AGENCY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE SELF

AGENCY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE SELF: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE OTHERWISE THROUGH THE LENS OF NIETZSCHE, HEIDEGGER AND SARTRE

By LISA WILL, B.A.

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LAY ABSTRACT:

Is having an ability to choose otherwise the best ground on which to hold persons responsible for their actions? This thesis considers the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, which reveal some evidence that persons should not be held responsible for their actions on the basis of being able to choose otherwise. I argue that authenticity is an inherent feature of autonomy which involves the relationship one has to one's self and 'choosing one's self'; and that there is a distinction to be made between the 'ego' and the 'self'. Further, I advance an argument that actions are dependent on a 'self', but that the 'self' is not a cause of action. This thesis raises questions to be addressed in future investigations regarding the connection between responsibility and dependence as well as whether the world is best understood as dependently structured rather than causally structured.

ABSTRACT:

The aim of this thesis is to determine whether having an ability to choose otherwise aids our understanding of the kind of balanced autonomy that is required in order to claim that people should be held responsible for their actions. By looking to the theories of three historical philosophers (Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre), I find evidence that suggests having an ability to choose otherwise should not be the ground on which we base responsibility for an agent's actions; actions involve 'choosing one's self' and there is a relationship one has to one's self which is often overlooked. My investigation reveals evidence that *existential* authenticity is an inherent quality of autonomy and that the 'genuine self' which grounds an agent's actions ought to be viewed as a 'dependence' rather than a 'cause'. My investigation also reveals a concept of a 'genuine self' as distinct from the concept of a narratively structured 'ego'; the self and the ego appear to be distinct entities which are existentially interdependent. This thesis raises questions which should be addressed in future investigations. First, how *is*, and how *should* responsibility be related to the dependences from which actions arise and second, is the objective world best understood as causally structured, in accordance with the doctrine of determinism, or rather, should we seek an understanding of the objective world as dependently structured.

Key words: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, choice, autonomy, authenticity, causation, dependence

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This thesis contributes to the philosophical debate about free will by showing that the principle of alternative possibilities is not an adequate principle on which to hold persons responsible for their actions. This thesis advances a concept of authenticity as an individuated ground of action which is an inherent part of autonomy and reveals the ability to choose otherwise as an ability that belongs to a causally structured world, as opposed to a dependently structured reality on which an agent's actions depend. This thesis lays the foundation for future investigations into the question of responsibility as it relates to the dependencies from which an agent's actions arise. This thesis also lays a foundation for further investigation into both the distinction and relation of the 'ego' and what is properly the 'self' as a ground of action.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

A young Russian soldier, 21 years old, was recently on trial, having allegedly committed the war crime of shooting and killing an unarmed Ukrainian civilian. This young soldier admitted to the shooting and said that he was ready to accept responsibility for his actions. His lawyer argued that he was ordered to shoot the unarmed man and that *anyone*, in similar circumstances, would not realize that their actions were criminal. The prosecutor argued that the young soldier could have avoided killing the civilian. And the court found that this young soldier was criminally responsible for his actions and sentenced him to life in prison. Had this young soldier not been captured, he may have returned home to Russia and no one might ever have known that it was he who shot and killed the Ukrainian civilian. Most likely, there have been many soldiers who commit war crimes and are never brought to justice. Some may even be praised as 'heroes'. This thesis is not about criminal laws or criminal responsibility, but rather the kind of responsibility that one might say grounds society's ideals about criminal and moral responsibility: the individual responsibility we bear simply by virtue of the assumption that we retain the ability to choose and to do otherwise.

One of the core beliefs we hold about ourselves and others is that our choices and actions *are* up to us. And if our actions truly are up to us – if we are the incontestable authors of our actions – we ought to be held responsible for those actions, not just criminally or legally, but also personally and morally. Underlying all of these different kinds of responsibility is the simple premise that we always retain the ability to choose and do other than we have chosen or have done.

The problem with this view is that it appears to be contradicted by the very manner in which the world is structured. It seems as though the world is causally determined. Events are caused by previous events and those events are caused by previous events, and so on and so on. Of course the laws of nature play a part in determining the outcome of events, but there are no events which are uncaused. This is the doctrine of *determinism*.

If determinism is true, we lose the basis on which we hold persons responsible for their actions, as it would seem that we are never able to choose other than we do: past events plus the laws of nature are the determinants of everything that happens in the present and everything that will happen in the future. Peter Van Inwagen explained this dilemma in what he termed the *consequence argument*:

> If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us. (Van Inwagen 1983/2015, pp. 39)

Herein lies the core of a long-standing philosophical debate. If the world really is causally determined, how do we reconcile the core belief of ourselves as free agents: are the two compatible? We call this the 'free will debate', but really, it is a debate about responsibility. There are many and varied arguments arising from this debate. A strong stance on the side of determinism would hold that the world, including the actions of agents, is always causally determined thus no one is truly free and we should not hold ourselves and others responsible for our actions. However, this strong determinist view is held by only a select few and is otherwise unpopular, as it would lead to broad acceptance

of actions without responsibility. Thus, the main debate lies between two basic views. 'Soft determinists' argue that free will and determinism are compatible; there is a way to understand the ability to do otherwise even in a determinist framework. 'Libertarians', on the other hand, argue that free will and determinism are *not* compatible; we, as agents, must be able to initiate causal chains which are not determined by prior events and thus we are always able to do otherwise, thereby falsifying the doctrine of determinism.

Regardless of the stance one takes, the principle at the centre of this debate is the *principle of alternative possibilities* (PAP). Although the precise wording and interpretation of this principle has varied over time, the basic principle aligns with the sentiment expressed by our core beliefs: *persons are responsible for what they have done (or chosen) only if they could have done (or chosen) otherwise.* Although philosophers debated whether or not persons *do* retain the ability to do otherwise, the truth of PAP itself was not questioned until Harry G. Frankfurt published his influential 1969 paper, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility". Frankfurt devised scenarios which show that people could be morally responsible for their choices and actions even though they could not have done otherwise, and also showing, he claimed, that PAP is false.

I take the liberty here of changing Frankfurt's scenario only insofar as changing the names of the antagonist and protagonist and inserting an action to be performed. I use the example of the young Russian soldier from the beginning of this chapter: Suppose someone – a Russian general, let's say – wants a young Russian soldier to perform a certain action – to shoot and kill an unarmed Ukrainian civilian. The general is prepared to go to considerable length to get his way, but he prefers to avoid showing his hand

unnecessarily. So he waits until the young soldier is about to make up his mind, and he does nothing unless it is clear to him (the general is an excellent judge of such things) that the young soldier is going to decide to do something other than what he wants him to do. If it does become clear that the young soldier is going to decide to do something else, the general takes effective steps to ensure that the young soldier decides to do, and does do, what he wants him to do. Whatever the young soldier's initial preferences and inclinations, then, the general will have his way (cf. Frankfurt 1969/2015, p. 172-73). Exactly how the general would ensure the young soldier does exactly what he wants him to do is not relevant. It could be anything – threats, coercion, or even mind control. The important point is that according to PAP, the young soldier is not responsible for his actions because he could not have done otherwise – the general would have prevented any alternate actions.

PAP does seem to be a valid principle if the young soldier's choice was in fact to do other than the general wanted him to do. However, PAP would not account for a scenario where the young soldier *did* decide, entirely on his own, to shoot the unarmed civilian, regardless of the general's wishes. Under such circumstances, according to PAP, the young soldier would not have been morally responsible even though he did in fact choose to kill the unarmed civilian. In Frankfurt's own words, the point is thus: "The fact that he could not have done otherwise clearly provides no basis for supposing that he *might* have done otherwise if he had been able to do so" (Frankfurt 1969/2015, pp. 174).

As successful as Frankfurt was in shaking up the debate, his own solution to revise PAP produced little more than a negative principle, leaving moral responsibility

only tenuously attached to free will: "A person is *not* morally responsible for what he has done if he did it *only* because he could not have done otherwise" (Frankfurt 1969/2015, pp. 176, my emphasis). Frankfurt's revision produces a principle for determining the circumstances under which we should *not* hold persons responsible for their actions: if they had no alternative possibilities for their actions, then they are not morally responsible. But even this revised version of PAP does not resolve the question of whether determinism is compatible with free will.

If we take the 'libertarian' side of the debate, the truth of Frankfurt's revised PAP might be acceptable, yet, libertarians could maintain their argument that agents, being first causes, always have alternate possibilities for their actions and thus are always morally responsible. Frankfurt's revision seems neither to support nor frustrate libertarian arguments.

Likewise, if we take the 'soft-determinists' side of the debate, Frankfurt's theory may be acceptable yet unsupportive. What the soft-determinist really wants to show is not merely why we should *not* hold persons responsible for their actions, but precisely why we *should* hold persons responsible for their actions, even if our world is causally structured. We already do hold persons responsible for their actions, but what we really want is some confirmation that we are right to do so. And for this we need more than a negative principle – we need a positive reason for upholding our claim that persons should be held morally responsible for their actions.

The debate continues and, notably, continues as a debate about a person's ability or lack of ability to *act autonomously* because having an ability to choose otherwise is an

autonomous ability. But what does being an autonomous agent *really* mean? Linguistically, 'auto' and 'nomos' translate from their original Greek into 'self' and 'law'. Thus, autonomy, linguistically, means something like 'self law'. However, autonomy, as a theory of *freedom* is somewhat problematic. Rousseau's concept of autonomy combined "obey only oneself and remain as free as before" with "obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself" (Menke 2017, pp. 159). The result, as Christoph Menke and others point out, leads to a 'paradox of autonomy'. As Menke says, putting a 'self-given' law into force would mean either obeying a 'non-self-given law', in which case, the agent is 'unfree'; or obeying an 'arbitrary free choice', in which case, the agent is 'lawless' (Menke 2017, pp. 159).

An attempt to resolve this paradox, Menke thinks, can be found in Hegel's theory of ethical life, which understands the autonomous agent as a participant in social practices (Menke 2017, pp. 160). Robert Pippin termed his interpretation of Hegel's theory 'left-Hegelian'. In this understanding of Hegel, "because the subject has and acts on its own laws – is autonomous – only through its participation in social practices, the autonomy of the subject depends on whether the 'given world' is a world of practices whose law can be appropriated as reasons" (Menke 2017, pp. 165). This account resolves the paradox because 'autonomy' means simultaneously (and reciprocally), the 'autonomy' of the subject and the 'autonomy' of the practice: "The autonomy of the subject consists in following only its own law as reason for action. The autonomy of the practice consists in its being a rational context of reasons" (Menke 2017, pp. 167). Normatively, "the subject

first attains its own law by appropriating the practice; the practice first becomes a rational connection of reasons when the subject participates in it" (Menke 2017, pp. 168).

A more recent theory by Marina Oshana aims to understand autonomy as 'social-relational'. Oshana understands autonomy as 'a global property of a person' and defines autonomy as grounded, 'first and foremost' in self-determination. Oshana thinks that:

> what decides autonomy is whether a person possesses influence and authority of a form and to an extent sufficient for a person to oversee undertakings in those domains that are of import to her agency… the existence of social relations that afford a person this influence and authority are mandatory if a person is to count as genuinely self-determining, whatever her choices are for and however laudably self-affirming they appear to be. (Oshana 2015, pp. 4-5)

The upshot of Oshana's theory is that agents can be said to live an 'autonomous life' even if their choices are 'opposed to autonomy': "That is, while I deny that autonomy depends on a meshing of preferences and an independent ideal, I claim that it is to be explained in terms of the presence of relational circumstances in the world that make practical self-determination possible" (Oshana 2015, pp. 5). Ultimately, Oshana thinks that "A plausible account of autonomy must be naturalistic – that is, it must be congruent with general empirical facts, such as the fact that people in societies occupy positions of social and relational interdependence" (Oshana 2015, pp. 5).

Hegel and Oshana both seem to recognize autonomy as a social function. This grounds autonomy as a function of living in a world of others and taking part in social practices. On Hegel's view, when I make a choice, it involves understanding the social practices which I have accepted as my own. I think Oshana takes this ideal of autonomy one step further than Hegel – for Oshana, there is a recognition of social interdependence and an acknowledgement that we may, at times, be required to choose and act in a manner

in which we are not initially inclined. This places autonomous agents in a position of viewing their surroundings both subjectively *and* objectively. My well-being is partly dependent on the choices and actions of others, and the well-being of others is partly dependent on my own choices and actions. Autonomy, thus understood, does not mean always being able to choose as one would like.

What the theories of Hegel and Oshana tell us is that autonomy entails freedom as a balance between, on the one hand, choosing and acting 'authentically', and on the other hand, being able to navigate one's life within a world of others. In other words, authenticity seems to be an inherent feature of autonomy, but it is unclear exactly how we should understand 'authenticity' in the context of it being a feature of autonomy. What we want to avoid is a notion of an 'authentic self' that is an inwardly oriented individual who is able to choose and act, entirely free of external influences. Such a notion is problematic as it would seem that the 'authentic self' need not be bound by moral concerns. It also conjures an image of the 'self' as indulgent and egoistic. In order to understand the authentic self that is a feature of autonomous action, we should view this concept, rather as an individuated ground of agency. As this thesis unfolds, this concept of authenticity will be revealed.

The aim of this thesis is to determine whether having an ability to choose otherwise aids our understanding of the kind of balanced autonomy that is required in order to claim that people should be held responsible for their actions. I approach this question, first, by setting aside any notion of authenticity as a social or psychological phenomenon and focussing only on authenticity as a fundamental aspect of human

existence – as being at least a part of the underlying structure of human reality and a ground of agency. For this, I consider the theories of three philosophers: Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre. Each of them have expressed views about the meaning of existence, its underlying structure, and some of the problems encountered with understanding the 'self' that grounds personal agency. Their writings raise questions about the understanding of freedom as an ability to choose otherwise as well as the possibility of this ability as a ground for responsibility. And as you will see, these writings raise questions about an agent's causal powers, especially as they relate to the causal structure of the world in general.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of freedom and agency, which I refer to as *effective agency*. According to Nietzsche, we cannot assume all agents are free agents, as efficacy is measured only by the agent's obedience to the command of the will.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the meaning of existence, as expressed in Martin Heidegger's theory of *Dasein*. Heidegger makes a clear distinction between ontic and ontological modes of existence. Only the ontological mode gives meaning to life and this meaning can only be found in his theory of Dasein. Heidegger's writings raise questions about the *meaning* of agency and, I believe, situates authenticity as a condition for autonomous agency.

In Chapter 4, I discuss Jean Paul Sartre's theory on the relation among existence, freedom, and the self. Sartre argues that persons are absolutely responsible for their choices and actions, however, having an ability to choose otherwise should not ground

responsibility. Choosing otherwise would involve being a different person and such a concept does not seem a valid condition for responsibility.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I explain what I believe each philosopher tells us about having an ability to choose otherwise and why PAP might not be an adequate principle on which to hold persons responsible for their actions.

Chapter 2 – Friedrich Nietzsche

Causa Sui, the Unfree Will and Efficacious Force

Friedrich Nietzsche's writings on free agency have divided scholars for many years. Some believe Nietzsche denies that any sort of freedom of will exists; others believe Nietzsche permits a certain kind of freedom, found only in an exemplary kind of human being: the *sovereign individual*. Nietzsche's views are highly contentious and his theory, as a whole, seems normatively incomprehensible: he asks his reader to make a distinction between morality and what is essentially human. His rejection of the 'ethical' individual seems a rejection of the very thing modern society holds most dear – the one thing we strive most to achieve. And this is especially so in the field of philosophy where we hold our humanity to the highest standards of ethical actions and outcomes.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche's writings about freedom, the will, and morality highlight some of the problems associated with the current debate about free will and determinism and in particular, reveals some of the limitations of the claim that being able to choose otherwise is a presupposition of free will and therefore grounds responsibility. In order to clearly distinguish Nietzsche's uncommon notion of agency, I will refer to this form of agency as *effective agency*. As you will see, effective agency does not depend on an ability to choose otherwise. It is, rather, grounded in choice that is authentic to the nature of the will of the agent.

There is a range of opinions amongst scholars regarding the significance of Nietzsche's views, as expressed in "Beyond Good and Evil" (BGE), section 21. Brian Leiter reads this section, in part, as Nietzsche's claim that holding people responsible for

their actions entails their being self-caused. Thus, this section supports Leiter's wider reading of Nietzsche: agents are not *causa sui* (self-caused) and their actions do not merit responsibility (Leiter 2005, pp. 122-124). Christopher Janaway also reads BGE 21 as a rejection of action causa sui, but points out that Nietzsche makes no claim that 'there can be free will only if there is a *causa sui*". Janaway reads this section as not so much an attempt to understand the nature of free will itself, but rather as an attempt to 'flush out' why it is that men have a "*longing for* freedom of the will" and to hypothesize "an explanation for its genesis and persistence" (Janaway 2007, pp. 115).

On my own reading of this section, one need look no further than the first line to conclude that Nietzsche rejects any notion of a self-caused agent: "The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has ever been conceived, a type of logical rape and abomination" (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 21). However, I do agree with Janaway that this section should not be read as a rejection of *all* possible accounts of free agency. As you will see, Nietzsche holds an *uncommon* notion of free agency which I believe is grounded in the efficacious force of the agent's will.

In my opinion, Nietzsche's argument in BGE 21 primarily explains why our traditional thinking on agent causation is, in his view, problematic. Nietzsche says: "*We* are the ones who invented causation, succession, for-each-other, relativity, compulsion" (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 21). And he uses 'the unfree will' to hint at why we are wrong about these concepts:

> The 'un-free will' is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills. It is almost always a symptom of what is lacking in a thinker when he senses some compulsion, need, having-to-follow, pressure, unfreedom in every

> 'causal connection' and 'psychological necessity'. It is very telling to feel this way – the person tells on himself. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 21-22)

On the surface, Nietzsche seems somewhat ambiguous on this point: after all, he earlier expressed his rejection of the agent as a 'self-cause'. However, as you will see in what follows, what appears to be an ambiguity is rather a distinction. In my view, Nietzsche makes a distinction between self-caused agency and a kind of agency that is derived from the efficacious force of the agent's will.

There is more insight to be gained about Nietzsche's views on agency in BGE 36. Throughout this passage, Nietzsche uses phrases like "assuming that", "make the attempt", "it *might* allow us", and "*venture* the hypothesis" – this makes understanding his intent difficult and should tell the reader that Nietzsche is making something less than a strong claim here. Nonetheless, I read this section as, at the very least, a hint of what he has in mind when it comes to understanding the importance of the will:

> The question is ultimately whether we recognize the will as, in effect, *efficacious,* whether we believe in the causality of the will. If we do (and *this* belief is really just our belief in causality itself -), then we *must* make the attempt to hypothetically posit the causality of the will as the only type of causality there is (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 36).

Nietzsche uses this passage to shift our thinking on agency from focussing on agents themself, to focussing on their *will*. While he clearly rejected the notion that agents are 'self-caused' in BGE 21, here he seems to permit some sort of causation which is dependent on the 'efficacious force' of the will. So if we have a causal agent that is *not* self-caused, but does have a will that is *efficacious*, this implies that causal agency derives its force from the *will*.

In this same section, Nietzsche also asserts the *will to power's* prominence and defines it as the will's efficacious force:

> Assuming, finally, that we succeeded in explaining our entire life of drives as the organization and outgrowth of one basic form of will (namely, of the will to power, which is *my* claim) … then we will have earned the right to clearly designate *all* efficacious force as: *will to power*. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 36)

This passage gives some insight into where Nietzsche would like to take the reader. And seems a departure from the uncertainty of other portions of BGE 36 – Nietzsche clearly states that our entire life of drives can be traced back to one form of will, the will to power.

For Nietzsche, there is a substantial difference between a cause which brings about an effect and a cause which brings about a *desired* effect. This is a critical point to consider when interpreting Nietzsche's view of agency: as I read Nietzsche, for an action to have been caused by an agent it must be *efficacious*, meaning it must be a cause not merely of effects, but specifically of *desired* effects. This implies that an agent's will must also be authentic because only something that is authentic can bring about *desired* effects. As you will see, Nietzsche places a great deal of importance on agents obeying their will, rather than obeying the will of others. Only when agents obey their own will is the resulting effect of its exercise desired. And only then does the agent exercise causal powers.

Agents do not merely have a will, they have an entire system of drives which all have a connection to the w*ill to power* and thereby all have some degree of efficacy. The precise nature of Nietzsche's *will to power* lies outside the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, the critical point to consider when understanding Nietzsche's view of

agency is that it is marked at least in part, by an 'efficacious force' of the will, which is based on what Nietzsche terms 'will to power'. In what follows, I refer to this unusual kind of agency as *effective agency*.

Complexity of Willing, the Will to Obey and Bad Conscience

Although the will to power is the 'efficacious force' which is central to Nietzsche's understanding of *effective agency*, this consideration alone does not tell us everything we need to know about the agent's will. For Nietzsche, there is a process of willing and everything must fit together in order to be able to claim that there is any kind of freedom on the part of the agent. Ken Gemes's reading of Nietzsche also identifies a complex process of willing: "It is when a strong will takes command, orders and organizes lesser drives that a genuine self can emerge" (Gemes & Janaway 2006, pp. 331). Elsewhere, Gemes says:

> to have a genuine self is to have an enduring co-ordinated hierarchy of drives. Most humans fail to have such a hierarchy; hence they are not sovereign individuals. Rather, they are a jumble of drives with no coherent order. Hence they are not genuine individuals (Gemes & Janaway 2006, pp. 336).

I agree with Gemes to the extent that he connects the emergence of a genuine self to the sovereign individual. However, I am careful not to place too much emphasis on the *strength of will* alone. Nietzsche's writings suggest strength as a manifestation of a successful system of wills and drives. Strength emerges from effective agency but strength alone is not the cause of the agent's actions. The term 'strong will' implies a concrete, objective presence that controls the agent's causal powers. Giving so much credit to the *strength of will* may lead to *objectifying* it as a 'cause'. And Nietzsche clearly rejects any notion of causation which 'objectifies' the cause:

> We should not erroneously *objectify* 'cause' and 'effect' like the natural scientists do (and whoever else thinks naturalistically these days -) in accordance with the dominant mechanistic stupidity which would have the cause push and shove until it 'effects' something; we should use 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure *concepts*, which is to say as conventional fictions for the purpose of description and communication, *not* explanation. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 21)

Here I think Nietzsche expresses the view that the natural sciences explain causation in terms of objectively present phenomenon. But for Nietzsche, this is not a sufficient means of explaining agency or its causation. The act of willing is a complicated process and cannot be reduced to a single function. The will's strength is not the only determinant of agency.

I am also hesitant to endorse a 'hierarchy of drives'. The trend amongst Nietzsche scholars is to focus on the will to power as a psychological concept. However, as Bernard Reginster points out, Nietzsche does often characterize the will to power as 'the essence of all life' (Reginster 2018, pp. 105). A hierarchy of drives would go a long way to explaining why some 'drives' win out over others in psychological terms. However, this thesis does not address the psychological aspects of authenticity. Here, I aim only to understand the role authenticity plays as a function of the underlying structure of human reality. In this respect, Reginster makes an important distinction, observing that Nietzsche seems to have expressed two concepts of power in his writings. First, there is a concept of power as 'power over' something. This concept aligns with the psychological notion of a hierarchy of drives, as it implies power as 'mastery' or 'dominance'.[1] It is the second concept of power which I think is more relevant to the aims of this thesis – the 'power to',

[1] Reginster discusses the debate centred on the will to power as a psychological phenomenon in Reginster (2018) "The Will to Power" in Katsafanas, P. 2018. pp. 105-120

which implies some sort of 'proficiency' or 'efficiency' (Reginster 2018, pp. 109). Although I agree that drives (or wills) gain their efficacy from the will to power, they also seem to have some independence of action insofar as the will's natural desires are concerned. At the very least, there is clearly a duality of agency at play which implies that the *will to obey* possesses some independence from the *will to power*:

> On the one hand, we are, under the circumstances, both the one who commands *and* the one who obeys and as the obedient one, we are familiar with the feeling of compulsion, force, pressure, resistance and motion that generally start right after the act of willing. On the other hand, however, we are in the habit of ignoring and deceiving ourselves about this duality by means of the synthetic concept of the 'I'. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 19)

We fail to notice the different roles the agent plays in every act of willing. The distinct roles of the agent tend to be blurred due to an expectation of the 'necessity of effect':

> The one who wills believes with a reasonable degree of certainty that will and action are somehow one, he attributes the success, the performance of the willing to the will itself, and consequently enjoys an increase in the feeling of power that accompanies all success. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 19)

This dual role of the agent shows that effective agency requires both a *will to command* (which seems to be the will to power) and a *will to obey*. The will to power's efficacious force is one determinant of the possibility of effective agency, while the agent's success in *obeying* the will to power is also a determinant of effective agency. This may seem contrary to Nietzsche's goal of designating "all efficacious force as: *will to power*" (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 36), however Nietzsche also claims that 'our entire life of drives' can be traced back to the will to power (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 36). Thus, the *will to obey* could be an independent factor in the determination of action, yet still gain its efficacy from being an 'outgrowth' of the will to power.

In BGE 188, Nietzsche places emphasis on the ability to obey laws, which seems to be (in Nietzsche's view) a part of our very nature:

> And, in all seriousness, it is not at all improbable that *this* is what is 'nature' and 'natural' – and *not* that *laisser-aller*! Every artist knows how far removed this feeling of letting go is from his 'most natural' state, the free ordering, placing, disposing and shaping in the moment of 'inspiration' – he knows how strictly and subtly he obeys thousands of laws … I will say it again: what seems to be essential 'in heaven and on earth' is that there be *obedience* in one direction for a long time. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 77-78)

I read the 'thousands of laws' the artist obeys in this passage not as externally imposed restrictions, but rather as *internally* imposed restrictions, and I think that what Nietzsche has in mind here is the *will to command*. If I am right on this point, the implication, once again, is that Nietzsche rejects the notion that agency involves being able to choose otherwise, and reminds us that agency is effective only by obeying the commands of the will.

Nietzsche also writes about another kind of obedience, which he calls 'bad conscience'. He thinks bad conscience is the kind of obedience that arose as a result of the emergence of the first political states. States emerged, not by social contract, but by violent actions (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 91). When people with 'good instincts' – the 'instincts of wild, free, roving men' were punished (Nietzche 1997, pp. 90), their 'instinct of freedom' was 'forcibly made latent' by the violent organization of these first states. People's instinct for freedom was "forced back, repressed, incarcerated within itself and finally able to discharge and unleash itself only against itself: that, and that alone, is *bad conscience* in its beginnings" (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 92). Nietzsche calls bad conscience "inherently ugly and painful" (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 92), and identifies the instinct for

freedom that it impedes as the will to power (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 92). At its best, the will to power unleashes its force outwardly, imposing one's form on the world and others. However, suppressed, this force turns inward and becomes bad conscience (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 92). Bad conscience is a kind of constraint that seems to lead to *ineffective* agency and seems to imply that the agent is *unfree*.

Nietzsche seems to imply that we *do* have an ability to choose to obey the commands of others, but this kind of action is not grounded by authenticity, and thus, impedes freedom. He seems to imply that autonomous agency is possible only if the will is efficacious and this requires that the will follows the commands of the will, not the commands of others. For Nietzsche, effective agency is only achieved when grounded by authentic willing. In this respect, Nietzsche implies authenticity as an inherent feature of autonomy.

Objective Moral Values and The Sovereign Individual

The main issue Nietzsche has with objective moral values seems to be not only that they threaten an individual's ability to live an authentic life, but more precisely, that objective moral values impair an individual's ability to be an *effective* agent. They threaten the ability to live authentically because obeying the will of others is contrary to the fundamental essence of life which Nietzsche believes *is* the will to power. As Nietzsche puts it, any body that is alive will want to "grow, spread, grab, win dominance, not out of any morality or immorality, but because it is *alive*, and because life *is* precisely will to power" (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 153). Nietzsche describes the nature of the will to power as the essential nature of life:

> Life itself is *essentially* a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least, exploiting … 'Exploitation'… belongs to the *essence* of being alive as a fundamental organic function; it is the result of genuine will to power, which is just the will of life. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 153)

For Nietzsche, the will to power leads to effective agency only if its true nature is obeyed. Anything that neutralizes this power will also neutralize agency. 'Life itself', according to Nietzsche, has nothing to do with objective moral values. Objective moral values don't even make sense in the context of life because life is all about imposing one's *own* will on the world.

Nietzsche thinks it is a mistake to endorse a '*fundamental principle of society'* based on objective moral values because it requires placing oneself on par with others and refraining from imposing one's *own* will on the world[2] (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 152-153). I do not read Nietzsche here as rejecting *all* morality (although in other sections he clearly rejects the notion of an 'ethical individual'). A strict reading of BGE 259 reveals only his distinction between objective moral values and what is essentially human. We might interpret 'overpowering', 'imposing your own form' and 'exploiting' as immoral, but note that is only because *we* decided they are immoral actions, and *not* (according to Nietzsche) because they are, essentially, *inhuman*. Here, Nietzsche merely makes the point that there is a clear distinction between our morality (or immorality) and the fundamental essence of human life.

[2] However, Nietzsche does think this may be a good principle for individuals who have 'genuinely similar quantities of force and measures of value and belong together within a single body.' Even so, those who belong to such groups will have to treat others, outside their group with less restraint (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 153).

Nietzsche thinks objective morality unfairly blames the strong for being strong, and he uses a bird of prey parable to stress this point: "There is nothing strange about the fact that lambs bear a grudge towards large birds of prey: but that is no reason to blame the large birds of prey for carrying off the little lambs" (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 58). We don't blame the birds of prey for expressing their natural desires, so we should not ask the strong to supress theirs: "It is just as absurd to ask strength not to express itself as strength, not to be a desire to overthrow, crush, become master, to be a thirst for enemies, resistance and triumphs, as it is to ask weakness to express itself as strength" (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 59).

Nietzsche also rejects the notion that the weak are free. Weakness itself is *misconstrued* as freedom:

> as though the weakness of the weak were itself – I mean its essence, its effect, its whole unique, unavoidable, irredeemable reality – a voluntary achievement, something wanted, chosen, a deed, an accomplishment. This type of man needs to believe in an unbiased 'subject' with freedom of choice, because he has an instinct of self-preservation and self-affirmation in which every lie is sanctified. (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 60)

Nietzsche's sentiment in GM I:13 mimics his sentiment in BGE 21: there is no 'agent' behind the deed, we invented 'the doer' 'as an afterthought' (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 59). Here he rejects only causal agents who have control over *manifesting* their strength or not. For Nietzsche, effective agency involves allowing one's strength to be expressed in the world, which involves obeying one's will to power and grounding one's choices in the commands of the will.

Yet another issue Nietzsche has with moral values is their objective nature. Life is subjective and thus whatever we value should also be subjective. Life itself is the will to

power and the will to power, by its very nature, is an efficacious force – a desire to impose one's own form on the world. Objective morality, on the contrary, tends to objectify people, by imposing *its* own form on individuals and confusing them about the truth of their own nature. For Nietzsche the one who thinks objectively ends up losing their sense of identity:

> Whatever is left in him of a 'person' strikes him as accidental, often arbitrary, and still more often as disruptive. It takes an effort for him to think back on 'himself', and he is not infrequently mistaken when he does. He easily confuses himself with others, he is wrong about his own basic need. (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 98)

Objective moral values, according to Nietzsche, seem to be self-negating. Once lost in the moral values imposed by others it is difficult to recall who you are and what your natural will actually is. When Nietzsche says the objective man "is not a conclusion – and still less a beginning, begetter or first cause" (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 99), I think he implies that an autonomous agent *does* view the world subjectively. An autonomous agent *would* know who they are and is thereby sure to impose *their* own form on the world, rather than taking on the form that the world imposes on them. As Nietzsche puts it, the objective man is a "pot of forms, who first has to wait for some sort of content or substance in order 'to shape' himself accordingly" (Nietzsche 2002, pp. 99). Nietzsche's views in this section once again distinguish two kinds of agency. Objective agents may appear to choose freely, but because they allow their values to be shaped by others, they do not choose authentically. As a result, the objective agent is an *ineffective* agent, and by extension, also an *inauthentic* agent and, according to Nietzsche's theory, is not a causal agent or an autonomous agent. This implies that the subjective agent may be closer to

being an autonomous agent and reaches this point only by *obeying* the commands of the will to power and choosing *authentically*.

Most prominent amongst scholars who believe Nietzsche's *sovereign individual* represents a rare achievement of free agency is Christopher Janaway. Janaway readily admits it is by no means certain who the sovereign individual is and whether or when he exists or existed. Nonetheless, Janaway thinks there is a certain tone in Nietzsche's passages which tend to suggest the sovereign individual is an 'ideal type' of human being (Janaway 2007, pp. 116). Janaway thinks Nietzsche's use of the phrase 'making the will free again' (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 99) suggests a "fall and redemption pattern" (Janaway 2007, pp. 117) and thus Janaway thinks the sovereign individual represents the kind of freedom which can be attained in the future:

> Someone who is conscious of the strength and consistency of his or her own character over time; who creatively affirms and embraces him-or herself as valuable, and who values his or her actions because of the degree to which they are in character; who welcomes the limitation and discipline of internal and external nature as the true conditions of action and creation, but whose evaluations arise from a sense of who he or she is, rather than from conformity to some external or generic code of values (Janaway 2007, pp. 119).

I agree with Janaway. Sovereign individuals seem to represent the kind of free agency that is possible when effective agency is sustained. They obey the commands of the will to power and have a strong and clear understanding of their own self-identity. These individuals clearly enjoy effective agency by Nietzsche's standards because they are able to obey their own will – not the will of others:

> We then find the sovereign individual as the ripest fruit on its tree, like only to itself, having freed itself from the morality of custom, an autonomous, supra-ethical individual (because 'autonomous' and 'ethical' are mutually exclusive), in short, we find a man with his own independent, enduring will … This man who is

> now free, who actually *has* the prerogative to promise, this master of the *free* will, this sovereign. (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 69-70)

Nietzsche emphasizes this individual's 'prerogative to promise', and I believe it is here that we find Nietzsche's views on responsibility. The core of the prerogative to promise is Nietzsche's concept of 'memory', which is also closely related to 'forgetfulness'. We commonly think of forgetfulness as a passive phenomenon, an unconscious state resulting from an inability to remember, but the forgetfulness of which Nietzsche speaks in this context is the opposite of this common belief, being the 'active ability to suppress' (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 68). Its only positive function is to allow the mind to rest:

> To shut the doors and windows of consciousness for a while; not to be bothered by the noise and battle with which our under world of serviceable organs work with and against each other; a little peace, a little *tabula rasa* of consciousness to make room for something new, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for ruling, predicting, predetermining (our organism runs along oligarchic lines you see) - that, as I said, is the benefit of active forgetfulness, like a doorkeeper or guardian of mental order, rest and etiquette: from which we can immediately see how there could be no happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, *immediacy*, without forgetfulness. (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 68)

Without forgetfulness we would not be able to cope with life, and in this sense, forgetfulness is a great strength.

Memory, for Nietzsche, also functions as a positive ability, which allows the individual to 'suspend' (or constrain) forgetfulness when a promise is made:

> It is an active desire not to let go, a desire to keep on desiring what has been, on some occasion, desired, really, it is the *will's* memory: so that a world of strange new things, circumstances and even acts of will may be placed quite safely in between the original 'I will', 'I shall do', and the actual discharge of the will, its act. (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 68-69)

Memory is active, and when Nietzsche calls it 'the will's memory' it seems clear that memory involves willing and is possibly also itself a kind of will. And we can assume, like all wills (according to Nietzsche), memory has an efficacious force which is an 'outgrowth' of the efficacious force of one's will to power.

When it comes to sovereign individuals, making promises and keeping them is possible because they are 'strong enough to remain upright' (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 70), they are able to cope with life – they do not have to resort to forgetfulness, as those who are less reliable do – their 'will's memory' remains intact all the way through to fulfilling their promise (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 68-69).

Sovereign individuals are answerable to themselves and with this privilege comes responsibility – and a conscience, which is their most dominant instinct (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 70). Being answerable to oneself has nothing to do with objective moral values. And having an 'enduring, unbreakable will' involves viewing others (and oneself) subjectively, from one's own viewpoint (Nietzsche 1997, pp. 70).

Having the prerogative to promise implies the sovereign individual has not only a strong will to power, but also a strong will to obey and a strong memory. The sovereign individual seems to represent the most natural state of humans, before morality interfered with their ability to obey their own will. I think this implies that the sovereign individual is worthy of praise and blame. However, praise and blame are not measured by moral standards; they are measured by one's ability to remain true to who one is.

The Implications of Nietzsche's Theory

Nietzsche's views on free agency have divided scholars, and for good reason; his writings appear to be rife with ambiguities. His rejection of the *causa sui* or the 'self-caused agent' seems to imply a rejection of the very notion of free agency. Yet he also clearly rejects the notion of an 'unfree will', calling it 'mythology'. It would seem, then, that some sort of free agency is possible. The apparent ambiguities throughout Nietzsche's writings are, in my view, not ambiguities at all – they are distinctions, the most important of which is one between the will of agents and the agents themselves.

Nietzsche's use of multiple terms involving the will adds to the uncertainty of exactly what the will entails. The *will to power*, though not clearly defined, has been described by Nietzsche as 'genuine'; an 'efficacious force'; and an 'instinct for freedom'. I am of the view that Nietzsche's *will to power* seems to be that which commands life. Nietzsche also uses the term *will to obey*, which is distinct from the *will to power*, yet seems to be just as much a determinant of agency as does the will to power – maybe even more so. He also implies degrees of efficacy when he distinguishes the 'strong' from the 'weak' will. However, I take the view that according to Nietzsche's theory, the will, in general, is of only one 'kind' insofar as it has a natural desire to be *free* – it commands, it overpowers, exploits, oppresses and it wants to impose its own form on the world. This, according to Nietzsche, is just the will's desire to live and in this respect, the will is the fundamental essence of human life.

Agency, according to Nietzsche's theory, is not entirely free in the sense of being self- caused, or *causa sui*. Agents are not so much free as they are *efficacious*. I refer to

this kind of agency as *effective agency*, as it is clearly distinct from the kind of agency we commonly think of as being free agency, which requires only that an agent's actions are self-determined, whether or not they reflect the authentic desires of the agent. However, effective agency does appear to be a kind of free agency. Effective agency is grounded in the will's desire to be free, and this is the sense in which the effective agent is a free agent. This kind of freedom depends on the agent's will to obey the *authentic* commands of the will. In this respect, effective agency requires the agent's actions being authentic.

According to Nietzsche's theory, we cannot assume that agency is always effective. Obeying the commands of others, including the commands of objective morality, leads to *ineffective agency*, which holds no freedom whatsoever. Freedom is found only in one's own will. The individual agent gains no freedom from following the will of others. I think this implies not only that freedom is grounded in an authentic self, but also that freedom involves in some manner 'choosing one's self'. This makes Nietzsche's ideal autonomy highly unusual and a departure from the understanding of autonomy that Hegel and Oshana and others hold when recognizing autonomy as a social function. Nietzsche seems to entirely reject the notion that persons could be autonomous by assenting to social norms and practices. Persons are autonomous agents only when the will's desire for freedom is satisfied and this can happen only by choosing to obey the commands of the will.

Nietzsche's work also raises questions about the existence of a genuine 'self'. Since any account of a 'self' should include some sort of individualization, Nietzsche's sovereign individual may be a candidate. Recall Gemes' view that a 'genuine self'

emerges out of an "enduring, co-ordinated, hierarchy of drives" (Gemes & Janaway 2006, pp. 336). While I do not quite agree that Nietzsche's theory necessarily entails a 'hierarchy of drives', I do agree with Gemes insofar as a genuine self appears to be expressed in the sovereign individual. Many scholars, including Janaway, view the sovereign individual as a 'rare achievement' of free agency. If they are right, then the sovereign individual as an ideal 'genuine self' would also exist only for a few. In my view, conceiving of the genuine self as a rare achievement, *existentially*, is problematic. I am of the view that any viable existential concept of a genuine self ought to be universally achievable. Psychologically, it may be that a genuine self could be understood only as a rare occurrence, involving some sort of self-realization. I would, however, accept a view of the sovereign individual as a genuine self that is available to all, but must first be chosen by an enduring, sustained, will to obey. In this respect, I take the view that Nietzsche's theory of freedom involves choosing one's self.

In addition to being autonomous, supra-ethical, free, and independent, the sovereign individual has the 'prerogative to promise', which appears to be grounded in Nietzsche's concept of memory. Memory is important because it keeps agents focussed on following through with their natural desires – the promises that agents make to themselves. This seems to imply that the responsibility we bear for our actions is due to some ability to keep our promises – not the promises we may make to others, but rather, the promises we make to ourselves when we 'will' or 'desire' in accordance with our true nature.

Nietzsche's theory poses a challenge to the principle of alternative possibilities. According to Nietzsche's theory, the will is efficacious and also determines whether or not agents are the cause of their actions: the "causality of the will is the only causality there is" (Nietzsche, 2002, pp. 36). This means that causal agency derives its power from the will and also that in order for an action to have been caused by an agent, the action must reflect the *will* of the agent. According to Nietzsche, not all agency is effective agency. Because of the dual roles of the agent, an agent's will to obey *could* obey the commands of others. This is *ineffective* agency. The person is still, strictly speaking, an agent, though not a *causal* agent. On Nietzsche's account, there would be a serious issue with situating responsibility as some sort of ability or power to choose otherwise. Agents can act, but only by 'choosing ones self' in the sense of obeying and willing only in accordance with the agent's will to power – a will that desires freedom – are agents the cause of their actions. Choosing autonomously by assenting to social norms and practices, or in relation to one's social situatedness – as Hegel and Oshana understand autonomy – does not guarantee that agents are the cause of their actions. And if we understand autonomy in terms of being able to choose otherwise, there is no guarantee that the alternate choice or action will fall within Nietzsche's definition of effective, and thus, causal agency. It would therefore seem unfair to claim that agents are responsible for their actions whether or not they were the cause of those actions.

Chapter 3 – Martin Heidegger

Ontological Existence

Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time" addresses the question of being. His methodology sets a clear distinction between his enquiry and that of his contemporaries as well as those who came before him. Rather than consider, as others had, the 'how' of being or the 'what' of being, or even the 'that' of being, Heidegger thought it more important to consider the *meaning* of being. And this approach prompted Heidegger to make a clear distinction between a human's 'ontic' existence, as a concrete entity, and its 'ontological' being - its *manner* of being. Heidegger relies on this ontic/ontological distinction throughout his work. The 'ontic' being of a human being is too concrete – too objectively present – for Heidegger's project, and to this point, Heidegger uses the term 'Dasein' as a term for the kind of ontological structure that underlies all human existence.

Only by understanding Dasein, Heidegger claims, can we understand the meaning of being in such a way that it lays a foundation for other inquiries. For this reason, Heidegger viewed his own project as having ontological priority over the inquiries of all other disciplines. In treating the human being as something that is *present at hand*, Heidegger thought that the theories of other disciplines overlooked the properly ontological structure of human existence, and therefore, lacked a fundamental ontology as their foundation (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 47-48). The 'fundamental concepts' to which the sciences appeal ought to be grounded in ontological research corresponding to the relevant mode of being of the entities it concerns. Since he viewed all domains of knowledge as pertaining, ultimately, to the being of beings themselves (and their

constitution), he saw his ontological inquiry as primary to all other scientific investigations. In Heidegger's view, only his existential philosophy adequately grounds the fundamental concepts of all the other scientific investigations (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 9-10).

In order to understand human existence, as far as Heidegger is concerned, only his theory – his Dasein analysis – can supply the ontological foundation that is missing from all other enquiries, not only into human existence, but for knowledge in general. But to understand 'Dasein' is no easy task. Dasein cannot be interpreted as any sort of 'thingly' subject that might seem familiar: Dasein is not anything like an 'ego', or a 'soul'; it is not akin to 'life' or even 'human being'. The peculiar being of Dasein, rather, is entirely *without* objective presence (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 45).

Dasein's Existence, Spatiality and Movedness

Heidegger says that the *essence* of Dasein lies in its existence, though existence, as an essence of Dasein cannot be understood in the traditional sense of existence as being *objectively present*: "The characteristics to be found in this being are thus not present 'attributes' of an objectively present being which has such and such an 'outward appearance,' but rather possible ways for it to be, and only this" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 41). To emphasize this distinction, Heidegger mentions a number of innerworldly things whose 'being in' is very different from the 'being-in the world' of Dasein (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 54). 'Water' being in a 'glass' is one example and in order to more fully understand Heidegger's point, I think it is worth expanding on his example: The water has objective presence, as does the glass, and each has a relation of being to

each other, as container and contained. They each have "the same kind of being – that of being present as things occurring 'within' the world" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 54). As I understand Heidegger's point, the water first exists, and only then, can it have the *property* of being in the glass. The water does not depend on being in the glass, in order to exist. However, Dasein's *being in the world* is a different mode of being – Dasein's being in the world is not the being of a property. Being in the world is rather, the *fundamental 'existential constitution'* of Dasein. Unlike water in a glass, Dasein does not first exist, and only then acquire a relation to the world. Dasein is never free from being in the world, nor does Dasein have the freedom to choose to be in the world or not – Dasein's existence is such that it exists *only* as being in the world (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 56-57). Another way of putting this is to say that a condition of Dasein's existence is that it 'be' in-the-world.

Heidegger uses the term 'worldly' to denote the kind of being of Dasein and contrasts this term with 'innerworldly' as the kind of being of objectively present entities: "Thus, terminologically 'worldly' means a kind of being of Dasein, never a kind of being of something objectively present 'in' the world. We shall call the latter something belonging to the world or innerworldly" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 65). I think Heidegger means to emphasise that although Dasein is being-in-the-world, Dasein does not *belong* to the world, as other things – objectively present things – *belong* to the world.

It is no doubt difficult to understand how a 'being' can exist as 'being-in' the world, yet not be objectively present in the world and not 'belong' to the world. Especially since, as Heidegger explains, "It would be incomprehensible if it remained

totally veiled" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 60). Dasein's existence, though not objectively present, does entail some sort of spatiality in the world. Of this, Heidegger says that:

> a being which is itself extended is enclosed [*umschlossen*] by the extended boundaries of something extended. The being which is inside and what surrounds it are both present in space. Our rejection of such an insidedness of Dasein in a spatial container should not, however, basically exclude all spatiality of Dasein, but only keep the way clear for seeing the kind of spatiality which is essential for Dasein. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 99)

Ultimately, Heidegger says that the 'being-in-the-world' of Dasein is what makes its spatiality possible (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 102). In this context, Heidegger discusses 'de-distancing' and 'directionality'.[3]

An in-depth consideration of these terms is beyond the context of this chapter. However, I think what Heidegger has in mind is Dasein's potentiality for bringing itself (not necessarily innerworldly beings) near and giving itself direction, which involves the relationship Dasein has *to itself, or how it understands itself.* In his introduction to "Being and Time", Heidegger emphasizes the relationship that Dasein has *to itself*:

> Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each Dasein itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 11)

And he later says of Dasein: "As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and will understand itself in terms of possibilities" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 141).

[3] Heidegger defines *de-distancing* and *directionality*: "De-distancing means making distance disappear, making the being at a distance of something disappear, bringing it near. Dasein is essentially de-distancing" *(Heidegger 1927/2010, pg. 102).* 'Directionality' is defined in terms of 'de-distancing': "As being-in which de-distances, Dasein has at the same time the character of *directionality*. Every bringing near has always taken a direction in a region beforehand from which what is de-distanced approaches so that it can be discovered with regard to its place." (Heidegger 1927/2010, p. 105)

Charles Guignon characterizes Dasein's unique kind of being as that of a 'happening', an 'event', or a 'movement' (Guignon 2015, pp. 11). On my reading of Heidegger, I am hesitant to use these terms to characterize Dasein, as I think they imply something that we could point to – that is, something that is objectively present. I think Heidegger would agree, as he does say that "the movement of existence is not the motion of something objectively present. It is determined from the stretching along of Dasein" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 358). Guignon notes that Heidegger uses the term 'movedness' (*Bewegtheit*) and in his chapter, "Authenticity and the Question of Being", Guignon does focus primarily on his characterization of Dasein as a 'movement': "Dasein is a *movement,* though not in the way a baseball moves when thrown, where the ball remains what it is despite the throwing. Instead, Dasein is a movement in the sense that its Being just is this movedness: a coming-to-be where the unfolding happening of its movement is its Being" (Guignon 2015, pp. 11). I think that the term 'movedness' is a more accurate characterization of Dasein's unique kind of 'spatiality'. And if I am right about this, it would seem that 'de-distancing' and 'directionality' can be thought of as the kind of movedness that reveal Dasein's spatiality.

However, the question remains: in terms of what, exactly, is Dasein's movedness? As I earlier expressed the point, Dasein's movedness cannot be from one event or act towards the next – this would contradict Heidegger's consistent characterization of Dasein as a being that is *not objectively present* in the world. One might be tempted to characterize Dasein's 'movedness' as a movement from one 'mode' of existence to another: from an inauthentic mode of existence towards an authentic mode of existence.

However, I think this characterization of Dasein's movedness is not quite right. I believe the key to clarifying Dasein's unique existence as 'movedness' should start with Dasein's 'potentiality-of-being', rather than any one particular mode of existence. Dasein's 'movedness' relates to the relationship Dasein has to itself – to its understanding of itself in terms of its own 'potentiality-of-being'. Having the quality of 'movedness' is what allows Dasein to move or act, but 'movedness' itself is not a movement or an action. As you will see, as this chapter unfolds, what ultimately determines Dasein's 'inauthentic' and 'authentic' modes of existence is precisely Dasein's own *understanding* of its potentiality-of-being. It is therefore important to keep separate Dasein's own *understanding of its potentiality-of-being* and *the fact that Dasein's underlying structure is its potentiality-of-being.*

Dasein's Inauthentic Mode - The Problem of the 'Who'

In order to understand exactly what amounts to an 'inauthentic' mode of existence or an 'authentic' mode of existence, I keep in mind two points that Heidegger makes. First, Heidegger makes the point that both of these modes exist as 'being-in' the world, but each constitutes a distinct 'kind' of being-in-the-world: "Inauthenticity does not mean anything like no-longer-being-in-the-world, but rather it constitutes precisely a distinctive kind of being-in-the-world which is completely taken in by the world and the Dasein-with of the others in the they" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 169). The second point is that Dasein's 'inauthentic' mode of existence is not that of a 'lesser' being: "But the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify a 'lesser' being or a 'lower' degree of being. Rather, inauthenticity can determine Dasein even in its fullest concretion, when it is busy,

excited, interested, and capable of pleasure" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 42). When I consider these two points together, I believe they indicate that both modes rely upon the same underlying structure of human existence. Thus, whether Dasein exists in its everyday, inauthentic mode, or its (perhaps preferred) authentic mode, there is still only one structural system which underlies Dasein's existence: *its potentiality-for-being*. And Dasein always does *in fact* exist as a potentiality-of-being, regardless of the mode in which it exists – regardless of how it relates to or understands its potentiality-of-being.

In its inauthentic mode of existence, Dasein does not understand its own potentiality-of-being. Existing, initially and for the most part in its 'everydayness', Dasein becomes completely absorbed in its world (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 111). In its inauthentic mode, Dasein seems to be both 'nobody' and 'everybody': "Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The *they*, which supplies the answer to the *who* of everyday Dasein, is the *nobody* to whom every Dasein has always surrendered itself, in its being-among-one-another" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 124). This seems to have a serious consequence for Dasein, bringing the 'who' of Dasein into question. For this 'who' is not an objectively present being but rather the 'who' that Dasein identifies as itself.

The problem of the 'who' arises right from the beginning of Dasein's existence as *being-in-the-world*. First, the structure of Dasein is such that it "understands itself, initially and for the most part, in terms of its world" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 117). But the world that Dasein is initially 'thrown' into is not one of its own making or choosing (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 131-32). Second, Dasein is existentially determined by its 'being-with' and in the context of its world, Dasein's 'being-with' is a 'being-with'

others. Others are not encountered by an objectively present subject as other subjects also objectively present – others are not the opposite of a subjective self. Others are encountered, rather, in the 'surrounding' world of Dasein (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 116). Heidegger stresses this point: "Being-with existentially determines Dasein even when an other is not factically present and perceived. The being-alone of Dasein, too, is being-with in the world" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 117). But herein lies the problem for Dasein's 'who'– because it does not encounter others as 'objectively present thing-persons', others are also encountered in their being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 117*)* – which, notably, is the same situation in which Dasein encounters itself. This means that Dasein's 'being-toward-others' is also different than its being toward objectively present things: "The 'other' being itself has the kind of being of Dasein" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 121). However, Heidegger is clear that this does not mean that the relation of 'being-toward-others' is any sort of projection of Dasein's own being toward itself – the 'other' is not a duplicate of the self (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 121). The 'other' therefore does not imply any sort of authentic relationship to the self.

Heidegger reminds his readers of the sense in which we use the term 'others': "'Others' does not mean everybody else but me … Others are, rather, those from whom one mostly does *not* distinguish oneself, those among whom one also is" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 115). And therein lies the problem for Dasein's being-in-the-world as 'everydayness': "being-with is such that, as everyday being-with-one-another, Dasein stands in *subservience* to others. It itself *is* not; the others have taken its being away from it. The everyday possibilities of being of Dasein are at the disposal of the whims of

others" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 123-23). The point I would stress here is that by identifying itself, or understanding itself as an 'other', Dasein fails to understand its own potentiality-of-being. Thus Dasein's relationship to itself is inauthentic – Dasein understands itself inauthentically.

As a result, Dasein ends up losing its own 'who' and dissolves into the kind of being that others take up:

> This being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into the kind of being of 'the others' in such a way that the others, as distinguishable and explicit, disappear more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unasertainability, the they unfolds its true dictatorship. We enjoy ourselves and have fun the way *they* enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way *they* see and judge. But we also withdraw from the 'great mass' the way *they* withdraw, we find 'shocking' what they find shocking. The they which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 123)

A further problem of the 'who' of Dasein in its mode of 'everydayness' is that it understands itself, incorrectly, or 'inauthentically', as objective presence:

> But since the phenomenon of world itself is passed over in this absorption in the world, it is replaced by objective presence in the world, by things. The being of beings, which *is there too,* comes to be understood as objective presence. Thus, by showing the positive phenomenon of closest everyday being-in-the-world, we have made possible an insight into the basic reason why the ontological interpretation of this constitution of being is lacking. It itself, in its everyday kind of being, is what initially misses itself and covers itself over. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 126)

Heidegger amplifies the problem of the 'who' of Dasein by making a clear distinction between our use of the word 'I' and what is properly the 'self'. He thinks that our use of the word 'I' leads us astray when it comes to understanding Dasein's constitution. He calls it the 'I of acts', observing that:

> We can probably always correctly say ontically of this being that 'I' am it … However, the ontological analytic which makes use of such statements must have fundamental reservations about them. The 'I' must be understood only in the sense of a noncommittal *formal indication* of something which perhaps reveals itself in the actual phenomenal context of being as that being's 'opposite'. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 113)

I think Heidegger here is referring to Dasein's having 'lost itself' in its own everydayness. Dasein's use of 'I' is not an expression of its ontological existence, since, as he says:

> The everyday interpretation of the self has the tendency to understand itself in terms of the 'world' taken care of. When Dasein has itself in view ontically, it *fails to see* itself in relation to the kind of being of the being that it itself is. And this is particularly true of the fundamental constitution of Dasein, being-in-the-world". (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 307)

When Dasein says 'I', it does not get at what the 'self' actually is – and in this respect, Dasein, in its everyday mode of existence, identifies itself as a 'they-self' (as an 'other') – and in so doing, fails to identify or understand 'who' it actually *is* (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 307). The problem, one might say, is the relation that Dasein has with itself in the everyday mode of existence. Especially since when Dasein says 'I', it is referring to itself in terms of the *they* (or the *other*); it understands itself *inauthentically*; it holds an *inauthentic* relation to itself; and ultimately, it relates to itself incorrectly, as a being that is objectively present in its being-in-the-world.

Dasein's Authentic Mode and the Significance of 'Anxiety'

The possibility of emerging out of an inauthentic, every day, average mode of existence is, on Heidegger's account of Dasein, revealed in 'anxiety':

> That in the face of which one has anxiety is not encountered as something definite to be taken care of; the threat does not come from something at hand and objectively present, but rather from the fact that everything at hand and

> objectively present absolutely has nothing more to 'say' to us. Beings in the surrounding world are no longer relevant. The world in which I exist has sunk into insignificance, and the world thus disclosed can set free only beings as having the character of irrelevance. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 327)

There is a popular view amongst scholars that Dasein's experience of anxiety is its experience of the 'meaninglessness' of its world. Denis McManus, in "Anxiety, Choice and Responsibility in Heidegger's Account of Authenticity", summarizes this popular view:

> Most commentators understandably take such remarks to depict anxiety as 'an experience of utter meaninglessness' (Dahlstrom 2013: 208), of 'universal meaninglessness' (Philipse 1998: 395): '[a]nxiety is the condition in which nothing matters' (Blattner 1999: 80), in which 'all meaning and mattering slip away' (Dreyfus and Rubin 1991: 332). (McManus 2015, pp. 163)

However, the problem with this view, as Denis McManus points out, is that it seems puzzling that the very same Dasein, which Heidegger prioritizes as the ontological foundation of all knowledge, "would seem to be deprived of the 'object' that it – as an understanding of Being – must grasp if it is to exist" (McManus 2015, pp. 164). There are a number of other issues that arise from this popular reading of Heidegger, and indeed, as McManus points out, there are a number of problems which arise from Heidegger's writings on the role that anxiety plays in the life of Dasein. However, I will focus only on this one issue, as it is most critical and most relevant to my thesis.

In my opinion, the meaninglessness of Dasein's experience of its world is revealed only in its inauthentic mode of existence, which I have previously identified as Dasein's not understanding its own potentiality-of-being. I think Heidegger alludes to this point in the following passage on anxiety from "Being and Time":

> However, this means that our heedful awaiting finds nothing in terms of which it could understand itself; it grasps at the nothingness of the world … Being-in-the-world is both what anxiety is anxious in the face of and what it is anxious about … That in the face of which one has anxiety is, after all, already "there"; it is Dasein itself. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 327-328)

I take careful note of Heidegger's claim here that Dasein has anxiety 'in the face of Dasein itself' – and by stating 'what is already there', I think Heidegger refers to Dasein's inauthentic *mode of existence* – which is its inauthentic *understanding* of itself – which fails to understand the 'who' of Dasein as a being whose existence is its *potentiality-of-being*. Seeing itself as an 'other', or as a 'they-self', Dasein's mode of existence (or more specifically, its 'who') is the 'nothingness' it encounters. Therefore, in my opinion, 'anxiety' reveals not the meaninglessness of the world and things encountered in the world, but rather the meaninglessness of Dasein's encountering the world and things in the world *in its inauthentic mode of existence*. On this point I also refer to Heidegger's own words: "Anxiety frees one *from* 'nullifying' ['nichtigen'] possibilities and lets one become free *for* authentic possibilities" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 329). This quote emphasizes Dasein's 'possibilities', which speak to Dasein's 'potentiality-of-being'. Being free from 'nullifying' possibilities refers back to Dasein's inauthentic mode of existence – the mode in which it fails to understand its own existence as a 'potentiality-of-being'.

Further, Heidegger says that anxiety actually 'stuns' Dasein and induces a feeling of 'uncanniness': "But this feeling of being stunned not only *takes* Dasein back from its '*worldly*' possibilities, but at the same time *gives* it the possibility of an *authentic* potentiality-of-being" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 328). I take Heidegger to be saying that

Dasein is 'stunned' by the realization of its own inauthentic mode of existence, and this 'stunning' moment, revealed in anxiety is what gives Dasein its possibility of moving towards an authentic potentiality-of-being. Thus, the problem is not so much Dasein's encountering the 'meaninglessness' of the world, but rather Dasein's encountering the world in its own inauthentic mode of existence, yielding an *experience* of the world that is itself meaningless.

Authentic Dasein and Heidegger's Concept of the 'Self'

But what of Dasein's *authentic* mode – if this mode *does* reveal the true 'self' of Dasein, how should we understand the 'self' as an entity that is distinct from the 'I'? As Mark Wrathall points out, Heidegger does not appear to have given his readers a clear understanding of what, exactly, the 'self' amounts to. Wrathall emphasizes Heidegger's unique approach to agency, as he believes Heidegger has made authenticity an "ideal inherent in autonomous agency itself" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 193), giving authenticity a methodological priority over autonomy: "Heidegger argues that one cannot understand what the self is, let alone figure out the right way for the self to ground action, until one has grasped authenticity as an ideal of human experience" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 193).

Wrathall thinks that "for Heidegger, authenticity is not a matter of realizing the true substantive core of one's personal desires and aspirations, but rather a matter of recognizing and living in recognition of the structure of the self as such" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 201). This point aligns with my own project, as I also wish to set aside any psychological or emotive aspects of the authentic self and focus, rather, on Heidegger's *structural* definition of the 'self'.

But the 'structure of the self as such' seems unclear. Although Wrathall thinks that Heidegger does not provide a clear definition of the self, he says that Heidegger is clear on two points: the self is distinct from the 'I'; and it is clearly not anything like an object that occurs in the world (Wrathall 2015, pp. 198).

Wrathall approaches the issue of the 'self' by first appealing to Heidegger's distinction between what we might think of as a general idea of guilt and the more specific kind of guilt that envelops Dasein, which might be called *existential guilt*. Generally, the concept of being guilty amounts to 'being-a-ground' for a 'lack in the existence of an other' (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 271). However, *existential guilt* is distinct, because it amounts to "being-the-ground for a being [Sein] which is determined by a not – that is, *being-the-ground of a nullity* [*Nichtigkeit*]" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 272). Heidegger goes on to explain that since Dasein's existence is not something that is objectively present, the 'not' that grounds it also cannot be conceived of as anything that is objectively present, and specifically he dismisses any notion of this 'not' being something like a deficiency or a lack (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 272). Nonetheless, if the self should be conceived of as a 'not', it seems unclear exactly what the 'not' amounts to.

Wrathall answers this question by appealing to a distinction between two kinds of grounds. The first are *establishing grounds*, which include causes insofar as a "cause is the reason why an entity is at all or is the way that it is" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 208). But it's the second kind of ground that Wrathall thinks we should pay close attention to: backgrounds. A background "allows a figure to show itself in the foreground" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 208), however, it does not act as a 'cause' of the entity or event (Wrathall 2015,

pp. 208). "The background, instead, grounds the figure by withdrawing, by *not* touching it, *not* shaping it" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 208). "To be a background is precisely to withdraw from the experience, to exist without definite qualities of its own, and only on the horizon of the experience" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 209). And he thinks that "The self is just such an existence-sustaining, withdrawing ground" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 209).

Wrathall thinks Heidegger is aiming at the broad range of possibilities of human existence:

> Thus, Heidegger explains, human existence 'in each case stands in one possibility or another', and that means, 'it constantly is *not* another possibility, and has renounced it in the existentiell projection' (SZ 285). An 'existentiell projection' is Heidegger's term for a concrete, particular way of understanding the possibilities afforded by the world. In my existence, I am 'a being determined by a nothing' (*ein durch ein Nicht bestimmtes Sein*), because in taking up an identity and in determining who I am, I necessarily nullify at the same time other possibilities in terms of which I could interpret myself. Thus, every way of being is itself a nullification of other possible ways of being. (Wrathall 2015, pp. 204)

Wrathall concludes: "So where ordinary guilt is being an inadequate reason for a lack in another, existential guilt is being an inadequate reason for not being a different person" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 206).

As much as I agree with Wrathall that *being-the-ground of a nullity* entails being a kind of a background that does not act as a cause, I have concerns about defining this kind of background as 'withdrawing'. My concern is that an entity that 'withdraws' does not seem to align with Heidegger's view that selfhood is found only in authentic potentiality-of-being: "Existentially, selfhood is only to be found in the authentic potentiality-of-being-a-self, that is, in the authenticity of the being of Dasein *as care."* (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 308). This particular excerpt did help Wrathall's reading of Heidegger, as

he believes it suggests that "Heidegger's account of authenticity, death, guilt, anxiety and resoluteness *are* his account of the ontological structure of the self of autonomy" (Wrathall 2015, pp. 200). Thus, it supports Wrathall's conclusion that Heidegger's account of the 'self' entails authenticity as an inherent ideal in autonomy. I think that Wrathall is mostly right about this. However, I also wish to point out that Heidegger places a great deal of emphasis on Dasein's potentiality-of-being when he uses the phrase "*existentially, selfhood is only to be found in the authentic potentiality-of-being-a-self"*. My concern is that Wrathall's characterization of the 'self' as a 'withdrawing ground' does not seem to align with the most essential aspect of Dasein – its potentiality-of-being. The self as a 'withdrawing ground' implies the self removes itself from its own situatedness. On my reading of Heidegger, this is not the kind of movedness that is characteristic of Dasein's spatiality in the world. Dasein's movedness is one of de-distancing and directionality, as explained above. Dasein brings itself closer and gives itself direction. However, 'withdrawing', contrarily, implies more distance and no direction.

Here, I point to another excerpt from "Being and Time": "Because Dasein is always essentially its possibility, it *can* 'choose' itself in its being, it can win itself, it can lose itself, or it can never and only 'apparently' win itself. *It can only have lost itself and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is essentially possible as authentic, that is, it belongs to itself*" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 42, my emphasis). As I read this section, Heidegger alludes to a 'self' that is a potentiality-of-being, not as a lack, or a deficiency, but rather, as a 'not yet', and what is 'not yet' is always possible.

Thus, *being-the-ground of a nullity*, on my reading of Heidegger, means being the ground of a nullity in the sense of it being 'not yet', which is not a deficiency and is not a lack, but rather a constant possibility because the underlying structure of Dasein – its background self – has the character of being potentially authentic. I reach a conclusion that is similar to Wrathall's – authenticity is what grounds autonomy. Ultimately, Dasein is existentially guilty, not merely due to *not being a different person* (which is Wrathall's conclusion), but more specifically, from Dasein's not recognizing its 'self' as the core of its existence as a 'not-yet' (as a background that *is* a potentiality-to-be) and as a result not having an authentic relationship to itself.

Dasein's Freedom and Responsibility

Conceiving of the 'self' as a structural background that *is* a constant potentiality-of-being authentic aligns with the kind of freedom that Heidegger attributes to Dasein. Although Heidegger does not offer a deep discussion of freedom in *Being and Time*, the kind of freedom that Dasein does have is very distinct – Dasein has the freedom to 'choose itself':

> Anxiety reveals in Dasein its *being toward* its ownmost potentiality of being, that is, *being free for* the freedom of choosing and grasping itself. Anxiety brings Dasein before *its being free for*…(propensio in), the authenticity of its being as possibility which it always already is. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 182)

Elsewhere, Heidegger clarifies Dasein's distinct kind of freedom. Dasein is not free to be indifferent as far as its potentiality of being is concerned:

> As an existential, possibility does not refer to a free-floating potentiality of being in the sense of the "liberty of indifference" *(libertas indifferentiae).* As essentially attuned, Dasein has always already got itself into definite possibilities. As a potentiality for being which it *is*, it has let some go by; it constantly adopts the possibilities of its being, grasps them, and sometimes fails to grasp them. But this

> means that Dasein is a being-possible which is entrusted to itself, it is *thrown possibility* throughout. Dasein is the possibility of being free *for* its ownmost potentiality of being. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 139-140)

Exactly how we should understand Heidegger's use of *libertas indifferentiae* is brought into question by William Blattner, who prefers the phrase 'indifference of choice', rather than 'liberty of indifference' as he views the latter translation to be too 'Kantian' because it implies being free is being subject to the moral law. In Blattner's view, Heidegger associates freedom as a subjection to being guilty: "Freedom is, however, only in the choice of one [possibility], that is in bearing not having chosen and not being able to choose the others (SZ 285)" (Blattner 2015, pp. 118). While Blattner's reasoning here does have merit, I think an argument could be made that Heidegger used the phrase *libertas indifferentiae* specifically, to emphasize the fact that Dasein is not free to be indifferent towards its own being, or its own potentiality-of-being. While these different understandings of *libertas indifferentiae* may not ultimately lead to a disagreement as to Heidegger's intent insofar as the limits of freedom are concerned, I note that my understanding emphasizes Dasein's existence as its own potentiality-of-being, which is not objectively present and thus, freedom remains a feature of Dasein's ontological existence. Blattner's understanding of the same phrase as 'indifference of choice' seems a reference to ontic human existence, rather than properly ontological human *being*, the mode of being appropriate to Dasein.

There is evidence that Heidegger viewed Dasein's unique kind of freedom as an ontological function of its peculiar mode of being:

> Dasein has always already compared itself, in its being, with a possibility of itself. Being free *for* its ownmost potentiality-for-being, and thus for the possibility of

> authenticity and inauthenticity, shows itself in a primordial, elemental concretion of anxiety. But ontologically, being toward one's ownmost potentiality-for-being means that Dasein is always already *ahead* of itself in its being. Dasein is always already 'beyond itself,' not as a way of behaving toward beings which it is *not,* but as being toward the potentiality-for-being which it itself is. (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 185)

I note here, as well, Heidegger emphasizes that 'potentiality-for-being' *is* what Dasein already *is* (ontologically), which seems to be why Dasein is 'ahead-of-itself' – because it already is (or exists as) that for which it has existential freedom, namely, its 'potentiality-of-being'.

The Implications of Heidegger's Theory

Heidegger's theory, as a whole, emphasizes an important distinction to be made between what he calls the ontic and the ontological. For Heidegger, this is an important distinction because the concrete reality of human existence does not get at the core of what it *means* to exist. The meaning of existence can be found only in what Heidegger terms 'Dasein' – being which is not objectively present but is nonetheless the most fundamental, ontological structure that underlies all human existence. Only by first understanding Dasein can we understand human life and the world in which it is encountered. In this respect, Heidegger views the being of Dasein as the foundation for all other disciplines. Insofar as the debate about free will and determinism concerns responsibility, we cannot understand the grounds for holding persons responsible for their actions unless and until we understand the foundation of human reality – Dasein.

Dasein's character seems to be one of 'movedness' and the movedness that creates Dasein's spatiality is nothing objectively present. Dasein's movedness can be found in de-distancing and directionality: it brings itself near and gives itself direction. In my

view, movedness reveals not only the unique kind of spatiality Dasein creates for itself in the world, but more specifically, the relationship that Dasein holds to itself – how Dasein understands itself. And it is important to keep separate Dasein's own *understanding* of itself as a potentiality-for-being and *the fact that* Dasein's underlying structure actually is and always is its potentiality-for-being, regardless of the mode in which it exists.

The relation Dasein has to *itself* is revealed in its two modes of existence, namely, authentic and inauthentic, although each of these modes exist as being in the world and I believe Heidegger intends that both modes are ontological and thus not cases of objective presence in the world. The inauthentic mode is not that of a 'lesser being', and both modes have the same underlying structure as Dasein's potentiality-of-being. It is only the 'who' that Dasein identifies itself as that comes into question. Existing in an inauthentic mode, Dasein sees itself as just one amongst others – it understands itself as objectively present. Only when Dasein understands itself as what it is – a potentiality-of-being – does Dasein understand itself authentically.

Heidegger makes a distinction between what he refers to as 'the I of acts' and the 'self'. When we refer to the 'I', Heidegger is clear that we are not referring to an authentic self. Although Heidegger does not exactly say that the 'I' is the equivalent of an ego, I think it is implied because he does state that when we use the word 'I', "we can probably always correctly say ontically of this being that 'I' am it" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 113). The self, for Heidegger is not fundamentally, anything like an ego. I read Heidegger as making a distinction between ontic as opposed to ontological human reality. If I am right, the 'ego' belongs to ontic reality – it is a 'they', an 'other',

presenting the self as an objectively present being. While the 'I' (or the ego) seems to be a valid expression of one aspect of human reality, for Heidegger, it also fails to express the more fundamental authentic self.

For Heidegger, an authentic understanding of oneself is revealed through anxiety because anxiety reveals the meaninglessness of, not the 'world', but rather the meaninglessness of Dasein's experience of the world in its inauthentic mode of existence. Only when understanding that it exists as a potentiality for being, in its authentic mode of existence, is Dasein's experience of the world meaningful.

Wrathall believes, and I agree, that Heidegger's concept of 'self' is revealed in his definition of 'existential guilt' as a being that is the 'ground of a nullity'. Thus, the key to understanding Heidegger's concept of 'self' lies in understanding what 'being-the-ground of a nullity' entails. In my view, Dasein's existential guilt reveals not merely a self that is guilty due to not being a different person (Wrathall's view), but more specifically, existential guilt reveals a self that exists as a 'not-yet'. Dasein's existential guilt arises from not recognizing itself as a potentiality of being. Thus, existential guilt arises from not having an authentic relation to oneself: from not 'choosing oneself' in the sense of not choosing one's ownmost potentiality of being. In this sense, the 'self' that grounds agency is a self that must in some way be 'chosen' in order for the agent to affirm its actions as authentic.

The unique kind of freedom that Dasein holds goes much deeper than merely being able to choose and act otherwise. As Wrathall rightly concludes, authenticity seems to be an inherent quality of autonomous agency. In this respect, Dasein lacks the freedom

of indifference. Exactly what Heidegger's intent was in using the Latin phrase *libertas indifferentiae* is debatable – Blattner understands this phrase as something like 'indifference of choice'. However, I read Heidegger as making a more specific claim: we are not free to be indifferent to our own being or our own potentiality of being. If I am right, the implication is that responsibility is grounded, not in being able to choose otherwise, but more specifically in being able to choose one's self as a way of being. This is important, as it reveals responsibility as an ontological feature of existence, arising from the relationship one has to one's self.

Chapter 4 – Jean-Paul Sartre

The Totality of Existence

Just like Heidegger, Sartre's aim was to understand human existence by revealing its underlying structures. Whereas Heidegger's key to existence is the potentiality-of-being *in time*, for Sartre the key to existence is the absolute freedom of *nothingness*. And like Heidegger, Sartre makes a distinction between ontic and ontological modes of being. Consciousness, according to Sartre's theory, is 'ontico-ontological' because "a fundamental characteristic of its transcendence is to transcend the ontic towards the ontological" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 24). The 'ontic' aspect that Sartre refers to here, is the 'being-in-itself' region of existence, while the 'ontological' aspect is the relation that arises when the 'being-for-itself' region of existence nihilates[4] the 'being-in-itself' region of existence. Although each region can be abstracted in order to understand their distinct features, insofar as 'existence' is concerned they exist only as a totality (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 804). There is no duality of existence and existence is not reducible, nor is it separable from itself.

Being-in-itself is the region of existence that simply *is* what it is: 'pure positivity' that is neither 'activity' nor 'passivity' and bears no relation to itself, because, as Sartre

[4] As explained by translator, Sarah Richmond, Sartre's original French text of "Being and Nothingness" uses the word *neantiser*. Although similar to the French *aneantir* (to annihilate), it is notably a distinct spelling and is not found in French dictionaries. Yet, Sartre does not explain his use of this new word. Translators Hazel Barnes and Sarah Richmond both solve this issue by translating *neantiser* as 'to nihilate', even though it is not found in the English dictionaries (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. xli). In my own view, Sartre's use of the new word *neantiser* (to nihilate) throughout "Being and Nothingness" is intended to soften the term *aneantir* (to annihilate).Thus, we should not read the nihilation of being-in-itself as a *destruction* of being (as to annihilate would indicate), but rather as a *freeing* of being.

puts it, "it is itself" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 27). As I understand Sartre, Being-in-itself seems to be the *underlying structure* of things and entities which we might consider to be 'objectively present', rather than objectively present things themselves. This would include not only the underlying structure of the being of concrete things like rocks, but more importantly the aspect of human beings that underlies their ontic existence (that which one might consider to be physically determined). Since being-in-itself is ontically determined, it is the structural aspect of an existent's being *unfree, unconscious,* and *indifferent*. As Sartre himself states: "A being that is what it is cannot be free" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 579). As you will see later in this chapter, I interpret Sartre's concept of 'ego' as exactly this kind of ontically determined underlying structure of human reality.

The second region of being, *being-for-itself*, seems to be everything that being-in-itself is not: "the being of the *for itself* is defined, on the contrary, as being what it is not and not being what it is" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 27). Being-for-itself is where existence finds its *freedom*, its *consciousness* and its *inability to be indifferent* – features quite different than those characteristic of being-in-itself. Being-for-itself is not represented in ontic reality – but it is the aspect of existence which frees the in-itself by nihilating it: "The for-itself and the in-itself are joined by a synthetic bond that is nothing more than the for-itself itself. Indeed, the for-itself is nothing but the pure nihilation of the in-itself: it is like a hole within being" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 798-79). This relation is important since, as Sartre says it forms a part of their structure (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 34). Being-for-itself represents not merely the underlying structure of objectively present things, but

more specifically the underlying structure of *existence as a whole* which, according to Sartre includes this particular kind of nothingness.

Sartre insists that there is no 'reciprocity of relation' between the two regions: their synthetic relation arises entirely from the 'for-itself' (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 807). This claim seems intuitive, inasmuch as it is only being-for-itself that contains any kind of freedom. There does, however, appear to be a reciprocity as far as *existential dependence* is concerned. Indeed, it is somewhat striking how easily one can make a connection between the being of these two regions as a whole and their apparent interdependence insofar as their *potentiality for being* is concerned. Sartre makes a clear point of distinction between his theory and that of Heidegger when he insists that there is no duality of being in 'actuality' and in 'potentiality' (for Sartre, all being is 'in actuality') (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 3). Nonetheless, being-in-itself seems to have a *potentiality-for-being negated,* and since being-in-itself's *unfreedom*, *unconsciousness* and *indifference* mean that on its own it would never realize any potentiality-for-being negated, it therefore dependents on the existence of being-for-itself in this respect.

The opposite also seems true. Being-for-itself *depends on* the existence of being-in-itself and the relation that arises between the two, in order that its own potentiality-of-being absolute freedom may arise. I think Sartre implies as much when he discusses the for-itself's freedom: "But the reader will have noted that this freedom requires a given – not as its condition, but on a number of counts: first of all, freedom can be conceived of only as the nihilation of a given" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 628). The 'given' that being-for-itself nihilates is being-in-itself – the aspect of existence that is not free. Although Sartre

says that "the given plays no role in constituting freedom" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 635), its existence is nonetheless required insofar as the for-itself's *foundation* is concerned. Sartre says that although being-in-itself cannot be the foundation of itself or of other beings, the for-itself can found itself only by nihilating the in-itself (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 133). Even though Sartre claims that the in-itself is neither active nor passive and cannot act in anyway itself[5] (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 26-27), in my view, its very existence is what the for-itself's foundational existence is *dependent* upon. Even though being-in-itself is 'nihilated', its 'contingency' remains untouched:

> It is what *remains* of the in-itself as facticity within the for-itself and it is the reason why the for-itself has only factual necessity, why the for-itself is the foundation of its *consciousness-being* or *existence*, but cannot ever found its *presence*. In this way, consciousness cannot ever prevent itself from being, and yet it is completely responsible for its being (Sartre 1943/2018, p. 135-36).

Thus, the ground of existence and its absolute freedom lies not only in the for-itself, but more specifically in the *synthetic relation* between the two regions that arises along with the for-itself's foundation and also gives rise to the *totality* of being.

Sartre's Concept of the 'Self' as Distinct from the 'Ego'

Sartre clearly rejects the notion that there is a 'self' *behind* consciousness: "We have shown … that, by definition, no self or *itself* can inhabit consciousness" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 160). And when he critiques and dismisses Bergson's notion of a 'deep-seated self', Sartre says that "the for-itself is entirely ipseity and cannot have any 'deep-seated self', unless we understand by that certain transcendent structures of the psyche"

[5] Sartre explains this controversial claim in his introduction to "Being and Nothingness", pp. 26-27. His explanation is not easily understood, nor do I find it acceptable.

(Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 583). The 'certain transcendent structures of the psyche' alludes to Sartre's concept of the 'ego', which he explains more expressly in "The Transcendence of the Ego" *(Transcendence).* Sartre's aim in *Transcendence* is to show that the ego is not 'in consciousness', but is rather an object with concrete existence in the world, "like the ego of another" (Sartre 1936/1991, pp. 31).

In *Transcendence*, Sartre addresses the issue of the 'I' clearly stating that there is no room for an 'I' in consciousness: "the *I* is deceptive from the start, since we know that nothing but consciousness can be the source of consciousness" (Sartre 1936/1991, pp. 52). Thus, Sartre posits a theory of ego which includes both an 'I' as the unity of actions and a 'me' as the unity of states and qualities. Ultimately, he says, the distinction is simply functional (Sartre 1936/1991, pp. 60). And he says quite clearly that "The ego is not the owner of consciousness; it is the object of consciousness" (Sartre 1936/1991, pp. 97).

In his 2013 paper, "Reflection Memory and Selfhood in Jean-Paul Sartre's Early Philosophy", Lior Levy proposes that the 'self' of Sartre's theory is a fictional or imaginary entity which nonetheless has 'real presence' in human life (Levy 2013, pp. 97). Levy states that he bases his argument on the necessity of narrative when it comes to understanding the structure of a 'self' (Levy 2013, pp. 98). Levy also states that he relies mostly on Sartre's writings in "Transcendence of the Ego", and specifically, the relation between consciousness and ego (Levy 2013, pp. 98).

Levy seems to have drawn out exactly the peculiar character of the ego that is a created construct of an entirely free consciousness. While I find Levy's paper

enlightening as far as understanding Sartre's concept of ego is concerned, I am hesitant to assume, as Levy seems to have, that Sartre intends 'ego' and 'self' to be interchangeable concepts.

However, Levy's interpretation of the 'self' as a narratively created construct does have support amongst scholars. In particular, I note Farhan Erfani's 2011 book, "Aesthetics of Autonomy: Ricoeur and Sartre on Emancipation, Authenticity and Selfhood". As reviewed by David Detmer, Erfani's work interprets the 'self' as a creatively constituted narrative:

> For both Sartre and Ricoeur, the self is created – a goal, not foundation. Moreover, both philosophers advance the concept of narrative selfhood – that is, the idea that 'our identities are creatively constituted' (1), that 'any sense of being our own,' or of 'achieving autonomy' is 'a creative aesthetic endeavor' (3), based largely on story-telling. (Detmer 2011, pp. 96)

Detmer highlights the benefits of the narrative approach, which I believe are also similarly the benefits of Levy's approach:

> Such an approach helps explain how authenticity can be possible without assuming a pre-given essential self. 'This form of authenticity emphasizes that we understand ourselves through our projects, through our narratives; to understand life is to take responsibility for being the [partial] author of our lives,' even though 'the achieved autonomy is not a permanent essence,' but rather an ongoing achievement. (5) (Detmer 2011, pp. 96)

Nonetheless, I find no clear evidence in Sartre's writings which implies his concept of ego is interchangeable with what should properly be termed a self. On the contrary, there is some evidence that he distinguishes the two when he references the 'fundamental ipseity of consciousness':

> It is consciousness … that, in its fundamental ipseity, enables the Ego to appear in certain conditions as the transcendent phenomenon of that ipseity … And similarly, we should say of the 'I' – which is quite incorrectly regarded as an

> inhabitant of consciousness – that it is the 'Me' of consciousness, but not that it is its own *self* or *itself.* (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 160)

This passage confirms that consciousness is a sort of 'fundamental' individuated selfhood that seems to be the foundation on which the ego is created – but the selfhood of consciousness is nothing like the ego – it is more primordial and it involves the 'self' being a 'presence' of consciousness.

Heidegger also makes a distinction between what we refer to when we say 'I' and what may properly be considered a 'self'. Heidegger, as you will recall from the previous chapter, concentrates on the 'I of acts' and he says that "we can probably always correctly say ontically of this being that 'I' am it. However, the ontological analytic which makes use of such statements must have fundamental reservations about them" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 113). I believe Sartre makes a similar distinction insofar as the ego is concerned. Sartre says that:

> the Ego is in itself, not for-itself. If it were 'of consciousness', it would be its own foundation of itself, within the translucency of the immediate. But in that case it would be what it was not, and would not be what it was – which is not the mode of the being of the 'I'. (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 159)

This remark clearly situates the ego as an 'in-itself' - the underlying structure of human reality that is *ontically* determined. This means that Sartre would not admit any sort of freedom as an aspect of the being of the ego. If I am right to interpret being-in-itself this way, that would make Sartre's concept of ego similar to Heidegger's concept of the 'I' – the 'ego' is the 'I of acts', but it is not truly the 'self'. In my view, what underlies the *ontic* aspect of human reality is this idea of a narratively constituted ego, but this should by no means be interpreted as entirely constituting a self. Being-in-itself is not free.

Since the core of Sartre's theory of existence is absolute freedom, whatever the 'self' in Sartre's theory amounts to it must, at minimum also enjoy absolute freedom. In other words, the self as a ground of action, according to Sartre's theory, must be absolutely free. In my view, this does not mean that the self is necessarily a 'for-itself', as I believe the self is rather the relation that arises between the two regions of being when being-in-itself is nihilated by being-for-itself.

In his 1972 paper, "Sartre's Notion of Freedom", K.L. Helstrom addresses a common criticism of Sartre's *Transcendence of the Ego*: without a permanent ego there is no continuity of ego, and thus, no continuity of consciousness (Helstrom 1972, pp. 116). Helstrom thinks that this criticism is misdirected as it speaks to the empirical determination of human beings, rather than their phenomenological aspect. Helstrom goes on to explain that while Sartre certainly would not deny the empirical aspect of humans,

> this empirical ego must be sharply distinguished from the ego which constitutes the unity of consciousness beyond our theoretical understanding, because it is a noumena or nothingness which constructs the empirical ego. In this second aspect, human being has no permanent ego to be studied, since consciousness confronts its own empirical ego, giving its facticity significance in terms of its projected ends, and hence can only be the permanent freedom to construct both … Lack of an ego is connected with the character of consciousness as freedom and nothingness and can be criticized only from a phenomenological standpoint; empirical criticisms just miss the point. (Helstrom 1972, pp. 117)

Keeping Helstrom's critique in mind, I note that Sartre says:

> Consciousness, from the moment it arises, makes itself *personal* through the pure nihilating movement of reflection: for it is not the possession of an Ego – which is only the *sign* of a personality – that confers personal existence on a being, but rather the fact of existing for oneself as self-presence (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 160).

I think this excerpt supports Helstrom's critique, since Sartre clearly makes a distinction between the 'personal' aspect of consciousness which he calls 'self-presence' and the

'personality' that is the ego. The text also gives at least one clue to understanding the distinction between ego and self as it implies that the 'self' of existence is not founded narratively but rather, is founded on 'self-presence'. If I am right about this, then it would seem that the key to understanding the kind of self that fits with Sartre's overall theory may be found in the right interpretation of 'self-presence'.

As I understand Sartre's concept of self-presence, consciousness is 'self presence'. As I explained at the beginning of this chapter, consciousness, according to Sartre's theory, is ontico-ontological: its fundamental characteristic is to transcend the ontic toward the ontological (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 24). The self, brought to the presence of consciousness, has been freed from its - to use the language of Helstrom - empirical form. In this respect, Sartre says: "Man is free because he is not an itself, but self-presence. A being that is what it is cannot be free. Freedom is precisely the nothingness that *is been* at the heart of man and which obliges human-reality to *make itself,* rather than *to be*" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 578-79). This is especially important, I believe, because on Sartre's theory humans enjoy 'absolute' freedom, thus any interpretation of his concept of 'self', must imply absolute freedom. Thus, it does *not* seem *entirely* correct to claim that the ego is the 'self' in 'self-presence' – the ego is not free. On my reading of Sartre, the self is presence to consciousness as an absolutely free entity *precisely* because the narrative that we call 'ego' is nihilated (or freed). *This means that the self is not a narrative* – it is purely 'self-presence'.

This is not to say that the self as 'self-presence' is not dependent on the existence of an ego. Earlier in this chapter I explained that although Sartre claims there is no

reciprocity of relation as far as existence is concerned (being-for-itself in its freedom is the annihilating factor of existence), there nonetheless appears to be, at the very least mutual existential dependence between the two regions of being. I now make good use of this point when it comes to understanding Sartre's concept of ego and how it relates to the self. The narrative 'ego' is the 'given' that the for-itself frees through nihilation: "freedom can be conceived of only as the nihilation of a given" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 628). And although the ego, as narrative (Sartre uses 'given') "plays no role constituting freedom" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 635), its existence is required insofar as the for-itself's foundation is concerned: "If being in-itself can be neither its own foundation nor the foundation of other beings, foundation in general enters into the world through the for-itself. The for-itself does not only, as nihilated in-itself, found itself but, along with the for-itself, foundation appears for the first time" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 133). As I read Sartre here, the 'foundation that appears for the first time' is none other than that which is truly the 'self' – an entirely free entity which is not bound to a narratively constructed ego. Yet, I also note Sartre says: "Still, this in-itself, swallowed up and nihilated as the absolute event that is the appearing of foundation, or the for-itself's arising, remains at the heart of the for-itself as its original contingency" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 133). I think that Sartre's use of 'original contingency' implies a kind of dependence. Even though the ego as narrative (the in-itself) is neither active nor passive and cannot act in anyway itself, its very existence is what the self's existence (the for-itself's foundational existence) depends upon. Thus, the ego and the self have a synthetic bond, an intimate relationship:

"And how indeed should we define a person, other than as a free relationship to himself?" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 161). Nonetheless, the ego, as I have explained, is *not* the self.

Freedom and Responsibility

Throughout *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre makes a number of claims that imply the being of the 'for-itself', 'existence', 'nothingness', 'choice' and 'consciousness' all amount to roughly the same thing: "freedom, being equivalent to existence" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 583); "we have shown that freedom and the for-itself's being are just one and the same: human-reality is free precisely to the extent to which it has its own nothingness to be" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 594); "freedom, choice, nihilation and temporalization are just one and the same thing" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 609); "choice and consciousness are one and the same thing" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 605); and "freedom, being a choice, is a change (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 647). These equivalencies emphasize the absoluteness of freedom. For Sartre, freedom is nothing like a property or a quality of existence – freedom actually is existence. It is freedom, rather than anything like the concept of a will, that forms the foundation of the ends we try to accomplish throughout our lives (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 583). Thus, freedom is 'deeper than the will' (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 593).

With a theory of freedom that is so absolute it is no surprise that Sartre is critical of what he terms the 'current' debate about free will and determinism. At the time he wrote "Being and Nothingness", the debate would have been focussed on a response to the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP): *People are responsible for their choices and actions only if they could have chosen or done otherwise.* And it is PAP, I believe,

that Sartre references when he states: "According to the view that is generally accepted today, to be free does not only mean to choose oneself. A choice is said to be free if it is such that it could have been other than it is" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 594). But Sartre thinks this is the wrong ground on which to center a debate about determinism and free will:

> There is no doubt that I could have done otherwise, but that is not the problem. We should instead formulate it like this: could I have done otherwise without markedly changing the organic totality of projects that I am … In other words, I could have done otherwise, agreed: but *at what cost*? (Sartre 1943/2018, p. 595).

The sentiment that Sartre expresses here echoes Nietzsche's view. For Nietzsche, the cost of choosing otherwise is high – it means losing your causal powers and denying the most fundamental essence of your existence. For Sartre, choosing otherwise comes at the cost of actually being a different person. For Sartre, it seems this simply is not possible. The choices we make are grounded in who we are. Although there is no permanent 'self' expressed in Sartre's writings, a choice does involve 'self-presence'.

The main issue, Sartre thinks, is that the debate fails to analyze the structures of action, which, for Sartre, takes into account the fact that an act, 'by definition' is *intentional*:

> To act is to modify the way the world is *figured*, to arrange the means in view of an end; it is to produce an organized, instrumental structure such that, through a series of sequences and connections, the modification brought about in one of the links brings in its wake modifications in the entire series and, in the end, produces some foreseen result (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 569).

Intention is what distinguishes an *act* from mere *movement* (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 623). So there is a sense in which having the ability to choose otherwise is not very informative

– its seems we are responsible, rather, for our choices and actions simply by virtue of intending them and according to Sartre's theory we are absolutely free in this respect.

The only limit to our freedom seems to be the nature of freedom itself. Freedom exists and can only be expressed within 'a resisting world' (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 631). Thus, Sartre acknowledges that his theory of absolute freedom ultimately leads to a paradox: "there is freedom only *in a situation*, and there is a situation only through freedom" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 638). While on the one hand freedom is absolute, on the other freedom, being the same as existence, does have a past, and is situated: "And it is the contingency of freedom and the contingency of the in-itself that are expressed *in situation* through the unpredictability and adversity of my surroundings. Thus I am absolutely free, and responsible for my situation. But in addition I am only ever free *in situation*" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 663).

When we make a choice, the past, according to Sartre "has no power to constitute the present and to sketch out the future in advance" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 646). However, once we have chosen an end, the past becomes "an integral part and a necessary condition of my project" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 654). Yet, Sartre also says that "if freedom is the choice of an end in accordance with the past, the past, conversely, is what it is only in relation to the chosen end" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 648). Rather than entirely nihilating its past, the for itself "posits it in order to lack any solidarity with it, precisely in order to assert its complete freedom" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 656). When we make a choice, we give meaning to the past, and the past is relevant only as it relates to our present choices.

Helstrom's explanation is helpful when it comes to understanding Sartre's paradox of freedom:

> Freedom requires choice, and choice cannot create its objects but requires something independent of itself to be chosen and material to bring the choice into being. The choices available to man must be, and are, prescribed by his facticity and in this way his freedom is finite. But because that facticity cannot determine which of the available choices are made it is at the same time no barrier to human freedom … Human freedom requires obstacles in order to define itself. But the obstacles provided by facticity, Sartre claims, have meaning for us only in terms of our freely chosen projects (Helstrom 1972, pp. 117-18).

For Sartre, there is little question of responsibility. Just like freedom, responsibility is absolute. In this respect, freedom is not merely moral responsibility, but rather the absolute responsibility of the 'for-itself':

> Man, being condemned to be free, carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders: he is responsible for the world and for himself, as a way of being. We are using the word 'responsibility' in its ordinary sense of a 'consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or an object. In this sense, the for-itself's responsibility is overwhelming (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 718).

However, 'absolute responsibility', as Helstrom rightly points out, "destroys all the distinctions we ordinarily make; after all we do excuse and justify actions, relieving men of responsibility. If all men are responsible, there is no difference between responsibility and nonresponsibility and both become meaningless" (Helstrom 1972, pp. 120). Put this way, the motivation behind PAP seems obvious – we already do hold persons responsible for their actions in some cases and not in others. What we are looking for is a reason that confirms we are right to do so.

Helstrom reconciles this issue by distinguishing between transcendent and factical responsibility:

> Although a man is ultimately responsible on the side of transcendence, this does not mean that we do not recognize different kinds and degrees of responsibility on the side of facticity. The complications involve factually the choices available; this takes care of coercion, diminished capacity, and perhaps conditioning, since no man is blamed for freely choosing the evil when any man would, when the alternatives are more evil, or when the price of pursuing alternative goods is too high. In the circumstances, a person may not be presented with the choices a normal person might have in normal circumstances (Helstrom 1972, pp. 120).

Ultimately, Helstrom concludes that "Sartre's position rather than violating these distinctions of responsibility may serve as the proper basis for them by providing an explanation of why we draw them … There is much less of a conflict here than might appear" (Helstrom 1972, pp. 120).

The Implications of Sartre's Theory

Although Sartre's theory shares some similarities with that of Heidegger, Sartre specifically acknowledges and even emphasizes an aspect of human existence that entirely lacks freedom. This is not merely a distinction between ontic and ontological modes of being, but more particularly a distinction between that which underlies concrete reality and that which holds the absolute freedom of nihilation. Although these two regions of being can be abstracted in order to better understand what each entails, they exist only as a totality, and in this respect they are existentially dependent.

Insofar as Sartre's theory expresses human reality, the 'ego' represents the unfree, unconscious, indifferent aspect of human existence (being 'in-itself'). Sartre says that the ego has concrete existence as an object in the world and he rejects any notion that the ego is either 'in consciousness' or is the 'owner of consciousness'. More directly, Sartre says that 'the ego is in-itself'. But what, exactly, *is* the ego? Some scholars claim that a narrative structure is necessary when it comes to theories of the 'self' and for this reason

the ego in Sartre's theory may seem to be his concept of a 'self'. While I accept the notion that the ego is narratively structured, I also take the view that the self and the ego in Sartre's theory are clearly distinct entities, and I have found good evidence in Sartre's writings to support this distinction.

Being-in-itself is not merely that which has concrete existence in the world, but is more particularly that which is the underlying structure of things that have such concrete existence. In terms of human reality, the ego, as an 'in-itself', is that which narratively structures human reality. In this respect, Lior Levy seems to have captured the peculiar character of Sartre's concept when he likens the ego to a fictional character, emphasizing its narrative structure.

Being for itself does not nihilate concrete human existence (the physical aspects of human reality); it nihilates only the underlying ontic structure of existence (the narratively structured ego). The process of nihilation makes the self present to consciousness as absolute freedom. The self is not bound by the narrative structure of the ego, however when being-in-itself is nihilated, its original contingency remains, which is what ends up as the factual necessity of being-for-itself – its 'facticity'. This means the self has a history, a dependence, but the causal structure that one might associate with a narratively constructed entity is nihilated. In this sense, the process of nihilation creates room for nothingness alongside contingency. The ego's original contingency remains, but any sort of causal necessity associated with the narrative aspect of the ego is freed. This seems to be where freedom comes from and why freedom is absolute. As far as a continuing

narrative is concerned, the self is essentially 'nothing', and as such is removed from any sort of causal order of worldly things.

This concept of the self as absolute freedom is in keeping with Sartre's theory of existence as absolute freedom. As I read Sartre, it would be inconceivable that a concept of the self would, like the ego, entirely lack freedom. If we are free, our *self* must be free. This is not to diminish the importance or necessity of the ego. Recall Sartre's theory that the ground of existence is the totality of existence – this includes both regions of existence (being-in-itself *and* being-for-itself). There is no self without an ego and there is no ego without a self. The two are existentially dependent, while the underlying structure of existence as a whole is not found in one region or the other, but rather in the synthetic relation between the two. Thus, according to my reading of Sartre, the self is not found in one region or the other, but rather the self can be found in the relation that arises between the two when being-for-itself nihilates being-in-itself (the ego).

Given the absoluteness of Sartre's theory of freedom, it is no surprise that he views the free will debate as having been established on the wrong grounds. Sartre's main critique of the debate is that having an ability to choose otherwise overlooks the intentional nature of our choices. When a choice is made, there is an intention to change the way that the world is configured. Without intention, our choices and actions are mere movements and mere movement is no basis on which to hold persons responsible for their actions.

The problem with defining action as an intention is that often the results of our actions are not foreseeable. I have found no clear evidence that Sartre resolves this issue.

He seems to double down on this view with his example of the 'clumsy smoker' who inadvertently blows up a powder keg – the clumsy smoker, Sartre claims, has not acted (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 569). Sartre does say this does not imply that we must foresee all the consequences of our actions, and he uses the example of Constantine whose founding of Byzantium brought about the rise of the Catholic church and eventually, the fall of the Roman empire (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 570). He says Constantine still acted to the extent that he fulfilled his project of creating a residence for emperors (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 570). But Sartre is not very clear with the use of this example – and leaves his readers wondering whether or not he views Constantine ultimately responsible for the fall of the Roman empire. Sartre seems to have set a high bar for something to count as an action. The clumsy smoker did, after all, presumably, intend to light and smoke his cigarette, yet Sartre does not think him responsible for the consequences of his actions. Sartre's view here also seems to contradict his view that we are absolutely responsible for our actions.

Freedom is nothing like a quality or a property of existence – it *is* existence. And the only limit to freedom is the nature of freedom itself. Freedom exists only in situations; it needs resistance; it requires something that it can change. Without such a situation there is no need for freedom. Likewise, situations arise only because we are absolutely free; only by choosing do we give meaning to situations.

Although the self is not an inhabitant of consciousness and the self is definitely not 'behind' consciousness, the self is 'self-presence'. One might say that the self becomes present for consciousness when a choice is made or an action is intended. This means that when we choose freely there is a sense in which we choose ourselves. Having

an ability to choose other than we do would require not only intending other than we intend, but also either altering who we are, in terms of our existential self, or alternately choosing inauthentically, and thus, unfreely. According to Sartre's theory, these alternatives are impossible, but choosing otherwise also seems impossible. Actions seem to depend on the 'self' that is present when a choice is being made. If this 'self' is unstable and dependent on its situatedness, then the question arises whether it is *dependence*, rather than an ability to choose otherwise, that is the proper ground of any debate about responsibility.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

The Principle of Alternative Possibilities

The principle of alternative possibilities (PAP) situates agents' responsibility in their ability to act or choose other than they do. However, as Frankfurt's scenarios show, this principle is, perhaps, *too broadly* construed as it cannot account for agents being responsible for their chosen actions when circumstances would have prevented them from choosing otherwise. As a theory of freedom, PAP is problematic, as it fails to acknowledge authenticity as an aspect of freedom. According to PAP, an agent can choose or act either authentically or inauthentically – it does not matter in order for this principle to apply. Although Frankfurt does not resolve the problem with PAP, I believe his scenarios show that PAP is too broad to be a defining principle of autonomy. PAP implies that agents either are or are not the cause of their actions. If you could have done otherwise, then you could have been the cause of a different effect. However, PAP, as a principle for responsibility, does nothing to advance our understanding of how to balance an agent being able to choose authentically with the fact that agents live in, and govern their actions in, a world filled with other people. Neither aspect of autonomy should be ignored, albeit together they do present challenges.

Fundamental Existence

Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre each analyze authenticity as an aspect of the underlying structure of human reality. For Nietzsche, this structure is a system of wills and drives which are intertwined, yet each of which appear to have some independence of action. The core of existence, for Nietzsche is the will to power – an efficacious force

with a strong desire for freedom. The most fundamental aspect of human existence is a driving force that wishes, above all else, to express its own will in the world growing, spreading, grabbing, winning, exploiting, overpowering, and oppressing. For Nietzsche, this efficacious force 'just is the will of life' – it is a 'fundamental organic function', *the* fundamental essence of life itself.

In terms of balancing the kind of autonomy that marks responsibility for one's actions, Nietzsche's theory heavily favours the authentic aspect of freedom. His theory leaves no room for any notion of a Hegelian autonomous agent as a participant in social practices, nor would he accept the kind of autonomous agency which Oshana identified as social-relational or inter-dependent. For Nietzsche, these notions of autonomy overlook the will's desire for freedom and would lead to 'bad conscience' rather than effective agency, and in such circumstances, ultimately, one could not claim that such agents are the cause of their actions. For Nietzsche, the acting agent seems to be causal only when effective, and efficacy belongs only to the authentic choices of the will. In effect, then, Nietzsche tells his readers to look deeper than merely action when determining responsibility. There are times when we act, but are not causal agents and thus are not always free. In terms of being able to always choose otherwise, I think Nietzsche would say this is possible, but having the ability to choose otherwise is a marker of free will and responsibility *only if* the alternate action involves obeying the will. There is a substantial difference between obeying one's own will and obeying the will of others. In order to be a causal agent, the agent must 'choose' itself by obeying the commands of the will. Obeying the commands of others – even when accepting social practices and norms as

one's own – is disastrous for the agent, resulting in the will's full force being turned inward, creating 'bad conscience'. Most importantly, the agent lacks causal powers when the will of others is obeyed. In this respect, Nietzsche makes a clear distinction between the will and the agent. Whereas the will is always free, causal agency is conditioned by obeying the will.

Nietzsche's theory implies that freedom can be achieved only through obedience. This is a highly unusual notion of freedom and is difficult to reconcile with his claim that we are not free when accepting or obeying social norms and standards. In practical terms, Nietzsche's notion of freedom can be best achieved by entirely isolating oneself from others, which seems contrary to the kind of freedom most of us would like to achieve. Typically, freedom has value because it allows its possessor to pursue a fruitful life amongst others and to enjoy the benefits of social relations and interactions. Nietzsche's theory does not seem to acknowledge any such benefits.

I think Heidegger starts to resolve this issue by distinguishing between ontic and ontological modes of being. Heidegger rejects any notion that we can understand Dasein ontically. Indeed, the foundation we ought to set for all knowledge is, according to Heidegger, ontologically determined. And although Heidegger may well have been influenced by Nietzsche, in Heidegger I see a more definite move towards an existentialist theory. Whereas Nietzsche emphasizes the fundamental *essence* of human existence as the will, Heidegger places human existence entirely in what he terms 'Dasein', the most fundamental, primordial structure of human existence which entails first distinguishing between ontic human existence – that which is concrete, determined,

present – and Dasein's peculiar mode of being (*Sein*), as a structure of relationships existing as a 'not yet' and at the same time as a potentiality of being. The essence of human reality that Nietzsche defined has an objective presence that Heidegger would not like. Heidegger was more interested in the *manner* of human existence, which entails existing always and foremost, as a 'potentiality for being'.

I think the core of Heidegger's theory of existence lies in a relationship that we commonly overlook – the relationship that we hold with ourselves. For Heidegger, this relationship is not that of command and obey (as expressed in Nietzsche's theory), it is rather, a question of how the agent understands itself. Dasein understands itself not as an efficacious force but rather in terms of having a potentiality *for* being – and this is what defines Dasein's peculiar mode of existence.

On Heidegger's account of Dasein, it is possible to live in either an inauthentic mode of existence or an authentic one. However, initially, and for the most part, we understand ourselves in terms of our world and thus we live in an inauthentic mode of existence; we understand ourselves only in terms of being an 'other', a being with objective presence, just like every other being. In this everyday mode of existence, a problem arises. We become more and more like the 'other' – we see, read and judge as the 'other' sees, reads and judges. We fail to distinguish ourselves from others – we become both 'nobody' and 'everybody' – we lose our self identity and dissolve into the being of the other. Ultimately, we become subservient to the 'other'. And we allow ourselves to *belong* to the world. This is a serious problem because, according to Heidegger's theory, Dasein may exist as being-in-the-world but Dasein does not *belong*

to the world. Here, I think Heidegger better explains the issue that Nietzsche identified with his theory. On Nietzsche's account, obeying the commands of others results in losing one's causal powers – and Heidegger may be saying something similar when he says that viewing one's self as an 'other' results in belonging to the world.

For Heidegger, our choices and actions reflect who we *think* we are. In terms of balancing freedom, Heidegger claims that living inauthentically is not existence as 'a lesser being'. This is not how everyone would view inauthenticity. Typically, we attribute more value to the authentic over the inauthentic. Nonetheless, when Heidegger uses the phrase 'lesser being' in this context I think he refers to something like an *ability to function*. We can still make choices and act in an inauthentic mode of existence, but when we do our experiences lack meaning.

Regardless of whether we exist in a mode of inauthenticity or authenticity, the underlying structure of our existence itself does not change. What changes, rather, is how we understand this structure. This is why I believe we must read Heidegger as making a distinction between *existing as a potentiality for being* and *understanding that* we exist as a potentiality for being. The inauthentic mode does not alter what, authentically, we are, it only alters who we believe ourselves to be. If the inauthentic mode of existence were that of a lesser being, it might then be impossible to emerge out of this mode. However, as Heidegger's theory tells us, the spatiality of human existence in the world is that of movedness, and my understanding of this movedness is not Dasein moving from one event to another, but rather movedness in terms of how Dasein understands itself. I think Heidegger implies that functionally, we might always retain the ability to choose

otherwise – but only living in an authentic mode gives meaning to our actions and our experiences. When we experience the world by living inauthentically we lose access to a meaningful life.

In Sartre, there is yet another shift in methodology. Like Heidegger, Sartre thinks that the key to understanding human existence is to understand its ontological structure, but Sartre seems to acknowledge the importance of ontic existence. For Sartre, a part of the underlying structure of existence is objectively present; as Sartre puts it, 'it is what it is'. I view this as the aspect of existence that is already determined and in this respect it is unfree. It is existence that is not free to be anything other than what it is. This means it is also unconscious and indifferent to its own existence. But Sartre recognized that there must be something more to human reality than what exists. His core belief about existence is that it is absolutely free. The question is how to move from existence that is entirely determined, unfree, unconscious and entirely indifferent to its own existence, towards the absolute freedom of human reality of which Sartre was so certain.

This is where the second aspect of existence plays an important role. Only by nihilating that which is already determined – that which is a 'given' – can human reality find its absolute freedom. For Sartre, although the nihilating aspect of existence does all the heavy lifting, even this freedom cannot exist without a 'given' to nihilate (or to free). We know there is an aspect of our existence that is already determined and there are some aspects of our existence – some contingencies – that will remain, yet we can still imagine changes in our world. What freedom nihilates is not the objectively present human, but rather the underlying structure of ontic reality – of concrete reality. Whatever it is that

holds our image of ourselves as unfree, it is nihilated by the absolute freedom that is our existence. And since Sartre says that existence can only be conceived as a whole – as a relationship between these two regions of being – human existence is absolutely free.

In terms of balancing freedom as both an expression of an agent's ability to act authentically and their ability to navigate their social situatedness, Sartre's theory leaves no room for agents other than to embrace authentic action. Agency is conceived not merely as a manifestation of the will; agents are entirely free and their freedom 'goes deeper than the will'; the agent's freedom is the same as its existence. Sartre made a point of defining an act as 'intentional', using the example of the clumsy smoker to make this point. The clumsy smoker who unintentionally blew up the powder keg did not, in Sartre's view, 'act'. The fact that the clumsy smoker chose to light his cigarette, then carelessly throw it away does not seem to make him responsible according to Sartre, as he did not intend an explosion. In this respect, Sartre seems to imply that actions are not only intentional, they are also *isolated*. However, Sartre also rejects the notion that actions can ever be 'otherwise', which is why he says one cannot choose otherwise "without markedly changing the organic totality of projects that I am…In other words, I could have done otherwise, agreed: but *at what cost*?" (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 595). Here, Sartre expresses the view that acts are *not isolated*, which appears to contradict his earlier point regarding the intentional aspect of actions. If agents were to choose other than they do, they would have to be entirely different persons. As a critique of PAP, I believe the latter argument is more successful. When the self is brought to the 'presence' of consciousness, the narratively structured ego is nihilated, but there is always some contingency which

remains and this contingency, in part, determines the agent's choices and actions. Any claim that the agent might have chosen otherwise would depend on a different set of contingencies and thus an altered past and an altered agent. However, this would be impossible – the past cannot be altered and the agent also cannot be altered.

Authentic, Genuine Self

All three thinkers – Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre - take issue with our use of 'I' when referring to the 'self', and Heidegger and Sartre go so far as to make a clear distinction between the I (or ego) and the self. This is, I believe, an important distinction when it comes to understanding the genuine self that underlies individual existence and grounds individual autonomy. In my view, this distinction should not be explained in terms that import a dualist theory of a self, that is, a theory that posits the ego and the self as distinct substances or as unrelated entities. The ego and the self are clearly closely related.

Nietzsche's issue with our use of the word 'I' is that it fails to acknowledge the dual 'roles' that the agent plays in every choice or act. For Nietzsche, 'the one who commands' is distinct from the 'one who obeys'. But these are merely distinctions he makes between different types of wills, all belonging to the same 'system'. I think Nietzsche has expressed his ideal of a genuine self in his description of the sovereign individual, who obeys the commands of the will rather than the commands of others. Many scholars agree that the sovereign individual seems to be a rare achievement that emerges from the agent's obedience to a strong will. However, if they are right, it is questionable whether the sovereign individual is available to all, and I believe this is a

problem for Nietzsche' theory. Nietzsche seems to admit that we all have a desire for freedom, as this is how he describes the will, and presumably he would agree that all person's do have a will. If we analyze the self as a psychological phenomenon, then the sovereign individual as a rare occurrence might be an acceptable result, as it would involve some sort of self-realization. However, I am of the view that any viable *existential* concept of a 'genuine self' ought to be universally achievable. In this respect, it may be that the genuine self emerges only if 'chosen' by an enduring, sustained will to obey. Once again, however, Nietzsche faces a problem when it comes to his views on causation. If the sovereign individual is the self that emerges out of sustained obedience, then it would seem that the 'self' is, in some sense, 'caused' by the actions of the agent. If this is the case, it would seem that there is no essential, primordial self, according to Nietzsche's theory – the agent must, through obedience to the will, actually 'cause' itself. I think this is a concept of self that Nietzsche would reject because he clearly rejects the notion of a *causa sui* – a self-caused agent.

Heidegger's theory makes a start on resolving this difficulty in Nietzsche's account. Heidegger's use of the phrase 'the I of acts' implies a distinction between an ontically determined 'ego' and what is existentially the ground of a human's individual existence. The 'I' ('ego') is an objectively present entity and, on Heidegger's account seems entirely separate from the 'self' as a ground of action. Referring to the 'I', Heidegger says: "We can probably always correctly say ontically of this being that 'I' am it" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 113). So he does acknowledge this aspect of individual human reality, but at the same time, he implies that the 'I' (ego) does not participate in a

properly ontological mode of being. "When Dasein has itself in view ontically, it *fails* to *see* itself in relation to the kind of being of the being that it is" (Heidegger 1927/2010, pp. 307). So, although the ego may express ontic human reality, it cannot ground human reality because it appears to lack ontological meaning. According to my reading of Heidegger, the self is a ground that is not a cause, but rather, exists as a 'not yet', and this ground can be understood only ontologically, as a potentiality of being. There are, however, a number of issues that arise with this view, the most important being that it is difficult to understand what connects the ego to the self. Even if we analyze the self and the ego as distinct entities, there must be some way of understanding how the two can exist, either as a whole or side by side. The self of Heidegger's theory seems entirely removed from any aspect of the concrete world, including the ego.

Although I think Sartre would disagree, his theory has a number of similarities to that of Heidegger when it comes to understanding what having a genuine self entails. Sartre seems to reject any notion that existence could be defined as a 'potentiality', insisting that all being is in 'actuality' (Sartre 1943/2018, pp. 3). Yet, his theory does identify ontic being-in-itself as having at least a *potentiality* for being nihilated and being-for-itself as having a potentiality *to* nihilate. These potentialities are existentially dependent. In Chapter 4, I argued that the 'ego' and the 'self' in Sartre's theory are distinct. The ego is a being-in-itself, while the self appears only once the ego is nihilated (or freed). Whereas Heidegger's theory failed to achieve a connection between the ego and the self, Sartre's theory connects the two as existentially dependent though distinct entities. Sartre achieves this connection only by acknowledging the role of the ontic mode

of being in human reality, which seems to be what is missing from Heidegger's theory. Absolute freedom is available to the agent only once the narrative structure of the ego is nihilated, and the self is brought to the presence of consciousness. Only through this process of nihilation can absolute freedom exist alongside that which is determined and unfree. This is the connection between the ego and the self: they are existentially dependent.

For Sartre, it seems impossible to live an inauthentic life and in this respect there is a strong sense in which we must own all of our choices and actions. Nothing, not even the narrative structure of our lives can excuse us from taking responsibility for our actions. Nor is the past any reason to excuse our actions. The past holds meaning only insofar as we give it meaning by choosing the projects that define our lives. However, in my opinion, Sartre's claim here could be challenged. The 'contingency that remains' appears to be an incontestable feature of self-presence and at least a part of this contingency seems to be the past, or related to the past.

Future Considerations

Nietzsche's writings question the kind of causal powers an agent may possess. An agent's being the cause of its actions *depends on* who or what the will obeys. According to Nietzsche's theory, we cannot simply view agency as being a 'cause' or an 'effect'. There is much more involved in agency than merely a system of causes and effect. Agents have a complicated system of drives and wills and although each of these can be traced back to the will's efficacious force, each also appears to have some degree of independence. Viewing an agent as the true cause of an event depends upon how these

drives and wills act and interact. Thus it may be that we should view agency as being a *dependence*, rather than a cause.

Heidegger's theory also raises some questions about agency and causation. Heidegger's theory reveals a basis on which humans are responsible, although their responsibility does not derive from choice or action – contrary to the principle of alternative possibilities. Since choices and actions produce effects, they must be objectively present, and thus have an ontic rather than ontological being. I think this implies that the debate about free will and determinism is founded on an ontic rather than ontological principle. Viewing the 'self' that grounds autonomy ontologically, as Heidegger does, reveals a 'genuine self' as an entity that does not 'belong' to the world, but rather exists as a 'background' that is a 'not-yet', and it is this background on which an agent's actions *depend*. Heidegger's theory also reveals a 'self' that appears to be unstable and constantly changing insofar as its *being* is characterized by 'movedness'.

Sartre's theory also raises questions of how best to view agency. When the narrative structure of the ego is nihilated, the 'self' is essentially freed from its ontic existence. Like Heidegger, Sartre seems to imply that the genuine self that grounds autonomy is an entity on which action *depends* and one that appears to be somewhat unstable, perhaps even impermanent. In this respect, the 'self' seems to be a *dependence* rather than a cause. Actions seem to depend on 'who' the self actually is and 'who' the agent understands its 'self' to be.

Further investigation should consider how the self can be a *dependence*, but not be a 'cause', as well as whether the 'self' is a stable entity or constantly changing due to

changes in the conditions and situations of the agent. It may be that further analysis will reveal responsibility, not merely as an ability to choose otherwise, as PAP prescribes, but rather as related to the dependences from which actions arise. PAP tells us that by choosing otherwise the agent could have been the cause of a different effect and this implies that the agent is the *singular* cause of its actions. But if we consider the issue from the point of view of dependences, rather than causes, it may be that one can only choose otherwise if that on which the action depends could also have been otherwise. Viewing the world as dependently structured, rather than causally structured acknowledges not only the agent having made a choice, but also their situatedness and how they understand themselves and the world in which they live.

On a final note, I return to the storey of the young Russian soldier from the beginning of this thesis. Could the soldier have chosen otherwise? It would seem that, functionally, yes, he could have taken any number of alternate actions: he could have refused to kill the civilian; he could have shot and killed his commander; he could have laid down his gun and refused to take any action. These are all possibilities. But the results of this thesis imply that the young soldier's action was the result of the particular balance of choosing authentically and navigating the situation in which he existed at the moment that he chose to fire his rifle. This balance, I would suggest, was heavily weighted on the side of having to negotiate a world defined by war. The results of this thesis raise doubt about whether the young soldier could in fact have chosen other than he did, and it raises a question about exactly how to understand the 'self' on which the young soldier's actions depend.

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