourselves. We philosophers and theorists must resist the metaphysics of detachment of the natural sciences and dig as the hermeneuticists suggest. Only after recognition of our ideals and shortcomings can we attempt to bring political power to bear on them. In democracies, these are our ideals after all, and as such should undergo constant vigilance, investigation, and evolution.

Second, political ideologies would ideally bear with them a deep sensitivity to ontological plurality. Such recognition of the diversity of life spawns a moral which is today offered in forms academic, popular, even theological: tolerance. The impulse to respect difference can manifest in a variety of perspectives, and need not have a solid philosophical foundation to function. For postmodern intellectuals, an ethic of tolerance is

based in an epistemology of perspectivism which denies any one mode of being exclusive access to objective Truth. For ordinary citizens who haven't participated in the abstraction of the perspectivist epistemological revolution, tolerance might be nourished by the sentiment behind adages like "different strokes for different folks" and "to each his own." All of us desire a private realm, and the fundamentals of the liberal democratic social contract require that we cede to others the rights we reserve for ourselves.

Even religious "true believers" with no stomach for political philosophy might be encouraged to offer tolerance: many church-, synagogue-, and mosque-goers acknowledge human fallibility, recognizing the inherent incompleteness of revelation, their inability to know completely the Truth of the divine. And the alienated, resentful, private, anti-citizen must also practice an amount of tolerance in a liberal democracy, if only for fear of the law's retribution. Despite the interventions of both "jihad and mcworld," ontological plurality and the moral imperative to tolerance will remain a powerful counterforce to the globalization of American popular culture and the equally homogenizing aspirations of violent religious fundamentalism. Perhaps political ideologies can play an important role by recognizing such ontological truths at their core, encouraging tolerance of diversity to become common sense.125

But where political discourse is so impoverished--compacted into the flash of the TV commercial and the preformulated prompts of polling--it is not surprising that political ideologies are not engaging in interpretive and ontological discussions. As such they tend to remain in the realm of myth (in a Barthesian sense), where dominant ideology works within a tried-and-true mode of signification. "Opportunity, responsibility, and community" are intentionally designed to resonate within common sense and dominant ideology. Revealingly, these pillars in the 1996 Democratic platform are expressed in

125Does such recognition of difference slide us into moral turpitude, where we are undisposed to apply any normative criteria to existence? Such "soft relativism" is the target of neo-conservatives, who insist with religious zeal on the necessity for paramount, objective Truth. The rest of us, however, don't have a problem recognizing the relative validity of our values and still standing up for them. Despite the fact that they are only our values, they are still our values, essential to both individual and social identity. We will revisit the supposed "slippery slope of relativism" while discussing Rorty in Chapter Five.
identical form as the bullet points of the conservative Heritage Foundation's 1999 agenda. In such a climate of banality, our most revered values are bound to lose dynamism and float into the realm of shibboleth. Such discourse becomes "idle talk," in Heidegger's words.

Enter Authenticity

To this point I have barely mentioned the concept on which this project is centered: authenticity. This initial chapter explicitly set out to examine charges of spectatorship and scientism against theory, and to advocate the insertion of more theory into political life. From our meta-theoretical standpoint, tracing the development of our understanding of theory and ideology, we have also opened our eyes to the issue of authenticity. I will continue to argue, in Chapter 3, to illustrate that ideology is an indispensable participant in any project to be oneself. Since we all need access to reality, some perspectives (neutral ideologies) become irreducible and necessary, for they provide essential grounding for comprehension and conviction, i.e., being. Yet certain ways of seeing can undoubtedly serve us ill, producing and legitimating meanings (negative ideologies) which become settled and unquestionable, sometimes to the distinct benefit of powerful groups. The picture here sketched of positive, political ideology is clearly meant to be a friend of authenticity—enabling us to be true to ourselves by invoking ontology, analysis, and advocacy into the political realm. It is only through a philosophized political ideology that we can interpret the world with one eye on our ideals and another on practical politics. As such, the exercise of a theoretically-active political ideology within a contested public realm is an act of authenticity.

Each configuration of authenticity to be examined in the following chapters positions itself vis à vis ideology. In fact, a central task of an authentic mode of existence is to be able to judge between necessary and negative ideology. Indeed, to be true to

oneself, we must be able to discern which idea structures enable or inhibit our project for the good life. When in the fold of negative ideology, where dominant modes of signification work to naturalize uneven power relations, we may not be ourselves but the people the dominant powers want us to be instead. Contrary to orthodox Marxian assertions, negative ideology is not limited to class and economic power. Indeed, any situative ideologies—religion, ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation—which provide necessary grounding can also exhibit negative power, where the aspiring authentic’s project to be itself is unduly hindered. Unreflective adherence to common sense or "group-think" (what Heidegger calls “idle talk”), even if this group sometimes challenges dominant representations, may violate the precept of being oneself by dulling one’s critical, reflective edge. An increasingly theoretical approach to life, however, would maximize the interpretive and analytical components of ideology, making sure that ontology is not forsaken in normative exercises. As such, the activity of authenticity cannot help but engage ideology. As we extend our exploration of ideology into Chapter 3, we must first understand that from the outset I am trying to loosen up traditional formulations of ideology: it is not simply class power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, nor can it be innocent, innocuous situative grounding.

What follows will consider authenticity as an existential and philosophical phenomenon. As I discuss in Chapter 2, authenticity first becomes an existential problem for Europeans with the breakdown of ascriptive social hierarchies and the growth of commerce and urbanization in the 17th and 18th centuries. Unprecedented numbers of people leaving the countryside for the city, and the old world for the new, meant that being true to oneself was no longer a foregone conclusion. Authenticity does not acquire strong ethical force until the Romantics, extolling the value of uniqueness and originality, assert that it is incumbent upon the individual to realize its own way of being. Yet we will see that each generation of modern philosophers, beginning in the Enlightenment, addresses the problem of being true to oneself in face of habit, tradition, and popular prejudice. Our
brief sampling of these different approaches, also to come in the chapter immediately below, will inform the second half of this project.
CHAPTER 2
AUTHENTICITY AS AN EXISTENTIAL AND
PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM

Discontented with your present state for reasons that foretell even greater
discontents for your unhappy posterity, perhaps you would want to be able to go
backward in time. The sentiment must be the eulogy of your first ancestors, the
criticism of your contemporaries, and the dread of those who will have the
unhappiness to live after you.

--Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754

A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under
the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds,
and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions,
was the tiny, fragile human body.

--Walter Benjamin, 1936

A colorful diversity seems to proliferate in contemporary American society.
Individuals are freer than ever to cast off the roles imposed by family, socio-economic
class, and tradition in order to adopt a unique, self-generated identity. We see yuppies
jumping into leather jackets, studs, and chaps to ride like outlaws all weekend with their
Harley motorcycle club; homosexuals proudly flying the rainbow flag from their homes
and cars; ethnic groups actively minding their cultures, refusing to relinquish their identity
to the American "melting pot"; green-haired high-school students defiantly brightening up
their confinement. Are we becoming a nation of freaks, each insistent upon forging a
unique self?

There is still, of course, a "mainstream" with multitudes of adherents and
defenders. Yet encounter with "deviance" outside of mainstream norms has become a de
rigueur, everyday occurrence for millions Americans. Nothing shocks New Yorkers
anymore, we observe: they have seen it all--and more--and life goes on. For the many
Americans who lead isolated daily lives, television exposes them to the diversity of modern
life well enough. If they don’t like what they see out there, most realize that they still have to tolerate it. To be sure, in spite all the cruelty that deviants suffer at the hands of the majority, we are a remarkably tolerant society. But the history of rights is a young one, and we have known the right to "fly our freak flag" probably only since the hippie revolution of the 1960s.

It may be in the nature of dominant ideals and ideologies, however, to become atrophied, unreflective, and complacent. As individualism becomes further naturalized at the heart of American identity, we tend to take our utmost good--freedom--for granted. In the meantime, the practices through which we articulate this liberty lose their dynamism. When an ideal is no longer dialectically engaged with the actual, the latter assumes an exaggerated aura of permanence, self-sufficiency, and wholeness. The success of individualism as our civil religion may mean that we no longer critically compare the actual condition of liberty or autonomy, for example, with the powerful ideals which underwrite them. This unreflective employment of our first language of individualism has dulled the awareness needed to tend our ideals and improve our reality.

This, I suspect, has become the fate of our commitment to the unique individual under the hegemony of individualism. Perhaps we assume that our embrace of an abstract ideal of freedom will ensure, as if marshaled by an invisible hand, the proliferation of pluralism, diversity, and uniqueness. On the other hand, maybe authenticity is an inevitable victim of democracy, where majority opinion tyrannizes in a vacuum of traditional authority, as De Tocqueville and J.S. Mill suggest. Or perhaps the problem is fundamentally economic, to be traced to the contradiction between consumer capitalism and liberal democracy, produced by the dual imperatives to homogenize and individuate, as the Frankfurt theorists contend. But it is my contention here that there is plenty alive in the practice and theory of authenticity, and what follows will attempt to reinvigorate our thinking about this essential American ideal.
As I try to demonstrate below, authenticity has been an existential, philosophical, and moral problem that marks much of Western modernity. The story that I relate in this first section is meant to be more evocative than authoritative; by no means am I purporting to offer a comprehensive history of authenticity. I would like to think that my impulse is relatively modest: to offer some context and dimensional relief to the contemporary debate about authenticity to be analyzed in the project's second half. Yet my scope is ridiculously grand: the examination of authenticity as a philosophical, moral, and empirical phenomenon. Authenticity is such a fecund and potentially unwieldy concept because of a rich 300-year existential and philosophical history.

Below we visit some of the forces--scientific, sociological, philosophic, artistic, and economic--which brought the advent of modernity. For it is to these processes which we owe the emergence of individuality as we now know it. It is crucial to note that our modern sense of self was born out of crisis, one which we are still struggling to mitigate. Many of the early inhabitants of the great cities had no choice but to confront the problem of authenticity: Who are we when we are severed from ascriptive ties such as family, class, occupation, and reputation? The shallowness and weightlessness experienced by these fledgling European urbanites is still very much with us in 21st-century America. To illustrate this same phenomenon, I could have told present-day stories: about the Bolivian immigrant who finds good work, achieves US residency, and starts preferring basketball to fútbol; the African-American professional couple who leave the inner city for the white suburbs to raise a family; the disenchanted middle-class suburban teen who moves to the city to start her own "homocore" punk rock band. Even more banal scenarios, like the "well-adjusted" adolescent leaving for college, exhibit the existential and moral challenge of authenticity. For the freedom to "be ourselves" is frequently granted at the cost of the ascriptive connections of family, community, and tradition which make up so much of who we are.
As we will see, this problem was recognized early on by a number of social critics, who were quite incensed at the noxious insincerity which had infected French society under the guise of politeness. The two great, emblematic strains of thought which drove early modernity—the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement—each developed a response to the early manifestations of the problem of authenticity. Immediately below I attempt to trace the implications of the distinct models of individuality offered by the empiricist-rationalist strain of the Enlightenment, on one hand, and by the Romantics and their progenitor, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the other. Following these two accounts of authenticity, we explore authenticity as it was postulated in a post-Romantic strain of thought led by Friedrich Nietzsche. As a philosopher of heroic ironism, Nietzsche plays a crucial role in the second part of the project as we examine the thought of Richard Rorty. And finally, as a gateway to our revisitation of ideology in Chapter 3, we examine authenticity as promoted by a main figure of 20th-Century "existentialist" thought, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger, too, bears increasingly significant weight as our discussion of authenticity presses deeper.

Given such ambitious scale, I have had to sketch the thinkers I have chosen to tell this story rather coarsely. To reduce Rousseau or Nietzsche to ten pages (or Locke to three!) could certainly be considered criminal. The intention is to be at the same time comprehensive and imprecise, such that a larger picture of authenticity might be possible—which only comes into focus when we take a few steps back, allowing some of the fine lines to blur. Yet my desire to say something important about the larger issue has led to the attempt to appear comprehensive, and I would certainly stand by my choices of the philosophers to follow as being key contributors to the debate over authenticity. This impulse to authoritativeness, however, is clearly shamed by all the important contributors who are missing: major Enlightenment figures like Hume and Kant; Christian thinkers

1As with the terms "pre-modern" and "modern," both "the Enlightenment" and "the Romantic movement" are crude categories, complexes which no doubt display, under some lenses, more internal differentiation than coherence. Yet even the most particular-minded enemy of categorization must admit that at times it is useful to speak with categorical generality. I am claiming as much here.
such as Paul or Augustine; post-Romantics like Wilde and Freud; the existentialists Sartre and Kierkegaard. I have tried to assemble a collage that is parsimonious but still provocative. Before embarking on this tour, however, let us first examine authenticity as it arises as an existential problem.

The Problem of Authenticity in Historical Narrative: The Rise of the Modern Individual

The Enchanted, Pre-Modern World

Modernity, it is usually noted, was preceded by a period in which the cosmos was seen as a unified, purposive whole, where each part (including the individual) had a fixed place and purpose. What we call "traditional" or "peasant" societies hold that the world, our environment, is alive with meaning, with gods manifesting themselves through natural phenomena. The pre-modern world, as Max Weber put it, was "enchanted." Time was circular, not linear and progressive. Peoples had shared cosmic syntaxes--there was a public language of symbols, images, causes and effects. Some of these were part of common sense, e.g., religiously following the ancestors' planting calendar found in the movement of the stars. Other signs needed interpretation--they might be omens, foretelling the future--and called for the intervention of priests to effect their full, public meaning. At times, the link between existential reality and shared symbolic meaning could have been virtually seamless. At the height of ancient Athenian civilization, "The Greeks had been involuntarily compelled to connect all experiences at once with their myths...so that even the most immediate present necessarily appeared to them sub specie eterni and in a certain sense timeless," writes one commentator.2

In the pre-modern period, there was structure and fullness to being which is notoriously absent in postmodernity. This structure took the form of a "Great Chain of Being." As Arthur Lovejoy puts it, this is a "universe...composed of an immense...number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents...

through 'every possible' grade up to the *ens perfectissimum* . . . , the highest possible kind of creature". The hierarchical, vertical nature of the Great Chain was matched by its depth, its fullness of being. Lovejoy terms this "plenitude": the concept that the "range of conceivable diversity of kinds of living things is exhaustively exemplified," and that "no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfulfilled." Purpose, then, permeated the great plenitude of existence: each part manifested its individual being by assuming its role in the whole. In the lexicon of the Ancient Greeks, this is *telos*--the ends of the whole. Every thing and person had an Aristotelian final cause--its purpose and function--which dictated its true identity.

Such structure and purpose enable sympathetic, parallel relations between planes of existence. This often took the form of anthropomorphism, where understanding of the universe was achieved by casting our subjective image upon it. Indeed, the stars were organized in the shape of humans, and (human) gods resided in the clouds atop Olympus. On the earthly plane, too, parallelism provided a coherent logic for the whole: the eagle is as the lion, as is Man--all rule their realms as kings. In addition, life was much more organic than we now experience it, in a double sense. As foragers or agriculturists we had continuous, direct, survival-driven contact with the environment; in addition, there was a strong sense of belonging to a larger, interdependent, living whole which had infinitely greater purpose than oneself.

This regimented order and meaning attributed to the universe in this pre-modern *Weltanshauung* found homological expression in the hierarchy of earthy society. For people, too, had a place in the cosmological order, and bolstered by traditional authority (e.g., Church- and community elders), pre-modern societies were thickly and resolutely stratified. Roles were *ascribed*, and people were to assume faithfully the station into which they were born. Within the social structure of feudalism, for example, lords and vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, wives and wetnurses were all implicated in a

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4 Ibid., p. 52.
vertical arrangement which resolutely prohibited mobility. Within this “manifold gradation of social rank,” as Marx and Engels put it, shepherds begat shepherds, while lords and ladies also reproduced in kind.\(^5\)

On through the Renaissance in Europe, this was the general shape of cosmology, individuality, and society. In many places, the authority of this worldview was singular. For the split between science and religion--one of the antagonisms by which we have come to define modernity--did not yet exist. Since long before Plato, philosophy-science saw its task as a meticulous mimesis of a pre-existing, preordained chain of being. This was to be a faithful rendition, for the teleological imperative saturated discovery and description: every detail, each minutae demanded integration into the purpose of the whole. Importantly, the character of this whole was not established by induction. Instead, King, Theologian, Scientist, and Philosopher regularly made sure they were reinforcing each other's stories on the same side of Truth. These cover stories, however, would not last forever.

**Socio-Economic Change and the Problem of Authenticity**

The shockwaves which would produce the modern self first hit Western Europe in the 17th Century. This was the epoch of the great "rise of the bourgeoisie," where unprecedented activity in international trade and commerce drew theretofore unseen hordes to the great cities. The urbanization of London and Paris, for example, was remarkable: the former grew from 60,000 to 750,000 between 1550 and 1750, while Paris bulged to 500,000 inhabitants in the same two hundred years.\(^6\) But as Richard Sennett and others have compellingly displayed, urbanization was much more than a simple phenomenon of numbers. Unlike the immigrants to New York a century later, the early migrants to these

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\(^{5}\) Of course, by no means is the ascription of identity a thing of the past: many of the societies on earth are still marked by ascriptive hierarchies, caste systems which bestow worth based purely on the inherited social rank of one’s family. Indeed, modernity and “modernization” continue to be thoroughly incomplete.

European cities did not make the trip with their families and ethnicity intact. Most of the European migrants were male, young, and single, embarking on a solitary journey from their static, bucolic past which ascribed them an identity based in social and economic class, family, occupation, region, etc. They left the countryside to improve their lot; as they did, "personal identity" became an altogether new problem of historic proportions. As such, these transplants became the unwitting vanguard of modern identity.

Inescapably, changes were in store for the new urbanite. With the new anonymity and freedom gained from a break with one's past comes the awful responsibility of self-creation. Sennett summarizes it thus:

> When people broke a family tie to come to the city, family names, associations, and traditions did not help. When population was distributed by new urban forms massing large numbers of people around squares not meant as places of easy congregation and sociability, knowing those strangers through routine observation became more difficult. When the complexity of overlapping markets destroyed stable territories of economic activity, occupational "place" did not help. Status breaks between the generations became more frequent; the inheritability of position succumbed to the creation of position, lower as well as higher.

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In the city, as French and English social hierarchies began to show unprecedented permeability, one had to make one's own history in a milieu of strangers. In the urban tourbuillon social, as Rousseau called it, the nascent forces of modernity created altogether new questions for the self.

How did neophyte urbanites adjust to life among strangers, without demonstrative, "natural" identity markers like family, occupation, and geographical origin? One mechanism was the popular conception of the "theatrum mundi"—that "all the world's a stage." Though known much earlier in the West, the notion of everyday life as theater had a particularly strong hold on 17th and 18th century European public imagination. Play-acting was central to life in public, and the line between stage and street became increasingly blurred.

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7Sennett, p. 59, emphasis added.
On through the early-modern era, sumptuary laws, especially those regarding clothing, helped maintain a visual sense of order in public. In early-modern Europe, people were required to dress appropriately to their station in the social hierarchy, as each occupation had its appropriate clothes. But within the economies of the growing cities and the burgeoning colonies, such codifications were bound to come under pressure. In trade and commerce, for example, there were many new positions which had no established uniform. In addition, the decline of the guild system meant that the ribbons and buttons which distinguished status within each trade no longer signified with their previous, unequivocal force. The spread of fashion (traveling from Paris to London by means of coutured dolls in salesmen's cases), moreover, enabled aspiring middle-class women to appear in public as aristocracy, however outmoded.

Though sumptuary laws were rarely enforced (at least officially) by the mid-18th century, sartorial transgression in the social hierarchy was less frequent than one might imagine. What was fairly common in the lower-middle classes, it appears, was a horizontal wandering, where a shipping clerk, void of a traditional costume, might stroll about in tailor's clothes. In such cases, the sense of stage-acting must have been strong. Though people in general still dressed appropriately to their station, there was enough aberration to make people generally uncertain of the background of the person whom they encountered on the street.

What is fascinating about the story told by Sennett, however, is that people continued to act as if strangers were presenting their true selves. Even if people were not transgressing stations, he concludes, "One became a figure in a contrived landscape; the purpose of clothes was not to be sure of whom you were dealing with, but to be able to behave as if you were sure."8 Distance between one's "real self" and one's recognition in public had become normal. This convention found expression in the theater and in the street, and was commonplace in the famed coffeehouses of Paris and London. The

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8Ibid., p. 68.
coffeehouses were centers of information and communication; men went there to read newspapers and talk with one another. *Bonhomie* and lively discourse bloomed because in the coffeehouses, social rank was suspended. Though dress and elocution almost certainly revealed the social position of speakers, for the sake of the conversation it did not matter. Anyone had the right to accost and engage another, and it was considered bad form to refer to the background of an interlocutor.

Sennett argues that the popular conception of the *theatrum mundi*, the commonsensical notion of man as actor, was governed by an historically novel "regime of signification." Within the *theatrum mundi*, linguistic expressions stood for themselves—regardless who was speaking, they were taken literally. Speech acts were "signs" rather than "symbols"; they were self-sufficient, taken at face value, rather than symbolizing or standing in for concepts beyond the immediate context. Disbelief completely suspended, an actor's delivery in the theater would provoke spontaneous, fervent eruptions of emotion in the audience. In the coffeehouse, only the content of words mattered, not their origin in a particular speaker. On the street, clothes signified as if they accurately expressed the true nature of their wearer.

This was the literalization of convention, the exaltation of appearance. Inescapably, people were strangers in the big city, to themselves and others. What was being lost was a certain lucidity to self, society, and surroundings. Pre-modern existence had a legibility which was blurred by cosmological disenchantment and the dynamic milieu of the modern, cosmopolitan city. This was the same transparency which was absent when one faced a stranger in the city: people might not be as they appear. But one proceeded as if strangers were perfectly readable. Sennett calls this social logic an effort to create "a meaningful sense of audience." Such maneuvers were necessary, for "The material conditions of life in the city weakened any trust people could place in the 'natural,' routine labeling of others
by origin, family background, or occupation."⁹ On a daily existential basis, then, the early-modern city-dweller was already responding to the problem of authenticity.

A world away, at court, social relations and the self were undergoing a parallel transformation. Sennett states, "In the courts of the mid-17th Century, not only in France but in Germany, Italy, and England, greetings between people of different ranks involved elaborate flattery based on interpersonal knowledge."¹⁰ The flatterer would mention the family connections or outstanding achievements on which his superior's reputation had been made. In court, intimacies became common knowledge and the gossip wheel whirred with unrestrained fervor. Such machinations made court life under Louis XIV at Versailles infamous for the ages.

Less than 100 years later, by 1750, the modus operandi of court and society life had transformed. While the French royalty shifted its gravity back to Paris, flattery as a social lubricant fell from favor and was replaced by stock phrases of greeting. As on the street, in the theater, and the coffeehouse, this speech was meant as a sign, not a symbol. Stock greetings were valued for precisely their indiscriminateness: they were judged on the grandiloquence of their phrasing, not on the personal information revealed about an interlocutor. The essence of a compliment shifted from flattery based on interpersonal knowledge to being able to honor another without revealing personal effects, in oneself or another. Rampant gossip, too, was no longer in vogue. Voltaire notes that if one gossips too early in an acquaintance with a man, it is considered an insult. Instead of a source of introductory banter, gossip came to be information only shared among intimates. Once outside of the small circle of court life at Versailles, it was dangerous to talk of people to whom your interlocutor might be favorably disposed. Again, the new scale of city life demanded substantial transformation of the self one presented to society.

⁹Ibid., p. 60.
¹⁰Ibid., p. 61.
Indeed, this is the advice given by Lord Chesterfield to his son in a famous set of letters published in the 1740s. Never refer to the family background of the person to whom you are being introduced, the son is cautioned, for you can never be sure of that person's emotional ties to his or her family. Further, in the "confusions" of London, one easily might not have all the important families sorted out straight. In a milieu which was transient and constantly refilling with strangers, connecting through interpersonal knowledge became unreliable and eventually impossible. All people must be seen as strangers, unknown quantities, for appearance and reality may have no necessary relationship.

Maintaining a conscious distance, therefore, between one's private and public self was a requisite for social success. Indeed, the theatrum mundi, deeply embedded in the urban consciousness, demanded constant mask-wearing in public. The street was a stage, crowded with unknowns wearing public personas glossed with politiesse. While in conversation, Lord Chesterfield counsels, one should gently conceal one's private affairs:

People of your age have, commonly, an unguarded frankness about them which makes them the easy prey and bubbles of the artful and the experienced . . . . Beware, therefore, now that you are coming into the world, of these proffered friendships. Receive them with great civility, but with great incredulity too; and pay them with compliments but not with confidence.11

Such civility and compliments were part of "an ideal of politeness which was soon to spread to Western Europe as a whole," Henri Peyre informs us.12 But there was serious suspicion underneath this cloak of civility. The stage was set for duplicitous farce.

To be sure, these developments were not lost on the artists and moralists of the day. Much of the literature of the classical period of 17th Century France heaped scorn on the hypocrisy of the age. The politeness displayed in various modes of social interaction--

12 Henri Peyre, Literature and Sincerity (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1963), p. 51. Not surprisingly, Peyre's explanation of this ideal's presence is a lot less materialist than Sennett's. The pressure to be polite did not come from below; rather, Peyre contends, "The acceptance of rules of courtesy and of bienséances by the aristocracy and the middle class constituted a victory of women over the brutal unruliness of males, of graceful artificiality over instinct" (Ibid., p. 51).
flattery based on interpersonal knowledge, stock greetings which skirted personal details, and coffeehouse commerce where speech signified by itself—was fundamentally an act, a gesture which only feigned sincerity. Indeed, such conventions of politeness, Peyre writes, "entailed sacrifices, that of candid speech in particular."13 Exercising the distance between what one felt and what one said became normal for these new modern creatures. Though sincerity was professed superficially, a scheming insincerity reigned below the surface, and became the signature condition of early-modern social interaction.

Pascal, to be immortalized for his work with numerical formulae, was also an acerbic social critic: "Human life is only a perpetual illusion. No one speaks of us in our presence as he does in our absence. Human society is founded on mutual deceit."14 Pascal was so appalled at the condition of French society that he ruled out any possibility that people could be authentic in the city. Condemning all social roles equally, Pascal at the same time finds the root of the problem to be our "amour propre." Vain self-love is the source of Man's deceptive inclinations, which, "so far removed from justice and reason, have a natural root in his heart."15 For his part, the moralist La Rochefoucauld claims that weakness, rather than scheming conceit, rules the heart. "Weak persons cannot be sincere," he announces; it is a fundamental inability to be true to oneself which leads to the penchant to lie in public.16 As we will see further below, both Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, preceding Rousseau by a century, will offer rationalist rather than romantic solutions to the problem of authenticity.

In addition, Molière, a playwright of unprecedented popularity and importance to French society, put (in)sincerity at the center of his comedies of the 1660s, Tartuffe, Don Juan, and Le Misanthrope. Don Juan and Tartuffe are master dissemblers; they are constantly contorting themselves to appear other than they actually are. Ultimately,

13Ibid., p. 51.
15Ibid., p. 59.
however, they are deceived by their own duplicity, and succumb to their own tricks. In contrast, Molière's misanthrope, Alceste, aggressively crusades for sincerity: "My chief talent is to be frank and sincere," he proclaims. He comes to detest his contemporaries, "Some because they are vicious/The others for being obliging to the vicious". Yet, Trilling reminds us, Alceste, like all Molière's characters, is hobbled by a comic flaw. His incessant activism on behalf of the truth becomes his point of pride. Thus, he shrinks from applying this ethic of truth fully to himself--his passion directed at the deceit he sees around him eclipses the rational poise he needs to cultivate his own, inner truth. He withdraws, impossibly disgusted with his species, into solitude.

Rameau's Nephew electrified many, including Goethe and Hegel--it burst on the former "like a bombshell," inspiring him to translate it immediately. To Hegel, Rameau was at war with the "honest soul," what he also called the "heroism of dumb service." This "honest" self has a "noble" relation to external powers of society; it identifies with and reproduces those forces through its very being. In learning and rejecting society's roles, Rameau offers the honest soul freedom from external power. As such, he becomes the paragon of the modern man separated from himself. It is already indicative in the title: we are not dealing with a sound, integrated, sincere being but with one who is necessarily, fundamentally, chaemeleonic--he is not himself, but the nephew of a celebrity. As such, he illuminates the insincerity which society forces on the self, highlighting the impossibility of personal integrity in modern life.

The nephew's magnificence, however, consists in his mastery of this situation: a mimetic, protean faculty is the skill upon which his existence depends. In the dialogue's climax, where the he is championing the new forms of opera to the old, he dramatically plays all parts--he is every musical instrument and actor, manifesting each emotion, tone, and subtlety. Rameau's nephew becomes Hegel's "base" self, which, in its outward

17Quoted in Trilling. op. cit., p. 17. Here I am presenting Trilling's reading of Rameau and Hegel.
antagonism to power, encourages Spirit and smashes the wholeness of the honest soul. Through the nephew's performance, Hegel declares, Spirit is able to "pour scornful laughter on existence, on the confusion pervading the whole, and on itself as well." 19

Despite his deep disapproval of Molière, Rousseau considered Le Misanthrope, "of all Molière's comedies, indisputably the one which contains the best and healthiest moral." 20 Indeed, by 1750, Rousseau was cresting a wave of intellectual insurgency to French society's status quo. His first published piece, for which he received instant intellectual fame, was a sustained invective aimed at early-modern civilization. In considering the effect of the science and arts of the Enlightenment on moral life, Rousseau is ruthless in his attack of "that softness of character and urbanity of customs which make relations among you so amiable and easy; in a word, the semblance of all the virtues without the possession of any." 21 The city was rife with forces corrupting human nature, degrading both society and its component individuals. In Paris, "Incessantly politeness requires, propriety demands; incessantly usage is followed, never one's own inclinations. One no longer dares to appear as he is." The modern city-dweller enjoys "no more sincere friendships, no more real esteem." 22

Unquestionably, to Rousseau's mind, this callow but potent modernity was debasing man from his true self. Saint-Preux, the genteel protagonist of La Nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau's epistolary novel which was a popular sensation, is thoroughly disoriented by his move to Paris. Becoming "giddy like a man before whose eyes a multitude of objects is made to pass rapidly," he writes that "sometimes I forget what I am and whose I am." 23 Virtue, which can only find its source in a sincere heart, "has a

19Quoted in Trilling, op. cit., p. 121.
20"What! Plato banished Homer from his republic and we will tolerate Molière in ours! What worse could happen to us than to resemble the people he depicts, even those whom he makes us like," Rousseau laments in the "Letter to D'Alembert," pp. 116-17. A bit below we will further explore Rousseau's condemnation of the theater.
22Ibid., p. 38.
language quite different from the false demonstrations of politeness and the misleading appearances that the custom of society demands." Writing to his soul-mate Julie, Saint-Preux's commentary on Paris is a rich testimony to the problem of authenticity:

Meanwhile, judge if I am right in calling this crowded scene a wasteland, and of being alarmed by a solitude in which I find only an empty appearance of sentiment and of sincerity which changes every instant and falsifies itself, in which I see only spectres and phantoms which strike the eye for a moment and disappear as soon as one tries to touch them? Until now I have seen a great many masks; when shall I see the faces of men?25

As will be evidenced further below, Rousseau clearly detected the emerging paradox of the modern individual: in the city, the self was being freed from the very components which gave it coherence and substance in the first place. To cope in a sea of unknowns, people had become remarkably insincere and other-dependent. Rousseau suspected that the very notion of a self to be true to might be in jeopardy.

Evidently, by 1750 the new generations of the cities had become pale shadows of their rural ancestors. The threshold into modernity had been breached, and the problems which still plague personal identity were born. Indeed, "coping mechanisms" were developed, and succeeded as a palliative for a time: in the street, acting as if people were true to their appearance enabled continued legibility and social coherence. In the coffeehouse, ignoring a stranger's particularity was the key to the social communion the city dweller was routinely denied. And in the parlor, politesse lubricated relations amongst unknowns. Yet these were far from sustainable solutions, and would soon bleed with the crisis of authenticity. Who were these people for whom deception, feigning, and pretense were a modus vivendi? When people were consistently false to others, could they really be true to themselves? The fundamental problem of identity had been exposed: who are we when we are deracinated from ascriptive surroundings? Perhaps this dilemma can be informed by some of the philosophical responses to the problem of authenticity which we will explore below.

24Ibid., II, XIV, p. 196.
25Ibid., II, XIV, p. 197.
Authenticity in Enlightenment, Romantic, Post-Romantic, and Existential Thought

Enlightenment Authenticity: Mastery, Rationality, Detachment

In a movement concurrent with the restructuring of the urbanite's existential reality and the bloody tribal warfare of the counter-Reformation, the Scientific Revolution and the philosophy of the Enlightenment thoroughly challenged traditional cosmology. The engine for this disenchantment would be a new conception of reason exercised by a new kind of human. Enlightenment philosophy and science also would posit a new cosmological model, the universe as a great machine, which emboldened modern civilization's drive to understand, and at times, control nature. This purpose of this section is to contextualize and briefly visit the model of self propounded by some of Enlightenment's philosophy's early luminaries, namely René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke. Their ideal human agent is one who would rule itself through reason, assembling knowledge free from assumption, superstition, and passion. This ethic of willful self-control which can conquer both ideology and appetite is a main theme of Western philosophy, dating to Plato. We also see it reflected in contemporary, popular notions of self-reliance and self-creation, and it continues to resonate through contemporary theoreticians of subjectivity. In this section we will explore the incarnation of rational mastery formulated in response to early modernity's crisis of authenticity. As we will see further below, this self-mastering, rational atom would soon be counterweighted by the anti-modern epistemology and anthropology of the Romantic movement.

To be sure, Enlightenment thinkers saw themselves as new men of a new age. The modern analyst, pioneered by the likes of Kepler, Galileo, and Newton, spurned his previous role as scribe to the meaning-rich, organically integrated, Great Chain of Being. This was a period where Rousseau found himself pretty lonely in a climate dominated by an analytic spirit eagerly expecting a new epoch. As Ernst Cassirer puts it, "The whole eighteenth century is permeated by this conviction, namely, that in the history of humanity
the time had now arrived to deprive nature of its carefully guarded secret, to leave it no longer in the dark to be marveled at as an incomprehensible mystery but to bring it under the bright light of reason and analyze it with all its fundamental forces."\(^{26}\)

In the hands of Bacon, Descartes, and Locke, the meaning of reason and rationality undergo a crucial transformation. First, the rational faculty is, we might say, naturalized and democratized. For Locke, "The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason . . . is that law."\(^{27}\) In addition, the model of rational mastery promoted by these thinkers was ideally practicable by all men; for Plato, the masses would, by their every nature, always be ruled by their appetites. Reason also transmorgifies: it is seen not as a state of being, as in systems of past, but as a mode, an activity, a process. From Plato in the 5th Century BCE to Spinoza and Leibniz in the 17th Century, reason was an elite realm of metaphysical truths. One was in reason when one was able to align one's thoughts to the ontologically secure Ideas. With the Enlightenment, reason is historically redefined. As Charles Taylor summarizes it, "We could say that rationality is no longer defined substantively, in terms of the order of being, but rather procedurally, in terms of the standards by which we construct orders in science and life."\(^{28}\) As such, process becomes paramount, the correct execution of which will count as Knowledge. The demand for "correct thinking" is strongly evidenced in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, a tendency which the Romantics would later condemn as homogenizing and one-dimensional.

In contrast to seeing the world as a meaningful, Great Chain of Being, Enlightenment thinkers view the universe as a mechanism, no longer saddled with meaning from without. Moreover, nature's machinations were seen to work according to complex


but understandable laws. Now reality could be known by its fundamental components, the pure math of clear concepts and immutable formulae, completely freed from teleological imperatives. Knowledge, as Taylor puts it, "ceases to be something we find and becomes something we build." Such an enterprise could be deeply threatening to traditional authority, the guardians of Truth. In part, such activity entailed a thorough transvaluation of the libido sciendi, the lust to know, previously condemned by theologians as intellectual pride. For the modern analyst, the lust for knowledge becomes the engine of reason, the sole creator of truth. Thanks to reason, the vehicle of truth, we no longer needed the divine hand of revelation to find—rather, build—truths of unprecedented certitude.

The mode for building such knowledge, Descartes famously contends, is through detachment from the material world. Only detachment enables the functioning of reason, which, designated by "cogitare," has its etymological origins in the activities of gathering and ordering. Splitting existence into two kinds of substance, a res cogitans and a res extensa, Descartes' ambition to reconstruct the entirety of philosophy is predicated on the domination of the latter by the former. Mind (or "soul") shall win its dominion by severing its connection to matter, including our own bodies. Taylor emphasizes that such detachment is aimed at instrumental control over the res extensa, made possible because "The move to mechanism neutralizes this whole domain." He continues,

The new model of rational mastery which Descartes offers presents it as a matter of instrumental control. To be free from the illusion which mingle mind with matter is to have a understanding of the latter which facilitates its control. Similarly, to free oneself from passions and obey reason is to get the passions under instrumental direction. The hegemony of reason is defined no longer as that of a dominant vision but rather in terms of a directing agency subordinating a functional domain.

Indeed, this is the solution offered by most French social critics at the time. Though lacking Descartes' scientistic, logical rigor, moralists such as Pascal and La Rochefoucauld similarly appeal to the rational faculty to overcome insincerity and self-deception. For

29 Ibid., p. 144.
31 Ibid., p. 149.
Pascal, since the self-deception that public insincerity fostered was endemic to society, one can only be true in isolation, locked in contemplation. Peyre notes that a similar solution was common to critics of very different dispositions. Skeptics, Jansenist mystics, orthodox Christians, all agreed on a singular message: "listening to the insidious 'reasons of the heart,' and letting imagination (envisaged in its deceptive aspect and not in its creative one) rule us and the world, usurping the role of reason--these constitute the most formidable obstacles to clear-sightedness and to wisdom as well as to saintliness."32

As Taylor points out, "This shift in scientific theory, as we would call it today, involved a radical change in anthropology as well."33 For the knowledge sought was not simply of the external, material mechanism, a world comfortably distant to the analyst's eye. With the light of reason, the human mechanism could be known as never before. The response to the great, unprecedented machinations of modernity was a distinct model for a new human being: ruled by a reason of detached engagement, it would exert control through a willful rationality.

This, too, is the model of the self offered by John Locke--who, Taylor reminds us, has quite a bit in common with Descartes, despite their descendants congealing into the warring camps of Empiricism and Rationalism. For Locke also offers an account of the rational subject who also achieves authenticity through self-mastery. To Enlightenment empiricism, as pioneered by Hobbes and Locke, we build our (I)deas and understanding from the data received by our senses, not from innate Ideas. Ideally, idea-construction is a private process, where the independent consciousness compiles ideas out of basic units of data. Within this general empirico-rationalist self, the process of understanding is fundamentally an atomistic activity, achievable only by the actor who can isolate and organize inputs. This notion "reifies the mind to an extraordinary degree,"34 observes

32Peyre, op. cit., p. 59.
33Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 144.
34Ibid., p. 166.
Taylor, and is completely contrary to our contemporary views of consciousness as language-based, and thus social to a significant degree.

This places unprecedented responsibility on the individual, for here knowledge is only that which we compile and arrange ourselves, "acquired by thoughts and meditation, and a right use of [our] Faculties."35 Piece by piece, knowledge must be gathered and arranged, free from ideology, i.e., habit, tradition, and superstition. For Hobbes, "those men that take their instruction from the authority of books, and not from their own meditation, [are] as much below the condition of ignorant men, as men enbued with true science are above it."36 And as Locke proclaims, "So much as we our selves consider and comprehend of Truth and Reason, so much we possess of real and true Knowledge. The floating of other Mens Opinions in our brains makes us not a jot more knowing, though they happen to be true."37 In Locke's theory, experience etched on the tabula rasa can actually be reordered, free from the influence of traditional authority, custom, or passion. His aspiration is the rational reconfiguration of sense-data, for "fashion and opinion have settled wrong notions, . . . the just values of things are misplaced, and the palates of men corrupted."38 Universally guaranteed the faculty of reason by the Creator, we can, indeed should, step back and master this world, outside and in.

The authentic individual is ruled by reason, in fact constituted by reason: the rational mind is the collector, arranger, and builder of truth. Without such self-mastery, we are not likely to be our own person, for we will be ruled by tyrants, as well as received opinion, superstition, and passion. Rational examination is vigorous exercise, Locke acknowledges, a capacity which too many men lack:

Laziness and Oscitancy in general, or a particular aversion for Books, Study, and Meditation keep others from any serious thoughts at all: And some out of fear, that

38Ibid., II, XXI, 69, p. 281.
an impartial enquiry would not favor those Opinions, which best suit their
Prejudices, Lives, and Designs, content themselves without examination, to take
upon trust, what they find convenient, and in fashion.\textsuperscript{39}

When people are proffered principles supposedly beyond question, they are inhibited from
the use of their own reason and judgement. For this nascent empirio-rational self,
authenticity is mastery, potentially of all domains, internal and external.

Importantly, this self-responsibility extends to the moral realm. Taylor argues that
the Cartesian-Lockean self internalizes moral sources, a momentous turn in the history of
the modern individual. Such a notion contradicts both the Platonic model, where the self is
to be oriented toward the sources of the Good outside of us, and the Augustinian self,
which, although turning inward to find our proofs of God, is still directed outward, toward
a righteous cosmological order which supplies our moral wherewithal. In contrast,
Descartes and Locke locate the power to resist sin \textit{within} us—an ability which radically
deeplens the influence, and responsibility, of this new self. Granting the self such a
substantial moral center amplifies its atomistic nature, as well. As Locke states, “In this
personal identity is founded all the right of reward and punishment; happiness and misery
being that for which every one is concerned for himself, and not mattering what becomes
of any substance, not joined to, or affected with that consciousness.”\textsuperscript{40} Since there are not
innate moral Ideas bestowed on us by God, the responsibility to construct truth and act
righteously is ours.

The nascent idea of authenticity is also advanced by Hobbes' and Locke's
interventions on behalf of ontological plurality. Despite their frequent appeals to various
"Laws of God and Nature," they are substantially liberal in their assertions of individual
diversity. Locke's \textit{A Letter Concerning Toleration} attempts to open up not only political
but psychic space for the authentic self, insisting that "The care of every man's soul
belongs unto himself, and is to be left unto himself."\textsuperscript{41} His study of history and peoples

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., IV, XX, 6, p. 710.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., II, XXVII, 18, p. 342.
\textsuperscript{41}Locke, \textit{A Letter Concerning Toleration}, Charles L. Sherman, ed., (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts,
has demonstrated "The great variety of Opinions, concerning Moral rules, which are to be found amongst Men, according to different sorts of Happiness." Hobbes, for his part, notes that although we all are alike in pursuing felicity, we do it in our own ways. "There is in men a diversity of dispositions to enter into society, arising from the diversity of their affections," he states, evidencing an awareness of ontological plurality to become a fundament of liberalism. It is perhaps at the altar of authenticity where ancient and medieval philosophy's commitment to teleology, a summun bonum and a finis ultimus, is ultimately sacrificed.

These thinkers' contribution to the concept of authenticity is also greatly advanced by their concern with freedom. This original, essential, antecedent freedom "is so necessary to, and closely joyned with a Man's Preservation, that he cannot part with it, but by what forfeits his preservation and Life together," as Locke phrases it. The political implications for such freedom are significant. We enter into the social contract, remedying the ills of the state of nature, because we are free, rational, and see the founding of government as a "prudent deal," in Hobbes' words. Repeatedly intervening on behalf of the sovereign individual, Hobbes and Locke cede limited legitimacy to government, which "hath no other end but preservation." For these Enlightenment thinkers who would come to be known as classical liberals, the individual atom, as the temple of a self-regulating rationality, is the sole raison d'être of social and political organization. It is only on behalf of the integrity of the primordially free and rational individual that political order is necessary and justifiable. And it is within the exclusive purview of the individual intellect to unsettle the wrong notions of dominant ideology conveyed in fashion, tradition, and politics: the individual must uncorrupt itself.

44Locke, Second Treatise of Government, IV, p. 16.
Truly, these are remarkable assertions for the autonomy and integrity of human being. Authenticity as rational self-mastery seems to offer us a powerful admixture to combat the problem of authenticity created by the social and economic upheavals of early-modern Europe. Our faculties of reason and will, if assiduously applied, should not only withstand the tourbuillon social, but conquer the new confusions of the sense-world. This consciousness is singular, indivisible, "punctual," as Taylor puts it. As a point, or atom, we are extentionless, independent, steady, and able to fix as an object everything outside of the mind. With such powers, the problem of authenticity seems rather tame: being true to oneself means ruling the objective world through reason. A rigorous task, no doubt, but it presumably can trust in such a simple, certain formula. Accordingly, the center of the self ("the Soul") is guaranteed to hold, despite the existential conundrum of the new urbanite. Our rational faculty, as the locus of self-sufficiency and certainty, insures our wholeness of being: ergo sum.

No doubt, this account of authenticity has serious deficiencies. Despite recognizing our differences in dispositions, Enlightenment theorists emphasize the uniformity of reason. With the conviction that would activate the strain of Epistemology within philosophy, it is asserted that there is one, correct process which leads to Knowledge and Truth. In addition, the freedom claimed for the Enlightenment individual is substantially reified. In Locke's universe, "all men are naturally in . . . a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit." However, forces which influence freedom of will and character--ideological and economic structures, say--suffer gaping errors of omission in Hobbes, Locke, Bacon, and Descartes. It is simply assumed that freedom, being our natural condition, will take care of itself if shielded from the rapacity of political power and predatory neighbors. Critical theory and postmodernism have thankfully blown the lid off such pretensions.

46This is Descartes' term, as well as Locke's. See the Essay, II, XXVII ("Of Identity and Diversity").
47Locke, Second Treatise, op. cit., II, p. 5.
48This blindness is reproduced throughout liberal political theory which insists on reifying personal sovereignty. It's as if endorsing "negative liberty"--that being free means being left alone--requires
Moreover, Hobbes' and Locke's political theories, while insisting on government by contract and consent only, stop far short of advocating political freedom. There is no substantive discussion of the "consent" so essential to these theories, while anything approaching participatory self-rule is clearly not in the cards. In fact, many of these thinkers prescribe powerful government--betraying not only an intense fear of civil disorder, anathema to "civilization," but also the new modern analyst's demiurgical impulses. Bacon's ambition to convert James I into a disciple so that his proposals could triumphantly be enacted was reflected in wide support amongst philosophes for what they called le despotisme éclairé.49 The absolutism of Hobbes' Leviathan is notorious, as is the brevity and ambiguity with which Locke speaks of "consent of the majority" in his treatises on government. While empowering the individual through an ethic of rational self-mastery, Enlightenment thinkers show a rather malign neglect of the notion of political self-rule. Rousseau, as we will see, ambitiously theorizes in these gaps. Next, we turn to the Romantic response to the model of the Enlightenment individual, which will offer us an contrary model of an authentic self.

**Romantic 'Authenticity: Sincerity, Connection, Expression**

Undeniably, the Scientific, Cartesian, and Empirical Revolutions, combined with the nascent liberal political theory of Hobbes and Locke, asserted unprecedented power and importance for the individual. Government's sole justification was to secure the individual's natural freedom. The rational faculty, active in each and all, soared with new possibility. With reason, we could decode and perfectly represent the workings of a mechanical world freed from teleological imperatives; through reason, we could reorganize our sense-data to conquer superstition and meticulously assemble knowledge. Truth was ignorance of the oppressions of daily life: unexamined religious precepts, laboring at behest of market demands, roles forced on people due to their race and gender. When politics is emptied of positive potential, and seen as a necessary evil at best, we do not serve freedom, as too many liberals contend. Rather, we limit our ability to fight all the extra-political forces which would much prefer obedient doggies to free individuals. They, not freedom, are succeeding.

not to be received on faith, popular opinion, or tradition, but generated solely on the
authority of one's own intellect. At the center of the new modern world reigned not
dominant ideology but the rational self-mastering subject, the Cogito.

Yet, as some disillusioned grandchildren of the Enlightenment--the Romantics--noticed, this new self seemed so foreign. It proposed to objectify everything outside of the mind; yet instrumental objectification of nature was at the heart of the horrors of modern cities. Men were turned into machines inside the "Dark, Satanic Mills," as William Blake expressed it. These dissidents, fathered by Rousseau, wondered if humans might possess powers which, only recently discovered, were being corrupted, exploited crudely and instrumentally. As Rousseau lamented, "They evaluate men like herds of cattle."50 Was not nature, the source of the individual's powers, more than an object to be understood only in order to be manipulated?

Unlike the Enlightenment thinkers, the Romantics were not so ebullient about modernity's designs upon the individual. For the Romantics sensed a schism at the heart of the modern condition, one that was dividing mind from spirit, civilization from nature. Modernity displayed a pernicious double edge: it was freeing us from the unjust fetters of feudalism, no doubt, but only after wrenching us from a previous organic unity necessary for human efflorescence. Indeed, two centuries later, we are still yearning to replace the losses inflicted by modernity, where, as Horkheimer and Adorno observed, "Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power."51 The alienation and anomie so emblematic of the 20th Century was not only first diagnosed but fought by the Romantics. The Romantic archetype would refer not to the feudalism recently conquered by nascent modernity, but to the ancient Greek world--where nature, culture, and the individual achieved concurrent, complementary realization. In modernity, the self, no longer in tune with its surroundings, suffered substantially, and the Romantic project, writ large, sought to remedy such error.

50Rousseau, Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts, op. cit., p. 51.
51Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, op cit., p. 9.
Rousseau

How to bring the self back into complement with the world? (Or, conversely, bring the new world into alignment with true human nature?) Such concerns animate the wonderfully diverse oeuvre of Rousseau, who, as a social critic, philosopher, and artist, gave an unprecedented (and perhaps hitherto unequaled) account of authenticity. In its originality and complexity, Rousseau’s project would inspire a model for the self which would challenge the detached, rational self-master as the authentic archetype for the modern age. To many critics, Rousseau’s project is seen as fundamentally an anti-modern polemic.52 Indeed, his reputation was originally won with an argument which condemns not only the pomp and insincerity of Parisian society (while extolling the simple life of the provinces and pre-modern civilization), but also claims, quoting Seneca, that “Since learned men have begun to appear among us, good men have disappeared.”53 One can follow this seemingly inverse relationship between modern civilization and virtue throughout Rousseau’s work. Yet, despite the length of this indictment, it should not obscure the potent, positive visage of Rousseau’s critiques. Emile, The Social Contract, and The Letter to D’Alembert, for example, are all extremely constructive works, in which Rousseau courageously investigates an alternate model for modernity. It is this strain of Rousseau’s thought which I will illuminate in this present section.

Rousseau, concurrently an individualist and a communitarian, was driven to postulate on the social-political component of authenticity to an extent far beyond his Enlightenment predecessors. Seeking connection with, instead of protection from governmental authority, Rousseau chafes against the main flow of modern Anglo-American political thought. Unlike other early modern political theorists who champion the mercenary cause of the individual, Rousseau insists that "The founder of nations must weaken the structure of man in order to fortify it, to replace the physical and independent

52See, for example, Judith Shklar’s Men and Citizens (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1969).
53Rousseau, Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, op. cit., p. 45.
existence we have all received from nature with a moral and communal existence."\textsuperscript{54} Such a plan far surpasses the demands that other social contract theorists (e.g., Hobbes and Locke) make on the individual who enters political society. There, subjects must cede certain acquisitive and predatory rights, inherent to the state of nature, in exchange for security for a wider array of prerogatives. A change of consciousness is not required of the rational, self-interested individual; it is only asked that he accept some restrictions on behavior that was previously permitted in the state of nature. Indeed, for many critics, Rousseau's intense advocacy of an identity between individual and community interest sends his political theory off the socialistic deep end, dragging the autonomous, self-mastering individual to the guillotine or the gulag.

Yet Rousseau's political ideal is admirable to the great extent which it \textit{advocates} autonomy and mastery—expressed in the public realm. To Rousseau, "being oneself" necessarily means manifesting one's will with others in the \textit{res publica}, the public place, as well as within oneself. The problem which the social contract attempts to answer, Rousseau says, is "How to find a form of association which will defend the person and goods of each member with the collective force of all, and under which each individual, while uniting himself with the others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before."\textsuperscript{55} Sovereignty for a people means the exercise of Rousseau's notorious concept of the "general will," which reflects the common interest of all (as opposed the sum of private wills). That such a commonality exists is not controversial to Rousseau, but obvious: "for if conflict between private interests has made the setting up of civil societies necessary, harmony between those same interests has made it possible."\textsuperscript{56}

Rousseau takes very seriously the "civil freedom" which a contracting people gain. It yields so much more than the "prudent deal" struck by Hobbes' instrumental power-seekers, for it enables the moral life. This is historically unprecedented, and Rousseau

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., I, 6, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., II, 1, p. 69.
\end{footnotesize}
places the political act in the center of a progressive, humanistic narrative: "The passing from the state of nature to the civil society produces a remarkable change in man; it puts justice as a rule of conduct in the place of instinct, and gives his actions the moral quality they previously lacked." Man has lifted himself "from a narrow, stupid animal" to a "creature of intelligence and a man," where "his faculties are so exercised and developed, his mind is so enlarged, his sentiments so enabled, and his whole spirit so elevated." 57 Rousseau, like the Enlightenment thinkers we visited above, expects moral self-mastery from his model subjects.

For Rousseau, the substantial social component to authenticity demands the exercise of moral wherewithal through political institutions. Like the Ancients before him and the Romantics to follow, Rousseau emphasizes the organic nature of being, of which political life (an organic identity itself--"the body politic") needed to be an integral part. For all of Rousseau's talk about "changing human nature," this is not an idealist dream of the Platonic variety. In political organization, as in all matters, simplicity is best: "When we see among the happiest people in the world bands of peasants regulating the affairs of state under an oak tree, and always acting wisely, can we help feeling a certain contempt for the refinements of other nations, which employ so much skill and mystery to make themselves at one illustrious and wretched?" 58 Rousseau's version of the social contract demands that a people's nature be expressed through their political institutions and practices. This is also true for cultural production. In arguing against the installation of a theater in his native Geneva, his solution evinces a rather parochial materialism: "in order to make the dramas of our theatre suitable to us, to compose them ourselves; we should have authors before we have actors. For it is not good that we be shown all sorts of imitations, but only those of things that are decent and befitting free men." 59 To be sure, this is a radically democratic and materialist vision, emphasizing connection rather than estrangement in a people's

57 Ibid., I, 8, pp. 64-5.
58 Ibid., IV, 1, p. 149.
59 Letter to D'Alembert, op. cit., p. 120.
relation with their government. "The common good makes itself so manifestly evident that only common sense is needed to discern it," Rousseau claims;"60 thereby, the general will "should spring from all and apply to all."61

Yet for all his insistence on the social component of authenticity, Rousseau celebrates the autonomous individual repeatedly and rigorously. Despite the emphasis on organicism and connection soon to reside at the center of the Romantic worldview, Rousseau at times seems to be advocating a solitude bordering on atomistic autarky. He had become so disgusted with the mode of sociality in Paris, that in Emile, his treatise on education, he orders a retreat to bucolia. For, "Man's weakness makes him sociable. Our common sufferings draw our hearts to our fellow-creatures; we should have no duties to mankind if we were not men.... A really happy man is a hermit."62 Rousseau's "natural man" is almost a complete solitary, content to satisfy only physical needs, acting in accordance with its amour de soi, or healthy self-regard.63 Civilization brings corruption in the form of other-dependence, where status-seeking replaces independence. The development of our natural selves would clearly be better served in isolation.

Sounding a conviction to become a mainspring of Romanticism, Rousseau appeals to nature as a source of strength and authenticity. He likens natural man to "a sapling chance sown in the midst of the highway, bent hither and thither and soon crushed by the passers-by." Rousseau implores the educator to "remove this young tree from the highway and shield it from the crushing force of social conventions. Tend and water it ere it dies.... From the outset raise a wall round you child's soul."64 Such autarky is necessary because the articulation of the authentic subject depends on the voice of nature which has been muffled by society. Accessing the inner voice is necessarily a solitary affair, the only way to break free from the insincerity of politeness and propriety. This is how Rousseau sees

60The Social Contract, op. cit., IV, 1, p. 149.
61Ibid., II, 4, p. 75.
63See the Discourse on Inequality, Part I.
64Emile, op. cit., I, pp. 5-6.
the task of writing his memoirs, *The Confessions*. To recount the "history of my soul" is to remember "what I have felt," "what my feelings have led me to do." In order to tell this story faithfully, "I have need of no other memories; it is enough if I enter again into my inner self, as I have done till now."  

Access to one's true, inner self is much more likely to occur under certain environmental circumstances. Rousseau hints that authenticity may have a class component: "Among the people, where great passions only express themselves occasionally, natural feeling makes itself heard more often. In the highest ranks of all it is absolutely stifled, and beneath a mask of feeling is always self-interest or vanity that speaks." There is also a strong pastoralist strain to Rousseau's model of authenticity, which equates the honesty to one's self with the simple life of the provinces, away from false appearances and play-acting of the city. People freed from subsistence labor, family and civic duty, caught up in reputation-seeking and sociability, become increasingly distanced from their own self. City dwellers were excessively social, and apt to manipulate their appearance in the eyes of others in order to win approval, becoming alarmingly insincere and other-dependent. Rousseau suspected that the only real hope for authenticity lay in the countryside. In the small town,

"More original spirits, more inventive industry, more really new things are found there because the people are less imitative; having few models each draws more from himself and puts more of his own in everything he does; because the human mind, less spread out, less drowned in vulgar opinions, elaborates itself and ferments better in tranquil solitude; because, in seeing less, more is imagined."  

To articulate this originality is precisely the project of Rousseau's *Confessions*, where he embarks on "an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator." This work, published posthumously, was electrifying in its sincerity and complexity, for Rousseau wrote with widened vocabulary of sentiments and

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66 Ibid., IV, p. 144.
67*Letter to D'Alembert*, op. cit., p. 60.
impressions, greatly expanding the lexicon of self-description. This is the story of the unique individual: "I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different." Yet Rousseau is not only claiming a unique composition, but endorsing a certain self-mastery to be achieved through the articulation of self-knowledge. This is strong ethic of sincerity: based in the honest telling of one's story, it is an attempt to become transparent both to self and audience. "To thine own self be true/And it doth follow, as the night the day/Thou canst not then be false to any man," old Polonius advises Laertes in Hamlet.

For Rousseau, this honesty must be absolute; it must include both the pleasant and the painful, the respected and the reprehensible. He reflects on the process of writing his memoirs:

I decided to make it a work unique and unparalleled in its truthfulness, so that for once at least the world might behold a man as he was within. I had always been amused at Montaigne's false ingenuousness, and at his pretense of confessing his faults while taking good care only to admit likable ones; whereas I, who believe, and always have believed, that I am on the whole the best of men, felt that there is no human heart, however pure, that does not conceal some odious vice.

Nature is good, but it is not always pretty and agreeable. And it is incumbent on us to tell the truth. In his social life, this became an ethic of frankness, and when practiced, sometimes upset his acquaintances not the least. For Rousseau believes that "the most sacred duty of friendship . . . does not consist in always making oneself pleasant, but in always offering the best advice."

Clearly, Rousseau lived his ideal of authenticity. As one critic puts it, "he forced his contemporaries to acknowledge that the self was a problem as pressing for them as it was for him." Despite the nostalgia, parochialism, and pastoralism which deeply color his scholarly work, Rousseau's own life was an indictment of the social order which

69Ibid.
70Quoted in Trilling, op. cit., p. 3.
72Ibid., XII, p. 545.
preceded modernity. Rising from the provincial shopfloor to the salons of the chic, composing operas for the King and articles for the *Encyclopaedia*, Rousseau was a living condemnation of ascribed status. This true original would inspire authentics for centuries to come.

Thanks to Rousseau, the question of authenticity also assumes a theoretical importance theretofore unrecognized by the philosophers and scientists of modernity. Indeed, the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement are united in their assertion of the individual. But for the early rationalists, empiricists, and liberals, the diversity of individuals is an ontological given, an irreducible condition of a “difference in manners” and “diversity of dispositions.” Yet, as some critics recognized, certain forces of modernity were exacting their toll on this individual who had risen to such prominence in the theoretical configurations of Enlightenment thinkers. Rousseau both reiterated the warning and proposed alternatives which would, unlike the complacency encouraged by Enlightenment epistemology and political theory, abundantly fuel theorists of authenticity to follow him.

**Expressivism: Herder and the poets**

In his illuminating narrative of the modern self, Charles Taylor characterizes Rousseau’s work as the first intimation in the development of an altogether new model for human being. This turn, which Taylor labels "expressivism," would be given a more explicit articulation by the German romantic Johann Gottfried von Herder, who we will visit shortly below. "Expressivism" is a rebuke of Aristotelian teleology and functionalism for the self; in the wake of the Romantics, "the adequate human life would not just be a fulfillment of an idea or a plan which is fixed independently of the subject who realizes it," but rather "the epoch-making demand that my realization of the human essence be my own."74 This revolutionary view of authenticity demands that each individual realize its own form or essence, its own way of being human. And this is necessarily expressed

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differently through each of us—a process that we "cannot exchange with that of any other except at the cost of distortion and self-mutilation."75

Thus, the authentically-lived life becomes, in itself, an expression of an idea. Expression is more than a medium for meaning, for an idea frequently does not fully take form until it is expressed. Meaning, and being, are thus dependent on expression: they do not fully exist until they are brought to fruition. There is an obvious similarity with artistic activity, in the sense that the "message" of a painting or a poem cannot be completely known until the artwork is completed. Taylor describes the work of art "as the locus of a manifestation which brings us into the presence of something which is otherwise inaccessible, and which is of the highest moral or spiritual significance; a manifestation, moreover, which also defines or completes something, even as it reveals."76 The new Romantic self was to be an analogue to the work of art, and the artist becomes a cultural and moral hero.

"It must go further still: that soul must become/its own betrayer, its own deliverer, the one/activity, the mirror turn lamp." M.H. Abrams' classic work on Romanticism is launched by this passage by Yeats, which provides a compelling image for the radical epistemological and anthropological transformations wrought by the post-Enlightenment era. The mirror turned lamp: no longer a passive, reflective surface of external objects and dominant ideology, the soul is "a radiant projector which makes a contribution to the objects it perceives."77 Aristotle's long-standing definition of art as mimesis (imitation) is overthrown, and poiesis (creation) becomes the poet's modus operandi.78 No longer is the purpose of art to represent (by means of reflection) something outside of us, from the realm of the metaphysical and eternal, but to manifest the unique universe within—not to reiterate but to create.

75Ibid.
76 Taylor, Sources of the Self, op. cit., p. 419.
78See Aristotle, Poetics, Chapter I. Plato, too, classifies art as such, and uses the fact that poetry is imitative as a justification for the banishment of poets from his city. See the Republic, Book X.
As Taylor argues, this conviction works alongside a notion of freedom particular to Romantic thought, which sees extant ways of thinking, acting, and being as its main enemies:

Expressivist theory makes freedom a, if not the central, value of human life ... the standard Enlightenment view of freedom was that of independence of the self-defining subject in relation to outside control, principally that of state and religious authority. New freedom is seen as consisting in authentic self-expression. It is threatened not only by external invasion but by all the distortions that expression is menaced by.  

An ethic of self-expansion accompanies these new visions of freedom and art, which was reflected in the forms taken by artistic expression: the dominant genres of the Romantic period were the personal novel, autobiography, the intimate diary, and lyric (i.e., personal) poetry. The poet becomes the center of the work of art, blazing white-hot with authenticity: "I must create a system, or be enslaved by another Man's," declares Blake, while Wordsworth assumes the ultimate creative task: "Every great and original writer must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished." Ultimately, the expansive Romantic personality would spill over into its notorious decadence, provoking Nietzsche's condemnation which we will visit further below.

Just as Rousseau implores the educator to tap nature as the source of a student's physical, psychic, and moral strength, the connection with nature is also a central theme of the Romantic poetry he inspired. To Coleridge, poetry aspires to manifest Naturgeist, "for so only can we hope to produce any work truly natural in the object and truly human in the effect." The Romantics sought out nature at its wildest, as formal gardens and coutured landscapes lost their appeal. As Wordsworth odes, "Ye mountains, thine O Nature. Thou hast fed/My lofty speculations, and in thee/For this uneasy heart of ours I find/A never-failing principle of joy/And purest passion." In Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse, Saint-Preux's most intense moments occur in the midst of aggressive alpine terrain and along the

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rugged southern shore of Lake Geneva. "The Alps," one critic states, "an object of horror for the Age of Reason, became for Romantics of the generations that followed Rousseau, a place of pilgrimage." Combating the rift between mind and nature emphasized by Descartes' *res cogito* and *res extensa*, Romantic thought insisted on their ultimate connection. As Byron speculates, "Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part of me and of my soul, as I of them?"84

In addition, nature is seen as the ultimate source of Imagination, the force so central to Romantic being--"living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception," as Coleridge phrases it.85 Engaging the imagination, for Blake, meant seeing "through the eye" rather than "with the eye," this latter being the impoverished mode of Newton's "single vision." Imagination is a fundamentally creative mode of perception; it does not passively reiterate the world but participates in the activity of understanding. Romantic epistemology emphasized the imagination's role in the processing of sense-data, reacting against the mechanistic and homogenizing implications of Lockean empiricism. As Blake posits, "I see Everything I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is more beautiful than the Sun, & a bag worn with the use of Money has more beautiful proportions than a Vine filled with Grapes."86 Was this due simply to "fashion and opinions having settled the wrong notions," as Locke would have it, or does the working of the imagination create an incorrigible diversity of perception? If minds were as mechanical in their recording, and rational in their reordering of sense-data as Locke claimed, Romantic authenticity would be impossible. As one commentator puts it, "we are not certain that our sense-impressions are the same as those of others, except at the simplest level; and for the Romantics the recognition that the sense-data are transformed and

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83 Cranston, op. cit., p. 16.
84 Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, III, st. 75, quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 52.
understood by each individual mind is vital, because it is that transformation which declares the individual.\(^{87}\)

This exaltation of uniqueness and particularity was given especially rigorous articulation by one of Rousseau's fellow-travelers, Johann Gottfried von Herder. A trenchant opponent of rationalism and classicism, Herder wrote philosophy of history and cultural interpretation of a radically democratic and anthropological temper. Coiner of the term "nationalism," he exhorted his compatriots to "Speak German! Spew out the Seine's ugly slime!," recognizing the integral, immanent importance of language to identity.\(^{88}\)

Sometimes implicated in the line of pernicious national chauvinism which culminated in Nazism, Herder was actually a virulent anti-imperialist. Controverting the major philosophical minds of his time (e.g., Kant and Hegel), he considered each Volk of equal importance and integrity, refusing to rank them within any hierarchical narrative of historical progression. This moral assertion on behalf of uniqueness was accompanied by an equally radical ontological one: each Volk contains its own principle of measurement within itself--each is fundamentally incommensurable, incomparable.

No doubt influenced by Rousseau, Herder applied the insight of ontological plurality to the individual. "Every man is ultimately a world, in external appearance indeed similar to others, but internally an individual being, with whom no other coincides."\(^{89}\) As with his interventions on behalf of diverse peoples, this is more than the simplistic observation that each is unique. For Herder is asserting that "Each human being has his own measure, as it were an accord peculiar to him of all his feelings to each other."\(^{90}\) To each his own measure: in each of us, humanity is divulged in our own unique way; there is

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\(^{87}\) Watson, Ibid., p. 19.
no universal, homogenizing scale by which to judge the "human," for it is manifested differently in all of us.

This conviction was based on his Romantic conviction in the power of nature, its infinite diversity and boundless depths. Like Rousseau's prescriptions for his student Emile, Herder was convinced that authenticity arose through nature's dance with the senses. He states,

To produce original men, let them experience many things in their youth and let them perceive these in the manner that is natural to them.... The diverse tangible and vivid sensations, spontaneously perceived in the most uniquely individual manner, constitute the basic components of a sound human frame and the very foundation of that characteristic which we principally associate with original genius: strong, lively, creative ideas independently formed.\(^{91}\)

After reading Rousseau's *Emile*, he concluded that religion had no need of reason, and instead could be based in feeling, in connection with the nature of the body. Herder went on to posit ways in which sensibility should rule rationality. Taylor reflects on this expressivist revolution, congealed by Herder:

Feeling here is not what it was for the mainstream of the Enlightenment, a passive state of affect only contingently linked with what provokes it on one hand, and with the action it motivates on the other. Rather we have a notion of feeling in the pregnant sense as inseparable from thought, just as thought, if it truly engage with reality is inseparable from feeling . . . . [For Herder] Only idle speculation can be unaccompanied by feeling.\(^{92}\)

Emphasizing the centrality of nature to authenticity, Herder was driven to make outlandish assertions on behalf of plurality and relativism: "Not a man, not a country, not a people, not a natural history, not a state, are like one another. Hence the True, the Good, the Beautiful in them are not similar either."\(^{93}\) And again with Rousseau, Herder is

\(^{91}\)Herder, "Journal of My Voyage in the Year 1769," in F.M. Barnard, ed. and trans., *J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1969), p. 83. "Genius" is the term generally employed by Romantics to convey the true original, what I am calling the "authentic"—this new form of subjectivity arising in early modernity. Of course I intend the term "authentic" to apply to a much wider range of the population (potentially all of it, actually) than the concept of "genius" implies. The Romantic employment of the narrow category "genius," I suspect, simply conveys the scarcity of "*les originaux*" in this epoch.

\(^{92}\)Taylor, Hegel, op. cit., p. 21.

thoroughly convinced that the authentic individual must be *sincere*. There is no denying nor transcending one's language, religion, folk traditions, and fund of available imagery; rather than being restrictions, these are *vehicles* for the expression of uniqueness. It is untenable to Herder that the genius transcends context, or can think freely in all idioms. The authentic individual is not the cosmopolitan, but the sincere being grounded in place, people, language, and tradition. It is the "genius" who can creatively engage this embeddedness, manifesting its nature in unique fashion.

It is with the Romantics, then, that the ideal of authenticity incorporates the notion of uniqueness at its core. As a result, authenticity assumes its moral imperative: that the individual must manifest its singular nature. In time, such devotion to ontological plurality and difference would burrow deep into the consciousness of the West, serving as a philosophical fundament for our reigning ideology of liberalism. Indeed, Romanticism reverberates resoundingly through contemporary popular consciousness: as social critics of many shades lament, hedonistic self-fulfillment is our existential engine, and "feeling" is as legitimate a moral animus as reason or will. Though it has contributed considerably to this dominant ideology, we must not depreciate the innovative and insightful nature of the Romantics' contribution. In their hands, "being true to oneself" demands a strong dose of connection, with nature and nation, which sets this model of authenticity distinctly apart from its immediate predecessor and successor. For the alpha and omega of the modern period, the *Aufklärer* and Friedrich Nietzsche, authenticity maintains distance and detachment close to heart. For Nietzsche, as we will see, detachment also entails a strong commitment to irony and self-overcoming.

**Nietzsche's Post-Romantic Authenticity: Irony, Creation, Detachment**

Nietzsche’s ironic heroism, a major touchstone for this project, is best introduced in his own unequivocal words:

No one can construct for you the bridge upon which precisely you must cross the stream of life, no one but you yourself alone. There are, to be sure, countless paths and bridges and demi-gods which would bear you through this stream; but only at
the cost of yourself: you would put yourself in pawn and lose yourself. There exists in the world a single path along which no one can go except you: whither does it lead? Do not ask, go along it.94

Despite their equal commitment to the true original, Nietzsche despised Rousseau. In fact, Nietzsche achieved much of his identity in the latter stage of his writing (once he had turned against Richard Wagner), through the oppositional foil of the Romantics. Not only did Rousseau, the penitent Christian "abortion," inspire Nietzsche's venom; the late German Romantics, led by Wagner, are a constant antipode for his iconoclasm. While extolling the artist and the artwork as heroically authentic, Nietzsche condemns the decadence that Romantic art justified and propagated. "Art for art's sake" transformed into excess for the sake of excess, which, in the hands of the Romantics, was mere palliative and balm, used to flee rather than engage and overcome life. In the Nietzschean testament, it is a cardinal sin for an artist to fall unequal to the challenge of nihilism. Romantic intensity might claim to be sincere, but it is ultimately false, and "is no sign of strength but of a feeling of deficiency."95 According to Nietzsche, the Romantics suffer from an "impoverishment of life" which seeks through art "rest, stillness, redemption, . . . intoxication, convulsions, anesthesia, and madness."96 As we will see, this is not Nietzsche's idea of the authentic life. The 18th century, he says, was "dominated by woman, full of esprit, shallow."97 In addition, Rousseau's notion of natural equality, the "venomous poison" which makes the unequal equal, was much too responsible for the "bloody farce" of the French Revolution.98 Yet below, we will see that Nietzsche may have so ardently distanced himself from the Romantics because in important ways he stood so close to them. Indeed,

97The Will to Power, op. cit., I, 95, p. 59.
all emphasized the importance of art, self-creation, and personal assertion in the achievement of a unique subjectivity.

The Romantics, however, were only one of many targets for Nietzsche's dynamite. He also ruthlessly explodes the fundamental presumptions which enable the rational mastery of the Enlightenment authentic. Striking against Descartes, Locke, and Kant, Nietzsche refutes the notion that the faculties of mind, soul, spirit, will, or reason are independent, unified, or sovereign. "Both the doer and deed are fictions," he posits, insisting that "Everything of which we become conscious is arranged, simplified, schematized, interpreted through and through . . . . 'Thinking,' as epistemologists conceive it, simply does not occur." 99 What we call reason is not a faculty nor a process; rather, it is a result, a certain arrangement of passions and drives which we imagine is an self-generated, independent act. "Each thought, each feeling, each will . . . is a composite . . . of our constituent drives," he claims. 100 The virtuous, correct, autonomous act is a result of neither reason nor will, for "All perfect acts are unconscious and no longer subject to will." 101 There can be no willful doer behind the deed because the subject, too, is an after-effect. Radically breaking with Enlightenment faith, Nietzsche insists the "The 'subject' is not something given, it is something added on and invented and projected behind what there is." 102

Nietzsche's critique of the subject is indeed profound. He recognized that the current of thought beginning in Socrates and culminating in Christianity had deepened and greatly empowered the self, by granting it responsibility for wrongdoing and the starring role in the drama of personal salvation. The cruel irony, Nietzsche observed, was that ultimately the Christian is unequal to this new imperative of self-mastery, and is encouraged to abandon this sovereignty for submission to the grace of God. Such was the

101 The Will to Power, op. cit., II, 289, p. 163.
102 Ibid., III, 481, p. 267.
model offered by St. Paul, a frequent recipient of Nietzsche's vituperation, who embodies the great paradox where, as one interpreter phrases it, "the very selfhood that is first called forth by Christianity must ultimately deny itself in order to achieve an eternal life." To Nietzsche, Christian morality is all about denial, refutation, and weakness. It is fundamentally a form of existential resentment: in order to take revenge for the unpredictability and pain of life, the moralist strikes out against life, attempting to control its flux and chaos, to deny its mysteries by subscribing to a prescribed code of self-renunciation. Adherence to this moral code provides both easy answers and incentive, justifying earthly suffering and promising to reward it in the afterlife.

Nietzsche rejects not only religious morality, but also philosophy's attempts to supply ethical wherewithal. The Kantian notion of duty unabashedly promotes the interests of the herd, and his insistence on universality is naïve. There are no reprehensible actions "in themselves," for the world is both too complex and too interconnected. For its part, the utilitarian focus on consequences is also fundamentally naïve and myopic. Is it really possible to know the consequential chain, for "Who can say what an action will stimulate, excite, provoke?" Moreover, discerning what has utility, what is useful, is a problem which defies the simplistic formulations of the utilitarian. "They have no conception of the grand economy," he judges.

Nietzsche perceptively calls morality the herd instinct within the individual. Its purpose is to cut off the tallest ears of corn, to prune away individuality and difference. Like every biological entity, society's first priority is to reproduce itself. In vulgar democratic fashion, the herd must constantly reign in individuality in order to survive: "it will allow value to the individual only from the point of view of the whole, for the sake of the whole, it hates those who detach themselves." The herd by nature is given to preservation and stasis; it will not allow a creative bone in its body. Transparency and

105 Ibid., II, 275, p. 157.
truthfulness are imperative for its members. It says, "You shall be knowable, express your inner nature by clear and constant signs--otherwise you are dangerous." Expressing his revulsion to impulses of traditional morality which he sees in Romantic sincerity, Nietzsche addresses the potential authentic on behalf of the many: "Your ability to dissimulate is the worst thing for the herd. We despise the secret and unrecognizable."106

Distancing himself dramatically from the Romantic model of authenticity, Nietzsche invokes the power of irony for his ideal subject. "I myself have long ago learned to think and estimate differently with regard to deceiving and being deceived," he states, for "it is nothing more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than semblance."107 Irony is an elusive and perhaps overused concept, with numerous applications throughout its history. Here it will be defined as a gesture which creates distance: between speech and intention (saying one thing and meaning another), an action and consequences, a speaker and an interlocutor, or a speaker and him- or herself. This distance, as Trilling notes, "is not for the purpose of deceit and not wholly for the purpose of mockery."108 In the hands of Nietzsche, it is movement of detachment, an attempt at autonomy, which calls attention to the provisional nature of all truth, including the constancy of identity. "Is it not at length permitted," he wonders, "to be a little ironical towards the subject, just as towards the predicate and object? Might not the philosopher elevate himself above faith in grammar?"109 For the ironist, the transparency to which metaphysics aspires--"seeing the world steadily and seeing it whole," as Richard Rorty puts it--is the same aspiration which drives Romantic sincerity. The "honest soul" decried by Hegel as an impediment to Spirit must give way to a "disintegrated consciousness" from which authenticity might issue. For Nietzsche, the honest soul is "a representative of retarded cultures," for the "inertia of the spirit" has allowed its superficial opinions to harden into firmly-held convictions. The

106Ibid., II, 277, p. 158.
108Tilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, op. cit., p. 120.
Ironic authenticity proposed by Nietzsche contends that only he "whose spirit is free and restlessly alive can prevent this stiffening through continual change." We must not be held back by the convictions we have professed in the past. We are not obliged "to be faithful to our errors ... We have to become traitors, be unfaithful, again and again abandon our ideals."\(^{110}\)

For, as Nietzsche contends, "The demand for truthfulness presupposes the knowability and stability of the person."\(^{111}\) In refutation of the Enlightenment model of the steady, unified, and rational subject, Nietzsche proposes "The subject as multiplicity." Since we are each a jumbled compendium of drives and impulses, the unity we assume is forced and artificial: Nietzsche calls the individual "an extremely vulnerable piece of vanity."\(^{112}\) We believe that the individual is an autonomous moral agent and thereby a \textit{causa prima}. Yet to Nietzsche there is no kernel of the self, no place nor activity which defines its essence. He asks, "How can man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled; and if the hare has seven skins, man can slough off seventy times seven and still not be able to say: 'this is really you, this is no longer outer shell'."\(^{113}\) Indeed, he wonders whether "The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general? A kind of aristocracy of 'cells' in which dominion resides?"\(^{114}\) The coherent, stable, sovereign "I" who thinks and wills, claiming itself as the motive force behind thoughts and action, is "a fable, a fiction, a play on words."\(^{115}\)

Such observations on human nature enable Nietzsche to advance a strong case for ontological plurality. This is the space in which authenticity thrives:


\(^{111}\)\textit{The Will to Power}, op. cit., II, 277, p. 158.

\(^{112}\)Ibid., III, 783, p. 410.


\(^{114}\)\textit{The Will to Power}, op. cit., III, 490, p. 270.

Let us finally consider what naïvety it is in general to say 'man should be such and such!' Reality shows us a delightful abundance of types, the richness that comes from an extravagant play and alternation of forms: to which some wretched loafer of a moralist says: 'no!' man should be different? . . . He even knows how man should be, this maundering miseryguts: he paints himself on the wall and says 'ecce homo!'

Unmistakably, Nietzsche intervenes on the side of our biological distinctiveness: "Each of us bears a productive uniqueness within him as the core of his being; and when he becomes aware of it, there appears around him a strange penumbra which is the mark of his singularity." But we are incapable of remaining the keeper of our uniqueness, for our weakness and our social nature wages war on our biological inheritance. Indeed, "Most find this something unendurable, because they are, as aforesaid, lazy, and because a chain of toil and burdens is suspended from this uniqueness." Behold the men we really are: a cowardly, weak, and lazy race. Each person's "strangely variegated assortment" will only come into existence once, yet we allow the herd to subjugate our uniqueness.

Humans are timid, but also indolent, "and fear most of all the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden them . . . for it is on account of their laziness that men seem like factory products." As with both the Enlightenment and Romantic models discussed above, responsibility for authenticity ultimately lies with the individual, in our ability to assert our own being over the prejudices of common convention. "And to repeat," Nietzsche emphasizes, "Public opinions--private indolence."

To be sure, Nietzschean authenticity cannot be achieved without the rigorous exercise of one's own morality. The value of a deed is to be determined, in short, by the extent to which it is generated by the individual. For we put the health of our soul in jeopardy when we subscribe to the morality of the herd. "The worth of an action depends upon who does it and whether it originates from one's depths or one's surface: that is,

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how deeply it is individual." The individual should be a law to itself. Nietzsche's model is "the sovereign individual, that resembles only himself, that has got loose from the morality of custom, the autonomous 'supermoral' individual (for 'autonomous' and 'moral' are mutually exclusive terms)." Such assertions are not a blanket approbation of all egoism, however. Nietzsche recognizes that egoism can be great or contemptible, depending on who is exhibiting it: "Every single person can be considered from the point of view of whether he represents the ascendant or descendent line of life. A decision on this point gives you a criterion for the value of his selfishness." Advocating a "restoration of 'nature,'" Nietzsche proposes a physiological basis for an action's moral value: "whether it is the expression of a complete or inhibited life." Authenticity is based not in obligation to a code of ethics but in attunement to our unique biological being. "A man appears full of character much more often because he always obeys his temperament than because he always obeys his principles."

In Nietzsche's universe, correct actions are the result of self-ordering. While he considers all physical and mental faculties as diverted passions and drives (thereby dethroning will and reason from their privileged positions), like much of his philosophical ancestry he conceptualizes a hierarchy of higher and lower elements within individuals. Like Socrates in Plato's Republic, Nietzsche proposes a city within a soul, ordered hierarchically, ruled in aristocratic manner--i.e., by the "best." Nietzsche reproduces Plato's distaste for democracy, asserting that the chaos which results from leveling ultimately enervates the living being, the organisms of city and soul. Though aristocratic rule is best, tyranny also affords the individual the necessary leadership to activate the higher self. Nietzsche contemplates three different arrangements of the passions:

123The Will to Power, op. ct., II, 291, p. 164.
1. The dominating passion, which even brings with it the supremest form of health; here the co-ordination of the inner systems and their operation in the service of one end is best achieved--but this is almost the definition of health!  
2. The antagonism of the passions; two, three, a multiplicity of 'souls in one breast': very unhealthy, inner ruin, disintegration, betraying and increasing and inner conflict and anarchism--unless one passion at last becomes master. Return to health--  
3. Juxtaposition without antagonism or collaboration: often periodic, and then, as soon as an order has been established, also healthy. The most interesting men, the chameleons, belong here; they are not in contradiction with themselves, they are happy and secure, but they do not develop--their differing states lie juxtaposed, even if they are separated sevenfold. They change, they do not become.125

For the soul to be healthy and powerful, the passions must be ruled by the strongest; in the multi-colored man, juxtaposition is the best order to be hoped for. Though he condemns the many for their indolence in succumbing to the normalizing impositions of the herd, Nietzsche at times displays a certain generosity toward the man in the street. Despite his contention that the higher man is truly rare, he concedes that "Everyone has his good days when he discovers his higher self; and true humanity demands that everyone be evaluated only in the light of this condition and not in that of his working-day unfreedom and servitude."126 Yet the higher self must rule; Nietzsche is unequivocal that order must be imposed on the chaos and antagonism created by competing factions. Democracy, as Plato and Aristotle prophesize, degrades into anarchy, which in turn must be rescued by the tyrant.127 As goes the city, so does the soul. Emphasizing the ironic nature of this authenticity, Nietzsche identifies a "pathos of distance" within the soul's hierarchy. Nietzschean authenticity is based in suffering, struggle, and renewal: the higher self must engage in "continuous work, war, victory, by day and night" to arrange the well-ordered soul, which in turn faces repeated overturning as "we shed our skins every spring."128

Classicism undoubtedly echoes at times through the streets of Nietzsche's Byzantium. It is perhaps loudest in his devotion to the ideal of the hero. Nihilism's challenge to modern humans is to create divinity in the wake of the death of God. But as

125The Will to Power, op. cit., III, 778, p. 408.  
127See Plato, Republic, Book XIII, and Aristotle, Politics, Book V.  
Nietzsche recognized, modern times are quite inimical to outstanding men, for the herd stifles individuality. Yet we insist on raising some men to great heights, where they are turned into idols who enable our own weakness. Such pusillanimous idol-worship was encouraged by the Romanticism Nietzsche so despised. He thus strove to reinvigorate the heroic ideal for the contemporary world. Indeed, such a concern was at the core of his first published piece of scholarship, *The Birth of Tragedy*, a work he would later criticize but never jettison. In this work, his doctoral thesis, he was most attracted by the tragic heroes of the Athenian dramatists, notably Sophocles. Later in his career he would implore the heroic aspirant to follow "a supreme commandment: to become mature and flee from that paralyzing upbringing of the present age which sees its advantage in preventing your growth so as to rule and exploit you to the full while you are still immature . . . . Satiate your soul with Plutarch and when you believe in his heroes dare at the same time to believe in your self."\(^{129}\)

Yet in the epoch of modern nihilism, the hero must achieve greatness in spite of popular reprobation and the lack of transcendentual standards. Thus the hero must foremost be a self-generator of morality: "We must free ourselves from morality to be able to live morally. My free will,—my self-created ideal wants this and that virtue from me, that is, to perish in pursuit of virtue. That is heroism."\(^{130}\) The modern hero must accept a colossal challenge, distinguishing himself from the classical hero by means of a righteous and intractable autonomy. Previous heroes, notes one commentator, "were incarnations of ideals or descendants of the gods. They were meant to serve as paradigms for their peers and their progeny, just as the gods served as models for the heroes."\(^{131}\) Nietzsche's hero represents nothing and no one but himself. Such a model is rooted in the modern ideal of authenticity, for uniqueness is at its foundation. Thus, unlike the ancient demigod, the modern hero "cannot serve as an exemplar, for his virtue consists in his

\(^{129}\) *Untimely Meditations*, op. cit., "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," 6, p. 95.

\(^{130}\) *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., 16, p. 163, quoted in Thiele, op. cit., p. 46.

\(^{131}\) Thiele, op. cit., p. 42.
incommensurability."[132] For the Nietzschean hero, "being great" means "being free and entirely himself."[133] This authenticity is based not only in our biological, ontological plurality, but in self-overcoming, a major theme of Nietzschean ethics.

Distinguishing his project from Romantic authenticity, Nietzsche claims that "Your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be."[134] Nature has sung her diverse song through each one of us, but the machinations of herd society silence dissonance and deviation. Thus it is up to each discrete individual to create a higher nature for itself. To do so, we must be ironic, prepared to forget ourselves. Only through creative self-destruction can we rise above. If we are tempted to look back, we must see what we have left behind and below as "an insignificant heap of dross."[135] As life whispers in the ear of Zarathustra, "Behold, I am that which must overcome itself again and again."[136] With the death of God, the overman becomes the new deity of the hero. For "Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Overman--a rope over an abyss."[137] As such an exalted ideal, the overman is rarely achieved and barely glimpsed. If reached, it is never possessed, for it impossibly enjoys the perfect ordering and transcendence of contradiction which ultimately must escape all mortal souls. Nietzsche's hero should not be confused with the overman. The former is the bridge which modern man must cross in the process of surpassing himself. For aspiring authentics, a worldly heroism must suffice.

Instructively, Nietzsche offers several archetypes for the authentic hero. He maintains that "Only in three forms of existence does one stay an individual: as philosopher, as saint and as artist."[138] These are the "true men... those who are no longer animal, the philosophers, artist and saints; nature, which never makes a leap, has

132 Ibid., pp. 42-3.
134 Ibid., 1, p. 129.
135 Ibid., 4, p. 155
137 Ibid., "Zarathustra's Prologue," 3, p. 43.
made its one leap in creating them.\textsuperscript{139} The philosopher, for his part, heroically attempts to create a world of thought. In doing so he incarnates himself in his work, itself a labor of self-overcoming. Every great philosophy, Nietzsche asserts, is essentially autobiography, the unconscious confessions of the philosopher's soul. "In the philosopher . . . there is absolutely nothing impersonal," and his work is a "decisive testimony as to who he is."\textsuperscript{140} Philosophy is profoundly heroic, for "It always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise."\textsuperscript{141} While excoriating the idealist and rationalist traditions, Nietzsche looks forward to a new order of thinkers who, in courageous affirmation of worldly life, will become "philosophers of the dangerous 'Perhaps'."\textsuperscript{142}

The saint, for Nietzsche, is the lover, the one who can abandon the ego, achieving "a profound feeling of oneness and identity with all living things."\textsuperscript{143} As such, the saint displays an overflowing multiplicity of self which melts away the borders between beings. In the saint there are "bright sparks of the fire of love in whose light we cease to understand the word 'I'."\textsuperscript{144} Like the artist, the saint spiritualizes the sensual, extolling the immediacy and vibrance of the body. Ultimately the saint transforms himself and his world through love.

It is art, however, which provides the Nietzschean authentic with the greatest medium for achievement and overcoming. Again drawing upon classicism, Nietzsche implores the aspiring hero to order himself in the "grand style" of the classical artist. For, like strong passion, the grand style "disdains to please . . . it forgets to persuade . . . it commands." He entreats us "To become master of the chaos one is; to compel one's chaos to become form."\textsuperscript{145} Establishing an original, artistic style is the result of ordering the self in the greatest, most powerful way possible. In the words of one commentator, "Style is

\textsuperscript{139}Untimely Meditations, op. cit., "Schopenhauer as Educator," 5, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{140}Beyond Good and Evil, op. cit., "The Prejudices of Philosophers," 6, p. 387.
\textsuperscript{141}Ibid., "The Prejudices of Philosophers," 9, p. 389.
\textsuperscript{142}Ibid., 2, p. 383.
\textsuperscript{143}Untimely Meditations, op. cit., "Schopenhauer as Educator," 5, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{144}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145}The Will to Power, op. cit., III, 842, p. 444.
the index of the soul." Indeed, life as a work of art is one of Nietzsche's favorite metaphors for authenticity. We must become the poet of our own life, living not to produce art works, but leaving them as after-effects, as monuments to an artistically-led life. The most powerful life, Nietzsche insists, is not found in contemplation, but creation: "In the main, I agree more with the artists than with any philosopher hitherto: they have not lost the scent of life, they have loved the things of 'this world'--they have loved their senses." To live artistically means surpassing mere technique and preconceived form; it is to surpass mastery of these, ultimately subverting conventional categories. "One is an artist at the cost of regarding that which all non-artists call 'form' as content, as 'the matter itself.' To be sure, then one belongs in a topsy-turvy world: for henceforth content becomes something merely formal--our life included." To revolutionize form through original content: such is the authentic, stylized life.

To be sure, art is an essential ingredient of the ironic authenticity proposed by Nietzsche. Art becomes a necessary counterpoint to the real world, which is "false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, without meaning . . . . We have need of lies in order to conquer this reality, this 'truth,' that is, in order to live." Nietzsche is not only asserting that dissimulation, in the form of counter-hegemonic activity, can proffer truth. He is also boldly advocating epistemological perspectivism. Science and philosophy, after all, in their imagining the True and Immutable, have demonstrated that "without a constant counterfeiting of the world by means of numbers, man could not live." We owe "our ultimate gratitude to art," Nietzsche believes, for it enables perspectivist and skeptical vision. Such awareness is a necessary antidote in the face of the ugly, brutal reality of truth and the nihilism spawned by Christianity's lies. For,

146 Thiele, op. cit., p. 132.
147 The Will to Power, op. cit., III, 820, p. 434.
148 Ibid., III, 818, p. 433.
If we had not welcomed the arts and invented the kind of cult of the untrue, then the realization of general untruth and mendaciousness that now comes to us through science—the realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation—would be utterly unbearable. *Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide. But now there is a counterforce against our honesty that helps us to avoid such consequences: art as the *good* will of appearance.\(^{151}\)

"Truth is ugly. We possess art lest we perish of the truth."\(^{152}\) It is in this spirit which Nietzsche extols the mask-wearer, who, like Rameau's nephew, is able dexterously to shift perspectives and voices. "Every profound spirit needs a mask," he contends, for truth speaks in different tongues and falls on diverse ears.\(^{153}\) The higher human knows that even if truth presents itself unequivocally, the ignorance and plurality of the audience will assure a variety of interpretations. To navigate such a complex and war-torn landscape, the authentic soul must be a levitating contortionist, "looking down upon ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing over ourselves or weeping over ourselves... We need all exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish, and blissful art lest we lose the freedom above things that our ideal demands of us."\(^{154}\)

With such irony, Nietzsche challenges the models which propose authenticity as straightforward self-appropriation and assertion. He frequently calls his project for the self "Dionysian,"\(^{i}\) in reference to the Hellenic god of intoxication, chaos, and fecundity. As we have noted above, Nietzsche displays a consistent tendency to separate existence into two currents: the descending and the ascending line, the latter that of growth, affirmation, "Saying yes to life"—i.e., of Dionysis.\(^{155}\) In addition, Dionysian energies are ironic, manifesting "the desire for destruction, for change, for becoming."\(^{156}\) He asserts quite unequivocally that "Being oneself [is] the eternal joy of becoming—that joy which also encompasses the joy of destruction."\(^{157}\) Nietzsche offer ample evidence that his model of

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\(^{152}\) *The Will to Power*, op. cit., III, 822, p. 435.


\(^{156}\) *The Will to Power*, op. cit., II, 846, p. 44.

authenticity is not only based in creative self-destruction, but is dialectical rather than monological. One of his ideal art forms, tragic drama, weds Dionysis with the forces of Apollo, the god of order, clarity, and light. Whereas the art of Dionysis is music, Apollo's is sculpture, displaying "that measured restraint, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that philosophical calm of the sculpture-god." Apollo is the divine image of the "principium individuationis" mentioned by Schopenhauer, which empowers the individual to remain sovereign and intact despite the shaking world around it. Clearly, Nietzsche's principle of sovereignty, expressed in part through a self-generated morality and self-ordering, partakes of Apollonian principles. His proposal, then, for the self as a work of art is fundamentally dialectical, where the Dionysian, though acting as prime mover, must engage the Apollonian to come to full fruition. As one interpreter phrases it, Nietzschean authenticity is "a continual movement of the self that yokes together the Apollonian urge to self-cultivation and form with the Dionysian urge to self-abandonment." By chastening his unconditional commitment to Dionysian intoxication, abandonment, and autonomy, Nietzsche suggests that the ironic self may need (dialectical) grounding.

Indeed, Nietzsche occasionally pays respect to principles dear to the model of Romantic authenticity. When relaxing his usual tone of bellicosity, Nietzsche sounds downright sagely in his calmer reflections and aphorisms. Like the Romantics, he sometimes suggests that connection and sincerity are integral to an authentic life: "And this is a universal law: a living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself, and at the same time too self-centred to enclose its own view within that of another, it will pine away slowly or hasten to its timely end." Such a recognition of indispensable and shared horizons, we will see, is a fundament of the hermeneutic, communitarian ontology to be articulated in Chapter 3. Nietzsche also hints toward the social solidarity to be generated through the efflorescence

159 White, op. cit., p. 23.
of authenticity. For there may be causal links between the cultivation of ontological plurality and the creation of solidarity: "Under civilized conditions," Nietzsche hypothesizes, "Everyone feels himself to be superior to everyone else in at any rate one thing: it is upon this that the general mutual goodwill that exists depends, inasmuch as everyone is someone who under certain circumstances is able to be helpful and who thus feels free to accept help without a sense of shame." Even the hero, whom he implores to struggle against and overcome the herd, must partake of connection with fellow beings. "No river is great and abundant of itself: it is the fact that it receives and bears onward so many tributaries that makes it so. Thus it is too with all great men of the spirit. All that matters is that one supplies the direction which many inflowing tributaries then have to follow, not whether one is poorly or richly gifted from the beginning." In addition to irony and creation, greatness sometimes simply means giving direction, where connection supplies the momentum to overcome present-day humanity.

To be sure, it is important to acknowledge the sincere side of Nietzsche's ironic authenticity, if only because its rarity makes it that much more valuable. Never offering his own life as a model, he preferred to reference the few examples of others who had achieved authenticity. One of these was Goethe, who Nietzsche extols as a true authentic, displaying both connection and detachment, organicism and originality, the natural and supernatural:

Goethe--not a German event but a European one: a magnificent attempt to overcome the eighteenth century by a return to nature, by a coming-up to the naturalness of the Renaissance, a kind of self-overcoming on the part of that century . . . . he did not divorce himself from life but immersed himself in it; he never lost heart, and took as much as possible upon himself, above himself, into himself. What he wanted was totality; he fought against the disjunction of reason, sensuality, feeling, will (--preached in the most repulsively scholastic way by Kant, Goethe's antipode), he disciplined himself into a whole, he created himself.  

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162 Ibid., "Man Alone with Himself," 521, p. 182.
This was the overman in actuality of whom Nietzsche could only theorize and dream. Indeed, Nietzsche only achieved the philosopher, imploring the rest of us to become the saints, the lovers, and the great style-bearing architects.

**Heidegger's Existentialist Authenticity: Disclosing Dasein**

Together with Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger destroyed metaphysics, and philosophy has never been the same. Ruling the Western mind since Plato, metaphysical thought asserts the givenness, stability, and permanence of Being. Behind appearance lies ultimate reality, an essence which withstands all change. Metaphysicians assume that Being simply is. Being is considered a steady-state, a *what*, and the task of philosophy is to perfectly represent its content.

Heidegger recognized the blind, bloated swagger of this long tradition, and set out to reconsider our fundamental ontology. His magnum opus, *Being and Time*, encapsulates the 20th-century epistemological and ontological revelation which would become the neural pulse of postmodern consciousness: the notion that *Being is time*. Rather than a "*what*" frozen in time, Being is a "*how*" paddling in the slipstream, working on its strokes. This postulation, coupled with his explicit attention to the concept of authenticity, make Heidegger an invaluable component to this study. Indeed, we will see his innovative thinking about epistemology, ontology, and subjectivity unmistakably resonating through the project's second half. Not only is Heidegger a significant influence on Taylor and Rorty, but he will inform the reformulation of ideology to be attempted in the next chapter.

Striking against metaphysics while recalling pre-Socratic philosophy, Heidegger implores us to "raise anew the question of the meaning of Being."\(^{164}\) This question was alive in the thought of Parmenides and Heraclitus, which displayed a radically different *modus operandi* than the Platonic metaphysics to follow. Before Plato's creation of Socratism, Being was less a *what* than a *how*. Emphasizing the process of *becoming*, the

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Homeric philosophers conceptualized Being in terms of *physis* and *aletheia*. As one commentator writes, "Physis, often translated as 'nature,' signifies not simply geological or biological processes, but the upsurge of all beings as they come to presence. Aletheia, often translated as 'truth,' likewise refers to an unconcealment."\(^{165}\) Heidegger attempts to reinvigorate the concept of truth as a process of presencing. What we have lost under the hegemony of metaphysical thinking (which encompasses modern science) is an openness to ontology: the Being that exists spatially below, and temporally prior to Reality in its conventional construal as essence/appearance. According to Heidegger, we must ask anew the question of the Being of beings (*Sein des Seienden*). What precedes and underlies all our activity—the everyday and the philosophical? Thinkers beholden to the metaphysical tradition have striven to determine the requisites for correct thought, sweeping away the ephemeral and the everyday to arrive at the purely philosophical. Heidegger wants to reorients us, so that we may investigate the form of being which lies closest to us, "in its average everydayness."

In short, this is a proposal to conduct fundamental ontology. Contradicting the metaphysics of detachment advocated by Platonic and Enlightenment thinkers, Heidegger insists that scientific and philosophical activity cannot escape its pre-reflective qualities. In order to really understand the world, we must investigate "man's manner of Being," what Heidegger famously terms *Dasein*. Literally, Da-sein is "there-being," i.e., being grounded in space and time. "Dasein is not only close to us—even that which is closest: we are it, each of us, we ourselves."\(^{166}\) Heidegger calls this context "*Lichtung,*" translatable as "the lighting" or "the clearing." *Lichtung* is "Being-there," i.e., the space where Being is. Though Heidegger wants to counteract the subjectivism displayed throughout Western thinking, he inextricably links Being and human being: "Man occurs


\(^{166}\) *Being and Time*, op. cit., Int., II, 5, p. 36.
essentially in such a way that he is the 'there', that is, the lighting of Being."167 Dasein is rooted in existence; it is always human being. As such, Dasein is also fortunately the type of being which, in essence, is oriented toward the questioning of Being. It is in our nature to be ontological questioners, and only through Dasein can this inquiry proceed. Since examination of Being-at-large must proceed through human being, fundamental ontology "must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein."168

Due to his phenomenological orientation, Heidegger’s conceptualization of authenticity is heavily oriented by sincerity. To be sure, his obsession with fundamental ontology demands sustained attention to Being’s conditions of possibility. As Dasein, Being is encapsulated in “environment” and “worldhood.” Any authenticity must function within this phenomenological field, for there can be no metaphysical human Being which transcends ontological situation. As he puts it, “Dasein, in so far as it is, has always submitted itself already to a ‘world’ which it encounters, and this submission belongs essentially to its Being.”169 Heidegger’s authenticity requires not only this realm of everyday worldhood, but a dialectical interplay with inauthentic Being as well. Below, we will conduct an explication of Heidegger’s authenticity in three stages, which correspond to overlapping and mutually dependent ontological spheres: 1) everydayness, 2) inauthenticity, and 3) authenticity.

**Everydayness**

Unlike most of the other theoreticians of authenticity which we have visited in this chapter, Heidegger wants to ground authenticity in what he terms “Being-in-the-world.” Different from Romantic or Nietzschean notions of nature, which the aspiring authentic must recover and renew, Heideggerian Being-in-the-world requires culture--“the very world itself,” including the sphere of habit, the unreflective and mundane. “These are to be considered,” Heidegger states, “within the horizon of average everydayness--the kind of

168 Being and Time, op. cit., Int., I, 4, p. 34.
169 Ibid., I, 3, pp. 120-21.
Being which is closest to Dasein."¹⁷⁰ Far from trying to distance Being from the everyday, Heidegger embraces everyday worldhood as an essential component of Dasein and the ground on which ontological inquiry must function. World and environment are thus concepts with substance both ontical (extant, factual) and ontological (concerned with Being). Heidegger reminds us that his main phenomenological task is to determine the structure of this Being, rather than to gain specific, discrete knowledge of actual entities.

To these ends, he introduces and employs concepts such as equipment, ready-to-hand, circumspection, and care (concern). Congruent with the thought of other phenomenologists such as his mentor Edmund Husserl, Heidegger notes that our Being-in-the-world is comprised of "concernful dealings." He asks, like Locke, Hume, Kant and others, the central epistemological question: How do we perceive and understand the world? Not unlike Kant, he rejects the notion that we encounter simple, proximate Things within the world, what the Greeks called pragmata, with some sort of bare perceptual cognition. Rather, we display "that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of 'knowledge'."¹⁷¹ This "concern" is not a conscious sympathetic attentiveness, e.g., the attention we focus on a moral cause or the nursing we give a convalescent. Rather, care is intrinsic to Dasein: indeed, "Dasein's Being is care."¹⁷² There are, as we will explore, different ways of caring for the world. The most common, everyday care saturated with idle talk, can get in the way of authentic Being. But Heidegger recognizes that we cannot always be deliberative or theoretical (the other two modes of care we will discuss in Chapter 3). Thus, care is ontologically indispensable: "As structures essential to Dasein's constitution, these have a share in conditioning the possibility of any existence whatsoever."¹⁷³ In the chapter that follows, we will revisit this type of everyday being as ideology, drawing on Husserl, Heidegger,

¹⁷⁰Ibid., I, 3, p. 94.
¹⁷¹Ibid., I, 3, p. 95.
¹⁷²Ibid., II, 2, p. 329.
¹⁷³Ibid., II, 1, p. 308.
and others. But here we shall engage Heidegger’s contention that it is precisely the pragmatic character of *pragmata* which has hitherto gone unexamined, and which his phenomenology seeks to illuminate.

Heidegger’s term for *pragmata* is “equipment” (*Zeug*), i.e., “those entities which we encounter in concern.” Equipped is made up of all the tools, the “gear” which we employ to conduct everyday life, in our eating and sleeping, working and transport, leisure and idling. Instrumentality is at the heart of equipment, which “is essentially ‘something in-order-to’ . . . such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability.” The being displayed by equipment is manifested through action, and is apparent in its very use. Heidegger calls this mode of being “ready-to-hand” (*Zuhanden*), and labels the form of care as “involvement” (*Bewandtnis*), the mode of instrumental autopilot. The ready-to-hand is so primordial that there is no essence to a hammer that stands apart from hammering: “the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unceiledly is it encountered as that which it is--as equipment.” Readiness-to-hand cannot be discovered by simple examination, nor through a theoretical approach to things. Instead, to understand the ready-to-hand, we must actively use, instrumentally do.

Resisting the traditional formulation of the theory/practice dichotomy, where practice is unreflectively active and theory is observant, Heidegger posits a special type of vision for *pragmata*. Far from being vacant and blind, the everyday use of equipment spawns its own form of knowledge and sight. He phrases it thusly:

If we look at things just ‘theoretically’, we can get along without understanding readiness-to-hand. But when we deal with them by using them and manipulating them, this activity is not a blind one; it has its own kind of sight, by which our manipulation is guided and from which it acquires its specific Thingly character. Dealings with equipment subordinate themselves to the manifold assignments of the

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174 Ibid., I, 3, p. 97.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid., I, 3, p. 98.
‘in-order-to’. And the sight with which they thus accommodate themselves is *circumspection*.\(^{177}\)

Circumspection, i.e., *Umsicht*, is a type of sight which, prefixed by “um,” is both instrumental and encompassing. As Macquarrie and Robinson note, “*Umsicht* should be understood as ‘looking around’ or ‘looking around for something’ or ‘looking around for a way to get something done’.”\(^{178}\) This is the mode which Husserl calls “natural reflection,” the type of critical process which is required of us in the conduct of everyday life. Though it falls far short of Husserl’s “phenomenological reduction” which transcends our situation and brackets our prejudices, natural reflection as circumspection still differs significantly from the prescribed movements of an automaton. Indeed, based in instrumental action, by nature it foregoes the ontological questioning which is the hallmark of Heidegger’s authentic. Yet, while circumspective absorption may be blinkered, it is not blind; its “*own* kind of sight” is absolutely necessary to the enablement of authentic Dasein.

While we are all inextricably beholden to the unreflective mode of everydayness, we are not always inauthentic while in this mundane mode. Heidegger allows for a realm of “averageness” which is “undifferentiated,” having adopted neither the qualities of authenticity nor inauthenticity.\(^{179}\) Although in *Being and Time* he frequently conflates the everyday and the inauthentic, and has been read by many critics thusly, Heidegger also emphasizes the potentially *neutral* character of the everyday. To be sure, he is unequivocal in his insistence that the everyday is a primordial component of fundamental ontological existence—an absolutely indisposable, necessary component to Dasein. As such, it can be modally undifferentiated, serving neither authenticity nor inauthenticity. Heidegger articulates it as such: “this *potentiality-for-Being*, as one which is in each case *mine*, is free either for authenticity or for inauthenticity or for a mode in which neither of these has been differentiated.” In the words of one sympathetic commentator, Heidegger “seems to mean

\(^{177}\)Ibid.
\(^{178}\)Ibid., footnote 2.
\(^{179}\)Ibid., II, Int., pp. 275-76.
that everydayness is the undifferentiated (average) kind of existence which can be modified inauthentically or authentically.”\textsuperscript{180} This tripartite distinction between everyday, inauthentic, and authentic ways of Being will serve us through the rest of this study. Specifically, it is essential to the rearticulation of ideology attempted in Chapter 3. There, we develop a notion of ideology as an ontological \textit{sine qua non}, an untranscendable medium which offers both enablement and exploitation, serving both the cause of the authentic self and the forces of dominant powers.

\textbf{Inauthenticity}

If the everyday equipment-structure, care, and circumspection are essential to all Dasein, they also provide the infrastructure for Heidegger’s definition of inauthenticity. Here we will concentrate on three components of inauthenticity: absorption in the they, the tranquilization of Dasein, and subjectivism. Actually, we will suggest that these latter two qualities, tranquilization and subjectivism, are extensions of the first. What initially creates inauthenticity is a constant, unreflective absorption in what Heidegger calls the “they” (\textit{das Man}). He wonders, “Does the ‘they’ have a state-of-mind which is specific to it, a special way of understanding, talking and interpreting?”\textsuperscript{181} Answering in the affirmative, he labels this discourse “idle talk” (\textit{Gerede}), identified as the language both of the everyday and of inauthenticity. Inauthenticity functions in the mode of “irresoluteness,” the phenomenon of “Being-surrendered to the way in which things have been prevalently interpreted by the ‘they’. Dasein, as a they-self, gets ‘lived’ by the common-sense ambiguity of that publicness in which nobody resolves upon anything but which has always made its decision.”\textsuperscript{182} This is the mode where difference gets concealed: “This Being-with-one-another dissolves one’s own Dasein completely into the kind of Being of ‘the Others,’ in such a way indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more.” In this night, all cows are black, and “We take pleasure and enjoy

\textsuperscript{182}Ibid., II, 2, p. 345.
ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge . . . we find ‘shocking’ what *they* find shocking.”¹⁸³ In this state we not only partake of the neutral, undifferentiated realm of the everyday, but fall into inauthenticity, allowing “common sense” and idle talk to dominate Dasein.

Calling this condition “falling” (*Verfallen*), Heidegger is not asserting a Christian state of original sin, a metaphysical realm of authenticity which exists above and before the fall. Falling is not a normative concept, Heidegger insists. Since Dasein is essentially “thrown,” (*geworfen*), ontological possibility demands that Being manifest itself through descent much more than transcendence. Heidegger thereby envisages falling as “Being-alongside.” The inauthenticity which can follow is hardly surprising, seeing how attached our ontological Being is to its worldly manifestation. In this sense, inauthenticity is simply “an absorption in the Being-with-one-another” which becomes “completely fascinated by the ‘world’ and by the Dasein-with of Others in the ‘they’.”¹⁸⁴ Heidegger notes that “idle talk” and “falling” are not meant as terms of disparagement. Rather, they are strictly ontological terms which describe the everyday form of Being.¹⁸⁵ Yet, especially in the context of this study, we cannot see their ontical manifestation as anything but suboptimal. Indeed, it is difficult to withhold normative judgment of a situation where,

Idle talk and ambiguity, having seen everything, having understood everything, develop the supposition that Dasein’s disclosedness, which is so available and so prevalent, can guarantee to Dasein that all the possibilities of its Being will be secure, genuine, and full. Through the self-certainty and decidedness of the “they”, it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic understanding or the state-of-mind that goes with it. The supposition of the “they” that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine ‘life’, brings Dasein a *tranquility*, for which everything is ‘in the best of order’ and all doors are open. Falling Being-in-the-world, which tempts itself, is at the same time *tranquilizing*.¹⁸⁶

To be sure, Heidegger’s denial of the normative face of his concerns may be less than ingenuous. Idle talk may be necessary, but it is clearly a deficient form of Dasein.

¹⁸³ Ibid., I, 4, p. 164.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., I, 5, p. 220.
¹⁸⁵ Ibid., I, 5, pp. 210-11.
¹⁸⁶ Ibid., I, 5, p. 222.
Functioning as if it encompasses the totality of Being, idle talks offers "an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility" which enables "the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own."This is not a philosophical way in the world.

Such a fallen way in the world is indeed a tranquilized state, dependent on public, common-sense interpretations of Being. When (inevitable) common sense becomes unproblematic and unimpeachable, inauthentic Being falls further, allowing itself to become completely swallowed by the everyday. Suffering a "peculiar dictatorship of the public realm," our falling sometimes flirts with the drowning depths. Verfallen, though untranscendable, is not always a salutary Being-alongside; when we become inauthentic, it becomes an ensnarement in concealment, a lapsing from disclosure. Inauthenticity is so pernicious because it is insidious: it allows us to live tranquilized, as if life were completely whole, as if it all makes sense. In such a passive mode there is no reason to question appearances, no reason to interrogate after Being. Self-assuredly tranquilized in the concealment of the everyday, we close ourselves to Being's mystery.

Ironically, it is our passive ensnarement in the "they" that encourages our subjectivism. Indeed, Heidegger recognizes two main forms of subjectivism, philosophical and ontical, both which undermine authentic Dasein. As such, the "destruction of subjectivity" is one of the main goals of Heidegger's work. Subjectivism's philosophical face displays the visage of Cartesianism, projected through the entirety of modern philosophy—all the way to Nietzsche, Husserl, and Sartre. In the words of one commentator, subjectivism is "the conjuction, peculiar to modern philosophy, of an epistemological primacy given to the subject and an absence of ontological inquiry regarding its Being." To be sure, it is Heidegger's condemnation of this philosophical denial of the question of Being which serves as the point of departure and underlying justification for Being and Time. This critique of philosophical subjectivism will occupy us

187Ibid., I, 5, p. 213.
188"Letter on Humanism," in Basic Writings, op. cit., p. 197.
a bit further below. In the meantime, I want to focus on the subjectivism of everyday, ontic Dasein. This form we will call "egoism," which Heidegger condemns as promoting the concealment of Being.

As falling individuals, we display a tendency toward concealment. It is all too easy to resist Dasein as inquisitive openness, and instead conform to the picture of selfhood offered by the they. Metaphysicians of subjectivity, from Plato to Sartre, insist that the true self is to be recovered in isolation, in the reëstablishment of the sovereignty of the private realm. Not unlike the Neo-Marxist Frankfurt theorists who despised him so intensely, Heidegger argues that the private sphere is often merely an extension of the public realm. Indeed, the critique of liberal-bourgeois freedom has a long history, from Marx through the Frankfurt School and Foucault. For Heidegger, the seekers of authenticity cannot simply cordon off themselves from the outside world: "So-called 'private existence' is not really essential, that is to say free, human being. It simply insists on negating the public realm. It remains an off-shoot that depends upon the public and nourishes itself by a mere withdrawal from it. Hence it testifies, against its own will, to its subservience to the public realm." 190

Heidegger is no Marxist; but he senses how leisure is dependent on work, how the public realm of production lords over leisure, transforming it into an ancillary, recuperative reserve for the casualties of the they. And although Heidegger is writing before the advent of the consumer age, he seems to nail our escapist, individualist fantasies right on the head. As a mad science experimenting on ontic subjectivity, advertising overflows with the public manipulation of private life: Ford encourages us to partake in their line of "sport utility vehicles" with names like "Explorer" and "Expedition," so that we will have "No Boundaries." Daimler-Chrysler tells us that Dodge owners are "Unique" who drive vehicles that are "Different"—thus we should acquiesce to the commercial and buy Dodge like everybody else. Sometimes we are told to conform and become individuals, at others

190 "Letter on Humanism," in Basic Writings, op. cit., p. 197.
simply to conform: Gap clothing decrees “everyone in leather” and “everyone in khaki” and “everyone in denim.” That so much of 21st century leisure time is spent consuming goods in private that have been signified in public, seems to indicate an intensifying rather than a diminishing of Heidegger’s efficacy in these matters. With and against our will, the “peculiar dictatorship of the public realm” destroys difference, both by explicitly demanding conformity and encouraging only a certain form of individuality. Mired in concealment, this egoism can come about only as a negation of the they, and thus is quintessentially inauthentic.

We might also conceptualize egoism as the way we objectify Dasein in the form of the present-at-hand (Vorhanden). Clearly, humans cannot help but be objects, for we live in a world which demands contextualization and manipulation. Vorhandensein is the mode of Being we give to the natural world, what seems to in extant, neutral repose. In the dualism of the Western mind, we designate this as the world of objects. Yet to objectify human being, so different from the being of rocks, buildings, and beasts, is irrefutably to impoverish Dasein. To treat something as present-to-hand is to objectify it through contextualization and isolation; in doing so we must obscure the Being which does not fit into our terminology, methodology, and criteria for significance. Clearly, we do this in the human- and natural sciences, by focusing on the mechanics of wave motion or kinship ties, knowledge which by its very nature rises out of an isolated context. Heidegger’s writing on technology is fundamentally a critique of the present-at-hand: “Modern science’s way of representing pursues and entraps nature an a calculable coherence of forces.” In our subjectivist haze, we treat the natural world as “standing reserve” for our use; we objectify Being by “enframing” it.191 Such revealing of the world as present-at-hand, conceived and employed instrumentally, could not be farther from the ontological inquiry pursued by Heidegger.

Much has been written on Heidegger’s delineation of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand. As we have discussed, readiness-to-hand is primordial and essential in its instrumental, interdependent, unreflective functionality: the quality displayed by the hammer, used in order to drive a nail into wood, to build a house in which to live. Readiness-to-hand is mode of Being of “equipment,” which by nature resides within a web (an “equipment structure”) of primordial functionality. To see the world as present-at-hand, called a deficient form of *Zuhandenheit* by Heidegger, is inevitable to falling Dasein. To phrase it so blithely, however, weakens the force of Heidegger’s critique, even if it is only ontological. To be sure, in falling we are inevitably apt to treat the world as present-to-hand. We are manipulative (and manipulated) beings who must satisfy not only the selfish cravings of the ego but the modern will to knowledge. Yet partaking in ontic reality is not an automatic submission to the present-at-hand. Heidegger is unequivocal that the present-at-hand is a mode of Being which is inappropriate to Dasein. It is precisely the task of the aspiring authentic to change its relationship to the objectified world, to wage war on the impoverishment wrought by the *Vorhanden*.

Continuing to interpret Being (*ousia*) as substance (*substantia*), Descartes insured that such egoism would dominate the Western philosophical mind as well. Meting out punishment to inauthentic individuals as well as philosophers, Heidegger intones,

But if the Self is conceived ‘only’ as a way of Being of this entity [Dasein], this seems tantamount to volatilizing the real ‘core’ of Dasein. Any apprehensiveness however which one may have about this gets its nourishment from the perverse assumption that the entity in question has at bottom the kind of Being which belongs to something present-at-hand, even if one is far from attributing to it the solidity of an occurrent corporeal Thing. Yet man’s *substance* is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather existence.\(^{192}\)

In the Cartesian tradition, the “real core” of human Being is the *cogito*. The *cognitiones*, as an entity observed as present-at-hand, becomes the sustained object of inquiry of "rationalism,” the long shadow of Descartes and Locke over the Western philosophical mind. Yet such a focus has left the second half of Descartes’ formula, “ergo sum,” largely

\(^{192}\) *Being and Time*, op. cit., I, 4, p. 153.
ignored. Thus, Heidegger implores us to ask anew the question of Being. Descartes, Heidegger observes,
is credited with providing the point of departure for modern philosophical inquiry by his discovery of the “cogito sum.” He investigates the “cogitare” of the “ego,” at least within certain limits. On the other hand, he leaves the “sum” completely undisussed, even though it is regarded as no less primordial than the cogito. Our analytic raises the ontological question of the Being of the “sum.” Not until the nature of this Being has been determined can we grasp the kind of Being which belongs to cogitationes.193

The stable substance of the cogito is precisely what comes under question in the interrogation of Being. The life of the ego is existence, not permanent essence. To hallow the subject as the solid ground by which to generate Truth is a quintessential placing of the cart before the horse, the modus operandi of a metaphysics blinkered by subjectivism. As Heidegger phrases it, “Every determination of the essence of man that already presupposes an interpretation of being without asking about the truth of Being, whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical.”194

It is in this mind that Heidegger attacks the “existentialism” of Jean-Paul Sartre, which reproduces the arrogant subjectivism bequeathed by Platonism on the Western mind. In the “Letter on Humanism,” Heidegger responds to what he sees as the fundamental metaphysical nature of Sartrean humanism. In Sartre’s hands, the basic notion that “existence precedes essence” does not lead to an ontological examination of existential Being, but serves instead as the springboard for an intensified subjectivism. Indeed, without any essential nature, human being takes its form through action and doing. But for Sartre, subjectivity serves as Being’s point of departure, for without God, mineness is our only solid ground. In “radical choice” we take ultimate responsibility for our existence, for there is no guarantee of the righteousness of one’s decisions. Where Sartre posits “We are precisely in a situation where there are only human beings,” Heidegger retorts that “We are precisely in a situation where principally there is Being.”195 For Heidegger, the

193 Being and Time, op. cit., I, 1, p. 72.
195 Ibid., pp. 213-14.
metaphysical nature of humanism does not exalt human being but rather degrades it. He states,

The highest determinations of the essence of man in humanism still do not realize the proper dignity of man. To that extent the thinking in Being and Time is against humanism. But this opposition does not mean that such thinking aligns itself against the humane and advocates the inhuman, that it promotes the inhumane and deprecates the dignity of man. Humanism is opposed because it does not set the humanitas of man high enough.196

As we will see below, it is the ability to relinquish the subject as traditionally defined which leads the way to authenticity. It is Heidegger’s concept of “resolute openness,” rather than a willful subjectivism, which provides the appropriate stance to receive Being.

Authenticity

In falling, Dasein sometimes “flees itself,” where it becomes thoroughly enveloped in the they. Ontologically, this “turning away” is a natural occurrence of the inertia of falling. As Heidegger puts it, “Dasein’s absorption in the ‘they’ and its absorption in the ‘world’ of its concern, make manifest something like a fleeing of Dasein in the face of itself--of itself as an authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self.”197 Ontically, apparently and factually, “The authenticity of Being-one’s-Self has of course been closed off and thrust aside in falling.” Yet within Heidegger’s universe, we must recognize that ontologically, Being always is, as the primordial backdrop for falling Dasein. Dasein draws from a reserve which is as undefinable as it is without telos. However, the concealment which marks everyday Dasein also tends toward openness, for it is assiduously prodded and poked by Being’s impulse to disclose itself. As Heidegger phrases it, “Dasein is constantly ‘more’ than it factually is.”198 As such, Dasein retains its essential quality as the “not-yet,” for falling Dasein frequently cannot help but flee in the face of itself. Heidegger reminds us that “To be thus closed off is merely the privation of a disclosedness which manifests itself phenomenally in the fact that Dasein’s fleeing is a fleeing in the face of itself.”199

197Ibid., I, 6, p. 229.
198Ibid., I, 5, p. 185.
199Ibid., I, 6, p. 229.
Human being is always thrown, finite, and contingent; Dasein is necessarily, inescapably, being-towards-death. In its very nature, da-sein expires at death, for it is no longer “there” as worldly being. We flee in the face of being-towards-death into the safe haven of the “they” in several ways. The first is into egoism; we contrive exaggerated substance for the self in various ways. Caught up in our daily affairs, we suffer an egoistic isolation which political theorists have appropriately termed “atomism.” In addition, in our mortal fears we conjure metaphysical substance for a self--eternal life--which ontologically can have no such immortality. As we have mentioned above, Heidegger not only unveils egoism as vulgar subjectivism, but also as a capitulation to the they. But even where egoism lags; Dasein tends to flee into the comfort of the home provided by the they, a tranquility in which everything is pre-interpreted and understood, where all is ‘in the best of order’. In Heidegger words, “When in falling we flee into the ‘at-home’ of publicness, we flee in the face of the ‘not-at-home’; that is, we flee in the face of the uncanniness which lies in Dasein--in Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-World.”

The term which is translated as “uncanny” is “unheimlich”: literally, unhomelike. Because of our thrown finitude, there is an “unhomelike” quality to Dasein. A crucial force in recognizing this ungrounded contingency is anxiety (Angst). In fact, anxiety plays a dual role, in disclosing nothingness as it exists in the worldhood of the world, and thereby shocking falling Dasein out of its absorption in the they. Heidegger expounds on anxiety thusly:

When in falling we flee into the ‘at-home’ of publicness, we flee in the face of the ‘not-at-home’; that is, we flee in the face of the uncanniness which lies in Dasein--in Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-world, which has been delivered over to itself in its Being. This uncanniness pursues Dasein constantly, and is a threat to its everyday lostness in the ‘they’, though not explicitly . . . . Anxiety, as a basic state-of-mind, belongs to Dasein’s essential state of Being-in-the-world, which, as one that is existential, is never present-at-hand but is itself always in a mode of factical Being-there--that is, in the mode of a state-of-mind. That kind of Being-in-the-world which is tranquilized and familiar is a mode of Dasein’s uncanniness, not the

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200Ibid., I, 6, p. 234.
reverse.  *From an existential-ontological point of view, the 'not-at-home' must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon.*

Heidegger is clear that anxiety is an essential component of Dasein, and that the homelessness which is Dasein becomes altered when we flee into the comfort of the they. Heidegger emphasizes that Angst and the homelessness it reveals are primordial: "That which anxiety is anxious about is Being-in-the-world itself." When explicitly applied, anxiety offers shock therapy out of the inauthenticity of the everyday. When anxious, we realize that "The 'world' can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others. Anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publically interpreted. Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about--its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world." Anxiety is "a disclosive state of mind," says Heidegger. Anxiety is thereby necessary for authentic Dasein: the nothingness of worldly Being must be recognized before true valuation can proceed, before authentic Dasein can be disclosed.

The task of worldly being, therefore, is to become at home in the unhomelike. Becoming at home in an authentic manner means rejecting the easy, tranquilized consolation offered by the they. The authentic subject is thus "the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way." Here we will explicate Heidegger's case for authenticity in terms of several complementary movements: as 1) a victory over concealment, 2) a relinquishment of egoism, and 3) a heeding of the "call of conscience." As disclosure, authenticity conquers concealment when the individual is able to emerge into one's own unique clearing. Heidegger posits, "If Dasein discovers the world in its own way and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its

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201 *Being and Time*, op. cit., I, 6, p. 234.
202 Ibid., I, 6, p. 232.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid., I, 4, p. 167.
own way."\textsuperscript{205} This attack on concealment is lead by what Heidegger terms “resoluteness” (\textit{Entschlossenheit}).\textsuperscript{206} "Resoluteness, as authentic Being-one's self," is an attentive openness to our unique being, a "concernful solicitude" which draws oneself out of concealment.\textsuperscript{207}

The link between unconcealment as authenticity and Heidegger’s conceptualization of truth is manifest. He contends that truth should not be considered accuracy of thought to matter (as in the empiricist-rationalist tradition) nor the comportment of thought or thing to Idea as established by the \textit{intellectus divinus} (the metaphysical version). Heidegger wants us to return to the pre-Socratic mode where truth is conceptualized as \textit{aletheia}, i.e., unconcealment. Truth is freedom, and freedom is an openness to being--"letting beings be." Heidegger emphasizes that such a letting-be is far from what we call indifference, for it requires an \textit{active} caretaking, attentive to process and becoming, an articulation out of the nameless shadows into language. To let beings be requires attentive shepherding in the open space of the clearing. Freedom is a mode of resoluteness; \textit{Entschlossen}, as the opposite of \textit{Verschlossen} (closed, shut-up) also means un-closed, i.e., open. Thus, resoluteness is far from meaning the type of resolve where one has fixed and closed one's mind; rather, it is an attentive openness. "As letting beings be, freedom is intrinsically the resolutely open bearing that does not close up in itself."\textsuperscript{208}

Because Dasein is not only a "being-there" but also "essentially a Being-with" (\textit{Mitsein}), authenticity demands an "eclipse of the self."\textsuperscript{209} In fact, being authentic presumes the world we share with others, for "Knowing oneself is grounded in Being-with."\textsuperscript{210} Thus, the struggle against egoism demands that one acknowledge the "with-world" while at the same time combatting the "they-world." Heidegger is far from

\textsuperscript{205}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206}Macquarrie and Robinson note the etymological similarity between \textit{Erschlossenheit} (disclosedness) and \textit{Entschlossenheit} (resoluteness). See ibid., II, 2, p. 343.
\textsuperscript{207}Ibid., II, 2, pp. 344-5.
\textsuperscript{208}“On the Essence of Truth,” op. cit., p. 133.
\textsuperscript{209}\textit{Being and Time}, op. cit., I, 4, p. 156; and Zimmerman, \textit{Eclipse of the Self}, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{210}\textit{Being and Time}, op. cit., I, 4, p. 161.
contending that the authentic must be thoroughly Nietzschean and ironic: "Only in its Dasein with others can Dasein surrender its individuality in order to win itself as an authentic self." He rejects the ontological possibility of a "bare subject" and the notion that authenticity requires a detachment from the they. Rather, Heidegger's goal is to enable the authentic who is a social self but not a they self. Instead of insisting upon rejection of the herd as a fundamental condition of being oneself, Heidegger enjoins us to alter our relation with the they:

To this lostness, one's own Dasein can appeal, and this appeal can be understood in the way of resoluteness. But in that case this authentic disclosedness modifies with equal primordiality both the way the 'world' is discovered . . . and the way in which the Dasein-with of Others is disclosed. The 'world' which is ready-to-hand does not become another one . . . nor does the circle of Others get exchanged for a new one; but both one's Being towards the ready-to-hand understandingly and concernfully, and one's solicitous Being with Others, are now given a definite character in terms of their ownmost potentiality-for-Being-their-Selves.

This is quite an epistemological shift demanded of the authentic, perhaps requiring the sovereignty of the solitary. But Heidegger is emphatic that he is not advocating the "free-floating 'I.'" His authentic is instead the inquirer whose very ability to pose important questions is made possible by grounding in Being-in-the-world. Heidegger's is an authenticity of sincerity: there is an ethic of proximity and truthfulness here, where the discrete individual must acknowledge its social infrastructure. Indeed, this picture of authenticity is integrally related to Heidegger's conceptualization of truth as unconcealment. According to one recent commentator, "Aletheia is Greek for 'truth, truthfulness, frankness, sincerity.'" In short, we must remain a social self, sincere to our Dasein-with-Others, while discovering our original being.

A crucial part of Heidegger's account of authenticity as anti-subjectivist sincerity is his position on language. He memorably proclaims, "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians

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212 Being and Time, op. cit., II, 2, p. 344.
of this home." Indeed, language is the exclusive purview of ζων λόγον ἕχων, we animals possessing logos. Yet Heidegger inverts the subjectivist metaphysics which usually infect logocentric views of human being. With Heidegger, the essential link between consciousness, being, and language leads to a strong anti-subjectivism which distances him from both Nietzsche and his fellow "existentialists," namely Sartre. "Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man," Heidegger asserts. Because Dasein can only be at home in language, "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of being." To be sure, humans have an essential role in the being of Being: we must tend, usher, and guard. But we are not the essence of Being. Here with Nietzsche, Heidegger posits the radical contingency of human being, as notions of a transcendent soul, reason, or will are put to rest. If Nietzsche's authentic breathes the giddy ether of irony, Heidegger's must partake equally of the pithy realms of history, society, and language.

Finally, Heidegger's authenticity is framed as heeding the "call of conscience." Integrally linked with anxiety and resoluteness in the achievement of authenticity, "Conscience summons Dasein's Self from its lostness in the 'they'." While resisting the traditional theological or ethical meaning of conscience, usually defined as the voice of the divine within us, Heidegger also rejects the Nietzschean deprecation of conscience as the voice of the herd. Yet Heidegger notes the similarity between his ontological concept and the theological. When we are reminded by our conscience to resist sin, we are jolted out of our unreflective, everyday way of doing things. Likewise, the task of Heidegger's concept of conscience is to roust Dasein's potentiality-for-being-itself out of a situation where "Losing itself in the publicness and the idle talk of the 'they', it fails to hear its own Self in listening to the they-self." Heidegger phrases conscience as a "call," a kind of

215 "Building Dwelling Thinking," in Basic Writings, op. cit., p. 324.
216 "Letter on Humanism," op. cit., p. 221.
218 Ibid., II, 2, p. 315.
discourse which is as silent as it is powerful. Although there is clearly an element of voluntarism in the transition to authenticity, Heidegger emphasizes that the call of conscience is not a result of individual will.\textsuperscript{219} As he states,

\begin{quote}
Indeed the call is precisely something which we ourselves have neither planned nor prepared for nor voluntarily performed, nor have we ever done so. ‘It’ calls, against our expectations and even against our will. On the other hand, the call undoubtedly does not come from someone else who is with me in the world. The call come from me and yet from beyond me and over me.\textsuperscript{220}
\end{quote}

The call, Heidegger maintains, comes from Dasein’s essential uncanniness: the not-at-home of falling Being-in-the-world. Authentic Dasein must partake of nothingness in order to blossom out of the wasteland of the they:

The caller is Dasein in its uncanniness: primordial, thrown Being-in-the-world as the ‘not-at-home’—the bare ‘that-it-is’ in the ‘nothing’ of the world. The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it something like an alien voice. What could be more alien to the ‘they’, lost in the manifold ‘world’ of its concern, than the Self which has been individualized down to itself in uncanniness and been thrown into the ‘nothing’?\textsuperscript{221}

Heidegger thereby reasserts human Being as fundamentally constituted by the ability to interrogate in an ontological manner. The call of conscience is intrinsic to individual Dasein, yet is not the product of individual will. Thrownness, the fate of all human Being, offers us the challenge of inquiring after Being. We can resist, seeking shelter in the easy answers of the they. But as potentiality-for-being-itself, Dasein can never escape the responsibility of facing the nothingness that is falling, contingent, finite Being. Becoming at home in the unhomelike remains the ultimate task of the aspiring authentic.

It is in this sense that the Being of Dasein is “care.” When we ontological questioners concern ourselves with worldly Being, we are manifesting the potential of Dasein. Unique among beings, for us Being is an issue. Yet “In the structure of thrownness . . . there lies essentially a nullity . . . Care itself, in its very essence, is

\textsuperscript{219}Zimmerman, in \textit{Eclipse of the Self}, op. cit., cogently argues that Heidegger’s early concept of authenticity, as presented in \textit{Being and Time}, demands a significant amount of voluntarism which is revised in his subsequent work in an anti-subjectivist direction, where non-willfull releasement (Gelassenheit) is emphasized.

\textsuperscript{220}\textit{Being and Time}, op. cit., II, 2, p. 320.

\textsuperscript{221}\textit{Ibid.}, II, 2, pp. 321-22.
permeated with nullity through and through.”  

Falling Being always displays a lack (Schuld). Again exercising his etymological finesse, Heidegger employs Schuld to yield yet another key concept, calling human Being essentially Schuldig, or guilty. “Being-guilty constitutes the Being to which we give the name of ‘care’.”  

We are in debt ontologically, as it were. We are responsible to compensate for the nullity which is intrinsic to human Being. Reminding us of the essential Being-with which is at the heart of his sincere authenticity, Heidegger posits that “This kind of lacking is a failure to satisfy some requirement which applies to one’s existent Being with Others.”  

Importantly, it is anxiety which initiates the care and resoluteness which are central to authentic Dasein. Indeed, in future chapters we will see the fortuitous interplay of modes like resoluteness and moods like anxiety in the workings of an ideologically-aware Dasein. Anxiously Schuldigsein, we must respond by making a home in the void which is falling, thrown Being. Resoluteness is the endgame for the beginning of authentic Dasein, the language for Being’s poem just begun. Heidegger’s phrases it thus:

The disclosedness of Dasein in wanting to have a conscience, is thus constituted by anxiety as a state-of-mind, by understanding as a projection of oneself upon one’s ownmost Being-guilty, and by discourse as reticence. This distinctive and authentic disclosedness, which is attested in Dasein itself by its conscience--this reticent self-projection upon one’s ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety--we call ‘resoluteness’ . . .

But if we have learned anything from Heidegger, it must revolve around his ontology of attunement. The authentic sensibility must stay tethered to world if it is to Be:

Resoluteness, as authentic Being-one’s-Self, does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free-floating ‘I’. And how should it, when resoluteness as authentic disclosedness, is authentically nothing else than Being-in-the-world? Resoluteness brings the Self right into its current concernful Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into solicitous Being with Others.”

This discovery-based model of authenticity will resound deeply into the chapters to follow.

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222 Ibid., II, 2, p. 331.
223 Ibid., II, 2, pp. 332-33.
224 Ibid., II, 2, p. 328.
225 Ibid., II, 2, pp. 333-34.
Truth, Ideology, and Authenticity

Heidegger's radical, post-metaphysical formulation of "the essence of truth" is that truth is freedom, which is openness leading to disclosure. Truth as aletheia is fragmentary, provisional, and contingent; the clearing which fosters the upsurge of being is not a permanent illumination but a temporary achievement. Thus, bringing beings to openness and light presumes darkness and closedness. Again with Nietzsche, Heidegger rebukes the claim that truth is always whole and transparent, requiring complete illumination and the banishment of shadows. Rather, there is a dialectic at the heart of truth: "Letting be," Heidegger contends, "is intrinsically at the same time a concealing." Heidegger's conception of truth as disclosure depends on an inexhaustible reserve of the unnamed and unknown; in order to let beings be, we must preserve the general mystery of Being as a whole. Only within this "primal strife" can openness be won, because "Truth essentially occurs only as the strife between lighting and concealing."229

Given such insights, how should we describe Heidegger's contribution to our understanding of ideology? Though he never employs the term, it should be difficult to approach his investigations of pre-reflective, fundamental ontology and remain aloof to the

discussion of ideology in Marxist circles which we visited in Chapter 1. For it seems Heidegger has a sophisticated understanding of the phenomena we have been calling "negative" and "necessary" ideologies. In his view, "Beings can be as beings only if they stand within and stand out within what is lighted in this lighting. Only this lighting grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are."\(^{230}\)

We have the task of both standing within and standing *out* within; the realms of the everyday and the inauthentic are necessary for our access to reality; Dasein, also being a *Mitsein*, demands at least a tissue of shared meaning to make life minimally intelligible to its participants. We each need a perspective, some ideology to provide solid ground on which to stand, in order to see our surroundings with any clarity. We cannot eradicate "idle talk," the common-sense concealment, the neutral ideology which grants us access to the everyday.

Nor does Heidegger believe that we can or should do away with concealment-as-dissimulation, where "One being places itself in front of another being, the one helps to hide the other, the former obscures the latter, a few obstruct many, one denies all.... [and] a being appears, but it presents itself as other than it is."\(^{231}\) Heidegger recognizes that insincerity and irony are permanent residents of social and political life. Like Nietzsche and Rameau's nephew, Heidegger knows that the mask sometimes hides truth and that deception is an inextricable condition of human being. As such, what would the world be like without the will to dissimulate? In order to have truth-as-disclosedness, we must experience the misrepresentations of negative ideology.

Heidegger contends that to insist on the steadiness and transparency of truth is to deny the essence of truth. Indeed, metaphysical thought in all its guises refuses truth-as-disclosure. Yet the ripples of Heidegger's epistemological temblor impact far beyond the crumbling mausoleums of his metaphysical forebears. In the context of our ideology

\(^{230}\)Ibid., p. 175.
\(^{231}\)Ibid., pp. 175-6.
narrative, his ontology of Dasein and epistemology of truth-as-disclosure can perhaps mediate the opposition we find between modernist and post-modernist postulations of ideology. As we remember, theorists adhering to Marx and Engels' epistemology invest heavily into the binary distinction between essence and appearance, and a representational theory of truth. To modernist Marxists, our ideas (as mental representations) are either true or false, either conforming with the permanent essence of a thing or engaging in deceptive appearances. In contrast, the perspectivist and semiological revolutions make us see truth much more local, provisional, and plural. By the late-20th century, this had reached the point where cultural studies theorists, for example, completely forgo the assignation of truth and falsity to different perspectives of reality. Such considerations not only become passé but politically incorrect as deconstructive skepticism rules the day.

Perhaps Heidegger can offer us a way out of this oppositional impasse. At the first pass, truth as the process of unconcealment clearly contradicts the postulation of truth as a permanent and stable "what." Yet another look, and it seems that Heidegger's entire project is oriented toward the revelation of Truth at the expense of Concealment. To search for truth is an unabashedly modernist enterprise. Yet by retaining this impulse, Heidegger possesses the normative wherewithal forsaken by cultural studies theorists in their unique marriage of scientism and epistemological perspectivism. For Heidegger, the fact that Being is time does not dissuade him from pursuing freedom and truth ever more intensely, albeit in the dress of a shepherd not a scientist. Seeking freedom by letting beings Be is no easy task, yet it is what Heidegger asks of his aspiring authentic. In order to stand within and stand out within, one must be a sincere discoverer, searching to become who we are and express it truthfully. Indeed, Heidegger demands the most of the authentic: to simultaneously disclose oneself and the world.
CHAPTER 3
IDEOLOGY REVISITED

Authentic Being-one’s-Self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the “they”; it is rather an existentiell [ontical] modification of the they--of the “they” as an essential existentiale.

--Heidegger

In the hands of the ruling class, ideology kills authenticity in everybody else. Subjected to a exogenous regime of material and mental production, the masses are thoroughly enslaved to the interests of the owners of capital. All consciousness becomes false consciousness. Under capitalism, authenticity is impossible because exploitation, alienation, and estrangement rule.

Yet are alienation and estrangement ever total? What makes consciousness false, as opposed to partially right and mostly wrong; or right among us in the here and now but questionable in a different community in another space and time? Within a capitalist economic system, are there limits to domination by the class in power? While economy clearly impacts all of our lives, are there portions of our existence which are not penetrated by capitalist ideology? Against the Marxists, might we illuminate life conditions which should not be categorized in terms of dualistic categories such as true/false, liberated/exploitive, and science/ideology? Are there forms of ideology which function contradictorily or ambiguously, even neutrally, serving neither dominance nor resistance?

While such queries might be a handful, they cannot be ignored. This chapter attempts, however provisionally, to try to make some sense out of this mess, where many fundamental epistemological and ontological questions will probably remain unresolved. We will focus, of course, primarily on the implications of ideology for authenticity. We
are beings for whom beliefs, ideals, and practices are essential. In addition, we are self-interpreting animals, as Charles Taylor puts it. The project of being true to oneself demands that one not only examine and employ one's conscious commitments, but partake of plenty of unconscious idea- and practice-structures as well. I have become convinced that any study of authenticity must confront the very real existence of everyday ideology—conscious beliefs as well as latent belief structures, those to which we intentionally appeal as well as those on which we lean without reflection. Thus, ideology performs multiple tasks: it deceives but also situates, misleads but also enables.

We last discussed ideology in Chapter 1, where our review of the development of ideology critique had brought us upon the key late stages, Althusserian structuralism and Gramscian hegemonism. In its presumptions and practice, Cultural Studies had wrested ideology critique away from the dualistic, representationalist epistemologies of Marx and the Frankfurt School. Gone were Marx and Engels' dichotomous epistemology of essence and appearance, reality (material base) and ideology (superstructure), and Althusser's deterministic structuralism. Instead, ideology was redefined as the medium for power expressed through meaning, a locus of class struggle. In this chapter we renew this attention to ideology, for it is clear that any aspiring authentic must be aware of the forces which would subjugate it. What we have hitherto left noticibly untouched, however, is the functioning of ideology within the fundamentality of ontological situation. While Marxists insist on the total nature of capitalist domination, emphasizing how ideologies are the conduits of exploitative power that act against personal authenticity, we should be unsatisfied with their account of the formation of the subject. If bourgeois ideology sometimes fails to saturate the subject, whence comes its power to function and sometimes rebel? Indeed, we are yet to examine fully the notion of idea structures as necessary to, and constitutive of human being in ways that are not entirely expressions of dominant forces.
In order to do so, we must expand beyond the Marxists. For what we termed "negative ideology" in Chapter 1 is only one manifestation of the ideologies which structure human being. Indeed, there is no dilemma here for those who believe in the dualist utopianism of Marx: after the revolution, exploitative social relations will cease, deception will be unnecessary, and truth and transparency will rule. The Frankfurt School, shedding Marx and Engels' revolutionary utopianism for Cold War melancholia, extended this notion of ideology to apply to mass cultural forms. Consumer capitalism was enacting a brilliant, happy, seamless ruse, where all difference was robbed of its revolutionary potential and transformed into mere variation on the theme of the totality. Capitalist ideology effects a system "uniform as a whole and in every part," in Horkheimer and Adorno's words.

But what if we see ideology in greater terms than as simple stage, set, and play conducted by the bourgeoisie as puppetmaster? What if we recognize, as do postmodern- and cultural studies theorists, that domination is always incomplete and resistance, within the current system, always possible? Here our nourishment from the Marxian tradition becomes thin. As Heidegger argues, becoming authentic cannot be a matter of severing oneself from a dominant force called the "they." Acknowledging that common, even hegemonic ways of thinking and acting exist and are frequently pernicious, Heidegger denies that they can be superceded and defeated. Rather, he implores us to transform our actual, ontical relation with everyday ideology: to recognize our necessary existential grounding in social forms without allowing ourselves to be dominated by them. It is the task of this chapter to develop a phenomenological conception of ideology, inquiring after its ontological fundamentality, which is ultimately an attempt to inform the existential struggle of the aspiring authentic.

So, while retaining the Marxian conception of negative ideology, we must counteract several of its tendencies. First, as we have already mentioned, its dualisms have to go. One of these is the fundamental distinction between capitalist and proletariat,
exploiters and exploited. Societies consist of multiple fracture lines and fields of force which resist categorization into the binaries Marx proposes. Ideological power is not the exclusive purview of the ruling class, nor is it omnipotent and seamless. Second, the economic determinism of orthodox Marxism must also be thwarted. Certainly there are idea structures, i.e., ideologies, which function (at least) semi-autonomously from what Marx called the economic base. Individualism, patriarchalism, racism, Christianity, technicism . . . all these ideologies that Marx insisted belong to the superstructure as an expression of the base are not determined in a mechanical, expressive, or structural manner as various schools of Marxism insist. We should still be struggling to discern their relation to economy, to be sure. But perhaps the link with the economic base should be an afterthought rather than a guiding principle.

We must, however, continue to employ the concept of negative ideology advanced by the Marxists. For it displays the sensitivity to power, specifically class domination, which is conspicuously absent in phenomenological-hermeneutical accounts of the “natural attitude,” “situation,” and “Being-in-the-world.” In Chapter 1, we focused on the portraits offered by Marx, Engels, and the Frankfurt theorists. While I reject its epistemological dualisms, the Marxian notion of ideology is less wrong than incomplete. Therefore, rather than presenting Marxian and phenomenological conceptions of ideology as exclusive types, I try to advance them as complementary notions. Our task is to expand the conception of ideology, to account for the structures that offer indispensable ontological grounding to human being while maintaining the critical edge of Marxism.1

In Part I below, we first briefly revisit the virtues and demerits of this conception of ideology as a tool of capitalist hegemony, an extension of the economic and institutional power of the bourgeoisie. This section only quickly sets the stage for a

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1 Any discussion of necessary ideology would be incomplete without some significant postmodern thinkers who represent the self in terms of “subjection” and “subjectivation.” Following Michel Foucault’s later work, the American philosophers William Connolly and Judith Butler speak of a subject who is simultaneously disciplined (“subjected”) and activated (“subjectivated”) by power. Unfortunately, this argument must wait for a future incarnation of this project.
revisitation of the late-Marxist notion of ideology proffered by French Marxist Louis Althusser. He proposes, we remember, that humans are ideological animals by nature, partaking in the "necessary imaginary" which enables our "lived relations" to reality. To complement Althusser's account of ideology as the necessary, irreducible, ontological grounding for everyday life, in Part II we then appeal to the phenomenological-hermeneutical thinkers Edmund Husserl and Hans-Georg Gadamer. This current, while completely disregarding Marxism and Marxist concerns, offers unequaled discussion of the indispensable functions of ideology as the "natural attitude." Drawing as well from the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty and the sociologist Bourdieu, Part II also illustrates ideology as comprised by situative spheres and "habitus." Filling in the gaps left by Althusser, we work to illuminate ideology as an existential phenomenon, recognizing that besides deception, ideology performs a number of indispensable ontological functions: situation, constitution, and enablement.

While increasing our theoretical understanding of ideology, this chapter is also aimed at enabling the existential struggle of the subject. Part III thus adds Heidegger back into this mix, seeking to document the "ontology of ideology." In a Heideggerian universe, ideology as the natural attitude has no choice but to be situated within mood and care. Along the way, the aspiring authentic will need to be able to criticize ideology: Which idea- and practice-structures, by offering situation, constitution, and enablement serve the project of the aspiring authentic? On the other hand, which ideologies, by performing some of the same functions, also act against authenticity by deceiving, exploiting, and subordinating the subject? The subject must, in short, be able to typologize ideology as negative or positive, as either inhibiting or promoting one's project for authenticity. Hopefully, by the end of this chapter we will have developed our understandings of ideology and ideology critique to better evaluate the two strategies of authenticity to be explored in Chapters 4 and 5, those of Charles Taylor and Richard Rorty.
Marxian Ideology Revisited

Capitalist Deception and Domination

For Marx, ideology is part of the superstructure which is expressed by the material, economic base. Employing the metaphor of an edifice, Marx places the "objective" economic mode of production, as well as the social, i.e., labor relations which sustain production, as the foundation of human society. Without this economic infrastructure, the rest of the building could not stand. Indeed, it is the shape and capacities of the foundation which determine the character of the (super)structure. While the precise effect of the economic base on the superstructure continues to be a topic of theoretical interest, Marxism retains at its heart significant impulses toward economic determinism and functionalism. In short, Marxism insists that its practitioners see cultural forms as expressive of the economic system. When that system is capitalism, Marxian critics cannot help but wonder to what extent institutions, practices, ideals, beliefs, and myths are tools in the hands of the ruling economic class. The "ideological superstructure," as the extension of the economic domination of the bourgeoisie, acts in both explicit and implicit ways to insure that capitalism is a functioning, governing totality. That is, we can assume that the subjects of capitalism, all those workers manual and mental, are deeply influenced, if not penetrated and controlled, by ruling ideology. For Marxism's major figures--Lukács, Horkheimer, Adorno, Jameson, Althusser, the eponym himself--ideology is a force that envelops each and all.

The problems with such convictions are several. While it is important that we are aware of the expression of class power in our everyday being, we need to acknowledge the many realms of existence which are not directly subordinated to ruling ideology. First, within the epistemological dualism at work in Marxist thought, the only realm outside ideology is that of science--that of correct, objective thought. This split between true and false consciousness is absolutely untenable in the current climate of ontological pluralism. In this context, the claims to correct thought advanced by the philosopher-
theologians of Ancient and Medieval times are no different than the claims to objective thought by Enlightenment scientists and philosophers. As postmodern critics have cogently argued time and again, reason and logic are only perspectives, and make limited truth claims which are neither universal nor objective. By the dawn of the 21st century, recognition of the legitimacy of different ways of thinking, acting, and living has spread beyond the academic realms of cultural anthropology and comparative politics to become an important moral precept of everyday consciousness in Western liberal societies. When Locke, Descartes, Marx, or Althusser claim to have access to a law of objective reason or science which delegitimates unregulated, everyday interpretation and experience, we (post)modern creatures cannot but laugh. With all its excesses, the “people’s century” has lifted subjugated knowledges and everyday ways of life from deprecated obscurity. It is not only sophisticated academicians who might recognize the wisdom of the peasant or the street hustler; many of us acknowledge that knowledge has many faces, colors, and languages. As such, ours is both the “people’s century” and the “peoples’ century.”

As Richard Rorty argued in our first chapter, the will to totalization inherent in Marxian explanations of ideology is also troublesome. As a postmodern and pragmatist, Rorty is bothered by traditional theory’s impulse to make sense of the whole, which is premised on the notion that the totality actually displays an overarching, integrated coherence. Here I think he is correct: Marxian accounts do overestimate the totalizing nature of negative ideology. Rorty has a lot of company in criticizing this aspect of Marxism; as we remember, Cultural Studies theorists, focusing on popular culture, draw our attention to the ways in which consumers appropriate products in creative and sometimes rebellious ways. Poststructural theorists, as well, have been quite effective in illuminating the fissures and aporias in dominant discourses. We (intellectuals) need only look at our own life to see how the ability of negative, capitalist ideology to dominate discrete existences is limited. While we should reject the Mannheimian notion that intellectuals are somehow independent and above ideology, we also must resolutely
impugn the Marxian insistence that mental labor is as permeated with capitalist ideology as manual labor under the capitalist mode of production. While work may indeed dominate life, life does not suffer complete subjugation. As Erich Maria Remarque, Christa Wolf, Gabriel García Márquez and countless other artists have demonstrated, love knows no borders. There is no socialist love or capitalist love or fascist love; no Führer, General, nor CEO can dominate with omnipotence, thoroughly negating all the pleasures of human life. In the mind of Marx and the Frankfurt theorists, we capitalists suffer the "sheer estrangement of all the senses," feeling "happy without being so at all." From America's point of view, there was no happiness in the former Soviet Union. The Russians, East Germans, Poles, Czechs, Cubans—all had to be miserable. With any genuine investigation, such postulates are revealed to be ludicrous projections. Ideology simply does not have this type of ubiquitous reach.

Yet when we compare the Marxian conception of negative ideology to the ideology of the phenomenologists to follow, we see more of a difference in degree than kind. For Marx, the Frankfurt theorists, and Althusser (to be revisited below) all recognize the situative, constitutive, and reproductive functions of ideology. With such emphasis on the deceptive nature of all of these processes, however, this Marxian conception limits its vision. Could there be realms of ideological embeddedness which are undifferentiated, lacking clear commitment to dominant power? And if workers under capitalism are so thoroughly subjugated by ideology as to be compliant tools of the bourgeoisie, how do we account for the agent's enablement to occasionally withdraw from and resist ideology? Of course, Marxism is all about resistance, advocating the arousal of the workers to see their exploitation as it really is. My complaint with the Marxian view of ideology is that total revolution is the prerequisite for seeing clearly: the proletariat must become für Sich, a class for itself, in order for any meaningful resistance to be possible. But lacking total revolution, we must put our hope in everyday rebellions, the occasional epiphanies of mundane life that enable us to see critically and clearly from
time to time. For insights of this nature, we will appeal to phenomenological thinking which addresses some of these ontological issues neglected by Marxism. But before leaving the Marxists, we shall take another look at Althusser, who serves as important bridge between these schools of philosophy.

The Interpellation of the Althusserian Subject

Despite his explicit scientism and epistemological dualism, we need to take seriously the account of ideology offered by Althusser. Downplaying the deceptive functions of ideology, he instead documents its reproductive and constitutive effects. Indeed, the problem of ideology is at the center of the key question for Althusser’s structural Marxism: the reproduction of the means of production. Specifically, he addresses the issue of the reproduction of labor power. Althusser notes that reproducing labor power consists of more than simply providing the material conditions necessary to insure that the worker will return to the factory or the office each day—a wage to pay the costs of food, shelter, transportation, etc. Laborers must also be, as he phrases it, "competent." Essential to this "know-how" is knowledge of and obedience to the rules of the established order.

Much of our integration into the material reality of everyday worklife is the product of what Althusser calls "ideological state apparatuses" (ISAs). Acting in concert with "repressive state apparatuses" (the police, courts, army), ISAs proffer not only deception but epistemological and ontological grounding. Straddling the private and public sectors, schools, churches, the family, the media, and even labor unions teach a mode of competency, a stable way of functioning in the everyday world. Crucially, ideology "interpellates" and "hails" us as individuals; in fact, we are "always-already" subjects within its fold. Althusser describes the scenario of being hailed by a policeman in the street with a "Hey, you there!" By turning around, we become a subject, for we have recognized the hail which recognizes us. Likewise, while responding to a knock on our door, we ask "Who's there?", and the answer provides interpellation of the subject on
the other side. We are similarly recognized as spouse and sinner, brother or sister, student, sales associate or software engineer. Indeed, by establishing the roles, the "subject positions" which congeal the relations of production, Althusser contends that "all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects."2

But there is a fundamental "ambiguity" in this concept of the subject. Describing what Michel Foucault would later call the "double-bind" of subjectivity,3 Althusser reminds us of the two meanings of the noun-verb "subject": "(1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission."4 Althusser emphasizes this immanent contradiction of the double-bind, installing ideology as the medium for the drama of agency. "There are no subjects except by and for their subjection. That is why they 'work all by themselves'."5

Although functioning in the realm of ideas, in the mind, Althusser insists that ideology is a material practice. Quite in line with Marxian materialism, Althusser contends that the ideological reproduction of labor power directly relies on actual practice, the routines and rituals of everyday life. Thus, "the subject acts insofar as he is acted by the following system (set out in order of its real determination): ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief."6 When we subscribe to God, or Duty, or Justice we participate in practices which, aggregated, form the ideological apparatus. As such, the ideological apparatus depends on freely-chosen, conscious belief while at the same

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4 Ibid., p. 182.
5 Ibid., emphasis in original.
6 Ibid., p. 170.
time shepherding the idea-structures of human agents. To be sure, we should wonder about the structurally deterministic tones of such an assessment. Does the fact that the subject is shaped by the practical rituals of everyday life, dictated by the mode of production, also mean that the agent is unreflective and powerless? What does it mean that subjects are necessarily products of subjection, working "all by themselves"?

Although his structuralism is often condemned as deterministic and functionalist, Althusser recognizes that all is not at the beck and call of the bourgeoisie:

Ideological State Apparatuses may be not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle, and often of bitter forms of class struggle. The class (or class alliance) in power cannot lay down the law in the ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State apparatus, not only because the former ruling classes are able to retain strong positions there for a long time, but also because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the utilization of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions in them in struggle.7

The exploited classes, he maintains, can "turn the weapon of ideology against the classes in power."8 Unfortunately, he is not forthcoming with the details of a method of ideology critique. For that, we will have to wait. Yet Althusser acknowledges that we can, and frequently do recognize ourselves as functionaries within the structure of everyday life. But such consciousness is a far cry from having the "scientific" knowledge of ideology required to break with it. It is clear that this is not a realm for everyone. Science, the antipode to ideology, is a pure, "subject-less," objective discourse, the realm of correct-thinking academics like himself.

Adopting the categories of the "real" and "imaginary" from the lexicon of the Freudian revisionist Jacques Lacan, Althusser asserts that "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."9 Crucially, he posits the imaginary as an irreducible secretion of the real: only with the mediation of the imaginary can people relate to the mode of production. Yet this field is not uniform; as

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7 Ibid., p. 147.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., p. 162.
we have noted, Althusser concedes that ISAs are the site of class struggle, and thus are only incompletely ruled by the bourgeoisie. Given that ideology hails, interpellates, and offers subject positions, at what point does subjectivity stop being penetrated, nay created by ideology? If shared (and unconscious) horizons are essential to all subjectivities, the aspiring authentic must not only partake but forego. I am tempted, with Althusser, to call all subject positions ideological. Yet how are we to determine what ideology is positive, necessary, and enabling, and which is negative and exploitative?

Althusser doesn't supply the answer. Indeed, he offers little explanation of the critical processes necessary to authenticity. Yet there is surely potential here, and we do not have to buy into his structural version of Marxism in order to appreciate this theory of ideology. For unlike the phenomenologists in the section below, Althusser's sensitivity to asymmetry, domination, and exploitation alerts us to the fact that although some ideology is necessary and irreducible, some serves ruling powers. Clearly, all subject positions are not equally (negatively) ideological. Determining this degree, I want to suggest, is essential for an authentic hermeneutics of the self. These are pivotal challenges for the aspiring authentic: to recognize when conformity is being purchased at the cost of being true to itself, and to apply ideology critique to the professed ideals of everyday life.

In the section immediately below we see how our understanding of ideology can be informed by the phenomenological and hermeneutical traditions. To be sure, during my encounters with Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer, I have had a hard time not drawing direct parallels to ideology. Yet the Marxian and phenomenological traditions are not *prima facie* compatible: the intense materialism of Marx and the transcendental (and indeed at times aesthetic) orientation of the phenomenologists have long kept them apart. Yet it along the axis of necessary ideology where these differences may at least inform, if never reconciled. Below we explicate the connections among Husserl's notions of the "life-world" and phenomenological "reduction"; Gadamer's notions of "prejudice" and understanding; and Heidegger's invocation of "moods" and types of "care."
result, I hope, will be an expanded and reinvigorated view of ideology which can inform the project of authenticity.

**Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Ideology**

As Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer persuasively illustrate, we are all products of perspective. Understanding is not achieved by reaching the "objective view from nowhere," but by making ourselves aware of our cultural and historical situation. Far from negating the possibility for knowledge, certain biases *enable* productive engagement with whatever is in view. In the sections that follow, I ask whether it makes sense to talk about these biases, the "moods" and "fore-structures" of the "life-world" in terms of ideology. If so, then certain forms of ideology are *necessary* for us to make any sense of the world. As such, ideology also *serves* authenticity. One cannot function without established thought structures, states of mind, and unexamined dispositions. Indeed, our exploration of authenticity must take account of the *situative, constitutive, enabling, and reproductive* qualities of ideology which do not, as in the Marxian account, necessarily serve dominant class power.

**Husserl and Ideology**

Currently shunned as passé for his Cartesianism, Edmund Husserl survives as a giant of phenomenology and, as Heidegger’s mentor, a crucial transitional figure to post-metaphysical philosophy. Combining a dualist, Enlightenment epistemology with a hermeneutical appreciation of contingency, his work resists easy classification as either modern or postmodern. Without question, the explicit, ultimate goal of Husserl’s phenomenology is to enact a new Cartesian revolution in philosophy, where radical doubt inspires us to ground all knowledge in the experience of pure phenomena. As he unambiguously states in his *Cartesian Meditations*, “Everything that makes a philosophical beginning possible we must first acquire by ourselves.”

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treatment of his foundationalist philosophy of science is not the main task of this section, Husserl's exploration of new phenomenological grounding for science will contribute to our still undernourished concept of ideology as performing essential enabling, situative, constitutive, and reproductive functions for the subject. Yet we must first acknowledge that Husserl's project is aimed at reforming the activity of professional philosophy rather than providing a popular mode of ideology critique for John and Jane Doe. At the same time, however, Husserl casts sustained attention on all that gets in the way of true knowledge--prejudices both everyday and scientific--and thus should help us better understand the obstacles for the aspiring authentic.

This section, therefore, Appropriates two of Husserl's concepts which are central to his philosophy of science: the "natural attitude" and "reduction." We will envisage the natural attitude in terms of necessary ideology, that which provides the idea structures which offer epistemological and ontological grounding to everyday life. Though this ground is ineliminable, Husserl insists that it is reducible and transcendentable. This process, which he terms phenomenological (or transcendental) reduction, can be seen as a form of ideology critique.

Husserl posits that neither sense-data, brute experience, nor tradition can offer reliable building-blocks for the construction of knowledge. In the next chapter, we will visit Taylor's dismantling of the epistemological presumptions of "rationalism"--that reality is comprised of swirling bits of discrete data which are then processed by the rational faculty. Likewise, Husserl suggests that our senses can deceive us and that scientific paradigms are historically contingent. In regard to the sciences, he states: "their universal basis, the experienced world, must also be deprived of its naïve acceptance. The being of the world, by reason of the evidence of natural experience, must no longer be for us an obvious matter of fact; it too must be for us, henceforth, only an acceptance-phenomenon."11 What we like to consider "naked facts" are the result of a

11Ibid., I, 7, p.18.
larger unity of perceptions and experiences. The world should not be accepted as actuality, but as "actuality-phenomenon."

Undoubtedly, it belongs to human being to be enveloped within the natural attitude. With terminology that he would impart to his protégé Heidegger, Husserl explains that "world is for me a continuous-living prejudice and is, in a certain sense, the totality of all my prejudices in my natural life."12 The natural attitude is our auto-pilot, the necessary, unreflective modus operandi of everyday life, the medium for tradition, inculcation, and habit. What Husserl and Heidegger neglect to discuss, is that it is the preserve of moral commitments as well, the ethical theater which will be so important to Taylor's authentic agent. Husserl calls the natural attitude "the primordial dwelling place of all my judgments, the ones which I have acquired myself as well as the ones I have accepted from tradition . . . that, because of their implicitness, are at first hidden from me although they nonetheless determine me in my views."13

Indeed, we could say that necessary ideology, as the natural attitude, is comprised of both place and process. As place, we are situated within what Husserl terms "horizon," a metaphor which continues to fuel phenomenological and hermeneutical thinkers. In modernist, proto-structuralist fashion, Husserl emphasizes the unity of perceptions which makes up the natural attitude. Describing his project of phenomenological reduction (which we will address below), he queries, "I ask how all these manifold experiences of our consciousness of world meld into the unity of a common achievement by which, across multiple subjective elements, a unity of one supposedly objective thing is found and by which, universally speaking, a unity of one objective universe continually manifests itself."14 He prescribes an "incessant uncovering of horizons," to reveal "the unity of a systematic and all-embracing order."15

13Ibid.
15Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, op. cit., II, 22, p. 54.
Clearly, Husserl is positing a transcendental realm of Being, where, in Cartesian spirit, Husserl asserts the *ego cogito* as temporally and spatially antecedent to the "natural world." In Husserl's transcendental idealism, "the being of the pure ego and his cogitationes, as a being that is prior in itself, is antecedent to the natural being of the world--the world of which I always speak, the one of which I can speak. Natural being is a realm whose existential status is secondary; it continually presupposes the realm of transcendental being."\(^\text{16}\) The natural attitude, our most immediate reality, is itself situated within a transcendental whole. This spatial situation, domains ensconced into one another like Chinese boxes or Russian dolls, makes transcendence of natural, everyday existential reality possible. Like the innermost doll, the ego displays the solidity absent in the surrounding realities, offering a transcendental, primordial core to the enveloping existentialia.

As *process*, the natural attitude is constituted by what Husserl terms "projection" and "functioning intentionality." Crucially, he recognizes that consciousness is always a "consciousness-of." In order to experience the world at all, we must invest its objects with purpose. Experience never writes upon us as a blank slate; rather, we always receive perceptions by means of prejudice. In short, we cannot separate experience from meaning. As he puts it, "There are . . . not two things present in immanent experience; the object is not immanently experienced and then next to it the intentional, immanent experience itself; . . . rather, only one thing is present, the intentional, immanent experience, of which the essential descriptive characteristic is precisely the relevant intention."\(^\text{17}\) Intentionality is less a steady-state than a process and function; meaning is never metaphysically frozen but arises from our mode of being in the life-world.

Accordingly, Husserl contends that this process is a simultaneous projection (*Vorwurf*) and a retrospection (*Rückschau*). We launch expectations, grounded in past

\(^{16}\text{Ibid., 8, 61, p.21, emphasis in original.}\)

experiences, into new experiences. The continual process of everyday understanding entails projecting a "ray of consciousness." This shaft of light emanates from the "pre-horizon" (Vorhorizont) which has been "sedimented" into our projections. These are the processes essential to everyday life, what Husserl calls the "mundane," the "straightforward," and the "anonymous." This is the realm of "co-intentions," where meaning is taken for granted, as provided by a specific social milieu. While Husserl calls this way of being "naïve," he stops short of condemning it as false consciousness. The problem with the natural attitude is less that it is deceptive than that it is deficient. The original ray of consciousness, though it is essential to understanding, illuminates only outer shells of the doll. Much remains concealed within anonymity of the natural attitude: the fullness of its (transcendental) horizon, its situation within (transcendental) Being, its manner of functioning.

Reduction lifts the natural attitude out of obscurity, creating the necessary Archimidean point to espy innermost reality. Congruent with his effort to provide new phenomenological foundations for science, Husserl expounds on the "philosophical attitude," the key to providing an eidetic, i.e., ideal account of fundamental reality.

"Instead of following his experiences in their naïve harmony as they appear in the contingent and traditional course of his life, which constitutes his apperceptions, [the philosopher] tries to encompass the universality of the existing world, in such a way that, instead of taking as ground the world naïvely pre-given to him, he grasps it as 'intention' and treats it as problematic." The goal of phenomenological reduction is to thematize the mundane: to make the everyday fully transparent, discover its intentional mechanisms, and situate it within the transcendental whole. Husserl further describes reduction as "the radical and universal method by which I apprehend myself purely: as Ego, and with my own pure conscious life, in and by which the entire Objective world

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19 Husserl, Ms. K, III, 6, pp. 137-8, quoted in ibid., p. 204.
exists for me and is precisely as it is for me."\textsuperscript{20} The ultimate object of reduction, alternately called "phenomenological epoché," is to open up the "universe of phenomena" through a "universal criticism of consciousness."\textsuperscript{21} Thereby, we will uncover our "pure living, with all the pure subjective processes making this up."\textsuperscript{22}

In order to subject the natural attitude to the philosophical attitude, we must "bracket" our everyday prejudices. Husserl speaks of "parenthesizing the objective world," a "universal depriving of acceptance" of the mundane, a "putting out of play' of all positions taken toward the already-given objective world."\textsuperscript{23} Clearly, here Husserl is advocating a transcendence of condition, a form of Cartesian dualism, an idealism of the philosophical faculty. He speaks approvingly of the "splitting of the Ego," where philosophers hover above their situation, in "absolute freedom from prejudice":

If the Ego, as naturally immersed in the world, experiencingly and otherwise, is called \textit{interested in the world}, then the phenomenologically altered--and, as so altered, continually maintained--attitude consists in a \textit{splitting of the Ego}: in that the phenomenological Ego establishes himself as \textit{disinterested onlooker}, above the naively interested Ego ... the Ego's sole remaining interest being to see and to describe adequately what he sees, purely as seen, as what is seen and seen in such and such a manner.\textsuperscript{24}

To gain a properly philosophical understanding of Being, then, we must "deliver ourselves from this footing" of the natural world of co-intentions and shared understandings.

Does Husserl hold any hope for critical reflection on an everyday basis? This is, remember, the central question for the aspiring authentic, the "interested Ego." Husserl does acknowledge "natural reflection": our everyday consciousness of being, valorization, and memory. Though at times dismissing it as a superficial activity, he notes that natural reflection can be transformative. Undoubtedly, phenomenological

\textsuperscript{20} Husserl, \textit{Cartesian Meditations}, op. cit., I, 8, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., II, 15, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., I, 8, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., II, 15, p. 34, emphasis in original.
reduction transforms our subjective processes. Yet this is true of all reflective forays, Husserl contends. For even,

Natural reflection alters the previously naïve subjective process quite essentially; this process loses its original mode, 'straightforward', by the very fact that reflection makes an object out of what was previously a subjective process but not objective. The proper task of reflection, however, is not to repeat the original process, but to consider it and explicate what can be found in it. Naturally the transition to this considering yields a new intentional process, which with its peculiarity of 'relating back to the earlier process', is awareness.25

Yet Husserl retracts with one hand what he offers with the other. While at one moment calling natural reflection a transformative awareness, he authoritatively repudiates it in the next:

We must distinguish 'straightforwardly' executed grasping, perceiving, remembering, predicating, valuing, purposing, etc., from the reflections by means of which alone, as grasping acts belonging to a new level, the straightforward acts become accessible to us... In the 'natural reflection' of everyday life... we stand on the footing of the world already given as existing—as when, in everyday life, we assert: 'I see a house there' or 'I remember having heard this melody'. In transcendental-phenomenological reflection we deliver ourselves from this footing, by universal epoche with respect to the being or non-being of the world. The experience as thus modified, the transcendental experience, consists then, we can say, in our looking at and describing the particular transcendentally reduced cogito, but without participating, as reflective subjects, in the natural existence-positing that the originally straightforward perception... that the Ego, as immersing himself straightforwardly in the world, actually executed.26

Clearly, we should question whether our authentic agent must deliver itself from its existential footing. As we will see below, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Taylor deny the possibility and desirability for such radical transcendence. To be sure, Husserl is at times victim to a fetish of transparency, a philosophical scientism which his heirs, hermeneuticists and postmoderns, have lambasted for the last 25 years.27 But Husserl has brought us to a critical juncture, by proffering an idealism which recognizes the importance of the temporal world. Despite his epistemological dualism, the natural

25Ibid.
26Ibid., emphasis in original.
27Bernet, Kern, and Marbach point out that Husserl's concept of the life-world changed significantly in late 1920s. First considered the realm of mute, unhistorical, preconceptual intuition which provides support for the sciences, by 1926 the life-world becomes the actually-present, concrete, historical world, to which scientific practice belongs as simply one practice among others. See An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology, op. cit., pp. 220-26.
attitude remains ineliminable: "The world is and remains for me the one I always accept at face value--the reduction does not alter this fact in the least. It only prevents me from taking the real world in the way in which it always seems to be real, and continues to pass for ground, as pre-given Being-horizon" 28

Indeed, Husserl gestures toward the critical edge we would wish for our aspiring authentic in the face of ideology. Might the ethical agent be able to question "the real world in the way in which it always seems to be real" without insisting on the "freedom from prejudice" of Husserl's philosophical attitude? To turn previously unreflective, subjective processes into objects of reflection and articulation, as in Husserl's more generous account of natural reflection recounted above: indeed, this is the faculty of the ideal aspiring authentic which would well inform Rorty's and Taylor's agents to be visited in subsequent chapters.

But for most of us the transcendence required by the phenomenological reduction is not possible, nor desirable. Thus our key issue remains: while some of the natural attitude is ineliminable, ideology necessary for normal human functioning in the life-world, it also comes in manifestations which are negative and exploitative. If we cannot transcend as instructed in Husserl's reduction-as-ideology-critique, whence do we draw our critical wherewithal? Indeed, we have more to learn about the critique of ideology, particularly in its performance of enabling and situative functions.

Gadamer, Interpretation, and Ideology

Hans-Georg Gadamer sees us radically embedded in language and history. His magnum opus, Truth and Method, is concurrently a critical history of the hermeneutics and an exposé of ideology. His purpose, akin to Heidegger's attempt to document fundamental ontology, is to understand the conditions under which we know, the conditions which make knowing possible. In doing so, Gadamer's project, like

\[28\text{Husserl, Ms. B, I, 5, ix, pp. 27-8, quoted in Kockelmanns, ed., op. cit., pp. 207-8.}\]
Heidegger's, is quite instructive for the student of ideology and authenticity. Part of the anti-Enlightenment movement which thoroughly rejects the notion that knowledge is created by the disembodied actor in a position of detachment and objectivity, Gadamer asserts the scandalous Heideggerian opposite: that it is precisely prejudice and embeddedness which enables the possibility of knowing at all. Indeed, ideology is necessary to Dasein.

Gadamer is building of the work of modern hermeneuticists like Scheiermacher and Dilthey, who, with phenomenological precision, attempt to map the possibilities for a "true" understanding of objects, i.e., knowledge of historical texts in themselves. This is no place to do justice to this tradition which deserves significant homage. By insisting that existential embeddedness undergirds all knowledge and experience, and that we can never fully objectify this world in which we are immersed, hermeneuticists alert us to an open field begging for cultivation. If detachment and objectivity are false gods, then how can we understand our "life-world"?

Gadamer entreats us to become aware of our "situation." This is Hegel's notion of "substance," the spirit-matter of subjective being in the world, which concurrently enables and limits the possibility for all knowing. Expressing a concept which is central to Taylor's ethical hermeneutics and Rorty's strong poetry, Gadamer argues that awareness of our situation cannot mean objectifying it in the sense of standing outside of ourselves. Self-awareness is "a task of particular difficulty" because historical being dictates that knowledge is not only dependent on situation but that situation is constantly in flux. "To exist historically," Gadamer posits, "means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete". All understanding is process, and agent's knowledge is never objective knowledge.

Following Nietzsche and Husserl while presaging Taylor, Gadamer invokes the imagery of the "horizon" to convey the situatedness of being. Horizons at once serve to

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limit and to launch. By situating ourselves in horizons, we learn to put things, including ourselves, into perspective. Without horizons, we overvalue what is closest to us; with an awareness of a horizon, we are not blinded by the proximate for we are able to see beyond immediacy. As such, finitude is the requisite for expansiveness. Gadamer asserts that “A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, as near or far, great or small. Similarly, the working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.”

This encounter, however, is conceived quite differently than in Enlightenment or Romantic contexts. There, tradition is the reservoir of prejudices, habits, and affections, and as such, is the antipode to reason. In hermeneutics, tradition is the foothold for understanding; it is the necessary loam which nourishes productive interpretation. Since we always stand within tradition, we should never conceptualize it as something alien, for “It is always part of us, a model or exemplar, a recognition of ourselves.” In fact, it is our very recognition of our place in the stream of tradition which makes “true” understanding possible. “The fact is that tradition is constantly an element of freedom and of history itself.” We are capable of understanding a text that resides in a tradition because, naturally, we share elements of that tradition. The goal of hermeneutic awareness, however, is neither to suspend tradition, freezing it into a steady object of our gaze, nor to give ourselves entirely over to it, to replicate the mind of the author or stand in tradition’s unbroken stream. Rather, hermeneutics is fueled by a “polarity of familiarity and strangeness” which tries to understand the historical text both as a unique object and as part of a shared tradition. “The true home of hermeneutics,” Gadamer states, “is in this intermediate area.”

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p. 250.
32 Ibid., pp. 262-3.
Within all this praise of tradition, where lies interpretation’s critical edge? To be sure, Gadamer is aware of the need to separate, in his words, “true from false prejudices.” But he is not about to prescribe a method for correct understanding. Hermeneutics is an *ontological* exercise; it sees itself quite differently than the Cartesian or Baconian enterprise of assiduously following the process of reason to create unimpeachable knowledge. Rather, Gadamer seeks only “to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place.” In other words, independent of the light of reason or any methodological procedure, understanding *happens*, and we do not know enough about it. The hermeneutic ethos is less prescription and creation than *disclosure*—“resolute openness” in Heideggerese. The distinction, then, between productive prejudices which enable understanding and the negative ones which hinder interpretation “must take place in the understanding itself.”33 This occurs, Gadamer insists, by emphasizing a function which has in the past remained peripheral to the hermeneutic approach: the productivity of temporal distance between interpreter and text.

Gadamer has deeply imbibed Heidegger's temporalized existentialism, recognizing that time is "the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted."34 As being is time, so is understanding. Neither is a steady-state, for time evinces a "genuine productivity of process."35 Our understanding of texts, Gadamer maintains, is improved by our distance from them. This space is "not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition."36 We are unable to clearly judge contemporary works of art, for example, because time has not bequeathed us "sure criteria." We are not in control of fancies and prejudices of the day, Gadamer insists, those prominent and immediate notions "that have too great an influence over us for us to

33Ibid., p. 263.
34Ibid., p. 264.
36Ibid., p. 264.
know about them." 37 With time, the prejudices of now and yesteryear become ever more clear.

To which prejudices does this apply, and how does this occur? Understanding is a process that parallels historical distance. By conducting repeated conversations with an object of the past, we open ourselves to prejudices both positive and negative. Concurrently, we encounter identity and difference. The similarities allow us to connect with the tradition whence we came. Difference, however, must be engaged: by being made aware of our epoch's unique prejudices, we are forced to test them, Gadamer contends. Indeed, it is the engagement across temporal distance which enables understanding: "It not only lets those prejudices that are of a particular and limited nature die away, but causes those that bring about genuine understanding to emerge clearly as such." 38

"Genuine understanding," for Gadamer, is a "fusion of horizons." As we have mentioned, this is far from a collapsing of horizons, for hermeneutics conspicuously thrives in the tension between familiarity and strangeness. As Gadamer puts it, "Historical consciousness is aware of its own otherness and hence distinguishes the horizon of tradition from its own. On the other hand, it is itself, as we are trying to show, only something laid over a continuing tradition, and hence it immediately recombines what it has distinguished in order, in the unity of the historical horizon that it thus acquires, to become again one with itself." 39 Gadamer sees constant conversational play between old and new, where the horizon of the present is in dialectical alternation with the horizon we have projected for the past. Through such trans-temporal activity we reach our clearest, deepest, best understanding.

How does the "filtering process" approvingly recounted by Gadamer compare to what we know about ideology critique? First, this filtering process seems to be of a

37 Ibid., p. 265.
38 Ibid., p. 266.
39 Ibid., p. 273.
singular dimension, driven by a singular criterion: improvement in understanding. We are reminded that Gadamer's inquiry is an ontological-epistemological activity, not a prescriptive one. Thus, he is seeking only to clarify the conditions under which understanding occurs, to assist in the constructing knowledge, not to criticize the (moral) content of that knowledge. He observes that some prejudices simply endure and remain: those that "bring about genuine understanding" and are not of a "particular and limited nature." Other prejudices (i.e., traditions), many of which ideology critics worry about, are left alone. The traditions that remain intelligible are all but endorsed, many of which would surely be condemned as deceptive and exploitive by Marxists and chalked up as "superstition" and "myth" by Enlightenment modernists. Indeed, this is consistent with the self-definition of the hermeneutic enterprise, which sees its ontological focus functioning at a level below what Marxists would call ideology. Yet, I want to contend, situation is ideology itself.

**Taking Stock of Situation: The Natural Attitude Revisited**

I hope that I have been reasonably convincing that these non-Marxist thinkers can significantly help us to understand ideology as phenomenon. As such, the hermeneutical-phenomenological illumination of the natural attitude and situation—their utter indispensability and paramount importance to being—coupled with Althusser's notion of the necessary imaginary, establishes ideology as a phenomenon which is *irreducible*. And contrary to Cartesians and (indeed most) Marxists, this is far from a lamentable fact; rather, it is precisely the lack of transcendence that allows any understanding at all. As Heidegger says, we must recognize the *positive* capacity which ontologically underwrites delusion. The fact that we can be deluded also means that we can be correct; it is only in ideology that we are able to *be* in the world at all.

Gadamer is quite indebted to Heidegger on this score, vehemently rejecting the notions of transcendence and reduction. The detached philosopher, splitting his ego in order to deliver himself from situation, is a fantastic and inauthentic subjectivist, a relic
best dumped in the dustbin with metaphysics. Reduction, the Cartesian "philosophical\nepoché" of Husserl, is, in short, an abomination. For the philosopher's transcendence is
not only impossible but undesirable, a familiar, stale insult to the notion of Dasein as
worldly Being. Intensely ontological, Heidegger's project is to enable not transcendence,
but \textit{attunement} to Being-in-the-world. Indeed, it this issue—the absolute necessity of
everyday ways of being—which makes Heidegger's phenomenology so crucial to this
investigation of ideology.

But before Heidegger again commands our attention, I want to explore further the
concept of the "natural attitude." It is through this notion, informed not only by Marx,
Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer, but Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu, by which we
will explicate the situative, constitutive, reproductive, and enabling functions of ideology.
The natural attitude, we remember, is a phenomenological term which was introduced to
this study through Husserl. For him, it provides the ontological and epistemological
underpinning for mundane, everyday existence. While he says that the natural attitude is
ineliminable, for the aspiring Cartesian it must also be transcendable. From a
phenomenological-hermeneutical standpoint, though, Husserl's account of the natural
attitude is an auspicious promise. Calling it "the primordial dwelling place of all my
judgments," Husserl sees the natural attitude as supplying deep ontological substance
which no worldly agent can forego. He also importantly argues that a synoptic unity of
perceptions arises within the natural attitude, which enables the manifest complexity of
everyday being to make sense.

It is out of this conception of the natural attitude that we will build our expanded
notion of ideology-as-situation. Indeed, the phenomenologists hitherto examined have
significant company, and here we will briefly mention two of their very worthy co-
conspirators: the mid-century French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and
contemporary French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Indeed, "situation" is probably
Merleau-Ponty's central concept, establishing him as a major force in the current of
Husserl and Heidegger and a crucial forebear of Gadamer. Following Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty recognizes the indispensability of situation to the ability of agents to navigate the world. In fact, the only way which one can experience otherness is through our own “sedimented situation”—the structured principles which allow us to assimilate new circumstances and milieux. Resisting deterministic structuralism, Merleau-Ponty insists that significant ambiguity remains active in our experiences of situation. The subject must constantly mediate within and between its situations, for comprehension and attunement can never be complete.40

Bourdieu, for his part, develops the notions of “field” and “habitus” to describe the relationship between societal structure and individual agency. Rejecting the structuralist view of society as a seamless totality, Bourdieu sees society as composed of “relatively autonomous” fields of play. Too differentiated to be assimilated into an all-encompassing system conforming to a determinative calculus, each field runs according to its own values and rules. Bourdieu speaks of the economic, political, artistic, and scientific, each which, like a magnetic field, supplies a matrix of structured force which applies to all bodies within its realm. While Bourdieu’s sophisticated sociological eye should be appreciated, here we are in search of ontological answers, and will thus apply the concept of field to the individual ontological level. Indeed, the notion of habitus, as the subject’s internalization of a field’s values and rules, will provide great help to our understanding of the natural attitude. We will explore habitus a bit below.

What do we mean by the concept of situation? As such a common term in our vernacular, it is immediately evocative, and carries both positive or negative connotations. When we speak of a “good,” “strange,” or “bad” situation, we refer to a particular existential nexus, a compressed confluence of normal processes and unexpected contingency in which we find ourselves. In the popular American mind, the cinematic image of Harvey Keitel’s character in Pulp Fiction is illustrative of this

definition of situation as a troublesome state: the "situation," in this case, is a mess of a backseat murder that needs discrete disposal. The "situation room" of the White House is also prominent in the popular imagination, where the leaders of the American empire address and dispatch world crises. Merleau-Ponty gives much attention to this need for the subject to negotiate the disconcerting novelty of situations. However, it is just as common that we talk of a "comfortable" situation, where we reside within a desirable existential confluence requiring little effort of interrogation and resolution on the agent's part. In philosophical parlance, "situation" is a crucial ontological concept, meaning our very necessary embeddedness within existential structures of thought and practice. As Dasein, human Being is always Being-in-the-world, which is far from a lamentable state. As we have learned from Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer, situation is the indispensable grounding for all of our interaction with the world. It is this sense, situation as existential embeddedness, which will serve our evocation of the natural attitude as ideology.

In a general sense, the natural attitude is the sum of situations. And our situations are multiple. Many of them are manifest, some of them not; some of them are the stuff of willful, conscious thought, many of them not. Each and all of us have constitutive affiliations to groups with whom we share significant attributes: we are interpellated into socio-economic class, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, and sexual orientation. I cannot define myself without my Anglo middle-classness, my Christianity, my male heterosexuality, my American-ness. These sort of situative spheres subject in the double sense recognized by Althusser, Foucault, and their postmodern heirs. We are subjected, i.e., subordinated to these situations because they are untranscendable to the point where we simply cannot be constituted as subjects without them. Here we are each and all the products of socialization, by default as it were, within a Bourdieuxan field which propagates and enforces values and rules which criss-cross every existential sphere. In addition, we are "subjectivated," activated and enabled to be-in-the-world as willful and reflective agents. Without my Anglo-middle-classness and my Christianity and my
maleness and my American-ness, I would not be able to Be—a friend and a lover and a
father and a writer and so on. Situative spheres offer footholds, without which we cannot
gain any standing nor traction in the world; nor, in fact, be-in-the-world at all. While all
the modifiers of class, ethnicity, religion, etc. are interchangable, the categories
themselves are clearly not. We might “choose our religion,” and one might consciously
will a change in their socio-economic class or gender, but there never exists a choice to
leave fundamental level of these situations altogether. One cannot Be-in-the-world
without the reservoirs of prejudice which they offer. Like the hermeneutical concept of
horizon which limits and launches, these reservoirs collect tradition and experience, and
as we draw from them, offer necessary nourishment for human life.

We are also intensely situated in spheres which American political observers have
long called “voluntary associations,” those commitments which we adopt at different
stretches along the life cycle, and which we presumably can exchange without
threatening ontological possibility. Here I am thinking of situations such as vocation,
avocation, friends and associates, political loyalty, and regional (geographical/cultural)
affiliation. These identifications, too, can also offer the subject profound ontological
grounding, to the extent that if shed, the aspiring authentic would lose the critical mass
necessary to exist authentically. Many people become their work, for instance, while a
political identification could be indispensable in defining one’s worldly Being. But the
fact that most of these identifications are chosen means that they frequently can be
unchosen. And, undoubtedly plenty of people could live without a job—ontological
possibility is aided rather than threatened while on vacation.

In line with our phenomenologist’s bias, patrolling the level of fundamental
ontology, this account of ideology as the “natural attitude” has another crucial
component: what Bourdieu has called “habitus.” In brief, habitus is the subject’s
internalization of values and rules which provides a structuring, orientative function for
everyday life. As the mechanism for mundane existence, habitus is elastic, adaptive, and
even productive. Bourdieu describes it as "a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks." Providing an ontologically necessary structure for thought and action, habitus is a crucial player in all understanding. It is through habitus, drawing from the well of situative spheres, that we are able to use, compile, and integrate experience, retrospecting and projecting. Only with such mechanisms can any understanding--authentic or inauthentic, theoretical or mundane--take place. And we must not forget that valuation is made possible by the natural attitude created by situation and habitus. Tradition and prejudice are the moral sources which empower as they fetter, disclosing Dasein as they concurrently conceal.

Though I have profoundly contorted the notion of ideology in the previous pages, I obviously think it needs liberation from its Marxian tomb, where ideology is held captive by the spirits of dualism and utopian idealism. While freeing it from such fetters, we have at the same time tried to keep ideology in a place proportional to its effect. Although situative spheres are clearly essential to the interpellation of the subject, they do not exhaust the potential of Dasein. For, I will argue below that the natural attitude cannot function without the help of Heideggerian moods and care. And the combination play of mood, ideology, and care produces a magnificent plurality of outcomes which thoroughly embarrass all notions of Marxian dualism, determinism, and functionalism.

But by no means should we retire the notion of ideology as deception. To be sure, postmodern and pluralist conceptions of politics have weakened the Marxian picture of the state as tractable tool of bourgeois domination, a wholly repressive apparatus marching lockstep to the tune of the ruling ideology. Yet Marx and Engels were clearly right to assert that the forces who control the means of economic-material production are far from powerless in the realm of mental production. Those with capital are frequently

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quite effective in exerting influence in the realms of education, religion, family, politics, law, etc. After all, look at how liberal democracy has defined its utmost good, liberty: we simply want to be left alone, have an electoral check against tyranny, and be secure in our property. Don't such notions disproportionately serve a certain class--those who are comfortable in the status quo? When those who are losing in the current arrangement adopt this officially authorized view of the good life, they suffer false consciousness.

But if the natural attitude is necessary, it is not sufficient to comprise Dasein. Heidegger, for one, would remind us of ontological spheres and functions which have yet to be accounted for. Indeed, we are yet to discuss at any depth the entire process of reflection which enables our conscious life as *zoon logon echon*. Although this account will barely scrape the surface of the problem as well, we must at least talk preliminarily about the ontological relationship between situation and reflection, i.e., the *possibility of ideology critique*. Knowing that we are always-already situated, and that situation launches as well as limits understanding and disclosure, where are we to locate the critical faculty within the subject? Thanks to Marx's reminder, we should also be heightened to the probability that many situations are the conduits of negative ideology, those paralyzing forces who would gladly dominate and exploit individuals, cheerfully crushing the impulses of the aspiring authentic.

**Ideology's Ontology--Toward a Heideggerian Ideology Critique**

Here we will press Heidegger to offer, in addition to all the ontological insights hitherto mentioned, a picture of the neighborhood which surrounds situative spheres and their habiti. To that end, this section will illuminate (and appropriate) Heidegger's discussion of moods and care. But first, we should remind ourselves of the interpretive treatment given Heidegger in Chapter 2, which will figure into what will follow. Previously I introduced two innovations. First, I split the authenticity/inauthenticity pair into three parts: everydayness, inauthenticity, and authenticity. Second, I resisted the supposedly exclusive ontological quality of these concepts. According to some
interpretations, there exist two modes of Being, ineradicable and mutually dependent: the inauthentic is the shared, unreflective, everyday, They-world; while authentic Being is expressed through uniqueness, openness, and ontological awareness. Heidegger explicitly reminds his readers that these are purely ontological concepts; there is no condemnation nor disposal of the inauthentic. Despite this claim of ontological exclusivity, I am unwilling to abide by some of these professions. Not only is there an occasional normative tone to Heidegger’s analysis (condemning the tranquility of the They which purports to understand everything at first glance), but I contend that there is great potential in employing authenticity as a normative concept. Indeed, my project has staked everything on the assumption that we can and should be pursuing authentic Being. As such, being authentic requires the cooperation of the ontological and the ontic. To first recognize the indispensability of our ontological grounding is to enable the activation of an actual, existing authentic relation within the world.

Below we combine the currents stirred by these interpretations to push along our understanding of ideology and ideology critique. Heidegger’s phenomenology of Dasein will help fill in this picture, providing the ontological surroundings of the natural attitude. As such, ideology is supported and exploited by two teammates of Dasein: moods and care. For Heidegger, moods are primordial states-of-mind, modes of attunement to Dasein. As a crucial player in human Being, moods make the world available to us, in tandem with the natural attitude and modes of care (also called circumspection or concern). Care, as “the always-already-interpretive comportment of human being,” enables us to take different stances toward the world. Just as we are always in a mood, likewise being-in-the-world is never without a mode of care. Below we discuss these modes in terms of everyday care, deliberative care, and theory. The intended crescendo of this discussion, then, argues how the ontic interaction of these interdependent,

ontological components of Dasein—moods, ideology, and care—determines whether individual Dasein will be authentic or inauthentic.

Moods

"Mood" is a translation of Befindlichkeit, literally rendered as the state one finds oneself in. Heidegger often uses the synonym "state-of-mind" to convey this concept of disposition. Heidegger tells us that moods have three "essential characteristics," which we will collapse into two: 1) mood discloses thrownness and the "Being-in-the-world as a whole"; and 2) mood makes any and all circumspection possible, allowing the world to matter to us.

To Heidegger's keen ontological eye, mood is indeed essential and indispensable. As a student of Dasein, Heidegger sees state-of-mind as disclosive, a clue begging to relinquish the mysteries of worldly Being. It is in this sense that "A mood makes manifest 'how one is, and how one is faring'." Mood also serves a key existential function: "In this 'how one is', having a mood brings Being to its ‘there’." At certain moments in Being and Time it seems as though Heidegger wants to install state-of-mind at the very foundation of human Being, speaking of "the primordial disclosure belonging to moods." Despite their foundational position, moods are far from stationary. For mood actively carries much of the dynamic load of Dasein. Heidegger is unequivocal that each and every action of the worldly dweller requires a state-of-mind. As he sees it, mood flexes, in tandem, muscles both ontological and functional. With italicized emphasis Heidegger writes, "The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something." While it discloses, mood also orients. A partner in disclosing Dasein with ideology and care, mood not only triggers one or another type of care, but enables such

\[\text{\[43\]Heidegger, Being and Time, op. cit., I, 5, p. 173.}\]
\[\text{\[44\]Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\[45\]Ibid., I, 5, p. 176.}\]
elemental human functions such as sense perception. As Heidegger phrases it, "only because the 'senses' belong ontologically to an entity whose kind of Being is Being-in-the-world with a state-of-mind, can they be 'touched' by anything or 'have a sense for' something in such a way that what touches them shows itself in an affect."46 The ontological function of moods is profound, for without them reception and disclosure could not occur. As the sine qua non of all types of circumspection, things can matter for us only with the intervention of moods.

As indispensable modes of attunement, moods are thereby untranscendable. Refuting all forms of idealism, from Plato through Descartes and Husserl, Heidegger insists that "we are never free of moods."47 They function in all circumstances, from the most vulgar They-discourse to the sophisticated heights of theory. Since "having a mood brings Being to its 'there'," it follows that "in every case Dasein always has some mood."48 Displaying his obvious disapproval for the notion of phenomenological reduction, Heidegger writes that "even the purest theoria has not left all moods behind it . . . Any cognitive determining has its existential-ontological Constitution in the state-of-mind of Being-in-the-world."49 Yet he refuses to lower the philosophical attitude which enables science to mere intuition or feeling. For the present-at-hand can only be created through a powerful combination of mood and circumspection in a unique theoretical comportment.

The number of specific moods Heidegger mentions is actually quite few, and those he discusses in any detail, even fewer. Some, like boredom, fear, and anxiety get extended attention. As we have discussed, anxiety propels one into confrontation with worldly being, a crucial step in making oneself at home. Boredom, the state of profound indifference with worldly Being, anesthetizes one away from the ontological questioning

46Ibid., I, 5, pp. 176-77.
47Ibid., I, 5, p. 175.
48Ibid., I, 5, p. 173.
49Ibid., I, 5, p. 177.
that combats the unheimlich. While these are obviously important moods, Heidegger’s account in Being and Time leaves much unsaid given the ontological fundamentality of mood. To anxiety, boredom, fear, and elation, we must add other moods which clearly are also essential dispositions of primordial Dasein, such as resignation, contentment, hurry, curiosity, cynicism. Humans indeed display a plurality of moods, and each of us has our favorites. And their impact is huge: obviously, curiosity and boredom will combine with situative ideology and care in radically different ways. Authentic and inauthentic Being always start with a state-of-mind.

In typical ontological fashion, Heidegger sees moods as significantly autonomous from will and reason. As such, volition and cognition presuppose mood, and one cannot will transcendence in any Platonic or Cartesian manner. But, significantly, his voluntarist tendency also causes him to state:

Factually, Dasein can, should, and must, through knowledge and will, become master of its moods; in certain possible ways of existing, this may signify a priority of volition and cognition. Only we must not be misled by this into denying that ontologically mood is primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself prior to all cognition and volition, and beyond their range of disclosure. And furthermore, when we master a mood, we do so by way of a counter-mood; we are never free of moods.  

This ability to change moods by conjuring another is absolutely essential to the aspiring authentic. While always creatures of situative ideology and state-of-mind, and while we may tend to be dominated by certain moods which enable inauthenticity, subjects are never slaves to these (inescapable) ontological forces.

Modes of Care

“Care” is the most common term Heidegger employs to describe the Being of Dasein. Our Being-in-the-world is constantly involved in one mode of care or another. Care is comprised, Heidegger notes, by thrownness, falling, and projection.  

We discussed thrownness and falling in the previous chapter; while projection is a less

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50 Ibid., I, 5, p. 175.
51 Ibid., II, 2, p. 329.
prominent term in *Being and Time*, is no less important for authenticity than the other two components of care. Calling projection the existential structure of understanding, Heidegger expands on previous phenomenological accounts of the concept, notably Husserl’s. For Heidegger links projection not only with understanding, but potential. Since “Dasein is constantly ‘more’ than it factually is,” it relies on projection to disclose its possibility. He reminds us that projecting is rarely a result of will, but is rather a regular manifestation of Dasein in its Being. “Any Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting. As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities.”

And clearly, the most robust of these possibilities is authentic Being itself. In this section, we will discuss the three types of care which are essential contributors to Dasein: everyday concern, deliberative concern, and theoretical concern. Everyday concern, what Heidegger sometimes calls “circumspective concern,” is the mode of unreflective manipulation. In everyday care, we are “involved” with the world at the level of equipment, a relation Heidegger calls *Bewandtnis*. As we discussed in Chapter 2, this realm of *pragmata* is ruled by the logic of instrumentality. Far from a conscious mode of operating, the employment of equipment is a primordial relationship which is manifested through unreflective use. As we recall, this quality of equipment is “readiness-to-hand.”

Everyday concern is the mode which usually arises out of the situlative spheres of the natural attitude. Or, we might put it conversely: everyday care is the mode in which we frequently receive our situlative ideologies. As such, our gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, etc. are comfortable collaborators with everyday concern. Thus it is not simply physical equipment, the gear of everyday life (the hammer, keyboard, or car) which gets unreflectively treated here as ready-to-hand. In the mode of everyday concern our ideological prejudices, saturated as they are with historical and moral content, also become ready-to-hand. This is the sense in which the readiness-to-hand of equipment

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52Ibid., I, 5, p. 185.
has “its own kind of sight,” and why Heidegger burdens it with the misnomer of “circumspection.” For, in everyday care, we employ our (enabling) biases without conscious reflection or examination. Thus the everyday mode resembles auto-pilot much more than critical scrutiny.

Where everyday circumspection “operates in the involvement-relationships of the context of equipment which is ready-to-hand,” deliberative care “illumines Dasein’s current factical situation in the environment with which it concerns itself.” In deliberative concern, we “bring objects closer” in a way which is a “making present.” When equipment is purely ready-to-hand, our relationship to it is primordial, unreflective. Readiness-to-hand is undeniably a presence, but in a way which, based in use, is unidimensional. On the other hand, deliberative care “lays open” equipmental relationships. Far from transcending the primordial Dasein evidenced in equipment, deliberative care must “in the schema of making present, be in conformity with the kind of Being that belongs to what is to be brought close.” Part of this Being is belonging to a “unity of temporality,” the type of existential totality claimed by all the phenomenological-hermeneutical thinking we have hitherto examined. And crucially, deliberative care must also partake of the essential qualities of Dasein which precede it: “It is grounded in a retention of that context of equipment with which Dasein concerns itself in awaiting a possibility. That which has already been laid open in awaiting and retaining is brought closer by one’s deliberative making-present or envisaging.” In Heidegger’s account of deliberation, transcendence and reduction are simply not options. Dasein in deliberation must maintain its situation and continue to project its possibilities.

In the section from Being and Time on which we are here focusing, Heidegger is primarily interested in “the Way in which Circumspective Concern becomes Modified.

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53 Ibid., II, 4, p. 410.
54 Ibid., II, 4, p. 411.
55 Ibid.
into the Theoretical Discovery of the Present-at-Hand." Understandably, his attention to this transition is monopolized by things-as-equipment, e.g., how the hammer as a simple tool ready-to-hand becomes hammer as an entity with mass and other physical, quantifiable properties. As we will discuss below, these material quantities are indeed the stuff of science/theory. However, what Heidegger’s analysis lacks is precisely the realm which Taylor in the next chapter will illuminate: our moral reserves as a ready-to-hand player in circumspective care and ripe to be laid open and brought close through deliberation. For the type of immanent criticism which we must demand of the aspiring authentic needs to be able to recognize and scrutinize the ideological biases of situation.

To be sure, in the aspiring authentic the natural attitude must undergo this mode of care--deliberation both equipmental and moral (or rather, the moral as equipmental). Where a modicum of awareness of one’s situation is demanded of any worldly being, we know that Heidegger demands much more of his authentic: openness, uniqueness, ontological awareness, resoluteness. For the type of “self-awareness” of the person fond of everyday modes of care is a pale shadow compared to the robust self-knowledge generated by Heidegger’s ontological questioner. While the everyday acknowledgment that “I’m a liberal” (or Christian, African-American, or Muslim), might very well be idle talk, deliberative care of one’s ideological situation demands radical, directed, and sustained inquiry. Not only would the aspiring authentic arouse its consciousness of its multiple situations (of gender, class, ethnicity, religion, etc.), but engage its interpretive faculties. What does it mean to be working-class, lesbian, evangelical Christian, or Latino? What are the qualities of each of these affiliations, (How) do I want to carry these representations around with me? We will see Taylor’s “strong evaluator” displaying this type of critical wherewithal.

Lest we get too caught up explicating moral deliberation here (a subject Heidegger largely left to Taylor), Heidegger reminds us that in the mode of equipmental

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56Sec. 69b, II, 4, p. 408
deliberation, theory and science lie mere steps away. When opening up ready-to-hand equipment to manifest physical, quantifiable qualities, we are indeed modifying Being in a fundamental manner. Science and Theory have longed claimed a difference in kind—a great binary divide—between their enterprise and the ways the rest of us go about things. While we have seen Heidegger and other hermeneuticists put the hurt to the pretensions of Cartesianism, theory and science maintain unique, powerful qualities. As we discussed in Chapter 1, while theory is always-already interpretive (thus defying the fact/value dichotomy), it aspires to a specific form of total, systemic knowledge. While always in a mood as well, theoretical care manages to reveal the world in ways which are fascinating as they are powerful.

But, Heidegger reminds us, the theoretical/scientific attitude conceals as much (or more than) it discloses. Putting theory in its place, he notes, “In the ‘physical’ assertion that ‘the hammer is heavy’ we overlook not only the tool-character of the entity we encounter, but also something that belongs to any ready-to-hand equipment: its place.”57 This “release from environmental confinement” enables some potent vision, to be sure, as our natural scientists and engineers have shown. And philosophers, for their part, have not been entirely mistaken in their attempts to “thematize” the whole. Yet this is Dasein revealed through a projection of acute and narrow proportions, where an investigative a priori, typically an imperious mathematical sensibility, severely limits methods and boundaries of questioning. Heidegger is right: we must look away from theory for authentic understanding of Being.

Conclusion: Ideology Critique and the Aspiring Authentic

I hope that this redemption song for ideology has found some agreeable ears. The Marxian conceptualization of ideology indeed has its problems, yet without an awareness of exploitation our aspiring authentic does not have a chance. I have argued that the

57Ibid., II, 4, p. 413.
concept of ideology can only be redeemed by a phenomenological treatment, where we recognize the indispensability of the situation and enablement they offer each and every subject.

To validate the *raison d'être* of this chapter, I need to have successfully illustrated the appropriate relationship between the Marxian and phenomenological conceptions of ideology. To this end, we have explored and extolled the benefit of assimilating their strengths into a notion of ideology as situative spheres, criss-crossed with currents of power both enabling and exploitive. Indeed, I hope that it is helpful to think of the ideologies of the natural attitude as the necessary link between disposition and a mode of care which discloses.

To be authentic, moods conducive to the cause of resoluteness--curiosity, anxiety, elation--must sideline those who would weaken authentic impulses--fear, boredom, resignation. Modes of care rely on certain indispensable collaborators. The everyday care which flees from Dasein is likely under the effect of resignation, fear, and/or boredom. While such moods are not necessarily causes of inauthenticity, they are certainly amenable to the everyday, unreflective circumspection which accepts the authority of the They. Deliberative care, in contrast, needs the states-of-mind conjured by curiosity and anxiety. And the theoretical attitude depends on anxiety to conquer boredom and resignation in the creating of the present-at-hand. *Resoluteness* is the directed, co-ordinated play of these inderdependencies. None of this could happen if embeddedness in situative ideologies were threatened.

We now turn to the final stage of this project: the exploration of different strategies for achieving authenticity: Taylor's sincerity and Rorty's irony. While attempting to do justice to their wise and provocative work, I argue that each of these strategies for authenticity lacks sufficient sensitivity to the central roles of ideology and ideology critique in any attempt at authentic Dasein. Only by thoughtlessly wagering
their ontological and normative possibilities do authenticity strategies forego moods, ideology, the call of conscience, and care.
PART II
TWO CONTEMPORARY THINKERS
ON AUTHENTICITY
INTRODUCTION TO PART II

What we ought to be doing is fighting over the meaning of authenticity . . . . The struggle ought not to be over authenticity, for or against, but about it, defining its proper meaning. We ought to be trying to lift the culture back up, closer to its motivating ideal.

--Charles Taylor

Taking this cue to heart, so far I have presented various definitions and strategies for being authentic, from Descartes to Heidegger. This search continues in the chapters that follow, focusing on Taylor and one of his contemporaries, Richard Rorty. As a pair, they offer a tremendously productive combination of complement and contradiction by which we will advance our understanding of the authentic self. Indeed, Taylor and Rorty are both friends and enemies. Liable to be grouped together in the popular intellectual media as "liberals," they are cast by professional philosophy as antagonists in the controversy between hermeneutics and pragmatism, while in political theory they are supposed antipodes in the liberal-communitarian debate. The two chapters that follow feed off each side of this complex relation, with a focus on the implications of their differences for the issue of authenticity. We will, as Taylor counsels above, argue about authenticity, attempting to define its proper meaning. Yet producing philosophical discourse on the subject falls far short of "lifting the culture back up" into the pursuit of personal and collective authenticity. To be sure, there is so much work to be done, a lot of it political. How are we to facilitate recognition of authenticity as one of our most important ideals, with a goal of creating greater space for difference, enabling a great plurality of authentic souls? With an eye towards a politically viable definition of authenticity, the exegeses to follow will also take note of Taylor and Rorty's convergences. As an introductory gesture, here I want briefly to attract our attention to this common ground, and acknowledge some
of its potential for contributing to the cause of authenticity. Further below I preface the all-important differences which will fuel the rest of the project.

To begin with, both Rorty and Taylor are anti-foundationalist in their views of philosophy and anti-representationalist in their epistemologies. Both deny that knowledge and truth are mental representations of external objects or the alignment of thought to Ideas. In contrast to the metaphysical and Epistemological traditions, Taylor and Rorty reject the notion that an ultimate, perfect, and permanent reality exists independently of and superior to human being, and that the job of philosophy is to discern and record this reality. For these contemporary thinkers, truth and justification become matters of historical contingency and social practice, rather than a communion with the eternal and transcendent. In wake of the death of metaphysics and the rise of perspectivism, philosophy can no longer see itself as a foundational enterprise. It cannot claim to be the gatekeeper of Truth. Instead, philosophy needs to reconceptualize itself as only one voice among others, making its case without reference to metaphysical authority or language. For Taylor and Rorty, philosophy must recognize the this-worldliness of itself and the objects of its attention.

Taylor and Rorty also both subscribe to a usefulness criterion for truth. Humans call "true" the descriptions that bring us into better, more useful relations within reality. Truth is what makes sense to us, given our particular historical and cultural dispositions. This is not to say that all our relations with the world are purely instrumental, as fervent pragmatists would have it. Clearly, Taylor and Rorty recognize that we engage in some activities which serve no discernible purpose or need. Rather, the point is that criteria for truth can find no grounding other than in Dasein. Neither of these two theorists look to the intellectus divinus nor the "view from nowhere" to discover Truth. Both contend that the composition of truth will vary according to the demands of the agents engaged in inquiry. However, there is by no means seamless agreement between the two. While Rorty wants to avoid any privileging of representations (thereby invoking the "death of Philosophy"), Taylor suggests that hermeneutical inquiry offers the possibility of achieving a "truer"
relation with our surroundings. Yet Taylor's is truth in the most modest sense, a form which recognizes its own contingency, i.e., its historical and anthropological grounding. Taylor may speak of improving the power of our truth-claims, but he is far from insisting that these bring us into correspondence with things as they "really are" in an independent, permanent, metaphysical reality.

Integral to this anti-essentialist epistemology is linguistic constructivism. Both Taylor and Rorty advance a constitutive philosophy of language, contending that rather than representing a reality which exists prior to and outside of itself, language plays an essential role in *constructing* reality. Here they both follow Wittgenstein's notion of truth as the result of language-games and Heidegger's belief that language is the house of being. We will see, however, that they take very different lessons from Wittgenstein and Heidegger, which in turn lead their projects for authenticity in separate directions. For Rorty, truth and progress are the result of employing increasingly useful metaphors rather than increasing our understanding of how the world "really is." In Taylor's account, language is the space, the clearing, where our relation to the world is constituted. Through language we disclose the world, and are able to attend to concerns which are specifically human, i.e., the moral life. Indeed, language can be used with parsimony or excess, accuracy or illusion; yet Taylor and Rorty concur that there is no "getting behind" the representations of language to a more basic representation of the reality it seeks to designate. What the fundamental components of our language reveal, rather, is a certain, irreducible way of being in the world—*our* Dasein.

A final, potentially productive convergence between Rorty and Taylor is their anti-essentialism of the human subject. Their models of the self, though grounded in rather disparate ontologies which we will illustrate directly below, are both fundamentally historicist and constructivist. They reject the notion of a metaphysical essence (e.g., reason or soul) untouched by culture and history, which if exercised correctly, will ensure true, authentic being. Again, their emphasis is on *worldly* being, which is thoroughly
contingent. Such anti-essentialism is a component of their general anti-subjectivism. In opposition to the metaphysical and Enlightenment notions that the subject is the locus of will, control, and clarity, Rorty and Taylor work to de-center the subject from Truth and Being. Where Rorty sees us as a tissue of contingencies, Taylor reduces the subject to shepherdhood in the service of Being. No doubt, it is important to note that unlike Rorty, Taylor does subscribe to an "essentialism" which contends, pace Heidegger, that humans are in essence "self-interpreting animals." Yet this is a weak, temperate essentialism which distances itself from ardent metaphysics. For Taylor, the nature of our self-interpretation, the beings which perform it, and the Dasein we interpret are all products of historical contingency. To christen ourselves as ontological questioners is only to recognize our drive and ability to inquire, not to close ourselves off from important questions (What is truth, Who are we, What should we be?). As Taylor will argue cogently below, it is this inquisitive, hermeneutical stance which allows these questions to remain open and vital for us.

I want to suggest that these convergences—anti-foundationalism, truth as usefulness, linguistic constructivism, anti-essentialism and anti-subjectivism—are significant and should not be slighted. This thought will be pursued in the conclusion. But in the two chapters that here follow, I illustrate the important, consequential differences which distance Taylor and Rorty.

Though Rorty and Taylor share an anti-essentialist notion of the self, their accounts of the nature and being, i.e., ontology, of that self are considerably at odds. Taylor, developing the consequences of Heidegger's concept of Dasein in the wake of hermeneuticists like Hans-Georg Gadamer, emphasizes the social nature of the self. Following Heidegger's ontology of "there-being" and "with-being," Taylor talks of "inescapable horizons of significance" to which any self, even the ironist, is beholden. We will explore Taylor's compelling evocation of the importance of language to authenticity, emphasizing the intersubjective, holistic nature of the enterprise. Taylor's Aristotelian
convictions will also come to the fore, i.e., to be fully human one must pursue the good. "Moral sources empower," Taylor contends, "and articulation can bring them closer."

Taylor's ontology of the self is fundamentally a social and moral one, which, we will see, unambiguously directs his program for authenticity.

Where Taylor advances an ontology of groundedness for the self which can lead to principled evaluation and coherence, Rorty perceives fragmentation and opacity. Rorty's ontology of the subject also partakes of Heidegger, emphasizing its postulates on the contingency of being, rather than his program for ontological scrutiny. Rorty's model of self draws most heavily from Nietzsche and Freud, who reject the aspiration toward coherence advanced by Heidegger and Taylor. Because the individual is a multiplicity, the steadiness supposedly provided by embeddedness is a fiction. Freud, like Nietzsche, rejects the traditional hierarchy of the human faculties (e.g., reason, will, conscience, passion . . .), proposing instead that these are varied, poetic responses to the blind impress of contingency. Our drives, passions, and unresolved complexes all develop their unique languages of expression. Moreover, the richness of the unconscious reveals that the ego is not master in its own house. Since there no coherent self to know, the best the aspiring authentic can hope for is redescription. As we will discuss below, this search for self-expansion is primarily a private one, conducted as an artistic exploration for new vocabularies and metaphors.

Epistemological skirmishes tandem this ontological squabble. We have noted Taylor's attraction to Heidegger's description of the authentic as the ontological questioner. Taylor also puts the ability to reflect on our own being at the center of the ontology of the subject. He argues that because self-reflexivity is an essential, constitutive part of being human, we can gain a deep and improvable knowledge of ourselves. He calls this "agent's knowledge": the insider's knowledge of the moral and interpretive animal. Though we are certainly subject to delusion, we enjoy privileged access to the meaning of our own activity because as purposive beings it can have a "point" for us. Our existence is indeed historical,
cultural, contingent. Yet Taylor contends that agent's knowledge can be compulsory and progressive, that it brings us into a clearer, truer, and stronger relation with Dasein. We achieve such understanding through hermeneutical digging, through examination of our orientation(s) within a language community.

Rorty’s rendition of linguistic constructivism presents us as both creatures and commanders of our language. Here Rorty's deviations from Heidegger are important. For one, Rorty rejects what he sees as Heidegger’s hyperbolic anti-subjectivist philosophy of language. Pointing out that language is the house of being is one thing; claiming that language is the master of man is another. As we will see, Rorty maintains a significant amount of Nietzschean sovereignty for his ironist. In addition, constructivism for Rorty is a result of an intense Heraclitean, post-modern, anti-foundationalist ontology of permanent flux and thoroughgoing contingency. As a result, Heidegger's and Taylor's project of a fundamental ontology is rejected. In Rorty's scheme, since there is no single, permanent reality which lies below language, Taylor's authentic is woefully if purposively misguided, digging in the wrong direction. Home, attunement, and true being are not ontological possibilities; rather, they are the stuff of illusion and instrumental need. In Rorty's ontology, our "truest" experience can only be play within some sort of language game. None of these, whether it be philosophy, science, poetry, psychotherapy, or evangelical Christianity can claim a language any closer to "reality" than another. "Progress" and "knowledge" are optimistic labels we put on new ways we have learned to speak. This does not mean that they are not important to their subjects. Rorty's pragmatism simply asserts that we choose them on instrumental grounds, for they bring us into a more useful relationship with our surroundings. (As I argue below, Rorty's "instrumentalism" does not a priori rule out hermeneutical digging, and may in fact require such activity to determine what is of use). Where Taylor would have us discover, converse, and interpret, Rorty advises the potential authentic to find, internalize, and express new metaphors.
Here we arrive at the challenge of the second half of this dissertation: explication of the different modes of authenticity advocated by Taylor and Rorty, including their different approaches to ideology. In keeping with one of my main tropes, on one level this analysis will be cast in terms of sincerity vs. irony. Where Taylor seeks attunement, Rorty strives for detachment. Irony is an explicit focus of Rorty's work; it also occupies the center of his ethic of authenticity. Rorty's authentic is driven by aesthetic exuberance, playfully engaging new experiences and languages. This ironist must be able to move back and forth through different metaphors without attempting to make progress toward the Truth which is "out there" to be discovered. The search for authenticity is driven by creative self-expansion, attempting to be increasingly "ironic, playful, free, and inventive in our choice of self-descriptions." Indeed, Rorty's authentic is heroic, maintaining significant sovereignty despite its deepgoing contingency. The goal of this detached chaemeleon is to recreate itself to the radical extent to which Nietzsche and the Romantics aspired, yet never taking itself too seriously.

This is not Taylor's authenticity. Drawing attention to the intersubjective nature of language and meaning, he insists that any authentic must partake in crucial spheres of existence which are irreducibly social and shared. This is a dialogical activity, one that asks us to recognize our boundedness and express this knowledge in a sincere manner to ourselves and others. Indeed, Taylor retains the Enlightenment's faith in the search for knowledge, albeit in a contextualized (historicized and temporalized) Heideggerian configuration. Even though we only shepherd being with the permission of language, as purposive agents we can build a truer knowledge of ourselves and our situation. Taylorian authenticity, then, is to be gained by the honest soul who strives to be true to its deepest attachments which are always embedded within shared, "inescapable horizons." Even the most heroic of ironists, Taylor insists, "cannot leap out of the human condition, and it remains true that one can elaborate one's new language only through conversation, . . . the

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1Rorty, Essays on Heidegger and Others, op. cit., p. 155.
drive to original vision will be hampered, will ultimately be lost in inner confusion, unless
it can be placed in some way in relation to the language and vision of others." 2

Uniqueness, then, must first be a function of sincerity: digging, discovering, and
articulating in the service of transparency and honesty.

The chapter immediately below works to evoke Taylor's model for authenticity. In
the main I want to illuminate his ontology of holism, and will discuss him as a
hermeneuticist and communitarian proposing a sincere form of authenticity. Yet he also
displays strong philosophical and normative commitments to the individual, as in his
thoughtful, engaged explorations of authenticity in Sources of the Self and The Ethics of
Authenticity. Indeed, Taylor is an individualist as well as a communitarian. It is crucial to
recognize that Taylor's employment of Heideggerian epistemology and ontology is not an
endorsement of any particular form of politics (including the moralizing, communitarian
model with which he is usually connected). Rather, in a nation full of individualists, it is
an entreaty to examine the individual's conditions of possibility. Let us first, Taylor
implores, activate our interpretive and moral motors, discussing and discovering who we
are and who we want to be. Insisting that this be done on the collective as well as the
individual level is no slight of the latter. It may be, however, that Taylor's model of
hermeneutical self-examination needs to be more attuned to power. Certainly negative
ideology infects language and the moral realm, and the authentic subject must carry tools to
engage the meaning which serves dominant power. We ask whether "strong evaluation"
needs to be more critical and politically savvy, i.e., ideologically aware. Therefore, let us
proceed with this account of Taylor's holistic individualism, through which he advocates
his sincere form of authenticity.

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2Taylor, Sources of the Self, op. cit., p. 37.
CHAPTER 4
CHARLES TAYLOR'S SINCERE AUTHENTICITY

It takes quite a time, to get to know people, smoke many a pack of cigarettes till you raise that wonderful word you're needing from the deep artesian folk wells.

--Vladimir Mayakovsky, "Talking to the Taxman about Poetry"

Like the rest of us, Charles Taylor is an individualist. With the authority of the ethnographer who has spent decades in the same village, Taylor implores us to study ourselves, to examine the beliefs that make us who we are. In the case of the post-Enlightenment, post-Romantic, democratic West, we must come to terms with our individualism, making sure we are manifesting it in ways consonant with our ideals. We all have a drive to be authentic, i.e., be true to ourselves. Whether or not we approve of individualism, it is here with us, in us; we thus have no choice but to reflect over its meaning, what form it should take.

This chapter's main objective is to explore Taylor's project for authenticity. I have saddled Taylor with the task of exemplifying one main mode of authenticity, which I am calling its "sincere" form. Defined by Lionel Trilling as a "congruence between feeling and avowal," I think the term sincerity appropriately describes Taylor's proposal for hermeneutical self-reflection. A sincere authenticity is based in honesty: we are all situated beings, always-already beholden and privy to "shared horizons of significance" which provide dimension, grounding, and meaning to existence. To be honest with itself, Taylor's sincere authentic must uncover and articulate this embeddedness, always aiming to
improve the clarity of its reflections and articulations. For Taylor, "to be true to oneself" is to achieve congruence between our underlying commitments, their articulation, and our actions. In contrast to the ironic model of authenticity proposed by Rorty, Taylor's subject displays stability, substance, and a privileged ability to know itself.

As such, authentic being is rooted in ontological awareness. When we open ourselves to ontology, we ask, "What are the fundamental components of reality, what form does human being take in its most skeletal manifestations?" Taylor wants to remind us of how we "be," and his self-described "philosophical anthropology" is driven by its dominant object of study: human ontology. Manifesting the phenomenological and transcendental impulse to discover the fundamentality of phenomena, Taylor indicts the "eclipse of ontological thinking" in social and political theory. Below in Part I, entitled "Ontology Matters," I work to illuminate the concern with ontology which underlies so much of Taylor's oeuvre, expressed in his emphasis on language as a shared medium and concepts such as "inescapable horizons of significance." We consider some of the implications of the holist ontology which Taylor suggests we live, not the least for his model of an authenticity of sincerity. Taylor's contributions in this area are indeed rich; it will become apparent how vital I deem his work on the ontological bases of authenticity.

Part II of this chapter investigates in greater detail the workings of Taylor's ethical agent. Emphasizing the centrality of moral concerns to human being, he insists that the authentic must partake of the good, which is by nature shared and dialogical. In addition, he posits language as the house of being, exercising indispensable expressive and constitutive functions. These are the "inescapable horizons" in which his ethical agents, the "simple weigher," "strong evaluator," and "radical re-evaluator," must negotiate. Authenticity must be grounded in discovery, Taylor insists, where we recognize a shared, holistic ontology as the source of our uniqueness.

Again, my admiration for Taylor's work on these accounts will be evident. Yet here we arrive at the question which drives this chapter: Does Taylor's ideal moral agent,
while attuning itself to its shared horizons, possess the wherewithal to judge the validity of those commitments? Here, I suspect, the ethical agent must confront what in Chapter 1 we termed "negative ideology": the meanings, roles, and representations which encourage submission to a repressive status quo. Indeed, I share some of the disquietudes of many Marxists, liberals, and postmoderns with Taylor's project. What is to keep what Taylor calls better, truer relations with our ethical embeddedness from becoming subjugation and exploitation? Despite its various incarnations, authenticity undeniably means being the person we want to be, not the submissive character actor encouraged by dominant powers: to be authentic, one must be more than a tool of the powers that be. It is only with an awareness of ideology that one can, as Nietzsche put it, "become mature and flee from that paralyzing upbringing of the present age which sees its advantage in preventing your growth so as to rule and exploit you to the full while you are still immature."1 Mustn't the authentic not only discover but question the traditions, roles, and meanings which it is bequeathed?

**Ontology Matters--Taylor's Holistic Individualism**

To think is to confine oneself to a single thought that one day stands still like a star in the world's sky.
--Heidegger

Attending graduate school in the 1950s, Charles Taylor was of the first generation of Anglo-American philosophers to be raised on Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Nietzsche, who were then being sanctified into the Western academic canon. There is no doubt that Taylor has done right by this education, thoroughly overcoming discipleship to any of his guiding spirits--Aristotle, Hegel, Heidegger. His sockdolaging refutations of neutralist liberalism have left a permanent mark on political philosophy, as has his insistence that the social sciences reject the natural science model of detached objectivity and adopt a

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hermeneutical sensibility. Here I want to contribute to another arena of Taylor appreciation: his commitment to an authenticity based in discovery, sincerity, and the good.

Evoking the conditions which enable sincere authenticity, here in Part I we explore Taylor's near-obsessive concern with ontology. True to his phenomenological and hermeneutical commitments, this self-described "monomaniac" is fundamentally interested in what he calls "philosophical anthropology." It is an investigation of ontology defined broadly: our situation, our Dasein, our necessary ideology--"how we be." In philosophical argumentation, ontological descriptions provide the underlying conditions of reality which provide the prerequisites in any order of explanation. Ontology is so important to Taylor because, as a political philosopher, he recognizes that ontology delimits advocacy. To do good political thinking, one must have philosophical awareness of ontology. In order for political programs to succeed, they must partake of our now-nature, our historical being, the way we are.

For Taylor, an embeddedness in language and moral concerns are main components of our ontology. Thus this section will recount his philosophy of language, out of which arises much of his philosophy of authenticity. For a phenomenologist and hermeneuticist like Taylor, language provides indispensable ontological substance; it is the fertile loam of being, the common property of human beings. By performing expressive, constitutive, and disclosive functions, language creates the "clearing" where Taylor's sincere agent comes to be. Language is also the medium for moral concerns, and recognition of the good is crucially necessary to Taylor's project for the subject. Such attention to language, Taylor hopes, will reinvigorate our appreciation for ontological thinking in political philosophy. In the section directly below we will visit Taylor's comments on the "liberal-communitarian debate," which he contends has been grossly misshapen for lack of ontological awareness. To understand our shared ontology, we will recognize, is to enable discovery of our "cross-purposes."

\[2\text{Human Agency and Language, op. cit., p. 1.}\]
The Liberal-Communitarian Debate: Ontology and Advocacy

Taylor does not dignify the categories “left,” “right,” or “communitarian” through use in his universe. Asserting that we would be better off scrapping such "portmanteau terms," he wants us to structure our inquiry according to deeper distinctions. A political philosopher, Taylor is concerned with the link between theory and advocacy. The "eclipse of ontological thinking in social theory" causes frequent blindness to the actual array of choices open to us. This is costly, for lack of ontological awareness leads to poor policy-making and political theory. Taylor, in full phenomenological and hermeneutical garb, wants to reawaken our ontological sensibilities, inspiring us to be aware whether the fundamentals of our theory and practice function with "holist" or "atomist" presumptions. Becoming clear on these terms, he believes, would enable us to see beyond some of the pseudo-controversies currently gripping Anglo-American political theory.

One of these is the so-called "liberal-communitarian debate." Taylor argues that due to an underappreciation of ontological issues, this dispute has misled itself. In particular, the contributions of the group of thinkers labeled "communitarian"--most prominently Michael Walzer, Alisdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Taylor himself--have largely been misread. The main force of these critiques, he proposes, is descriptive, not prescriptive. As such, there has been a serious underappreciation of these communitarian critiques, caused perhaps by an over-wariness toward their supposed prescriptive component. According to Taylor, a mistaken premise of the liberal-communitarian debate has been the misarticulation, if not conflation of the realms of ontology and advocacy. "The discussion up to now has suffered from a certain parochialism," he observes, serving to retard the debate between these two groups of thinkers.4

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4Ibid., p. 203.
Instead of functioning on a single axis, Taylor sees the discussion composed of two axes: the first is the ontological, whose poles are the "atomist" and the "holist." Within atomism, also called "methodological individualism," the sovereign individual is the foremost unit of analysis, and social phenomena are explained through the aggregate behavior of individuals. Holist ontologies, on the other hand, take their cue from the organicism of the Ancients, particularly Aristotle's notion of man as a zoon politikon, a social and political animal. Holism argues that a significant portion of our human being is comprised by our social ties. In phenomenological spirit, arguments at this end of ontological axis attempt to know "how we be," to offer a description of the infrastructure of Dasein.

Now Taylor argues, and I agree, that Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, the great interlocutor of John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, is primarily an ontological critique. It is aimed overwhelmingly at Rawls' faulty assumptions about the nature of human being, which undergird a strong theory of distributive justice. Rawls, wanting to produce principles of justice out of the intuitions of the transcendent citizen, predicates his theory on an impossible model of the individual. For, thanks to its ability in the original position to rise above its abilities and attachments, his rational chooser would find no reason to see itself connected enough to care so much about justice. According to the communitarian critique, Rawls' account of the nature of the individual and its relation to society is faulty from its point of departure. He bases his prescription--a boldly egalitarian theory of social, economic, and political justice--on an impossible atomist description of the constitution of the individual: that a self could exist shorn of its qualities, maintaining a core capable not only of autonomous, rational choice but a self-effacing, empathy-inspired justice. Clearly I cannot sufficiently make this argument here, nor can I offer a full rehearsal of Sandel's version nor Rawls' subsequent revisions. However, I hope I have demonstrated to some degree how important ontological awareness is to Taylor's and Sandel's projects. Ontology matters because any theory's success depends on its
conditions of possibility. To Rawls' communitarian critics, there is no question that his impoverished ontology has imperiled his normative commitments.

Just as the liberal-communitarian debate operates on an ontological axis (between holism and atomism), it also acts along an advocacy axis. Reminding us not to conflate these two functions, Taylor describes the poles of advocacy: on one end we have "individualist" theories of politics, which prioritize rights, resist the formulation of societally-endorsed goods, and endorse the neutrality of proceduralism. In order to maximize individual freedom, the state shall take no sides (other than that of the "free individual"). At the other extremity of the advocacy axis we find "collectivism," a political scheme which would assert community over individuality, social goods over individual ones. Here one thinks of socialisms traditional (e.g., peasant theocracies) and modern (Marxism-Leninism). There is no clear, mechanical causality between these two axes. Thus arises the crucial question for this section, which resonates through all comers of this work: What is the relation between this advocacy axis and the ontology so central to Taylor's project?

Taylor first alerts us to what ontology doesn't do. Referring back to the liberal-communitarian debate, Taylor resists the mantle of communitarianism foisted upon Sandel's work. Taylor reminds us that Sandel's critique of Rawls is not exercising a normative function; rather, it is conducted at the ontological level. Contrary to its reception by many liberals, the argument of Liberalism and the Limits of Justice advocates no particular political arrangement. Indeed, Sandel supports a model of subjectivity is holistic instead of atomistic. But this holistic ontology neither drives the critique nor results in advocacy of any political schema. Rather, Sandel is animated by the spirit of transcendental inquiry: what would have to be true about us as subjects in order to derive the two principles of justice from the original position? Sandel's conclusion is that Rawls' rational agent who seeks justice presupposes a shared, holistic ontology which his atomist
ontology denies a priori. Thus, Rawls' theory of justice "is not morally self-sufficient but parasitic on a notion of community is officially rejects."  

To be sure, the modesty of such a conclusion may leave us wanting more. Much communitarian political theory, including Taylor's, has been noticeably absent of the systematic components of analytical theory-building of enterprises like Rawls'. Because contemporary communitarian and civic republican thinking is yet in its youth, many of the implications of this transcendental, ontological critique remain concealed. Taylor warns us of jumping to conclusions: ontological assertions do not automatically lead to a particular political arrangement. For Taylor, an individualist, rejecting atomist ontology does not commit one to advocating a communitarian, collectivist, moralizing political order.

What is, then, the relation of ontology to advocacy? Strong as it is, the kinship of ontological assessments and political advocacy is underdetermined and subtle. Taylor explains it this way:

Taking an ontological position doesn't amount to advocating something; but at the same time, the ontological does help to define the options it is meaningful to support by advocacy. The latter connection explains how ontological theses can be far from innocent. Your ontological proposition, if true, can show that your neighbor's favorite social order is an impossibility or carries a price he or she did not count with. But this should not induce us to think that the proposition amounts to the advocacy of some alternative.

Ontology vehiculates, but does not dictate advocacy. It is all too easy to caricature the supposed political incarnations of ontological theses. "The choice is not simply between a close, family-like community and a modern, impersonal society," Taylor points out, even given the disparate, perhaps polarized ontologies of Sandel and Rawls. Though a holist ontology may lead to advocating a collectivized social arrangement, as in Marx or Rousseau, this is not a necessary relation. Taylor reminds us of the holistic ontologies of Herder and Humboldt, which were greatly admired by J.S. Mill, the subsequent hero of

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6Taylor, Philosophical Arguments, op. cit., p. 183.
7Ibid.
today's procedural liberals. In addition, the North Atlantic (or "neo-roman") republican tradition, crucial to the birth of the American republic, manifests an adherence to a holistic ontology (the "body politic") while maintaining a fundamental commitment to the rights-bearing, liberal individual.\(^8\) Holism should also speak to contemporary Anglo-American liberalism, Taylor asserts.

Below, I will continue to make Taylor's case that atomist ontology doesn't fly. Indeed, ontology matters: it determines the range of possibilities for advocacy, advancing our self-knowledge. Just as a lack of ontological awareness can hurt the efficacy of one's political theory, it can have harmful, even disastrous effects throughout realms of policymaking. We will revisit this relation between ontology and advocacy in the conclusion, extending the discussion of Chapter 1 on theory and ideology. Below, we refocus our attention to the importance of ontology to the philosophic enterprise.

**Ontology and Transcendental Philosophy**

To be sure, Sandel is practicing a form of criticism--transcendental critique--which also dominates Taylor's philosophical identity. Taylor's fascination with fundamental ontology leads him back to Kant, of all places, where he finds the roots of 20th-century phenomenological thinkers like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. In making a case for "the validity of transcendental arguments," Taylor finds in the *Critique of Pure Reason* not only the origins of his critique of atomist rationalism, but also justification for his sincere authenticity.

The term "transcendental critique" was coined by Kant as a description of his refutation of Lockean-Humean empiricism and Cartesian dualism, the composite of which Taylor calls "rationalism." Kant inquires what preconditions are necessary for his opponents' theories of knowledge to be true. Advocating that we break down sense inputs into their fundamental parts, rationalists in turn ontologize this process, assuming that

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being presents itself and is absorbed in a series of segmented, discrete data. As we mentioned in Chapter 2, this is a private process: the acquisition of knowledge and experience occurs through reception, disaggregation, and processing in the individual brain. If the basis of all knowledge were the private reception of raw, atomic bits of uninterpreted data, Kant judged, "it would be possible for appearances to crowd in upon the soul and yet to be such as would never allow of experience." The fundamental level of reality cannot be comprised of swirling bits of data, else we would never be able to make sense of it. As Taylor puts it, "It was one thing to call on us to break down our beliefs into their possibly separable components, another to think that the primitive information which enters the mind must do so in atomic bits." The problem uncovered by transcendental critique manifests when rationalism turns a method for building reliable knowledge into a theory of being.

Kant fuels such critique with certain foundational assertions about experience (namely the discernible reality of an objective and subjective order of things), which inescapably lead to the stronger thesis that a coherent unity of representations must comprise experience. While a transcendental critique examines the preconditions of its adversary's position, transcendental argument employs what it considers as ontological certainty as a springboard for the deduction of larger conclusions. As Taylor describes them, transcendental arguments "start from some feature of our experience which they claim to be indubitable and beyond cavil. They then move to a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject or the subject's position in the world." This type of argument, Taylor asserts, resonates through the variegated assortment of Humboldt, Herder, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, and also provides Taylor's project with its modus operandi. All are in debt to the transcendental argument's

10 Philosophical Arguments, op. cit., p. 64.
11 Ibid., p. 20.
"chains of apodictic indispensability claims which concern experience and thus have an unchallengeable anchoring." As modern phenomenologists remind us, the anchoring provided by fundamental ontology "can't be shrugged off," in Taylor's words.12

When passed down to 20th-century phenomenologists, the term "transcendental," with its imagery of rising above the contingencies of situation, becomes misleading. As we have seen, contemporary holists have aggressively severed their link to the Kantian subject who must transcend it ends in order to be moral—the Rawlsian manifestation which is attacked, ironically, on transcendental grounds. The transcendental supposition of Kant's holist heirs is what Taylor terms "embodied agency." Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty make "apodictic indispensability claims" which, when applied by Sandel to Rawls' subject in the original position, deny the possibility of transcendence. Asserting the ontological indubitability of what they call "situated subjectivity," these inheritors of the transcendental sensibility of ontological awareness deny the premise of transcending context pace Kant's universal moral subject and Husserl's transcendental reduction.

Just as Kant starts with the ineluctable obviousness that fundamental experience must present itself as a coherent unity, Taylor's work unfurls the consequences of "embodied agency," the foundational premise of any exploration of the human condition. Making ontological foundations the sine qua non of effective forensics, Taylor conducts his investigation based in what he considers to be an undeniable and irreducible condition of humanity: our identity as self-reflexive beings. Because self-reflection is an essential, indeed constitutive part of being human, this transcendental condition should serve as the foundation for departure for any phenomenology of agency. The ontological given of embodied agency means that we can gain "agent's knowledge," a privileged view into our own activity. It is such a perspective on our own actions, combined with the ability to judge the relative worth of our motivations, which enables Taylor's form of sincere

12Ibid., p. 28.
authenticity. Below I will work to explicate the role of language in providing the transcendental conditions which vehiculate Taylor's authentic self.

**Language and Fundamental Ontology**

Aristotle called humans "zoon logon echon," animals who possess logos. While Western philosophy has usually rendered logos as "reason" or "thought," Taylor reminds us of its fundamental connection to language. "Logos meant 'word'; and the root it came from, legein, meant 'to say'." Thus the ancients perceived a connection between thought, speech, and reason to the extent that one word, logos, could apply to all.

Heidegger, likewise, defines logos as "talk" or "discourse" (*Rede*). Though speech, as a frequently faulty vehicle, clearly paled when compared to the ontic primacy of Idea, Plato insists that we do not really know something until we give an account of it. If we cannot articulate it in speech, we display mere opinion (*doxa*), not true knowledge (*episteme*).

These are faculties peculiarly human, the ancients recognized, located in a human language which far surpasses the simple grunt or gesture of the beasts meant to signal a demand or a warning. Rather, human knowing comes in holistic, discursive form.

Holism is a central quality of the philosophy of language advanced by Johann Gottfried von Herder, who inaugurates a current Taylor calls "expressivism." His *On the Origin of Language* (1772), a polemic against the conjectural history of language published by Condillac, poured the foundation for a paradigm-shift completed in the 20th century by the likes of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Gadamer. In this section we will investigate Taylor's appropriation of this expressivist tradition. Specifically, we will attend to his emphasis on the ontological fundamentality of language, manifested through its discursive, expressive, disclosive, and constitutive qualities. Subsequently, in our exploration of Taylor's ethical agent in Part II, we will unfold some of the implications of another essential, exclusively human role played by language: as the locus of moral concerns.

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Let us start our description of expressivism with a negative comparison. Herder's critique, though expressly directed at Condillac, was a reaction against what Taylor terms a larger "designative" tendency evidenced through empiricists like Hobbes and Locke. This designative account was meant to serve the new view of the universe as disenchanted and mechanistic, to be freed from any shroud of mystery by the illuminative powers of reason.

In a representatable universe, language is the amenable tool of thought, employed by the willful master to stand in for the clear ideas produced by reason. Meaning, on this view, is unidirectional and transparent: words designate the objects and states of the world. The issue of meaning is no more complex than the things or states themselves.

Language, here, is in Taylor's words "an assemblage of separable instruments, which lie as it were transparently to hand, and which can be used to marshal ideas, this use being something we can fully control and oversee." The meticulousness with which Hobbes and Locke construct their definitions, for one, reflects the will to instrumental mastery of the empirical theory of knowledge: we can, on their account, rise above all contingency and pre-reflective bias to construct pure knowledge. Such obsession with lexical precision equally betrays the liberatory, individualist tenor of this 17th-century revolution. As Locke proclaimed, "every Man has so inviolable a Liberty, to make words stand for what Ideas he pleases, that no one hath the Power to make others have the same Ideas in the Minds, that he has, when they use the same Words, that he does." This simplistic understanding of meaning, and the insistence on control over language (that is it an instrument fully in our command and that lexica are created, not discovered) was put under extreme suspicion by the likes of Herder and Humboldt.

Indeed, the source of expressivism is to be found in Herder's rejection of Condillac's conjectural history of language's origins. Condillac posits two children alone in a desert, who, in the course of everyday life, emit "natural signs" in the form of cries.

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14 Ibid, p. 231.
and gestures. As they come to repeat certain cries, the children start to recognize the objects or feelings which cause the utterance. They would thus be able to emit "instituted signs" to refer to specific causes of distress. Language is then built, term by term. In protest, Herder insisted on what went unexplained in this mechanistic account of language. As Taylor phrases it, "To account for language by saying that we learn that the word 'a' stands for a's, the word 'b' for b's, is to explain nothing. How do we learn what 'standing for' involves, what it is to describe things . . . ?" 16 According to Herder, we have an unconscious, reflective awareness (Besonnenheit) toward our world which allows us to speak meaningfully. This is far from a simple chain of reactions, for knowing the correct word to use means invoking a wealth of interconnected knowledge about the world. By invoking this background, we are able concurrently to express and realize our rich being in the world. Only in language can this reflection be realized.

To understand further how human language is sui generis, Taylor takes us beyond these retrospective conjectures of long-dead philosophers to recent experiments with primates and sign language. Attempting to skirt this heated controversy, Taylor nonetheless draws a rigid distinction between the signaling of chimpanzees and the speech of humans. Many animals have been trained to respond to signals: the mouse is taught that going through the door with the triangle gets the cheese, or the dog learns that jumping through the raised hoop gets a scooby snack. Chimpanzees, however, not only respond to signals but emit them, signing "I want banana." This evinces the advanced ability of chimps to combine signs into phrases, which has long been recognized as a unique feature of human communication. Remarkably, chimps also play with their linguistic repertoire, signing outside of the specific contexts they had been taught. As fascinating as they may be, Taylor argues, all of these signaling capacities fall distinctly short of human speech.

This contrast between signaling and speaking was largely lost on the designative theorists. Oblivious to the background which enables human speech, Hobbes, Locke, and

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16Human Agency and Language, 228.
Condillac prefaced the blindness of contemporary celebrants of chimp language. The distinction between animal and human language, Taylor posits, revolves on the ontological grounding necessary for human speech. What does it mean to get a word "right" in the course of conversation, to speak not only appropriately but evocatively? To make a word stand for something is no small task; it presumes an intricate reflective engagement with our world.

Taylor acknowledges that both chimp signaling and human speech are complex tasks which can succeed or fail. In the case of the chimp, the signal is emitted in order to get a result: signaling "give me banana" is correct when it reflects a desire, causes a response in the provider, and procures the fruit. But there are some tasks, many human ones, whose success is defined in a different way than achieving this sort of result. In chimp signaling, the task to be completed is independent of the language used to signal it; in other words, the result (getting the banana) is, in Taylor's phrase, "non-linguistically defined." But think of the many manifestations of human language where the result of the emission is judged in terms of the utterance itself. Taylor asks us to "Consider a gamut of activities, including disinterested scientific description, articulating one's feelings, the evocation of a scene in verse, a novelist's description of character. A metaphor someone coins is right, profound. There is a kind of 'getting it right' here."17 In these cases, our appropriate employment of terms constitute the result to be achieved. Unlike the successful performance of the chimp's task, success in these forms of human communication dictates that the task itself is defined by the emission. For a task to be completed in such moments, Taylor states, "It would itself have to be defined in terms like truth, descriptive adequacy, richness of evocation, or something of the sort. We can't define the rightness of word by the task without defining the task in terms of the rightness of the words."18 This two-way action invokes a complex, busy relationship with the world. When we attend to the

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17 Philosophical Arguments, op. cit., p. 84.
18 Ibid.
subtleties which constitute the correctness and appropriateness of a speech act, we are in what Taylor terms "the linguistic dimension."

Only humans are sensitive to "irreducible forms of rightness in the signs it deploys," Taylor observes. This sort of reflection, of course, is not consciously applied in the flow of everyday speech. Conversation frequently just happens. But unlike simple signal emitters, we can reflexively justify our choice of locution. The background provided in the linguistic dimension that is taken for granted in any utterance is made (partially) apparent when asked to explain one's use of specific words. More often than not, an interlocutor would be able to respond, "Why yes, I used the right word because I meant . . . " In explaining one's employment of particular terms, the speaker gives evidence to the linguistic dimension. Even a simple declarative sentence like "Even though I am sick today with a sore throat I need to go teach in order to keep my classes on schedule" is an expression that can only occur within the linguistic dimension. Taylor refers us back to the holist nature of language, asserting that the use of any of these words presumes an interwoven family of terms which extends far beyond the discrete linguistic units uttered at any one time. "One might say," he suggests, "that language as a whole is presupposed in any one of its parts."20

In his description of the expressivist view, Taylor uses the metaphor of a web to convey the discursive and holist qualities of language, and the folly of attempts to master it. When we speak, we touch a section of web which can't help but resonate to strands beyond it. As such, we can never fully predict nor control all the possible implications of an utterance. And the vast intricacy of the web insures that "language is always more than we can encompass; it is in a sense inexhaustible."21 Contrary to the designative-rationalist aspiration, there can be no full transparency in language. The nature of language, claim expressivists, prohibits the possibility that all designations and relations could be laid bare.

19 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 231.
As Taylor maintains, "You can't go on digging under our ordinary representations to uncover further, more basic representations. What you get underlying our representations of the world--the kind of things we formulate, for instance, in declarative sentences--is not further representation but rather a certain grasp of the world that we have as agents in it."  

Indeed, instrumental representation is only one of the things we do in language. Expressivists present a picture of language as a wealth of different activities which, taken en masse, is our concurrent expression and realization of certain way of being in the world. As Taylor argues, "This way of being has many facets. It is not just the reflective awareness by which we recognize things as --, and describe our surroundings; but also that by which we come to have the properly human emotions, and constitute our human relations, including those of the language community within which language grows."  

The linguistic dimension opens a public space in a way which rationalist, designative theories of language cannot account for. On the designative account, language is a simple case of private information processing. Yet, as Taylor's version of the expressivist view maintains, "A conversation is not the coordination of actions of different individuals, but a common action in this strong, irreducible sense; it is our action. It is of a kind with . . . the dance of a group or a couple, or the action of two men sawing a log."  

Conversation is essentially dialogical, common discourse; it cannot be reduced to the exchange and processing of data between atomistic mechanisms. Rather, a conversation is an "attending-together" in a space which is created by language.

Here Taylor augments his appropriation of Herder by invoking Heidegger. Indeed, his most recent writings on language evince a clear affinity for Heideggerian metaphor and metaphysics: Dasein and Lichtung ("the clearing") are frequently employed. This last, also translated as "the lighting," is a dimension which cannot be reduced to traditional physical or psychic space. Lichtung can't be located within minds, as designative theorists would

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22Philosophical Arguments, op. cit., pp. 11-12.
23Human Agency and Language, op cit., p. 234.
24Philosophical Arguments, op cit., p. 189.
have it, but only exists between interlocutors. This is a new, unique space, one opened up by expression. The clearing is the medium of Dasein, of worldly being, "the necessary context for all our acting and making." As we have mentioned, for Heidegger language is "the house of Being." It can't come about without us--zoon logon echon--yet we are its subjects. Through language we do not create Being, but "shepherd" it. As the exclusive practitioners of language, it is only we humans who can usher in being. Yet Taylor reminds us of Heidegger's anti-subjectivism: Lichtung "is Dasein-related, yet not Dasein-controlled. It is not our doing."

What occurs in language, Heidegger and Taylor maintain, is disclosure. For Heidegger, "language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time." As the medium for being-in-the-world, language is thoroughly constitutive and expressive in ways it is denied in designative accounts. There, as we've mentioned, words are tools for straightforward, transparent, instrumental representation of things, states, feelings, and relations. Words are the articulation of thought; they are to stand in for the clear knowledge processed there. Such an emphasis on instrumentality, Heidegger and Taylor contend, obscures how articulation in language is frequently constitutive of expression. Above, Taylor's insistence on superiority of speech to signaling demonstrated that many language tasks are defined by the very words employed. When we speak a sentence which is not only truthful but parsimonious, for example, the task completed cannot be described in any meta-language more definitive that the actual words employed. The sentence uttered, then, becomes constitutive of the task at hand.

Indeed, there are some substantial human phenomena which come to be only in language. In a significant way, then, language constitutes these. For it can be said that ideas and feelings don't fully exist before they appear in language. It is only when they are spoken that feelings are brought to the fore as fully developed. Most of us have

\begin{itemize}
\item[25] Ibid., p. 121.
\item[26] Ibid., p. 115.
\item[27] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Basic Writings, op. cit., p.185.
\end{itemize}
experienced the "talking out" of emotions as a *denouement* of sorts—where partially formed, inchoate, opaque feelings are finally made explicit and public. The description of the feelings is *constitutive* in an important sense; it can't be said that the articulation of the feelings is simply a description of an independent state. Rather, Taylor reminds us, "when we come to articulate a feeling in a new way, it frequently is true to say that the feeling also changes."  

The expressivist critique points out that designation is only one aspect of language: saying "Is the book on the desk?" indeed refers to clear objects and a simple relation. Yet behind this apparently straightforward designation is a world of expression: it may express my fear that I have misplaced it, my anxiety over your commitment to return it, or my relief that it has not been lost. My intonation might speak volumes. In these cases, "Is the book on the desk?" is more than a query about a spatial relationship between two simple objects. For the question can also *manifest* certain feelings or inner states, incarnates them in ways that are exclusive to the expression. It can't be said that feelings are *designated* in language, because part of the essence of the feeling is that it is manifested in some way.

This is even clearer when we consider languages outside the written. Artistic expression is an expressivist language by nature; to conceive of a dance, for instance, as simply designating an inner state is absurd. Taylor reminds us that this is particularly true in the case of ritual, e.g., a rain dance. "If we though of it just as a tool which has proved handy in bringing on rain (or thought to be so proved), then we could construe it as an elaborate signal. But plainly the very sense of its efficacy is bound up with its felt rightness as evocative of, or akin to, the forces producing rain. This kind of 'sympathetic magic' can only be practiced by creatures that are already in the linguistic dimension."  

Indeed, the evocative quality of art evidences its reach far beyond the designative. Heidegger observes that "A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing," for its being

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29 *Philosophical Arguments*, op. cit., p. 86.
transcends the merely designative and representative. The ability to construct such works (a dance, temple, song) is exclusively human, and occurs in the clearing of the linguistic realm. As Taylor puts it, "It is not an accident that the only speaking animal is also the one who dances, makes music, paints, and so on." In addition, the "expressivist-constitutive" account posits the inextricability of language and community. From Herder to Heidegger, it is a Volk who manifest a language. That speech might be reduced to a private processing function is an ontological fallacy—for language exists only through conversation. Even when we are physically alone, we are in conversation, "talking to ourselves," as we say. Language is shaped by speech, which is primarily activity, i.e., conversation. This occurs amongst humans, the necessary constituents of any and every language. As Taylor phrases it, "The language I speak, the web which I can never fully dominate and oversee, can never be just my language, it is always largely our language." His emphasis on the irreducibly social nature of individual speech acts will be replayed below when we attend to his notion of "shared horizons of significance," the necessary font for any agent who wishes to avoid triviality. One cannot be a self on one's own, Taylor insists.

Yet for all its integrality to human being, language does not dominate us. Yes, we are its products, but also its producers. Taylor's attraction to Heidegger's anti-subjectivist philosophy of language does not blind him to the obvious fact that we do employ language as an instrumental tool. Through our deliberate usage, we also have the power to vary our use, changing language. But we should be wary of the designative claims to be able to isolate terms, trace correlations, and redefine words. In Taylor's elegant elocution: "Reshaping it without dominating it, or being able to oversee it, means that we never fully

31Human Agency and Language, op. cit., p. 236.
32Ibid., p. 234.
know what we are doing to it; we develop language without knowing fully what we are making it into."

The link between fundamental ontology and language is thus inseverable. Language provides the necessary prism for being: refining, defining, and casting light into the clearing. The holistic, expressive, and constitutive components of language are indispensable concepts for Taylor's model of sincere authenticity. To be sure, "Language realizes man's humanity." Yet sincerity, i.e., attunement to ontology, is not passivity. On the contrary, awareness of the expressive-constitutive nature of language empowers us to action. As Taylor puts it, "The expressive theory opens a new dimension. If language serves to express/realize a new kind of awareness; then it may not only make possible a new awareness of things, an ability to describe them; but also new ways of feeling, of responding to things. If in expressing our thoughts about things, we can come to have new thoughts; then in expressing our feelings, we come to have transformed feelings."

Taylorian Phenomenology of the Ethical Agent

The existential "problem of authenticity" suffered by early-modern urbanites, discussed in Chapter 2, has a distinct contemporary incarnation: nihilism. Indeed, as disenchantment unfurls itself into the human psyche, it often suffocates meaning and hope. Combined with contemporary forms of individualism (a consumer culture of self-fulfillment, a ruling liberal political ideology of "rights talk"), we millennial Americans display multiple "malaises of modernity," as Taylor phrases it. Meanwhile, we still suffer the original "problem of authenticity": we struggle to be true to a self which cannot rely on the inevitability of ascriptive markers like class and family occupation, as the even putative statuses commanded by race, religion, and gender begin to break down. To be sure, in the

33Ibid., p. 232.
34Ibid., p. 233.
300 or so years of Western modernity, the problem of authenticity has evolved and amplified.

Here in Part II, we will trace Taylor's response to the problem of nihilism. In the current climate of atomist individualism, we respond to disenchantment by simultaneously suppressing moral ontology and encouraging moral subjectivism. We must resist moral subjectivism, he contends: not only because it leads to the fragmentation and "soft relativism" denounced by neo-conservatives, but because it is based in mistaken ontological assertions. Taylor reminds us that we operate in the moral realm all the time, yet have become notably inarticulate in describing our qualitative distinctions. He believes this has a lot to do with the omnipresent valorization of "choice," which tyrannizes over moral discourse, flattening the self. The liberal assertion is that because the individual is the best judge of its own interests, all choices need to be seen equally as valid. While intending to serve the cause of freedom, such practices have become debased, ultimately weakening moral agency. What is important in this regime is not what is chosen, but that it is chosen. When choice is seen as "free," its foundations within an ontology of the moral become obscured. We thereby propagate "soft relativism," where morality is reduced to a matter of taste, operating above the need for justification or examination. But the moral realm exists, and despite our atomist presumptions, it is a shared world. Taylor hopes to help us recover our muted moral sources.

The sections below, then, will render Taylor's response to the marginalization of the good. As moral beings we are "strong evaluators," who make decisions based not only in instrumental, cost-benefit terms, but by frequently invoking deeper moral criteria. In short, we humans can, and do judge actions by asking whether they are creating the person we want to be. At our best, we evaluate whether they conform to our vision of a life which is noble, courageous, righteous, free, or whatever our "hypergood" might be.
In the growing body of secondary literature on Taylor, this phenomenology of agency has begun to come under question. But none of these critiques addresses the shortcoming which I would like to highlight here: the insufficient political character of this model of moral reflexivity. Of course, Taylor's project is deeply political. I am attracted to many of its intimations, while impugning with liberals and postmoderns the potential implications of his communitarianism. Though I'm quite taken by his overall project, here I will suggest that the evaluative modes displayed by Taylor's agent may be too complacent about the power exercised by dominant forces in the realm of meaning. Though he acknowledges that inaccuracy and delusion frequently cloud self-evaluation, Taylor's ethical hermeneutic unequivocally advocates *attunement* with our "shared horizons of significance." Any authentic, I want to insist, including Taylor's sincere ethical agent, must display an awareness of ideology: not only of its situation within "necessary" forms, but also over and against those "negative" manifestations which work to crush the cause of unique being. Yet any invective against a potentially quietist phenomenological understanding like Taylor's must at the same time be informed by this Continental philosophical tradition. Thus in this chapter's conclusion we again investigate the critical abilities of Taylor's agent given the insights we gained in Chapter 3. However, let us first explore Taylor's response to the problems of nihilism and authenticity, limned through the phenomenology of his ethical agent.

**Authenticity and the Good**

Taylor's attentiveness to our deep embeddedness in language, history, and culture leads him to an investigation of the centrality of the moral realm to human ontology. While moral philosophy has confined its notion of morality to our proper obligations to others, Taylor defines "the moral" and "the good" in a broad sense: it is the general realm of

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qualitative distinction, which we invoke in order to identify things as valuable, worthy, or admirable. "In addition to our notions and reactions on such issues as justice and the respect of other people's life, well-being, and dignity," Taylor intones, "I want also to look at our sense of what underlies our own dignity, or questions about what makes our lives meaningful or fulfilling."37 Taylor sees his Sources of the Self as "an essay in retrieval," attempting "to show something about the tentative, hesitating, and fuzzy commitments that we moderns actually rely on."38 These are the discriminations that make life worth living, notes Taylor, essential bulwarks in the war on nihilism.

This all might be considered truism, Taylor acknowledges, describing his campaign as fighting uphill to recover the obvious. But the tenor of three centuries of naturalist and utilitarian thought has worked to marginalize such concerns from moral philosophy, reducing moral life to a calculus of brute reactions, desires, and preferences. In the name of individual autonomy and liberal justice, modern moral philosophy has rejected the Ancient focus on the integrality of the good life to human ontology, and thus "has no conceptual space left for a notion of the good as the object of our love or allegiance."39 Taylor insists that we are so much deeper than this, for we are profoundly moral beings. Like the beasts, we frequently act out of inarticulate impulse or appetite. But humans' exceptionality, as zoom logos echon, lies not only in our ability to explain these actions, but to choose to act against them. Such reflexivity, Taylor observes, "is constitutive of human agency."40

Humans, because of our powers of self-reflection, are "self-interpreting animals." When we "strongly evaluate," in Taylor's terms, we are forced to voice the feelings, emotions, and aspirations which motivate us. We cannot do without this moral muscle and orientation, for "it belongs to human autonomy to exist in a space of questions about

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38 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
39 Ibid., p. 3.
40 Ibid., p. 27.
strongly valued goods, prior to all choice." Taylor argues that these motivators are not self-generated, somehow created in the action of choice. Rather, "richer background languages" function behind our ideals, obligations, and preferences. They may, however, have become obscured in our current practice, idling inactively at a level below conscious awareness. Thus, Taylor embarks on his phenomenological enterprise, attempting to document the shared, "inescapable frameworks" which have become eclipsed within modern moral philosophy and our everyday, disenchanted existential reality.

Borrowing a Nietzschean and phenomenological metaphor, he calls these background languages and frameworks "inescapable horizons of meaning." Bounded to others within language, time, and culture, we all share a moral topography. Indeed, these assertions also might have the ring of truism, for as we observed last chapter, even the monomaniac Nietzsche posits a "universal law: a living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon." Horizons serve Taylor's aspiring authentic as source and limit. Horizons offer perspective, granting depth to our vision so that we don't overvalue the near or project infinitude into the distance. As "frameworks," they provide the ontological background through which we make sense of moral demands and dilemmas. They are fed by our identifications and commitments, many of which are not chosen. Such horizons are the stuff of culture imbedded in time--nationality, ethnicity, family, religion, etc. They are the situation in which we are born, supplying the perspective we need to understand (and misunderstand) the world. To be sure, horizons are indispensable to human being; as Taylor puts it, "Doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us."43

Yet what of the creative side of authenticity stressed by Romantics and post-Romantics alike, and the ironist's advocacy that the aspiring authentic distance itself from ascriptive markers? Despite his emphasis on attunement, Taylor more than acknowledges

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41Ibid., p. 31.
42Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations, op. cit., 1, p. 63.
43Sources of the Self, op. cit., p. 27.
these components of authenticity. On one hand, he illustrates, authenticity "involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality." Yet we are woefully misled if we think that these are sufficient conditions for authentic being. Under the influence of liberalism, atomism, and subjectivism, however, this seems to be precisely our presumption. The modern period's enshrinement of personal freedom, steeped in disenchantment, has conjured an intense moral subjectivism which, to some critics, paves the highway to nihilism. Indeed, modernity encourages a strong moral current which posits that each individual has the right develop its own life project. To do so, one must decide for oneself what is truly important, to which vision of the good one will aspire. In a subjectivist climate of "narcissism" and "hedonism," where the good life is defined by satisfaction and pleasure of the self, we often fall subject to moral autarky.

Coronating "freedom of choice" as our hypergood, we assume that worth is produced by our free choice: if it is chosen, it must be good. For it is only paternalists who question the result of free choice. Americans, political theorists and everybody else, do not like to be told that the free, utility-maximizing individual might not be the best judge of its own interests. In all quarters, choice rules.

Again directing our attention to the ontological preconditions of being, Taylor refuses to grant this position ontological legitimacy. Horizons are indispensable because they are the very foundations for meaning, based in "moral intuitions which are uncommonly deep, powerful, and universal." They are so deep, he notes, that we frequently talk of moral instinct, though it is obvious that instinct is shaped variously by culture. Yet Taylor insists that we have moral responses whose criteria are independent of our desires and preferences. Hyperbole, perhaps, but in the service of an elegant and desperately needed assertion: choice, in itself, does not create significance. We court

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44 *The Ethics of Authenticity*, op. cit., p. 66.
45 *Sources of the Self*, op. cit., p. 4.
triviality, and surely inauthenticity, if our choices are not embedded in "shared horizons of significance." In contemporary American society, for example, one cannot claim significant meaning for one's expertise in counting blades of grass or eating doughnuts. Rather, our horizons confer worth on activities like hitting a baseball with high frequency, explaining complex mathematical principles to beginners, or being a good parent. As Taylor phrases it, "Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. Let us call this a horizon. It follows that one of the things we can't do, if we are to define ourselves significantly, is suppress or deny the horizons against which things take on significance for us."46 Blushing Hegelian, Taylor insists on the "need for recognition."47 Even in a culture committed to authenticity, unbounded originality runs the risk of turning into static, defying all attempts to understand. Certainly much contemporary art suffers from such illegible eccentricity, where an artwork's signs are simply too recondite and private to stir much appreciation.

As Taylor sees it, our abilities to understand and utter are based in a language and criteria which the individual does not create. "Horizons of significance" are inherently shared. Denying the possibility for private languages, Taylor states that "No one acquires the languages needed for self-definition on their own."48 Rather, he stipulates that meaning is fundamentally dialogical in nature. In this sense, we achieve significant selfhood only amongst other selves; as he says, "One cannot be a self on one's own."49 Referring to the heroic, Nietzschean project (whose reinvention by Rorty we'll investigate below), Taylor asserts,

Taking the heroic stance doesn't allow one to leap out of the human condition, and it remains true that one can elaborate one's new language only through conversation in a broad sense, that is, through some kind of interchange with others with whom one has some common understanding about what is at stake in the enterprise. A human being can always be original, can step beyond the limits of thought and

46 The Ethics of Authenticity, op. cit., p. 37.
48 The Ethics of Authenticity, op. cit., p. 33.
49 Sources of the Self, op. cit., p. 36.
vision of contemporaries, can even be quite misunderstood by them. But the drive to original vision will be hampered, will ultimately be lost in inner confusion, unless it can be placed in some way in relation to the language and vision of others.  

Clearly, genius must engage in language and conversation. The hermit, too, is implicated in conversation: retirement to a cave in the hills has meaning when seen as a rejection of society. Even as the hermit mutters to himself in solitude, he is in dialogue with the society that put him there. Nietzsche's Zarathustra eventually comes down from the hills, compelled to speak among the herd. The American individualist, too, is partaking of a shared tradition of leaving home, where, Taylor notes, "what an independent stance involves is defined by the culture, in a continuing conversation into which that young person is inducted (and in which the meaning of independence can also alter with time)."  

Indeed, purpose is essentially tied to articulation in shared language. As we have discussed above, such articulations become largely constitutive of experience. We may feel purpose and meaning, but until we are able to express them in coherent language they are mere shadows. To describe them is to coin them out of the messy, ill-defined material which so frequently animates us. "Moral sources empower," Taylor claims, "and articulation can bring them closer." Until we can name our inclinations--ushering them into a medium of language which has a distinct history, structure, vernacular, and interlocutor--our feelings and purposes remain inchoate, incompletely and sometimes mistakedly formed. Language is constitutive of meaning to the point where formulation and reformulation frequently change their object. I find that once I "talk it out," for example, the jealousy I feel toward my wife's social circle is no longer experienced as inarticulate resentment of what I previously perceived as her excessive chattiness. Upon examination and re-articulation, I am able to see this jealousy in a new manner, as a product of my personal insecurities about say, my weight, and the fear that through her social

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50 Ibid., p. 37.
51 Ibid., p. 39.
52 Ibid., p. 96.
intercourse she may leave me for someone more attractive. Taylor makes a cogent case that the language in which we cast feelings and experience is constitutive and transformative of meaning. As a result, the articulation of our moral sources "can by its very nature never be completed."\(^5^3\)

Our indispensable moral life, then, is a life-long conversation each of us holds within a dynamic landscape always shared and pre-existent to our choices. Such moral ontology is absolutely central to Taylor's sincere authenticity. To ward off nihilism and become authentic we must attune, drawing close to our moral sources by articulating them in language. Though in the modern period identity may no longer be ascribed, horizons of significance are. When it recognizes that meaning is discovered more than created, dialogical rather than monological, the aspiring authentic is able to emerge out of the illusion of moral autarky, where individual choice appears to create value. On the contrary, the authentic will orient its pursuit of the good through discovery and sincerity, bringing our shared horizons to light so that one might be true to them in everyday life.

**Reading Oneself, or, the Hermeneutics of the Ethical Evaluator**

As "self-interpreting animals," we have privileged access to the meaning of our own activity, a capacity Taylor terms "embodied agency." Though one's insight can never be complete, and meaning may be clouded or deluded, activity can and does have intentional meaning for purposive beings like ourselves. We not only answer to appetite, but act with deeper purpose. Because we frequently can explain the "point" of our activity, we display what he calls "agent's knowledge." This is the insider's view which is peculiar to human being, and accompanies all self-interpretation, rendering futile all attempts to treat human pursuits as purely "objective" phenomena.\(^5^4\) A central activity of "strong evaluation," the *modus operandi* of Taylor's moral agent, is to "map the territory of the

\(^{5^3}\)Ibid., p. 34.

\(^{5^4}\)This argument, rejecting the natural science model for the social sciences, can be found in Taylor's monumental "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man" in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, op. cit.
self" through a distinction between surface desires and deeper purposes. As self-reflexive beings, all of us have "the power to evaluate our desires, to regard some as desirable and others as undesirable."55 This is not simply a matter of calculating instrumental outcomes or heeding the uniform call of duty, as utilitarians or deontologists would have it. Rather, judging the desirability of actions also must invoke qualitative distinctions of worth.

As we have mentioned, such qualitative evaluations are largely constitutive of one's identity. The frameworks or horizons which supply the sustenance for these evaluations are not chosen, but bequeathed. Certainly one's "selfhood" is comprised of a myriad of properties, like physical appearance and abilities, religious-, class-, and cultural background. But, Taylor argues, such factors are central to identity only when they contribute to the "horizons of significance" through which we make qualitative judgements. I may believe strongly in the integrity of my ethnic group; it displays qualities which I value as an agent, and thus I reproduce these as I go about negotiating the world. Shorn of these qualities, Taylor insists, we would cease to be ourselves, in a profound sense. In such a scenario, "We would lose the very possibility of being an agent who evaluates ... [and] we would break down as persons, be incapable of being persons in the full sense."56 It is these horizons which supply the wherewithal not only to make sense of the world, but to exercise our essence as purposeful beings. With no recourse to these horizons and their subsequent evaluations, one would lapse into quasi-insanity, suffering a severe "identity crisis."

To illustrate his phenomenology of agency, Taylor sketches three modes of the deliberating self: the "simple weigher," the "strong evaluator," and the "radical re-evaluator." The simple weigher is Taylor's composite of the instrumental-rational chooser. Such an actor is reflective "in a minimal sense," for it deliberates only shallowly on alternatives, basing discriminations in cost-benefit analysis in an instrumental calculation of

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56Ibid., pp. 34-5.
Admittedly, Taylor notes, the simple weigher has rationality, reflection, and will. But such an agent is limited to the decision-making criteria of taste, instrumentality, and outcome, standards which are frequently established by habit and fashion.

The strong evaluator, on the other hand, "goes deeper, because he characterizes his motivation at greater depth. To characterize one desire or inclination as worthier, or nobler, or more integrated, etc. than others is to speak of it in terms of the kind of quality of life which it expresses and sustains."\(^{57}\) Unlike the simple weigher, the strong evaluator is able to judge desires in "an additional dimension." By reflecting in this manner, we engage in significant self-reflexivity. When we judge our motivations and inclinations, we strive to assert what is really important to us. In doing so, Taylor notes, "we are reflecting about our desires in terms of the kind of being we are in having them or carrying them out . . . [which] takes us to the centre of our existence as agents. Strong evaluation is not just a condition of articulacy about preferences, but also about the quality of life, and the kind of beings we are or want to be."\(^{58}\) Indeed, this is a transformative and constitutive experience. Instead of acting out of blind rage, resentment, or jealousy, we are able to invoke motivations which are unquestionably better, for they are more clairvoyant, considered, and calm. "One is a bigger person," he states, "with a broader, more serene vision, when one can act out of this higher standpoint."\(^{59}\)

To act morally, then, one cannot be following impulse, ignorance, or fear. As in Aristotelian ethics, one is not generous by mistakedly dropping money or capriciously tossing away one's wages to the homeless, drunk on wine and generosity. In regards to courage, Taylor observes that,

Someone may rush the machine-guns out of stupidity, or drunk with frenzy, or because he has had too much of life. It is not sufficient just that he see the danger, a condition which is met in the last two cases. Or suppose a man is driven with some uncontrollable lust, or hatred, or desire for revenge, so that he runs out into danger. This is not courage either, so long as we see him as driven. Courage

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\(^{57}\)Ibid., p. 25.  
\(^{58}\)Ibid., p. 26.  
requires that we face danger, feel the fear which is appropriate, and nevertheless
over-rule the impulse to flee because we in some sense dominate it, because we are
moved by something higher than mere impulse or the mere desire to live. It may be
glory, or the love of country, or the love of some individual we are saving, or a
sense of our own integrity. Implicit in all of these is that the courageous man is
moved by what we can at least think of as seen by him to be higher.60

Here the strong evaluator is exemplified by the actor who is motivated by not by nihilism,
fear, or foolishness, but a higher inspiration. To be authentically courageous, he cannot be
"driven," i.e., in the throes of a motivation which disallows a certain depth, transparency,
and collectedness. In the case of his infantryman, Taylor approves of "glory, or the love of
country" as legitimate foundations for purposeful action. These are higher causes which
articulate our deepest commitments.

Yet these are not always well-articulated. Taylor asserts that "There are more or
less adequate, more or less truthful, more self-clairvoyant or self-deluding interpretations." Given
the crucial role of linguistic articulation in strong evaluation, there is a "double fact"
present in the activity, i.e., "an articulation can be wrong, and yet it shapes what it is
wrong about."61 It is in the very nature of interpretation that re-evaluation is always
possible, even necessary. Because our notions of the good are articulations (which can be
mistaken) of what is frequently opaque and inchoate, our evaluations are always open to
challenge. What Taylor is asking us to do is to get them right, to challenge their accuracy
to their amorphous objects. He is not proposing that the strong evaluator question their
legitimacy. Since "evaluations are not chosen," it seems as though Taylor's free agency is
exclusively an activity of representing objects through articulation, not critically engaging
the objects themselves.

But with the process of what he terms "radical re-evaluation," Taylor does provide
the possibility of going deeper. He recognizes that basic evaluations can, and do undergo
reconsideration; we might ask "Have I really understood what is essential to my identity?

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61 Ibid., p. 38.
Have I truly determined what I sense to be the highest mode of life?"62 Taylor notes that radical re-evaluation is experimental, rigorous, frightening. It is radical self-examination in a form which most people would rather not conduct. He mentions "not only the difficulty of such concentration, and the pain of uncertainty, but also all the distortions and repressions which make us want to turn away." He acknowledges that "It is much easier to take up the formulations that come most readily to hand, generally those which are going the rounds of our milieu or society, and live within them without too much probing."63 This reevaluation is radical, Taylor notes, not in the Sartrean sense of the criteria-less procedure of "radical choice," but in way in which the good saturates fundamental ontology. In Taylor’s universe, radical re-evaluation touches the very roots of Dasein.

In a sense, it is our most fundamental evaluations, the horizons which provide the wherewithal for all other evaluation, which most demand examination. Since these foundational evaluations are the deepest, they are the least clear and well-articulated, and thereby have the greatest potential for misrepresenting our horizons within. In Taylor’s words, “In radical re-evaluations by definition the most basic terms, those in which other evaluations are carried on, are precisely what is in question. It is just because all formulations are potentially under suspicion of distorting their objects that we have to see them all as revisable, that we are forced back, as it were, to the inarticulate limit from which they originate.”64 Taylor’s representationalism is on display here, chastened though it is by his constitutive, expressivist theory of language. A sincere authenticity demands our ethical topography down there be discovered, brought up and articulated in a manner ‘true to its object.’

This is far from an easy task, as Taylor acknowledges that challenging the horizons in which all other evaluations are grounded is “uncommonly difficult.” For radical re-evaluation questions the yardstick which previously provided the very measure for our

62 Ibid., p. 40.
63 Ibid., p. 42.
64 Ibid.
motivations. Indeed, Taylor phrases radical re-evaluation as a drastic ‘gestalt-shift in our valuations.’ One moves from strong evaluation, where one has been able to articulate what is of fundamental importance; as Taylor puts it, “some notion of a certain mode of life as higher than others, or the belief that some cause is the worthiest that can be served; or the sense that belonging to this community is essential to my identity.”

Moral agency, then, would be a matter of asserting the components of my ethnic pride manifested in terms of honesty and perseverance, and allowing these criteria to judge the quality of the impulses of daily life. Radical re-evaluation, on the other hand, would demand that I go further, not only evaluating whether my action is reflecting the honesty I value, but questioning the foundational notion itself. Where does this sensibility come from, and why am I adhering to it? What is it about honesty that I value? Have I been manifesting it in the right way?

This process is much easier achieved if we see the subject in terms of the Heideggerian struggle for authenticity as presented in the previous chapter. And must not forget the insights of Gadamer. It is not an excessive stretch, I hope, to conceptualize the strong evaluator’s soul as a text analogue. Taylor entreats the moral agent to explore this ethical underworld, to give interpretive articulation to the apocrypha of our deepest moral intimations. Exercising “agent’s knowledge” is a hermeneutical activity, where one’s own horizon of individual purposes must fuse with “tradition,” i.e., shared, social horizons of moral significance. Even the Nietzschean iconoclast, Taylor reminds us, must establish a *modus vivendi* within shared horizons, if only to partake of language. It seems that just as Gadamer’s interpreter of historic texts relies on *temporal* distance to achieve understanding, Taylor’s evaluator thrives on *moral* distance. The strong evaluator’s main activity is to articulate and project its ethical purposes on the activities of everyday life. These are separate horizons that never should, nor could be collapsed. It is the productivity of this ethical distance, of examination of actions and re-articulation of motivations, which defines the moral agency so central to Taylor’s sincere authenticity.

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65 Ibid.
And how would any evaluation proceed without moods and care? As we remember, Heideggerian moods provide a stance with which to receive the world. As enabling states-of-mind, moods like anxiety, curiosity, even boredom and resignation allow the world “to matter to us,” as Heidegger puts it. When Taylor invokes the notion of inescapable horizons which provide the necessary sources for moral life, he is referring to the role played by situative spheres in ontologically grounding the subject. Indeed, I argue that Taylor’s hermeneutic should be agreeable to such terms, acknowledging that any journey to discover one’s authentic being must pass through ideology on its way to fresh air and daylight. But if these situative horizons are ontologically given, critical engagement with them is not.

Thus Taylor’s vision of the ethical evaluator is greatly enhanced by consideration of modes of care. Sometimes we are on auto-pilot, unreflectively going about our day, employing objects and moral sense as tools ready-to-hand. Here simple-weighing and idle-talk monopolize Dasein, as everyday care enables us to reproduce daily life with a minimum of friction from our existential surroundings. But in the course of strong evaluation, as our situative spheres become increasingly drawn upon, we may occasion to re-evaluate them. Such self-reflection presupposes an inquisitive disposition and a deliberative mode of care. Indeed, just as Heidegger submits that Dasein can and should become master of its moods, Taylor implores his authentic to take the inquisitive road to authenticity. Simple-weighing may be unavoidable, but it cannot dominate existence.

Taylor is thus making both a descriptive and prescriptive case for his strong- and radical evaluators. Clearly he believes that agents should be invoking deeper criteria when making decisions, for such a mode allows us to manifest our potential for an ethically-led life. But evaluation is also an ontological sine qua non, and as such is not only a capacity but a reality. In response to the suggestion that his moral agent is a normative creation, he explains, "A true 'simple weigher' in all contexts in life would be a severely pathological case, incapable even of what we would call an identity, incapable of shame and much
As in his criticism of liberal neutralism enabled by his hermeneutical tradition, he accuses utilitarians and rational-choice theorists of being guilty of constructing their theories on the unstable sand of ontological impossibility. I suspect that this fundamental, incisive, immanent critique will be occupying political theory for some time to come.

Conclusion: Sincere Authenticity and Ideology Critique

We are all moral agents. We need to invoke qualitative distinctions in order to lead a life worth living. These distinctions must be articulated out of fundamental horizons which we do not choose. One cannot help but be swayed, at least partially, by this account. Yet at this point arises the question which animates this chapter. Yes, the strong evaluator has the ability to explain motivations, controvert desires, and articulate deep meaning. But does Taylor's strategy allow criticism of the fundamental horizons themselves? Shouldn't such a critical mode be an indispensable component of the sincere authenticity he promotes? What of power exercised by forces which would subjugate and exploit the aspiring authentic?

In his example of the courage of the soldier, the strong evaluator is exemplified by the actor who is motivated by not by nihilism, fear, or foolishness, but a higher inspiration. To problematize the motivations of Taylor's infantryman requires merely recalling any sort of recent war propaganda--where a complex cause is over-simplified, personal sacrifice is glorified, or an enemy is demonized. Motivated by such manipulation of meaning, we should wonder how deep an evaluation a soldier is making while dying for "the love of country." Certainly one's sense of valor, chastity, or honesty which provides enablement and depth to the strong evaluator may, in fact, serve dominant interests, encouraging self-abnegation to the serious detriment of authenticity. Shouldn't we worry about the

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67 See, for example, "Atomism" and "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty" in Philosophy and the Human Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1985).
substantial sections of one's horizons which do not fit, functioning apart from an individual's purpose and control, in the hands of power which would rather subordinate than authenticate?

Yet, as Heidegger insisted, we cannot be authentic all the time. And clearly, the commitment of the soldier, steeped in nationalism, ethnicity, and masculinity, is usually not propelled by the moods and modes of care which collude in the cause for authentic Dasein, i.e., anxiety, curiosity, and deliberative care. Does the cannon fodder die virtuously and authentically if they simply perceive themselves involved in a virtuous cause? As the skepticism of the post-Vietnam generation amply illustrates, the young are no longer willing to suffer the lies proffered by the powerful to justify the loss of life in war. Despite all the exploitative ideology issued to the fighting troop, the citizen-soldier curiously remains a prominent exemplar of Taylor's strong evaluator.

Indeed, Taylor's insistence that "our evaluations are not chosen" might give many the impression that Taylor is a conservative, a willing apologist for tradition. I, too, have expressed my disappointment with the lack of political acuity within Taylor's moral hermeneutics. We must not forget, however, Taylor's commitment to the individual. It is more than the anthropologist's impulse which drives his interest in authenticity, for Taylor claims a proud place within the current of Western individualism created by Nietzsche and the Romantics.

We have seen that even radical re-evaluation remains largely ignorant of power. Emphasizing the hermeneutic project of fundamental ontology, Taylor is right to request a map of our ethical folkways, claiming that it is an invaluable document for any exercise of agency. Yet self-knowledge is not enough, and the strong evaluator's industrious mapping of the ethical wherewithal of its soul leaves much to be explored. Since Taylor's sincere authenticity based in discovery and attunement is not always equal to the challenges facing the aspiring authentic, we will turn to one of his contemporaries, Richard Rorty, for a different strategy for authenticity.
[In] the properly democratic ages . . . a sort of impudent conviction and quite contrary mode of viewing things comes to the fore, the Athenian conviction which is first observed in the epoch of Pericles, the American conviction of the present day, which wants also more and more to become a European conviction: whereby the individual is convinced that he can do almost anything, that he can play almost any role, whereby everyone makes experiments with himself, improvises, tries anew, tries with delight, whereby all nature ceases and becomes art.

--Nietzsche

Will the fight for our sanity
Be the fight of our lives
Now that we’ve lost
All the reasons we thought we had?

--The Flaming Lips

Nietzsche knew that he was a philosopher of the future, and that future is now.

The 20th century will be known as the people’s century, where democracy reached unprecedented levels of legitimacy and popularity. It will also become known as the era of the individual, an epoch ruled by the prerogative of personal fulfillment. Indeed, with Nietzsche’s push, our turn into “postmodernity” in the latter half of the century has spurred new ways of thinking and living subjectivity. Reinvention and personal transformation, rooted in the American traditions of second chances and starting over, is, oxymoronically, our norm. Our new popular heroes are celebrities of the “image culture” who succeed in never boring us; they must constantly entertain, however superficial our communion may be. We are creating academic disciplines (Cultural- and Media Studies departments) which make the rapidly mutating condition of the contingent, fragmented, and chameleonoid individual of our “technoculture” the sustained object of scholarly attention. As media theorist Douglas Kellner concludes, “Identity today thus becomes a freely chosen game, a
theatrical presentation of the self, in which one is able to present oneself in a variety of roles, images, and activities, relatively unconcerned about shifts, transformations, and dramatic changes." Meanwhile, tyrannized by our MTV attention span, we demand constant novelty or we’ll change the channel. We get annoyed with yesterday’s news and yesterday’s personalities.

One wonders whether authenticity has any part in this conversation. To be sure, the terms of a post-Nietzschean, liberal, postmodern discourse may seem to preclude the substance, depth, and consistency demanded by an ideal of authenticity. This project, however, has resisted this narrow definition of authenticity, one which posits that the self has an essence to be discovered. Instead, we have refashioned authenticity into the general ideal of “being true to oneself,” where the nature of both the “true” and the “self” are under contestation. In previous chapters, we have envisaged this truth in several different modes: sincerity and irony. In Charles Taylor’s model of authenticity, the subject attunes itself within its pre-existing horizons of significance. The truth of this self is one of alignment, where the agent evaluates everyday actions in terms of its fundamental commitments. Taylor’s sincere self, then, is largely pre-existing, waiting to be discovered through hermeneutical self-examination.

Richard Rorty radically redefines this notion of authenticity. His advocacy of the “strong ironist” defies many of Taylor’s assertions about a self which can be found and centered through self-reflection. Rorty’s theory of the self, launched by Freud and Nietzsche, asserts that the subject can achieve authenticity only by recognizing its contingency and multiplicity. Below we will explicate this ironic mode of authenticity, with attention to his bifurcation of the subject into private and public selves. Indeed, a public/private distinction is the supple mechanism by which Rorty reconciles his strong (and prima facie contradictory) commitments to a Nietzschean, postmodern ontology and a democratic, pragmatic, solidaristic liberalism. Yet this reconciliation is not without its

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discontents, and the second part of this chapter will voice some of these protests. In particular, we will focus on an issue which has influenced much of the discussion hitherto: the centrality of ideology not only to an individual's everyday unreflective ontological grounding, but to its reflective, public, political action.

Irony and the Private Quest for Self-creation

Before we embark on this explication of the Rortian subject, we should pause to acknowledge that Rorty's theory of authenticity is, importantly, an anti-authenticity. For the overwhelming tenor of his philosophy is anti-metaphysical; rarely does he miss a turn to differentiate himself from the long tradition in philosophy which strives to discern permanent essences. Thus the attempt to distill the ahistorical essence of an object, a virtue, or an Idea is as misguided as any similar metaphysical approach of inquiry into the identity of a human subject. As such, Rorty repeatedly works to invalidate any project of authenticity which contends that an individual has a stable, unified essence to be uncovered by a singular, proper mode of analysis.

The essence of the individual, for Rorty, is anti-essence. Irony, Rorty's preferred mode of authenticity, directly contradicts the notion of essence. For, as we will remember, irony is a distancing: between intention and result, feeling or belief and avowal, self and situation. An ironist typically will undermine all attempts to pin down its identity, frequently driving this subversion itself. Defying all logic of stability, the ironist commits to a manic multiplicity, where personae often contradict rather than complement one another.

Freudian-Rortian Authenticity: Conversing with Ourselves

Given such embrace of plurality and instability, it is of little surprise that Rorty's theory of subjectivity draws heavily from Freud's conceptualizations of personal identity. Against Plato and Kant, Freud (like Nietzsche to be discussed below) refuses to define the subject as purveyor of capacities which require proper ordering, optimally commanded by
reason. Rather, Freud posits that the ego “is not even master in its own house,” for, like Hume, he chastens reason as “a feeble and dependent thing, a plaything and tool of our instincts and affects.” By drawing our attention to the magnificently powerful, complex workings of the unconscious, Freud blocks the coronation of any of those forces which have aspired to be Sovereign over the properly human: universal reason, moral sense, or will. For Freud espies a sophisticated, not a vulgar unconscious, the “lower” part of ourselves traditionally defined—energy inarticulate, unruly, animalistic—called “passion.” Freud also rejects the typical philosophical coronation of reason as central, commanding faculty. Rorty describes this pluralizing and legitimizing of the unconscious as a “de-divinizing” of the self. For he dethrones not only reason and will, but conscience as well. In this view we cease to see morality as the voice of the divine in us, and instead treat it as only one story we tell ourselves, one way in which we try to make sense of unresolved complexes, the imprints of contingency upon being.

This decentering of identity is part and parcel of Freud’s description of the unconscious as a harbor for a plurality of selves. These are not lower, degenerate beings but rather, as Rorty puts it, “clever, articulate, inventive persons.” Thanks to Freud’s redefinition, we are able to see that “our unconscious selves are not dumb, sullen, lurching brutes, but rather the intellectual peers of our conscious selves, possible conversational partners for those selves.” The Freudian soul, the conscious and the unconscious, thus contains multiple analogues of persons, each a coherent cluster of memory, will, and desire. Freud’s great revolution not only erases the center of the human soul, but violates the long-serving presumption that this center provides the universal human essence. No longer subject to the dictates of metaphysics, the Freudian self is freed to embrace contingency.

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To Rorty’s approval, Freud “leaves us with a self which is a tissue of contingencies rather than an at least potentially well-ordered system of faculties.” Indeed, “contingency” is a much-deployed shibboleth in Rorty’s approach to truth and being. The contingent is the persistent, positive counterpoint to the metaphysical and universal; it is particular, historical, idiosyncratic, conditional. The Freudian self as a tissue of contingencies refutes the notion that there could be a paradigmatic human being or a universal human essence. Lifting a metaphor out of a Philip Larkin poem, Rorty insists that we are essentially creatures of contingency whose lives are spent articulating “the blind impress that all our behavings bear.” This tissue of contingencies is inherently idiosyncratic, a sublimely unique intersection of biology, culture, and time. Here, as in many others places, Rorty evidences his thorough commitment to an ontology of plurality. With perhaps too keen a political eye, Rorty’s sees Freud’s self as egalitarian, secular, and plural.

For, as Philip Rieff observes, “Freud democratized genius by giving everyone a creative unconscious.” Since no one has a boring unconscious, each of us has poetic reserve deep in our being. Thus, Rorty encourages us to see our lives as a series of poetic reactions to contingency. Freud calls this process *cathexis*, the creation of idiosyncratic fantasies in which emotional energy is concentrated onto an action or idea. Through *cathexes* we all write our private poems, attempting to give language to the blind impress. These poems of are the particular way we negotiate life, articulations of the stuff which drives our choices and commitments. As Rorty describes, they are what, people do with their spouses and children, their fellow workers, the tools of their trade, the cash accounts of their businesses, the possessions they accumulate in their homes, the music they listen to, the sports they play or watch, or the trees they pass on their way to work. Anything from the sound of a word through the color of a leaf to the feel of a piece of skin, can, as Freud showed us, serve to dramatize and crystallize a human being’s sense of self-identity.

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5Ibid., p. 23.
Clearly there is no core self here to be discovered, no hierarchy of faculties to be ordered. For, as Rorty contends, “None of these strategies is privileged over others in the sense of expressing human nature better. No such strategy is more or less human that any other.”

In the Freudian universe there are many candidates for a “true self,” many poems told through each individual life. Such are hostile climes for notions of the true self; with the help of Freud, Rorty is able to reject traditional modes of self-knowledge. In the wake of these thinkers, the aspiring authentic can no longer hope to command its own transparency and self-purification.

But if self purification is not possible, self-enlargement is. Self-knowledge in the wake of Freud is a matter of, as Rorty puts it, “Getting acquainted with one or more crazy quasi people, listening to their crazy accounts of how things are, seeing why they hold the crazy views they do, and learning something from them. It will be a matter of self-enrichment.” Here, then, we have one mode of Rortian authenticity, made possible by Freud’s decentering, multiplying, and democratizing of the soul. Though this self may seem to be a simple variation of Kellner’s postmodern self mentioned above, here Rorty evinces one of several sympathies with the hermeneutical authenticity we explored through Taylor and Heidegger.

Despite Rorty’s aversion to the general notion of authenticity, and in particular one based in discovery, he recognizes that we can dispose of neither stability nor discovery. He intones appreciatively, “Freud gave us a new technique for achieving a genuinely stable character: the technique of lending a sympathetic ear to our own tendencies to instability, by treating them as alternative ways of making sense of the past, ways that have as good a claim on our attention as do the familiar beliefs and desires that are available to introspection.” Indeed, Rorty opens to the notion that creation needs discovery, a concession which will temper the atomism of the heroic Nietzschean authenticity to be

\[8^{\text{Ibid., p. 38.}}\]
\[9^{\text{Freud and Moral Reflection,” op cit., p. 150.}}\]
\[10^{\text{Ibid., p. 152.}}\]
explicated immediately below. Though he speaks of an authenticity achieved through "self-creation rather than self-knowledge," Rorty concedes the role of discovery in the process.

To be sure, what we seek to discover is nothing like a metaphysical essence: "Freud made the paradigm of self-knowledge the discovery of the fortuitous materials out of which we must construct ourselves rather than the discovery of the principles to which we must conform." Yet we must search, converse, become acquainted. Discovery is digging, the modus operandi of the hermeneuticist. In addition, there may be a large social-communitarian component inherent in this form of Freudian-Rortian authenticity. We will argue (in Part 3 below) that while cathexis is an undeniably idiosyncratic drama, the "fortuitous materials" of contingency are both public and private, social and individual.

**Nietzschean-Rortian Authenticity: the Strong Poet**

But this story of an ironic authenticity is far from over. For Freud's postulation of self-knowledge as self-expansion corroborates the Nietzschean mode of self-realization based in aesthetic self-creation. To Rorty, both are apostles of "the desire to embrace more and more possibilities, to be constantly learning, to give oneself over entirely to curiosity," advocating that we live "the life which seeks to extend its own bounds rather than to find its center." Rorty pursues this mode of authenticity by means of what he calls "the strong poet." It is this hero of Rorty's "liberal utopia" who aims to transform into personal triumph the deficiencies of a post-Nietzschean, post-heroic, post-metaphysical age. The goal is to be "increasingly ironic, playful, free, and inventive in our choice of self-descriptions."

While Freudian psychoanalysis provides novel metaphors and methods to make sense of the multiplicity which is the self, it is far from a mode of authenticity. If authenticity is "being true to oneself," what remains missing from this account is a theory

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11Ibid., p. 155.
12Ibid., p. 154.
13Ibid., p. 155.
of truth. Though he has edified layreaders of many persuasions, including philosophers, Freud does not concern himself with conundrums of professional philosophy. Without a theory of truth, however, the decentered, multiple, and expansive subject lacks some of the creative tools its needs to be true to itself. This concern may seem recondite for all except obsessive, pointy-headed philosophers. But as Rorty will demonstrate below, whether one thinks truth is discovered or made has profound existential consequences.

We also need a prototype, or at least an exemplar, of the authentic life. Admittedly, the Freudian self, as Rorty has argued, is all about rejecting the notion of a paradigmatic human being. But we need more than a program of diagnosis and treatment. In a Freudian mode we may recognize, and come to understand some of our multiple selves, but can they be marshalled to action? Such concern for agency is not idle in the postmodern age.

Fortunately, Rorty’s alliance with Nietzsche offers an exhilarating reply to this problem. Nietzsche, predecessor to Freud, worries about the democratized, pluralistic man which Freud would later struggle to understand and cure. Here we might return to the epigraph which opened this chapter: while in the democratic age everyone “improvises, tries anew, tries with delight,” we make impossible a certain type of hero, “the great architect.” As a result, Nietzsche continues, “the building power is now being paralyzed; the courage that makes plans for the distant future is disheartened; there begins to be a lack of organizing geniuses.”14 The judgment, in short, is that we no longer produce heroes.

Rorty’s partnership with Nietzsche produces a new heroism for a disenchanted, anti-heroic age. The Nietzschean transition into postmodernity also produces a radical redefinition of truth, elegantly developed by Rorty throughout much of his work. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* he articulates this distinction in terms of a battle between metaphysics and irony. In this general context, “irony” stands for his renewal of pragmatism, a subject which has provided one of the most prolific hubs of philosophical discourse of the last decade. Rorty suggests that we move from a metaphysical conception

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which contends that truth is "out there" to be discovered to a recognition that truth is product of sentences, which are inherently human creations. The world does not speak; rather, we speak about the world. To proceed according to the metaphysical notion of truth is to attempt to represent perfectly "things as they really are." Such a definition assumes that the world, behind all potentially deceptive appearances, conforms to a Truth which preexists humans' interaction with and articulation of the world. Bit by bit, we will be able to reveal the Truth gradually, faithfully, and correctly through our scientific formulae, mathematical equations, artistic paintings and poems. Rorty chides these "realist" and "representationalist" presumptions which have dominated philosophy from Plato through Descartes, Marx, and Taylor. The sooner we recognize that truth is, in Nietzsche's phrase, a "mobile army of metaphors," the better.

Intellectual and moral progress, then, needs to be reconceptualized. No longer should we be searching for the One True Language that God or Nature has inscribed on the universe. For, "The world does not speak, only we do." It is preposterous to think that the ways we have come to understand the world necessarily correspond with the ur-language in which the world is primordially written. As he cogently expresses, "the fact that Newton's vocabulary lets us predict the world more easily than Aristotle's does not mean that the world speaks Newtonian."\textsuperscript{15} We need to jettison the metaphysical belief that the world has an intrinsic essence which we can express once we get our methods of observation adjusted correctly. Again, to Rorty truth is a matter of sentences, which are inherently human. He sums it thusly: "Truth cannot be out there--cannot exist independently of the human mind--because sentences cannot exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own--unaided by the describing activities of humans--cannot."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Rorty, \textit{Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity}, op. cit., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 5.
Rorty offers a reconceptualization of truth along pragmatist, historicist, and constructivist lines. He suggests that we think of truth as a proposition, necessarily bound by culture and time, which simply puts us into better, more useful relations with the world. Truth, as a product of sentences, is what describes the world well according to our experiences. In characteristic pragmatist fashion, he sees no need for the centuries of epistemological hand-wringing in professional philosophy we have endured. What needs to be jettisoned is the belief that truth represents the world “as it really is,” and that our investigations bring us ever closer to a once-and-for-all, definitive correspondence to reality. Rather, with William James (“the true is the good in the way of belief”) and Nietzsche, Rorty is unwilling to grant any difference between truth and justification. Indeed, “we have no criterion of truth other than justification,” which relative to audiences. Following Donald Davidson, Rorty is inspired to state that if truth is an absolute concept, then “It is only the relative about which there is anything to say.”17 Thus the philosopher should see herself “as auxiliary to the poet rather than to the physicist”: progress, on Rorty’s account, is “a history of increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are.”18 In his latest work, Rorty explicitly argues “that truth is not goal of inquiry.”19 Inquiry should instead be seen as “recontextualization.” Scientific and moral revolutions, he contends, are metaphorical redescriptions rather than portals peering into the essential, intrinsic nature of reality.

These all-too-general comments on Rorty’s theory of truth have profound implications for his theory of subjectivity. He directly proposes this link, which is predicated on a Romantic concept we discussed in a previous chapter, namely the transition from artistic truth as mimesis to poiesis. Rorty wonders,

If we could ever become reconciled to the idea that most of reality is indifferent to our descriptions of it, and that the human self is created by the use of a vocabulary

18Contingency, Irony and Solidarity, op. cit. pp. 8, 9.
19Truth and Progress, op. cit., p. 3.
rather than being adequately or inadequately expressed in a vocabulary, then we should at last have assimilated what was true in the Romantic idea that truth is made rather than found. What is true about this claim is just that languages are made rather than found, and that truth is property of linguistic entities, of sentences.\textsuperscript{20}

Emphasizing the integral connection of language to identity, Rorty introduces the concept of a “final vocabulary.” All of us, he points out, carry around a set of terms which we employ to justify our actions and commitments. Some of this vocabulary is made up of general terms, like “right,” “good,” “integrity,” and “beautiful.” But most of it is constituted by concepts that are more parochial, such as “Christ,” “nation,” “professional standards,” “good parenting,” “the LDS Church,” “the Revolution,” and the like. These latter, local terms do most of the work, Rorty notes; they are akin to the moral commitments of Taylor’s ethical evaluator discussed last chapter. In line with his constructivism and historicism, Rorty calls these vocabularies “final” because “if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse. Those words are as far as he can go with language; beyond them there is only helpless passivity or a resort to force.”\textsuperscript{21}

The truth of the subject, then, resides in the language that one speaks. But, as Taylor and Rorty concur, we do not choose our original vocabulary and the moral commitments which reside therein. Rorty notes that it is a specific character type, the ironist, who is uncomfortable in the language which she has been bequeathed. He defines an ironist as fulfilling three conditions:

(1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20}Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, op. cit., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.
The ironist is restless, unsatisfied, and skeptical. At times he resembles Nietzschean mask wearer, who must shed his skin every spring. But the seeker, e.g., the typical American youth "in search of himself," is not necessarily an ironist. Though Rorty does not assume that the ironist is functioning with a theory of truth at hand, it is clear that ironism demands a firm commitment to historicism, constructivism, and anti-foundationalism. For, he continues,

The ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game. She worries that the process of socialization which turned her into a human being by giving her a language may have given her the wrong language, and so turned her into the wrong kind of human being. But she cannot give a criterion of wrongness.23

What is crucial to this portrait of the ironist is that one knows that one cannot settle on single vocabulary. As he indicates in (3) above, the ironist's restlessness is insatiable, in part because the ironist knows that there is no such thing as a "correct" final vocabulary. Here, we again find ourselves in a Nietzschean postmodernity, where every profound spirit needs a mask, since truth speaks in different tongues and enters diverse ears. If one does not acknowledge this central tenet of perspectivism, one will simply be a restive metaphysician, clutching to the hope that one glorious day, the perfect words (or technique, or formula) will be found.

Rorty's prescription is otherwise. We should think of final vocabularies as poetic achievements, i.e., the succession of an old, tired set of metaphors by a new one. The hero of his liberal utopia is the strong poet—not the aristocrat, the warrior, the priest, the philosopher, or the scientist. Indeed, this character type has its mythical American counterpart in the self-maker and new-starter. In Rorty's Nietzschean universe, poetry and subjectivity are essentially intertwined. Where Freud describes every human subconscious as an unbridlable poetic faculty, Nietzsche likewise lifts the poet to exemplify the properly human. Rorty interprets it thus: "To fail as a poet—and thus, for Nietzsche, to fail as a human being—is to accept somebody else's description of oneself, to execute a previously

Ibid., p. 75.
prepared program . . . . So the only way to trace home the causes of one’s being . . . would be to tell a story about one’s causes in a new language.”24 This is the heroic effort to give birth to oneself, to look at the past and say “thus I willed it.” Yet, as we have mentioned, central to poetic self-creation is resisting the metaphysical impulse: self-enlargement can never end in a perfect description, in adjusting our vocabulary to correspond correctly with the reality of our subjectivity. The Freudian-Nietzschean self-creator must display an ironic awareness, acknowledging that the best one can do is to shift vocabularies horizontally, to redescribe oneself by scrapping our old vocabulary and provisionally accepting the new. This is not a vertical movement, a digging downward or an ascension which increases our propinquity to the truth of oneself. Rather, with Nietzsche, we philosophize the “dangerous ‘perhaps’,” wondering if “the assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness.”25

In Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Rorty refers frequently to his normative goal, his “liberal utopia.” Clearly the ironist is a hopeful construct, and we must ask what place it has in Rorty’s scheme. He explains the structure of such an arrangement: “In the ideal liberal society, the intellectuals would still be ironists, although the nonintellectuals would not. The latter would, however, be commonsensically nominalist and historicist. So they would see themselves as contingent through and through, without feeling any particular doubts about the contingencies they happened to be.”26 Rorty would have the majority of citizens, then, be “commonsensical non-metaphysicians” or “weak ironists.” They would have an appreciation for the contingency (i.e., relativity) of truth, without questioning their own final vocabularies. They are non-metaphysicians because they recognize the relative validity of their truths, and they are commonsensical because they

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24Ibid., p. 28.
26Ibid., p. 87.
allow the metaphors in which they express their commitments to survive without the sustained reflection of the hermeneuticist or the restless experimentation of the strong poet.

Rightly, Rorty recognizes that the philosophically-reflective life is not for every­body, nor is the Romantic-Nietzschean project of heroic self-creation. As distasteful to someone who like myself would like to democratize authenticity, Rorty’s elitism on this matter is not exactly controversi­al. Indeed, “autonomy is not something which all human beings have within them.”27 What Rorty does here is acknowledge the necessity of ideology: is not the commonsensical the Althusserian realm of “competence,” Heideggerian “idle talk”? Yet Rorty sees no potential in the concept of ideology, which, on epistemological grounds, he dismisses curtly (“On the uselessness of the notion of ‘ideology,’ see Raymond Guess”).28 Indeed, as we have discussed in previous chapters, pre-Althusserian Marxian conceptions of ideology rely on an essence/appearance distinction which Rorty is right to reject.

Yet the connection with the concepts of ideology which we have traced from Althusser through Husserl and Heidegger are quite manifest. Here we should let Rorty recontextualize himself:

The opposite of irony is common sense. For that is the watchword of those who unselfconsciously describe everything important in terms of the final vocabulary to which they and those around them are habituated. To be commonsensical is to take for granted that statements formulated in that final vocabulary suffice to describe and judge the beliefs, actions and lives of those who employ alternative final vocabularies.29

Indeed, this seems to be a solidly Heideggerian understanding of the irresoluteness with creates inauthenticity. The metaphysician stands with “tranquilized self-assurance,” in Heidegger’s phrase; it believes it has seen and understood everything. It also appears, at first pass, that what we have defined as “negative ideology”—the meanings which serve dominant power to the detriment of the aspiring authentic—has no analogue in Rorty’s

27 Ibid., p. 65.
28 Ibid., p. 59.
29 Ibid., p. 74.
thought. Astoundingly, power is not a concept Rorty recognizes as very relevant to private projects of self-creation. Like Taylor, his model of authenticity is curiously blind to the dominant interests which so enflamed Marxist thought. The denial of difference evidenced by Rorty’s commonsensical agent above can indeed be fed by chauvinistic forces rooted in situative ideologies such as nation, race, and religion.

We will not pursue this line of inquiry any further here, and will save for a later section an extended discussion of the relevance of ideology for Rorty’s ironic authenticity. Our immediate task is to press our explication of Rorty’s authenticity from the private to the public realm. Despite providing a modus operandi for private projects of perfection, What further role does irony play in Rorty’s liberal utopia?

**Public Liberalism and Solidarity**

The idea that liberal societies are bound together by philosophical beliefs seems to me ludicrous. What binds societies together are common vocabularies and common hopes.

--Rorty

Richard Rorty is first and foremost an unabashed liberal. He not only champions individual freedom, but he believes that our existing liberal institutions can be made equal to the task of protecting that liberty. Yet he is not a quietist. Like all post-metaphysicians, including Taylor, Rorty knows he needs to confront the specter of nihilism. To do so, he invokes a pragmatism of hope, which explicitly identifies the need for solidarity between humans. The fuel for such solidarity, we will see, is a species of communitarianism, which, despite Rorty’s commitment to the Nietzschean, ironic individual, relies on notions of a shared moral life.

In this section, our task is two-fold. First, we will continue our exegesis of his project of ironic authenticity, here exploring his vision of a pragmatic political liberalism. Concurrently, we will ask, along with some hermeneuticists, whether Rorty’s commitment to solidarity is jeopardized by his postmodern principles, in particular his extolling of the ironist. Indeed, by demanding that his strong poet maintain the perspectives of both the
solidaristic insider and the ironic outsider, Rorty may be limiting such postmodern citizenship to a small elite. Yet I will come to Rorty’s defense, attempting to bolster not only the strong ironist but the viability of the commonsensical non-metaphysician as well. I contend that we also need to concern ourselves with society’s remaining metaphysicians, who must be good liberal citizens although they will never reach the level of sophistication of the ironists, strong and weak. This argument will open the door to this chapter’s Part III, which will suggest a Heideggerian authenticity to mediate this controversy.

Rorty is unequivocal about the role he perceives for irony in the public realm: nil. Irony is “largely irrelevant to public life and political questions. Ironist theorists . . . seem to me invaluable in our attempt to form a private self-image, but pretty much useless when it comes to politics.”30 Here Rorty’s commitment to a pragmatist liberalism shines bright, partially eclipsing his postmodern sensibilities. Indeed, he states, “I cannot imagine a culture which socialized its youth in such a way as to make them continually dubious about their own process of socialization. Irony seems inherently a private matter.”31 Advocating a “collage of private narcissism and public pragmatism,” Rorty maintains that one can and should turn oneself into “a private self-creator and a public liberal.” The same person can (and should) be, “in alternative moments, Nietzsche and J.S. Mill.”32

To the postmoderns who would have the public square ruled by irony, he confidently praises the status quo. Not unlike Fukuyama’s “end of history” triumphalism, Rorty asserts that we in the rich, liberal-democratic West do not need fundamental institutional change. We desire to cultivate and protect personal and political freedom, and “that goal requires, besides peace and wealth, the standard ‘bourgeois freedoms’.”33 Rorty implies that postmoderns are too reckless with the achievements of liberalism. Without the protections of liberal freedoms, people have historically been less able to pursue their

30Ibid., p. 83.
31Ibid., p. 87.
32Ibid., p. 85.
33Ibid.
private projects of self-perfection. Here I contend that there is little use arguing with Rorty: no one who presses the cause of freedom can do without "rights talk." However, some would argue, following Foucault, that the rise of liberal freedoms parallel historically unprecedented machinations of subjectivity; that liberalism not only masks great repressions under the guise of the self-responsible, free subject, but produces the very subject whom we consider "free." While Rorty engages and indeed appropriates much of Foucault, he is largely deaf to American postmoderns like William Connolly who argue cogently that a solid public/private distinction is untenable. Rorty simply finds it convenient to ignore Connolly's thesis that "Any lived conception of personal identity projects standards of collective identity, and any lived conception of collective identity fixes a range of tolerances for personal identities." 34

Rorty equally rejects metaphysicians who contend that liberalism needs philosophical underpinnings. We philosophers should let go of our metaphysical expectations, and realize that liberal political freedoms do not require a thick, rational consensus but only thin, practical justifications. Waging an unmitigated war on metaphysics, he insists in brusque, yet exhilarating terms that "such freedoms require no consensus on any topic more basic than their own desirability." We Westerners have already decided that "the point of social organization is to let everybody have a chance at self-creation to the best of his or her abilities." Show the metaphysicians the door; we democrats don't need them. Rorty's pragmatism cuts through philosophical dilemmas with parsimonious ease: "All we should do is point out the practical advantages of liberal institutions in allowing individuals and cultures to get along together without intruding on each other's privacy, without meddling with each other's conceptions of the good." 35 In a post-metaphysical world, we philosophers who worry about truth and the good have no choice: "we shall call 'true' or 'good' whatever is the outcome of free discussion . . . if we

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take care of political freedom, truth and goodness will take care of themselves.”

To be sure, Rorty’s pragmatic commitment to liberalism enables him to shrug off not only metaphysicians, but multiculturalists who would ally themselves with postmoderns to inaugurate a politics of identity into public institutions. In his “On Ethnocentrism: a Reply to Clifford Geertz,” Rorty confidently asserts the virtues of minimalist liberalism, “aim[ed] at nothing stronger than a commitment to Rawlsian procedural justice.” Our problems in adjusting to cultural diversity, despite their severity, do not demand institutional change. Instead, Rorty alerts us to a balance between public and private sectors that already exists thanks to “the agents of love and the agents of justice.” These two groups share the moral work in a democracy, which, employs and empowers both connoisseurs of diversity and guardians of universality. The former insist that there are people out there whom society has failed to notice. They make these candidates for admission visible by showing how to explain their odd behavior in terms of a coherent, if unfamiliar, set of beliefs and desires—as opposed to explaining this behavior with terms like stupidity, madness, baseness or sin. The latter, the guardians of universality, make sure that one these people are admitted as citizens, once they have been shepherded into the light by the connoisseurs of diversity, they are treated just like all the rest of us.

Reminting one of Geertz’s metaphors, Rorty’s envisages “a bazaar surrounded by lots and lots of private clubs.” Indeed, at times he seems to be advancing a neutralist liberalism, suggesting that we “think of cultural diversity on a world scale in the way our ancestors in the seventeenth and eighteenth century thought about religious diversity on an Atlantic scale: as something to be simply ignored for the purposes of designing political institutions.”

But Rorty’s rebukes to the metaphysical demand for universal foundations and the postmodern/multicultural call to revolutionize institutions to account for difference do not leave his liberalism barren of moral commitment. On the contrary, Rorty’s liberalism does not purport neutralism nor shy away from moral purpose. Rather, “Its sense of its own

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36 Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, op. cit., p. 84.
38 Ibid., p. 206.
39 Ibid., p. 209.
moral worth is founded on its tolerance of diversity." For Rorty, tolerance demands a war on cruelty, and following Judith Shklar, puts cruelty's abeyance at the center of his definition of liberalism. Further, he is willing to consider a wide range of behaviors as constituting cruel action: not only any physical coercion or assault, but also economic hardship and political marginalization. He also includes humiliation, and mentions in particular the cruelty suffered by those who have their final vocabulary invalidated. Certainly he is correct to understand the sensitivity of each individual's "little world," which is constituted by justifications that are frequently as idiosyncratic as they are local. In demanding that the citizens of his liberal utopia be nonmetaphysicians, however, he is sure to invalidate many a metaphysical final vocabulary.

As the moral core of liberalism, reducing cruelty is directly linked to the cultivation of solidarity. The traditional way to cultivate respect and fellow-feeling among humans is a metaphysical approach, where discerning a common, universal essence of humanity discourages maltreatment of others because we know they are just like us. As we know, Rorty rejects this project, which has opened him up to charges of irrationalism and relativism. Yet even given his allegiance to postmodern principles, which would seem to encourage unabatable skepticism and societal fragmentation, Rorty presents a compelling, two-pronged case for solidarity. The first seems again to be based in Shklar's theory, namely "the liberalism of fear," which, drawing on Hobbesian themes, grounds itself in the vulnerability of the prideful individual. Specifically, Rorty speaks of the solidarity which can come about due to the desire to avoid a unique form of human pain, i.e., humiliation. Thus, "human solidarity is not a matter of sharing a common truth or common goal but of sharing a common selfish hope, the hope that one's world--the little things around which one has woven . . . one's final vocabulary--will not be destroyed." 41

40 Ibid., p. 204.
41 Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, op. cit., p. 92.
The key to the second source of solidarity is the notion that solidarity is created and not found. Solidarity is formed through empathetic connection and the appreciation of the final vocabularies of others. Here Rorty reveals the central importance of literature to his theory. "In particular, novels and ethnographies which sensitize one to the pain of those who do not speak our language must do the job which demonstrations of a common human nature were supposed to do." This is more than the pedantic recommendation that we all read around more—which, of course, would do everybody some good. For Rorty makes a compelling case that the metaphysical search for a common human essence is simply the wrong place to look to heal the wounds of humanity. He puts it this way:

Moral progress has, in recent centuries, owed more to the specialists in particularity--historians, novelists, ethnographers, and muckraking journalists, for example--than to such specialists in universality as theologians and philosophers. The formulation of general moral principles has been less useful to the development of liberal institutions than has the gradual expansion of the imagination of those in power, their gradual willingness to use the term “we” to include more and more different sorts of people. In this vision, "Solidarity has to be constructed out of little pieces, rather than found already waiting." This expansion in imagination can only occur through exposure, the cosmopolitanism at the heart of the liberal experience. In Rorty’s liberal utopia freedom and experimentation encourage solidarity, for “it is a culture which prides itself on constantly adding on more windows, constantly enlarging its sympathies.”

Rorty, then, has some plausible responses to those who would accuse his postmodern liberalism of encouraging amoralism. Not only does his liberalism display the central moral tenet of avoiding cruelty, but his redescription of morality is based in a surprisingly strong affirmation of community. Specifically, Rorty follows Michael Oakeshott and other critics of Kantian and utilitarian modes of moral philosophy, who argue that the principles of moral philosophy are much more reflective than creative. As

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42Ibid., p. 94.
44Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, op. cit., p. 94.
Rorty puts it, the moral principles derived from philosophy are valuable “only insofar as they incorporate tacit reference to a whole range of institutions, practices, and vocabularies of moral and political deliberation. They are reminders of, abbreviations for, such practices, not justifications for such practices.”

Rorty suggests we toss out the morality/prudence distinction, and redesign it to conform with the contingency of community. By invoking Wilfrid Sellars’ (Hegelian) definition of morality as “we-intentions,” we can pragmatize and relativize our moral commitments without draining them of persuasive force. Thus, immoral action is redescribed as “the sort of thing we don’t do.” Here Rorty acknowledges, against many postmoderns, the necessity (and desirability) of a shared normal discourse. As he puts it,

An immoral action is, on this account, the sort of thing which, if done at all, is done only by animals, or by people of other families, tribes, cultures, or historical epochs. If done by one of us, or if done repeatedly by one of us, that person ceases to be one of us. She becomes an outcast, someone who doesn’t speak our language, even though she may once have appeared to do so.

Morality thereby becomes “an appeal to the interests of our community”; it derives its force from questions like “Who are ‘we’, how did we come to be what we are, and what might we become?” rather than questions of dutiful obligation like “What rules should dictate my actions?” Thus, “moral philosophy takes the form of historical narration and utopian speculation rather than of a search for general principles.” To be sure, this is a rather intense communitarian tenor, one worthy of a hermeneuticist like Charles Taylor. Given what we know about Rorty’s ironist predilections, we need to ask about the apparent contradiction that arises here. How successfully does Rorty weave together these seemingly antithetical strands of postmodern and communitarian thought?

According to many of his critics, not very well. Below we will visit some hermeneutic commentators, who protest Rorty’s articulation of the split ego of the strong poet. As we know, Rorty employs a strict private/public distinction in order to negotiate

47Ibid., pp. 59-60.
48Ibid., p. 60.
this terrain, suggesting that one engage in private narcissism and public pragmatism. Can we have it both ways, where the ego pursues experimental self-enlargement while it adheres to community values?

Contingency, Ego-Splitting, and Ideology

The Hermeneutic Critique

Hermeneuticists and communitarians are generally quite disdainful of Rorty’s Nietzscheanism. While praising the communitarian strand in his thought for offering “a great deal of the plausibility of Rorty’s vision of the ideal state,” they fret over the implications of his advocacy of the aesthetic, expansive self.49 Charles Guignon and David Hiley impugn Rorty’s redefinition of morality as the “we-intentions” of a community: “What is questionable here, however, is whether this sort of normal moral discourse will survive and continue to exert a pull on us if we evolve into a fully aestheticized culture. For it seems as though Rorty’s ‘private morality’ is morality in name only.”50 They cast serious suspicion on the ability of the strong ironist to be a good community member. Indeed, Nietzsche’s many condemnations of morality seem to encourage atomism, for traditional morality is the stuff of weakness and nihilism. As the herd instinct of humans, morality deprecates the truly righteous life: the heroic mission to achieve original style of character. As Guignon and Hiley phrase it, Rorty wants us “To speak a new vocabulary in which, instead of saying ‘Manipulating others is wrong’ or ‘Slavery is bad’, we will be able to say, ‘My superego is telling a story according to which manipulating others is wrong’ or ‘Our group currently holds the view that slavery is bad.’ Yet somehow we are simultaneously supposed to keep believing that these things really are

50 Ibid., p. 358.
wrong."51 They worry that "A culture dedicated to aestheticism self-enlargement may well come to drop the concerns of morality altogether."52

As we know, Rorty's response is to this apparent contradiction is two-fold. The first is to present the ironist as Janus-faced, able to look both ways at its existence. This would require a sort of ego-splitting, where the subject is turned into a "empirico-transcendental doublet." In Guignon and Hiley's words, such a notion "implies a distinction between an 'I' who is the web and an 'I' who reweaves and recreates the web."53 Here the strong poet must alternatively play the insider and the outsider, conforming to morality as defined by one's community while at the same time knowing recognizing the contingency of that final vocabulary. The ironist is aware that she is always only the product of an indifferent blind impress, yet must struggle to remake oneself in wholly original ways. Contrary to Guignon and Hiley's disquietudes, I do not think we can reject the possibility that the enlightened ironist can look both ways. Their worry is that we have no indication that the Nietzschean will be a good liberal, genuinely concerned with cruelty as Rorty is. While there is certainly no guarantee that ironists will be good citizens in public, I do not see why we should fear them as serious threats to a good liberal order. If the liberal inculcation of tolerance that Rorty would certainly have them undergo were to fail, the threat of state violence would not.

The second part of Rorty's answer is to split the population in two, injecting "common sense," as the opposite of irony, into the societal equation. In his liberal utopia, the intellectuals would be Nietzschean ironists while Jane and Joe citizen would not. The best hope we have for them is to be "commonsensical non-metaphysicians," those who recognize the contingency of their commitments without, like his ironists, consistently questioning the terms with which they justify their existence, i.e., their final vocabulary. Yet such resolution only postpones other charges, namely that of elitism, which Rorty has

51 Ibid., p. 360.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., p. 359.
a much harder time wriggling out of. But I contend that he does not really need to: even we democratically-leaning intellectuals need to acknowledge that ironic Nietzschean heroism is beyond the ken of most of our fellow citizens. The more important concern, rather, is whether and how we can make possible Rorty’s liberal utopia of commonsensical non-metaphysicians. How might the average citizen recognize the relative validity of one’s convictions and yet stand up for them?

In contending the “the communitarian strand in Rorty’s thought tends to undermine the existentialist ideal of unhampered self-creativity,” Guignon and Hiley complain that we are thus stuck between two equally unattractive options. “Either we uncritically accept the status quo, or we engage in the kind of Foucauldian directionless ‘permanent critique of the present’ which Rorty criticizes as a product of ressentiment.”54 Not wanting to endorse either one of these alternatives, their hermeneuticism points them toward another solution which embraces critical activity within the “insider perspective.” As they describe it, “Recognizing our ‘situated freedom’ and our historicity, our task is seen as critically evaluating our current commitments in the light of the possibilities laid out by the past in order to articulate meaningful goals for the future. And this task, it could be argued, is better undertaken by individuals who take self-focusing rather than self-enlargement as their character-ideal.”55

As I have indicated in previous parts of this project, I too consider immanent criticism and self-focusing as indispensable components of authentic being. Yet in the few pages that remain I want to question Guignon and Hiley’s verdict on Rorty, employing two seemingly disparate sources: authenticity and ideology.

**Hermeneutics, Irony, and Ideology**

Rorty is unquestionably a hermeneuticist and a theorist of ideology. In this last section (besides employing some of Rorty’s characteristic hyperbole), I will try to make a

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 361.
two-fold case. First, despite being transfixed with poiesis, Rorty’s pragmatic liberalism requires significant hermeneutic digging, quite similar to Taylor’s project of recovering our shared horizons of significance. We will see that Rorty is more open to hermeneutic premisses, namely digging and discovery, than our portrait of him as a liberal ironist has hitherto suggested. Despite his enthusiasm for the distance provided by irony, it is clear that much of his “liberal utopia” is predicated on the “insider” perspective advocated by Guignon and Hiley. Moreover, we will remind the hermeneuticists of the critical force of irony, a potent tool in fighting the complaisant traditionalism potentially encouraged by communitarian hermeneuticism.

Second and finally, we will introduce the concept of ideology into Rorty’s lexical universe, despite his disdain for the concept. He is right to reject the epistemological dualism which underpins the Marxian definition of ideology: the reliance on binaries such as appearance and reality, illusion and truth. Yet Rorty’s “final vocabularies” are a clear employment of the notion of situative spheres which we have equated with the natural attitude, i.e., the ideology which enables, situates, reproduces, and potentially exploits the aspiring authentic. Without a phenomenological understanding of the necessary qualities of ideology and lacking a Marxian sensitivity to dominant power and exploitation, Rorty’s ironic authentic is in jeopardy, indeed.

Guignon and Hiley endorse the critical evaluation of the insider as superior to the perspective of the ironist outsider. Yet we must entertain the possibility that the insider’s perspective may condemn one to inauthenticity. Heideggerian inauthenticity, we will remember, is a state of absorption in the “They,” where we ensconce ourselves in the “idle talk” of the everyday. This autopilot causes Dasein to “flee from itself”; that is, we become engrossed in a “tranquilized self-assurance” where we assume that our way of seeing sufficiently comprehends being-in-the-world. In brief, inauthenticity closes us off from the ontological questioning which defines Heideggerian authenticity.
What is the difference, then, between insider critical evaluation and outsider irony? Certainly the insider perspective, if deprived of all irony, may find itself absorbed in the They. Without the radical power of irony, "critically evaluating our current commitments in the light of the possibilities laid out by the past in order to articulate meaningful goals for the future" may leave us foundering in the shallows of tired, old, oppressive significations. Can we be fully open to the potential of Dasein when we restrict ourselves thusly? Rorty's definition of moral, philosophical, and scientific progress as driven by metaphoric revolutions should insider advocates pause: it is the strong poet as outsider--Rousseau, Galileo, Maya Angelou--who pushes hermeneutical activity toward criticism and away from complaisance.

In addition, we need to appreciate Rorty's hermeneutical side. Besides taking Heidegger seriously enough to subject him to a book-long study, Rorty acknowledges the need for discovery in his scheme of personal and social authenticity. First, as we have noted above, the aspiring authentic who adopts a Freudian image of itself aspires to listen to its unconscious. We can see this as a particular sort of attunement, where the subject plugs into the reverberations left by various biological and cultural impresses. To be sure, the process of cathexis is creative and expansive, where blind impresses get expressed though idiosyncratic practices. It also rejects notions of a stable, centered self. But such experimental activity cannot occur without openness to what is already there.

In addition, cathexis is by no means always a thoroughly unique, atomistic process: undoubtedly, many of our blind impresses are quite social in nature. Not only do others share in our situation, but frequently we cannot be without engaging significant others in the process of poetic self-creation. Despite Rorty's apparent narcissistic atomism, it is clear that we act out our private poems in social settings--with spouses and children, fellow workers, our clubs, the sports we play or watch, and so on. These are others who are sometimes significant in G.H. Mead and Taylor's sense, and frequently crucial to our

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56Essays on Heidegger and Others, Philosophical Papers 2, op. cit.
having the experience at all. Recognizing the impresses we share, and partaking in community *cathexis*, as it were, should certainly be recognized within Rorty’s authenticity-as-creation.

I also want to make a case that Rorty’s political and philosophical pragmatism require significant hermeneutical digging. We should be careful before we assume that his overriding criterion of “usefulness” is as shallowly instrumental as it might appear at first blush. On an epistemological level, instrumentality enables Rorty to reject realism, i.e., correspondence theories of truth. On his account, truth is not a correct representation of “what is really out there,” but rather certain propositions, always encased in language, which put us into better, more useful relations with our world. But Rorty is not insisting that we are fastiduous instrumental calculators with efficiency as a constant *summum bonum*. Usefulness is frequently not a straightforward, transparent concept, where the instrumentality of our actions is always clear to us. Rorty’s point is that the truth of our actions cannot find any anchor other than in our activity, *our* being-in-the-world. In situations where our purposes are not clear, hermeneutical self-examination is certainly in order.

Moreover, once taken to a societal level, Rorty’s pragmatism cannot help but partake in a type of democratic reflexivity which will significantly mirror the “self-focusing” advocated by hermeneuticists. When Rorty argues that we need no grounding for our institutions “other than their own desirability,” he all but necessitates a participatory ethic of institution-building and oversight. For how are we to define “desirability” and “usefulness”? It seems apparent that no superficial criterion of instrumentality will suffice here. Certainly part of the usefulness of our political institutions will be their incarnation of deeply held ideals, ones for which hundreds of thousands of citizens would be willing to sacrifice their lives. To be pragmatic is not to forsake moral considerations. On the contrary, for we moral creatures who cannot extirpate issues of the good life from our
existence, the “useful” will have deep moral content. To gain access to this level of being, hermeneutical activity is a must.

Finally, I want to revisit Guignon and Hiley’s assertion that Rorty’s contradictory mix of irony and communitarianism offers us one of two equally undesirable options: either we uncritically accept the status quo or we engage in a permanent, directionless critique of the present. Here I will suggest that we have another choice: the employment of a Heideggerian model of authentic Dasein, where we become an unique being within social embeddedness by altering our relationship to the They. Below we will revisit some of Rorty’s main categories of subjectivity with what we know about ideology. Ultimately, we will again appeal to a Heideggerian ontology of agency, where moods, ideology, and care must all conspire to achieve the freedom Rorty’s ironist so intensely needs. In the process, we should be able to help Rorty answer some of the hermeneuticists’ most persistent complaints: 1) What enables Rorty’s strong and weak ironists to recognize the relative validity of their convictions, i.e., their contingency; 2) to live everyday lives of meaning and sanity; and 3) to stand up for their beliefs?

As Rorty professes, “Citizens of my liberal utopia would be people who had a sense of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and thus of their community. They would be liberal ironists . . . people who combined commitment with a sense of the contingency of their own commitment.”57 As we remember, he splits this category of ideal citizens into two groups, strong ironists (also termed strong poets) and weak ironists (commonsensical non-metaphysicians). Now, as many have noted, the class of strong ironists is an elite. Rorty admits as much, reserving this label for intellectuals like himself. We can confidently say that most of our fellow citizens will not fit into this category. Perhaps we should also wonder how many of us in the intellectual class actually fit this description. The strong poet is the hero of Rorty’s liberal utopia, and heroes are scarce by definition.

57 Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, op. cit., p. 61.
We have discussed some of the special qualities required of the strong ironist: boundless curiosity, restlessness, a sophisticated philosophical understanding of the contingent nature of truth, and facility in splitting its ego to be alternately a narcissist in private and a liberal pragmatist in public. Quite importantly, the strong ironist must also display commonsense stability, i.e., the ability to maintain at least a modicum of sanity, to avoid a schizophrenic meltdown of ego, a permanent identity crisis.

It is this quality of stability which is enjoyed by the weak ironists, those who from time to time recognize their contingency but carry on without the restless doubting of the strong poet. Actually, “weak ironist” is an unfortunate misnomer, for these are the agents who, in the face of contingency, must still be able to defend their beliefs. Again, as non-metaphysicians, they recognize the relativity of their final vocabulary--that it is the product of the vagaries of time, place, and culture, with no privileged claim over others' vocabularies of truth and justification. However, weak ironists are commonsensical, in the sense that they allow their contingent beliefs to endure without questioning. Yet Rorty would have these non-metaphysicians remain capable of standing up for their beliefs in the face of opposition.

A tall order, indeed, for Rorty is demanding from both types of ironists some sophisticated critical-philosophical wherewithal. Without a great evolutionary leap forward, we may be at a loss to realize this vision. Here is where I believe we should invoke Heideggerian ontology, which draws upon moods, situation, the call of conscience, and modes of care to achieve authenticity. First, we need to acknowledge the stability offered by embeddedness in situative spheres. Post-Marxian notion of ideology supplies a home in the face of nothingness, thereby forestalling nihilism. It is this mundane infrastructure of everydayness, where we do not question our purposes or practices, which is the common sense of Rorty’s analysis. To be sure, the reservoirs of meaning provided by the situative spheres of class, religion, ethnicity, gender, etc. cannot be forgone.
To partake constantly in commonsense is to forsake assiduous self-critique: we grant our everyday ways of thinking a certain level of legitimacy so that our attention may be directed elsewhere. Rorty would agree with the phenomenologists that such automatic pilot is existentially necessary. But this is not the quality of the weak ironist that is under question. Rather, what we wish to know is how one might achieve authenticity, i.e., be true to oneself, where the self is able to maintain enough consistency to be considered a coherent individual, is solid in its convictions, and is not subjected to undue exogenous, exploitative power.

Thus the Rortian ironist must be aware of negative ideology. Without a sensitivity to societal power, the curious, playful vocabulary swapper may fail to serve its own impulses to authenticity. Certainly some vocabularies based in specific situations, say those of the Mormon Christian, the team athlete, or the punk rocker require significant conformity to practices and values that demand obedience from the aspiring authentic. To justify one’s actions in terms of the Revolution, the Church, or the Company is to run the risk of being captured by a particular final vocabulary and exploited for the purposes of the whole. Even oppositional cultures can exercise power that would rather subordinate than authenticate, and the rules of subcultures are often intense.

To be cognizant of contingency is to display a substantial critical distance on one’s situation. Rorty’s commonsensical non-metaphysician is an enlightened creature, one who is able to appreciate the contingency of her own views because she has engaged, at some level, differences she recognizes as legitimate. Here the weak ironist has the ability to recognize that, although she relies on her particular idea-structures to orient her everyday life, these convictions are only relatively, locally valid. Whence the motivation to emerge out of metaphysics and the They?

Rorty does not acknowledge that there are different types of commonsensical non-metaphysicians. We should not assume that they have come about their recognition of contingency in an way Rorty would approve--through education in literature, cultural
anthropology, comparative politics, etc. For there are also those who have been ideologized into recognizing contingency on a superficial level. These are the soft-relativists Taylor reminds us of, and their harmlessness is less than assured, for it courts the specter of nihilism. Recall Bloom’s lamentation in *The Closing of the American Mind* that his students "are unified only in their relativism and in their allegiance to equality." This relativistic cancer of American democracy is underwritten by openness, "the only virtue which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating." Bloom’s condemnation is complete as he observes: "The students, of course, cannot defend their opinion."\(^{58}\)

Rorty, of course, is one of the devils of Bloom’s universe. But such neo-conservative salvos must be fielded; all of us are right to question the authenticity of Rorty’s agents. It is true, the soft-relativism is a second-best commonsensical non-metaphysics. Bloom’s college students reside squarely within a specific natural attitude, non-critically conforming to an idea-structure which purveys significant moral content. Bland acceptance of difference is not engagement, and can be pernicious. And yet Rorty is absolutely correct that irony is not appropriate for social and political institutions. Not everybody can grow up to be a strong poet. Thus an unreflective, everyday ideology of toleration is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of a liberal state, and all the peace and prosperity it can bring.

It becomes increasingly apparent that the ironists extolled by Rorty all presume the functioning of Heideggerian moods and care. There is no question, for example, that the restless ironist is in the state of mind of anxiety. As if in the throes of Heideggerian homelessness, "the ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game."\(^{59}\) Indeed, the strong ironist draws heavily from the openness created by *Angst*, "a disclosive state of

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59 *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, op. cit., p. 75.
mind" as Heidegger puts it. The ironist who knows that a single vocabulary can never suffice deeply feels the lack (Schuld) of being in perpetual ontological debt. It is precisely (and exclusively) the strong poet who feels the responsibility to compensate for this nullity bequeathed by the blind impress.

Irony is also an enemy of everyday care. Rorty is correct to emphasize the intractability of commonsensical ways of being. Charmed by the tune of idle talk, commonsense is abetted by certain moods--namely boredom, resignation, and fear. Similarly, vocabulary inspection needs a collaborator in deliberative care. While Rorty openly deprecates theory and its grand thematicizations, he is an unequivocal advocate of critical modes of care, theoretical and deliberative. Irony is all about the critical distance provided by an anxious, inquisitive mood and the acuity supplied by deliberative care. Final vocabularies must be made present-at-hand by the strong poet, who manipulates locution by distancing himself from equipment.

This is indeed a sophisticated way in the world. Although Rorty might resist such a redescription, the commonsensical non-metaphysician must engage in some savvy ideology-negotiation, where necessary ideology is recognized as a contingent yet indispensable construct. We should not underestimate the salubrious stability provided by situative ideologies. For we are enabled to take stances in the world thanks to our idiosyncratic, contingent embeddedness in ethnicity, gender, nationality, etc. Undoubtedly, everyone needs a final vocabulary to live by.

But these vocabularies cannot become overly parochial, where a blinkered chauvinism dumps resentment on the Other. The great epistemological shift demanded by Rorty in his liberal utopia is driven by perspectivism, created by the recognition that each person has received their unique blind impress, and thus has developed their own "angle" on the world. Rorty is correct to identify this liberal disposition as the crucial underwriter of a peaceful and prosperous future. I also believe that he has a credible response to those who can only see the "slippery slope of relativism" in his historicism, perspectivism, and
constructivism. True, if universalism is wrong, we have to face up the fact that our deepest moral commitments are only our beliefs. But they're our beliefs, absolutely critical to any authentic community or individual. Recognizing contingency does not cause nihilism. Rather, we should lift the best beliefs of the natural attitude to a level of solid conviction through examination. In this sense, irony is indeed the promise and hope of the Western world.
CONCLUSION
SINCERITY, IRONY, AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Become mature and flee from that paralyzing upbringing of the present age which sees its advantage in preventing your growth so as to rule and exploit you to the full while you are still immature.

--Nietzsche

One cannot be a self on one’s own.

--Taylor

I hope the reader has recognized the fundamental dialectic at the heart of this theoretical debate on authenticity. While one must exercise the Nietzschean impulse to fight all ascribed identity and create oneself anew, we have learned that one cannot “be” at all without embeddedness in indispensable situations which we do not choose. This is indeed one of the morals of this narrative, which began with Chapter 2’s wide survey of the philosophical contributions to the authenticity debate. More recently, in Chapters 4 and 5, we have seen how Taylor’s and Rorty’s definitions of authenticity share important qualities, not the least of which is the recognition that our horizons and vocabularies are inherently shared. Regardless of one’s attraction to Taylor’s sincerity or Rorty’s irony, we know that each theory advocates discovery and creation.

In this conclusion I would like to speculate how Taylor’s and Rorty’s theories might play out as strategies of authenticity for the agent in pursuit of authenticity. Throughout this study I have used the term “aspiring authentic,” and have consciously tried to orient, however gradually, our theoretical discussion of authenticity toward actual employment by someone who seeks to be true to him- or herself. Here, in this final intervention, I would like more explicitly to explore how an aspiring authentic with a will to authenticity might move through the Heideggerian ontology of agency I have
presented hitherto. We ask how an agent who has adopted a sincere or an ironic approach might function within Heideggerian moods and modes of care; more specifically, which moods a sincere or ironic authentic might try to conjure, and what modes of care it would need to employ to reach its goal.

In addition, we revisit the issue of the aspiring authentic's critical wherewithal. I have been arguing that the central figures in our theoretical dialogue about authenticity--Heidegger, Nietzsche, Taylor, Rorty--offer unsatisfying descriptions of the agent's ability to criticize its situations. How can the authentic be sufficiently critical of the power exercised through situation while drawing its critical power from the very same indispensable embeddedness? In the second part of this conclusion, we reassume engagement with this problem, reexamining some epistemological questions raised by issues of critical distance and immanence.

Before we see how the sincerist and the ironist might engage Heidegger's ontology of agency, let's briefly review what our creation-discovery dialectic has been asking of the potential authentic. What qualities might our two interlocutors agree upon? First, from an ontological-hermeneutic, Heideggerian-Taylorian perspective, we determined that any authentic must attune to its situation. Hermeneutic knowing is essential to even the Nietzschean-Rortian ironist: how could it grow so restless without discerning that current vocabularies are devoid of life, crying for a coup de grâce and replacement in a new language? On this account, Heidegger is completely correct: one cannot but attend to the They, the complex of received meanings which one must know, not only for critique but even for unreflective employment in one's everyday coping. As Rorty demands that we recognize the contingency and insufficiency of our current final vocabulary, so Taylor asks the strong evaluator to recognize the gap between our (historically- and community-bound) ideals and their instantiation. Thus, we conclude that:

• The aspiring authentic must attune to its situation, whether in embrace or rejection
Such attunement is essential to any authentic project because it lays the groundwork for evaluation. As ontological precursors to the authentic as critic, Heidegger’s moods, the call of conscience, and modes of care are quite compelling concepts. Yet, as any slightly Marxist critic of Heidegger will insist, this authenticity appears to be a complaisant sincerity, a willingness to embrace immanence whatever the content. What Heidegger’s ontology needs is a critical stage between the Zuhanden and the Vorhanden, where equipment is in use, yet somehow reflectively, under a new kind of examination. This would be a realm where practice and theory meet, where unreflective employment must dialogue with the impulse to quantification, environmental releasement, and theoretical thematization central to the present-at-hand. Unsupplied within Heidegger’s universe, the aspiring authentic must look elsewhere for this type of critical power. As I’ve consistently argued (thanks to my own Marxian and Nietzschean impulses):

• Each authentic must be able to recognize and judge the political interests and power relations manifested in the situations it inhabits.

Here Heidegger isn’t much of a help. On levels both epistemological and normative, he is earnestly committed to the “letting-be” of attunement; while a certain level of recognition is essential to his project, he never shepherds the everyday aspiring authentic into the critical realm. His account of theoretical care (in Division II, Section 2 of Being and Time) for instance, offers only an ontological sketch of the currently extant theoretical comportment. But the environmental releasement there required clearly cannot be part of our prescription for the agent seeking authenticity. Thus, below, after acknowledging our ontological commitment to connectedness in terms of Heideggerian metaphor (moods, call of conscience, modes of care), we will push further the difficult question of critical self-consciousness. Renewing the substantial epistemological insights of Taylor’s and Rorty’s projects, we will engage some of Stanley Fish’s arguments on the matter, trying to offer the aspiring authentic a sketch of a hermeneutical, critical, deliberative mode of care.


Authenticity's Ontology of Agency: the Ironist and Sincerist at Work

Once again, I am drawn back to Heidegger's fundamental ontology. We will see how his concepts of moods and the call of conscience provide a solid ontological foundation for the deliberative care which we have been asking of our authentics. Yet before we see how Taylor's sincerist and Rorty's ironist engage this infrastructural ontology of agency, perhaps it is appropriate to make a confession. All throughout this study there has been a barely-acknowledged ghost in the machine of authenticity: the will. Every theorist of authenticity we have discussed relies on it. Only a few of them--Nietzsche, Heidegger, Rorty--bother to problematize it at all. My project, I confess, also has leaned heavily upon the camouflaged support of the will to advance my arguments. Will is indeed crucial to any project of authenticity: without a will to authenticity, there is no aspiring authentic, no sincerist nor ironist. But thanks to Heidegger, the will plays a diminished role in our conclusions about authenticity. Unfortunately, in this concluding chapter the question of the will cannot receive the attention it needs. But refusing to discuss it will not license me to ignore it. For, in the section immediately below, we expound on Heidegger's notion of the call of conscience, an ontological concept, which along with moods and care relies on an ambiguous form of willfulness (and its euphemisms) to enable authentic Dasein. In the second part of this conclusion we, too, continue to employ an underexplicated notion of the will--decentered, diminished, and yet absolutely crucial and catalytic.

As we may remember, Heidegger charges the call of conscience with the task of bringing Dasein back from its lostness in the They. Such lostness in such common sense and group think creates a "lack," the mark of all inauthentic Dasein. As lacking, the inauthentic must make up for absolving itself of its responsibilities to worldly being when it takes shelter in the pre-interpreted, self-satisfied realm of the They. Heidegger's own words here are richly evocative:

> 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 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.\(^1\)

Again, the goal of the authentic cannot be to jettison the They and thus vanquish inauthenticity. What Heidegger asks of the authentic is the ability to alter its relation to the They—not to transform the indispensable ontological substratum, but redeem the debased ontical form this connection comes to take when dominated by the “dictatorship of the public realm.”

Heidegger phrases this process in terms of Dasein calling and finding itself. He is explicit to decenter the willful subject from this process, which he terms resoluteness. The call of conscience does not issue from anyone or thing; rather, “the caller is Dasein in its uncanniness: primordial, thrown Being-in-the-world as the ‘not-at-home’—the bare ‘that-it-is’ in the ‘nothing’ of the world.”\(^2\) It is within the very nature of falling Dasein to be schuldig, guilty, and thus it is the task of the potential authentic to attune to and transform this lack. But if a will to authenticity is not behind this resoluteness to hear the call, what is? As we have seen, Heidegger phrases this orientation as incorporating “choice,” e.g., “choosing to choose a kind of Being-one’s-Self.”\(^3\) Yet, clearly, Heidegger devoluntarizes the transformation into authentic Being, especially the hearing of the call—it is not effected by will or choice. Heidegger does, however, speak in terms of choosing to align oneself in order to receive the call: in “becoming free for the call,” Dasein “has chosen itself.”\(^4\)

But this is choosing does not resemble preference expression, our common definition of choice. Heidegger’s analysis is ontological, and thus “choosing to have a conscience” functions at a level well below ontical activity such as choice. So do moods,

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\(^1\)Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., II, 2, p. 313, emphasis in original.

\(^2\)Ibid., II, 2, p. 321.

\(^3\)Ibid., II, 2, p. 314.

\(^4\)Ibid., II, 2, p. 334.
it appears, as Heidegger denies that one can summon a state-of-mind at will. Volition is dependent on mood, not the other way around. Yet this is not simple linear causality, and even at this ontological level, Heidegger cannot dispose of the will. The role of the will is not limited to the fact that “Understanding the appeal’ means ‘wanting to have a conscience’.”5 The ontologically fundamental states-of-mind, too, must pair with will to summon resoluteness: “Dasein can, should, and must, through knowledge and will, become master of its moods.”6 While this section might so far appear as a somewhat unnecessary digression on the will, I bear the reminder that our purpose here is to place Taylor’s sincerist and Rorty’s ironist into this ontology of agency. We have assumed from the beginning that both bear a will to authenticity and a conscious strategy for achieving truth to itself. How, then, might their aspirations and theorizations play through the call of conscience and moods?

In a previous chapter we noted that the actual moods discussed by Heidegger are quite few. Boredom is the opiate which abets inauthentic fleeing-in-the-face-of Dasein. Anxiety, we know, is central to becoming-one’s-self authentically. As such, anxiety as a state-of-mind works in tandem with the call of conscience to orient the agent toward confronting homelessness. As Heidegger puts it, “The call whose mood has been attuned by anxiety is what makes it possible first and foremost for Dasein to project itself upon its ownmost potentiality-for-Being.”7 It is apparent, then, that both the sincerist and the ironist must conjure anxiety. Each seeks to customize a home out of its distinct suffering of homelessness.

But, we might ask, why the Taylorian community-member needs anxiety to attune to its shared horizons of significance. We must remember how Taylor’s Aristotelian metaphysic of the good postulates a very Heideggerian lack into human existence. As the space between ideal and actual becomes distant, ideals become submerged and debased.

5Ibid.
6Ibid., I, 5, p. 175.
7Ibid., II, 2, p. 322.
In the case of the current manifestation of American individualism, the promise of self-fulfillment unleashed by romanticism becomes a function of mass-consumption and subjectivist instrumentality. As one's self become the only important reality, it concurrently becomes flatter, unable and unwilling to draw upon moral sources serving purposes greater than its own fulfillment. Undoubtedly, this inauthentic American individual could use a dose of anxiety's electric thunder, the sort of abrupt arousal that Heidegger talks about.

The good is so prominent in Taylor's thought that he ontologizes the self-reflective drive of his moral agent. And indeed, it is here once again where the will diffuses and disguises itself through separate levels of existence. For Heidegger, the will-in the weak form of choice--can merely orient us in the right direction to be able to begin to hear the call of conscience. Taylor, however, posits moral agency--the ability to judge the relative worth of our actions--at the very core of the properly and exclusively human. Thus the ontical will to evaluation becomes a direct manifestation of ontological lack, where Dasein, the good, and anxiety are inextricably intertwined. For Taylor, the roots for strong evaluation and radical re-evaluation go all the way down to the Heideggerian ontological level of mood and the call of conscience. Self-reflexivity becomes the transcendental condition for Dasein.

The particular homelessness experienced by the sincerist is the anomie of uprootedness, where one's connection with community has been severed. Thus the sincerist suffers a distinct form of anxiety--isolation from horizons of significance. When the shared goods which are ontologically necessary become obscured or malformed, the ideals embedded in horizons stumble garbled or fall silent. Despite some critics' assertions to the contrary, Taylor's authenticity is not a state of complaisant attunement. It is not simple embeddedness in situation which creates authenticity, but rather interpretation of situation which makes the moral agent authentic. Resoluteness for the aspiring sincerist, then, is the focused struggle for articulation. For Taylor's sincere
Dasein to realize its potentiality-for-Self, it must attune by listening to the murmurs of submerged sources of meaning. Horizons of significance are; the call comes; the sincerist (i.e., strong evaluator) listens, recognizes, and rearticulates old ideals into recoin metaphor. To be sure, Taylor’s metaphysic of hermeneutic truth, encapsulated in the concept of “embodied agency,” offers the aspiring sincerist significant recourse. The truth is already there, ready to be retrieved and rearticulated within a community sharing language and meaning.

Where Taylor’s honest soul, the community-craving, cuddly sincerist might not initially appear to be an intimate of anxiety, Rorty’s “strong ironist” cannot begin to deny its close relationship with Angst. Indeed, anxiety seems to permeate all strata of the ironist, not the least of which is a philosophical appreciation for the contingency of one’s beliefs. Meanwhile, the seeking ironist is ineluctably propelled by an unconscious metaphysic of restlessness. Feeling like it was born into the wrong language game and tribe, the homelessness of Rorty’s agent dominates every aspect of its existence. Haphazardly driven by impulse, intuition, anxiety, philosophical understanding, and the will to Nietzschean self-overcoming, the ironist is perpetually dissatisfied and unable to commit to any one set of horizons. Anxiety is a partner is all it does. The ironist knows that it cannot continue to suffer the lack embodied in the worn-out final vocabulary of its current language community. Just as Heidegger’s authentic must face up to its ontological guilt, Rorty’s ironist must confront the dead metaphors which restrict the potential of the aspiring original.

For an ironist in a Freudian mode, heeding the call of conscience opens the ego to its unconscious. To listen to the languages simmering within is to enable Dasein to confront itself in the form of its contingencies, unresolved complexes, and drives. Engagement with the “crazy quasi-selves” of the unconscious is an ontical process absolutely dependent on a Heideggerian ontological vocabulary of conscience and moods. Rorty asks the ironist take the voices of the unconscious seriously, “listening to
their crazy accounts of how things are, seeing why they hold the crazy views they do, and learning something from them. It will be a matter of self-enrichment.” Likewise, the strong poet’s self-expansion cannot proceed without critical engagement with its final vocabulary, requiring a large measure of attunement with situation. As with Taylor’s sincerist, the ironist’s will to authenticity is essentially vehiculated by Heideggerian fundamental ontology.

Yet we have asked much more of the aspiring authentic. As we have insisted above, any aspiring authentic must not only attune to its situations but be able to identify political interests and power relations exercised therein. Attunement, whether Taylorian or Rortian, is not enough. Resoluteness must include the summoning of critical consciousness.

Critical Consciousness in the Postmodern Mind

Heidegger’s analysis, we might remember, highlights three types of concern: everyday care, circumspective deliberation, and the theoretical attitude. In Chapter 3 I called this second category deliberative care, and held it up as a potential motor of ideology critique. As Heidegger presents it, deliberative care operates between everyday care’s unreflective employment of the ready-to-hand and the abstraction away from equipment intrinsic to theoretical care. Indeed, he speaks of circumspective deliberation “making present,” “bringing closer,” and “illuminating Dasein’s current factual situation.” While it “operates in the involvement-relationships of the context of equipment which is ready-to-hand,” deliberative care “can be performed even when that which is brought close in it circumspectively is not palpably ready-to-hand and does not have presence within the closest range.” Connected to equipment, this “envisaging” is able to gain some distance from direct everyday involvement, for it “catches sight directly of that which is needed but which is un-ready-to-hand.”

It is in this space, between the ready-to-hand of everyday care and the present-at-hand of the theoretical attitude, where our aspiring authentic must exercise its critical wherewithal. Might there be a realm between the *Zuhanden* and the *Vorhanden* where equipment is in use, under examination (even sustained critical attention) in a way that does not have to detach from and "thematize" its object in a theoretical fashion? This is something akin to what we saw Taylor’s radical re-evaluator doing in Chapter 4, where the moral agent was able to re-examine the status and meaning of its commitments (and thus its identity). Such reflection is clearly more than the everyday employment, in a manner ready-to-hand, of our moral reserves shared with the They. At the same time, it does not attempt to transcend its condition in a Cartesian, Marxian, or Husserlian manner. Bounded yet reflective, Taylor’s account of hermeneutical self-reflection is rather compelling. My complaints about the insufficiently political nature of this re-examination still stand, of course. Fittingly, then, in the pages that remain I want to press a related concern. Is the shortcoming of Taylor’s model for authenticity a fault of substance or structure? In other words, is there something fundamentally flawed in the hermeneutic model of self-knowledge, or is Taylor’s sincerist simply uninspired to think critically? Is the “insider-view” epistemology underwriting such reflection implausible?

Is critical self-consciousness even possible? Stanley Fish doubts it. In his “Critical Self-Consciousness, Or, Can We Know What We’re Doing?” and related pieces, Fish strikes out against the epistemological dualism which vehiculates both traditional Cartesian and modern Marxist projects. More precisely, Fish is rejecting the possibility of critical distance— that one can detach from one’s situation in order to put it under examination. Fish contends that such distance requires leaving one’s old situation all together, in which case we are no longer the same person looking back at one’s beliefs. With Rorty, Fish’s anti-foundationalism proposes that what we want to call critical distance is really only a lateral shift of belief. To gain distance on one’s beliefs is
actually to transfer into another set of convictions which enables the old beliefs to be cast in a completely new light.

Fish illustrates this point with an example from his work at the university. He describes the experience of sitting on a committee charged with investigating the status of women at his institution. When he questions department chairs about the low number of women faculty in their departments, the chairs usually respond in several ways. First, they state that hiring is conducted strictly by the means of intellectual merit, and second, that hiring pools typically have a low number of women. Fish wonders how these men (they usually are) can be brought to see several things: that merit, far from an objective notion, is a rather contestable cultural and political construct which works to exclude but a small sample of the intellectual population, and that the size an academic applicant pool is hardly a statistical aberration given the highly-charged meaning of “intellectual merit.” Trying to bring the chairs around to his way of seeing, here is how Fish describes their potential alteration in belief:

It is certainly possible that at least some of the chairmen with whom my committee deals will come away from the process with a new understanding of their responsibilities with respect to the recruiting and promoting of women. Let us assume that this has in fact happened. In what terms would one want to characterize this success? The temptation would be to say that it marked the achieving of a heightened or raised consciousness, and that these men had passed from an unreflective state to a state of a new and enlarged awareness. But, in fact, the awareness of the chairmen affected by our arguments would not have been enlarged, but changed. It would not have been enlarged because any gain in awareness is simultaneously a loss: someone who is now able to see merit as a political or social category is now unable to see merit as intrinsic; the passing from one point of view to another deprives you of whatever insights and certainties flow from the point of view you have “transcended” (in quotations because it is transcendent only in relation to a new set of constraints).  

Fish is refuting a sort of vertical epistemological scale where levels of understanding can be measured and ranked, where we could get closer to representing the world “as it really is.” Indeed, this is a rejection of an entire complex of beliefs: representationalism, rationalism, foundationalism, dualism. An unrepentant perspectivist like Rorty, Fish

refuses to see any fundamental difference between truth and justification, belief and persuasion, reason and rhetoric. Critical theory's "theological" conceptualization of belief change, Fish contends, is beholden to the same fundamental flaws of the modernism he slays. Egad, what a dreadfully quaint notion--"consciousness raising"--as if the Light could be perfectly seen without mediation or situation, without a different location or a new set of glasses.

To be sure, the epistemologies of Rorty and Fish share much. Both are intensely opposed to the notion of transcendence--that the critic can rise above the "prevailing realm of purposes" to see things are they "really are." As we remember, Rorty's ironist is chronically on the search for new metaphor, but not because it perceives that with each new improvement in representation it is growing closer to the Truth. Rather, the strong poet is an anti-foundationalist in habit if not philosophy. Opening itself to the ontological fact of contingency, it conceives of its changes as mere metamorphoses rather than an upward progression of steps toward telos. A new incarnation is always only a new incarnation, never The Incarnation. The epistemology that underlies this account of authenticity is, as we've said, clearly anti-foundationalist and perspectivist, where the agent moves laterally out of one belief-situation and into another. This is a paradigm shift with no presumption of correct representation. Instead of moving vertically into greater understanding, the ironist simply swaps the old for the new, which is better only because it is different. This epistemology is fundamentally Nietzschean and Foucaultian: different understandings are incommensurable, incomparable. Thus to propose that one is still within the old while employing the new--in some sort of detached, critical understanding--is fundamentally mistaken, says Fish.

Critical awareness cannot be transcendence; "awareness," if it means anything, is one's straightforward understanding of everyday existence within one's situation. "In short, one is always aware; one can always give reasons." The only substantial critical awareness one can gain is by leaving one's old situation, never to return. As Fish
continues, "Awareness is not a quantity that can be increased or diminished on an absolute scale; rather, it is a name for what is obvious and perspicuous to us situated as we are within a structure of beliefs." Everyday functioning within our specific, contingent milieu demands we engage in constant justificatory warfare, a rhetorical battle with those around us, who of course don't see the world exactly as we do. But these mundane beliefs, whether informed philosophically, ideologically, intuitively, religiously, or however, never escape the realm of "catechism." As Fish sees it, the reasons we give in everyday justification are just fine, even as they are the farthest thing from philosophical or transcendent awareness: "They are reasons for your faith; and they are also reasons that derive from your faith in a circular but not vicious relationship; and when that faith is succeeded by another, a new set of reasons will accompany it, and that set of reasons will be the instantiation of a new awareness." 

While Fish has undergone plenty of criticism for his rather hyperbolic postmodernism, here I want briefly to add my own as a gateway to this project's final words. Fish insists that his rejection of critical distance—the ability to step outside of one's beliefs in order to scrutinize them—is inconsequential, for several reasons. First, as we've mentioned, self-knowledge, awareness, and reasons for belief are all exercised in everyday care. It is in this way that his rejection of critical distance is "superfluous." "One is always aware": in other words, self-knowledge is always self-evident, embodied in a mundane, apodictic justificatory rhetoric. We undergo changes to this awareness through the push and pull of everyday life; persuasion is a two-way street, or better, a contingent, cacophonous matrix which is outside our control. Who knows what factors go into successful persuasion; as Fish puts it, "There exists no certain correlation between the exertions of persuasive pressure (of whatever kind) and the certainty or even the likelihood of success." 

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11Ibid., p. 462.
12Ibid.
13Ibid., p. 463.
Second, critical distance is "impossible." As I've illustrated, Fish and Rorty contend that epistemological progress is made through lateral movement. Once we gain distance on a set of beliefs, we fail to hold them any longer. The conclusion he draws, then, is the following:

The fact that change can neither be willed nor stopped means that critical self-consciousness is at once impossible and superfluous. It is impossible because there is no action or motion of the self that exists apart from the "prevailing realm of purposes" and therefore no way of achieving distance from that realm; and it is superfluous because the prevailing realm of purposes is, in the very act of elaborating itself, turning itself into something other than it was. The fact that there can be no special act of the will by which its own possibilities are enlarged is rendered harmless by the fact that no special act of the will is required. The failure of critical self-consciousness is a failure without consequences since everything it would achieve--change, the undoing of the status quo, the redistribution of power and authority, the emergence of new forms of action--is already achieved by the ordinary and everyday efforts by which, in innumerable situations, large and small, each or us attempts to alter the beliefs of another.14

To be sure, this view is provocative, even quite threatening to those who need to maintain an essential dichotomy between critical reason and all forms of coercion. Yet Fish's will to deconstruct the distinctions between truth and justification, reason and rhetoric do not get him as far as he supposes.

As we've seen, Fish denies the possibility of a quantitative measure of awareness. There cannot be consciousness raising, in the sense of an upward procession along a vertical axis. For once we have "raised" consciousness, we have actually changed consciousness, and we no longer stand in the same place as before. While I certainly have sympathy for the postmoderns' guerrilla tactics--refusing to engage the traditional epistemologists on their own ground--I think these postmoderns come close to offering a worse option than traditional representationalism. For, the lateral epistemology they advance is mired in the same type of dichotomous metaphysic they purport to abhor. While everyday awareness is a constant, Fish tells us, any change in consciousness is exclusive. Though resisting a whole host of philosophical dualisms--

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14Ibid., pp. 463-4.
reality/representation, essence/appearance, mind/body—Fish still seems to be working within a certain binary here, for critical consciousness is either on or off.

Indeed, there are substantial problems with Fish’s epistemology, though I can only mention several here. First, with his contentions on the nature of everyday care, he effectively steals the banner of complaisance from Heidegger, Taylor, and other sincerists. Can he really mean that “one is always aware”? True, one might always be aware enough to cope in the world; but why is Fish not concerned if one is swallowed by the They? Again, Heidegger is instructive: the common sense offer by the They is a tranquilizer, for it ensconces one in idle talk which purports to understand everything without engaging the world at all. Here Fish’s position is akin to Rorty’s abrupt dismissal of the concept of ideology as “useless.” According to Fish, “one always knows what one is doing.” Sure, we are self-interpreting animals. Yet one’s “awareness” and “reasons” need not be anything more than the cover story offered by dominant powers. Calling this “catechism” allows Fish to get in his digs at popular consciousness, but he stops far short of challenging its epistemological or normative standing. Fish’s position is naïve at best, disingenuously democratic at worst. For what intellectual has ever given the voice of the people unconditional legitimacy, even while deriding it? While such a position may be the postmodern, perspectivist credo, this democratic postmodernist, your author, will have nothing of it.

More importantly, though, there are deep problems with Fish’s inside/outside dualism. And it is here where my commitment to Taylor’s hermeneutics must have the final say. As it is, Fish offers us only two epistemologies: 1) awareness progressing along a vertical scale of quantifiable units; 2) a lateral, horizontal relation of mutually exclusive beliefs. What Fish proposes is a simple, two-dimensional x/y axis that we all know from elementary mathematics. The dualism at work is the contention that once we have gained critical distance on our current beliefs, they are no longer current; we have successfully moved horizontally into another set of beliefs. Since there is no “outside” of
situation, there can be no critique of situation until we have placed ourselves in another. As Fish argues in regards to his departmental chairs mentioned above, "Someone who is now able to see merit as a political or social category is now unable to see merit as intrinsic." Likewise, Rorty’s strong poet frequently moves from one final vocabulary whose metaphors have died to a whole new way of describing—and living—the world.

While I am clearly in support of the ontological notion that situative ideology cannot be transcended, I view Fish’s epistemology with significant suspicion. I want to close with two points. First, I am unconvinced by this account of belief change. While Fish and Rorty make great strides away from foundationalism and representationalism, they strut their way into hyperbolic absurdity. In his example of departmental chairs, Fish is emphatic in his epistemological exclusivity—that truths, encapsulated within *sui generis* regimes of powerknowledge, are incommensurable: “The passing from one point of view to another deprives you of whatever insights and certainties flow from the point of view you have ‘transcended’.” How can Fish assume that our beliefs are always full and consistent? Such a position hangs quite congruently with his denial of any variance in degree of awareness (“one is always aware”). For Fish, awareness, like belief, is always whole and undivided.

I have spent several chapters arguing that ideology has several faces; one of which, the Marxian, works to obfuscate the purposes of the willful subject. Cursory as well as theoretical examination illustrate, contra Fish, that more often than not, belief is inconsistent and fragmented. Even the most aware among us—those with the Aristotelian leisure to constantly self-examine—are rather riddled with beliefs that are awkwardly imbricated. I do not see how Fish’s academics escape this very mundane dilemma. Does he really think that those chairmen he impresses with arguments about the contingent and political nature of intellectual merit will be able to jettison their long-standing notions of academic quality? It seems to me that Fish’s forensic success will very rarely be total. He offers no compelling case why residue, remainder, and the unconscious will not
forever harass new belief. His postmodernism should tell him otherwise; but in this case, seemless totality rules over fragmentation and aporia.

Second and finally, I believe Taylor’s philosophy of language offers a vastly superior account of belief change. As we remember, Taylor emphasizes the expressive and constitutive qualities of language: that words do more than designate or stand in for concepts, but have an active role in manifesting meaning. Taylor’s rearticulation, as we discussed it in Chapter 4, is an activity which doesn’t conform to the two-dimensional epistemologies offered by Fish: either 1) vertically moving from clouded to clear understanding or 2) horizontally swapping belief systems. Fish insists that different beliefs must be mutually exclusive, denying that they can be complementary. But Taylor’s philosophy of language confounds Fish and Rorty’s inside/outside dichotomy, asserting that critical self-consciousness functions in an altogether different manner: through the unique power of re-articulation.15

Indeed, something special happens in the linguistic dimension, the clearing, die Lichtung: humans express themselves in a way that far surpasses mere representation of impulse, emotion, or reason. Taylor offers a compelling account of the “logomorphic” nature of feelings and thoughts which frequently stumble around inarticulate, dependent on verbalization for being. What is more, re-expression directly affects it object. Feelings and thoughts can change when they are re-articulated. Fish and Rorty would agree with much of this; indeed, even Taylor the communitarian shares their anti-foundationalism. Yet Taylor’s profoundly linguistic hermeneutical sensibility signals a fundamental divergence in epistemologies between these thinkers. And as he argues in his transcendent article on the liberal-communitarian debate, the epistemological and ontological components of a philosophy direct (though don’t dictate) its normative possibilities.

15If we were asked to place Taylor’s epistemology on Fish’s x/y axis, it would be drawn as a diagonal, with a positive slope from the lower left quadrant to the upper right. In other words, he believes that we can make progress as we change our articulations. But to represent Taylor’s view in two dimensions is to misrepresent it, for hermeneutic re-articulation defies such flat geometry.
The divergence in postmodern and hermeneutic epistemologies is reflected, then, through their hopes for critical consciousness. Since self-understanding is expressed and constituted through articulation, Taylor maintains that we can achieve better understanding of ourselves without negating the self which was defined by previous articulations. In fact, is the very continuity of narrative which enables a new self at all. New articulations issue from a self dissatisfied with previous self-definitions, and it is only a self which has lived incomplete or worn-out self-descriptions who can integrate new metaphorics into its existence. The consequences of the Taylorian metaphysic are earth-shaking for the aspiring authentic. I hope that this project has helped answer a question posed by Taylor in 1985 which has every implication for the debate on authenticity:

Does it make sense to strive for a mode of self-understanding that can undo at least some of the suppression of previously dominant schemata? Can we move to a higher and fuller schema that will bring some hitherto smothered voices to speech, without suppressing some that we now can hear? Or does all liberation involve fresh incarceration, so that we can only move from one equally bad regime to another--or better perhaps, between regimes that are incommensurably bad?16

From Taylor's epistemology and ontology springs hope. We must make no mistake: the possibilities not only for authenticity, but truth and freedom hang in the balance.

REFERENCES


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Luke Garrott, born 18 October 1967 in Evanston, Illinois, is the son of two career educators. He received his BA in Latin American Studies from Stanford University in 1989, his MA in 1994 and PhD in 2001 from the University of Florida. He is currently Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Utah, where he has taught political theory since 1997.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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May 2001

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