Flourishing Selfhood in Aristotle and Authentic Selfhood in Heidegger

Jacob Graham

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THE FLOURISHING SELF IN ARISTOTLE AND THE AUTHENTIC SELF IN HEIDEGGER

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Jacob N. Graham

May 2012
FLOURISHING SELFHOOD IN ARISTOTLE AND AUTHENTIC SELFHOOD IN HEIDEGGER

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ABSTRACT

THE FLOURISHING SELF IN ARISTOTLE AND THE AUTHENTIC SELF IN HEIDEGGER

By

Jacob N. Graham

May 2012

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Michael Harrington

This dissertation explores Aristotle’s concept of human flourishing, or eudaimonia, through the lens of the flourishing self. Connections will be made with Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, as seen through the lens of authentic selfhood. It is argued that there is some type of authenticity or self-appropriation already present in Aristotle’s ethical thought. For both thinkers, however, the particularized self is subsumed into a type of universality—the universality of excellence or care.
DEDICATION

For Eleanor
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was born in two different ways. I first saw the connection between Heidegger and Aristotle’s thought in Dr. Ronald Polansky’s course on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I am in many ways indebted to him for my interpretations of Aristotle. Moreover, Dr. Polansky and Dr. James Swindal granted me a dissertation stipend, which has helped me immensely in completing my work in a timely manner, and for giving my dissertation the attention it deserved. I am ever grateful for that.

The second way this project emerged was through an interest in philosophy as a way of life. Although I do not directly reference Pierre Hadot’s *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, or his collected essays in the *Philosophy as a Way of Life* volume, this is where I first saw articulated the possibility of the sublimation of the particularized self. I start with the basic assumption that philosophy, when taken seriously, must inform how we live. This is the driving force behind this project.

I would also like to thank my director, Dr. Michael Harrington, for his advice and guidance. His advice and comments were never pedantic, and always served to temper and strengthen my work.

Last, I thank my wife, Eleanor. She has been a constant inspiration and support throughout the writing and creative process. She reminds me of what self-cultivation means by being an example of it herself.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BC = Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy

BQP = Basic Questions of Philosophy

NE = Nicomachean Ethics

PS = Plato’s Sophist
Preface

Since their publication in the *Gesamtausgabe*, Heidegger’s lectures on Aristotle have received more and more attention. Possible connections between Aristotle’s practical philosophy and Heidegger’s *Being and Time* have been suggested. Heidegger’s apparent appropriation of Aristotle has been questioned. Whatever the case, Aristotle’s influence on Heidegger’s thought is undeniable. As always, scholars draw connections between the two based upon their interpretations of each thinker’s work. More often than not, Heidegger’s interpretations of Aristotle have already influenced the way Heidegger scholars view Aristotle. This sometimes results in an overly Heideggerian version of Aristotle. Or sometimes scholars critique Aristotle on a Heideggerian basis, without having properly understood Aristotle’s thought. While drawing connections between Heidegger and Aristotle is not unwarranted, one must be careful to understand each thinker on his own terms, to the degree that this is possible.

In comparing Heidegger and Aristotle’s thought, I do not intend to reduce one to the other. Efforts are made here to treat each thinker fairly and on his own turf. Having said so, there is an unabashed effort to look at and past the differences in thought between the two. While I will highlight differences between Aristotle’s thought and Heidegger’s, I argue that these differences are not enough to preclude a dialogue between these thinkers. But such arguments are just means toward a greater end.

This project is not an attempt to see how Aristotle may have prefigured Heidegger. The task at hand is to see in what way there is some sort of ‘authenticity’ or self-appropriation in Aristotle’s thought. This theme is not immediately apparent in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and to my knowledge, has received little to no attention. Heidegger
paves the way for such an idea in his lectures on Aristotle’s *Ethics*, but the interpretations offered here will move beyond Heidegger’s interpretations. In doing so, I fully acknowledge the fact that much of what is said here about the possibility of self-appropriation in Aristotle is not explicitly found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, we should see that this idea is not only compatible with Aristotle’s practical thought, but even encouraged by it.

To accomplish this goal, we will compare Aristotle’s concept of *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing, to Heidegger’s concept of authenticity or self-appropriation. More precisely, we will be comparing the flourishing with the authentic life through the lens of the self who might live such a life. Although Aristotle says little about it, he does give us some hints as to his notions of selfhood. This comes primarily in Books VIII and IX of the *Ethics* where he tells us that the self is most *nous*, or mind. I will directly address this idea in the fourth chapter of this project. Until then, we will gather shades of the meaning of the ‘self’ in our discussion of the character excellences. For Heidegger, selfhood is mentioned explicitly in *Being and Time*, and will be addressed as such.

We will come to see that both the authentic life and the life of excellence offer us a way beyond most common concepts of selfhood. Not only this, but we shall also see that these ways of living offer us a way beyond a particularized self, or a self primarily characterized by the ‘me’ or ‘I’. The movement beyond particularization does not, however, utterly leave behind particularization. Rather, it reinforces particularity by raising it to a new meaning. We will see that for both Aristotle and Heidegger, although in different ways, the flourishing or authentic life offers a way for self-appropriation. This self-appropriation is not a process of grabbing hold of and possessing a thing called
‘self’, but rather of freeing the self from objectification in particularity. Both the flourishing and authentic life, then, involve a movement beyond a particularized “me”, toward a universalized self.

The first chapter will introduce us thoroughly to the project by elucidating Aristotle’s concept of excellence, and by addressing Heidegger’s early lectures on this concept. The second chapter will offer a reading of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. It will be shown that authenticity does not entail an existentialist, ‘me versus them’ battle, but rather, a sublimation of the they-self into the being of human being—into care. The third chapter suggests ways of self-appropriation through the particular character virtues Aristotle names. We shall give the most attention there to the virtue of courage, which as a virtue dealing properly with death, will show affinities to Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. The fourth chapter discusses Aristotle’s concept of friendship, and Heidegger’s concept of being-with. We will see here what selfhood is in Aristotle, and open a dialogue between being-with and friendship. The last chapter explores the topic of contemplation in Aristotle, addressing again Heidegger’s early lectures on this topic. We will see how contemplation completes human flourishing, and offers the ultimate venue for a movement beyond the particularized self.
CHAPTER ONE

As the scholarship on Heidegger’s relationship with Aristotle grows, little has been said about the possible connections between authenticity and human flourishing, or happiness.¹ Heidegger himself prepared the way for such connections in his interpretations of Aristotle’s thought. We will explore the possibilities of such a connection through the lens of selfhood. The flourishing and authentic self will guide our comparison of the flourishing and authentic life. First, however, we must understand some of Aristotle’s basic ethical concepts. This chapter, then, will offer us a way into the discussion of the flourishing and authentic life. We will explore just what the flourishing life is for Aristotle by gaining an understanding of some basic ideas in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: the human work or function (ἔργον), character excellence, and prudence (φρόνησις). We will then explore Heidegger’s interpretations of these phenomena. This will prepare us for the next chapter’s discussion of authenticity and authentic selfhood.

**Aristotle’s Basic Ethical Concepts**

Aristotle’s concept of happiness rises or falls with his argument for a human function. Without it, the concept of happiness would be a mere assumption or common notion. That there is a highest human good has already been established.² This good is generally taken to be happiness. Aristotle dislikes straying too far from generally accepted truths. However, philosophy must look for what really is the case, and not what merely appears to be the case. As such, he recognizes that the concept of happiness as the highest good

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¹ Although commentaries have noted this many times, it is worth repeating. Our translation “happiness” hardly captures the richness of *eudaimonia*. I will at times use “human flourishing,” or simply “flourishing.” I will also employ the traditional “happiness.” Either way, we must see in “happiness” more than what is colloquially there. My exegesis will bring to light some of the richness in *eudaimonia*.

must be reasonably supported lest we fall prey to “platitude” (1097b22). Aristotle says the risk of platitude may be dispelled “if we could first ascertain the function of man” (1097b25). Interestingly, Aristotle seems first to assume that there is a human function; all we seek now is what the function is. But, as is well known, he continues as though we have not yet determined that there is any such function for human beings, and that this still needs proving. Why does Aristotle operate this way?

Let us look at the passage in question to see exactly what Aristotle said.

Following the above quoted sentence, Aristotle says:

> For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity [καὶ ὅλως ὃν ἔστιν ἔργον καὶ πρᾶξις], the good and the ‘well’ is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he naturally functionless? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from these? What then can this be? (NE, 1097b25-32)

Before determining what the human function is, Aristotle seems to begin and end this discussion with the assumption that there is a human function. Why begin and end this way? Would it not have been more prudent to start by proving that there is a function? Aristotle begins (and ends) this way because the human function or work is a first principle. It is the first principle of our being human. The human function is a life of activity involving *logos*. Since this is a first principle, it cannot be demonstrated. We must rather assume it or, at best, inductively indicate it. Failing that, the best route to take is a *reductio ad absurdum*. Since we are merely describing the way things are, we use a *reductio* (for those still in doubt) to show how absurd it would be not to accept that this is how things are.
Let us first be sure about the meaning of *ergon* in this passage. As C.D.C. Reeve has shown, Aristotle identifies the function of something with what that thing is, or its essence.\(^1\) A vase, for example, is a vessel made for holding liquid. In order to fulfill this end, the vase must function or work as a vase. If the vase is broken, it does not work or fulfill its function. As Aristotle would have said, it is then a vase only nominally.\(^2\) That is, we still call it a vase, but it is one that does not work properly so that it is “not much of a vase,” or “not as much a vase as that one which works.” It is quite literally out of order. It does not work, and this means it cannot fulfill its end. So, as Reeve says, “the essence is function as act; the end is function as result.”\(^3\)

This need not mean, as has been suggested, that whatever has a function must be an instrument.\(^4\) Although being an instrument may be a sufficient condition for having a function, it is not a necessary condition. It is true that the vase has a function, and that it is an instrument, but its instrumentality is granted it only on the condition that it has a function. What such an objection seems to fear is that human being, if it is to have a function, must be viewed as an *object* designed for some use. But there need be no fear of intelligent design or the objectification of human beings. If the function is most what a thing is, i.e., the activity\(^5\) of the essence, and the function is also the end, then a thing fulfilling its function is a thing being itself.

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2 Reeve, *Practices*, 123. As quoted in Reeve, from Aristotle’s *Meteorologica*, “What anything is is defined by its function: a thing really is what it is when it can perform its function, for example when an eye can see. When something cannot perform its function, it is that thing in name only, like a dead eye or one made of stone” (309a10-12).
5 Joe Sach’s rendering of *energeia* as “being-at-work” fits this context in a pronounced way.
As has already been suggested, Aristotle’s argument is not so much for a human function as it is to a human function. That is, Aristotle cannot demonstrate the human function, but can only indicate it. He can argue that there is a human function only upon the basis of the sorts of things for which the human function allows. Notice that his examples are limited to the human realm. As Rachel Barney notes, “The builder and the shoemaker are human beings, identified qua practitioners of a particular craft [technē].”\(^6\) While Aristotle adds to his human examples “all things that have a function or activity,” he mentions none of these other things explicitly. Aristotle keeps the examples in the human realm to gear us to accept the human function—a function which allows for all of these particular human crafts—more easily than we otherwise might.

Aristotle also keeps his examples in the human realm by his mention of body parts. While some of the body parts Aristotle mentions need not be human body parts, it is likely that Aristotle intended us to think this way, especially with his mention of the hand.\(^7\) There is no danger here of the fallacy of composition.\(^8\) Aristotle does not say that the human as a whole must have a function since the human’s body parts have functions. First, this would restrict the human function to something biological, which it clearly is not. Moreover, Aristotle asks whether the human has a function similar to these organs, but apart (παρά) from them.\(^9\) Aristotle is not arguing from parts to whole, but is rather suggesting a likeness between the two. That is, he does not say that there is a function of the human being because the body parts have functions. Rather, the human seems to have

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\(^6\) See Barney, “Aristotle’s Argument,” 297. While Barney recognizes this as well, her recognition is to a different end.
\(^7\) Barney, “Aristotle’s Argument,” 297. Barney cites Aristotle as having said that the hand is “distinctively a human part.”
\(^8\) Contra David Bostock’s suggestion in Aristotle’s Ethics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16.
\(^9\) Reeve treats this para as “over and above.” See Practices, 124.
a function as do the parts of the body. Neither is the argument properly an argument from analogy. This would lead us to believe that the argument is function as an induction, which, as we shall see below, is not the case.

In fact, the whole argument seems to be a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*. As Reeve states, it “is not so much a direct argument that human beings have a function as an indirect one, which relies on the implausibility of the view that they lack a function.”\(^{10}\) This is indicated by Aristotle’s question, “is [the human being] naturally functionless \([\alphaργόν]\)?” Barney notes that the use of *argon* is etymologically *a*-ergos, a standard term of disparagement denoting idleness or laziness. She goes on:

On the one hand, Aristotle is simply specifying the logical alternative to his proposal that human beings have a natural function; but on the other he is using the pejorative connotations of *argos* to suggest, with a strong hint of *reductio*, that this would amount to claiming that human beings are by nature lazy or *unemployed*. That is, he suggests that the rival view is committed to a degrading conception of human nature.\(^{11}\)

While this is a plausible interpretation, there is something more than a mere rhetorical device at play. Aristotle meant *argos* to suggest more than “lazy,” “unemployed,” or even a degraded human nature. Aristotle is urging us to see that a functionless human being is not properly a human being. A functionless human being is a being without the human essence. Such a being would not be human. Even if such a being were physically identical to the human being, we could not call it human without that which makes it specifically human.

What exactly is the human function? Aristotle arrives at the answer by a process of elimination. Aristotle’s elimination rests on the assumption that in searching for the human function we are searching for a kind of life (1097b30-1098a5). The function


\(^{11}\) Barney, “Aristotle’s Argument,” 308.
cannot be mere nutrition, because even plants have this kind of life. The function cannot be mere perception, because even the horse and ox have perception. Aristotle is searching for what is peculiar to human beings. He concludes that it must be “an active life of the element that has a rational principle [πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγου ἔχοντος]” (1098a3-4).

Aristotle has established that human life, simply speaking, is not merely nutritive or perceptive. He has not yet stated the nature of this life having *logos*. Aristotle adds parenthetically that this *logos*, or rational principle, has two parts: “one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to *logos* [ὡς ἐπιπειθές λόγῳ], the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought” (1098a4-5). This tells us that we need not take the rational principle to mean something strictly theoretical; it is simply an active life of *logos* (1098a6).

The typical translations of *logos* as “reason” or “rational principle” are not to be taken, in this context, as treating *logos* as something prestigious or honorific.\(^\text{12}\) The human function, or the active life involving reason, is simply what makes specifically human living possible. It is what distinguishes us from plants and other animals, but it is also what produces the rich array of human activity. This would include our crafts, arts, and emotions; in short, anything specifically human.\(^\text{13}\) There is also textual evidence that this is the case. It is noteworthy that Aristotle again uses an example from the human

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\(^{12}\) This interpretation, and largely my interpretation of the function argument, comes from Ronald Polansky’s lecture notes on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2009.

\(^{13}\) Even something as basic as using a bathroom and toilet would fit into this frame. Our sexuality, with all its variations and fantasies, would also be made possible by *logos*, or the human function. One may take as a sign the fact that someone could either be stimulated or turned off by more or less “animal” sexual behavior (implying that human sex is different). This answers Sarah Broadie’s objection in *Ethics With Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). She claims that the function argument “throws into the background aspects of human nature not capable of standing up for themselves in logical argument, since that is not their way. Besides being rational, we are spiritual beings, responsive to beauty, imaginatively creative, capable of humour, pride and compassion…” (36). Broadie would be correct only if we were to restrict *logos* or “reason” to lofty rational activity.
realm when pushing us toward a definition of the human good. The function of the lyre-player is to play the lyre, of a good lyre-player to do so well (1098a11-12). Likewise, the function of the human being is to be human, and of a good human being to be excellent. The human good turns out to be an “activity of the soul in conformity with excellence,” but this activity of the soul will “imply the rational principle” (1098a13-15). The rational principle is implied because it is what allows for the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.

Moreover, Aristotle has already told us that the function of man is activity of the soul in accordance with, or not without (ἄνευ λόγου), a rational principle (1098a8). This should make clear that we are not to restrict logos here to something lofty, although it will also encompass discursive theoretical activity. If it were activity of the soul without logos, or alogos, then we would not have something peculiar to human being.

Aside from textual evidence, we may also consider the richness and array of meanings of the word logos. This is not to say that logos ought not here be translated as “reason” or “rational principle.” Rather, we must keep in mind that these translations cannot, in this context, be restricted to a lofty realm. I suggest that we should bear in mind the various meanings of logos when considering the human function.14 This can help us avoid the narrowing down of “reason” or “rationality.” For example, Sarah Broadie finds the “rational animal” definition problematic, since there are other animals exhibiting some degree of rationality.15 But with a broader interpretation of logos, this is

14 For starters: word, statement, assertion, speech, language, discourse, story, fable, narrative, position, ratio, thought, reason, and principle.
not a problem. The human being is the being having logos, or reason, speech, or reasoned speech. The human being has logos as its function, and this allows for all the particularly human things we do. We do not know yet of any other animal that could be said to have logos, construed in this way, as its function. For other animals exhibiting rational activity, their degree of rationality is not to be included in something as rich, varied, and particular as logos.

From Function to Flourishing

We have seen that the fulfillment of the human function is the activity of the soul—an activity implying, or not without, reason—in accordance with excellence. Aristotle also adds that this activity must run its course in a complete life (1098a17), since it would be strange to consider a short life to be flourishing. What constitutes a short life? Aristotle says, “one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy” (1098a18-19). “One day” seems to serve as a limit principle. That is, it seems absurd to think of someone’s happiness, or flourishing and cultivation, being encompassed in only one day. Aristotle then leads us into generality with “a short time.” While one day seems an almost certain candidate for the impossibility of human flourishing, it is difficult, or even impossible, to say just how long is needed. For this, one must turn to experience. Perhaps some can achieve a good life in a shorter time than others, but what exactly too short a

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16 None of this is to say that ‘reason’ as a translation is insufficient. It is difficult, and possibly faulty, to stray from this translation of logos in an Aristotelian context. But even reason can be broadly construed. Reason extends over into religious ritual, i.e., it must follow a reasonable course, even if this kind of reasoning plays out in its own closed circuit of meaning. Emotions, too, can be displayed appropriately, or have the proper context. It may be strange (unreasonable), for example, to see someone crying while blowing out candles on a birthday cake.

17 This is a prime instance of the translation of eudaimonia as “happiness” being particularly troublesome. Using happiness colloquially, we could imagine someone being happy—expressing emotions of pleasure, joy, and perhaps contentment—for one day. The reader should be reminded that this conception of the word does not encompass Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia.
time is we cannot set down without jeopardizing our account’s integrity. This is corroborated by Aristotle’s following proviso:

Let this serve as an outline of the good; for we must presumably first sketch it roughly, and then later fill in the details...And we must also remember what has been said before, and not look for precision in all things alike, but in each class of things such precision as accords with the subject-matter, and so much as is appropriate to the inquiry. (1098a20-29)

Aristotle is recalling the prefatory remarks of chapter three that we must not seek the same amount of precision in all inquiries. It is the mark of someone experienced and thoughtful that she will not demand more precision than is necessary for the inquiry. This is especially the case in a practical science, which must, as any science, accord with its subject-matter (ὑποκειμένην ὑλήν). Here, the subject matter is concrete living, with all its diversity of circumstances and situations. Therefore, we cannot pretend to predetermine the entire realm of ethics.

This proviso is also applicable to the human function argument itself; for, it too was part of the outline of the good. Aristotle continues:

Nor must we demand the cause in all matters alike; it is enough in some cases that the fact [τὸ ὅτι] be well established, as in the case of the first principles; the fact is a primary thing or first principle [ἀρχή]. Now of first principles we see some by induction, some by perception, some by a certain habituation and others too in other ways. But each set of principles we must try to investigate in the natural way [ἡ περιφέρεσιν], and we must take pains to determine them correctly, since they have a great influence on what follows. For the beginning [ἀρχή] is thought to be more than half of the whole, and many of the questions we ask are cleared up by it. (1098a33-b8)

For Aristotle, establishing the human function is pointing to the fact, the this, of human being. The human function, as the process of elimination established, cannot be this (the nutritive life), or this (the life of mere perception), but logos: reason, speech, word, argument, rationality, etc. How did Aristotle arrive at the human function? Was it
induction, perception, habituation, or in some other way? We cannot look at the argument as mere induction, lest we be left with an atrocious one.\textsuperscript{18} The argument seems to take the form of an induction, but it really is a pointing to things we perceive to be the facts. It points out things we simply see to be the case, and things about which we are habituated to think in certain ways. The cobbler has the work or task of making shoes, and the good cobbler does this well. Need we move past our day-to-day experience and observations to make this point? The point, in fact, is made by pointing to \textit{this}, i.e., what is all around us—not only what we perceive using senses, but all the things to which we are culturally and socially habituated. We then shift to the thought that the human being, upon observation, similarly seems to have an \textit{ergon}, something that is peculiar to her.

\textbf{Virtue}

Aristotle begins his inquiry into excellence with a sharp distinction. There are intellectual (\textit{διανοητικάς}) excellences, and character (\textit{ηθικάς}) excellences (1103a4-5). Philosophic wisdom (\textit{σοφία}) and practical wisdom, or prudence (\textit{φρόνησις}), are examples of intellectual excellences, while temperance and liberality are examples of character excellences. “For in speaking of a man’s character we do not say that he is wise or has understanding but that he is good-tempered or temperate; yet we praise the wise man also with respect to his state; and of states we call those which merit praise excellences” (1103a7-10). Let us notice Aristotle’s use of “we say” (\textit{λέγομεν}) and “we praise” (\textit{ἐπαινοῦμεν}). Aristotle does not want to stray far from what we generally accept to be

\textsuperscript{18} Cf. Barney’s comments in “Aristotle’s Argument”. If it is read as an induction, Barney claims it may be Aristotle’s “worst induction ever” (296). She goes on to say, “But on closer examination, it seems unlikely that an induction is really intended here at all. If it were, we would expect Aristotle to cite uncontroversially function-bearing objects, such as tools and other [artifacts]; or perhaps beings relevantly \textit{like} human beings, such as other animals and natural substances. In fact, he does neither” (296). This should also refute the misconception of the argument as one of analogy.
the case. Whatever we say here in practical science must not clash with the way things are (1098b9-11). If what we say clashes with experience or the best opinions, then our practical science begins to lose credibility. If we are to maintain credibility, our account must tally with our experiences and the way human beings generally are.

Aristotle then says that intellectual excellence comes about by teaching, and character excellence through habit. Aristotle evokes the etymology of “character” to reinforce this idea. Ἐθικῆ, character, is rooted in ethos, or habit (1103a14-19). Thus, we cannot be born with character excellence, but it must be developed. If character excellence were by nature, we could never habituate ourselves to act otherwise than we do, in the same way that stones cannot be habituated to move upward. Instead, says Aristotle, we are “adapted by nature to receive [character excellence], and are made perfect by habit.” We see again that Aristotle’s ethics involves practice. It is directly situated in the world of action.

Aristotle begins the second chapter of Book II in the way that we might expect, given what he has already said about excellence.

Since, then, the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others (for we are inquiring not in order to know what excellence is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use), we must examine the nature of actions, namely how we ought to do them; for these determine also the nature of the states that are produced (1103b27-31).

Aristotle does not wish merely to talk about excellence, or merely even to determine what it is. We will talk about excellence and figure out what it is with the goal of becoming good. Practical science, for Aristotle, is directly practical, i.e., oriented toward actions (πράξεις). Our actions produce our dispositions, and excellence will be determined to be a disposition (ἕξις). Aristotle has already said in chapter one of Book II, “excellences we
get by exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well” (1103a31-32). Our practical science is directed toward action because action is both the goal (becoming good) and the sphere in which human excellence plays out. Aristotle continues:

But this must be agreed upon beforehand, that the whole account of matters of conduct must be given in outline and not precisely, as we said at the very beginning that the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity, any more than matters of health. The general account being of this nature, the account of particular cases is yet more lacking in exactness; for they do not fall under any art or set of precepts, but the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion. (1104a1-8)

This strong reminder of the preface given in the third chapter of Book I, says Aristotle, must be born in mind, and it must be assumed and agreed upon from the very beginning. Aristotle again insists that we cannot give a perfect account when we are dealing with matters of action. Ultimately, it comes down to the agents (πράττοντας) to survey and consider (σκοπεῖν) what to do according to the given moment (καιρόν).

How is this to happen? Aristotle tells us, before the above quoted proviso, that right reason (ὀρθὸς λόγος) is the standard for action (1103b33). That this is the case must be assumed, and Aristotle will later tell us what this is and how it relates to other excellences. He has already told us that character is developed through habit. Habit may seem to clash with right reason, since habit (good or bad) is often taken to be what is done without thinking. However, Aristotle has not said that we ought to act according to right reasoning, but rather to right reason. We need not think through every situation as it is given to us, nor should we consider habits to be originally thoughtless, especially good habits. We may habituate ourselves to exercise or healthy eating, but this initially

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19 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe, commentary by Sarah Broadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 297. Sarah Broadie argues, “‘Right reason’ is misleading if it invites the interpretation ‘right reasoning’, since ‘logos’ here means, as often, a product of reasoning such as a formula or articulate declaration.”
may take much planning and work. We would thus be acting out of habits originally informed by right reason and hard work. So, acting according to right reason is not in conflict with acting out of habit, since the excellent habit may originally be informed by reason.

Yet, there may be occasions when our generalized ethical reflections will not inform us of what to do. This is where the agent must consider what is appropriate. This does not mean that the agent will be completely uninformed or at a loss. Habituation to certain types of action (and here we think particularly of good action) is always with us. We may nevertheless need to consider what is appropriate in the given moment. This is not agential relativism. One can act appropriately, as the moment demands, while acting in accordance with one’s general principles. It is also possible that one’s principles cannot cover the severity of a situation, and one must adapt accordingly. Here, this adaptation will involve surveying and considering the situation, and acting accordingly.²⁰

As we come closer to the definition of excellence, Aristotle tells us we must consider pleasure and pain along with excellence. “For [character] excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of pain that we abstain from noble ones” (1104b9-11). If actions are accompanied by pleasures and pains, and we do bad things because they are pleasurable, and abstain from good things because they pain us, then it is difficult to be excellent. But Aristotle tells us more:

…it is by reason of pleasures and pains that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these—either the pleasures and pains they ought not or when they ought not or as they ought not, or by going wrong in one of the other similar ways that reason can distinguish. (1104b21-24)

²⁰I will argue in more detail against the relativism claim when dealing with the doctrine of the mean.
The great difficulty lies in perceiving when, where, and in what ways to experience pleasures and pains. One can feel pain and pleasure rightly or wrongly, according to Aristotle, and this “has no small effect on our actions” (1105a6-7). The difficulty of ethics is not attempting to adhere to the categorical imperative, but being able to act appropriately.

How is it that we become excellent by doing excellent things? Does this not mean we are already excellent? It does not, and Aristotle answers this difficulty by highlighting a distinction in our experience. It is possible for one to do a just act while not being a just person. This is not an uncommon occurrence. It is quite possible for someone who is typically stingy to give a generous gift. The act is a generous one, but this is not sufficient evidence that the person is generous. He must still prove himself to be generous. Aristotle offers a formula for the truly excellent person and the acts proceeding from this excellence. The agent must have knowledge, he must choose the acts for their own sake, and his action “must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character” (1105a31-b1). Just as someone may write grammatically without knowledge of grammar, i.e. by accident, so too may someone do a just, temperate, or liberal act without doing it as or in the way (ὡς) the excellent person would. The conditions Aristotle sets forth coincide with the idea that character virtue comes to be from habit. The knowledge could come from experience or thought. The choice need not happen with every act. On the contrary, one could choose to do just things, and then become habituated to doing just things. A firm and unchangeable character is created by habitual action.

At the start of chapter five, Aristotle says excellence is one of three things: emotion (πάθη), capacity (δύναµις), or a disposition. If we see these as kinds, they are
respectively, acts, undeveloped powers for acts, and developed powers for acts. Since we are doing practical science, and the goal is action, it is likely that this is why Aristotle chooses these three things for his process of elimination.\textsuperscript{21} Since we are not called good based upon emotion or passion, this cannot be the locus of excellence (1105b30). We are not good or bad, or praised or blamed, simply because we have the capacity to feel certain ways, so neither can capacity be the home of excellence (1106a7-10). The only option is that excellence is a disposition.

Virtue and the Mean

Aristotle will soon reveal to us the definition of virtue or excellence. Aristotle appeals again to the human function to let us know that excellence makes human beings good by making the work or function of human beings good. How does excellence make human beings good? His answer is famous and controversial.

In everything that is continuous and divisible it is possible to take more, less, or an equal amount, and that either in terms of the thing itself or relatively to us \([\eta \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron \tau\omicron \alpha\rho\alpha\gamma\mu\alpha \eta \pi\rho\omicron \odh\mu\alpha\varsigma]\); and the equal is an intermediate \([\mu\varepsilon\sigma\omicron\nu]\) between excess and defect. By the intermediate in the object I mean that which is equidistant from each of the extremes, which is one and the same for all...by the intermediate relatively to us that which is neither too much nor too little—and this is not one, nor the same for all. (1106a25-33)

I suggest, along with Leslie Brown, we should understand “relatively to us” as “relative to the situation,” rather than relative to the particular agent.\textsuperscript{22} Although there is relativity here, there is not relativism. Aristotle does not mean that it is up to each person to decide what is excellent and what is not, or that what is decided to be excellent will be

\textsuperscript{21} Broadie says otherwise in her commentary. “[Aristotle] relies on his audience to remember that excellence in general belongs in the category Quality,” and the three things named by Aristotle are three of four subdivisions of Quality (301).

something different for each person. While the agent may need to decide what is appropriate in a given situation, the decision of the excellent person will be one informed by reason, not whim or wish—and it is the excellent person who sets the standard.

There is no doubt that ethical decisions play out in varied situations, demanding different courses of action. However, the relativity involved here is not that which is relative to the agent, but what is relative to the situation. As Brown says, “the mean is not relative to agents over and above the situation.”

Different situations, it is clear, will demand different actions. Thus, the temperate action in one situation will perhaps look different from the temperate action in another. This does not mean, however, that you or I have arbitrarily determined what temperance is (qua excellence). This is because the standard of excellence is in place. Temperance may play out differently for me than for you because we are situated differently, or disposed differently to different feelings or pleasures. What this means is that our temperate actions may look different (or they may look quite similar), but what temperance is as a character excellence is determined by the way the temperate person is temperate. This provides a limit principle.

Aristotle’s concept of the mean is not strictly quantitative, and thus is not tantamount to moderation. We can say that someone not only drank too much, but also

23 Section II of Brown’s article deals well with various arguments claiming Aristotle promotes agent relativism (81-86).
24 Brown, “Mean,” 80. “Accordingly we have the famous definition of excellence of character (NE 1106b36) as a disposition to choose, being in a mean state (a mesotes) which is mean relative to us, determined by reason, i.e. by that reason by which the phronimos, the person of practical wisdom, would determine it.”
25 While Brown does well to make this point (86), I would like here to expand upon it.
26 In an Aristotelian context, I suppose we could look to an actual temperate person, or the ideal of a temperate person based upon someone who approximates temperance.
too quickly, or too soon, or not in the right way. Moderation seems to be aimed at an arithmetical number (e.g. never drink more than two beers per day), while the mean state goes for what is appropriate. For example, we might consider how one approaches beer and feels about it, how much to drink in this setting, how much delight one takes in it as opposed, say, to philosophical discussion, etc. Moreover, we see here that this example does not show us agential relativism, but relativity to the situation.

What Excellence Is

We now arrive at the complete definition of excellence. We should notice that this definition comes after Aristotle reinforces the difficulty of excellence. We can go wrong in many ways, but we can be good only in one way (1106b35). In other words, it is easy not to hit the mark of excellence. Having said so, Aristotle now defines excellence.

Excellence, then, is a state concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. (1106b36-1107a2)

This makes clear the point made earlier. That excellence lies in a mean relative to us does not make excellence determinable by just anyone. The phronimos, or practically wise person, determines just what this mean is. Excellence relates to two extremes of vice. For example, rashness (the extreme) is less opposed to courage (the mean) than is cowardice (the deficiency). Aristotle names two reasons for this phenomenon. First, it seems to be the thing itself that gives rise to this type of opposition. Second, the opposition is based upon us, “for the things to which we ourselves more naturally tend seem more contrary to the intermediate” (1109a1-15). The example given for the first is rashness, which is least opposed to courage. It appears rashness itself tends more toward courage than cowardice.
The example for the second is that we more naturally tend toward pleasures, so self-indulgence is more contrary to temperance than insensibility (1109a4-19).

But since hitting the intermediate in action is so difficult, Aristotle suggests that we must “take the least of the evils” and aim for the vice that is less opposed to the virtue. We do this in order to come closer to the intermediate “by drawing well away from error” (1109a33-b6). Aristotle’s ethics, though difficult, tends to be forgiving. If I am normally cowardly, I may want to aim at a rash action here and there in order to train myself toward courage. I do so not to become habituated to rashness, but in order to push myself more in the direction of courage. Once I do the rash action(s), I may become more inclined to see the goodness and worth of doing things courageously. This is not inconsistent with Aristotle’s system, for at least two reasons. First, a rash action will not make a rash person, just as a just action will not make a just person. Moreover, as Aristotle says, hitting the mean is difficult. For example:

…it is not easy to determine both how and with whom and on what provocation and how long one should be angry; for we too sometimes praise those who fall short and call them good-tempered, but sometimes we praise those who get angry and call them manly. The man, however who deviates little from goodness is not blamed, whether he do so in the direction of the more or of the less, but only the man who deviates more widely. (1109b14-20)

We do not blame the one who strays only a little from the good because it is often difficult to tell just what motivates an action (or reaction), and in just what way the (re)action should have taken place. For instance, anger seems the proper reaction when one suffers a grave injustice. Yet even here we would not want to prescribe anger as the proper reaction. It rather seems to tally with experience, and we would not blame someone for being angry in this sort of situation.
If we are looking for criteria upon which we can confidently place blame or not, we are out of luck.

But up to what point and to what extent a man must deviate before he becomes blameworthy is not easy to determine by reasoning, any more than anything else that is perceived by the senses; such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception. (1109b20-23)

We can only be dissatisfied by this if we forget our position—we are thinkers reflecting upon matters of practical science. If we honestly reflect upon the way of experience, we see that Aristotle is prudent to say what he said. But what does it mean to say, “the decision rests with perception” (ἐν τῇ αἰσθήσει ἡ κρίσις)? To say that our judgment rests with perception is to say perception judges. The one who strays far from the good, says Aristotle, does not fail to be noticed (1109b20). Here, it is as though we simply perceive the bad action; our judgment seems to require little to no thought. We just see that the action was a bad one. While not all actions can be judged in such a way as this, this seeing will play no small part. The seeing is an informed seeing; it is informed by logos, and the practical wisdom of the one seeing. Thus, even when there is a more obvious (thoughtful) reflection upon the nature of an action, the judgment depends upon what was seen at the time and place, and must take into consideration all of the circumstances.

Phronēsis

There is still one necessary type of virtue to discuss before we address Heidegger’s appropriation of Aristotle. Character excellence is not possible without reason, since choice may inform how we act, and choice involves deliberation. It is phronēsis that informs choice. The one excellent in character is prudent, or practically wise.28 We already saw the practically wise person mentioned in Book II. The phronimos sets the

28 I will hereafter use “prudent,” “practically wise” and their variations interchangeably.
standard of excellence. By her practical wisdom, the prudent person establishes the mean disposition, which is excellence.

It is not enough for us to know what the practically wise person does, but we must also know what practical wisdom is. Aristotle tells us what practical wisdom is in the fifth chapter of Book VI. What is noteworthy in Aristotle’s account is that it begins not with a definition of practical wisdom, but by “considering who are the persons we credit with it” (1140a24-25). Since practical wisdom deals with particular actions, it will be difficult to grasp it without pointing to how it plays out. Therefore, perhaps the best way to find out what prudence is, is to see it in action. We must look at prudence embodied since it is found only within practical situations.

First, we see that the practically wise person deliberates well about what is good for him. This good is not particular, but refers to the good life as a whole (1140a25-29). We must also understand that one deliberates neither about necessary things, nor about impossibilities. Thus, practical wisdom is not knowledge, since the objects of knowledge are necessary (cannot be otherwise). Practical wisdom is also not art because art deals with making and practical wisdom with action (making having its end outside itself in the product, and acting having its end in itself). What is left is “that [practical wisdom] is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man [ἐξιν ἀληθῆ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικὴν περὶ τὰ ἁνθρώπῳ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ]” (1140b4-5). Notice Aristotle’s phrase, “true and reasoned state.” Practical wisdom will not only reach the truth, but it is itself true. Practical wisdom is a disposition operating truthfully—not in the sense of “honestly,” but in the sense that it is within truth. Practical wisdom operates within truth—a truth established according to logos or reason—and
from that locus has the capacity to act with regard to good and bad things. The spatial language employed here (in, within) is akin to saying someone is in love. The person in love acts *out of* love. The *phronimos* acts from within and out of truth.

Aristotle notes that temperance (σωφροσύνη) is called by its name because it saves or preserves (σῴζει) *phronēsis*. Temperance is closely linked with practical wisdom because the practically wise person is not distracted by pleasure and pain.

For the principles of the things that are done consist in that for the sake of which they are to be done; but the man who has been ruined by pleasure and pain forthwith fails to see any such principle—to see that for the sake of this or because of this he ought to choose and do whatever he chooses and does; for vice is destructive of the principle. (1140b15-19)

Temperance preserves practical wisdom since it allows the practically wise person to make good judgments about what is good in action. But there must be a necessary circularity at play here. Practical wisdom, as necessary for the character virtues, must also in some sense preserve temperance. A lack of distraction from pleasure and pain provides an easier basis upon which to make good decisions about the good life. Good decisions made about the good life will likely increase security from the distraction of pleasures and pain. Each logically and practically entails the other.

There is, however, no excellence in practical wisdom (1140b23). One either is or is not practically wise. If one is practically wise, then this is already good or excellent (practical wisdom is, after all, an intellectual virtue). As Broadie explains, “one can say ‘a good doctor’ etc., but not ‘a good wise person’ (as if there could be bad ones).”

Moreover, practical wisdom, says Aristotle, cannot be forgotten as specifically reasoned states can be. The linguist, through lack of practice of a foreign language, may forget some of the rules, vocabulary, or syntax of that language. One cannot, on the other hand,

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29 Broadie, 369.
forget the disposition allowing for choosing good action. Practical wisdom is simply there when one has it. One cannot forget how to make good decisions about the good life. One may be able to shirk it or ignore it willfully, but one cannot forget it.

**Heidegger’s Interpretation of Aristotle’s Ethics**

Three years before the publication of *Being and Time*, in the summer semester of 1924, Heidegger gave a lecture series that we now see published under the title, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*.\(^ {30} \) The first half of this text deals broadly with Aristotle’s work; key concepts from the *Rhetoric*, *Politics*, *Metaphysics*, and *Nicomachean Ethics* are all included in Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle. Robert D. Metcalf and Mark B. Tanzer, in the translator’s preface to the English edition of this lecture series, suggest that Heidegger’s Marburg lectures, of which *Basic Concepts* was part, “typically examined historical figures in the context of the main issues treated in *Being and Time*.”\(^ {31} \) Moreover, Metcalf and Tanzer suggest that the Marburg lectures involve traditional philosophical interpretations reworked through the lens and determination of phenomenology, and these reworked interpretations inform the development of Heidegger’s key concepts in *Being and Time*.\(^ {32} \) While I do not intend to demonstrate this latter point, this section will prepare us for the later discussion of how Aristotle may have some version of authenticity already present in his formulation of the good life.

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\(^ {30} \) Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 18 (Frankfurt Am Main: Vittorio Klostermann).


\(^ {32} \) Translator’s Preface, xi.
Heidegger and the Human *Ergon*

Let us take a look at Heidegger’s initial interpretations of Aristotle’s ethical thought.

“Aristotle defines the [Dasein] of human beings as a ζωή πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγου ἐχοντος, ‘a life [Leben], specifically one that is πρακτική, of such a being as has language [Sprache]’” (BC, 31). Aristotle’s definition here comes from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1098a3-4). Heidegger translates logos as language for the remainder of the lecture. This allows for a broad, ontological interpretation of logos. Heidegger recognizes that the zoê praktikê is determined as psychês energeia—that is, as Aristotle says, the practical life directed toward happiness is an activity of the soul—and so sets out to interpret these key concepts in tandem.

Heidegger says, “ἐνέργεια is perhaps the most fundamental being-character [Seinscharakter] in Aristotle’s doctrine of being.” Heidegger takes note also of energeia’s root word, ergon. Heidegger sees the human ergon as a “definite limitation” of human being—it is the “genuine achievement [eigentliche Verrichtung]” or “concern [Besorge].” The peras of being is constituted by the agathon. From this, we are led to eudaimonia as the telos of human being, “to the determination of that which beings with the character of life [Lebens] carry within themselves as their basic possibility [Grundmöglichkeit].” At first sight, we notice the inaccuracy of calling eudaimonia a determination of beings with the character of life. Aristotle does not see humans as merely having life, but also and essentially as having logos. But Heidegger goes on to say:

Life is (1) a way of being characterized by its being-in-a-world [Sein-in-einer-Welt] and (2) a being for whom, in its being as such, this very being is a question, a being that is concerned with its being [das um sein Sein besorgt ist]. The genuine [eigene] being of life is posited in a certain way in its ἔργον as τέλος.
Aristotle seeks basic possibilities within this concrete possibility of [Dasein], according to which every concrete [Dasein] decides itself. We designate as existence [Existenz] the ultimate basic possibility in which [Dasein] genuinely is [in Der Dasein eigentlich ist]. (BC, 31)

For Heidegger, the only sort of being for whom being is a question is Dasein. A similar formulation becomes a sort of definition of Dasein in Being and Time. Being-in-the-world is also characteristic of, and peculiar to, Dasein. In short, the only sort of being who could have life as he here characterizes it is a human being. So while Heidegger’s talk of “life” may not be ideal in the above context, it seems what Heidegger has in mind is a distinctly human life. Heidegger goes on to claim that Aristotle designates the life of the polis, “being-in-the-πόλις,” as the genuine life of human beings. Human beings have logos (speech), and this means that, as speaking, human beings are with-one-another. Thus, Heidegger calls “being-with-one-another” a fundamental character of human being-there, determined by having logos (BC, 32).

We notice here many future key concepts for Being and Time. We are not here concerned with what influence these lectures on Aristotle may have had on Being and Time. Rather, we notice that Heidegger uses the language from Being and Time to interpret Aristotle. We want eventually to know what significance this may have for Aristotle’s thought. We can say for now that Heidegger saw the human function as the “authentic carrying-out [eigentliche Verrichtung]” of human being. The human function is where human being comes into its own [eigen]. The human function gives human being its own being. It is the concern (Besorgen) of human being, and that which gives rise to the human way of being-in-the-world.

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We have already seen at least a hint that Heidegger’s interpretation of *logos* is broad. He goes on to say:

For Aristotle, the disclosedness [*Erscholssenheit*] of the being of the world has its genuine [*eigentliche*] basic possibility in λόγος, in the sense that, in λόγος, what is living-in-a-world appropriates the world, has it there, and genuinely is and moves in this having-it-there. (*BC*, 37)

Here, Heidegger understands *logos* as what makes possible a disclosure of the world in its being. We must remember that, for Heidegger, the act of disclosure is not primarily a process of reason. To “disclose” is a technical term Heidegger uses to indicate the pre-theoretical or pre-thematic way in which we move about in our world. The world in which I am situated is disclosed to me to some degree as a world already having meaning for me—there is some context in which I find myself. Disclosure is the mode in which the world is laid open or already has been laid open for me (*B&T*, 105). I do not thematically recognize the desk by which I work while I work, yet it is part of the work-world disclosed to me. So, the being that lives-in-the-world (and here we can understand “being-in-the-world” for “living-in-the-world” based upon the above definition of life) has its world in a meaningful way through disclosure. Heidegger interprets *logos* as something that allows for basic ways of human being in the world. We may see room here for a similar interpretation of the human function argument to the one already discussed in our section on Aristotle. *Logos*, as the genuine possibility for disclosure, would allow for theoretical disclosure, in addition to pre-theoretical disclosure.

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34 *Being and Time*, 105. Disclosure “never means anything like ‘to obtain indirectly by inference.’”
35 See Heidegger’s discussion of disclosure in relation to understanding and meaning, 193.
Heidegger and the Good

Heidegger’s lectures are peppered with his interpretations of the good. However, we should here focus on Heidegger’s discussion of the good in the context of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Heidegger says:

The being of human beings is determined as concern [*Besorgen*]; every care [*Sorgen*] as concern has a definite end, a τέλος. Insofar as the being of human beings is determined through πράξις, every πράξις has a τέλος; insofar as the τέλος of every πράξις, as πέρας, is ἄγαθόν, ἄγαθόν is the genuine [eigentliche] *being-character of human beings*. The ἄγαθόν is a determination of the being of human beings in the world. (BC, 46)

It is care *as* concern that is aimed toward an end. The good is indeed the end of every action. However, as Aristotle states at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the good is also the end of every choice, inquiry, and art. Heidegger does indeed go on to talk about the agathon in technē. Perhaps Heidegger’s translation and interpretation of the first sentence of the *Nicomachean Ethics* will shed some light on his conception of the good.

It appears that every τέχνη (knowing-one’s-way-around [*Sichauskennen*] something, in a definite mode of concern; the shoemaker understands how one makes a shoe, he knows his way around in it), every knowing-one’s-way in a concern, every μέθοδος, every pursuing-of-a-matter, being-on-the-way after a matter (yet again, a mode of being-oriented, a knowing-one’s-way-around)—in the same way, the concern and the occupying oneself with something that is to be settled, that is to be brought to an end through concern—all these modes of knowing-one’s-way-around and of concern about something, appear to be after some good. (BC, 47)

First, Heidegger’s parenthetic interpretation of technē is seemingly inadequate.36 If I am the working artist, I am unquestionably in a definite mode of concern. I concern myself with the artwork in progress. But this mode of concern is not simply a knowing-my-way-

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around the work, or a mere “know-how in taking care of something.” I can know my way around a city, a building, or a textbook. None of this makes me an artist. I can have practical know-how in taking care of my health, but this does not make me a nutritionist or doctor. Moreover, Heidegger does not even mention Aristotle’s definition of technē, “a state of capacity to make, involving a true course of reasoning” (1140a9-10). Heidegger’s interpretation of choice—“the concern and the occupying oneself with something that is to be settled”—seems no better. To bring something to an end through concern could just as well fit his interpretation of technē. The artist is concerned with the eventual product, but the artist need not be making any real choices about it. Bringing something to an end through concern does not necessitate deliberate desire. Let us see how properly to view Heidegger’s interpretation.

Francisco J. Gonzalez says, “techne becomes the sole and guiding perspective in Heidegger’s account of the agathon.” The problem with collapsing the meanings of praxis and technē is the obvious trouble that praxis has its end in itself, while technē has its end outside itself in its product. Thus, the good would no longer be located in genuine praxis—something that we can choose for its own sake. Moreover, proairesis loses any semblance of the usual (and perhaps, proper) translation, “choice.” The problem is that the real relationship to the good is skewed. We are no longer, under Heidegger’s interpretation, choosing (having deliberate desire for) the good, but are bringing something (whatever it is) to an end through concern, so as to be after the good (hinter

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37 Gonzalez’s rendering.
38 Gonzalez says Heidegger has subordinated or assimilated choice and action to techne.
39 Gonzalez, “Beyond or Beneath,” 130.
Gonzalez says, for Heidegger, “Our relation to the good is to be located in our existing, not in our acting, desiring, deliberating, or choosing.” Indeed, none of these concepts, as such, seems to show up in Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle. This interpretation, says Gonzalez, should not surprise us, “since this is precisely what Heidegger must do in order to interpret the agathon ontologically as a way of being.”

While the good may be broadly found in our existing, the good is located more precisely in the how of being, or the way one is.

Perhaps, however, we can salvage Heidegger’s seemingly unsatisfactory interpretation. Heidegger’s interpretation operates in a phenomenological and ontological realm. Thus, Heidegger is attempting to interpret technē, inquiry, choice, and action in their most basic forms, i.e., not as what they are thematically, but what they are when they are enacted. For Heidegger, the traditional meanings and contexts of these terms are already there, and his ontological interpretation need not preclude those meanings. So, for the artist, the vague “something” he knows his way around is that upon which he works. In choosing, we are indeed concerned and occupied with something that is to be settled, and this will involve deliberation. Heidegger is not reducing these phenomena to ontology, nor is he pulling them out of context. Rather, he is teasing out the ontological elements of these phenomena as they are situated within their respective contexts. When keeping in mind a contextual understanding of these terms, Heidegger’s ontological

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40 This is a rare instance where we see Heidegger using the traditional word Gut, rather than leaving the Greek untranslated.
41 Gonzalez, “Beyond or Beneath,” 131.
42 Gonzalez, “Beyond or Beneath,” 131.
43 It may perhaps be troublesome or anachronistic to use ‘existing’ to refer to Aristotle’s concept of the good. It is not at all clear that Aristotle would have spoken of existence as opposed to being.
interpretations may offer greater insight to their meaning—meanings situated firmly in the concrete world of work and action.

Here, Heidegger’s interpretation of the good is more understandable. However, the problem remains whether or not we are getting Aristotle’s ethics in this interpretation, or something only inspired by Aristotle. While Heidegger’s interpretations may be helpful, they cannot stand on their own as interpretations of Aristotle’s ethics. This is not to fault Heidegger’s interpretations of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics. Rather, we should approach Heidegger’s interpretations with care, remembering that Heidegger’s interpretations are ontological in nature, and thus not thorough interpretations of Aristotle’s ethics. Moreover, we should recall that where Heidegger’s interpretations do enter into an explicitly ethical realm, it is because he is working in the context of Aristotle’s Ethics. That is, where Heidegger uses ethical terminology that will be used in Being and Time strictly ontologically, he uses these terms to interpret Aristotle, not necessarily to reveal to us what Heidegger himself actually wants the terms to mean.

Heidegger and Virtue

Let us turn to Heidegger’s treatment of the good in relation to excellence or virtue. He treats the human function argument to get at the human good, highlighting its connection with virtue. First, Heidegger says:

We know that the being of human beings is determined through ἀρετή, the mode of being in which the τέλος is possessed—τέλος as the beyond-which-nothing. So…ἔργον is taken in its ownmost being-possibility, namely as fulfilling itself in ἀρετή…For example, in the case of the violin player, we distinguish between violin players. A bad one is distinguished from one who is σπουδαῖος, a “serious” [ernsthaften] κιθαριστής, who has taken his being-possibility seriously

44 Although a thorough discussion of this would take us too far afield, it is worth noting that Heiddgger’s interpretations may also be a product of his time. That is, he was trying to loosen Aristotle’s thought from a tradition in which terms like, “activity,” “reason,” “good,” etc. had for so long been cemented, and for that very reason, misunderstood and disallowed from displaying their richness and breadth.
[Ernst gemacht hat], who has genuinely put into work his having what he is at his disposal. (BC, 69)

Heidegger’s interpretation of aretē as “serious” or “earnest” at first seems problematic. It may be that the excellent person is serious or earnest, but his seriousness does not constitute his excellence. A lack of seriousness is not what primarily constitutes a bad musician, or a bad character. Conversely, seriousness does not primarily constitute a good musician or character. There may be a musician who takes his instrument and music very seriously, but who does not play with the same spirit and level of proficiency as another. Likewise, one may be quite serious about being good, but at the same time be incontinent. Moreover, someone with a bad character can be quite serious about being bad, e.g. a thief who is serious about what he does.45

Again, however, we should keep in mind Heidegger’s phenomenological and ontological operation. For Heidegger, the ontological state of seriousness or earnestness would likely make a way for a good musician or a good person to be good. That is, goodness of character necessarily includes some degree of seriousness. The good or excellent person earnestly approaches life and the decisions to be made therein. In other words, the excellent life is not one that the excellent person takes lightly. The excellent person takes seriously who she is, and puts this to work. By putting her seriousness and her own excellence to work, she fulfills the human function. While this reading is fair to Heidegger’s interpretation, it must be born in mind that this reading already presupposes the more thoroughly ethical context of Aristotle’s excellent person. Heidegger’s interpretation does not preclude this context, but perhaps enriches it.

45 Gonzalez, “Beyond or Beneath,” 137.
Heidegger goes on to say that the human good is “ζωή itself, living itself. The ἔργον is living itself, apprehended in the sense of being-in-the-world μετὰ λόγου, in such a way that it is thereby spoken” (BC, 69). Gonzalez notes, “the human good is such a life lived according to virtue. What has become of aretē in Heidegger’s account?” On Gonzalez’s reading, Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of virtue and the human good makes virtue (as excellence) and the human good (as really good, or valuable) disappear. The human good, happiness, is no longer a life lived according to excellence, but simply living. The living is according to “speaking.” Yet, this reading forgets what is likely happening in the background: Heidegger’s interpretation is teasing out the ontological aspects from an ethical context.

Heidegger says that the human good is living insofar as (Sofern also) “the τέλος of human beings does not lie outside itself but rather in itself as its being-possibility” (BC, 69). Heidegger is not saying that the human good strictly is living, but only insofar as the good, as telos, lies within human being as a possibility of human being. Heidegger has not transgressed what Aristotle meant by the human good, but has rather interpreted it with specific reference to it as a telos—a telos not outside human being (The Good), but a telos to be found within our very existence (the good). Although we may not be able to conclude from this, as Heidegger does, that the good is then “life itself,” we can at least see that Heidegger’s interpretations have not omitted virtue and the good. Thus, Heidegger goes on to say that the human good is, as Aristotle says, an activity of the soul (which constitutes the being of all living things) in accordance with virtue, and that this activity is a putting-into-work of a specific concern. This putting into work is one that has

46 Gonzalez, “Beyond or Beneath,” 137.
the character of the ‘well’—it is well done—and thus “the ultimate being-possibility is grasped in its end” (BC, 69). This ultimate being-possibility is the good.

Heidegger and the Mean

What does Heidegger say about Aristotle’s concept of the mean? Heidegger here does his best to save Aristotle from moralism, i.e. the type of morality based solely upon duty, and prescriptions lacking any flexibility regarding particular situations. Heidegger is right to do so. As we have seen, Aristotle’s ethics should not be mistaken for such a moral theory. Heidegger, however, maintains a more extreme position. “For our being, characterized by particularity, no unique and absolute norm can be given” (BC, 126). But, according to Aristotle, our being is not thoroughly characterized by particularity. Aristotle’s ethics will involve universals, even if we must ultimately answer to particulars, i.e. particular situations. For example, I may know that eating healthy is good, but not understand that this cake here is too much for me to eat at once, even if I can stomach it without feeling full or sick. Moreover, one may recall Aristotle’s statement in Book II that not all actions or passions admit of a mean. As examples, Aristotle cites spite, shamelessness, envy, adultery, theft, and murder. These are in themselves always bad. “It is not possible, then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must always be wrong” (1107a9-14). These must certainly be taken as norms.

Heidegger continues, “It depends on cultivating the being of human beings, so that it is transposed into the aptitude for maintaining the mean. But that means nothing other than seizing the moment” (BC, 126). Gonzalez finds this objectionable, because he thinks the mean has here been reduced to “seizing the moment” [den Augenblick zu

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47 Für unser Sein, charakterisiert durch die Jeweiligkeit, last sich keine einmalige und absolute Norm geben.
48 See Book VII of the Nicomachean Ethics and the discussion of incontinence, particularly 1147a1-9.
While being in the mean and aiming at the intermediate action may involve seizing the moment, this cannot be all that it is. Heidegger has, Gonzalez says, drained the mean of any “determinate content.”49 While a moment may be seized, for example, through the mean of temperance, it is seized in a particular way, viz. temperately. But perhaps there is, again, room for this ethical reading in Heidegger’s interpretation.

As with the difficulties above, this one should be solved, or at least tempered, with the reminder that this should not be taken as a strict interpretation of Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean. Taken in this way, Gonzalez’s objection stands. But, Heidegger goes on to say that the mean is here taken in the sense of a *hexis as taxis*, or:

> the ‘being-apportioned’ of that which comes up for a decision. Apportioning is a matter that arises from the resolution itself: the mean is, here, not a fixed property, but is a way of comporting oneself in the world. Aristotle designates ἀρετή as τοῦ μέσου στοχαστική; it ‘aims’ as what maintains the mean, as being-oriented to the right apportioning, the right seizing of the moment. (*BC*, 126)

With virtue, we are oriented toward the right seizing of the moment. Thus, Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean is not here rendered void of its ethicality, nor is it reduced to absolute relativism.50 By suggesting that the mean is a right seizing of the moment, Heidegger has here left it in its ethical place. The excellent person does not seize the moment in an arbitrary way, but in the right way. The excellent person takes hold of what is there in its particularity, and does what needs to be done.

**Heidegger on Phronēsis**

Heidegger’s interpretation of *phronēsis* is found in his lecture course, *Plato’s Sophist*. This lecture course took place in the Winter Semester of 1924-1925—the same year as the course on Aristotle, which we have just discussed. The role of *phronēsis* as a mode of

49 Gonzalez, “Beyond or Beneath,” 141.
50 As Gonzalez has suggested on page 141.
being in the truth (ἀληθεύειν) is important for Heidegger. Thus, phronēsis is first and foremost a mode for Dasein’s disclosure of beings in affirmation and denial. This leads smoothly into Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of phronēsis. Technē is aimed at the ergon of its product. “The deliberation of φρόνησις, however, relates to this ἔργον insofar as it contributes to the deliberator himself. The ἀληθεύειν of φρόνησις therefore contains a referential direction to the ἀληθθύων himself” (PS, 34). The deliberating and choosing of prudence can fulfill the function of the person making the decision. One can fulfill one’s function through the processes of phronēsis. This prepares the way for Heidegger’s determination of phronesis.

A person can be concerned with things of minor significance; he can be so wrapped up in himself that he does not genuinely see himself. Therefore he is ever in need of the salvation [Rettung] of φρόνησις. (PS, 36)

Let us examine this argument to see if it is an accurate interpretation of Aristotle’s concept of phronēsis. The premises are based upon Heidegger’s observation that pleasure and pain “cover up man to himself.” This seems to be a reasonable observation, since even our ordinary use of language confirms it. We do, after all, say we were “lost in pleasure,” or “I was beside myself with pain.” Pleasure and pain can overcome us, so that we only come back to ourselves afterwards. Heidegger, however, claims, “Circumspection regarding himself and insight into himself must again and again be wrested away by man in the face of the danger of διαφθείρειν and διαστρέφειν” (PS, 36). For Heidegger, phronēsis is an ever-renewed struggle. “Φρόνεσις, as soon as it is

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52 On the other hand, it could be that bodily pleasures and pains are revealing and tell us a lot about ourselves. It seems they are capable of both covering us up to ourselves, and of being self-revealing.
achieved, is involved in a constant struggle against a tendency to cover over residing at the heart of Dasein” (PS, 36-37).

There is trouble in such an interpretation. Such a struggle as Heidegger names is not present in Aristotle’s concept of *phronēsis*. In fact, Heidegger’s interpretation sounds much more like Aristotle’s account of the continent person. *Phronēsis*, we recall, is an intellectual excellence possessed by the person with character excellence. But the temperate person is not like the continent person, “for a temperate man will have neither excessive nor bad appetites” (*NE*, 1146a10-12). The continent person is continent because he has bad appetites, but struggles against them and conquers them. The practically wise and temperate person will not even have such appetites, and so there is no struggle. This is what makes *phronēsis* an excellence, as opposed to a device used merely to struggle against bad appetites. Heidegger clearly has in mind the common person. Excellence is rare, so most people will indeed be involved in a struggle against pleasures and pains. However, this struggle, strictly speaking, cannot characterize Aristotle’s concept of *phronēsis*.

Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of *phronēsis* can, however, still offer insight. In differentiating the deliberation of *technē* and *phronēsis*, Heidegger tells us that the deliberation of the *phronimos* is directed toward himself, and his own life, as opposed to a work standing over against him. Heidegger goes on to clarify that the *phronimos* does not deliberate regarding particular advantages he can gain for himself, “e.g. health or bodily strength, which promote Dasein in a particular regard”. Rather, the *phronimos* deliberates well, “regarding ‘what is conducive to the right mode of Being of Dasein as such and as a whole’” (PS, 34). Heidegger specifies here that the *phronimos* is concerned
with the right (rechte) mode of being. While this, as has been shown, would not involve a struggle, Heidegger has indicated that the deliberation is concerned with good living.

Heidegger recognizes the importance of the ethicality of *phronēsis*. *Technē* can fail, and has the possibility of failure as part of what it is. In *phronēsis*, however, “every mistake is a personal shortcoming” (*PS*, 38). The mistakes made in *technē* are, thinks Heidegger, ultimately an advantage for the artist. This allows the artist to be more of an expert. But *phronēsis* “is not oriented toward trial and error; in moral action [sittlichen Handeln], I cannot experiment with myself.” Heidegger situates *phronēsis* more firmly in the ethical sphere, even in an ontological interpretation of it. He also recognizes the aim of *phronēsis*, i.e. the *mesotēs*. Heidegger calls this the “permanent orientation” of *phronēsis*.

Φρόνησις is by its very sense στοχαστική; it has a permanent orientation, it pursues the goal, and specifically the μεσότης. With Φρόνησις, unlike τέχνη, there is no more or less, no “this as well as that,” but only the seriousness of the definite decision, success or failure, either-or. (*PS*, 38)

Again, we see Heidegger indicating that seriousness has to do specifically with an ethical decision. His interpretation is attempting to thrust us, reflectively, right into the difficulty of ethical decision making. Again, it is problematic to think of the *phronimos* as possibly failing, but Heidegger’s interpretation brings to light the seriousness and weight of ethicality. Even if the *phronimos* ultimately does not fail, he still must deliberate and deliberate well. Moreover, since *phronēsis* is permanently directed toward the *mesotēs*, it cannot be any more complete than it is; it has no excellence.

Heidegger continues with his interpretation of *phronēsis*, especially concerning the mysterious line that *phronēsis* cannot be forgotten.

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53 Thus the Platonic and Aristotelian notion that a good artist or craftsman is the one who can best go wrong in his respective art or craft.
It is...clear from the context that we would not be going too far in our interpretation by saying that Aristotle has here come across the phenomenon of conscience [Gewissens]. Φρόνησις is nothing other than conscience set into motion, making an action transparent. Conscience cannot be forgotten. But it is quite possible that what is disclosed by conscience can be distorted and allowed to be ineffective through ἡδονή and λύπη, through the passions. Conscience always announces itself. (PS, 39)

Interpreting *phronēsis* as conscience might explain how the prudent person can act well in a situation that has not allowed the proper time for deliberation. This interpretation also accounts for why *phronēsis* cannot be forgotten. It is key that Heidegger says *phronēsis* is conscience set into motion. Conscience is something we all have, but the *phronimos* sets it into motion in a particular way, such that the action is transparent. The *phronimos* simply sees the fact that a particular action is appropriate or inappropriate. Conscience announces itself and simply tells us whether or not to act in thus and such a way, without any process of reasoning. Conscience could also be seen as the guiding light for deliberation. Perhaps it illuminates the way for deliberation. Conscience calls us back to ourselves, and allows us to see what we can genuinely do in a given situation.

**On to Flourishing as Authenticity**

This analysis has paved the way for a discussion of Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, and how it may relate to Aristotle’s concept of the good life, or human flourishing. We have laid open the playing field with a discussion of Aristotle’s basic ethical concepts, and Heidegger’s interpretation of them. Again, the goal here is not to see how these interpretations might have inspired Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Rather, we grant only that Heidegger used his own concepts in his interpretation of Aristotle’s ethics. Our interest is now to see in what ways the authentic and flourishing lives may relate to one another. We will, in the third chapter, reveal the ways in which a type of authenticity is
found in the life of character excellence. First, we must understand Heidegger’s authenticity on its own turf.

To this end, the next chapter will explore authenticity and its related concepts. Some of these concepts have shown up in Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle. We have seen mention of being-in-the-world, being-with others, conscience, and authenticity. We have seen that *phronēsis* is a way of seeing what must be done. As *logos* provides for authentically human ways of being, we will see what the authentic life looks like in its own right. We will examine authenticity through the lens of the authentic self.
Chapter Two

If Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is primarily about human flourishing and the good life, then Heidegger’s *Being and Time* is primarily about an authentic way of human being. It is just as equally about that from which authenticity emerges—the everyday, inauthentic way of being. We will now explore the meaning of these ways of being. More precisely, we will make sure to differentiate these phenomena as they appear to the phenomenological observer from the way that they are lived. This important distinction will show that authenticity as a way of being—and it is an empty formality if it is not lived as a way of being—is not primarily an individualistic way of living. That is, the traditional “me versus them” conception of authenticity is rooted in the perspective of the phenomenologist, or the one doing the ontology, and not in the way that the authentic life is lived. In other words, authenticity is not primarily an individualist battle against a world of assimilation and conformity.

This warrants a note of caution. Until now, I have used the traditional “authenticity”, “inauthenticity,” and their cognates to render Heidegger’s terms *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigenlichkeit*. The traditional translation straightaway misleads the reader. We are led to believe that these terms designate the contrary of what I proposed above. That is, we think of the authentic life as a genuine one set over against a false or phony one. Heidegger, however, adhered to the etymological meaning of the German words. In *Eigentlich* (authentic), we have the root *eigen*. This means “own,” as in, “one’s own.” Thus, *Eigentlichkeit* is literally, “ownness” or “ownhood.” It is a way of being one’s own. More precisely, it is a self-appropriation. We may think this word in its
etymological sense as a “coming to ownness” (ad-proprius). Uneigentlichkeit, then, is the opposite; it is the mis-appropriated, or disowned way of being.

It may be objected that “owned” and “disowned” have a similar problem to “authentic” and “inauthentic.” They seem also to connote one person owning up to himself in face of the crowd. That being the case, I will use versions of “self-appropriation,” “owned,” “disowned,” “authentic,” “inauthentic” etc. as interchangeable translations for Eigentlichkeit and Uneigentlichkeit, respectively. Since we will be investigating these phenomena as ways of being, and thus through the lens of the self who lives them, I may often use “self-appropriation.” ¹ It is important however, that the reader keep in mind the meaning behind these words. We shall come to see that this meaning is peculiar. To come into one’s own is not to be one person against the crowd, but a way of being human that lives out who we simply are.

In order to discover what authenticity is, we must look into inauthenticity. We will come to see that one is, according to Heidegger, either inauthentic or authentic. We will see who and how the inauthentic self is. This will allow us better insight into who and how the authentic self is.

**Inauthenticity**

The first chapter of Division I in Being and Time already provides shadings of meaning for authenticity and inauthenticity. Dasein—that being for whom being is an issue—has what Heidegger calls “mineness” (Jemeinigkeit). Thus, one must use personal pronouns

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¹ Joan Stanbaugh, “An Inquiry in to Authenticity and Inauthenticity in Being and Time,” in Research in Phenomenology, 7 (1977): 153-161. Stanbaugh claims to look at authenticity and inauthenticity through the lens of the self (153), but never seems to address the problem in her paper. She does, however, give a helpful etymology of “authenticity.” It is, she says, rooted in the Greek autos, for “self.”
to designate oneself or someone else. Dasein makes decisions as to the way in which this mineness unfolds or plays out. Moreover,

That entity which in its being has this very being as an issue, comports itself towards its being as its ownmost possibility. In each case Dasein is its possibility, and it ‘has’ this possibility, but not just as a property [eigenschaftlich], as something present-at-hand would. And because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very being, ‘choose’ itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only ‘seem’ to do so. But only in so far as it is essentially something which can be authentic [eigentliches]—that is, something of its own [zueigen]—can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. As modes of being, authenticity and inauthenticity (these expressions have been chosen terminologically in a strict sense) are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness. (B&T, 68)

Here we see the introduction of authenticity and inauthenticity as ways of being for Dasein. We immediately see the importance of authenticity to Heidegger’s project and, as he claims, to human being. So far, it seems human beings can be either authentic or inauthentic. Either way, both modes of being are grounded in the ontological fact that Dasein is characterized by mineness. We shall explore further the implications of this mineness in both the inauthentic and authentic modes of being.

Heidegger also identifies a third way of being outside authenticity or inauthenticity. This third way is the undifferentiated averageness (Durchschnittlichkeit) in which Dasein for the most part finds itself (B&T, 69). Heidegger says:

At the outset of our analysis it is particularly important that Dasein should not be interpreted with the differentiated character of some definite way of existing, but that it should be uncovered in the undifferentiated character which it has proximally and for the most part. This undifferentiated character of Dasein’s everydayness is not nothing, but a positive phenomenal characteristic of this entity. Out of this kind of being—and back into it again—is all existing, such as it is. (B&T, 69)

Here, Heidegger identifies the undifferentiated mode as a way for Dasein to be (Seinsart).

Dasein is here shown to be neither authentic nor inauthentic, or differentiated. So far, it

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2 I have made slight typographical changes throughout to excerpts from Being and Time.
seems as though Dasein, in average everydayness, exists for the most part in an undifferentiated way. Otherwise, it would be difficult to see how this undifferentiated mode is that into and from which all existing passes.

Magda King immediately identifies *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* as “the two most basic possibilities of existence.” Then, King claims,

When Heidegger speaks of an ‘indifferent’ everydayness, he does not mean that this mode of existence ceases to be care, or that Dasein no longer exists for the sake of himself, let alone that he exists neither in one definite way nor in another, but means that the difference between an owned and disowned self does not come to light, it remains undifferentiated.³

It is unclear here to or for whom the differentiation has not come to light. King must mean that a differentiated existence has not come to light for the existing Dasein. That is, Dasein, as it exists, can only be authentic or inauthentic, but the existing Dasein does not recognize this or make it a theme.⁴ Dasein’s daily life is for it undifferentiated and average. However interesting it may be, this “undifferentiated mode” quickly drops out of Heidegger’s treatise to leave us only with inauthenticity and authenticity. Let us now take a look at this everyday way of being-in-the-world.

**Being-in-the-world**

We must now indulge in a bit of textual explication. This will serve us in our analysis of inauthentic and authentic selfhood. Heidegger says that being-in-the-world “must be seen as a whole” (*B&T*, 78). Being-in-the-world cannot be broken up into components since we live it as a concrete whole. In other words, we are not at one time being and at another

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⁴ This seems to accord with Robert J. Dostal’s conclusion in his article, “The Problem of ‘Indifferenz’ in *Sein und Zeit*,” *International Phenomenological Society*, Vol. 43, No.1 (1982), 57-58. Dostal’s article is somewhat tortuous and unclear, but he concludes that the “undifferentiated” is not a third way of being for existing Dasein, but is part of Heidegger’s “meta-existential” narrative. Therefore, “one can confidently assert that existence of Dasein has, on Heidegger’s account, two possible modes, not three.”
in the world. We can, however, theoretically explore these components to see what they mean, i.e., we can logically divide it up, but it is not existentially divided. These components are: 1. ‘in-the-world,’ 2. the ‘who’ which is-in-the-world, and 3. being-in, as such. The first of these deals with ‘worldhood’, and is found in chapter three of Division I. The second regards who Dasein is, and can be found in the fourth chapter. We shall primarily focus upon this second component. The third component is thoroughly discussed in chapter five, but we will here limit ourselves to Heidegger’s outline of it in chapter two.

Heidegger first tells us what being-in is not. Dasein is not in the world as water is in the glass. Nor is Dasein in the world as something merely present-at-hand, as, for example, a table, car or prairie. Rather, being-in is a “state of Dasein’s being” (B&T, 79). Heidegger then introduces a series of etymologies to suggest that being-in is a kind of residence or dwelling. Hubert Dreyfus says:

What Heidegger is getting at is a mode of being-in we might call ‘inhabiting.’ When we inhabit something, it is no longer an object for us but becomes part of us and pervades our relation to other objects in the world.5

Thus, we should so far understand being-in-the-world not to be something of which Dasein is immediately cognizant. For instance, when I am in my house, I am at home there. This means that I do not, for the most part, recognize the fact that I am at home. I am simply there, and I undertake my tasks there, relax there, think there, play there, eat there, etc. Being in my home is not a theme for me; it is simply a place to be. Although Heidegger’s being-in is quite similar to this, we must take this example carefully. Again,

Heidegger insists that being-in is not one entity within another (a person in a house), but a way or state of being, i.e., I am such that I am in a world.

Dasein is in its world through its involvement with it, or its concern (Besorgen). Dasein attends to its tasks and activities. Dasein has concern about such things. The concept of concern, says Heidegger, is introduced because we shall see Dasein’s being “made visible as care [Sorge]” (B&T, 84). Heidegger says, “being-in-the-world, as concern, is fascinated by [benommen] the world with which it is concerned” (B&T, 88). Dasein has been taken by or into the world. It seems Heidegger is playing on the relationship of benommen to the verb nehmen, “to take.” Dasein is “be-taken” by its world. This is similar to what we mean when we say we are “taken” with something or other. The world is that in which we thoroughly are. We are thoroughly wrapped up in our world through concern. Thus, being-in is akin to the spatial language we use when we say that we are “in love,” or “in a bind.” We are in some sense surrounded by love or difficulty, or we are taken in by it. Similarly, we are thoroughly in our world through our involvement with it. But what is the world?

When examining the worldhood of the world, we must examine our closeness with entities in our world. This closeness plays out in the general ways we go about our world, or our dealings or intercourse (Umgang) with it. To avoid what he sees as possible misunderstandings rooted in the Cartesian tradition, Heidegger avoids the word “things” when referring to those entities with which we deal, but instead opts for das Zeug. Macquarrie and Robinson translate this as “equipment,” but also note that it could be translated as “gear,” to show the collective meaning Heidegger attributes to it.6 Heidegger says, “there ‘is’ no such thing as an equipment” (B&T, 97). Those things we encounter in

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6 See footnote 1 on page 97.
our world do not sit solitarily without reference to anything else. “Equipment is essentially ‘something in-order-to’…” Equipment is always a totality of equipment, with each piece of equipment referring itself either to more equipment, or to its use or end.

Equipment—in accordance with its equipmentality—always is in terms of its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These ‘things’ never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up to a sum of realia and fill up a room. What we encounter as closest to us (though not as something taken as a theme) is the room; and we encounter it not as something ’between four walls’ in a geometrical spatial sense, but as equipment for residing. (B&T, 97-98)

When we seek the worldhood of the world, i.e., to know what the world is, we cannot treat the world as a sum of things. Nor can we define it in terms of theory, e.g. geometrically, or in terms of the natural sciences. This, according to Heidegger, is not how we primarily encounter or dwell in our world. If we decide to measure a room, or treat it as geometrical space, we do so only upon the background of and within the world in which we already dwell. Thus, the geometrical space of the room is what the room is for us geometrically, not primarily or ontologically.

We have already noted that equipment is characterized by its “in-order-to….” When, for instance, I grasp the hammer to work with it, I do not do so in a thematic way wherein I might robotically say, “I am now grasping the hammer, which serves the purpose of hammering nails.” Rather, says Heidegger, I grasp it pre-thematically in such a way that the hammer “could not possibly be more suitable” for the task (B&T, 98). The hammer is put to use, and I relate to it simply as the hammer I am using. In this way, the hammer, to speak as an Aristotelian, fulfills its function of hammering. This handiness (Handlichkeit) of equipment Heidegger calls the “ready-to-hand” (Zuhandenheit).

Equipment is there ready for my handiness. When I move to the computer to type, I

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7 It could be that the “in-order-to” talk is a basic appropriation of Aristotle’s thought.
normally do not have this activity in mind as an explicit idea. Rather, I have my task on my mind, and the computer is the equipment through which I undertake my task. But the computer is not isolated; there is also the lamp, the books, the pens and paper that I might use for notes, etc. It is all there, ready for my use. Similar as ends, for Aristotle,\(^8\) are subordinated, so too do our “dealings with equipment subordinate themselves to the manifold assignments of the ‘in-order-to’” \((B&T, 98)\).

How do we primarily come to recognize the worldly character (\textit{Weltmäßigkeit}) of the world, since it is not immediately visible to us in our everyday intercourse with it? When equipment, which is for the most part ready-to-hand, breaks or goes missing, it becomes conspicuous or obtrusive. When the latter occurs, the equipment is no longer handy or at hand at all. In either of these cases, the equipment slips from its readiness-to-hand, to mere presence-at-hand. It becomes the thing that is broken or missing. It now stands out no longer as a thing that I simply grab and use, but as something that I cannot presently put to its proper use. There are also times when something simply gets in the way of our tasks and concerns. These obstructions are those things for which we have no time. In any of these cases:

The presence-at-hand which makes itself known is still bound up in the readiness-to-hand of equipment. Such equipment does not veil itself in the guise of mere things. It becomes ‘equipment’ in the sense of something which one would like to shove out of the way. \((B&T, 104)\)

Even the presence-at-hand of equipment shows itself upon the background and within the context of the ready-to-hand. These two phenomena are interrelated, since presence-at-hand cannot show itself without readiness-to-hand. The ready-to-hand, however, takes priority as the way we encounter equipment in the world.

\(^8\) See the first chapter of the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}. 

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Dasein lets things be involved in its undertakings—Dasein makes way for equipment to do what it does, and this is always toward some end for which the equipment works. Dasein sets into relief the ready-to-hand by working with it.

Dasein always assigns itself from a “for-the-sake-of-which” to the “with-which” of an involvement; that is to say, to the extent that it is, it always lets entities be encountered as ready-to-hand. (B&T, 119)

The world is the setting or place in which the where-in, this assigning and for-the-sake-of-which, plays out. “And the structure of that to which Dasein assigns itself is what makes up the worldhood of the world” (B&T, 119). Dasein in its concern ultimately makes up the worldhood of the world. In my daily undertakings and tasks, the worldhood of the world is set into motion, as it were. Thus, the structure of the world is one of meaning or significance (Bedeutung). Dasein is in the world in such a way that this world always has, in its structure, meaning or significance.

Dasein, in its familiarity with significance, is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves. Dasein as such is always something of this sort; along with its being, a context of the ready-to-hand is already essentially discovered: Dasein, in so far as it is, has always submitted [angewiesen] itself already to a ‘world’ which it encounters, and this submission [Angewiesenheit] belongs essentially to its being. (B&T, 121)

Dasein is always situated. Or, we might say, human being is contextual. The significance or meaning is not something the world objectively has irrespective of my being, nor is it something I subjectively create. Rather, it is born of the way I constitutively am in the world.

Dasein is, further, directed towards the world and close with what is ready-to-hand in its spatiality. The closeness of the ready-to-hand is determined primarily not by a measured closeness, but by my concern (B&T, 135). Something is brought close in
concern via my deseverance (Entfernung) and directionality (Ausrichtung). In deseverance, Dasein brings close that with which it deals in concern. Dasein is directed towards its tasks, and removes the distance between it and the task in order to undertake the task. Dasein is primarily in its there (Da), and understands itself here (Da) in terms of its there (B&T, 142). I am concerned with that, there. I bring it close so that it becomes this matter, here. Thus, Da-sein is literally “being-there,” and also “being-here.” I am in my world, and there with my concern, which is brought close to me here through my spatiality. In being-in-the-world, there is therefore significance. A thing matters to me, so I bring it close to deal properly with it. This closeness need not always be a physical closeness. I can think of a loved one who is miles away, and bring her close in concern, in thought.

The Everyday Self

We are thoroughly in the world, but who are we? In chapter four, Heidegger aims to identify who everyday Dasein is. Heidegger prepares us for this investigation with a discussion of the self.

The assertion that it is I who in each case Dasein is, is ontically obvious; but this must not mislead us into supposing that the route for an ontological interpretation of what is ‘given’ in this way has thus been unmistakably prescribed. Indeed it remains questionable whether even the mere ontical content of the above assertion does proper justice to the stock of phenomena belonging to everyday Dasein. It could be that the “who” of everyday Dasein is just not the “I myself”. (B&T, 150)

Heidegger is here warning us that the traditional concept of the self is misleading. The “I,” conceived as a subject remaining the same throughout its various experiences, is how we generally conceive ourselves. In other words, “Dasein is tacitly conceived in advance as something present-at-hand” (B&T, 150). We generally think it is obvious that the “I” is the proper “who” of who we are. This, however, is a misunderstanding. The self is
primarily a way of being (B&T, 153), whether this be authentic or inauthentic. If I understand myself as something present-at-hand, then this is already an inauthentic conception—or as Heidegger calls it, a “perversion” (verkehrten)—of myself (B&T, 153). Heidegger goes on to suggest that Dasein is not what it thinks it is (“I myself”), even when Dasein says loudest, “I am myself” (B&T, 151). Dasein’s mineness is in part the very reason why Dasein is for the most part not itself. When I am not myself in this everyday manner, I am in such a way that I have lost myself (B&T, 152).

Dasein is constituted by being-in-the-world, but this being-in-the-world is always co-constitutive with being-with-others. Other Dasein are there with me, but not in such a way as to be present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. They are themselves Dasein, and are in the world with me (B&T, 154). When Heidegger talks about others, he does not intend, he says, to isolate one Dasein amongst many others. The others are those “from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too” (B&T, 154). I share the world with others, and am not isolated from them in what I do. Even if I choose to isolate myself by going off into the woods, I do so only upon the backdrop of being-with those from whom I remove myself. This removal is never a complete excision, but is always tethered to those with whom I primarily am. “The other can be missing only in and for a being-with” (B&T, 157). This being-with will become important in the characterization of authenticity.

Since being-with is not identical to being-in, but only co-constitutive with it, it does not operate within the realm of concern, but has its parallel in “solicitude” (Fürsorge). The ready-to-hand has its being through our concern with it. Being-with-others has its being in caring for others, or solicitude. For example, providing food for my
family is made possible by this caring-for. However, Heidegger calls our attention to several deficient or “indifferent” modes of caring-for or solicitude. “Being…against, or without one another, passing one another by, not ‘mattering’ to one another—these are possible ways of solicitude” (*B&T*, 158). In fact, Dasein’s everyday way of being-with-others is primarily inauthentic.

Dasein’s being has been “taken away by the others” (*B&T*, 164). Who, then, is Dasein? The who of everyday Dasein is neither this nor that particular person, nor the sum of all people; it is rather the inconspicuous “one” or the “they” (*das Man*). Heidegger notes the importance of using the neuter article, *das*, to express this (*B&T*, 164). As noted at the beginning of this section, everyday Dasein is not itself. That is, everyday Dasein is not its authentic self—Dasein has not yet appropriated itself from the they to come into its own (*eigen*). It is simply part of the crowd. Dasein is for the most part the anonymous one (*Man*). The being of the “I” is determined by the they, or the anonymous one. We might say that the they-self is not so much a *who* as a *what*.

We must be careful to notice, however, that everyday Dasein does not recognize this lostness. To the everyday person, the “I” just is the self. I am myself. Yet, this “I” is only a designator for an anonymous “one”—everyone and no one in particular. Let us look at the beginning of the description of the they-self.

We have shown earlier how in the environment which lies closest to us, the public ‘environment’ already is ready-to-hand…In utilizing public means of transport and in making use of information services such as the newspaper, every other is like the next. This being-with-one-another dissolves [löst] one’s own [eigene] Dasein 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

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9 The possibility of authentic being-with will be discussed in the fourth chapter, in conjunction with Aristotle’s concept of friendship.

10 “Nicht es selbst ist, di Anderen haben ihm das Sein abgenommen” (Heidegger, 126).
inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the “they” is unfolded [*entfaltet das Man seine eigentliche Diktatur*]. (B&T, 164)

The everyday self is subsumed into its life with the others. Our being-with generally takes the shape of this public life. Insofar as it does, each one is just like any other. Both public and private realms are made possible by our basic constitution of being-with. We are with others in such a way so as often not even to notice it. We are released or dissolved into this otherness, so that the others are, in that respect, hardly other at all. The “I” clung to so tightly, is really no individual “I” at all. It is rather “the one,” or “the they.” *Das Man* disburdens Dasein of its being. The they “constantly accommodates the particular Dasein by disburdening it of its Being, [thus] the ‘they’ retains and enhances its stubborn dominion” (B&T, 165). Being is made easy for us in public life. Decisions are made for us, and where they are not, decisions to be made are founded upon the options *das Man* provides.

Thus, “everyone is the other, and no one is himself” (B&T, 165). The self is not present-at-hand as *das Man*, nor is *das Man* itself present-at-hand. When the self conceives itself as present-at-hand, i.e. as a constant I-thing, it does so from out of *das Man*. “In terms of [*das Man*] and as [*das Man*], I am ‘given’ proximally to ‘myself’” (B&T, 167). Thus, the “I” is nothing more than a Man-selbst, a “they-self” or “one-self.” This self has been thoroughly dispersed (*zerstreut*) into *das Man*. This means that any attempt at individualism is illusory. The individual does not stand over against *das Man*. Rather the very possibility of this subject-object dichotomy is based in *das Man*, and its identity is dictated by *das Man*.

The general and everyday mode of understanding runs its course in idle talk (*Gerede*). As part of the public life of the they, idle talk understands what it talks about
only “approximately and superficially” \((B\&T, 212)\). In our common and everyday understanding, we all have the same thing in view.

And because this discoursing has lost its primary relationship-of-being towards the entity talked about, or else has never achieved such a relationship, it does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of gossiping \([Nachrede]\) and \textit{passing the word along}. What is said-in-the-talk as such, spreads in wider circles and takes on an authoritative character. Things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted by just such gossiping and passing the word along—a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness. \((B\&T, 212)\)

In idle talk, we do not really know or understand what we are talking about, even if we think we do. We gossip and thoughtlessly pass the word along. Then, the shaky grounds upon which the talk began recede into utter groundlessness \((\textit{Bodenlosigkeit})\). Even what has “been drawn from primordial sources with a struggle” is undetectable and never understood in everyday idle talk. Yet, idle talk creates the illusion that it understands everything. The more we find out or hear about something, the more we talk about it. All this talk leads us to think we understand and are privy to the facts. Ultimately, idle talk, encouraged by the public, “releases one from the task of genuinely understanding…[by] perverting \([\textit{verkehrt}]\) the act of disclosing into an act of closing off” \((B\&T, 213)\). Just as one is sure that “I am \textit{myself},” so too is one sure that one knows what one is talking about. In fact, one may talk a lot about oneself, without any understanding of what this means.

\textit{Das Man} also gives birth to the ubiquitous desire to see what is new.\(^{12}\) This is \textit{Neugier}, or what has been translated as “curiosity.” This traditional translation does not

\(^{11}\) We here move past Heidegger’s treatment of understanding, interpretation, state of mind, and discourse, since these are not essential to the thrust of our argument. This works well since Heidegger himself recognizes the interlude: “In going back to the existential structures of the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, our Interpretation has, in a way, lost sight of Dasein’s everydayness” \((B\&T, 210)\). It is this ‘everydayness’ upon which we must here focus.
get at the heart of the German word, which literally means “craving the new.” This craving does not wish to see in order to understand, but simply to jump from one novelty to the next. “In this kind of seeing, that which is an issue for care does not lie in grasping something and being knowingly in the truth; it lies rather in its possibilities of abandoning itself to the world” (B&T, 216). This craving for novelty is essentially a distraction, and is dictated by idle talk (B&T, 216-217). This leads into ambiguity, or Zweideutigkeit (literally, “double meaningness”). This is where “everything looks as if it were genuinely understood, genuinely taken hold of, genuinely spoken, though at bottom it is not” (B&T, 217). One thinks one knows exactly what is going on, but the matter has not been genuinely understood.

So it is that Dasein is fallen in its world. That is, one is absorbed in the world. Dasein has fallen away from itself, and is spread out into its world, and into das Man. Everyday existence is characterized by fallenness, and a tempting tranquillization. One becomes entangled (verfängt) in oneself, which is to say one is entangled in das Man. We see, then, just how murky inauthentic selfhood is. This is precisely where we think we have understood ourselves most. We think we know ourselves. Yet, we know ourselves only as objects. We do not understand that we never have been a thing present-at-hand, and never will be. We are either dispersed into das Man, or gathered into our proper (authentic) way of being. Let us now investigate this possibility of authenticity.

Authenticity

We have had to spend time upon inauthentic Dasein because, as Heidegger tells us, authentic Dasein is only “a modified way in which such everydayness is seized upon”

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12 The discussion of “seeing” will be important in the final chapter regarding contemplation.
(B&T, 224). He tells us that authentic Dasein does not transcend everyday fallenness. Heidegger is here attempting to avoid a picture of a super-Dasein who is able to escape fully the possibility of being a they-self. The authentic self does not entirely transcend the they, but modifies its own way of living.

**Being Towards Death**

Heidegger’s concept of authenticity relies upon his conception of death and its meaning for human being. Dasein, Heidegger tells us, has the character of the “not-yet.” We are in such a way that we are not-yet.

Our problem does not pertain to getting into our grasp the “not-yet” which is of the character of Dasein; it pertains to the possible being or not-being of this “not-yet.” Dasein must, as itself, become—that is to say, be—what it is not yet. (B&T, 287)

Dasein’s being is its becoming. Heidegger emphasizes here that we are not attempting simply to know about this not-yet, but to see it as a way of being. Dasein, as the not-yet, is not properly understood as a process toward completeness or fulfillment in death. Rather, Dasein “is its ‘not-yet’ constantly as long as it is, it is already its end too” (B&T, 289). Dasein is its end by being-towards-the-end (Sein-zum-Ende). “Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is” (B&T, 289). Thus, an ontological understanding of death is the foundation upon which any other questions concerning death can be properly founded, e.g., questions of “what may be after death” (B&T, 289).

Heidegger now takes us through a kind of dialectic—the authentic and inauthentic approaches to, and understanding of, death. First, we see an authentic characterization of death.

Death is a possibility-of-being [Seinsmöglichkeit] which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-being (eigensten Seinkönnen)... Its death is the possibility of no-
longer being-able-to-be-there (*Nicht-mehr-dasein-könnens*). If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-being. (*B&T*, 294)

We see again that death is a possibility of being. This possibility of death is something we can only experience in life. Heidegger’s ontology is one of human being, and it is precisely in our being where we must confront death, no matter how mysterious such a confrontation might be. Mortals are constantly faced with the possibility of no longer being. Being is the only grounds upon which we can have anything to say about death, i.e., by granting that we have the real possibility of no longer being.

Paul Edwards has difficulty calling death a possibility in Heidegger’s sense of the word. Edwards thinks Heidegger is merely speaking incoherently, oddly, or ponderously when he uses “possibility” in the way that he does. Heidegger says the possibility of death can be genuinely understood as “the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all” (*B&T*, 307). Curiously, death, understood as possibility, “gives Dasein nothing to be ‘actualized’, nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself be” (*B&T*, 307). Edwards complains, “the total absence of experiences and behaviour is most emphatically not what we mean by ‘possibility’ in any of its ordinary senses.” Edwards claims Heidegger’s use of “possibility” is “altogether superfluous,” since “What makes death a ‘non-actuality’ and thus a ‘possibility’ in [Heidegger’s] strange special sense is the impossibility of every way of existing.” Edwards continues:

> It is ‘possible’ but not certain that I will die five years from now. Heidegger is very definitely not using ‘possible’ in this sense when characterizing death as a possibility. For Heidegger repeatedly insists—quite rightly, though not very originally—that death is a certainty and not just a possibility in this sense.

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While Edwards is, I believe, incorrect here, his remarks are telling. He recognizes that Heidegger would grant this use of “possibility,” although not as an authentic characterization of death. It is, in fact, the way “the one” normally thinks of death as certain. One thinks death is certain, and that it is inevitable that one will die one day. This is usually coupled with the assumption that “one day” means, “but not now.” “The one” has forgotten or covered over the fact “that [death] is possible at any moment” (B&T, 302). In an authentic certainty of death, the indefiniteness of death’s “when” is recognized. Das Man, on the other hand, hides this indefiniteness by making death definite, as if death could be controlled. Really, however, the possibility of death is the possibility that at any moment I may no longer be. It is a possibility that strips one of all other possibilities, and once one “is” dead, there is nothing able to be actualized since actualization is a process of being.

Edwards has missed the fact that death is certain, but when death will come is indefinite. Not only is it possible that “I will die five years from now,” but it is just as possible (even if it is unlikely) that I will die five minutes from now. Indeed, the nature of this sort of possibility is strange, and perhaps bewildering. But I argue that it is the possibility itself that is strange, and not Heidegger’s use of “possibility.” Ultimately, Edwards agrees with Heidegger’s characterization of death as nothingness, or the ceasing of any way of existing, but has qualms with Heidegger’s use of “possibility.” “Heidegger is not wrong, but perverse.” Let us see if we can come to a more sensible interpretation of “possibility.”

The possibility of death is rooted in our very being. It is sensible to say, “I may die at any time.” Here is where the strangeness comes into play, and I do not think

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16 See section 52 in *Being and Time*. 
Heidegger would deny it. It is possible that I may at any moment die, but when I am dead, there is nothing actual for me. I am not actualizing any possibility in death, since the very “I” is altogether removed in death. This “I,” whether authentic, inauthentic, or otherwise, gets its shape from being in the world. Death takes this being away, and so the “I” loses its very being, or its “I-ness,” so to speak. If the being of the “I” is removed, there is no actualization of anything since an actualization is a kind of being. If Edwards agrees that death is the cessation of any way of existing, then he must also agree that there is nothing to be actualized in death. Yet, it would be absurd not to admit—or to say that it is not possible—that one may die at any given moment. The “when” is indefinite, but that death will happen, is certain. So there is nothing wrong with Heidegger’s use of possibility. It seems Edwards qualm must be taken up with the possibility of death itself. In short, the possibility of the impossibility of being does not mean that I will be actually dead (perhaps only an outside, still-existing party can says so), but that my death is the possibility of no longer being.

Since death belongs to who we are, we can recognize it or, as Heidegger says, we can stand before it. In doing so, he says, we are assigned our ownmost potentiality-for-being. But, as is apparent by what Heidegger says, we need not stand before our ownmost possibility; we can ignore it or shirk it. This is just what everyday Dasein does. Death is generally taken as simply an other event. “Dasein puts itself in the position of losing itself in the ‘they’ as regards a distinctive potentiality-for-being which belongs to Dasein’s ownmost Self. The ‘they’ gives its approval, and aggravates the temptation to cover up from oneself one’s ownmost being-towards-death…In this manner the ‘they’ provides a constant tranquilization about death” (B&T, 298). In the face of death, even if it is
someone else’s, we want to make the situation comfortable. Whether or not this is a fault is not the point. It does mean that we generally do not approach death with a genuine understanding of it.

In authentic (eigentlich) being-towards-death, which plays out in anticipation (Vorlaufen), Dasein confronts death as its ownmost (eigenste) possibility. In anticipation, “Dasein can have wrenched itself away from the ‘they’ and become its own” (B&T, 307). Authentic Dasein, which understands itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-being, is no longer caught in the throes of the they—it is itself. Death is what individuates each Dasein.

The non-relational character of death…individualizes Dasein down to itself (vereinzelt das Dasein auf es selbst). This individualizing…makes manifest that all being-alongside the things with which we concern ourselves, and all being-with others, will fail us when our ownmost potentiality-for-being is the issue. Dasein can be authentically itself only if it makes this possible for itself of its own accord. (B&T, 308)

In anticipation of, or running towards, its ownmost possibility, Dasein becomes its own. Dasein must, of its own accord, take itself over from das Man by projecting its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, which is shown through anticipation. This is the criterion for authenticity.

We need not take Heidegger to be advocating or describing hermetic individualism.\(^{17}\) If we notice Heidegger’s qualification, “when our ownmost potentiality-for-being is the issue,”\(^{18}\) we see that we need not take an individualist reading of “individualization.” When authentic Dasein takes over its potentiality for being, and chooses a certain path of action in accord with it, it is true that only the chooser can make

\(^{17}\) See again Dostal’s “The Problem of Indifferenz,” 55-56. Dostal takes a different route to a similar conclusion in addressing this issue.

\(^{18}\) wenn es um das eigenste Seinkönnen geht.
the choice. But the course of action that plays out accordingly may involve others, and will likely involve things with which we generally concern ourselves, even if these things are no longer of primary concern. Thus, Heidegger goes on to say:

if concern and solicitude fail us, this does not signify at all that these ways of Dasein have been cut off from its authentically being its-self. As structures essential to Dasein’s constitution, these have a share in conditioning the possibility of any existence whatsoever. Dasein is authentically itself only to the extent that, as concerned being alongside and solicitous being with, it projects itself upon its ownmost potentiality for being rather than upon the possibility of the they self. (B&T, 308)

Thus, Dasein is still constituted as a being who is alongside its world and solicitous, but when we are faced with our ownmost potentiality for being via a confrontation with death, concern and solicitude do not come to our aid in appropriating our mortality, and thus, in becoming authentic.

Since, as we have seen, death is certain, but the when is indefinite, Heidegger tells us that a threat is thus opened up to Dasein.

Dasein opens itself to a constant threat arising out of its own ‘there’. In this very threat being towards the end must maintain itself. So little can it tone this down that it must rather cultivate the indefiniteness of the certainty. (B&T, 310)

This threat is disclosed in the mood of anxiety (angst). Anxiety is the state of mind (Befindlichkeit), or the way one finds oneself, in which Dasein can cultivate (ausbilden) this indefiniteness of the certainty of death. In being towards death, we are anxious. But das Man “perverts anxiety into cowardly (feige) fear,” so Dasein must, ostensibly, hold itself authentically before death in anxiety (B&T, 311).

In Dasein’s individualized and anxious state, it is in an “impassioned freedom towards death” (B&T, 311). Dasein is here free because it has been “released from the illusions of the ‘they’.” Heidegger next searches for that which “gives testimony”
(Zeugnis gibt) to a possible authentic existence, “so that it not only makes known that in an existentiell manner such authenticity is possible, but demands [fordert] this of itself” (B&T, 311). Dasein’s possible authenticity still needs a phenomenal basis to which Dasein itself attests.

Conscience, Guilt, and Resoluteness

So far, authenticity has been seen only in its ontological possibility. Being-towards-death is the ontological condition for the possibility of being one’s own self. This plays out phenomenally in the call of conscience.\(^{19}\) Dasein is lost in das Man, and must be called back to itself so that it may choose (wählen) its authentic potentiality-for-being (B&T, 313). Who calls and who is called? The answer in both cases is Dasein. Dasein, in the uncanniness (Unheimlichkeit) of anxiety, calls to the Dasein who is lost in das Man. The call summons Dasein to being guilty (schuldig). What is guilt? Heidegger defines guilt as being the basis for a “nullity” (Nichtigkeit). To be the basis for a nullity means “never to have power over one’s ownmost Being from the ground up” (B&T, 330). We are essentially a not. We are, according to Heidegger, constitutively possibility. “In having a potentiality-for-being, [Dasein] always stands in one possibility or another: it constantly is not other possibilities” (B&T, 331). Not only will we never have complete control over our being (we did not, after all, choose to be born), but we can only actualize one possibility at a time, while not actualizing others.

Dasein is called back to the “stillness of itself,” away from the noise of idle talk, into its ownmost potentiality-for-being. Thus, Dasein wants to have a conscience, since it willingly takes over for itself its own guilt. The state of mind corresponding to this is

\(^{19}\) See Stanbaugh, “Inquiry,” 156-159. Stanbaugh makes this helpful distinction: phenomenology is Heidegger’s method, but ontology allows us to see the fundamental structures of being, i.e., the conditions for the possibilities of ways of being.
anxiety. Thus, “this reticent self-projection upon one’s ownmost being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety—we call ‘resoluteness’” (B&T, 343). Resolute Dasein is resolved to being what it is—it is ready to hear the call of conscience and take upon itself its own guilt, its own not-ness. Resolute Dasein opens up for itself the “situation” (Situation). In the situation, Dasein can authentically see what it must be (B&T, 346). Thus, “resoluteness, as authentic being-one’s-self, does not detach Dasein from its world…[but] brings the self right into its current concernful Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into solicitous being with others” (B&T, 344). The authentic self is thoroughly in the world, but with a new perspective. It sees the world anew, as it is.

Heidegger emphasizes the worldliness, so to speak, of resoluteness. When resolute, or as authentically being oneself:

the ‘world’ which is ready-to-hand does not become another one ‘in its content’, 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. (B&T, 344)

Resoluteness frees Dasein for its world (B&T, 344). We may here think of the etymology of “resolute.” The Latin verb solvo, from which we get “solve” and “solvent,” means to “free” or “loosen.” Thus, to resolve, or be resolute, means not to adhere stubbornly to an ideal. Rather, to be resolute means to be open and free. The world does not change in

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20 King, Guide, 196. King helpfully reminds us of the ambiguity of resoluteness, or Entschlossenheit. “Heidegger’s word means both resoluteness and utmost disclosedness. The ambivalence is essential, for it expresses that the authentic mode of care is the most original truth of existence, and that this can concretize itself only in the resolute choice on the part of a factically existing Dasein.”

21 See Michael Inwood’s A Heidegger Dictionary (Malden, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 186-187. “Schliessen means ‘to close, shut, fasten, etc.’ and also ‘to infer’ i.e. to join in thought to what precedes’. The prefix ent- indicates opposition or separation. Hence entschliessen originally meant ‘to open, unlock’. But by the sixteenth century the reflexive sich entschliessen meant ‘to decide, reach a decision’, ‘i.e. unlock one’s mind, clarify, make definite one’s thoughts’…The perfect participle entschlossen was used for ‘resolute’ and Entschluss for ‘decision, resolution’…erschliessen means ‘to disclose’…[Thus] ‘Resoluteness [Entschlossenheit] is a distinctive mode of Dasein’s disclosedness.
authentic resolve, but the authentic person is changed in her being. The authentic person is self-appropriated and directed toward the world in such a way as to take hold of her course in it. Thus, “only by authentically being-their-selves in resoluteness can people authentically be with one another” (B&T, 344).

The ordinary or Vulgär interpretation of conscience places conscience within the moral realm. It speaks of a good and bad conscience. In either case, says Heidegger, we have not reached the real, primordial phenomenon of conscience and being guilty. The common (mis)understanding of conscience also tries to thrust it into the practical realm.

We miss a ‘positive’ content in that which is called, because we expect to be told something currently useful about assured possibilities of ‘taking action’ which are available and calculable. This expectation has its basis within the horizon of that way of interpreting which belongs to common-sense concern—a way of interpreting which forces Dasein’s existence to be subsumed under the idea of a business procedure that can be regulated. Such expectations (and in part these tacitly underlie even the demand for a material ethic of value as contrasted with one that is ‘merely’ formal) are of course disappointed by conscience. The call of conscience fails to give any ‘practical’ injunctions, solely because it summons Dasein to existence, to its ownmost potentiality-for-being-its-self. (B&T, 340)

Common-sense is too common to see the real and exceptional phenomenon of conscience. In our commonness, we want hard results that we can see and feel. In fact, we may even wish for practical injunctions or prescriptions. Thus, we mistakenly interpret conscience as the voice that directs us toward concrete results. However, Heidegger tells us that the only function of conscience is to summon Dasein to its potentiality for being itself. But, Heidegger goes on to say, “to hear the call authentically, signifies bringing oneself into a factual taking-action” (B&T, 341).

22 Den Ruf eigentlich hören bedeutet, sich in das faktische Handeln bringen.

[Eröffnung].” We often tend to think of resolution as being a static, solid way of being. If I am resolved to do something, I may think of myself as immovable in that respect. However, we see that resolve is rather an openness to and for what is.
summons Dasein to its being, with no practical injunction, how can it at the same time bring Dasein to act?

Heidegger uses “act,” or *Handeln*, more than once. “The authentic understanding of the call has been characterized as ‘wanting to have a conscience’. This is a way of letting one’s ownmost self take action in itself of its own accord in its being-guilty…” (*B&T*, 342). To understand oneself in a potentiality-for-being, means that one must understand potential ways to be. This plays out authentically in the “situation.” To understand potential ways to be is to understand which course of action to take. But this does not mean that conscience is primarily that which gives practical injunctions. It may be that conscience only makes one ready to act in the practical, concrete world.\(^{23}\)

Again, in reference to resoluteness, Heidegger speaks of taking action. But this time, he voices reservations about the term.

…resoluteness can hardly be confused with an empty ‘*habitus*’ or an indefinite ‘velleity’. Resoluteness does not first take cognizance of a situation and put that situation before itself; it has put itself into that situation already. As resolute, Dasein is already *taking action*. The term ‘take action’ is one which we are purposely avoiding…it suggests a misunderstanding in the ontology of Dasein, as if resoluteness were a special way of behaviour belonging to the practical faculty as contrasted with one that is theoretical. (*B&T*, 347)

Resoluteness appears here not to be an empty structure which allows for action; it is already firmly planted within the realm of action. Heidegger is trying here to avoid a divided Dasein, i.e., the division of praxis and theory. He is not altogether denying such a division, but rather denying it as fundamentally ontological. Thus, he goes on to say:

Care…as concernful solicitude, so primordially and wholly envelops Dasein’s being that it must already be presupposed as a whole when we distinguish

\(^{23}\) King, *Guide*, 194. King suggests that conscience (and Heidegger’s characterization of human being in general) is ethical, contrary to Heidegger’s insistence that it is not. “It would seem, then, that in summoning Da-sein to a decision about how he is to be, conscience itself gives him his first ‘ought’.” While it may lead to ethical situations, conscience in itself need not be ethical.
between theoretical and practical behaviour. ...Resoluteness ...is only that authenticity which, in care, is the object of care, and which is possible as care— the authenticity of care itself. (B&T, 347-348)

Because Dasein is care, it is care that first gives rise to any theory-praxis distinction. Care runs its course in the world. Thus, authenticity or resoluteness does not remove Dasein from the world of action, even if conscience does not offer practical injunctions.

When conscience calls us back to ourselves, it calls us back to the real fact that we are. We see ourselves as mortals. In this gathering of ourselves, we are able to act resolutely. By seeing that I am the sort of being who may cease to be at any moment, the moment or situation may be made clearer. I see that not only I, but also this context in which I currently am, is not everlasting, and I may then be able to choose reasonably—or simply to see—what it is I will do. So, conscience calls Dasein back to itself, and resoluteness allows Dasein to be and act authentically in its world. Although conscience gives no practical orders or injunctions, it still allows for Dasein to be ready to act. To be authentic, then, Dasein must listen to the call of conscience and resolutely respond to it. The response is action. Thus, authenticity is carried out in the practical world through a resolute response to the call of conscience. One now acts as oneself because one has taken over his own potentiality-for-being, and has resolutely actualized it.

But what or who is this authentic self who acts?

The Authentic Self

We have seen that the Man-selbst is constituted by idle chatter, craving novelty, and ambiguity. This gives rise to the illusion that it is itself. It gives rise to the illusion that the self is a point called the “I” or “me.” But who is the authentic self? As suggested earlier,
the they-self is not so much the everyday who of Dasein as the what. In authenticity, Dasein becomes its own self, but who is the authentic self?

When the they-self is appealed to, it gets called to the self. But it does not get called to that self which can become for itself an ‘object’ on which to pass judgment, nor to that self which inertly dissects its ‘inner life’ with fussy curiosity, nor to that self which one has in mind when one gazes ‘analytically’ at psychical conditions and what lies behind them. The appeal to the self in the they-self does not force it inwards upon itself, so that it can close itself off from the ‘external world’. The call passes over everything like this and disperses it, so as to appeal solely to that self which, notwithstanding, is in no other way than Being-in-the-world. (B&T, 318)

The authentic self, through resolution and being ready for her being, realizes (makes real for herself) her being through resolute action, but this is only after she has come face to face with the sheer fact that she is. What the authentic self first sees is that it is (B&T, 321). When one comes back to oneself, the self is beyond all inauthentic conceptions of selfhood. It sees first that it is. As such, it is now authentically ready to be in the world by owning up to its being—a being that it can never fully own or control.

Authenticity brings one to oneself, but this self is not a thing, substance, or store of psychological content. We recall that when Dasein says “I” loudest, this is precisely when it is not itself at all (B&T, 151). So who is the authentic self? The authentic self is care. “The being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-already-being-in-(the-world) as being-alongside (entities-encountered-within-the-world)” (B&T, 237). The being of Dasein is care, and care plays out temporally. In authenticity, Dasein is ahead of itself (being-towards-death), but already in a world, and being-alongside entities in that world,

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24 King, Guide, 197. “Now, what happens when the lost ‘oneself’ is summoned by conscience and the call is resolutely answered? Apparently, nothing happens; the factical world in which Da-sein lives is not changed, his daily occupations, his circle of friends and acquaintances are not exchanged for others, and yet his care-taking being-near-to things and his caring-for being-with others are now primarily determined not by the possibilities prescribed by ‘them,’ but from the resolutely grasped possibilities of his own self.” We shall see that this “own self” is not what we might immediately think.
whether in concern or solicitude. When one hears and properly responds to the call of conscience, one is then ready to be in the world. Rather than shirking one’s being, the authentic self now takes up who it already is by looking ahead to its ownmost potentiality for being.

In the first instance, authentic Dasein is itself. The self has been, under Heidegger’s determination, removed from the dictatorship of the they, and is now individuated before its own death. The self has been recalled to itself by the calling of conscience. We already saw that inauthentic Dasein thinks it knows itself. Inauthentic Dasein can easily point out numerous things that it is, and just as many things it desires or things by which it is pleased. Dasein thinks it knows itself, and is most sure of this when it says, “I.” It is this “I” that Dasein claims to know. For Heidegger, this “I” is dictated by das Man, i.e., the content of the “I” is all of the involvements of the Man-selbst. This amounts to an objectification of the self as a thing present-at-hand in the world.

The authentic self, according to Heidegger, is the self who no longer says “I” loudly. The self-knowledge available in authenticity is not the knowing of a self as a thing.

We choose this term [i.e. transparency] to designate “knowledge of the self” in a sense which is well understood, so as to indicate that here it is not a matter of perceptually tracking down and inspecting a point called the “self,” but rather one of seizing upon the full disclosedness of being-in-the-world throughout all the constitutive items which are essential to it…In existing, entities [see] ‘themselves’ only in so far as they have become transparent to themselves in equal primordiality in those items which are constitutive for their existence: their being-alongside the world and their being-with Others. (B&T, 186-187)

Seizing upon oneself means seizing upon care. Calling the self “care” is not an objectification. It rather signifies a way of being. Just as the Man-selbst is dispersed into das Man, the authentic self is a distention of temporal being in the world. The authentic
self just is care, and this means that it is ahead of itself, already in the world, and with others in that world. Authentic Dasein is not divorced from the world, but thoroughly in it. Self-appropriation is becoming who one most basically is. It is a readiness to be, and this being plays out temporally. “As something that keeps silent, authentic being-one’s-self is just the sort of thing that does not keep on saying ‘I’; but in its reticence it ‘is’ that thrown entity as which it can authentically be” (B&T, 369-370). The self is literally nothing, but rather a way of being. Heidegger emphasizes “being” here to show that the self is not making authenticity a cognizant theme, but is rather being authentic as care.

Resoluteness operates in silence. This return to the self in silence is characterized by “stillness” (Stille). While keeping silent does dispel idle talk, it is not the same thing as being dumb. “Keeping silent authentically is possible only in genuine discoursing” (B&T, 208). Authentic Dasein has something to say. Perhaps we might say that authentic Dasein has something worth saying, i.e., it has “an authentic and rich disclosedness of itself” (B&T, 208). In authenticity, we no longer identify ourselves as what we do, desire, like, dislike, etc. We are simply beings already thrown into a world, alongside entities therein (via concern and solicitude), in anticipation of our death. We are a temporal, dynamic movement. When this is understood, Dasein does not have much to say about itself, because the self is no longer identified by the “me” or “I.” The “I” is not a thing, as das Man would have us believe. The silence of resoluteness derives from the fact that, as care, Dasein does not see itself as a particularized “me,” identified by typical, everyday modes of understanding. The self that is known is not an object, but being-towards death, already being-in-the-world, and being-with others.
Let us recall that, as resolute, Dasein is already acting. As resolute, we are open
and free, and can see what is to happen in the situation. We are thoroughly in the
situation, just as we are in the world. The resolute and authentic self is absorbed into the
situation, as everyday Dasein is absorbed and taken in by its world. The difference is this:
everyday, inauthentic Dasein is taken in by its world in such a way so as not to see it for
what it is. Everyday Dasein operates in such a way that its being as care is covered over.
Authentic, resolute Dasein, on the other hand, is absorbed knowingly into the situation.
This knowing is not a thematic knowing. That is, Dasein does not step back, as if looking
at itself in the situation from a distance. Rather, it sees from within the situation what is
to be done. Through care, resolute Dasein is open and directed toward the world. Dasein
becomes free for the world so as thoroughly to be in it, without being swept off its feet by
it.

What Authenticity Is and Is Not

Theodor Adorno saw Heidegger’s formulation of authenticity, and its insistence on
mineness, or a reclamation of the self from the they, as empty and formal. Authenticity
“takes its directive, beyond real states of affairs, from the highly formal sense of
belonging to oneself.”25 Thus:

The societal relation, which seals itself off in the identity of the subject, is de-
societalized into an in-itself. The individual, who himself can no longer rely on
any firm possession, holds on to himself in his extreme abstractness as the last,
the supposedly unlosable possession.26

In the movement of authenticity, i.e., the movement away from the they-self or public
life, the self becomes sealed in by its own mineness—a mineness that belongs to any

25 Adorno, Jargon, 115.
26 Adorno, Jargon, 115.
Dasein and just is the character of any Dasein. This universality empties Dasein of its content. Therefore, Adorno goes on to say, “By it [authenticity] the living subject is robbed of all definition, in the same way as it loses its attributes in reality.”

The individualization in the face of death is only this: one comes face to face with one’s being as care. This means that the self is no longer conceived as a thing, or as das-Man conceives it. The individualization is not a process of returning “into oneself.” There is no self to hold onto as a “firm possession.” In fact, authentic selfhood is a letting go of the self—the self as it is normally conceived. Authentic selfhood lets go of ways of conceiving itself. The self is not a concept. To get beyond the Man-selbst is to get beyond the concern with oneself as a thing. Authentic selfhood is spread out into dynamic, temporal being, rather than selfhood dispersed into misunderstanding, confusion, and entanglements. That is, authentic selfhood is the thrownness of its past and the not-yet of its future, all of which makes up the present moment. To call the self “care” is not an empty abstraction, if we understand how care temporally unfolds, i.e. how care is. Understanding the self as care does not “rob the living subject of definition,” because the self is no longer conceived as subject. There is no subject to be defined. Rather, there is a life to be lived, and this happens concretely in the world with others.

Again, in authenticity, self-conception drops out of the picture. What is left is being there in the situation. Oddly, the self-appropriation of authenticity is a letting go of all self-conception. The authentic self, in other words, no longer conceives of itself. Being released from self-conception is being released from the ways in which one typically identifies oneself. That is, one typically conceives of oneself on the basis of being a they-self. Heidegger pushes past all self-conception in his formulation of

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authenticity. It may seem paradoxical that the authentic self, one’s own self, is beyond conceptions of particularity and individuality. This need not mean that “the individual” (whatever this may mean) is lost. Rather, it is that the authentic self’s concern is directed elsewhere.

Another possible problem has been raised by Hermen Philipse. We opened this section on authenticity by saying that authentic Dasein does not escape from das Man, since the authentic self is only a modification of the Man-selbst. Yet, does not authenticity move past das Man? Philipse thinks there lurks a “persistent contradiction or tension” here.28 “Heidegger on the one hand stresses that we cannot free ourselves from the One or Everyman, and on the other hand claims that we have to liberate ourselves from it in order to become authentic.”29 There is tension, thinks Philipse, with the idea that the Man-selbst is the self thoroughly involved in its cultural setting, and it is only in and from this setting that one could be responsible for oneself.30 But, Philipse thinks, authenticity is defined as the opposite of das Man.31

We recall Dasein becomes itself, which is not its they-self, while still being-in-the-world. In fact, authentic Dasein is in-the-world, but in an authentic way. Authentic Dasein is not separate from das Man so as to have severed all ties with it. Rather, Dasein is only separate insofar as its self is no longer a Man-selbst. Das man is passed over in becoming one’s own, but this “does not by any means signify that the ‘they’ is not reached too. Precisely in passing over the ‘they’...the call pushes it into insignificance” (B&T, 317). Thus, authentic Dasein is not liberated from das Man in such a way as to be

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entirely unrelated to it. Rather, it is related insofar as it sees the they and its they-self—which still lurks as a possibility of being even for authentic Dasein, via the temptation of the they—as insignificant.

For us, the ones doing phenomenology, we see that the authentic self is not a Man-selbst. Phrased in this way, it seems authenticity entails a “me versus them” battle. It seems the authentic self is a self against the world. However, this is how it appears to us, the ones describing the phenomena. For the authentic person, however, who lives concretely in the world, and who is care, he is not a Man-selbst. The emphasis on the “is” here means that, as care, the authentic person is unconcerned with das Man. Das Man, as Heidegger says, has become meaningless or insignificant [Bedeutungslosigkeit]. The authentic person is simply unconcerned with das Man. Das Man is not something to be overcome for the authentic person. For the authentic person, as authentic, das Man is not a theme or a point of consideration at all.

We see now that the mineness of authenticity cannot entail a “me versus them” mentality. If it were to do so, then the self would be conceived all over again as a thing. It would be conceived as a subject set over against an object. Or, we may even say that the self as subject is objectified. This, however, is a disowned or inauthentic understanding of selfhood. The self as care has gotten beyond individualism. We say that this is beyond individualism since care is what human being most fundamentally is, and since it is unconcerned with being an individual. This, however, does not preclude individuation. From the phenomenological perspective, it is this whole, embodied being who takes over his own being as care, but he does not make individuation a theme. His projects and relationships will naturally take on their own particular flavors, but they will be based in
that which is common to all—care.\textsuperscript{32} The owned self is owning up to being—the fact that he is, that he is mortal, and in a world with others. The ownership here is not one of owning a thing called the self. There is no self-possession in that sense. Rather one owns up to being as care, and this entails the understanding that one is never fully in control of one’s being.

As care, Dasein is absorbed into the world, and is directed toward what must be done, and also directed toward others. As care, Dasein gets beyond the particularized, objectified self. We must remember that this plays out temporally. “In resoluteness, the present is not only brought back from distraction with the objects of one’s closest concern, but it gets held in the future and in having been” \textit{(B&T, 387)}. This way of being in the present—a present released by the future and having been—is the \textit{Augenblick}, or a way of truly seeing what is at hand. It is understood “in an active sense as ecstasy \textit{[im aktiven Sinne als Ekstase]}” \textit{(B&T, 387)}. This is why resolute Dasein is “carried away” in the situation. The authentic self is ek-static, i.e., it stands out into the world. “\textit{Temporality is the primordial ‘outside-of-itself’ in and for itself}” \textit{(B&T, 377)}. The authentic self is as having been, and \textit{is as} being-toward-death—this is the temporal distension of authentic selfhood. Therefore, there is a manifold meaning to care. Care is the temporal movement of being-towards-death, being already in a world, and alongside beings in that world. Care is also the direction we have toward our world. It is what allows for our projection onto the world. It allows for our concern with our tasks in the world, and allows for our caring-for others.

As resolute, we are ready to heed the call of conscience, and are “ready for anxiety.” We can even cultivate (\textit{ausbilden}) our sense of uncertainty in the face of death.

\textsuperscript{32} We will take this as our starting point in chapter four with the discussion of authentic being-with.
This need not mean that we are constantly wringing our hands, and worried over death.\(^\text{33}\)

Rather, we are simply ready for what is, in our acceptance of what will be and has been. This means, however, that being one’s own is in some sense not constant. One is not constantly seeing what must be done in the situation, since the situation does not always present itself. Resoluteness and its disclosure of Dasein and the world depends upon “what is factically possible at the time” that one is resolved (B&T, 345).

Dasein is already in irresoluteness, and soon, perhaps, will be in it again [Da
dasein ist je schon und demnächst vielleicht wieder in der Unentschlossenheit]. The term “irresoluteness” merely expresses that phenomenon which we have interpreted as a being-surrendered to the way in which things have been prevalently interpreted by the “they”...“Resoluteness” signifies letting oneself be summoned out of one’s lostness in the “they”. (B&T, 345)

For Heidegger, authenticity seems only to happen here and there. We perhaps cannot avoid slipping back into the everyday ways of being, understanding and interpretation. At most, we can only be ready to be appealed to in the call of conscience. “Wanting to have a conscience” does not mean that “one cultivates the call voluntarily” (B&T, 334). So what we have here is not a moral injunction. The most we can do is be ready for the call of conscience. We can only keep ourselves open (resolute) for it.

To be clear, there are two reasons why we cannot always be authentic. First, we must remember that authenticity, as with all human being, plays out temporally. Authentic human being must be situated. Heidegger evidently thinks that the “situation” is something that happens only now and again. When a situation does present itself, it is not everlasting. We act, or live through it, and then it is over. Next, we can only wait for the call of conscience. We cannot force the call. Instead, we must simply wait for it, and

\(^{33}\) In his “What is Metaphysics?” essay, Heidegger says that angst brings with it a “peculiar calm.” This essay can be found in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1993), 100.
when we are called, we can answer to the call or not. Thus, authenticity is not a goal that we strive to achieve. It is rather based upon a call that brings us back to our being. Just as we do not have control over our being from the ground up, we do not have control over the call which calls us to our being.

Let us now see a different type of authenticity in Aristotle. We will turn to the life of character excellence to see what sort of self-appropriation we might find there. Perhaps we will come to a steadier type of authenticity not so dependent upon mood or an uncontrollable call of conscience. We will see if Aristotle offers a way to think of authenticity as something more firm and lasting.
Chapter Three

We have seen that in authenticity, the everyday they-self is modified into a self who confronts its own being—that it is—by facing its own death. The persistence of the “I” recedes in favor of a reticent resoluteness to be. We have also seen that authenticity seems to be momentary—part of the movement of our temporal being. Is there a way to think a more steady kind of self-appropriation in Aristotle? We shall see, through an overview of the character excellences, that the typical importance of the “I” recedes in favor of a more beautiful or noble way of being. We shall see here the differences and similarities to Heidegger’s version of authenticity.

In his discussion of liberality, about which we shall have more to say later, Aristotle says, “it is more characteristic of excellence to do good than to have good done to one, and more characteristic to do what is noble than not to do what is base” (1120a12-13). We notice, on the one hand, that excellence for Aristotle is in one respect directed away from oneself. One does excellent things for the sake of the noble. On the other hand, we recall that excellence runs its course in activity, and activity is acted out by someone, or some self. One acts excellently, and in doing so, pulls the focus away from the particularized self and its interests, and directs it towards what is noble or best. In doing so, however, there is also a way in which the excellent self is addressed. In acting for the sake of the noble or beautiful (and ultimately the good), we shall see that the excellent person in Aristotle necessarily, but accidentally, also appropriates or owns up to the self. That is, we shall see a new kind of authenticity at play.
Thus, in this chapter we shall explore some of the similarities and disparities between the authentic self and the excellent self. For the sake of continuity, we shall follow the order of character virtues as Aristotle laid them out. We will confine ourselves to the character excellences in Books III and IV of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This will place us immediately on some common ground between Aristotle and Heidegger, since the discussion begins with courage, and that with which courage has to deal—death.

**Character Excellences and The Self**

Before discussing the particular character excellences, let us remind ourselves of the context and aim of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. We recall that Aristotle does not intend his ethics to be a mental excursion on which we might gain knowledge; the goal is not knowledge but action. The serious student of Aristotle’s ethics seeks insight into becoming good, not simply to know what the good is. This is the context in which Aristotle’s discussion of the particular character excellences must be situated. Thus, he deals with each excellence appropriately, with his audience in mind. Keeping this context in mind will allow us to see the flexibility of Aristotle’s ethical theory, since it is ultimately to be applied to sundry concrete settings and lives.

We shall see that Aristotle often discusses each particular excellence by assigning it a special theater in which it most readily shows itself. For example, courage most readily shows itself in battle, and temperance in situations pertaining to the sense of touch. We need not think these are the only places in which these virtues may play out, but that they can be seen most readily there.

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1 An extensive treatment of what the self is for Aristotle will come in the fourth chapter. For now, let the reader think of “the self” as a practical designation. For example, one acts out excellence in some concrete setting, and it is the excellent person himself, or the one becoming excellent that acts.
Having prime or special theaters in which virtues can most readily play out allows us to see several important aspects of the good life. First, the student sees that excellence is difficult, since it is seen most readily in difficult situations. Next, we may see that, even though there may be prime theaters, many of us do well enough by approximating to the excellences. For example, we show something very much like courage in nobly facing a disease (i.e., in a situation other than battle). Thus, one need not begin to habituate oneself to an excellence by jumping right into the prime theater. Related to this, if we do well in situations demanding something close to temperance, then this increases the likelihood of being temperate in all situations. Conversely, the truly temperate person will do well in all situations dealing with bodily pleasures. Having a prime or special theater of virtue gives the student of practical science a picture, or vision, of excellence on which to model herself. Let us now turn to Aristotle’s picture of courage. We shall spend the most time on courage since an important link will be made from it to Heidegger’s conception of authenticity in the face of death. We shall see how courage includes something like Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, but only as incidental to its enterprise.

Courage and Death

We have seen that virtue is a habitually developed disposition. More specifically, it is a mean which aims at an intermediate action. Courage is a mean with respect to fear and confidence (θάρρη), but deals primarily with fearsome things (1117a30). The courageous person aims for the courageous act when appropriate, rather than being rash or cowardly. This breakdown is not as obvious, nor as rigid, as it may seem. Those who are rash seem to rush headlong into anything, fearing nothing. Aristotle calls such people “madmen”
But do we not normally think of the courageous as being fearless? For Aristotle, “to fear some things is even right and noble” (1115a11-12). For example, one may rightly fear disgrace. Fear may motivate us to be better. Poverty and disease we should not fear, since they are not vicious, i.e., they do not proceed from anyone. However, fearlessness in the face of these does not constitute the truly courageous person.

To understand Aristotle’s conception of courage we must understand that with which courage most properly deals. This is where Aristotle draws a narrow conception of courage, and places it in its prime theater. This will allow us, the students, to see properly the difficulty of true excellence. Many instances that would appear to show true courage, such as fearlessness before being flogged, Aristotle briefly dismisses. True courage must be concerned with the most terrible or dreadful (δεινῶν) of things.

Now death is the most terrible of all things; for it is the end, and nothing is thought to be any longer either good or bad for the dead. But the brave man would not seem to be concerned with death in all circumstances, e.g., at sea or in disease. In what circumstances, then? Surely the noblest. Now such deaths are in battle; for these take place in the greatest and noblest danger. (1115a26-30)

A reader or student of Aristotle’s practical science may at this point be put off by this restriction of courage. Surely there are other ways to be brave than only in battle. Aristotle does not consider even a death at sea to be the perfect venue in which courage is displayed. As we shall see, however, Aristotle allows more room for courage than it seems at first glance.

First, we should notice the centrality of death to Aristotle’s conception of courage. Aristotle calls death deinon, i.e., dreadful or terrible. We should take this word in its broad significance. Death is terrible, dreadful, powerful, or even awful, i.e., something
leaving us full of awe. Death is terrible in a similar way as a powerful storm, or as ocean waves during a hurricane might be terrible. It is something that is “beyond human strength” (1115b7-8). We have no control or power over death, but death has power over our lives. Death, claims Aristotle, is the most terrible of all, and is that with which the courageous person is most properly concerned. It is most terrible because it is the end or limit (πέρας) of human life. Also, and just as importantly, nothing is thought to be good or bad for the dead.

It is important that Aristotle tell us in a practical science that nothing is either good or bad for the dead, since the good is what we seek. Death seems to strip human being of anything that makes human being worthwhile. When nothing is any longer good or bad, human being is no longer. We recall that human being is directed toward the good, which is happiness. All that we do is, or seems to be, directed toward producing or maintaining this end. When this end and all other goods are removed, human being seems no longer to be human. Even when the bad parts of human being—poverty, disgrace, disease, and friendlessness—are removed, there too seems a life that is no longer human.

In short, death seems to remove all that makes human being what it is; it removes the being from the human who dies, such that a corpse is not fully human any longer, but a human in name only. But death also removes the human from being human by stripping human life of all that made it a human life.\(^2\)

Death is the limit of human being. It is the end of human being by removing the being of the human. Death removes not only the being of the particular human, but also his humanity. This recalls the human function argument. The dead can no longer fulfill

\(^2\) We seen, then, for Aristotle, good and bad seem to be bound up in who we are. We can separate our ethicality logically, but perhaps not in being.
their function, or their being. They cannot be, and they cannot be human. The courageous one takes heart in face of this ultimate limit. Rather than submitting to nihilism in the face of death, the courageous one says that life—and this already means the life of virtue—is worth living in the face of death. To retreat into nihilism—the idea that life is absurd because it only leads to death—is cowardice. In this way, the life of courage preserves the good life. Courage is situated at the extreme of life, and is thus the excellence that protects all the other excellences by affirming their worth.

The courageous person will thus have a lot to lose in death. “And the more he is possessed of excellence in its entirety and the happier he is, the more he will be pained at the thought of death; for life is best worth living for such a man, and he is knowingly losing the greatest goods, and this is painful” (1117b10-12). The better the life, the more painful is it that it will be lost. Losing a good life, or even the thought of losing it, is more painful the better the life is. Thus, courage must shoulder a great weight—that of death. Despite this death, the courageous ones act nobly in the face of it. Yet, it appears to be not just any death that one must face to show true courage. Why does Aristotle restrict courage to the theatre of battle? The answer is in the context of his practical science.

This science is practical, and this means that with which it deals will play out in concrete action within the polis. Thus, it is political in the broad, Greek sense of the word. For Aristotle, and especially for his pupils, courage is most readily noticed in battle. This is even confirmed by the ways in which honor is bestowed in the polis (1115a30-32). We recall that Aristotle does not want to stray too far from what is ordinarily accepted to be the case. Soldiers are honored for their courage in battle,

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3 Καὶ ὁσοὶ ἂν μᾶλλον τὴν ἀρετὴν ἔχῃ πάσαν καὶ εὐδαιμονεύστερον ἢ, μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῷ θανάτῳ λυπήσεται.
perhaps more than any other instance of what appears to be courageous action. Aristotle needs to find an example of courage his students can live up to. The example he uses shows the student of practical science that excellence is difficult and rare. But there is a further reason why Aristotle chose battle as the prime theatre for courage.

In battle, one can toe the line and not retreat. One can courageously face an imminent threat to one’s safety or life. On the other hand, one can retreat. The fear of death can overtake the soldier, and he can flee it. Beyond this, the rash soldier can rush headlong into life-threatening situations, with no concern for whether or not he survives. The courageous soldier will not choose to face death in any situation in battle, but only when it is noble, or beautiful, to do so. The courageous soldier does not heedlessly or thoughtlessly fly into danger, but does so only when it is appropriate. He is not as expendable as the rash soldier. “Rash men are precipitate, and wish for dangers beforehand but draw back when they are in them, while brave men are keen in the moment of action, but quiet beforehand” (1116a7-9). The rash thus turn out to be sometimes willing to follow through with their reckless ways, but sometimes they are no better than the coward, and hardly distinguishable from him (1115b32). By blurring the lines between these vices, Aristotle implicitly shows us how distinguished the excellent person really is. The path of vice seems pell-mell and blurry, while that of excellence is difficult and rare, but clearly seen (see 1106b29-35).

The greatest difference between the rash and the courageous person is that the rash “do not hold their ground against what is really terrible” (1115b33-34). The rash may rush headlong into deadly situations, but they likely do not see that the situations are deadly. The rash soldier merely goes for the glory of the situation, and perhaps, upon

4 ἐν τούτοις γὰρ ἰδαν θρασυνόμενοι τὰ φοβερὰ οὐχ ὑπομένονται.
seeing the deadliness of it, will retreat. The courageous person does not rush into any
deadly situation, nor does he talk much about it beforehand (1116a9). This is significant.
Aristotle has not only given his students a picture of courage to follow, but has offered a
picture that stays true to human experience. A true recognition of our mortality has a way
of making us quiet. Yet, when the courageous person does act, he is keen and steadfast.
In battle, as we said, one can flee the imminent threats against one’s safety or life, or one
may remain steadfast. Where it is appropriate, the courageous soldier remains steadfast.
He confronts death, even if it is painful to do so. In fact, this is just what constitutes his
courage—he faces death despite the fact that this means the possibility of losing his life
(1117b13-15).

Thus, we see the nearly paradoxical nature of courage: it is fulfilled when it is
faced with the possibility of its own doom. We must keep in mind, however, that the
courageous soldier does not practice courage in order to die, but irrespective of whether
or not he dies. The practice of courage, then, is most fully a life practice. It runs its course
in life and living, even and especially where life is in danger of being lost. It is the
trademark of courage that the courageous person own up to his life by owning up to the
possibility of losing it. While this may play out especially well in the battlefield, we see
that Aristotle allows room for other ways of being that are much like courage; we even
call them by the same name.

Directly after Aristotle tells us that it is death in battle where courage is most
readily seen, he says:

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5 We may recall here Heidegger’s characterization of the reticent resolute person.
6 See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books II-IV, translation and commentary by C.C.W. Taylor (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2006), 175-176. Perhaps my “prime-theater” interpretation will offer a broader
view on Aristotle’s meanings, and we should see, contra Taylor, that courage is not limited merely to battle.
Properly, then, he will be called brave who is fearless in face of a noble death, and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind.\(^7\) (1115a33-35)

First, we notice that the courageous are brave in all emergencies directly involving death. Next, we see that the circumstances of war most produce such circumstances.\(^8\) So, there is no reason to think that someone facing a terminal illness could not be facing it bravely; for the key to courage is steadfastly facing one’s death, and accepting its threat despite the pain it causes, and all this for the sake of what is fine, beautiful, or noble to do. The theater of war produces situations in which courage can be, and usually is, most readily seen. This is, again, because one can here flee from the constant dangers of battle. One cannot flee the terminality of a terminal illness. While this does not preclude courage in the face of the illness, it opens the possibility of a hopeless abandonment to death (which, presumably, would be neither excellent nor vicious), rather than a brave steadfastness in the face of it. Although there may be a proper or most fitting situation for courage to be readily seen, this does not mean we cannot use the word in approximate ways, or accurately in different situations. Thus, we need not be suspicious of any absolute restriction of courage to battle.\(^9\)

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\(^7\) Κυρίως δὴ λέγοιτʼ ἂν ἀνδρείος ὁ περί τὸν καλὸν θάνατον ἄδεης, καὶ ὅσα θάνατον ἐπιφέρει ὑπόγυια ὄντα. Τοιαῦτα δὲ μάλιστα τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον.

\(^8\) See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C.I. Litzinger, O.P. (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), 177. Aquinas claims that enduring death for the sake of virtue is courageous, “But [Aristotle] makes a special mention of death in battle because in that undertaking men more frequently suffer death for the sake of the good.” So, death in battle here is taken as a prime theater for courage, rather than the exclusive field in which it must be exhibited. Aquinas continues, “death in battle happens in the greatest danger since a man easily loses his life there. It happens also in the most noble of danger since a man undergoes the danger in that case on account of the common good that is the greatest good…But virtue deals with what is greatest and best. Therefore, the virtue of fortitude especially deals with death that takes place in battle.”

\(^9\) See Amelie Rorty, “The Two Faces of Courage,” in *Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 236 (April, 1986): 151-171. “If we retain the traditional conception of courage and its military connotations—overcoming and combat—we should be suspicious of it” (151). Rorty seems not to hold Aristotle suspicious, but to leave room for a broader construal of Aristotelian courage. “Although he retains physical courage as the primary
That Aristotle is not ultimately concerned with restricting courage only to battle is evidenced by what he offers us in the eighth chapter. First, he wraps up his previous discussion of courage by saying, “Courage, then, is something of this sort [τοιοῦτον τι], but the name is also applied to five other kinds” (1116a16). On the one hand, courage seems restricted to its display in battle only, but then we are told that courage is only “something of this sort.” Courage may be most properly seen in battle, and is most properly a phenomenon concerning death, but it may be seen in other similar ways as well.

The five similar conditions to courage are named in order, where the first is closest to courage, and the last is furthest from courage. The five conditions are these: political courage, experience with regard to particular facts, passion, sanguinity, and ignorance. While I will not discuss these in depth, it is noteworthy that even the last two of these, Aristotle says, are like courage, but are not courage. Even if the sanguine “closely resemble brave men,” or the ignorant are thought to be brave because they sometimes temporarily hold their ground, neither of them are actually brave (1117a10-27). However, this does not mean they are somehow wicked or corrupt. It is simply that their actions do not proceed from a courageous character. Later, when discussing the virtue of liberality, Aristotle says that the prodigal are not wicked, but foolish (1121a16-30). Similarly, the sanguine or ignorant may be blamed from the perspective of excellence, but they are not corrupt. Thus, we see the flexibility in Aristotle’s conception of excellence. Some people come very close to courage, and some stray a little further away from it, while others go to the opposite extreme of cowardice. We may thus
approximate to courage, and the theater of war is only the prime theater in which courage may most readily be seen.

We may also recall here the quoted passage presented above. The more excellent and happy one is, the more he will be pained at the thought of death. Not everyone will be excellent in the same way, or to the same degree. Just as courage need not be reserved for the battlefield only, goodness of character can move in degrees and be seen in various ways.

The Courageous Self

Courage, as we have shown, is fulfilled through a confrontation with death. The courageous soldier is most himself precisely when he looks away from himself towards the courageous action. Let us recall that courage, as any other character virtue, is maintained through habituation. When one has habituated oneself to a courageous disposition, one is ready to act courageously. Even on the spur of the moment, one acts courageously because sudden actions are done “in accordance with one’s state of character” (1117a20-21). Thus, when circumstances call for courage, the courageous person is ready to be courageous. The courageous person is not looking for honors, rewards, or anything else that is selfishly motivated. Rather, it is by answering to the demands of the current situation (and doing so habitually), that the courageous person is constituted. Since courage may be approximated, this habituation need not take place on the battlefield—a place where few would have the chance at courage. Rather, we could habituate ourselves to something very much like courage in other areas of life.

That the courageous person is not, qua courageous, selfish (in our colloquial sense) can be seen when we recall his being pained by the thought of death (1117b10-11).
The more one is possessed of excellence, and in this case courage, the more one is pained by the thought or imminence of death. Life for an excellent person is good, and it is difficult to give up good things.\textsuperscript{10} Yet, despite this pain—which is indeed a personal one—courage calls us to act. If I were to lead an excellent life, and were particularly courageous, the thought of dying would pain me. Despite these considerations of myself, I decide to answer courageously as the situation demands, knowing well that it could mean the loss of my life. Thus, courage allows for a movement away from the everyday self and its demands and desires, toward nobility. The courageous soldier, for example, does not risk death in battle for his own sake (what reward would there be for him were he to die?), but for the sake of what is best.

Temperance

Courage allows the life of virtue to be lived, since it confronts death. Once the challenge of death is faced in courage, temperance allows for the discipline to live excellently. Temperance deals not with pleasures of the soul (love of learning, honor, etc.), but with bodily pleasures (1117b28-32). It is not even with all bodily pleasures that temperance is concerned. We do not blame, after all, the person who takes great delight in looking at paintings or listening to music, although either of these could be done to excess (1118a3-8). Here we notice that it is possible to go to excess with some bodily pleasures without being “bad,” or at least not being overly blamed, especially since these examples exhibit particularly human things to do. Aristotle is narrowing temperance down to its proper

\textsuperscript{10} Aquinas, Commentary, 193-194. Aquinas contrasts this view with the typically Stoic view that not even death is painful. It seems natural that the good soul would find dying difficult and sad. Aquinas might say that this natural reaction is good, since it indicates good things, i.e., the sadness is felt over the loss of what is truly good in life—excellence.
theater by overlooking actions that are neither temperate nor intemperate, even though they may be somewhat excessive.

People who delight in odors are not necessarily intemperate, but only those who delight excessively in odors which incite their appetites (1118a9-16). For instance, the glutton is intemperate when he delights too much in the smell of food only because it entices him to eat it. Yet, Aristotle does not say much here about intemperance or self-indulgence. He is interested in narrowing the theater even further. Thus, he tells us that animals do not seem to delight much in the scent of what they will eat, but rather the act of eating their food (1118a17). In other words, intemperance seems to carry a beastly quality of consumption, while overindulgence in scents still seems a human affair, since there seems to be some cognitive aspect here. We are now on the track of the bodily pleasures with which temperance shall deal.

The pleasures that temperance keeps under control must be ones shared by other animals, so that the self-indulgent person looks somewhat inhuman or brutish. Thus, temperance deals primarily with the pleasure of touch. Taste, in human beings, is discriminatory, and thus operates differently than taste in other animals. It would be indeed strange to call someone intemperate for loving the flavor of this or that food or drink.\footnote{See again C.C.W. Taylor’s commentary, 196. Taylor complains, “while it may be useful to define taste as the sense by which we discriminate flavours…that by no means supports the identification of the enjoyment of taste with the enjoyment of the process of making refined discriminations of taste, or of the discriminations thus produced.” Aristotle’s point is not to equate enjoyment of taste with refined discriminations, but rather to show that there is still the use of logos in human taste, even if only to the degree that one recognizes one likes the flavor of this or that drink or food, i.e., it is reflective. But the mere gobbling of food or sloshing of drink has to do only with touch. Even the results of overeating and drinking seem texture related.} Thus, it is the sense of touch (and therefore texture), with which temperance deals, e.g., the drinking of the drink, the eating of the food, and the feeling of sexual intercourse (1118a17-32).
Temperance (σωφροσύνη) is a soundness of mind. Literally, it suggests a saving of intelligence. Temperance saves the intelligence so that it can act properly. More precisely, temperance saves the intelligence from a lack of discipline, or self-indulgence (ἀκολασία).

By not having appetites leading to self-indulgence, the temperate person avoids the scattered, particularized life of the “I” or “me.” For Aristotle, the undisciplined life of self-indulgence or intemperance is not a fully human life. If we think of the extreme of self-indulgence, e.g., one who goes to excess in every bodily appetite, we easily imagine a chaotic, slavish, and brutish existence. We say he is a “slave to his passions.” The temperate person, on the other hand, leads a disciplined life of self-control, and this moves beyond the helter-skelter life of the pleasure-seeker.

The temperate person, *qua* temperate, is beyond particularized appetites by being in control of them. He is not pulled in the direction of multiple desires—“I want this and that”—but has expanded himself into a disciplined, controlled, and centered way of being. The temperate self, however, is not defined by the negativity of its not being controlled by pleasures; this would be more like continence. Let us recall that the temperate person does not have bad desires at all. There is no struggle here, but simply well-being. The temperate person is one who is in control of himself, especially when it concerns bodily appetites. Once habituated to temperance, the temperate person will not avoid his appetites, but will put them in their proper place. That is, he knows when, where, and how to indulge in them.
Liberality and Magnificence

With courage in the face of death, and self-control in temperance, we can now move on to the virtues dealing with money. Liberality is a mean with regard to both the giving and taking of wealth, but primarily with regard to giving (1119b22-25). Liberality, in Greek (ἐλευθερία), is related to the word for “freedom,” just as the English word “liberal” can mean both “generous” and “free.” Thus, the liberal person freely gives wealth, as reason directs. The prodigal (ἀσωτία) person is wasteful with money; he literally is not a preserver (σωτήρ) or saver of money. The deficient disposition with regard to liberality is illiberality (ἀνελευθερία), or “meanness.” The illiberal person is the one who is not free with his money, but is rather miserly. Thus, the freedom of liberality is not an all or nothing affair warranting wild spending sprees. Nor does the liberal person care to keep too much wealth for himself. Rather, “he will give to the right people, the right amounts, and at the right time,” and he will do so with pleasure (1120a24-25).

But does not the liberal person give in order to be honored? If this were the case, liberality would not be motivated by a desire to give in the right ways, but by a concern with how one will be regarded by others. However, it is more characteristic of the liberal person to give than to receive. Thus, giving is the foundational activity of liberality.

Moreover:

It is highly characteristic of a liberal man also to go to excess in giving, so that he leaves too little for himself; for it is the nature of a liberal man not to look to himself [τὸ γὰρ μὴ βλέπειν ἐφ᾽ἑαυτὸν ἐλευθερίου]. The term ‘liberality’ is used relatively to a man’s substance [κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν]; liberality resides not in the multitude of gifts but in the state of the giver, and this is relative to the giver’s substance. There is therefore nothing to prevent the man who gives less from being the more liberal man, if he has less to give. (1120b5-10)
First, we notice that liberality seems something like courage, since that which drives it (giving), also has the potential to undermine it. However, just as death does not undermine the courage of the courageous person, but merely prevents him from showing any further courage, excessive giving will not entirely undermine the liberality of the liberal person.\footnote{In his commentary, Taylor offers a good interpretation of excessive giving (τὸ ὑπερβάλλειν ἐν τῇ δόσει). Taylor says, “‘Excessive’ cannot imply improper excess, which is the vice of extravagance; it must mean ‘more than normal’ or ‘more than expected’” (207).} The liberal person will give at the right time, and to the right people, and in the right amounts. Even if this leaves him with little for himself, we need not take this to mean that he has given wrongly, or wastefully. The giving cannot be wasteful since it is appropriate. Moreover, it does not matter how much the liberal person has (or has left), since the mark of his liberality is not how much he gives, or has to give, but its appropriateness, i.e., how it accords with his substance and with the situation.

Liberality comes from one’s substance, but we can also translate ousia here as “one’s own,” or even loosely as “being.” Liberality is situated in how one has habitually established oneself to be. It is interesting that Aristotle tells us that we use liberality according to the liberal person’s ousia, since ousia also relates to property. There may be an intentional ambiguity here. Liberality shows itself according to both what one has, and how one is. Liberality has to do with how one is, and what the liberal person has at his disposal.

Since giving, then, is the activity in which liberality is readily seen, the act of liberality is directed away from itself toward the recipient. The wasteful person—the one who does not rightly preserve and spend his wealth—gives excessively, but in a way that seems aimed at self-indulgence (1119b31). As can be noticed with the vices relative to
the other virtues, prodigality even seems to mix somehow with illiberality.\textsuperscript{13} The prodigal begin to take money excessively, since “they wish to spend and cannot do this easily” (1121a30-b1). Moreover, the prodigal give “much to flatterers, or those who provide them with some other pleasure” (1121b6-7). They thus are self-indulgent and “incline towards pleasures because they do not live with a view to what is noble” (1121b8-10).\textsuperscript{14} The liberal person moves beyond personal interests and pleasures. One is liberal not for the sake of oneself, but for the sake of the noble or beautiful. Again, we see the expansion of a traditional concept of self, toward a concept of self that is beyond particularized and self-directed desires, pleasures, etc. Here, the self is directed away from itself.

The magnificent person, who gives and spends larger sums of money than the liberal person, will also provide an expansion beyond selfish interest, toward beauty and nobility. He is, in fact, “like an artist; for he can see what is fitting and spend large sums tastefully” (1122a34-b1). The magnificent soul directs his energy away from himself, toward the project that will be beautiful or noble, such as votive offerings to the gods, public buildings and spaces, and sacrifices (1122b19-21). While magnificence indicates greater sums of money spent than liberality, the magnificent person will not go to the excess of vulgarity. The vulgar person spends not “for the sake of the noble but to show off his wealth, and because he thinks he is admired for these things” (1123a25-26). Thus, the mean of magnificence is not self-oriented, but beauty-oriented.

\textsuperscript{13} Again, Aristotle implies here how rare, difficult, and distinct excellence is, while a vicious life is easy and muddled.

\textsuperscript{14} Interestingly, Aristotle notes that prodigality in some sense ruins the self (1120a3), about which we shall say more later in the chapter.
Magnanimity and Honor

While magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία) is perhaps self-directed, i.e., making the self its object, we see that ultimately the magnanimous self goes beyond the particularized, pleasure-seeking self to the excellent self. The magnanimous person is one who reckons himself worthy of great things, and really is worthy of them, as opposed to the vain person who thinks himself worthy of great things but is not (1123b1-9). We must understand that if the magnanimous person is excellent, and thinks himself worthy of great things, then he must be truly good (1123b30). This is what separates magnanimity from vanity; the former is born of a life of all around excellence and proper self-estimation, and the latter is born of something less than excellence, and improper self-estimation.

We need not think that Aristotle’s description of magnanimity exhibits, as Sir David Ross has suggested, “the self-absorption which is the bad side of Aristotle’s ethics.” Magnanimity is most properly concerned with honor and dishonor. Yet, even when great men bestow honors upon the magnanimous person, “he will be moderately pleased, thinking that he is coming by his own or even less than his own; for there can be no honor that is worthy of perfect excellence” (1124a5-8). He cares little for honors not because they are unworthy of him as a particularized self, but because they are not worthy of his excellence, since it is excellence that makes him good, and it is this goodness of which he has proper estimation. In other words, he does not view himself as

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15 Thus, we may see here the difficulty of proper self-estimation in Aristotle’s thought.
17 This quote should be enough to dismiss the misinformed claim that Aristotle’s magnanimous person uncritically accepts the community’s evaluation of him. See Jacob Howler, “Aristotle’s Great-Souled Man”, in The Review of Politics, vol. 64, no. 1 (Winter, 2002): 32. Nor is the magnanimous person, as we shall see, “a slave to honor.”
an object of which the honors are unworthy. Rather, he sees himself as an active being practicing excellence. It is therefore *excellence*, which the magnanimous person habitually practices, of which the honors are unworthy.

That the magnanimous person does not make much of honors bestowed upon him shows he is neither “self-absorbed,” nor even the opposite of what we call “humble.” In fact, Aristotle says that the magnanimous person will not be a gossip, since he “will speak neither about himself nor about another, since he cares not to be praised nor for others to be blamed” (1125a5-7). His focus is himself insofar as he is the embodiment of the excellence he diligently practices. Moreover, “he must be unable to make his life revolve round another, unless it be a friend; for this is slavish, and for this reason all flatterers are servile and people lacking in self-respect are flatterers” (1124b31-1125a3). If he were self-absorbed, it seems the magnanimous person would relish the opportunity to talk about himself, and would also gladly receive flattery. That the magnanimous person estimates himself highly need not entail vanity or self-absorption. In fact, in the picture Aristotle sketches, there seems no preclusion of humility before gods, since he is not a boaster, but simply someone who knows himself (i.e., the excellence he practices or embodies) well enough to form a proper self-estimation.

It is this self-knowledge that is important for our investigation. The magnanimous person’s self-estimation is proper and correct. Thus, he must first know himself in order

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18 James Stover and Ronald Polansky make this suggestion. See their article, “Moral Virtue and *Megalopsychia*,” in *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 23, no. 2 (2003): 354-355. I would add that what we typically consider humility or being humble is often an excessive or perverted humility. One need not think oneself as depraved, a failure, or worthless in order to be humble. Perhaps true humility is something more akin to Heidegger’s “being-guilty”—we can never have full power over our being from the ground up.

19 Howler, “Aristotle’s Great-Souled Man,” 32. Howler sets up an opposition between a “Socratic *megalopsuchos*” and Aristotle’s magnanimous person. Howler says Aristotle’s magnanimous person “suffers from a potentially tragic lack of self-knowledge. The Socratic *megalopsuchos*, in contrast, recognizes that not even practical wisdom can rightly claim to be an ordered whole (*kosmos*) of the virtues,
to make the proper self-estimation. This is not an easy task, since what he knows is that he is excellent, and excellence is difficult. One must first be truly excellent to be magnanimous.

Pride \[\mu\varepsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\chi\alpha\], then, seems to be a sort of crown of the excellences; for it makes them greater, and it is not found without them. Therefore it is hard to be truly proud \[\mu\varepsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\chi\omicron\omicron\]\; for it is impossible without nobility and goodness of character. (1124a1-5)

If magnanimity is difficult, then the self-knowledge required for it comes with that difficulty. It would be very easy for us to think we have properly estimated ourselves as “good” or “great,” when in fact this is only vanity. The self the magnanimous person knows is the excellent self. The excellent self is far from the particularized self, which is often defined by its passions or appetites. Both the vain and unduly humble, by contrast, do not know themselves, and thus improperly estimate themselves (1125a17-28). They do not know themselves because they are shaped by their desires and ignobility.

Aristotle next mentions an unnamed excellence also having to do with honor, but on a smaller scale. We recall the magnanimous person does not seek honor, but accepts it when bestowed by a good person. But it is difficult to be magnanimous since one must first be truly excellent. While the magnanimous person does few deeds which will result in great honor (1124b25), he will not do them for honor, but because they are noble and good. However, we cannot conclude from this that some degree of honor seeking, on a smaller scale, may not be appropriate and even good. This honor-seeking in smaller

\[\text{which is to say that he recognizes our inevitable imperfection and lack of self-sufficiency.}^{20}\] First, Howler’s translation of \textit{kosmos} as “ordered whole” is here an inappropriate interpretation. That Aristotle calls magnanimity “the crown of the virtues” need not entail that it somehow \textit{orders} all the others. Moreover, Aristotle’s magnanimity does not preclude a self-knowledge that knows the limits of human being, i.e., the fragility of our mortal lives.

Stover and Polansky, “Moral Virtue,” 356. Stover and Polansky have noticed a possible connection between the self-estimation of the magnanimous, and self-love. This connection will be addressed in our discussion of friendship and self-love in chapter four.
affairs is not ambitiousness. In fact, relative to ambitiousness, it would seem unambitious, and relative to unambitiousness, it would seem ambitious (1125b1-25). This means that some degree of honor loving may be appropriate in a situation that might call for it. It is made appropriate by that action that makes the actor honorable, *viz.*, good action. Honor reflects the goodness of the action done, and thus, it is not improper to desire honor to some degree.

**Good Temper, Truthfulness, and Ready-Wit**

The nameless virtues are no less important for not having typical names.\(^{21}\) Again, as with the virtues explicitly named, we see an expansion of our general concept of self. Good temper (πραότης), for example, is a mean with respect to anger. However, this gentleness does not preclude anger. The gentle or good tempered person will indeed get angry, but only “at the right things and with the right people, and further, as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought.”\(^{22}\) All this, moreover, he does “as reason dictates” (1125b32-36). Yet, reason does not always predetermine when, where, with whom, or how long one should be angry, because it is ultimately the particular facts and perception which will demand the appropriate reaction (1126b2-5). Thus, the person of good temper acts based upon what the situation demands, rather than out of personal motivations. Even if he acts based upon what he thinks might be ultimately beneficial for himself, he must do *this here* in consideration of what *it* demands, for the sake of nobility or beauty.

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\(^{22}\) ὃ μὲν οὖν ἐφ’ ὃις δεῖ καὶ ὃις δεῖ ὀργιζόμενος, ἐτι δὲ καὶ ἡς δεῖ καὶ ὃτε καὶ ὁσον χρόνον.
The excellent person is, in addition to being good tempered, neither obsequious (ἀφεσκός) nor contentious (δυσέριδες). Although the mean is here unnamed, those practicing this unnamed virtue are neither too quick to please nor too quick to pain others in social interactions, but neither are they opposed to pleasing or causing pain to others. They do either of these only with reference to what is noble or expedient (1126b29). Thus, the primary concern is not how others perceive them, or receiving a personal gain from social interaction, but what is best and noble in a given situation.

This leads well into what Aristotle calls “truthfulness,” since it lacks any real name as a virtue. The truthful person (ἄληθευτικός) is neither boastful (ἄλαζών) nor mock-modest (ἐἰρων). The sort of truthful person Aristotle intends here does not merely keep faith in agreements, but the man who in the matters in which nothing of this sort is at stake is true both in word and in life because his character is such. But such a man would seem to be as a matter of fact equitable. For the man who loves truth, and is truthful where nothing is at stake, will still more be truthful where something is at stake; he will avoid falsehood as something base, seeing that he avoided it even for its own sake…He inclines rather to understate the truth; for this seems in better taste because exaggerations are wearisome. (1127a33-b9).

We are talking here about one who is unassumingly truthful. This is someone who, even in word and life (ἐν λόγῳ καὶ ἐν βίῳ), is truthful. What does it mean to be truthful in word and in life? It means, in this instance, that both one’s words and the activity of one’s life stay true to excellence and what any given situation demands. It means, more basically, one’s words and life show themselves without pretense as a testament to a fulfilled way of being. This, perhaps, need not entail that the truthful person clings absolutely to fact and factual statements, as perhaps a moralist would have us do. In other words, there is no need always to speak the truth, even if one is not lying. It may be that

23 As a noun, this Greek word means “a false pretender” or an “imposter.”
even lying is not entirely prohibited here if we maintain a distinction between fact and truth. For example, the truthful statesman may lie to protect his people from some greater danger, thus preserving the truth of his position, i.e., one who serves and protects his people. We notice, in the least, that the truth-speaker is perhaps not always inclined to say much (like the magnanimous person), and even “understates the truth.”24 He sees no need to be overbearing to be truthful, since simplicity is often enough.25

Indeed, in general social intercourse, the excellent person is tactful, ready-witted, knows when to listen and when to speak, when to joke and when to refrain from joking, and also knows “the kind of people one is speaking or listening to will also make a difference” (1127b33-1128a18). Again, the mark of the ready-witted (εὐτράπελοι) is, as the word suggests, versatility, and a keen perception of what is appropriate in a given context. As Gottlieb says, this versatility will “enable its possessor to be sensitive to his audience and to know when a particular joke would be appropriate to make (and also to appreciate) and when not.”26 Even in jest the versatile soul is flexible, and ready to act appropriately.

Authenticity and Excellence

Heidegger’s concept of authenticity shows that the authentic self has come into its own in the face of death. Aristotle’s courageous soldier turns his focus away from himself and aims towards the noble. Is there already something like authenticity in courage?

24 See Gottlieb’s “Aristotle’s ‘Nameless Virtues’,” 5. My interpretation may or may not be tantamount to Gottlieb’s interpretation: “The term ‘truthfulness’ as a translation for ἀλήθεια is…misleading. It is apt to imply that the truthful person will simply tell the truth on all occasions. [Aristotle’s] truthful person is one who is truthful about his own possessions, beliefs and abilities and who gives out the right amount of information on the right occasions.”
25 We often have a tendency to overstate or to be overly emphatic to get across a point. A “word” or “life” is no more or less true with more or less emphasis. It is what it is.
26 Gottlieb, “Nameless Virtues,” 5.
Formulaically, of course, we do not see in Aristotle’s discussion of courage what we see in Heidegger’s discussion of being-toward-death. We might notice, however, that Aristotle’s conception of courage in the face of death does not preclude a Heideggerian reading, and may in fact engender one. If courage allows one to face death despite the pain that confrontation may cause, then is the courageous soldier or person already “authentic”? If so, we see that the life of excellence would already include authenticity, not as its goal, but incidentally.

Authentication in Courage?

We may first take stock of Heidegger’s formulation of authenticity to see its primary elements. In an anxious being-towards-death, the inauthentic they-self can either flee its own mortality, or resolutely accept it. This is attested phenomenologically by the call of conscience, which calls Dasein back to itself. Conscience calls Dasein to its potentiality for being itself, i.e., conscience shows Dasein the possibility of being authentic. It does this by summoning Dasein to its own “being-guilty.” That is, conscience reveals to us that we can never have complete power over our being. Our being is not entirely up to us, since we never chose to be born (thrownness), and since we will die. Dasein can either take hold of the potentiality for being itself and actualize it, or Dasein can shirk it. Do we see in Aristotle’s conception of courage anything of this sort already taking place?

As we suggested above, the key to Aristotelian courage is a confrontation with death. The courageous person is one who comes face to face with death and what that means for his life, i.e., the courageous person faces the possibility of losing his life. We recall that battle is Aristotle’s prime theater for courage. The soldier can run away from a dangerous or deadly situation, but this would not be noble where courageous action is
demanded. He could flee danger, and own up neither to his responsibility as a soldier, nor to the demands of excellence. But what happens when courage is actualized?

In courage, one is faced with one’s own mortality. But the courageous person faces this mortality, and accepts it as his lot. Because of this confrontation, he is able to shoulder the responsibility of the courageous action, despite the possibility of losing his life. While we do not and could not find Heideggerian language in Aristotle’s description of courage, we see that it is not precluded. The courageous person, in actualizing courage, is as being-towards-death and owning up to his mortality. Since he realizes death’s is close at hand, he realizes the nullity of his being, i.e., he faces the fact that he does not have power over his being. In facing one’s mortality, we see the ultimate limit of human being. Thus, by actualizing courage, the courageous person affirms human being in the highest degree. The courageous person is resolute, and firmly faces the real threat of death despite any pain this causes.27 His courageous action is a realization of his mortality, no matter the consequence.

The courageous person acts, however, not for the sake of affirming his being—which means affirming his mortality—but for the sake of the noble, beautiful, or fine. In other words, his goal or end is not affirming his own being (although this happens through his courage), but to act for the sake of what he thinks is best, i.e., to act for the sake of the noble. The self-appropriation in courage is not the goal or end of the action, but is incidental to it. The courageous soldier would have no need merely to affirm his being—it is already affirmed through his excellence. Courageous activity enacts a kind of authenticity without authenticity being the goal.

The courageous self is appropriated not because he explicitly desires and chooses authenticity, but because he habitually establishes himself as courageous. To choose authenticity as a primary end of one’s being, in this instance, would not be acting courageously. This is not to say that the courageous person could not also enjoy the fruits of his affirmation of being, but this again would be incidental to his courageous practice.

In an effort to synthesize Aristotle’s and Heidegger’s thought, Walter Brogan views Heidegger’s discussion of authenticity, or Dasein’s being-a-whole, as “remarkably parallel to Aristotle’s own understanding of the life that is characteristic of the happy person.”

Brogan claims that the Aristotelian concept of *dunamis*, or potentiality, signifies being “gathered into oneself,” or a motion back into oneself, away from one’s involvements, so as to be ready for those involvements. He then relates this to virtue.

Virtues open up a relationship to oneself, to one’s capacities as a source for directing one’s emotions and actions…the movement is from an actual entanglement with one’s surroundings to a return to oneself, and that this distancing of oneself from the immediacy of one’s involvement opens up the horizon of possibilities for being oneself in that situation.

It is not clear how the idea of drawing into oneself in potentiality relates to Aristotle’s idea of excellence. It may be that excellence allows for a “return to oneself,” but this return cannot be seen, from the Aristotelian standpoint, as a withdrawal into oneself. Even the practically wise person, when he deliberates, is deliberating *for* the purpose of action, and with regard *to* a particular situation. The concern here is that Brogan’s language makes Aristotle’s excellent person one who withdraws into an “inner citadel” and holds council with himself there, with little relation to the world in which he dwells. But one *is* excellent through the actualization of excellence. The actualization of

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29 Brogan, *Aristotle and Heidegger*, 141.
excellence happens in habitual practice. Thus, the excellent person will often act out of habit, since he is thoroughly enmeshed in the moment, and has no time for recourse to private thought. It is difficult to see, then, how he “opens up a certain distance from the moment” and withdraws into himself.  

Again, Brogan claims that courage is “first of all a disposition toward one’s own being and concomitantly a way of relating to others.” A distinction must here be made. Courage, as a confrontation with death, does involve a “disposition toward one’s being.” But courage is directed toward acting nobly in the face of what is most fearsome and most unsettling. To be clear, one is not courageous simply in order to be, and feel oneself in the fullness of being, but to act for the sake of what is fine, noble, or beautiful. Or, we may say that one is courageous to be noble. So it is not pure being toward which courage is directed, but being noble or good.

While comparisons between Heidegger’s authenticity and Aristotle’s virtue are indeed warranted, we must take care not to turn Aristotle’s thought into Heidegger’s. We cannot rightly claim that, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “Aristotle continues to concern himself primarily with the ontology of human being and continues to draw the discussion away from the specificity of practical life.” While there may be intriguing ontological aspects to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, even ones that invite a Heideggerian interpretation of them (as we saw in chapter one), we cannot claim that Aristotle’s practical science is primarily ontological. In the discussion of virtue, whether character or intellectual virtue, the end is not a return to one’s being, or a distance from the moment, but rather a full involvement in the moment for the sake of what is noble. Even if we say

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33 Brogan, *Aristotle and Heidegger*, 143.
that authenticity is the being of the noble, we must see that this authenticity is not merely being, but being good. For example, if I act courageously, I allow the noble to come to fruition. I become noble, which is to say that I become authentic. This, however, is not the same as Heidegger’s authenticity. I have not merely come into being, but into being good. We can restate this by saying that I have come into my being, and this being is good. This is why the goal for the student of the *Ethics* is not knowledge, and certainly not simply being or letting be, but becoming good.

If Aristotle draws his discussion away from the “specificity of practical life,” he does so not in order to do ontology, but because he is careful not to pretend to excessive prescription for particular actions. A Heideggerian interpretation of Aristotle does not force the conclusion that Aristotle was doing what Heidegger did, but rather allows us to see different shadings of Aristotle. We must take care that this interpretation does not confuse us into thinking that the two thinkers were undertaking the same project.

**Beyond Heidegger’s Authenticity**

In what other ways might the life of excellence open up a new way of living and self-fulfilment? We saw that courage already takes up Heideggerian authenticity, but not as its goal. Is there a way in which the other virtues may also be seen to open up a kind of authenticity, even if it does not fall under a Heideggerian formulation? Is there in Aristotle’s thought a way to think of something like self-fulfillment and cultivation, rather than authenticity? In Heidegger’s case, there is a modification of the everyday they-self, into an authentic self. That is, the authentic self has taken over its being from the they, and found some breathing room in the freedom of being toward death. This allows the self to be who it is as care. The self is temporally expanded in care, and stands
out into its world in care. For Aristotle, we see an already expanded conception of self—a self that is excellent, which is beyond the self that is caught up in its own particularities, i.e., desires, pleasures, pains, etc. There is no struggle for the excellent person to find or be himself; he already is thoroughly himself through his excellence.

In our analysis of temperance, we saw an expanded concept of self. We saw a self that is saved from a dispersal into appetites and bodily pleasures. The temperate person is thoroughly in the world, in the concrete setting of praxis, but is not controlled by the contexts in which she lives. She rather responds appropriately to situations having to do with bodily pleasures, i.e., she neither spurns nor plunges into bodily pleasure. We can also say that the temperate person saves her humanity by not giving way to brutish desires and pleasures, i.e., excessive pleasures of touch. Since the temperate person is not scattered in pleasure and desire, we can say that she is disciplined and collected.

The temperate person is excellent, and does not struggle to be so, and any self-appropriation or coming into one’s own is incidental to the practice. The temperate person has perhaps appropriated herself, or is her own self, but not because she has won over her being from those in which she has been lost. Rather, she has been sublimated into the life of excellence—an excellence she embodies, but which remains universal and ultimately beyond her particularity. Thus, in a strange sense, her “ownness” is far from what we might consider it to be, if we think in these terms at all. She has become excellent, and this is now who she is, and this is in some respect universal. In this respect, the life of virtue is akin to Heidegger’s authenticity. The ownness of the self is beyond a particularized self-possession. The ownness is rather a proper way of being human.
With respect to liberality, the prodigal person in some sense ruins himself. Aristotle says, “the wasting of substance is thought to be a sort of ruining of oneself, life being held to depend on possession of substance” (1120a2-3). Again, Aristotle may be playing on the ambiguity of ousia, or substance. As the wasteful person recklessly spends money, and spends in the wrong places, or at the wrong times, or with respect to the wrong people, he brings ruin not only to his possessions, but also to himself. We are in some degree preserved by what we have. By looking towards his own pleasures and urges, he ruins himself. On the other hand, the liberal person “does not look to himself” (1120b5). Again, the liberal person does not focus primarily upon himself as a particularized being, but upon giving appropriately. There can be here, then, no primary concern of trying to appropriate oneself, even if being liberal allows for a sense of fulfillment and self-cultivation. The primary concern is giving, even if one recognizes that giving will help cultivate the self. Again, the self that is here cultivated would not be so much the particularized being, but the self insofar as it is excellent.

In magnanimity, there is true self-knowledge. The magnanimous person is fully at home with himself because he is excellent, and has properly estimated himself to be so. We recall that he is not given to gossip, and also does not talk about himself. Corresponding to this description of the magnanimous person, we recall that, for Heidegger, reticence (Verschwiegenheit), or keeping silence, is a possibility of genuine discourse for human beings. “To be able to keep silent, Dasein must have something to say—that is, it must have at its disposal an authentic and rich disclosedness of itself” (B&T, 208). Like the magnanimous person, the authentic person will not say much, and

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34 δοκεῖ δ’ ἀπολεία τίς αὑτοῦ εἶναι καὶ Ἦ τῆς οὐσίας φθορά, ὡς τοῦ ζῆν διὰ τούτων ὑμὸς.
35 ὧστε καταλείπειν ἑαυτῷ ἑλαττῶ. This could also be rendered: “he leaves less for himself.”
will presumably speak the truth from a genuine “disclosedness” of himself. This genuine self-disclosure seems akin to the self-knowledge of the magnanimous person. The great difference, however, is what is known in the self-knowledge. The magnanimous person knows his excellence in the way he enacts it and is disposed to it. The self-disclosure of the authentic person is a disclosure of oneself as a temporal way of being—as care.

Aristotle’s unnamed, social virtues show us a person concretely in a social world. The excellent person is well integrated into the world. He exhibits truth in life and word, is gentle without being obsequious, and is ready for jesting when appropriate. As suggested, all of these virtues take their cue from what the situation demands, e.g., what is appropriate to say or feel here, with respect to these people, and at this time. But this raises an important point in our comparison.

We saw that Heidegger’s authenticity ultimately depends upon resolutely answering the call of conscience. One cannot force the call to happen, but one can only wait for it. In resolutely answering it, one sees clearly the situation in which one is. One is then ready to act. Authenticity, then, depends upon something ultimately out of our control. The character excellences also depend upon something beyond our control, i.e. the situations or contexts in which they play out.

The liberal man will need money for the doing of his liberal deeds, and the just man too will need it for the returning of services…and the brave man will need power if he is to accomplish any of the acts that correspond to his excellence, and the temperate man will need opportunity… (1178a28-33)

The life of character excellence significantly depends upon external goods, and one may not always have these at one’s disposal. Let us recall, however, that one develops character excellence through habituation. One need not be doing an excellent deed to be

36 This passage will be addressed in again in the fifth chapter, in reference to the life of contemplation.
considered excellent, but one must live a life in which excellent deeds are and have been done to be considered excellent. What does this mean for self-appropriation in virtue?

Excellence is dispositional. In habitually developing excellence, one develops a disposition toward excellence. This is why we can say, “she is courageous” even while she is not doing anything particularly courageous (e.g. while she sleeps). She is the sort of person to do courageous things when appropriate. She is disposed to doing courageous things. If, however, the self-appropriation comes to life in courageous action, this must also mean that she is disposed to self-appropriation, but not always practicing it. Self-appropriation follows along with excellence to the degree that one is excellent, and in the way that one is excellent. This means that it must follow excellence as a developed potentiality (or “first actuality”), or as excellence is actualized.

There is a difference, then, between this “dispositional” self-appropriation, and Heidegger’s “wanting to have a conscience,” or waiting to hear the call. If one is excellent even when not performing excellent actions, then one is self-appropriated or collected even when this is not made evident through excellent action. For example, the temperate person was said to be self-controlled. This self-control or collectedness is incidentally enacted in temperate actions. It would be absurd to say that one is no longer collected or self-controlled just because one is not performing a particularly temperate action. The temperate action simply allows the self-control to be activated—the action sets the self-appropriation into relief.

Since Heidegger’s authenticity-inauthenticity binary has to do only with ways of being, and authentic being depends upon the call of conscience, one cannot always be authentic. One can, at most, be ready to be authentic. This is not to suggest that
Heidegger’s version of authenticity is somehow inadequate; we are merely exposing its limitations. One can work to habituate oneself to excellence. One can work to get beyond the particularized self that seeks only bodily pleasure. In Heidegger’s version of self-appropriation, one can only wait for it. These two types of self-appropriation are not mutually exclusive. We do now see a way, however, that self-appropriation or authenticity can run its course outside the Heideggerian framework. We will see in the final chapter a more pronounced way in which the life of excellence is a life of self-appropriation and self-cultivation. But first, let us explore the connections between being-with and friendship, and role of the self in these phenomena.
Chapter Four

We have seen the points of intersection and divergence between Aristotle’s concept of character excellence, and Heidegger’s concept of authenticity. There is a kind of authenticity in courage, yet only incidentally. We then saw new ways of being oneself through the other character virtues. In this chapter, we shall explore new connections and divergences between Heidegger and Aristotle by focusing upon Aristotle’s concept of friendship, and Heidegger’s concept of being-with. Both thinkers think human being is naturally, or ontologically, constituted by life with others. For Aristotle, a naturally political life leads to several different types of friendship. While Heidegger, on the other hand, thinks that being-with others is for the most part inauthentic, he does grant the possibility of authentic being-with, although he says little about it.

We have made mention of Heidegger’s concept of being-with, but in the service of our investigation of being-in-the-world. We shall in this chapter explore the implications of being-with in order to see the intersecting and divergent paths between it and Aristotle’s concept of friendship. We will draw from Heidegger’s discussion of being-with in Division I of Being and Time. As with our preceding chapters, we will move beyond what is given in the text to its implications for the self who lives out these basic relationships. This shall then be compared to Aristotle’s concept of friendship, as found in Books VIII and IX of the Nicomachean Ethics. We shall see that, for Heidegger, authentic being-with is based upon an authentic self-disclosure—knowing oneself. For Aristotle, the highest form of friendship cannot be without self-love, which must be, as I
shall show, based upon self-knowledge.\(^1\) We will therefore see again different ways of being oneself, but this time based upon our relationships with others.

To do this, we need to discover exactly what the self is for Aristotle. In the last chapter, I suggested ways of self-appropriation through character excellence, but we did not see what the self is for Aristotle. In his discussion of friendship, Aristotle tells us explicitly that the self is mind. In this chapter, then, I will clarify what “self as mind” must mean. This will allow us to see several things more clearly. First, we will be able to understand Aristotle’s claim that the friend is “another self.” The friend as another self will turn out to be not at all what it appears at first sight. Likewise, “self-love” will be understood as an unusual phenomena, quite different from what we might generally consider self-love to be. Next, understanding the self as mind will be indispensable for the discussion of contemplation in the final chapter. There, we will also be able retrospectively to see more clearly what sort of self-appropriation occurs in the character excellences. Let us now turn to Heidegger’s discussion of being-with.

**Being-with and the Self**

We dwell in a world of equipment that sits ready-to-hand, and we understand that the equipment is not only for oneself, but for others as well. These others, however, are revealed to us as quite distinct from the equipment we use. “These entities are neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand; on the contrary, they are *like* the very Dasein which frees them, in that *they are there too, and there with it*” (B&T, 154). Let us repeat what we saw in the second chapter.

By ‘others’ we do not mean everyone else but me—those over against whom the “I” stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does *not*...

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\(^1\) We recall here the discussion of magnanimity in the previous chapter.
distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too…This ‘with’ is something of the character of Dasein; the ‘too’ means a sameness of being as circumspectively concernful being-in-the-world. \textit{(B&T, 154)}

We do not first take up being-with as a theme. We do not need to re-cognize that there are others there. Rather, we are with one another, and this is part of who we are. The newborn child, for instance, need not take a moment to survey the new world to recognize other beings there with her; she simply is there with others (mother, father, etc.). We are with each other in such a way so as, for the most part, not to distinguish ourselves from the others. Even when one makes attempts at individualization, this is done only upon the backdrop of already being-with-others.\textsuperscript{2}

We have here a picture of human being as thoroughly and constitutively with others. We are involved in and concerned with our various projects, and others “show themselves in their special environmental being, and do so in terms of what is ready-to-hand in that world” \textit{(B&T, 160)}. As we have seen, we do not comport ourselves toward others with concern \textit{(Besorgen)}, but by caring-for, or “solicitude” \textit{(Fürsorge)}. This is the realm in which we are. Thus, since the self is not isolated, but constituted by being-with-others, self-knowledge is “grounded in being-with” \textit{(B&T, 161)}. Being-with is the basis of both self-knowledge and knowing others, whether this is inauthentic or authentic knowledge. Caring for others provides the basis even for inauthentic ways of caring for others, e.g., indifference, overlooking, treating the other as merely the sales clerk, etc. But it also provides the basis for authentically caring for and knowing the other by letting him be.

\textsuperscript{2} See \textit{B&T}, 156. Heidegger discusses the possibility of being alone as necessarily upon the backdrop of being-with-others.
Authentic Being-with

At least one way of authentically being-with others is through what Heidegger calls “leaping ahead” (vorausspringen). This allows the one who springs ahead authentically to give the other his care. “This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care—that is, to the existence of the other, not to a ‘what’ with which he is concerned; it helps the other to become transparent to himself in his care and to become free for it” (B&T, 159). It is unclear what Heidegger could mean by “giving care back” to the other. How is it that one could give care to another, especially considering that the other already is constituted by care?

Magda King suggests that, unlike “leaping-in” (einspringen), which takes care over for the other, and “concerns primarily the handy things that have to be taken care of,” leaping-ahead “is not primarily concerned with what the other does but with his existence as a self.”³ King suggests further that leaping-ahead may help the other “to make him transparent to himself in his own being as care.”⁴ Perhaps it is not so much what the authentic self explicitly does for the other, but what he simply allows the other to do. Perhaps it is in letting the other be that the authentic person gives back care to the other. But, of course, the other still needs to take over his being for himself, and this is something only he can do.

Although Heidegger says little about it, it is possible to be authentically with others. Using a rare example, he describes the possibility of people working together authentically.

³ King, Guide, 77.
⁴ King, Guide, 77.
...when they devote themselves to the same affair in common, their doing so is determined by the manner in which their Dasein, each in its own way, has been taken hold of. They thus become authentically bound together, and this makes possible the right kind of objectivity [die rechte Sachlichkeit], which frees the other in his freedom for himself. \( (B&T, 159) \)

In order for people to be together in an authentic way, each person must have “taken hold” of herself individually. This means that each person must have authentically grasped who she is, and we have already seen the formula for how this happens. This allows us then to become truly open for the other, and to allow the other to be herself. When human beings are authentically together, they see one another in their being, and allow each other to be who they are, i.e., to take over and actualize their respective potentialities for being.

Let us recall Heidegger’s idea of self-knowledge as it relates to being-with others. Heidegger mentions a kind of self-knowledge or seeing of the self in “transparency” \( (Durchsichtigkeit) \). This seeing is a seeing-through.\(^5\) When Dasein really knows itself, i.e., knows itself authentically, it does so as seeing itself as a dynamic being in the world, who is as being alongside its world in concern, and being-with others in caring-for, or solicitude. Thus, as we saw in the second chapter, one’s being is authentically revealed as care, and as such, as being already in a world and with others. Dasein is not isolated in authenticity, but is with others in such a way as now to “have some understanding of the potentiality-for-being of others” \( (B&T, 309) \). That is, in authenticity, Dasein can understand others as the sort of being that they are. This could only be understood to the degree to which the authentic person sees the similarity of his own being to that of others, even though their being will play out in particularized ways that may differ from his own.

\(^5\) Macquarrie and Robinson note that this self knowledge \( (Selbsterkenntnis) \) is distinguished from that quoted earlier \( (Sichkennen) \) by the former “being concerned with a full and sophisticated knowledge of the self in all its implications” \( (186) \).
We recall that authentic resoluteness “pushes [the self] into solicitous being with others” \((B&T, 344)\). Through authenticity, we are able to be with others in a way that allows for true disclosure of the other, and letting the other be who he or she is. This means that we will not make another person into a mere object of our pleasure or use, even if we find him pleasant or useful. We understand that we cannot make the other person into more, or less, than he is. This observation will be significant in our comparison of Heidegger’s concept of being-with to Aristotle’s concept of friendship.

So, one can authentically be with others only insofar he has understood himself as the sort of being he is, \(viz\). care. This is also the case for the others as well. For there to be a genuine relationship, each member must have cleared the way for his or her own dynamic being. If this is the case, then insofar as each person is most truly care, they share in their being with one another. Insofar as those in question are most constitutively care, they are no different from one another. When they take over their being as care, they are able to become one. Authentically revealed as care, human beings can genuinely \emph{communicate}. Their being is shared with one another as care. This sort of communication need not entail speech, although discourse is not excluded.

**Genuine Communication**

In his section on discourse or talk \((\textit{Rede})\), Heidegger tells us that communication, or \emph{Mitteilung}, is a way in which a “co-state-of-mind \([\textit{Mitbefindlichkeit}]\) gets ‘shared’ \([\textit{Teilung}]\), and so does the understanding of being-with \([\textit{Mitsein}]\)” \((B&T, 205)\). \emph{Mitteilung} is literally “with-part.” Those who communicate are with one another.

Communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another. \(\text{Dasein-with}\) is already essentially manifest in a co-state-of-mind and a co-understanding. In discourse being-with becomes ‘explicitly’ \emph{shared} \([\textit{geteilt}]\); that
is to say, it is already, but it is unshared as something that has not been taken hold of and appropriated [ergriffenes und zugeignetes]. (B&T, 205)

As beings who are constitutively with one another, we are able to communicate. 

*Mitteilung* shows that we are beings who are already sharing (geteilen) with one another.

However, genuine sharing, taking part, or communicating with another happens only insofar as each person communicating has grasped and appropriated his or her own being.

Heidegger designates hearing (*hören*) as an essential mode of discourse.

Listening to *(Das Hören auf)*...is Dasein’s existential way of being-open [*Offensein*] as being-with for others. Indeed, hearing constitutes the primary and authentic way in which Dasein is open for its ownmost potentiality-for-being—as in hearing the voice of the friend whom every Dasein carries with it. (B&T, 206)

The last, and rather strangely phrased, part of the quote is foreshadowing the discussion of conscience. It is on the basis of hearing that we are able to open ourselves to the call of conscience. We hear meanings, not mere tone-data or sheer sound. “If we say we have not heard aright, it is not by accident that we say we have not understood” (B&T, 206).

Hearing and understanding go hand-in-hand. Hearing also allows us to listen to one another. If our own (*eigen*) being has been appropriated (*zugeignetes*), then we are able genuinely to communicate with others.

Again, genuine communication need not run its course in speech. Another essential mode of discourse is being silent (*Schweigen*). Silence (*Verschiegenheit*) “articulates the intelligibility of Dasein in so primordial a manner that it gives rise to a potentiality-for-hearing which is genuine, and to a being-with-one-another which is transparent [*durchsichtige*]” (B&T, 208). Let us recall that transparency, or seeing through, is the phenomenon of genuine self-knowledge. In genuine communication, whether in speech or silence, our being with one another is shared. As such, the other
becomes transparent. We can truly know the other. In what way do we know the other? We know the other as care. Our being is shared insofar as we are both care. We are still particular beings since we are embodied creatures, but our being, as care, is ultimately the same. Whether or not a word is spoken or thought, we both understand each other in our very being. We have communicated.⁶

**Friendship**

Aristotle begins his discussion of friendship by immediately establishing why we need friends. Friendship is most necessary for life, and no one, he says, would choose to live without friends (NE, 1155a4-5). Aristotle will argue for these claims, but we should first notice the weight he gives to friendship. First, friendship is most necessary for living (ἀναγκαιότατον εἰς τὸν βίον). Not only is friendship in some way necessary for life, but additionally, no one would choose to live without friends (ἄνευ γὰρ φίλων οὐδεὶς ἐλοιτ’ ἂν ζῆν). We should notice here that Aristotle has moved from what is necessary for life to how we would reasonably choose to live. Let us investigate Aristotle’s reasons behind these claims.

Even if one has all other goods, he would still choose friends. According to Aristotle, a prosperous life needs beneficence, or else it is useless.⁷ If one is rich and powerful, it seems he would want someone with whom to share the wealth. Moreover, there is great risk in having wealth, so one might need friends to preserve the riches. We think we need friends even more in poverty and hard times; friends may here be our only

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⁶ This section should suffice to undo Martin Buber’s objection that “Heidegger’s self is a closed system” and that the authentic self, though acting in the world, “does not include the belief that in this life with the world the barriers of the self can be breached, nor even the desire that it should happen.” See Buber’s Between Man and Man, trans. Ronald Gregor-Smith (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 199-203. If the self is care, we become one another as care. There is no closed system here.

⁷ He will argue similarly in IX.9 for why happy people need friends.
comfort. Beyond this, both young and old need friends, since the former need good influence, and the latter need help as their bodies decline. Between these extremes, those in the “prime of life” need friends to stimulate noble activity (1155a6-16). So far, Aristotle seems to have touched on the great extremes of life. When rich or poor, in good times and bad, it seems we need friends. When young or old, and even when one is in the prime of life, friends are needed. If we need friends at these extremes, then we will likely need them for life in general.

Now Aristotle moves on to show that friendship is even natural. It is not only needed in the general circumstances of life, but also for life itself. “Again, parent seems by nature to feel it for offspring and offspring for parent, not only among men but among birds and among most animals” (1155a16-19). Friendship is here claimed to be so basic to life that even parents among other species of animals feel it for their offspring. This is where we need to understand how broadly Aristotle uses “friendship,” or philia. Friendship, for Aristotle, extends to the most basic bonds between sentient beings. It is, as Martha Nussbaum notes, somewhat akin to our broad concept of love. Aristotle’s concept of friendship is broad enough to cover both the basic natural bonds that hold parent and child, as well as what we commonly mean today by “friendship.”

From the most basic, natural unit of the family, Aristotle says friendship will even extend to the polis.

We may even see in our travels how near and dear every man is to every other. Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for unanimity seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when men are

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9 Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 328. Nussbaum chooses to leave philia untranslated, or to translate it as “love.” She says, “philia is extensionally wider than friendship—it takes in family relations, the relation between husband and wife, and erotic relationships, as well as what we would call ‘friendship’.”
friends, they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality. (1155a20-28).

As we saw above, Aristotle again directs us toward extremes. We move from the unit of the family, to that in which families are encompassed—the polis. Where there is friendship, there is no need for the imposition of justice through law. Where friendship is present, there is no need for that which artificially brings people together, since people are already together of their own accord. The just, however, will need friendship, since they themselves are fair, and will presumably need friends by which to be fair.  

Aristotle has shown us not only why we would choose to have friends—or more extremely, why we would not choose to live without them—but also why friendship is most necessary for life. Without the friendship or love of parents, life would literally not go on. Offspring need the care and love of parents in order to survive. Beyond survival, we wish to live good lives, and part of this goodness includes friends with whom to share in the goodness. Also in bad times, friends could be considered perhaps our only and greatest good. In the formation of cities and states, i.e., when human beings come together for civilization, we need the bond of friendship in order to work together. Thus, we see friendship is necessary for life, and worthy of choice for the good life.

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10 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Books VIII and IX*, trans. with commentary by Michael Pakaluk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). It is not likely, then, as Pakaluk suggests in his commentary, that the just might need friendship because they would otherwise quarrel, or because without friendship the just are not ready to participate well in civic life (49).

11 In his commentary, Pakaluk says “necessary,” for Aristotle, “can mean ‘worth choosing for on account of something else’…and that seems to be its meaning here. The superlative would be appropriate because friendship is necessary in all three states of life (youth, prime of life, old age) and in various conditions of prosperity and misfortune” (46). While Pakaluk may be correct that “necessary” for Aristotle can sometimes mean “worth choosing on account of something else” (as when it is necessary to choose warm winter clothes to wear if one does not want to freeze), I do not think that is how it is used in this instance. The use of the superlative actually seems to suggest that without friendship, we literally could not live; thus the passage about parents and offspring. Moreover, Aristotle then mentions that friendship is worthy of choice; thus the passages about wealthy people wanting friends for beneficence.
Definition and Types of Friendship

Friendship is being well-minded (εὐνοεῖν)\(^\text{12}\) and desiring or wishing good things (βούλεσθαι τἀγαθὰ) for the other’s own sake, when this is mutually recognized, or not overlooked (µὴ λανθάνοντας), between the friends (1156a4-5). The friends must both understand that they want good things for one another, and are well-minded toward one another. Otherwise, there may be no difference between friends and those who are simply well-minded or well-disposed toward one another, while having none of the other characteristics of friendship. In friendship, there is a “mutual and recognized love [ἀντιφίλησις οὐ λανθάνουσα], and those who love each other wish well to each other in that respect in which they love one another” (1156a9-10).\(^\text{13}\) But in what ways may friends love one another?

The three types of friendship are those of use, pleasure, and good character. Characteristic of the first two types is that the friends do not love one another based on good character, but only to the degree that the friend is pleasant or useful. Right away, Aristotle tells us:

Now those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for themselves, and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to themselves, and not insofar as the other person is loved but insofar as he is useful or pleasant. (1156a10-17)

\(^{12}\) It will become clearer why I have chosen to translate εὐνοεῖν more literally as “well-minded” rather than the typical “goodwill.” I do not think the latter translation is bad (even if ‘will’ is slightly misleading or perhaps anachronistic for Aristotle), but as we shall see, I think Aristotle intends for his audience at least to be peripherally aware of the etymological meaning.

\(^{13}\) All words translated here as “love” and its cognates are from some form of the Greek verb φιλεῖν.
Friendships of use and pleasure are based out of a love that conceives of the other person as useful or pleasant. First, let us note that Aristotle does not at all consider these kinds of friendships to be depraved in any way. It is typical and ordinary for us to love others for their usefulness, or for whatever pleasure they bring us. We naturally want good things for ourselves, and when we judge someone to be useful (e.g., a ride to work) or pleasant (e.g., ready-witted) to us in some way, then this is generally good for us. Let us notice that these friendships are largely self-directed. I love a pleasant friend because he pleases me in some way.

While these types of friendship are not bad, Aristotle does consider them incidental (κατὰ συµβεβηκός), “for it is not for being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or pleasure” (1156a17-19). In friendships of use and pleasure, the friend is loved as pleasurable or useful.¹⁴ Thus, since there is no firm ground to stand on, i.e., character, these friendships may be easily dissolved, “if the parties do not remain like themselves; for if one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him” (1156a19-21). If a pleasurable friend changes, and is no longer pleasant in the way I found him to be, then we will likely no longer be friends. Likewise, if I change in what I find pleasant, then the friends I once thought pleasant are no longer. These friendships are often ephemeral since they deal with fluctuating things.

¹⁴ This need not entail that pleasure-friendships and use-friendships do not include friends loving one another for their own sake, as John Cooper has shown. See Cooper’s article, “Aristotle on Friendship,” in Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics, ed. Amelie Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 311. Cooper says, “A character friend wishes his friend to prosper because he recognizes his good character and thinks that it is fitting for those who are morally good to prosper.” Likewise, “the pleasure-friend will now be said to wish well to his friend for his friend’s own sake, in consequence of recognizing him as someone who is and has been an enjoyable companion, and the advantage-friend wishes his friend well for his friend’s own sake, in consequence of recognizing him as someone who regularly benefits him and has done so in the past.” All this is in contrast to the idea that a pleasure- or use-friend could only wish his friend well to gain some personal benefit in the future. Perhaps my further interpretation of the self below will shed light on this topic—the pleasure and use friendships do not include a love of their friends as what they most are, i.e., mind.
The friendship of goodness, on the other hand, is enduring because the excellence upon which it is founded is enduring. Let us recall that the life of excellence is habitually practiced. It would take great and perhaps perpetual misfortune to make a good life bad. Aristotle calls this a perfect or complete (τελεία) friendship. In a friendship of character, and especially of good character, the end or telos of friendship is fulfilled. Good friends are “alike in excellence; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good in themselves” (1156b8-10). Good friends, alike in excellence, love each other for the other’s own sake, and thus are most considered friends. They are friends without qualification, or simply (ἁπλῶς) friends. Their friendship stands on no pretense. There is nothing else required than that each be the one he or she already is. In addition, they are both pleasant and useful to one another. So, this is a complete friendship, since it also includes the other incidental types of friendship. It is also complete to the degree that each friend is a fulfilled or complete person through virtue.

Let us note also that strong friendships take time to develop, and demand the intimacy of “living together,” by which Aristotle means that the friends will devote much time to one another, enjoying the same things as one another (1157b5-24). Good friendships need time, and cannot develop overnight. The friends will also love each other.

Now it looks as if love were a passion, friendship a state; for love may be felt just as much towards lifeless things, but mutual love involves choice and choice springs from a state; and men wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of passion but as a result of a state. (1157b28-32)

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15 See again Cooper’s “Aristotle on Friendship,” where he insists that it is better to refer to this type of friendship as a “character friendship,” since this expression “brings out accurately the basis for the relationship is the recognition of good qualities of character, without in any way implying that the parties are moral heroes” (308). This seems to agree with my view that there are degrees of goodness (approximation to excellence), and that this is how most of us will live.
Whereas love (φίλησις) is normally considered a passion or something undergone (πάθει), in a friendship based upon good character, there is a degree to which the friends choose to love one another, as this choice comes from their disposition or state (ἕξει) of being good. From being good, one wishes good things for his friend for his own sake, and thus loves him, or has a friendly feeling toward him. Thus, the love here is not something merely and uncontrollably felt, but comes from a steady way of being (good).

The Self and Friendship

Aristotle goes on, in IX.4 to tell us that friendships proceed from the relation one has to oneself, or the way one is toward oneself (ἐοικεν ἐκ τῶν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐληλυθέναι). We consider friends those who wish good things to one another for their own sake, and also those who wish their friends to be and live for their own sake (βουλόμενον εἶναι καὶ ζῆν). These good things, says Aristotle, are also what each good person wishes for himself, and this is also true for everyone else, “insofar as they think themselves good” (1166a10-11). Notice that Aristotle begins by saying the good person wants good things (virtue) for himself, but he extends this to anyone who takes himself to be good. While the good man is the “measure of every class of things,” i.e., that by which we judge things to be good, one need not be excellent to have some degree of goodness. Thus, wishing good things for oneself is not here restricted only to excellent people, who are very rare, but extends to anyone to the degree that he is good.\(^\text{16}\)

In the last chapter, I argued for different ways of self-appropriation through character excellence. However, we did not see what the self most properly is for

\(^{16}\) This corresponds to John Cooper’s argument represented above.
Aristotle. If the good person wishes good things for himself, and is in good relation to himself, what is the self?

[The good person’s] opinions are harmonious, and he desires the same things with all his soul; and therefore he wishes for himself what is good and what seems so, and does it (for it is characteristic of the good man to exert himself for the good), and does so for his own sake (for he does it for the sake of the intellectual element in him, which is thought to be the man himself); and he wishes himself to live and be preserved, and especially the element by virtue of which he thinks. (1166a12-19)

What is this self? The self is mind, or the thinking element (διανοητικός). The good person is of one mind with himself (ὁμογνώμονεί), and whatever he desires (the desired things being good), he desires wholly, and not only desires them, but does them. There is no tension between what reason says and what is desired. He is collected and together, and does not desire haphazardly, and is not unclear about what he desires (virtue). All of this is done for the sake of himself (ἕαυτοῦ ἑνεκα), and we see that this “self” is the thinking element or mind.

Since being is good for those who are good, they will wish to continue living, and enjoying the good life. However, they will do this only on the condition that they themselves can enjoy it:

while no one chooses to possess the whole world if he has first to become someone else...he wishes for this only on condition of being whatever he is; and the element that thinks would seem to be the individual man, or to be so more than any other element in him. (1166a20-24)

We wish good things for ourselves, as we are here—i.e. our human, mortal selves. If we were to wish for the greatest things, e.g., becoming gods, we would no longer enjoy this goodness. If, for example, I wish good things for myself, I do so only on the condition that I can enjoy them. If I have to become other than I am—if I have to lose myself to become other than myself—to enjoy good things, then I cannot reasonably wish these
good things for myself. It would not be me who enjoys them, but whoever it is I become.

Aristotle reiterates who the self is, but this time by saying that mind is to be considered self *more than anything else* (δόξειε δ᾽ἂν τὸ νοοῦν ἐκαστὸς εἶναι ἢ µάλιστα). Why introduce the qualification, “more than anything else”? Let us take a look at the subtleties of Aristotle’s definition of self.\(^{17}\)

**Identifying the Self as Mind**

As Suzanne Stern-Gillet has rightly suggested, Aristotle’s concept of self is very different from any modern conception of self.

As for a *theory* of the self, Aristotle had none that could even remotely be compared with modern ones. Nowhere does he systematically set out to address explicitly formulated and related questions on the issues of self-identity, personhood, and individuality. Nowhere does he attempt to uncover, formulate, and critically examine the structure of his predecessor’s or his contemporaries’ concepts of selfhood.\(^{18}\)

While Aristotle spoke plenty about soul, his conception of selfhood is not given a full account. Thus, we shall attempt here to unpack what Aristotle’s concept of self is, in its relation to the happy life, and particularly the life of friendship. It is, however, important to note that “Aristotle’s notion of the self differs significantly from later, more purely cognitive and descriptive, concepts of selfhood.”\(^{19}\) Beyond this, we shall see that the self is not for Aristotle a private “inner” world into which the subject delves for self-

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\(^{17}\) My interpretation of Aristotle’s conception the self agrees with Charles Kahn’s interpretation. His interpretation may be found in his article, “Aristotle and Altruism,” in *Mind, Vol.* 90, no. 357 (January, 1981), 20-40.


\(^{19}\) Stern-Gillet, *Friendship*, 19.
discovery. Rather, it is a self firmly planted within the world, and one who is absorbed, as it were, in that world.  

The self is said to be *nous*, or mind. Mind is the faculty for thought, whether theoretical or practical. As suggested in *De Anima*, mind is made manifest in thinking, reasoning, or *logos*. Mind thinks universals, and has knowledge by means of them. We need not reference *De Anima* in order to understand that self is mind in *Nicomachean Ethics*, or even to have some understanding of what this could mean in an ethical context. We only need recall that the human *ergon* must involve *logos*, and from there, it is only a few steps toward establishing the role of mind in a practical science (mind allows for *logos*). However, if we are to unpack thoroughly what self as mind could mean, then we must think beyond what is explicitly given in the *Ethics*. Aristotle could not have told us, in the context of a practical science, what it means for the self to be mind.

Since mind thinks by means of universals, and since all human beings have mind, each human being has a share in universality. However, we are embodied creatures, not

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20 Stern-Gillet, *Friendship*, 16. Stern-Gillet here translates J.P. Vernant in this way: “The subject does not constitute a closed internal world, which he must enter in order to find or, rather, to discover himself. The subject is turned to the outside. In the same way as the eye does not see itself, the individual looks elsewhere, outwards, before apprehending himself. His consciousness of self is not a reflexive process, a retreat into himself, an internal enclosing, face to face with his own person: it is existential.” This may be found in the original French: *L’Individu, la Mort, l’Amour: Soi-même et Autre en Grece Ancienne*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 214.

21 Stern-Gillet, *Friendship*, 26. Stern-Gillet claims, “Practical reason...constitutes the hub around which the self is formed, since it alone can effect the integration of the various psychic elements into a whole.” I do not know if I can go all the way with Stern-Gillet here. Claiming practical reason as “the hub” of the self is in some way sensible, since it appears prior to the discussion of *theoría* as the apex of happiness. On the other hand, it seems that Aristotle would not want to restrict the self primarily to practical or theoretical reason, but would rather see mind as the capacity for either of these.

22 This comes from *De Anima*, 417b21-23. Kahn also employs *De Anima* in his article (35).

23 Kahn offers a “strong” interpretation of friendship as other self, saying that Aristotle has three distinct claims: “A. The true or deepest self of a human being is his or her *nous*. B. The *nous* of all human beings is fundamentally one and the same. C. Perfect friendship between persons of outstanding excellence is a relationship in which each partner becomes (at least obscurely) aware of the identity asserted in B, and hence recognizes (at least implicitly) the true self of the other as identical with his or her own true self.” We will say more about C later. For now, let us modify B by saying that the *nous, qua nous*, of all human
just minds. A human being is a “this here,” an embodied being. We sense particulars (with our bodies), but know them by means of universals (with our minds). Moreover, as embodied creatures we also have desires. For the good person, desire obeys the reasoning or thinking part of the soul. Each person has mind, which thinks by means of universals, but each person also desires and has particular appetites. In addition, as Charles Kahn has noticed, it is not only the body that individuates us, but also the way in which we use our minds. “Such an intellect will be individualized by its particular stock of phantasms, the range of concepts it has assimilated, and the degree of scientific training it has achieved (as well as by its broader connections with the emotional and sensory faculties in action and perception).”²⁴ The way I take things up into my imagination may be peculiar to me. Also, the way I relate (with mind) to my emotions may be more or less peculiar to me. As Stern-Gillet suggests, “Rather than, in the strict sense of the term, identifying human beings with their nous at the exclusion of anything else in the Soul…Aristotle assigns to nous the exercise of a regulating and predominating influence over the other elements in the human soul.”²⁵

By saying that the self is more mind than anything else, Aristotle is taking into account the fact that we are primarily mind—that is, mind primarily defines us as humans—but we are also body. This fits well with our analysis of Book I.7 concerning the human function. We also have bodily desires, but these are meaningless for us without mind. That is, they cannot be pursued, controlled, enjoyed, or shirked without our understanding—an understanding mind makes possible—that they are worth pursuing,

²⁴ Kahn, “Altruism,” 36.
²⁵ Stern-Gillet, Friendship, 27.
controlling, etc. Yet, this is not to discount the fact that we are also our bodies, and this is what is most particular about us.

If we were merely minds, no one would presumably be distinguished from anyone else. All minds would think universals, and so be universally disposed; there would be nothing here to individuate this person from that one. There would, in short, be no persons at all. If we were only mind, even the thoughts that we think would not be individuated, because there would be no phantasms, or images, by which to think them. Phantasms ultimately come to us through the senses, or *aesthesis*. We then use these images for thought. As said above, these images used by my mind are mine and not yours ultimately because they find their source in my body. So, even if you and I, for example, both understand the make-up of an atom, but you describe it with different imagery than I do, it is not because our minds are inherently different. Rather, it is because our “stock of phantasms” are different, and this differentiation is ultimately sourced in our bodily individuation. Our minds, qua minds, are not different.27

Let us recall that the soul, for Aristotle, is not literally divided, nor is it separate from body.28 We can logically, or in thought, divide the soul into its constituent parts, one of which is mind (assuming mind is part of the soul) and another the appetitive part. We must remember, however, that these are all parts of a unitary, composite being—the human being. So, we can call the whole human being “self” but strictly speaking, and especially in the context of wishing well to ourselves, or loving ourselves and excellence,

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26 Kahn refers to a “impersonal” or “superpersonal principle of reason” (38).
27 This distinction will become important in our discussion of self-love, and in the discussion of contemplation in the final chapter.
we consider the self mostly to be mind. As Stern-Gillet suggests, mind is the “sine qua non of an integrated personality. But it is also a sine qua non in so far as it constitutes the one specifically human element in the soul, upon whose recognition as such moral virtue depends.” Stern-Gillet rightly treats mind in this context as the “steward” of our a-rational drives. ²⁹

The self is most mind, thus identified with universality, but there is also bodily desire and appetite. The latter are particularities, and play out more or less particularly for different types of people. For instance, the excellent person sides more with mind, and using his mind controls well his bodily appetites. Thus, he knows himself best (recall our discussion of magnanimity), since his mind directs the bodily appetites. As Kahn says, “it is only by the action of this intelligent principle in us that we are able to live the rational life of moral and intellectual excellence.” ³⁰ Character is often determined by the way in which we deal with our lives as human beings, i.e., as embodied and thoughtful beings. Even the most excellent person will have bodily appetites, “for all men [πάντες] enjoy in some way or other both dainty foods and wines and sexual intercourse, but not all men do so as they ought” (1154a18-19). These appetites are a real part of everyone. Yet, in the case of good people, these appetites are least what identify them as selves. Nevertheless, even the good person is going to be one who enjoys this or that type of food, but in the right way. ³¹ It is mind that allows for this “right way” to take its course.

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²⁹ Stern-Gillet, Friendship, 27.
³¹ Moreover, the good person, being of one mind with her herself, controls these appetites so that, as we recall, there is no struggle between desires. This is contrary to Lorraine Smith Pangle’s argument in Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 145-146. “To be wholly and continually ‘of one mind with oneself,’ desiring the same thing ‘with one’s whole soul’ (1166a13-14), would seem to be completely attainable only in the case of a simple being who had only one interest and one activity, such as the Aristotelian divinity that has no body and that finds its happiness in contemplation (1154b20-31). For, composite beings such as we are, with an inability always to take
The bad person, however, is at variance with himself, and does not know how properly to direct his bodily appetites or desires (1166b6-7).

This is true, for instance, of incontinent people; for they choose, instead of the things they themselves think good, things that are pleasant but hurtful; while others again, through cowardice or laziness, shrink from doing what they think best for themselves. And those who have done many terrible deeds and are hated for their wickedness even shrink from life and destroy themselves. (1166b7-13)

Incontinent people may see what is best, but they do not do it. They give into what is immediately pleasant, rather than what is ultimately best. Beyond the incontinent are the wicked who flee (φεύγουσι) life and destroy (ἀναιροῦσιν) themselves by their habitually bad deeds. The bad identify themselves with their appetites, and thus, their real self is slowly destroyed through bad living. The bad, in other words, do not know themselves. They are the utter opposite of the good person, who is of one mind with himself, and collected. Those who identify themselves with appetites are pulled in the direction of those various appetites, and are therefore scattered among these appetites. They cannot preserve themselves. Thus, the good self is most himself, and knows it, while those identifying themselves by their appetites, likes, dislikes, etc., are least themselves.

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pleasure in the same thing and with a variety of serious concerns, it is impossible to avoid moments of feeling torn.” Pangle has misquoted Aristotle. At 1166a13-14, Aristotle does not say that the harmonious person desires the same thing with all his soul, but the same things (τῶν αὐτῶν). Thus, even his various bodily desires are not in conflict with his overall well-being. His desire for a moderate amount of fine food or drink, for instance, is never in conflict with what his reason tells him to do. While this may be an ideal, there is no need to equate Aristotle’s excellent person with the unmoved mover.

This is perhaps why Aristotle insists that becoming better after being bad is so very difficult. If the self, or mind, is destroyed (or even nearly so), then it is unlikely that the bad person will listen to reason, and thus, needs punishment before argument.

Stern-Gillet, Friendship, 29. Stern-Gillet here treats the self as “an achievement word,” ostensibly meaning that one must work toward excellence, and thereby gradually achieve real selfhood. Since, however, we have determined that Aristotle permits degrees of goodness and approximations to excellence, it is possible for someone to be more or less “himself,” to the degree that he is good. Thus, there is no need to follow Stern-Gillet in suggesting, “akratic and vicious people are not ‘selves’.” Her own reason for this conclusion should be contrary to the conclusion: “not only do their passions and appetites pull in different directions, but they rebel against and weaken the part that ought to direct them.” If the vicious do rebel or weaken mind, this suggests that mind is still there, but is not dominant in the vicious person’s life. This means that the self is still present, but is not collected and dominant in the way that the excellent self is. In
This is not to conclude that Aristotle encourages us to shed our likes and dislikes, or be unconcerned with the pleasures others take in things, if these pleasures are other than theoretical enterprises. For instance, our general way of getting to know people—being first interested in what music, books, or foods they enjoy—is productive and helpful for us. It allows us a view into that person’s world, and then perhaps later, with time, we begin to know the person more and more, beyond those likes and dislikes. Even then, we do not disregard the other interests he or she might take, but we see they find their proper place as regards who he or she is. So, the particulars are still present, e.g., my friend’s favorite foods or songs, but as we grow together, I do not identify her (her self) by those things only.

Let us say more about the universality of self. Insofar as we identify the self as mind, we are left with something of a paradox. The self as mind is the least self-ish sort of self that we could conceive. We normally tend to conceive of the self much in the same way as Heidegger claimed das Man conceives the self. We tend to think of the self as a static “me” or “I”—a truly individuated substance or subject. Granted, as said above, even mind could be individuated, in respect of that which it thinks—it thinks using these particular phantasms gathered from this particular aesthetic experience, or set of experiences. However, when one is self-controlled or of one mind with oneself, the individuating characteristics of the thought are least self-defining, while the universal disposition of thought is more characteristic of that self. In intellectual or character excellence, the good person strives for excellence, and this is in one respect beyond individuation (insofar as it is excellence, it is beyond individuation, but insofar as this other words, while mind is most the self, the vicious identify themselves least as mind, but most as their appetites.
person is habitually excellent, the excellence is individuated). The self, then, insofar as it is mind, is by our standards quite unlike any other concept of self as individual. Moreover, it is the universality of self that allows for the sharing of oneself with another.

The Friend is Another Self

For this reason, then, the good person is also “related to his friend as to himself (for his friend is another self)” (NE, 1166a31-32). The friend is another self not because he is another “me” as compound of matter and form, but because, in the highest type of friendship, the friends are like each other via the universality of mind and the virtue in which they share. Moreover, it is the universality of self that allows for the sharing of oneself with another.

34 The most universal element in them is most who they are, and thus, they are in a sense the same as one another. Kahn says, “The true self, then, which I and my friend have in common, is our relationship to this impersonal or superpersonal principle of reason; that is to say, our true self is its activity in us, which makes our own thoughts and actions rational, to the extent that they are shaped by it.”

When a friendship is based upon good character—or character to the degree that it is good—then we can see ourselves in our friends, because we both share in the same things, i.e., we

34 See Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett’s “Friendship and the Self,” in Ethics, Vol. 108, No. 3 (April 1998), 502-527. It is not the case, as Cocking and Kennett suggest, that the likeness of the friends is the basis upon which their friendship stands (506-507). Indeed, in friendships of character the friends are like each other insofar as they are good, but it is the character and goodness that is the basis of the friendship, not primarily the likeness between the friends. In other words, that the friends are like each other is incidental to their goodness. Again, in a footnote, Cocking and Kennett falsely give the “likeness” position to Aristotle. “It follows then that I cannot love you for any characteristics which I am unable to love in myself…Perhaps I am not inclined toward friendship with you because I do not like what I see of me when I look at you. I see my mean streak reflected in you or my tendency to brood over imagined slights. I am surely more likely to be inclined toward friendship with someone in whom I see reflected my particular sense of humor or my burning concern with social issues” (508, fn. 11). This arises from a misunderstanding of what the self is for Aristotle. As I shall show, the good sort of self-love is not loving individual characteristics (sense of humor, for example), but mind, which is in some sense beyond the individual, though in the individual. The friend, then, is not another self because he or she shares in my particular characteristics, but insofar as he or she shares in mind.

both share in goodness, and we are both mind. It is the universal disposition of mind that allows us to say that the friend, and especially the good friend, is another self.

This is not to say that there is no individuation between friends. Again, we are talking about embodied human beings who have appetites of a certain sort. However, insofar as the friends are themselves good, they both embody excellence. They are at one mind with themselves, since their desires are under the control of who they most are.

Good people do good things, and to that extent—i.e., to the extent that one is courageous, temperate, etc.—their selves are universal. Yet, they do these things here, now, and with respect to these people, etc. Thus, the virtue, insofar as it is enacted by this person, becomes to some degree particularized.36 “Thus, for instance, if Callias is joined with Coriscus in primary friendship, it is Coriscus’ particular courage that Callias apprehends and likes rather than courage simpliciter.”37 As mentioned above, good friends will know and appreciate even the most particular things about each other. “Not only do primary friends know of each other’s current views, interests, goals, sorrows, and successes, but they are also in a position empathetically to understand how these arise from earlier influences, achievements, traumas, difficulties, ambitions, etc. Each knows how the other became the virtuous individual he now is.”38

In friendships of pleasure or use, we love the friend for his sake, but we are here identifying him (his self) as pleasurable or useful. We also recall that these friendships are

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36 Kahn, “Altruism,” 38-39. True friends are “identical with one another only in that our ‘true selves’ are identified with the very same principle of intelligence active in us both; but the mode and circumstances of its activity are inevitably different for each of us. Not only is our empirical awareness (aesthesis) body-dependent and hence individualized, but the concrete problems on which, and the conditions in which, reason is exercised will differ from person to person. Even the best of friends are not identical with one another. Hence the repeated qualification: the being of one’s friend is just as precious as one’s own ‘or nearly so’. For the self which loves (and acts and dies) is a person, the individual human being.”
37 Stern-Gillet, Friendship, 47.
38 Stern-Gillet, Friendship, 47.
most easily dissolved, as we may no longer find pleasure or use in our former friend. When friendships are based upon pleasure and use, they are based upon particulars that the friends happen to have in common. These particulars are often shifting, since they deal with changeable, bodily things, or things that are only temporarily useful.

Friendships based upon character, and especially good character, are not based upon transitory things. Good people are, we recall, at one with themselves, “being, so to say, of one mind (for the wishes of such men are constant and not at the mercy of opposing currents like a strait of the sea)” (1167b6-8). Thus, these friendships tend to last, since we love the other as who she most properly is.

Since it is because of mind that we claim the friend to be another self, we can also see new meaning in Aristotle’s definition of friendship, which says that friends are well-minded toward one another. This is especially significant in friendships of good character. We wish our friends good things and are well-minded or well-disposed towards them, and this is mutually recognized. The mutual recognition of well-mindedness allows for the union of friendship. In mutual recognition, friendship is made; for well-mindedness alone does not make a friendship, since we can be well-minded even towards competitors or people we know very little (1166b30-1167a3). Being well-minded is a beginning or principle (ἀρχή) of friendship, and after intimacy and time, there develops a mutual recognition and real friendship (1167a11-12). It is through the universality of mind that the friend is another self, and the other self is a friend because we are well-minded toward one another.
Self-Love

Not only is a friend another self and loved, but good people should also love themselves. Before saying how or why good people love themselves, Aristotle reveals the ways in which we normally think self-love to be bad.

Those who use the term as one of reproach ascribe self-love to people who assign to themselves the greater share of wealth, honors, and bodily pleasures; for these are what most people desire, and busy themselves about as though they were the best of all things, which is reason, too, why they become objects of competition. So those who are grasping with regard to these things gratify their appetites and in general their feelings and the irrational element of the soul…it is just, therefore, that men who are lovers of self in this way are reproached for being so. (1168b14-23)

The term “self-love” (φιλαυτον) is often used reproachfully. We think of “self-absorbed” people as, in the least, unpleasant company. The grasping, or those who claim more than their due (πλεονέκται), especially of bodily pleasures, money, etc., are justly reproached. They gratify only their desires (ἐπιθυµίαις) and passions (πάθεις), or generally the part of the soul without logos (τῶ ἄλογῳ τῆς ψυχῆς). Interestingly, Aristotle notes that it is these sorts of people busying themselves about such things that gives rise to competition. The Greek here actually reads: διὸ καὶ περιμάχητα ἐστιν.

When people treat wealth, honors, and bodily pleasures as though they were the best of things (ὡς ἄριστα), then they fight. When the self is treated as nothing more than a ball of appetites and passions, then this can cause tension between all those simultaneously desiring the same things.

Is it possible, then, to love oneself in a good way, or a way that should not be reproached? Whoever desires to act justly, temperately, and in accordance with the excellences in general, seems “more than the other a lover of self” (1168b29). That is, those who assign themselves the greatest goods (i.e., activities in accordance with
excellence) are most properly called lovers of self, and more so than the reproachable self-lovers. Aristotle seems to be telling us here that the reproachable self-lovers are not, strictly speaking, lovers of self, but lovers of what they mistakenly consider themselves to be. “Self-love” is so often a disgraceful epithet because people often mistake their desires, appetites, etc., for who they “really” or most are. As we have seen, this sort of mistake can lead to, in the extreme, the dissolution of self, or at least a scattered version of the self wherein the part of the soul without *logos* seems to rule more than mind.

The good person is self-controlled and of one mind with himself. He is most properly a lover of self. Again, the self he loves is the mind.

A man is said to have or not to have self-control according as his intellect has or has not the control, on the assumption that this is the man himself; and the things men have done from reason are thought most properly their own acts and voluntary acts. That this is the man himself, then, or is so more than anything else, is plain, and also that the good man loves most this part of him. Whence it follows that he is most truly a lover of self, of another type than that which is a matter of reproach, and as different from that as living according to reason is from living as passion dictates, and desiring what is noble from desiring what seems advantageous. (1168b34-a6)

When one has chosen to do something, i.e. deliberated about this or that course of action, then we consider that chosen act to be most properly his own action, rather than involuntary actions, or even actions from appetite. It is the mind that ultimately gives rise to the choice, and so mind must be most the self. We should also see now that the most proper self love is not particularly “egoist.” As Kahn observes, when we consider *nous* the true self, the “issue of egoism versus altruism collapses, because of the collapse of the distinction in principle between the self and the other.”39 Again, the self that is here loved is not the particularized “me” identified by “my” bodily pleasures, pains, etc., but rather a universally disposed self. The analogies Aristotle draws at the end of the quote are

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significant. The good self-lover is as different from the bad self-lover as a reasonable life is from a passionate one, and as desiring nobility is from desiring advantage. Those who live according to passion and desire advantage identify themselves with and by these things. They mistake themselves for what they desire. Those who live according to mind desire what is noble, and are taken up into that nobility.

This brings us back to the point discussed above. Even though the self that is loved is properly mind, mind could not be loved without body. Aristotle treats love as an undergoing, or “passion” (1105b21-23). We saw earlier how mutual love between good friends involves choice. This sort of love seems a little more firm and lasting than a mere undergoing. However, this does not occlude the fact that they are still feeling. Good people allow mind to be in control. This means that their passions are under control of reason. This means that the love they feel is more or less stable as their lives take on more or less the stability of excellence. Yet, they still feel. This cannot happen without body. That is to say, there must be body for there to be love, even where this love is held under mind’s sway.

The mind cannot love itself, since mind is impassive, or apathê. So, when the good self-lover loves herself, her self-love requires embodiment. Notice the contrast Aristotle draws. The good sort of self-love is as different from the bad sort as desiring what is noble is different from desiring what seems merely advantageous. It is telling that Aristotle’s analogy involves desire. He sets up a contrast of desire where one desire is good, and the other is only seemingly good, but is in fact bad. The desire for nobility is good, and results ultimately from the desirer being of one mind with herself. The desire
for what seems advantageous is bad, and results ultimately from the desirer not being of one mind with himself.

Self-love is analogous in that it too involves something bodily—love. Self-love is under the direction of mind, and strangely, directed back toward the self as mind. But this, as Kahn has noticed, must involve the whole, composite being. “But the self-love of the good man is simply the loving commitment of the whole person, or the whole psyche, to the welfare or predominance of this principle [nous] in us. And the welfare of this principle in us is our own life of virtuous activity.” To say that it is the loving commitment of the “whole psyche” means that the whole, embodied human being is involved in self-love. Moreover, as Kahn tells us, the self-love runs its course and is fulfilled in excellent activity. The self-lover need not make a mental theme of this self-love. Rather, she loves herself through her own good living. Her good activity is a testament to her respect and love for herself.

**Needing Friends and Loving Life**

Aristotle now returns to the question of whether or not we need friends. More precisely, he asks whether or not the happy person will need friends, since the happy person is thought to be most self-sufficient, and already to have the greatest good(s). It is characteristic of the good person to live an active life, and this will include doing good things for others. Thus, the good person needs friends by which to do well (1169b13).

Surely it is strange, too, to make the blessed man a solitary; for no one would choose to possess all good things on condition of being alone, since man is a political creature and one whose nature is to live with others. Therefore, even the happy man lives with others; for he has the things that are by nature good.

(1169b17-19)

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40 Kahn, “Altruism,” 38.
The better we are, the more we fulfill the human function. To put it differently, the better we are, the more human we are, since the primary work of human being is fulfilled through our activity. If we are, then, political by nature, and naturally are with others, then the good person will fulfill that part of his nature, which is being with others. He therefore needs friends insofar as this fulfills his nature. Qua good, he will be with others he loves, with whom he wants to spend his time, upon whom he will confer goods, and with whom he will share goods. Along with this, it is easier to be continuously active with and toward others than by oneself (1170a4-7). We are able to discuss with others, and arguably thinking is often most productive with others, since we are able to hear new ideas and criticize our own more easily with others.

Those who might think the happy person needs no friends likely think so because they consider friends to be useful or pleasurable only. If these were the only types of friendships, then the happy person might have little use for them. Aristotle offers a further argument why the happy person will need friends.

We have said at the outset that happiness is an activity; and activity plainly comes into being and is not present at the start like a piece of property. If happiness lies in living and being active, and the good man’s activity is virtuous and pleasant in itself… and if a thing’s being one’s own is one of the attributes that make it pleasant, and if we can contemplate our neighbors better than ourselves and their actions better than our own, and if the actions of virtuous men who are their friends are pleasant to good men…the blessed man will need friends of this sort, since he chooses to contemplate worthy actions and actions that are his own, and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both these qualities. (1169b29-1170a4)

Happiness is found in living and activity—specifically, activity of the soul in accordance with excellence. Since this is the case, and this activity is pleasant to the one doing the
acting, it is difficult for the one doing the acting to contemplate the actions he does, except in hindsight. Moreover, we are often too close to ourselves to contemplate well our own actions. We thus need distance—a better perspective—from which to contemplate good action. We take pleasure in our own good action at least partially because it is our own and proper to us, but anyone living and doing well will share in the same goodness. Since it is easier to contemplate the actions of others, and another’s good action is very much like my good action insofar as it is good, then the good person will enjoy contemplating the good lives of his friends. The friend’s actions, too, are also in some sense one’s own; for, both parties are most themselves, and this is mind, which tends towards the universals of excellence and goodness. Moreover, the friend is another self, so his actions will be in some sense my own, but easier to contemplate because carried out in his particular way. Also, the friendship belongs to the friends, and so the actions may proceed in some sense from that friendship.

Aristotle told us in Book I that self-sufficiency (αὐταρκεῖς) extends beyond just one person by himself, and will involve family, friends, and even fellow citizens, “since man is sociable by nature [ἐπεὶ δὴ φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος]” (1097b7-10). Again, human being is by nature political and lives with others. The happy life is self-sufficient not in the sense that the happy person lives alone and needs no one else. Self-sufficiency is rather defined as, “that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing” (1097b15-16). The happy life, then, is self-sufficient in this way, but as we have seen, this self-sufficiency will include others. Again, we notice here the broadness of Aristotle’s concept of self, since it stretches out to include not just the happy self, but also

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41 We should notice here that Aristotle is not using ἰδεῖν in such a strict sense as he does in Book X. This will be discussed in the next chapter.
her friends, family, and fellow citizens to the extent that she plays an active role in the city.

Aristotle’s final argument for why the happy person will need friends is important for our investigation. Life for human beings is defined essentially by perception and thought (νοήσις). Life, too, is by nature good, “since it is determinate [ὁρισµένον]” (1170a21). Life as perception and thinking is determinate because, when fulfilled, it is a life lived according to excellence. This is made clear when he says, “and that which is good by nature is also good for the virtuous man (which is the reason why life seems pleasant to all men)” (1170a22-23). Let us recall that the excellent person is the measure for what we consider good, since he will reasonably choose and live the best life. Excellence is the standard, and excellence plays out in the lives of excellent people. The excellent life is determinate, whereas the wicked life (the opposite extreme) is indeterminate (1170a24). This is corroborated by Aristotle’s comment in Book I:

\[\text{It is possible to fail in many ways (for evil belongs to the class of the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans conjectured, and good to that of the limited), while to succeed is possible only in one way (for which reason one is easy and the other difficult—to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult); for these reasons also, then, excess and defect are characteristic of vice, and the mean of excellence. For men are good in but one way, but bad in many.} \] (1106b29-35)

Excellence is rare and difficult. To do well, one must live in accordance with reason and excellence. There are, however, many ways to go wrong. So, extremes cause a bad life to be indeterminate. Let us recall that Aristotle often says the extremes, i.e., the vices, blend

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42 Outside the context of a practical science, perception is limited by what it perceives. In De Anima II.6, Aristotle outlines proper, common, and incidental sensibles. Beyond this, excesses can to some degree destroy sense (De Anima, 424a29-32). Thought is limited by what it thinks, viz., universals. Also, as we shall see in Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics, we cannot think all the time, since we are embodied beings.

43 Pakaluk, Commentary, 210. Pakaluk refers to this passage of the determinacy of life as “obscure,” and turns to other non-ethical texts of Aristotle to explain what Aristotle might have in mind. We need not, however, move past what is given to us here in the Ethics, since Aristotle’s meaning is made clear by the context.
with one another, so that the rash, for example, sometimes seem cowardly, because they seem keen to fight beforehand, but in the moment, may turn cold and flee. Thus, the life of viciousness is a confused, indeterminate life. The excellent life, however, is an active life of the mean, and thus is difficult to achieve, but no doubt determined and definite. Indeed, after he has told us that life is pleasant and good for all men, since it is good for the excellent person, Aristotle goes on to say that this excludes lives of wickedness and pain, since these are indeterminate lives.44

Not only will we need friends, but we desire them to be there for and with us. Life is good in itself, and thus desirable. The good life, then, will be made up of pleasant activities. While the one who acts cannot contemplate well his own activity—since this could obstruct the activity to the degree that he is no longer doing it, but contemplating it—he will presumably be aware to some degree of what he is doing. If not, then he could not have even the slightest understanding that he is now doing something worthwhile. So, there is a basic self-awareness involved in action.

If he who perceives that he sees, he who hears, that he hears, and he who walks, that he walks and in the case of all other activities similarly there is something which perceives that we are active, so that if we perceive, we perceive that we perceive, and if we think, that we think; and if to perceive that we perceive or think is to perceive that we exist (for existence was defined as perceiving or thinking); and if perceiving that one lives is one of the things that are pleasant in themselves (for life is by nature good, and to perceive what is good present in oneself is pleasant); and life is desirable, and particularly so for good men, because to them existence is good and pleasant…and if as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self): then as his own existence is desirable for each man, so, or almost so, is that of his friend.

(1170a29-1170b8)

44 Pakaluk, Commentary, 211. Referring to this passage, Pakaluk says, “this is a digression, intended to forestall the obvious objection that not all the activity of all living things is good and pleasant. Exactly how the passage works is unclear, but its important point is the reminder that, as elsewhere in the ethics, we need to generalize on the basis of typical and central cases.” This last assertion is correct—we are reminded of the standard of goodness. However, the passage is not meant simply to forestall obvious objections, but primarily it reminds us of the indefinite, clouded, and confused nature of a bad life. Aristotle’s comment on pain probably means simply that a life overcome with pain cannot be considered flourishing.
Being self-aware for the good person means being aware of his good activity. This perception or awareness will then be itself pleasant. Ultimately one is pleased at simply being (εἶναι), because one is aware of perceiving and thinking, and this is how life was defined. Not only will he be pleased at the fact that he is, but will also desire life. This means that he will desire to continue living in a good way. However, it is not only his own being that he desires, but also his friend’s being (well-being), since the friend is another self. Thus, one is pleased not only by his own life, but by his friend’s life as well. He will be pleased simply that his friend is, and will want him to continue to be. Life, for the good, is wonderful, and they will need friends with whom to share in that wonder.  

**Being-with and Friendship**

Human being, as we have seen for both Aristotle and Heidegger, is naturally political, or constitutively being-with. For both thinkers, the human being is turned out towards its world. For Aristotle, there is no great need for an independent conception of self since, for him, the self is not a static thing situated in an inner world, as opposed to the outer world. Rather, one (-self) is concretely in the world or the polis, and one most naturally finds his station there. For Heidegger, also, the self is not a point or a heap of psychological states and passions, but rather a way of being concretely in the world, concerned with projects and solicitous for others.

Self considered as mind is not a fixed point, or grouping of particular states. Nous or mind is simply that which allows logos to run its course. Mind allows for thought, and thought allows for self-control and a definite course for the good life. We must remember that by considering the self most to be mind, we cannot fall into the trap of considering

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45 We shall discuss wonder in the next chapter.
We must simply think of mind as that which allows for thought. Likewise, for Heidegger, by calling the self “care,” we have not thereby made the self into something, if we remember what care is—human being is ahead of itself (in its projects or toward death), already in a world, alongside entities and with others. This dynamic conception of self, like Aristotle’s, moves beyond any common conception of self as solely individualized. Let us recall Heidegger’s remark that we should not be afraid of considering the self as a way of being. The ontological self is not something present-at-hand for Heidegger. Likewise, we should not consider self as mind to be something “present-at-hand” and static.

We saw that the universality of mind allows for the right kind of self-love, and explains how the friend is another self. Each person should love himself insofar as he is good, and the self that he loves—nous or mind—is what allows him to fulfill his human being. One must be in a right relation with oneself in order to be in right relation to a friend. The good person loves that which allows her to remain an ordered, collected human being. She does this through acting for the sake of the good, and according to right reason. It is in and through this action that she loves herself (mind). In doing so, she can now rightly appreciate and love her friend who is, by virtue of his ordering principle and the good action it directs, another self. They are each other to the degree that they are mind (universal) and good, but they are individuals to the degree that they are embodied, particular beings, whose particular desires play a role in how they carry out their goodness.

46 This corresponds to De Anima III.4. “Thus that in the soul which is called thought [νοῦς] (by thought [νοῦ] I mean that whereby the soul thinks and judges) is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing [οὐθέν ἐστιν ἐνεργείᾳ τῶν ὄντων πρὶν νοεῖν]” (429a23-24). It is difficult for us to refer to the self by any name, whether mind or otherwise, without considering it to be something. However, keeping in mind the meaning of self as mind, we can perhaps surmount this difficulty.
Similarly for Heidegger, when one has appropriated oneself as care, he is able to be authentically with others. That is, people cannot be authentically together if they have not first become their own selves. We recall, however, that this means only that one appropriates himself as a way of being—one becomes one’s own by dynamically being-in-the-world. The self is a fluid, dynamic being who is in the world and with others in projects and action. Thus, we may here open the way for a friendly being-with—a way of being with others that is genuine, since there is no present-at-hand-self obstructing the way.

As with the previous discussion of the character virtues in the last chapter, we can see a way in which the self-lover has already appropriated herself. Since she is excellent, then, as we have shown, she will already be fully herself. Moreover, she loves herself via her excellent ways of being. She allows herself to be most fully herself by allowing mind to exercise its direction of the whole person. She is most fully herself and most fully a human being. Her universality and particularity work cooperatively. Because of this, she is now able better to love, and be with, her friend. Good friends are of one mind with themselves, but also to some degree with each other. They are able authentically to be with one another, since they love themselves as mind.

Since I share the ontological constitution of care with others, we are each other to the degree that we take up our being as care. This is similar to the way in which friends are other selves, to the degree that the self is mind. For Aristotle, this is based upon virtue. The self as care does not preclude virtue, and could even encourage it. When I begin to realize my being as care, I may wish to fulfill this to the best degree possible, habituating my own actions and my being-with others to excellence. The owned or
appropriated self is a being already concretely in a world, with others, and shares itself with others to the degree that all selves are care. Thus, we would have here a genuine being-with others based upon mortality and temporality. When others also realize the fragility of their temporal being, perhaps they will then be ready to be more fully and genuinely with each other.

In this case, we would not consider authentic being-with an encouragement for others to undertake their own projects that will “attest to their individuality,” as Lawrence Vogel suggests. Rather, we would simply let others be. We recognize that the other is also care, and that we share in that fundamental way of being. We are then able to let the other be who she is as care, but also be with the other as a human being, in all the dynamic ways this being might play out. We suggested above that this prevents us from taking the other as merely a source for pleasure or use. In this way, authentic being-with is similar to the highest form of friendship in Aristotle. In a friendship based upon character, and especially good character, the friends can be pleasurable or useful to one another, but they are not only pleasurable or useful—they are not identified by pleasure or use. Since each friend loves himself insofar as he is good, and since the friend is

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47 King, Guide, 79. King strongly and correctly asserts, “This fundamental constitution [being-in-the-world-with-others] is not merely a rigid framework, but it itself determines the way in which Da-sein is together with others, and even the way in which he himself is a self.” We recall that Dasein is “for the most part” a they-self, and this self is determined by its being-with. The authentic or appropriated self is also being-with, but not in such a way as to have its being determined by the inauthenticity of das Man.

48 Lawrence J. Hatab, Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 85-89. Hatab here discusses the ways in which the “finitude of ethics” can undo unhelpful, traditional approaches to ethics. More precisely, “in the light of a temporal/historical analysis, it is not traditional ethical notions that are lost, but their tendencies toward exclusivity or dogmatic disclosure.” While this may be helpful, I am rather suggesting a way of seeing ourselves, collectively, as mortals, and how this may affect how we are with each other. Hatab does say, “our common finitude can draw us toward each other” (151), but ultimately he thinks that “Heidegger’s radically finite ontology calls for certain modifications of Aristotle’s moral philosophy” (103). While Heidegger’s ontology may help us draw out otherwise implicit aspects of Aristotle’s ethics, I do not pretend to modify the ethics.

another self insofar as he is mostly mind, we do not reduce the friend to an object, but must let him be himself. Good friends not only let one another be themselves, but each loves who the other is.

Let us now turn to the final chapter to see the ultimate form of Aristotelian self-appropriation. We will see Heidegger’s interpretation of this, and again bring the two thinkers into dialogue.
Chapter Five

Let us take stock of where we have been. The first chapter prepared the way for our inquiry by revealing the links connecting Heidegger to Aristotle. We saw Heidegger interpret Aristotle’s ethics through the lens of his own thought. The second chapter fleshed out Heidegger’s authentic-inauthentic binary, showing us what inauthentic and authentic selfhood is. In the third chapter, we saw a type of authenticity emerge in Aristotle’s account of the character virtues, especially in his account of courage. The courageous and otherwise excellent self is collected, gathered, and generally at one with himself. The fourth chapter advanced the connection between Heidegger and Aristotle through their respective concepts of being-with and friendship. Just as their thought remains distinct and individuated, and just as these distinctions are sublimated into a common field of thought, so too we saw the ways in which particular selfhood remains intact, but also the ways in which the particularized self is taken up (or brought back) into something beyond itself. In becoming or being itself, the self is beyond a particularized self, and taken up into who it most truly is as mind or care.

Here, in the last chapter, we shall revisit Heidegger’s earlier lectures on Aristotle, but this time as regards contemplation. Contemplation will come to light as that which is not only the apex of the flourishing life, but also, in Heideggerian terms, the way in which human being is most itself. We shall begin by addressing Aristotle’s description of ἑωρέιν or contemplation. We will then see Heidegger’s interpretation of it, and the ways this relates to his concept of authenticity. We shall also address Heidegger’s interpretation of wonder in his Basic Questions of Philosophy, since wonder will be shown to be the driving force behind the contemplative life. Without wonder,
contemplation—or seeing what is before us in thought—is nothing. We will conclude by showing how these two thinkers most differ, but also the ways in which their ideas are complementary.

**Contemplation**

It is significant that Aristotle begins Book X with a discussion of pleasure. The first five chapters are dedicated to pleasure, and the sixth is a transition into a reconsideration of the flourishing life. Aristotle seems to be reminding us that we are composite human beings, and that pleasure is important. In fact, pleasure is to some degree the impetus for action, and pleasure completes action (1175a11-21). Pleasure and the action it completes are said to cling to one another, or are wedded (συνῳκειόσθαι). In this way, pleasures intensify (συναύξουσι) actions, and belong at home with, or are proper to (τὰ δὲ συναύξοντα οἰκεῖα), the actions. Aristotle’s language clearly shows us the ways in which he claims pleasure to be nearly inseparable from the action. He even goes so far as to say that pleasures are so close to the activities and are “so hard to distinguish from them that it admits of dispute whether the activity is not the same as the pleasure” (1175a30-1175b34).

It is upon this background that Aristotle reintroduces us to the general consideration of his practical science, *viz.*, *eudaimonia*. True flourishing cannot be founded upon bodily pleasures and amusements. To make childish amusements the goal of life is characteristic of tyrants. A tyrant’s life tells us nothing about the good life, since we judge what is best by looking to the good person. Moreover, the pursuit of bodily pleasure should not be thought more desirable just because the powerful tyrant pursues it; “for boys, too, think the things that are valued among themselves are the best” (1176b9-
So, we do not exert ourselves for amusement, but we amuse ourselves in order to exert ourselves. If we have a genuine concern for the good life, then, we see that it is ultimately serious, and that relaxation and amusement allow us to recharge and regain strength to work towards or for the good life (1176b35-1177a10).

While allowing room for bodily pleasure, Aristotle now puts these pleasures in their proper place. This sets up his discussion of contemplation. Bodily pleasures are ultimately, in the best life, not pursued for their own sake, but help us in the life of contemplation. Happiness is activity in accordance with excellence, and “it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest excellence; and this will be that of the best thing in us.” The best thing in us is mind, or what we saw to be most properly the self.

Whether [the best thing is mind] or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper excellence will be complete happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said. (1177a12-18)

Mind contemplates noble, beautiful and divine things, and is itself the most divine part of who we are. To put this into perspective, we can say that the self most properly conceived is divine. We saw that the self as mind is beyond particularity. This “beyond particularity” is now qualified. Mind is godlike. Aristotle is likely drawing connections here between θεῖον and θεωρία, or “godlike” and “contemplation.” Mind contemplates or theorizes the theion, or godlike. The self as mind is beyond the individual human being.

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1 Heidegger, Plato’s Sophist, 44. Heidegger draws a similar connection, but says this etymological tie does not “touch the genuine meaning” of Aristotle’s concept of contemplation. We shall say more of Heidegger’s interpretation later.
A life of contemplation offers us a life of complete happiness (ἡ τελεία εὐδαιμονία). I have argued that Aristotle allows not only for approximations to excellence, but correspondingly, for degrees of happiness or flourishing. One does not lead either a completely flourishing life or a debased, wretched life. Rather, there are degrees along a continuum of possible lives. One can be vicious or completely happy, and these are extremes. Another possibility is that one is not vicious, but incontinent. Yet again, one can be continent, but not temperate. One can be moderately happy or flourishing, but perhaps external circumstances will not allow for a greater cultivation of one’s life. Therefore, the contemplative life does not work to the exclusion of the character excellences. The life of character excellence is happy to a lesser degree than the life of contemplation. As Aristotle says at the start of the eighth chapter, the life of character excellence is happy in a secondary way (δευτέρως).

Many commentators have thought there is a tension or inconsistency in Aristotle’s account.² There is no need to recount thoroughly the supposed tension or inconsistency, since this has already been done many times. The trouble generally speaking is this: Aristotle abruptly asserts the life of contemplation to be the best life, which seems to conflict with his earlier and substantial praise of the life of character excellence, and the claim that character excellence is enacted for its own sake. Since Aristotle allows for

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degrees of happiness, there is nothing that precludes the life of contemplation mixing with the life of character excellence. However, the two lives may at times conflict with one another. Before we consider properly what contemplation is, let us take a closer look at the relationship between contemplation and character excellence. Before doing so, however, it is important to note the various ways in which Aristotle intends “contemplation.”

The Ambiguity of θεωρία

Outside of Book X, Aristotle uses θεωρία, θεωρεῖν, and their cognates approximately twenty-five times in the Nicomachean Ethics, and this is not counting any other words sharing a root of θεω-. While many of these instances are not always properly translated into English as “contemplate,” as they are in Book X, Aristotle was surely aware of the connection with the more serious use of the word. As with so many of his important terms, Aristotle uses theôria and its cognates ambiguously, depending upon the context. The context is ever important in Aristotle, and it must be kept in mind.

Often, as at 1100a32, Aristotle uses some version of theôrein to show that something is up for consideration. This happens markedly at 1140a24. Aristotle is gearing up to discuss phronēsis. “Concerning prudence, we may grasp it in such a way,

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3 Aristide Tessitore, “Aristotle’s Ambiguous Account of the Best Life,” in Polity, Vol. 25, no. 2 (1992), 197-215. Tessitore concludes, “It is not that Aristotle is inconsistent, but that he consistently resists the temptation to try to reconcile completely two elevated ways of life which cannot be in every respect reconciled” (214). The lives of character excellence and contemplation may at some points conflict, but this is simply part of who we are as human beings.

4 For a fascinating account of the historical use of θεωρία before Aristotle and Plato, see Andrea Nightingale’s “On Wandering and Wondering: ‘Theôria’ in Greek Philosophy and Culture, in Arion, Third Series, vol. 9, no. 2 (Fall, 2001): 23-58. Although her assessment of the word is well done, Nightingale’s interpretation of Aristotle will be challenged later in the chapter.

5 I used the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae word search feature using the root just named, and found at least three instances of words sharing that root. My count excludes the mention of the “life of contemplation” at 1095b19 and 1096a3-4, since these refer to the discussion of contemplation in Book X.
contemplating who we call prudent. ⁶ I have chosen “contemplating” here not because it is the best option for translation, but because it allows us to see what is afoot. In light of what comes in Book X, and considering that this quote falls in the discussion of intellectual virtue, Aristotle must have seen the irony here. That we could contemplate or theorize *phronēsis*, whose sphere is practical life, shows us that “contemplation” need not always be of eternal or unchanging things.

Before this, at 1140a12, Aristotle tells us that all art is concerned with coming into being, and contemplates how something comes into being, which is able either to be or not be. ⁷ Again, this does not match the strict sort of contemplation mentioned sometimes in Book X, where contemplation seems restricted to eternal, unchanging things. Also in the context of the intellectual virtues, Aristotle tells us there are two parts of the soul having *logos*: one that contemplates (*θεωροῦµεν*) things having unchanging principles, and another that contemplates changing things (1139a5-9).

Outside of the context of the intellectual virtues, there are several examples of a loose sense of *theôrein* or *theôria*. Although there are several examples of “contemplation” being used without reference to eternal or unchanging things, let us recall only one. ⁸ We saw earlier that friends can contemplate one another’s actions better than their own. To contemplate another’s actions is to contemplate something that could have been otherwise. When we contemplate a friend’s actions, we contemplate a temporally situated, contingent event. Even if we contemplate the justice or liberality of

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⁶ This is my translation of: *Περὶ δὲ φρονήσεως: οὕτως ἂν λάβοι, θεωρήσαντες τίνας λέγομεν τοὺς φρονίμους.*

⁷ ἕστι δὲ τέχνη πᾶσα περὶ γένεσιν καὶ τὸ τεχνάζειν καὶ θεωρεῖν ὅπως ἂν γίνεται τι τῶν ἐνδεχομένων καὶ ἐίναι καὶ μὴ ἐίναι.

⁸ For starters, see 1102a23 and 1104a11-12.
the action, it is still the justice or liberality as it plays out in this particular action. This should suffice to show that Aristotle uses *theôria* and *theôrein* ambiguously.

There are also instances outside Book X where Aristotle uses “contemplation” to refer to eternal or unchanging things. We see this perhaps most readily in Book VI. Discussing the differences between wisdom and prudence, Aristotle says, “wisdom will contemplate none of the things that will make a man happy (for it is not concerned with any coming into being)” (1143b19-20). Here, we seem to have a restricted sense of “contemplate” in the context of philosophic wisdom (σοφία). When we are talking about contemplation from a strictly philosophic perspective, or from the strict perspective of *sophia*, then specifically unchanging or eternal beings are contemplated. This is the sort of contemplation Aristotle seems to have in mind at times in Book X. This is also where a possible conflict with the life of character excellence comes into play. As we shall see, however, even in Book X Aristotle uses “contemplation” ambiguously.

**Character Excellence and the Contemplative Self**

Aristotle spends the greater part of the *Ethics* discussing character excellence, and the happiness it brings. In Book X, contemplation is said to complete happiness. If so, why did we just hear Aristotle say that philosophic wisdom contemplates nothing that would bring us happiness? What is it about the strictly contemplative life that is in conflict with the flourishing that character excellence brings? Aristotle heightens this tension in Book X. Since character excellences play out in circumstances beyond the control of the agent, character excellences depend upon these (external) circumstances. For this reason, the need to perform the character excellences may even hinder the life of contemplation, which depends very little on external circumstances (1178b5).
As mentioned above, Aristide Tessitore claims that Aristotle understood this tension, and did not seek to avoid it. Aristotle’s “presentation of the philosophic life is alive to the inevitable controversy which accompanies a life of radical inquiry.”\(^9\) Aristotle’s account remains faithful to the phenomena of character excellence, but he is also aware of the tension between living the life of character excellence, and the life of contemplation. Tessitore’s argument rests upon the idea that Aristotle is addressing an audience of well-raised, decent people (“gentlemen”), some of whom will be philosophically inclined, without being philosophers.\(^10\) Decent people are part of a certain social class, but philosophers, as philosophers, are beyond social status, and radically question “all conventional beliefs, even praiseworthy ones, with a view to discovering the truth.”\(^11\) Thus, Aristotle’s audience will be made privy, in a subtle way, to what the philosophic life has to offer, and to the tensions between it and the life of character excellence.\(^12\) While Tessitore’s position is interesting, and while his argument regarding the proper audience of the *Ethics* should be considered, I do not think we need to take Aristotle so far in order to make sense of the tension at play.

Let us recall that the self is most properly mind. We have seen that this does not work to the exclusion of considering the self also to be the composite human being. We have also seen that considering self properly as mind does not force selfhood into a lofty, intellectualized realm. In fact, in Book VI, Aristotle refers to mind as both practical and contemplative. The practical intellect or mind (διάνοια)\(^13\) deals with truth in agreement

\(^12\) Tessitore, “Ambiguous Account,” 213-214.
\(^13\) Although this is not explicitly called νοῦς, we may recall from 1166a12-19 that Aristotle calls the self the thinking element, or διανοητικός. He soon after refers to the self as mind, or νοῦς, showing these two to be
with right desire, and the contemplative side of the intellect or mind deals with truth and falsity, outside anything practical or productive (1139a26-31). It is this multilayered ambiguity of the self that allows for the ambiguity of contemplation. We can contemplate practical things or unchanging things.

Mind in Book X is asserted to be the best thing in us, and to take thought of things noble and divine. Aristotle now moves on to contemplation as it takes its course in wisdom and philosophy.

The activity of wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of excellent activities; at all events philosophy is thought to offer pleasures marvelous [θαυμαστὰς] for their purity and their enduringness, and it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire. (1177a23-27)

First, activity in accordance with wisdom (κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν) is the most pleasant (ἡδίστη) activity. Aristotle does not say it is the only pleasant activity, and so even the life of character excellence can be pleasant. Next, we see that wisdom is here associated with philosophy, and that philosophy offers wonderfully pure and enduring pleasures. Contemplation is here restricted not to inquiry, but merely to being with, or seeing what is contemplated. One simply beholds what is there for contemplation. Contemplation in this sense has nothing to do with inquiry. This is why he goes on to say that nothing arises from the contemplating apart from the contemplation itself, and this is why it is loved for its own sake (1177b1-2).

This is the most restricted use of contemplation, and this is why this sort of life would seem “too high for man” (1177b27). This sort of life cannot be continuously or

\[\text{interchangeable. Thus, Adkins is wrong to assert that Aristotle identifies humans with theoretical reason. See “Theoria vs. Praxis,” 300.}\]

\[\text{14 We shall challenge Nightingale’s position that Aristotle thinks philosophy only begins in wonder, but ends in “certainty” (43).}\]

\[\text{15 We shall see that this sort of contemplation entails more than mere seeing.}\]
perpetually lived, and so we must relax from time to time (1176b35). It is not insofar as we are human beings that we will contemplate in this highest sense, but insofar as we are divine.

And by so much as [mind] is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of excellence. If [mind] is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. (1177b27-31)

It is the ambiguity of the self—not just the word “self,” but the actual self—that allows Aristotle to say what he here says. Insofar as we are mind, we are beyond our mortality, or our composite nature. Insofar as we are composite, we cannot adhere to the excellence of contemplative activity. Aristotle goes on to say that we should, then, not spend our time thinking (φρονεῖν) of mortal things, but as much as possible make ourselves deathless (ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν), and do everything (καὶ πάντα ποιεῖν) “to live in accordance with the best thing in us” (1177b31-34). Living in accordance with the best part of us is truly to become who we most are, and not doing so would be like living the life of someone or something else (1178a1-5).

Already Aristotle is bringing us back to the fact of who we are. We are most properly mind, but we are also composite beings. This is why we can only become immortal insofar as it is possible for us. If we could become entirely immortal, we would no longer be ourselves. By striving to become immortal, we do not become immortal, but become most ourselves. We settle down into who we most are by becoming mind, which is the most divine part of who we are. Yet, we are still mortal beings, and this is why we
have to be vigilant in striving to honor the best part of us. The life of contemplation is most proper to us, since we are most properly mind (1178a5-8).

Aristotle has also already begun to use “contemplation” ambiguously. If we are to try as much as possible to live in accordance with mind, or to be ourselves, this suggests that there may be gradations of contemplation. This is corroborated when he tells us, “happiness extends…just so far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy…” (1178b29-32). Aristotle is not here suggesting that happiness is impossible without philosophical contemplation.

“Contemplation” is used here in a looser sense. To the degree that one contemplates or thinks, one is happy. The only other way possibly to make sense of this claim, is to say that those who are able to contemplate for longer stretches of time are happiest. But Aristotle concludes this thought by saying, “happiness, therefore, must be some form of contemplation.” That happiness must extend as far as some contemplation, shows us that Aristotle intends contemplation loosely. While Aristotle may see lofty philosophical contemplation as complete or finished happiness, this does not mean that only philosophical contemplation can bring any degree of happiness at all.

This discussion is surrounded by a larger discussion about our composite, human nature. The character excellences belong to our composite nature, “and the excellences of our composite [σύνθετον] nature are human; so, therefore, are the life and the happiness

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16 See Sarah Broadie, “Aristotle and Contemporary Ethics,” in The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, ed. Richard Kraut (Malden: Blackweel Publishing, 2006), 343; and Wilkes, “Good Man,” 348. Contra Broadie and Wilkes, Aristotle does not need any “theological assumption” to establish the choice-worthiness of the contemplative life. He is not assuming the gods’ contemplative divinity, and then saying that we too ought to be the same. He has already established the goodness of the contemplative life. That it happens to be divine need not be part of the overall argument for us to pursue it.

17 ἐφ᾽ὅσον δὴ διατείνει ἡ θεωρία, καὶ ἡ εὐδαιμονία, καὶ οἷς μᾶλλον ύπάρχει τὸ θεωρεῖν, καὶ εὐδαιμονεῖν...

18 ὡστε εἶν ἢ εὐδαιμονία θεωρία τίς.
which correspond to these” (1178a19-22). This hearkens back to the statement from Book VI that philosophic wisdom will not bring human beings to happiness. Now we see that it must be the character excellences that bring us happiness qua synthetic, or embodied beings, whereas contemplation brings us happiness qua mind. Is there a contradiction here? If happiness extends as far as contemplation does, then there must be some degree of contemplation in the life of character excellence. If not, there is either no happiness, or it is false that happiness extends as far as contemplation.

We must understand just how composite or synthetic we really are. We must be ever aware in dealing with the touchy subject of selfhood in Aristotle, that there is no separate realm or place of the self. There is no inner citadel. We, as mind, are thoroughly interwoven with our bodies. This is why Aristotle, having just told us that happiness is some form of contemplation, continues, “but, being a man, one will also need external prosperity; for our nature is not self-sufficient for the purpose of contemplation, but our body also must be healthy and must have food and other attention” (1178b33-35).

It is this synthetic or composite nature that allows mind to be involved in “practical” life. It is also our composite nature that allows for the ambiguity of “contemplation.” In his discussion of *phronësis* in Book VI, Aristotle tells us: καὶ ὁ νοῦς τῶν ἐσχάτων ἐπ᾽ ἀμφότερα: καὶ γὰρ τῶν πρώτων ὄρων καὶ τῶν ἐσχάτων νοῦς ἐστί καὶ οὐ λόγος (1143a35-1143b1). We may translate this as follows: “And mind is of the ultimate things both ways: for of the primary definitions and of the ultimate particulars mind is, and not argument.”19 Aristotle clarifies this by saying that mind grasps both the primary and unchangeable definitions, but in practical things (ταῖς πρατικαῖς) mind grasps the ultimate particular. Since both universals and ultimate

19 This passage was brought to my attention while reading Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, 108-109.
Mind is activated regarding both concrete particulars and universals. Mind simply touches the ultimate objects, it does not discursively think them. Just as in philosophic contemplation we simply behold and see the first principles or everlasting and unchanging things, so too is mind involved in a kind of perception of the ultimate particulars, about which we do not reason, but simply see. There is here a different kind of contemplation. Let us quote Aristotle at length to finish the thought.

This is why these seem to be natural. While no one is by nature wise, there is [by nature] a means for thought, quick-comprehension, and mind. A sign for this is that we think these are consequent upon our time of life, and this time of life has mind and a means for thought…Therefore we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people or of people of practical wisdom not less than to demonstrations; for because experience has given them an eye they see aright. (1143b7-14)

No one is by nature wise. This takes time and effort. One must know not only what follows from first principles, but also the first principles themselves, i.e., the beginnings of knowledge (1141a15-19). This wisdom, however, is not of mortal things. “It would be strange to think that the art of politics, or practical wisdom, is the best knowledge, since man is not the best thing in the world” (1141a20-22). Again, sophia—the undertaking of the philosopher—does not think about mortal things. But this is only one particular way mind is enacted, even if it is the best. One may even, like Thales or Anaxagoras, know things that are wonderful, difficult, and divine, but not have practical wisdom or prudence

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20 Heidegger says, “Nous is related to the πρῶτοι ὅροι, to the first demarcations, to the ἀρχαί pure and simple, to the ultimate elements of that which always is, as well as to the outermost in the sense of the momentary individual this-there. The latter is no longer a matter for discourse but instead is grasped simply in νοεῖν” (PS, 109).

21 Everything up to the ellipsis is my translation.
at all (1141b4-7). In any case, mind is there whether we are thinking philosophically, or simply seeing what is before us in practical life.

So, the contemplative life can, in the strict sense, be self-contained and lead to a flourishing life. The contemplative life, in a looser sense, can also be flourishing. Let us note, however, that even if someone like Thales had no practical wisdom, but only philosophic wisdom, this does not mean he would be bad or vicious in character. It simply means that he cannot always see what is best to do in particular situations. Remember, he contemplates wonderful and divine things, and this is good in the sense of being complete, or perfect. His life is therefore affected in that he is made happy or flourishing in the complete sense, for “wisdom produces happiness” (1144a5).

There is nothing precluding the philosophically contemplative life from also being a life of character excellence. Even though the circumstances needed for excellent action can interfere with the philosophically contemplative life, we need not think this would upset the contemplative person. In fact, insofar as she is a human being, she will choose to do excellent acts, and may even need such acts to live a human life (1178b2-7). Even if, as many commentators seem to suggest, Aristotle said that the character excellences

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22 Whether or not he really did is up to whatever source we choose to trust. Nightingale points out plenty of references to a practically wise Thales (25-26). It could be, however, that Aristotle is cornering Thales into what he needs him to be for Aristotle’s own enterprise.

23 Tessitore, “Ambiguous Account,” 214, “The Ethics urges serious attention to the practice of moral virtue not as an end in itself or as something which provides the greatest happiness, but as a means to the end of contemplation,” and Nagel, “Aristotle on Eudaimonia,” 258, “The other functions, including the practical employment of reason itself, provide support for the highest part of ourselves...” See also Wilkes, “The Good Man,” 350, “Now to secure all this, so that he has unlimited time for contemplation, the theoretic man must apply his own practical reason, or at least assent to and approve the arrangements of others; unless he does so, he can have no guarantee of the secure continuance of this background.” Wilkes cites 1145a6-9 where Aristotle says that phronēsis “sees to the coming into being [ὁρᾷ ὅπως γἐνηται]” of sophia. This does not make phronēsis a necessary condition for sophia, but only a sufficient condition. Phronēsis may allow for sophia to be put to work (“come into being” or activity), but it need not be phronēsis. This is why Thales and Anaxagoras can be said not to have had phronēsis, but sophia.
are a means to contemplate better (which he did not in the *Nicomachean Ethics*), then there is no problem under my reading. For the person who does not practice philosophic contemplation, the character excellences will be ends in themselves, and enacting them will produce a happy enough life. For the philosophically contemplative person, the enacting of the character excellences may make more room for contemplation, which can only be good. Moreover, the philosophically contemplative person is still a human being, and may even appreciate and enjoy this humanity, and so wish to enact character excellence in order to live well qua human (about which we shall say more). In other words, the contemplative person need not shirk his humanity or embodiment.

It is then, the multifaceted self, or the ambiguity of selfhood, that allows for a rich interplay of theory and praxis. The two are logically separate from one another. Insofar as we do contemplate unchanging, divine things, we become most ourselves, and this is divine. The best sort of life, then, is one of self-cultivation. This runs its course through contemplation. This is also the most divine sort of life we could live. But self-cultivation could also entail a life of character excellence, since the self (mind) is operative here as well. Let us now move on to Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle’s concept of contemplation. This will lead us to our conclusion where we will be best able to compare the happy and authentic lives.

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24 There is a passage in the *Eudemian Ethics* (1249b5-25) where Aristotle seems to say this more explicitly.
25 This is contrary to Nagel, “Aristotle believes, in short, that human life is not important enough for humans to spend their lives on” (257). That Aristotle encourages us not to think of “mortal things” does not mean we cannot appreciate our mortality, which is not a mortal thing at all, but the root of mortal things (about which we shall say more later). Suffice it to say for now, Aristotle may well encourage us not to think of trifling affairs, and rightly so, but this need not mean that we cannot appreciate and enjoy our humanity, i.e., our embodied being.
26 Wilkes, “The Good Man,” 351. Wilkes asserts, “the ‘philosophic’ life ultimately denies all value to the ‘political’ one.” This statement is incorrect based upon our above interpretation. In addition, we see that it is wrong to say, “Aristotle’s position is thus not consistent; one cannot, and should not try to, juggle with the texts so that the conflict of the two lives is resolved.”
Heidegger on Contemplation

Heidegger confronts *theôria* primarily in his Plato’s Sophist lecture course, and also to some extent in his *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*. We will focus on the ways in which the life of contemplation affords a completion of human being, and the role that wonder plays in contemplation. This will open yet another path for thinking a type of self-appropriation in Aristotle.

Contemplation Arising from Everydayness

Let us first look at Heidegger’s discussion of the etymology of *theôria*. Heidegger first notes that *theôria* is similar in meaning to *eidos*. “The word θεωρεῖν, θεωρία, comes from θεωρός, which is composed of θέα, ‘look’, ‘sight’, and ὄραω, ‘to see’” (*PS*, 44). *Theôria* is most basically a kind of seeing. This way of speaking remains dominant even today (at least in English). We say, for example, when coming to an understanding about something, “I see.” Or, we ask our interlocuter, “do you see what I mean?” While Heidegger restricts his discussion of *theôria* to its activation in *sophia*, he does claim that Aristotle’s interpretation of these terms is based in the everyday ways in which human beings use these terms. “As is the case with all everyday speech, with the expressions in question Dasein moves in the indeterminateness of the ‘more or less’; one does not speak about σοφός but about μᾶλλον and ἤπττον σοφός” (*PS*, 46). Aristotle takes this everyday interpretation of “wisdom” and raises it to self-understanding (*PS*, 46). Thus, Aristotle understands *sophia* “as the highest possibility of the being of Dasein on the basis of the being of Greek Dasein itself. He thinks that which the natural understanding of the life of
the Greeks strove for; he thinks this radically and to its end” (*PS*, 43). The theoretic life of wisdom constitutes the most proper and genuine possibility of Dasein (*PS*, 42).²⁷

As Heidegger frames his lecture in his own terminology, we see the possibility of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) emerge in the wise and contemplative life. It becomes, then, more significant that Heidegger thought *sophia* to be taken by Aristotle from everyday, indeterminate use, and raised to the level of its utmost possibility and clarity. Just as Heidegger indicates the meaning of human being by looking at everyday human being, so too the “guiding line for Aristotle is to get ‘information’ from Dasein itself, i.e., from what Dasein, which is self-expressive, means when it uses terms like *σοφία* and *σοφός*” (*PS*, 45-46). Heidegger claims there are, in Aristotle’s thought, five levels of understanding found in “natural Dasein.”²⁸ There is common perception, experience, art, art as applicable knowledge, and *theòrein* (*PS*, 46). These levels build off of one another, up to the most advanced and rigorous way of knowing in *sophia*.

Of these five, of which the fourth seems an extension of *technē*, contemplation in wisdom is the apex. Here is a brief summary of how we get there. First, in perception, we see the world in a confused way. But, “over and against the accidental and arbitrary, trial and error,” experience brings definition to life—“it is the retaining present of a determined connection of occurrences in a single affair” (*PS*, 49-50). Out of the repetition of experience, the “what” emerges, and our understanding of this or that is enhanced. This gives rise to art or *technē*. From experiencing in certain repetitive ways, I become accustomed to my world, and thus gradually gain a clearer understanding of it. We

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²⁷ Daß dieses ἀληθεύειν eine eigene und die eignetliche Möglichkeit des Daseins ausmacht: den βίος θεωρητικός, die Existenz des wissenschaftlichen Menschen.

²⁸ Although Heidegger is here drawing from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, he sees his treatment as compatible with what is happening in the *Ethics*. 
thereby come closer to *sophia* insofar as the technician is wiser than someone who merely has experience. The technician comes to know that upon which he, in practice, works. This knowledge prepares the way for wisdom—for a mere seeing of what is, or seeing the archê.

The wise person does not merely understand this or that particular thing, but understands universals, and the beginnings or principles of particular things. “The σοφός is the one who is able to disclose that which is difficult to disclose, i.e., that which is not easily disclosed by man in his immediate existence, by the πολλοί” (*PS*, 66). The wise person, unlike human beings in their everyday existence, does not see things in “their immediate aspect but in their genuine whence and why” (*PS*, 66). While the wise person has gone beyond everyday existence by virtue of his knowledge and what he contemplates, the wisdom in which he has a share is a modified version of our everyday understanding and interpretive life, according to Heidegger. Heidegger does however admit that “this structure is not explicit in Aristotle. But we have to say in general that an interpretation must go beyond what can be found in the text at first glance” (*PS*, 53). The advantage of this interpretation for us is that we can perhaps see a window for the ambiguity in Aristotle’s use of *theória*. It, too, can run its course in the “more or less,” or in everyday ways, and more sophisticated ways.

Wonder as the Basis for Contemplation

According to Heidegger, there is a tendency, in our very being, toward contemplation. This tendency is shown in the phenomenon of wonder. Philosophic contemplation is a pure onlooking (*betrachten*), according to Heidegger. The possibility for this is rooted in our natural tendency to wonder, θαυμάζειν. Our understanding confronts the wonderful
as something awry, strange, or off kilter (Hier stimmt etwas nicht). “The astonishing, the wondrous, is constituted in relation to an onlooking insofar as the understanding at one’s disposal does not suffice for this encountered state of affairs. The understanding is shocked by what shows itself” (PS, 87). Our general understanding of things, or what often seems most obvious and clear to us, is turned on its head. We wonder at small things, and then this wonder grows toward greater things, even if we once thought even these to be obvious. We wonder about the moon, what happens to the moon, “about the remarkable fact that the moon changes…and finally about the genesis of beings as a whole” (PS, 87). 29 Let us turn to Heidegger’s Basic Questions of Philosophy 30 for a deeper understanding of wonder.

Let us first recall what is at stake. Both Aristotle and Plato claim wonder as the beginning of philosophy. 31 We can also say that Aristotle thought wonder to be not only the beginning of philosophy, but also the end of it. God compels our wonder, since he is “always in that good state in which we sometimes are.” 32 In the Ethics, too, we recall that philosophy offers pleasures wonderful in purity and enduringness. We will see here in what way wonder is the beginning of philosophy, and what this “beginning” means. We

29 Again, Heidegger draws the examples from Aristotle’s Metaphysics I.2, around which Heidegger’s discussion is oriented. However, we shall see that this applies just as well to contemplation in the Nicomachean Ethics.
31 See Plato’s Theaetetus, 155d2-3, and Aristotle’s Metaphysics, 982b11.
32 Aristotle, Metaphysics, trans. W.D. Ross in The Complete Works of Aristotle, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1072b24-26. Nightingale, in “Wandering and Wondering,” attributes this position to Aristotle: “the philosopher ‘escapes’ from perplexity and ignorance by acquiring knowledge or….by ‘theorizing the causes’. To ‘theorize’ or ‘see’ the cause of something perplexing is to move from a state of wonder to a state of certainty” (43). To attribute “certainty” to Aristotle seems out of place and possibly anachronistic—it seems more Cartesian than something that concerned the ancients. Moreover, Aristotle, as we have cited him in Book XII of the Metaphysics, reaches God as the ultimate end of philosophy (and the “beginning” of being, in a sense). This provokes our wonder. Thus, philosophy both begins and ends in wonder for Aristotle, contrary to Nightingale’s position.
will see what this means for the life of contemplation in the *Ethics*, and also for the good life in general.

Heidegger begins by analyzing our basic interpretations of “wonder” in order then to come to the “pre-eminent content and meaning” (*BQP*, 136). First and foremost, “wonder” is not curiosity (*Neugier*). Nor is wonder (*Erstaunen*) the same as astonishment (*Staunen*) or awe (*Bestaunen*). Heidegger does not differentiate the latter two from one another so much as he differentiates them from wonder proper, or *Erstaunen*.

Astonishment is a retreat in the face of the unusual, such that the unusual is allowed to grow in its unusualness. The unusual becomes more exciting, and the one who is astonished takes no position on the object of astonishment. We might say he can make nothing of it. The object of astonishment is the same as the object of awe. “Yet even here the astonishment is still in every case an encounter with and a being struck by a determinate individual object of awe” (*BQP*, 143). This will be at least one way in which we distinguish astonishment and awe from wonder.

In wonder, what is most usual becomes unusual. What is it that becomes most unusual? Heidegger’s answer is “everything” (*Alles*). “For the most extreme wonder, anything whatsoever as such and everything as everything become the most unusual” (*BQP*, 144). Explanation can make no headway here. One cannot explain away the wonderful. We cannot, in wonder, explain what is wonderful, because the wonder is driven by the “that it is.” To put it differently than Heidegger, we realize—make real for ourselves—the fact that there is being at all, or that there are beings. “In this way, wonder now opens up what alone is wondrous in it: namely, the whole as the whole, and the whole as beings, beings as a whole, that they are and what they are, beings as beings”

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33 Nor does Heidegger offer a corresponding set of distinctions for ancient Greek.
Heidegger emphasizes this “as” (als) to show us the “in-between” that wonder opens up for us—“the open of a free space…in which beings come into play as such, namely as the beings they are, in the play of their being” (BQP, 146). When we wonder, we open up the world in full dis-closure or truth, ἀλήθεια.

Wonder, then, as the beginning of philosophy, is what opens up a place for philosophical thought. It may open up a place for philosophical inquiry or philosophic contemplation. We may move beyond Heidegger’s assessment to say that wonder allows for the inquiry that gains us knowledge, which we could later contemplate. Or, it allows for the mere contemplation of things already known, or things simply seen in contemplation, such as first principles. We cannot reason our way to first principles, but they instead must be simply grasped or seen. In this way, we do not get beyond the beginning. By wondering about and at the things that allow us to have knowledge, or at that which allows certain processes of thought (e.g. number), we stand at the beginning of thinking. If philosophical inquiry leads us up to a place of contemplation, e.g. to the unmoved mover, then we also end with wonder. In this case, the unmoved mover is not only the end of philosophical thought, but the beginning of all that is.

Wonder is the beginning and end of philosophy. We recall our quote above that philosophy offers the most pleasant and wonderful things for thought. This runs contrary to Andrea Nightingale’s claim that, for Aristotle, philosophy only begins in wonder but ends in certainty. If contemplation is the apex of human flourishing, and it involves the most wondrous pleasures, and there is nothing accomplished outside the contemplation,

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34 This could be why Heidegger draws such fine distinctions between Erstaunen, Bestaunen, and Staunen. The prefix er- could suggest the beginning of an action, or the end or aim of the action. See April Wilson’s German Quickly (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 103.

35 Nightingale, “Wandering and Wondering,” 43.
then philosophy ends in wonder. Inquiry is not involved. We rather behold what there is to behold. Even if wonder can drive inquiry, that is not what wonder does here. Wonder allows us simply to be there with what we contemplate.

Mind is the place of thought and contemplation. Aristotle says further that mind is “both beginning and end; for demonstrations are from these and about these” (1143b9-11). Mind is both the beginning, or principle (ἀρχή), and the limit, completion, or end (τέλος). Mind is where we come into contact with what allows for demonstration, and where we think that which completes demonstrations. But if this happens in conjunction with wonder, we see again the tight interweaving of self as mind, and self as the composite being. If wonder is a mood or an undergoing (πάθος), then wonder is characteristic not only of thought, but also of embodiment. If philosophical thought is driven by wonder, then philosophical thought or contemplation cannot happen without the body. For Aristotle, a mood, attunement, or undergoing would require body. So, even the highest form of contemplation is done in a human being—not a detached mind (more on this later).

When we understand contemplation in terms of its basic way of attunement, it is clear how “nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating” (1177b2). Kathleen Wilkes objects to this by suggesting inquiry to be far more interesting than contemplation. “All research is intended to produce some answer, theory, or solution; but the point and pleasure of the work does not derive from the passive post factum

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36 Bywater thinks this phrase is misplaced. Whether or not it is misplaced, or out of context, there is nothing un-Aristotelian about it, and it still provides insight into the facets of mind.
37 Socrates refers to it in just this way in Theaetetus, 155d2. Heidegger refers to wonder as a Grundstimmung, a basic mood or attunement of philosophy (literally, a “ground-mood”).
38 See the discussion of self-love in the previous chapter.
contemplation of the result achieved but rather in the work itself and the discoveries.”

First, we must understand that contemplation is not a passion, even if it may involve wonder. Contemplation itself is an activity. In the activity (energeia) of contemplation, we fulfill our function (ergon), and become who we actually and completely are (entelecheia). While inquiry may indeed be enjoyable and highly pleasurable—and Aristotle would not deny this—the contemplation of what we now know from our inquiry offers the purest pleasure, since there is nothing left to do but simply behold it. This sort of contemplation would be worthless without wonder. Wonder is what allows for the pleasures of contemplation to be satisfying in themselves.

The mathematician may find great pleasure in working through and solving a formula, but may become bored with the answer once he has gotten it. Yet, to contemplate number or the beginning of number—what allowed him to do his work in the first place—is a philosophic and wonderful pleasure. This contemplation is driven by wonder, and this is what Wilkes’ objection misses. Even to contemplate the answer of the formula is driven by wonder. To contemplate the order that necessitated such a solution requires wonder. For example, we may contemplate that this step followed that one, and had to follow that one. Or, if other steps are available and interchangeable, that they all had to lead to the same solution. Wonder allows knowledge to become more than mere information. Without wonder, knowledge becomes static and mundane.

Wonder may also, as mentioned above, drive inquiry. This may especially be seen in the natural sciences. If we merely take for granted that trees, flowers, rivers, insects, etc. are there, then it is difficult to find a reason—or more precisely, it is difficult to want or desire—to inquire into them and their nature. A genuine inquiry into the natural world

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is driven by an implicit or explicit realization of these things as they are, or simply that they are at all, and are therefore precious and worth understanding. As Nussbaum puts it in her discussion of wonder, “we need philosophy to show us the way back to the ordinary and to make it an object of interest and pleasure, rather than contempt and evasion.”

The use of “philosophy” here, in an ancient context, will apply not only to abstract contemplation, but also to an inquiry into the natural world. As Aristotle says in the *Parts of Animals*, encouraging us not to think inquiry into such things is too lowly, “every realm of nature is wonderful.” Thus, as Nussbaum says, “philosophy, inspired by wonder, takes us to the world and its ever more precise description.” It is wonder that drives contemplation of higher beings, and investigations into the world around us.

Contemplation and Authenticity According to Heidegger

For Aristotle, let us recall that philosophic contemplation is where mind reaches its fulfillment. It is where human selfhood comes into its own. Heidegger recognized this in Aristotle, framing it in his own language.

\[ \Theta \epsilon \omega \rho \varepsilon \iota \nu \] is Dasein’s ownmost possibility since in it Dasein reaches its end in such a way that it is transposed into its most genuine possibility, into its ownmost there, as \( \Theta \epsilon \omega \rho \varepsilon \iota \nu \) constitutes the most genuine \( \epsilon \nu \tau \varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \chi \varepsilon \iota \alpha \) of the being of human beings. (*BC*, 64)

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41 Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, trans. W. Ogle, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 645a17. Nussbaum comments on this passage. Aristotle goes on to tell the story of Heraclitus who, when found by visitors warming himself by his stove, said, “there are gods here, too.” Nussbaum says, “presumably [the visitors] had expected to find him out contemplating the heavens, or lost in reflection—anything but this very ordinary activity” (262). Perhaps the order of this ordinariness is that in which Heraclitus found divinity.
42 Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 261.
43 None of this precludes the possibility of seeking knowledge for practical purposes. For example, it is good to know about specific ecosystems, so we may learn how they interrelate, or how we relate to them. Here, human or self-interest may be the impetus. Yet, if we enjoy knowing for its own sake, and it seems we do, then wonder is the impetus for this.
Contemplation is the genuine, or authentic \( (eigenste) \) possibility of human being.

Contemplation allows for the most authentic or appropriate \( (eigenlichste) \) way that human beings can be. In contemplation, we are genuinely there \( (Da) \) with what we contemplate. In fact, we are this “there.” We have become, to the degree that we are mind, what we contemplate. Yet, we could also say that we are most fully here \( (Da) \) in contemplation. Being there with what we contemplate, we are most fully here in presence, in self-fulfillment. Wonder is the way in which we come to behold what we contemplate, much as \textit{angst} is the disposition in which we confront our mortality for Heidegger.

In addressing the metaphor of contemplation as a healing power over the soul, Heidegger says, “\( \Theta εωρεῖν \) is a mode of being \( [Seinsart] \) in which man attains his highest mode of being, his proper \( [eigentliches] \) spiritual health” \( (PS, 117) \). Heidegger goes on to stake an important claim: the reason that \textit{sophia}, and not \textit{phronēsis}, constitutes the most proper being of human being hinges upon that to which \textit{sophia} relates—that which is always, or everlasting \( (PS, 117) \). \textit{Phronēsis} cannot fulfill human being to the degree philosophic contemplation can because \textit{phronēsis} depends too much upon circumstances. More specifically, “only someone who is already \( \acute{α}γαθός \) can be \( φρόνιμος \)” \( (PS, 114) \). Practical wisdom or prudence comes into its own in relation to someone who is already good. The highest wisdom—philosophic wisdom—is autonomous \( (eigenständig) \). \textit{Sophia} stands on its own. It relates to that which is beyond mere human being.

Wisdom stands on its own, and the philosopher that contemplates it must also stand on his own. “The philosopher…can be who he is only if and precisely if he is \( καθ’ αὐτὸν \ ζων \), alone with himself. And the more he is with himself and strives only to
disclose, the less he is in need of others” (PS, 121). Heidegger is drawing here from 
*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177a32. Aristotle, in distinguishing the life of character excellence and contemplation, says that the wise person does not need others to contemplate. The life of character excellence requires certain circumstances, and also other people, but the wise person can contemplate “even when by himself” (ὁ δὲ σοφὸς καὶ καθ’ αὑτὸν δύναται θεωρεῖν). Aristotle goes on to say that he can perhaps contemplate better if he has others with which to contemplate, but he is still most self-sufficient. Heidegger recognizes this by saying that, even when others are with the contemplative, he must still see things for himself. “Nobody can see things on behalf of someone else, and no one can have things present on account of some other person’s disclosure of them” (PS, 121). We cannot force our friends to see the meaning of what we say or contemplate. We can only present what is there in the best way we can, and the friend must take it up for himself.

Thus far in the *Sophist* lecture, Heidegger shows us that the flourishing life (εὖδαιμονία) makes for the authenticity, or the properness, of the being of human Dasein. Heidegger then does something surprising with the concept of flourishing as activity.

εὖδαιμονία as man’s proper being, must be reduced to ἐνέργεια. Ἐνέργεια means nothing else than presence, pure immediate presence at hand... Εὐδαιμονία is thus the presence of the finished state of the living being with regard to its highest possibility of being. It is the τελείωσις of the being of the being as being-in. (PS, 119).

Why must energeia, as the way we come into our own (the way we flourish), be nothing but presence at hand (*Vorhandensein*)? In the context of contemplation, we do indeed contemplate what is simply there, and we are there with it in presence. However,

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44 Sie macht die Eigentlichkeit des Seins des menschlichen Dasein aus.
energeia is far richer than a pure, static presence. Energeia is activity. If we stick to the etymology, it is the en-working of human being. It is where our ergon, our work or function, is enacted. This enacting can take its course according to character or intellectual excellence. In either case, it is something that we do, and this doing is never divorced from past or future. Nor is this en-acting something we can always do, but must be undertaken habitually, and through practice. This is why flourishing, as the completion of who we are, does not mean that we are a mere static presence. We are living, flowing beings who are constantly engaging our being in excellence. Even if we live up to the highest degree of happiness, we do not do so perpetually. We are, after all, as both Aristotle and Heidegger recognize, mortals. We cannot always be there with what just is. Insofar as we are mortal, “the ultimately appropriate comportment to what always is,” is denied us (PS, 118).

We see now that Heidegger is not claiming his version of authenticity, or self-appropriation, to be the same as Aristotle’s. William McNeill has recognized this. In the light of what we know from Being and Time, Heidegger has prepared “the terrain for a critique of this very prioritizing,” i.e., the prioritizing of theôrein, “as indicative of a desire for pure presence.”\textsuperscript{45} Heidegger, in Being and Time, works contrary to the idea of pure presence, which is what he claims Aristotle’s theôria temporally to be. McNeill says, “precisely the presencing of, or in, that authentic presence will be increasingly problematized; it will be shown to entail the phenomena of concealment and withdrawal, of absence and finitude of time that any logos premised on theoretical seeing—at least in its post-Aristotelian form—can only occlude.”\textsuperscript{46} In other words, Heidegger thinks theôria

\textsuperscript{46} McNeill, Glance, 54.
dwells in the purely present-at-hand, and then goes on to critique this privileging of
presence-at-hand. Although Heidegger interpreted Aristotle as offering us a way into self-
appropriation via contemplation, Heidegger himself apparently did not agree.

Heidegger did not equate his version of authenticity with what he found in
Aristotle. We see this even in Being and Time. In his discussion of Befindlichkeit—how
one finds oneself, or “mood”—Heidegger makes clear that our original way of being in
the world is not theoretical. In fact:

By looking at the world theoretically, we have already dimmed it down to the
uniformity of what is purely present-at-hand…Yet even the purest θεωρία has not
left all moods behind it; even when we look theoretically at what is just present-
at-hand, it does not show itself purely as it looks unless this θεωρία lets it come
towards us in a tranquil tarrying alongside..., in ῥαστώνη and διαγωγή. (B&T, 177)

Heidegger may be here refusing the primacy of a metaphysic of presence. We do not, in
our everyday way of being-in-the-world, approach the world from a moodless, cool,
removed height of theoretical observation. But even the purest theôria—and here
Heidegger must be talking about the kind upon which he commented in his lectures—
does not operate outside of mood. It moves along peacefully, with ease in the way it
passes its time. Here, Heidegger wants to be sure, as he has time and again in Being and
Time, to place even the loftiest types of philosophical contemplation on the basis of our
everyday being-in-the-world. His conception of authenticity, too, emerges directly out of
this concrete being-in-the-world, so that we do indeed seem to end up with something
like a phronimos, i.e., someone who is able to see the situation and act resolutely in the
moment.

There is nothing in Aristotle, however, that would seem to preclude in this respect
Heidegger’s description of human being. That is, Aristotle could grant that our everyday
being-in-the-world is not primarily theoretical. Such an admission would not ruin what he has to say about contemplation as the best sort of life. Indeed, there seems nothing in Heidegger’s work to prevent us from carrying on life in a contemplative way. Even if Heidegger might refuse to call theôria the best sort of life for human beings, and we have no evidence that he would, the reason for such a refusal would not, and could not, be explicitly found in Being and Time. This text purports to give us a fundamental ontology.

We know that Heidegger repeatedly insists that this text is not ethical or moralistic in nature. However, this does not altogether exclude ethics from the realm of human life. In short, because he could not say in Being and Time that the life of theôria could be the best life for human being, he cannot, for the same reason, deny this possibility.

We may recall here Heidegger’s discussion of resoluteness. He says that resoluteness does not stand at a remove from its situation, but is rather already in the situation. “As resolute, Dasein is already taking action” (B&T, 347). He goes on to tell us that he has been purposely avoiding the term “take action.” This term “suggests a misunderstanding in the ontology of Dasein, as if resoluteness were a special way of behavior belonging to the practical faculty as contrasted with one that is theoretical.” It is not that Heidegger refuses to make the theory-praxis distinction, but that this distinction is founded upon who we already are as care. It is the way we already are in the world that allows for the theory-praxis distinction.

Again, there is nothing in Aristotle that would seem to deny this. That the Nicomachean Ethics is a practical science presupposes the theory-praxis distinction, but Aristotle never insists that human being is fundamentally practical or theoretical. Even Aristotle’s “human function” argument does not make such a distinction. That the human
function is activity in accordance with, or not without, *logos* does not presuppose "theory" as opposed to the "practical." As we have seen, Aristotle is merely pointing to what allows us to be particularly human beings. It is the richness of *logos* that opens up human being. *Logos*, interpreted this broadly, would even encompass Heidegger’s pre-thematic understanding, circumspection, and our being-in-the-world in general.

The point here is not to show how Aristotle may have already anticipated Heidegger. We especially do not wish to reduce one thinker to the other. Nor is our task primarily to see the ways in which Heidegger’s *Being and Time* may or may not be a “radicalized” or an “ontologized” version of Aristotle’s concept of *praxis*.\(^{47}\) Rather, we should see that, despite Heidegger’s eventual and supposed “overcoming” of the metaphysics of presence, there is no reason, even in light of *Being and Time*, to view the flourishing and authentic lives as incompatible. We may even come to a better understanding of *theoria* than what Heidegger presented, allowing the two lives to be more interactive. Beyond this we can rethink ‘authenticity’ with Aristotle as our starting point. This is a starting point Heidegger himself already recognized, and to which he paid his homage.

**Conclusion**

We saw with Heidegger that authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) is becoming one’s own (*eigen*) self. We have deemed this self-appropriation, or becoming one’s proper self. We do not

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\(^{47}\) As Franco Volpi has suggested in, “Dasein as *praxis*: the Heideggerian assimilation and radicalization of the practical philosophy of Aristotle,” in *Critical Heidegger*, trans. and ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1996), 27-66. “Ontologization” is Volpi’s term. McNeill, in *Glance*, also suggests a “radicalization” of Aristotle’s *praxis*. Heidegger’s *praxis* “shows itself as a coming out of concealment, unfolding into presencing, returning back into concealment.” McNeill’s position seems to differ from Volpi in this: McNeill does not think we should view Heidegger’s *Being and Time* to be a “mere reversal of Aristotle’s argument, as though *Being and Time* merely wanted to uphold the practical *nous* of *phronesis* as opposed to the *theoria* of *sophia*” (109).
appropriate a self in the sense that we come upon and take ownership of an object. This would land us in the difficulty of whether we have two selves, and which one does the owning, etc. Rather, in authenticity, one becomes one’s own, proper self. One appropriates oneself. We are thinking of “appropriate” here in its etymological sense: ad-*proprius*. In authenticity, the self is appropriated in such a way that we come into our own, or we come into who we most properly are. For Heidegger, this involves the self-knowledge *that* we are, and that we are already in a world, mortal, and with others. We *are* this way of being. We are most ourselves in taking over who we already are—we become who we are.

We saw that Aristotle’s life of character virtue involves some version of self-appropriation, or ownness. In courage, one faces what is most terrible or uncanny, and that is death. Death is the end of human being, and nothing is any longer good or bad for humans in death. Death removes the being from the human. Despite this threat, even in its most imminent shape, the courageous person sees what must be done. The courageous person acts in the face of death. The self is here no longer conceived of as a thing. The thing-like, particularized self is gotten beyond and is absorbed in the situation. The life of character excellence is one where the particularized self is directed away from itself, toward *being* excellent.

We saw also that the more excellent the person, the more she knows herself as mind. This self-knowledge need not always be explicit. That is, her actions may show that reason is already in control, and reason runs its course in mind. As such, she is able to transcend her particularity and most genuinely be with her friends. She is of one mind with herself, and there is no conflict amongst her desires, or conflict between herself and
her desires. What she does, she does wholly and fully. In being at one with herself in her goodness, she is able to be one with her friend. The good friend is another self because both friends are most mind. In being together and in being good, they indicate that they are themselves.

Finally, the degree to which we contemplate is the degree to which our lives flourish. Contemplation sends us beyond our particularity by sublimating us into what is contemplated. Yet, we said contemplation is driven by wonder, and thus cannot happen without the body. Contemplation does not allow us to leave our bodies, and thus our mortality, behind. This is why in contemplation we make ourselves deathless only as much as we are able. However, we may recognize that wonder, even if it is an undergoing, is perhaps a more universally directed pathos. Wonder drives the contemplation of, and inquiry into, our world. It cannot happen without the body, but wonder does not direct us toward our particular bodily desires, emotions, etc. Wonder is what drives us beyond ourselves as this, particularized self, and toward the “that it is” of beings. This in turn allows us to ask “what” or “why” in inquiry. It also allows us simply to be with what it is we contemplate, in the highest form of contemplation.

Let us make this point clearer. Wonder is an undergoing, or “passion.” In Nicomachean Ethics II.5, Aristotle names several passions—appetite, anger, fear, envy, confidence, joy, love, hate, longing, etc.—and says they are in general accompanied by pleasure and pain (1105b21-23). Some of these ways of undergoing are self-directed, while others, like love, may be directed beyond the self. In loving my friend, I love her for her own sake, and this is pleasurable. Wonder, too, is directed beyond the wondering self, toward that into which we inquire, and that about which we think or contemplate.
Wonder can take place only in a particularized, embodied human being. It involves the whole human being, and somehow directs the wonderer away from her particularity. In wonder, the wonderer is directed toward what is there for thought, for inquiry, or for contemplation. Through wonder, which is an undergoing that happens only insofar as one is a particularized this here, the contemplative is directed away from this particularity and toward what is to be thought. The activity of contemplation cannot happen without the passivity of wonder. The rich interplay of the ambiguous self comes to light in this phenomenon. More precisely, the rich interweaving of self as particular and universal here shows itself.

It is selfhood that Heidegger overlooked in his interpretation of theôria. We have seen Heidegger make the etymological connection of theôria and seeing. The etymology is correct. Yet, Heidegger may have treated contemplation as though the contemplative were at a remove from what she contemplates. Indeed, Heidegger says, “The θεωρός is the one who goes to the festival, the one who is present as a spectator at the great dramas and festivals—whence our word ‘theater’” (PS, 44). Again, Heidegger’s etymology may help us see the connection to contemplation as a way of seeing, but it fails to let us in on what happens to the contemplator in contemplation. We saw that the contemplator “tarries alongside,” or spends her while with (Verweilen bei) what she contemplates. Contemplation, for Heidegger, operates in a presence-at-hand. What is present-at-hand is at a remove from the contemplator. Yet, as we have seen, the contemplative becomes what she contemplates. The contemplative self is in some sense absorbed or taken up into what is there. The contemplative is not set at a distance from what she contemplates, but is there with it, or even in union with it.
In conclusion, we see now that for both Aristotle and Heidegger, self-appropriation occurs at some sort of limit of human being. For Aristotle, the limits of our particularity are pushed, and even in some respect transgressed. Insofar as we are mind, we can move beyond our particularity. In contemplation, we are at the furthest remove from our particularity since we become what we contemplate. Yet even here, our particularity is affirmed, since contemplation is accompanied by the mood of wonder. Wonder, whether enthusiastic or sober and calm, needs embodiment to run its course. Our particularity is also affirmed by the fact that we cannot always contemplate eternal and unchanging things. We are needy beings, and this attests to our finitude. We need food, clothing, rest, and even friendship. This is where the character excellences can serve as another kind of self-appropriation. Here again, we move beyond the particularity of the appetitive self, and are taken up into excellence. But even here we affirm our particularity since the character excellences find their proper home in embodiment—the excellences deal with pleasures and pains.

For Heidegger, too, one transcends the they-self, and returns to who one already is as care. The self-definition handed down by *das Man* is left behind, or passes into insignificance in the face of our own death. The call of conscience attests to our being-guilty, or the fact that we do not have absolute power over or own being. We then settle down into who we are as finite beings—ahead of ourselves, already in a world, and alongside other beings in the world. Here, the self as “I” or subject is left behind. But just as we cannot contemplate forever, the possibility of inauthenticity is ever-present. The “situation” cannot always present itself, and one may recede again into the comfort of *das Man*. 
For Aristotle, character and intellectual excellence allows us to flourish. This also means that the flourishing life entails self-appropriation. For both Aristotle and Heidegger, self-appropriation is not “finding oneself” so much as it is a letting go of the way we normally conceive of or identify ourselves. In Aristotelian terms, excellence allows us to move beyond the particular, appetitive self. In Heideggerian terms, authenticity releases us from the they-self. For both thinkers, we see that neither the highest sort of self-cultivation nor the most intense authenticity is everlasting. We are beings bound by our finitude, and the ways in which we can become who we most are attest to this. For Heidegger, authenticity hinges upon mortality and finitude. Moreover, authenticity is impossible without inauthenticity. For Aristotle, we can only make ourselves deathless as much as possible. This means that we must always return to who we are as composite beings. The tension—the movement beyond particularity, and the affirmation of it—is a necessary part of who we are. I close with the suggestion that we may do well to heed this fact. Moreover, we should understand that the most healthy sort of authenticity or self-appropriation is never the finding of a static object called the self, but a simultaneous letting-be and cultivation of who we are and can be.
Bibliography


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