HEIDEGGER’S ROMANTIC PERSONALISM

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In his “Letter on Humanism,” written in the aftermath of the Second World War, Heidegger relates the following incident: “Soon after Being and Time appeared,” he tells us, “a young friend asked me, ‘When are you going to write an ethics?’” (G9 353/268). Heidegger’s “answer,” written some twenty years later, does not completely settle the issue. It is clear, however, that he regards this question as an important one. Immediately after relating this story, he writes:

Who can disregard our predicament? Should we not safeguard and secure the existing bonds even if they hold human beings together ever so tenuously and merely for the present? Certainly. (G9 353/268)

Here, Heidegger seems to recognize the salience of his young friend’s question. More importantly, it seems, at least in this passage, that Heidegger is at least somewhat sensitive to concrete moral and social issues. And yet, at the very end of his “letter,” Heidegger expresses a deep hesitance about enlisting philosophy in the service of addressing these sorts of questions:

It is time to break the habit of overestimating philosophy and of thereby asking too much of it. What is needed in the present world crisis is less philosophy, but more attentiveness in thinking; less literature, but more cultivation of the letter. . . . With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language. They are still more inconspicuous than the furrows that the farmer, slow of step, draws through the field. (G9 353/276)

Rather than making pronouncements that can cure the moral ills of society, Heidegger seems to suggest that philosophers should withdraw into a quiet, inconspicuous life of the mind. This all seems innocent enough, at first glance. But some commentators, such as John Caputo, see in this attitude Heidegger’s insensitivity to suffering, to the real moral issues that move ordinary men and women, and to his own (alleged) responsibility as a philosopher to address these issues.1 From this
perspective, Heidegger's "answer" to his young friend in the "Letter on Humanism" seems like an attempt to dodge the issue.

Few commentators want to deny, however, that Heidegger's thought is, at its core, motivated by an abiding concern for concrete human life. Hence, the ambiguities of Heidegger's response in the "Letter on Humanism" reflect the larger ambiguities of his thought as a whole. In the present essay, I will argue that this ambiguity is a reflection not of Heidegger's insensitivity to moral issues, but rather of his profound concern for a particular moral ideal. Heidegger thought morality to be a matter of such importance that philosophers ought only to enter into a discussion of it with the greatest reticence and caution that they can muster. To understand why he held this view, it is necessary to understand his own values, and the relation between what he valued and his way of doing philosophy.

I.

The passage quoted above, from the "Letter on Humanism," is by no means the only place where Heidegger expresses some concern for practical, moral, or social issues. On the contrary, his essays, lectures, and correspondence, are filled with indications that his work was in large measure motivated by such a concern. This is especially true of his writings from the period preceding Being and Time. It is clear that, for Heidegger, philosophy is serious business, and that its primary concern is not with abstruse theoretical problems but rather with fostering valuable ways of life.

At first glance, this assertion seems to be incompatible with Heidegger's critique of the concept of "value." This critique first emerges in the years following World War I, resurfaces in the 1930s, and is again made explicit in the "Letter on Humanism." Understood correctly, however, this critique does not invalidate the claim that Heidegger is motivated by a concern with valuable ways of life. "Value [Wert]" is a central concept in the so-called "Baden" school of neo-Kantianism, exemplified by Wilhelm Windelband and by Heidegger's Doktorvater, Heinrich Rickert. On this view, a "value" is an a priori norm grounded in transcendental "consciousness as such [Bewusstsein überhaupt]." Heidegger rejects this concept as part of his overall critique of modern subjectivity and of transcendental philosophy. To say, however, that Heidegger "values" something or cares about "values" is not to say that he endorses this particular concept, or to ignore his strident critique of "philosophy of value." 'Value' can be used in the informal sense of an idea, ideal, or activity that motivates a person, and it is in this sense that the term is used here.
Right at the outset of his academic career, Heidegger gives eloquent testimony to the deep motivations lying behind his life’s work. In the conclusion to his post-doctoral dissertation on the doctrine of categories, written in 1916, Heidegger emphasizes the complementary nature of intellectual inquiry and immediate life-experience. He couches this idea in explicitly religious terms: “Philosophy as a rationalistic construction detached from life is powerless—mysticism as irrational experience is without a goal” (S 68). A year later, in a letter to Rickert, Heidegger again contends that philosophy must have its origin in “the basic streams of personal life and the fullness of culture and spirit” (HR 38). Heidegger’s letters to Blochmann contain numerous claims of a similar nature. For example, just prior to the end of World War I and the collapse of the Wilhelmine Reich, Heidegger shares his convictions about the social duties of intellectuals:

How it will shape up after the end—which must come, and which is our only salvation—is uncertain. What is certain and unshakeable is the demand on truly spiritual people not to become weak now, but rather to take decisive leadership in hand, and to instruct the people for truthfulness, and for a genuine appreciation of the genuine goods of Dasein. (HB 12)

In the early 1920s, Heidegger found Karl Jaspers to be congenial to these ideas about the proper motives of philosophy. In his letters to Jaspers, Heidegger expresses his own characteristic convictions on the matter. Philosophy is a matter of a “fundamental struggle,” not quiescent academic “business” and detached “indifference” (HJ 29). On July 14, 1923, Heidegger argues that real cultural and educational renewal “will never be attained through merely writing books. Whoever has not yet realized that today, and who leads a pseudo-existence in the humdrum routine of today’s hustle and bustle, does not know where he stands” (HJ 42). The distinctively Heideggerian aspect of this claim emerges a bit later in the same letter, where Jaspers is told that an effective “up-heaval” or “revolution [Umsturz]” can only occur “inconspicuously,” not through bombastic jeremiads on the “decay of culture.” While Heidegger is committed to the seriousness and responsibility of philosophizing, he ridicules the “medicine-men” of philosophy who trivialize it with their “fearful, miserable handiwork” (HJ 42).

These early letters present us with moments of candor in which one can gain a clear glimpse of the deep motivations behind Heidegger’s work as a philosopher. What is ultimately at stake for him is not whether or not he makes some contribution to the “academic business,” but rather that he remains loyal to his own values and to his vocation as a philosopher. For Heidegger, philosophy is both motivated by life, and is itself a way of life that involves a passion for certain very specific values.
Heidegger also expressed these convictions in more public settings. For example, in his lecture course for the Winter Semester of 1919–1920, Heidegger comments on the "radicalism" of philosophy:

...a consciousness of problems that is genuine, original, living, continually ploughing up the ground anew, never resting—genuine science, which our age, and the nineteenth century, have lost, and which one cannot define ahead of time for the newly dawning age, but which has to be lived anew. A living concern, personal being and creating (→ radicalism). (G58 5)

Heidegger’s talk of a "personal" "living concern" with philosophy is not intended to suggest that the discipline belongs solely in the quiet of the study or in the silent inwardness of the philosopher himself. Heidegger’s vision of the vocation of the philosopher, while clearly something that has to be personally appropriated, is not at all a private matter. Instead, the essence of this vocation is that it forces one into the very heart of the social, cultural, and political maelstrom of the day. The philosopher’s job is to articulate “a genuine motivation for the fates (tasks) that fall to it, to its generation, and to humanity” (G58 150). The image that this remark suggests is of a series of concentric circles, each representing a level of concrete concern: individual, generational, and inter-generational. Philosophy draws its very life-blood from an individual’s own “anxious worry [Bekümmernung]” for her own life. At the same time, the individual philosopher is always part of a larger whole, i.e., the generation, which is itself faced with its own unique problems and promises. The generation, in turn, is part of the stream of humanity, to which a philosopher, in her own modest way, is called to contribute.

Heidegger revisits these ideas a few years later. “Hermeneutics,” he writes in 1923, “has the task of making the Dasein which is in each case our own accessible to this Dasein itself with regard to the character of its being, communicating Dasein to itself in this regard, hunting down the alienation with which it is smitten” (G63 15/11, emphasis added). Self-alienation is to be overcome and replaced by something that Heidegger calls “wakefulness” (G63 15/12). The whole project here is undertaken “with a view to developing in [life] a radical wakefulness for itself” (G63 16/12). Without this focus, hermeneutics “will itself remain unimportant” (G63 20/15). The target then is overcoming the alienation of life from itself.

It is noteworthy that life is characterized in these passages as something that is “in each case our own.” Earlier, at the beginning of this lecture course, Heidegger defined his object as follows: “‘Facticity’ is the designation we will use for the character of the being of ‘our’ ‘own’ Dasein. More precisely, this expression means: in each case ‘this’ Dasein in
its being-there for a while at the particular time" (G63 7/5). Heidegger's concern is what Franz Rosenzweig calls "I, who am indeed dust and ashes." I, a completely common private-subject, I fore- and surname, I dust and ashes," a matter that has been forgotten and left behind by philosophers bent on the construction of speculative systems. Heidegger is ultimately not just concerned with "facticity" as a philosophical concept, but rather with facticity as "a how of being, an indication which points to a possible path of being-wakeful" (G63 7/5). That is, Heidegger is concerned with the possibility of being an individual in more than a merely formal sense, with owning up to one's singularity and uniqueness. This is the value that ultimately motives his life's work.

II.

It has been shown that Heidegger was deeply concerned with a value that he describes at one point as "wakefulness." These and other terms are ways of indicating what readers of Being and Time are more familiar with as authenticity. The central claim of this essay is that understanding what "authenticity" means, and where it comes from, is the indispensable key to understanding the ambiguities of Heidegger's attitude toward moral philosophy or ethics. The goal of this section is to show that "authenticity" is Heidegger's version of what I call Romantic personalism.

Intuitively, "authenticity" means something like "being true to oneself." Charles Taylor has shed substantial light on the nature and origins of this idea in a recent monograph. This is his characterization:

There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's. But this gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for me.7

Taylor argues that the source of this ideal can be found in Herder, Schleiermacher, in the poets and artists of the Sturm und Drang and their Romantic successors. Reacting against what they perceived as the abstract universalism and intellectualism of the Enlightenment, these figures tried to reassert the value of the concrete individual as something uniquely valuable, and of being true to one's individuality as a valuable way of life. One might call this idea "Romantic personalism" in order to accentuate both its historical origins and its basic claims. Heidegger's talk of "genuineness," "wakefulness," and "authenticity" all reveal that he committed himself to his own version of Romantic personalism.

In the Summer Semester of 1919, Heidegger expresses his admiration for the "German movement," or in other words for Romantic personalism
He particularly admires Herder's assertion of the unique value of each nation and age. At the same time, there are elements of this tradition that Heidegger wants to reject, particularly the role of the Cartesian-Kantian concept of "subjectivity" in the subsequent development of this line of thought (G56/57 134/114f.). In practice, this translated into the aesthetic cult of genius and the study of history as the action of great personalities. Heidegger wants to purge this tradition of these problematic ideas, while at the same time vigorously asserting the importance of the core value of "genuineness" or "authenticity."

In a passage from later on in this lecture course, Heidegger sheds light on the essential core of the Romantic tradition that he wants to preserve, while casting off the more problematic elements:

Moreover, there are genuine life-experiences, which grow out of a genuine life-world (artist, religious person). Depending upon the genuine motivational possibilities, there arises the phenomenon of life-intensification (in the opposite case, minimizing of life). This phenomenon is not determined by a feeling of experienced content. There are people who have experienced much in various "worlds" (artistically, etc.) and yet are "inwardly empty." They have reached only a "superficial" experience of life. Today the forms of life-intensification are becoming ever more pregnant, fraught with meaning. "Activism" is in motive genuine, in form misguided. The "free German youth movement" is in form genuine, but without fertility in its setting of goals. (G56/57 208/175f.)

These remarks highlight many of the core elements of Romantic personalism: the paradigmatic status of the artist, the distinction between a passionate, resolute life and one that is "minimized" and "superficial." Particularly significant is the fact that the "religious person" is also taken to be exemplary. Indeed, the genuinely "religious person" serves as a model for authenticity throughout Heidegger's work. His measured enthusiasm for the youth movement also provides important information about both the content and the provenance of his ideals. The youth movement was a bastion of neo-Romantic reaction against the perceived superficiality of bourgeois society. The work of Romantic poets like Hölderlin, and neo-Romantics like George, factored significantly into this movement's ideals.

The valuable "core" of Romantic personalism also appears in Heidegger's correspondence with Blochmann. The role of the "personal" in the renewal of life is repeatedly emphasized. This means that the "ownmost existence" of individuals is the engine that drives genuine social and cultural regeneration, and that the attainment of "inner wakefulness" or "inner truthfulness" holds the key to success in this regard (HB 7). Deploying a religious conceptual framework, Heidegger tries to clarify
the point by saying that “Every accomplishment gains the character of final validity in the sense of genuineness, i.e., of an inner belonging to a central I and its god-directed steadfastness of purpose” (HB 7). A few years later, Heidegger again presents his ideal to his friend Blochmann. This time, he sketches it out in considerably more detail.

It is a rationalistic misjudgment of the essence of the personal stream of life, if one intends and demands that it vibrate in the same broad and sonorous amplitudes that well up in graced moments. Such claims grow out of a defect in inner humility before the mystery and grace-character of all life. We must be able to wait for the tautly strung intensities of meaningful life—and we must remain in continuity with these moments—not so much to enjoy them as to mold them into [eingestalten] life—in the continuing course of life, they are taken along and incorporated into the rhythm of all future life. . . . [H]aving oneself with understanding is only genuine when it is truly lived, i.e., when it is at the same time a being. By this I do not intend the triviality that one must now also adhere to what is known—but rather a vehement life, a turning inwards [Innewerden] to one’s own unique (though not theoretical) total spiritual direction. (HB 14)

Here again one can see the ideal of a passionate, intensified, committed way of life, the rejection of the over-rationalization of life characteristic of modern, post-industrial society, and a stress on the value of vocation. These ideals are all consonant with Romantic personalism. These same ideas appear in Heidegger’s well-known letter to Fr. Engelbert Krebs, in which he announces his formal break with Roman Catholicism:

It is difficult to live as a philosopher—inner truthfulness regarding oneself and in relation to those for whom one is supposed to be a teacher demands sacrifices, renunciation, and struggles which ever remain unknown to the academic technician. I believe that I have the inner calling to philosophy and, through my research and teaching, to do what stands in my power for the sake of the eternal vocation of the inner man, and to do it for this alone, and so justify my existence [Dasein] and work ultimately before God. (S 70)

Heidegger’s repeated reference to the “inner” expresses another important feature of Romantic personalism. People like Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard used this sort of language quite often. It even shows up in Nietzsche’s early work. Taylor has described the way in which earlier notions of the “moral sense,” of an inner voice that guides a person’s actions, factored into the development of the ideal of authenticity. Lutheran Pietism, which stressed the lived experience of conversion, was also an important tributary in this stream of thought. Heidegger’s em-
ployment of the language of "inwardness" again testifies to the religious overtones of his own appropriation of Romantic personalism.

Indeed, his own unique brand of Romantic personalism derives from his attempt to reappropriate the religious roots of this tradition. This attempt was inspired by Heidegger's reading of Wilhelm Dilthey, whom he regarded to be the deepest thinker among the Romantic personalists. Heidegger liked to say that Dilthey was, at bottom, really a theologian, and he duly noted Dilthey's own appreciation for Romantic poets and thinkers (S 151, 153). Indeed, Dilthey shared a Romantic suspicion of grand metaphysical systems and metaphysical views of history that eclipse the uniqueness and irreducible value of particular cultures, nations, and individuals (GS1 41/92). Dilthey found biographical writing to be particularly interesting as an expression of the value of individual lives: "The progress and destiny of the human will is here apprehended in its dignity as an end in itself" (GS1 33/85, emphasis added). For Dilthey, the individual has an "intrinsic value in the world of human spirit" (GS7 212/333).

Most important for Heidegger's thinking on these matters was Dilthey's claim that Christianity was the historical source for the recognition of the value of the individual. Dilthey traces the modern "emancipation" of the individual to the protest of religious feeling and the immediacy of religious life against the metaphysical systems into which it had been forced by medieval thought (GS1 352f./186f.). The Reformation was clearly of decisive significance in this regard (GS1 384f./218; GS2 39ff.). Dilthey also holds that Lutheran Pietism, which had a profound influence on personalist thinkers like Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard, was a powerful assertion of the religious value of the individual (GS7 183ff./204f.; GS6 288ff.).

In many passages from his lectures and essays during this early period, Heidegger more or less explicitly endorses Dilthey's ideas about this subject. For example, he shares Dilthey's interest in autobiography and in confessional literature (G58 58f.). He also regards Christianity, particularly in its primitive and "mystical" forms, as paradigmatic instances of an "intensifying concentration [Zugespitztheit]" toward the self (G58 60f.). Importantly, Heidegger makes an effort to distance this phenomenon from the conceptual apparatus of "subjectivity," something that Dilthey failed to do (G58 205). "Having oneself" in an authentic way has nothing to do with the serene self-presence of the theoretical subject (G58 155f.). The aim of exploring the religious sources of Romantic personalism was to retrieve the valuable core of this tradition.10

Based in large part on his readings of early Christianity, Heidegger articulated an ideal of "authentic" life.11 An authentic life is one that
begins with some sort of interruption of the normal course of events, of
the humdrum reality of the everyday. This interruption provides the
occasion for a person to gain perspective on her life as a whole, and to
make a new commitment to being a person of a certain sort. This com-
mitment requires a continually renewed struggle to remain loyal to
oneself and to one's own unique way of being human. During the 1920s,
Heidegger employs diverse vocabularies in an attempt to indicate the
way of life that he envisions.

Later, Heidegger calls this ideal “existence [Existenz].” Contrasting
the quotidian “circumstances” of life with the “situation,” Heidegger
explains the idea thusly:

In contrast to circumstances, the situation of factual life means the
stand taken by life in which it has made itself transparent [durch-
sichtig] to itself in its falling and has, in concrete anxious worry at
the particular time, seized upon the possible countermovement to the
falling of its care. (NB 10/118)

Heidegger is here attempting to portray life has become self-aware,
that has suddenly become cognizant of the unsatisfying superficiality
of its wonted ways. One has “seen through [durchsehen]” the life that
one has been living. This represents a chance to seize one’s life as one’s
own, to take ultimate responsibility for one’s life. Rather than tranquilly
drifting through life, one takes a stand on oneself as a person of a cer-
tain sort. This possibility is emphatically indexed to the individual. In
other words, the content of what it might mean for a specific individual
to live in this way is opaque to the theoretical gaze. The whole point,
after all, is that one’s life is one’s own. While the basic contours of “in-
ner truthfulness” or Existenz can be sketched out (largely in a negative
fashion), the nature of the ideal itself is such that it precludes any
detailed formulations.

These passages are critical for understanding Heidegger’s curious
blend of enthusiasm and reticence with regard to talking about moral
issues. To trot out formulae or decision procedures, on his view, would
be to invade the space that should only be determined by each individual
“at the particular time.” Yet, to refuse all mention of a moral ideal would
be to give up on the idea that philosophy is more than just an “academic
business.” As Heidegger continued to think about these issues and to
work out his philosophical position, these convictions became even more
firmly entrenched.

III.

Up to this point, it has been established (1) that Heidegger’s thought is
motivated in large measure by a concern with a particular value, and
(2) that the value in question is best understood in terms of Romantic personalism. With (2) in place, we can understand how (1) can be true, despite the fact that Heidegger is often very reticent about doing ethics or moral philosophy in the usual ways. Heidegger's thinking is motivated by a concern with particular individuals being "authentic," being true to themselves, or owning up to their own unique individuality. For this reason, he wants to steer clear of anything with even the hint of pedantry about it. Heidegger's conviction is that one cannot foster the value being true to oneself by proclaiming world-views or by making normative pronouncements about how people are supposed to regulate their lives and make decisions.

But, the lingering question is, why does Heidegger decide to talk about authenticity at all, given his worries about the potential for distortion and ideological pedantry? What must be kept in mind here is that Heidegger's emphasis on life's being "in each case my own" does not eclipse an equally strong acknowledgment its social nature. For Heidegger, the intelligibility of each individual life is importantly dependent on the social "world," the context of meaningful relations, which a person inhabits. From very early on in his career, Heidegger stresses the role of community and social relationships in enabling one to make sense of life (G58 32ff.).

Heidegger divides total phenomenon of "factual life-experience" into three interlocking contexts: the "environing world [Umwelt]," the "with-world [Mitwelt]," and the "self-world [Selbstwelt]." Again, the point is that the intelligible sense of things in our lives is partly grounded in their reference to other people: "the book we have used was bought at So-and-so's shop and given by such-and-such a person" (SZ 118/153f.). The broken skis in the corner call to mind our trip with someone, the table speaks to us of family dinners (G63 90f./69f.). Our understanding of ourselves and of our world is never isolated from the social relations in which we stand. Indeed, those whom we call "others" are those from whom we do not, by and large, distinguish ourselves. That is, the "others" are those amongst whom we ourselves belong; our world is a "shared" world (SZ 118/154f.).

The issue for Heidegger, then, is this: how can someone committed to the value of authenticity effectively engage with other people in such a way as to foster this value? The answer does not lie in imposing some common framework or ideological program on people. That is, shared values or systems of values are not required, beyond simply each person's commitment to the authenticity of each. The goal is not so much that everyone agree on the same course of action, but rather that, if such agreement does occur, it is in each case "determined by
one’s own Dasein that has been grasped in each case in one’s own way [je eigens ergriffenen Dasein bestimmt]” (SZ 122/159). The only thing that matters here is the “inner truthfulness of a worthwhile, self-cultivating life” (G56/57 5/4), which is certainly not a “matter for universal humanity or for a public” (G63 19/15). Heidegger spells out these ideas quite directly in an early letter to Karl Löwth with. Here, he asserts that a real bond between individuals can only be achieved through mutual commitment to liberating one another for their own struggle to achieve “inner truthfulness.”

It is only important that we agree that what really matters for each of us is to go to the radical, uttermost limit for what and how each of us understands the “one thing necessary.” Perhaps we are far apart with respect to “system,” “doctrine,” and “position,” but we are together as human beings alone can be together: in existence [Existenz]. (HL 32)

In Being and Time, Heidegger maintains that “communication” and “struggle,” not paternalistic pedantry, are the best ways to bring about a genuine community of persons (SZ 384/436). Not submission to authority, but rather a shared ideal of individual integrity, constitutes the foundation for real solidarity. What Heidegger envisions is a “community of struggle [Kampfgemeinschaft],” something which he articulates more explicitly in his correspondence with Karl Jaspers. Heidegger lauds the “exceptional and independent community of struggle [Kampfgemeinschaft] that I find all too rare these days” between himself and Jaspers (HJ 29).12 Mention has already been made of Heidegger’s hopes for a “revolution [Umsturz]” in university and cultural life, which must take its cue from an “invisible community,” not a political party (HJ 42). Heidegger certainly did not share many philosophical, political, or religious commitments with Jaspers. What he did share was a mutual commitment to revitalizing philosophy and the university. For him, this is much more important than having a common ideology.

In Being and Time, Heidegger describes this model using a slightly different vocabulary. Here, he argues that genuine community is founded on a commitment to being the “conscience” of other people (SZ 298/344). Understanding the way Heidegger uses the term ‘conscience’ more generally provides more substantial content to this claim. In §§55–60 of Being and Time, he uses ‘conscience’ or the ‘call of conscience’ as ways of articulating the structure of rare moments in life when the complacency of everyday “business as usual” is interrupted. These are experiences in which the human condition (or rather one’s own unique instantiation of it) of having to live one’s own life in one’s own way within a context of possibilities that one has not created is momentarily lit up. These moments of “life-intensification” (as Heidegger calls them in 1919) are
singular opportunities to undertake the project of "inner truthfulness," of refusing to lose oneself in the anonymous public. To be the "conscience" of another person is to act as such an opportunity.

The alternative to being the "conscience" of another is some kind of paternalism, as a passage from Being and Time makes clear (SZ 122/158). Here, Heidegger attacks a tendency toward what he calls "standing in [einspringen]" for another person and so contributing to her natural tendency to abdicate self-responsibility, i.e., to be inauthentic. Despite its benevolent intentions, this sort of activity ultimately robs the other person of her dignity by treating her as if she were a child, one who is incapable of radical loyalty to herself. A bit later in Being and Time, Heidegger characterizes his model of emancipatory interpersonal solidarity:

[A] solicitude which does not stand in for the other so much as leap ahead [vorausspringt] of him in his existentiell ability to be, not in order to take "care" away from him, but rather to give it back to him in the first place authentically and as such. This solicitude is essential to authentic care—i.e., it concerns the existence [Existenz] of the other and not some what with which he is concerned; it helps the other to become transparent for himself in his care and to become free for it. (SZ 122/158f.)

The objective here is not to relieve another person of the burden of having to be herself, but rather to serve as an occasion for her to fully embrace this burden, and to take a stand on herself as a unique individual. This talk of "leaping ahead" in Being and Time recalls Heidegger's earlier talk of "exemplary living [Vorleben]." Just as the "voice of conscience" gives no "practical injunctions" or "univocally calculable maxims," so in the same way a person concerned with the authenticity of another enacts this concern in unobtrusive exemplification (cf. SZ 294/340). A 1918 letter to Blochmann captures the idea quite clearly:

Spiritual life can only be lived in advance in an exemplary way [vorgelebt] and shaped so that those who ought to partake of it are immediately seized by it in their existence [Existenz]. The value of spiritual realities, insight into duty, and the will to fulfillment is only stirred up and liberated [lösen sich . . . aus] as the fruit of a vigorous and enduring awakening that is inwardly nourished without theoretical and didactic assistance and bridges. (HB 7).

Here, 'vorleben' is used for the ideal that is later called 'vorausspringen' in Being and Time. This is an idea that shows up again and again in Heidegger's work. "Leaping ahead," "exemplary living," being the "conscience" of another, sharing a "community of struggle"—these are all different ways of fleshing out Heidegger's vision of what it means to interact with other people on the basis of a mutual commitment.
to authenticity as an ideal. At this point, it must be recalled that, for Heidegger, *philosophy* is motivated, first and foremost, by this very ideal. Moreover, as has already been shown, philosophy is not a private endeavor, but one that takes place in community. As such, Heidegger's model of interpersonal solidarity grounded in a concern for authenticity must apply to it as well. An examination of his explicit remarks on the nature of the practice of philosophy confirms this supposition.

In some of his earliest lecture courses at Freiburg, Heidegger tries to make this point by divorcing philosophy from “world-view” (G56/57 220/187). In the circle of neo-Kantianism, a world-view is a systematic presentation of the meaning and purpose of human life and human culture, grounded on theoretically certain a priori norms. For Heidegger, this represents precisely the sort of dictatorial mode of philosophy that he his compelled to reject on the basis of his own commitments. In the winter semester of 1919–1920, for example, Heidegger explicitly rejects both sides of the neo-Kantian project (i.e., a science of “value” and the construction of a world-view based upon it): “Philosophy—neither mere investigation of subject matter and objects (validity of propositions); nor sermonizing, practical direction or regulation; rather, a leading [Führung] that understands; not the practical usefulness of norms, but rather genuine possibilities of leading and of cultivation [Bildung]” (G58 113f.). While repudiating the goal of regulating life through a priori norms, Heidegger is still committed to the claim that philosophy does have a role to play in individual and social “cultivation [Bildung].” That is, he does not want to retreat from the confusing bustle of “world-views” into the cool room of “scientific” philosophy, but rather is seeking to articulate a way of doing philosophy that moves beyond this dichotomy altogether. This is, of course, precisely the idea expressed as early as 1916, in the passage from his post-doctoral dissertation quoted at the beginning of this essay.

During summer semester 1920, Heidegger's renunciation of contemporary attempts at “applied” philosophy is even more emphatic:

Philosophy, insofar as it remains loyal to itself, is not to be defined in such a way that it must rescue or save the age, the world, etc., or must alleviate the misery of the masses, or must make human beings happy, or cultivate or enhance culture. All of this signifies the direction of an anxious worry in which what it all comes down to simply vanishes. All world-view philosophy corrupts the original motive of philosophizing. (G59 170)

Ideology, or “world-view,” is the downfall of genuine philosophy. It is well-worth noting that these commitments make Heidegger's later political activities all the more puzzling. His early work, while not at all
indifferent to concrete concerns, is devoid of explicit ideological flavor so apparent in his writings from the mid-1930s. However, throughout the early 1920s, Heidegger again and again stresses the independence of philosophy from ideology. He is repelled by the claim that philosophy should somehow "stand security for the coming period of culture and the fate of humanity." As he puts it in 1923, "philosophy has no mission to take care of universal humanity and culture, to release future generations once and for all from care about questioning, or to interfere with them simply through wrongheaded claims to validity" (G63 18/14).

Once again, it is absolute crucial to recognize that, for Heidegger, the repudiation of the usual ways of advocating cultural renewal does not entail that philosophy must lose itself in tranquil theorizing of pure "science." As he points out to his students in 1919, the "scientific man . . . does not stand in isolation. He is connected to a community of similarly striving researchers with its rich relations to students" (G56/57 4/4). Heidegger's view is that "life-relations renew themselves only by returning [im Rückgang] to the genuine origins of the spirit" (G56/57 5/4). What is required is the "truthfulness of a worthwhile [wertvolle] and self-cultivated [sich aufbauenden] life" (G56/57 5/4). Or, as he puts it a bit later on, "Only life, not the noise of frenetic cultural programs, is 'epoch-making'" (G56/57 5/4).

Heidegger's positive views about the social and cultural role of philosophy are derived ultimately from his commitment to the ideal of authenticity, or, as he calls it in 1919, of the "truthfulness of a worthwhile and self-cultivated life." This ideal is a re-working of central themes from the Romantic personalist tradition. As has already been discussed, Heidegger inherits from this tradition the view that artists and religious figures exemplify an authentic life. Heidegger invokes these exemplars during his attempt to sketch out his ideal of doing philosophy: "But just as the awe of the religious man makes him silent in the face of the ultimate mystery, just as the genuine artist lives only in his work and detests all art-chatter, so the scientific man is effective only by way of the vitality of genuine research" (G56/57 5/4). Just as art or religious life is a vocation, so too must philosophy emerge from an "inner calling" (G56/57 5/5).

Heidegger's claim is that consistency requires a person committed to authenticity as an ideal to relate to other people in a very specific way. The proper way to accomplish this goal is not by promulgating programs or ideologies, but rather through dialogic "struggle [Kampf]" and inconspicuous exemplification of "inner truthfulness." For a philosopher, who shares these commitments, and who regards them as the very life-blood of philosophy, this means that ideology or normative
“world-view” has no place. Instead, one must be content with calling something to the attention of others by first of all traveling “a stretch of the way oneself” (G9 42/36).

The oft-discussed concept of “formal indication” plays an important role in concretizing Heidegger’s vision here. Borrowing from Kierkegaard’s notion of “indirect communication,” Heidegger contends that philosophical discourse should aim at pointing a person into a “situation of enactment” in which the formal sense or meaning of a claim is realized in the temporal particularity of that moment. As he puts it in the “Letter on ‘Humanism’”: “With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language. They are still more inconspicuous than the furrows that the farmer, slow of step, draws through the field” (G9 364/276). More negatively, a philosopher might “compel” someone to “reflection” by challenging the complacent self-images, the “masks,” that keep individuals locked in an inauthentic way of life. Herbert Marcuse, influenced by Heidegger, famously decried the “one-dimensionality” of modern society. Borrowing the idea back from Marcuse, one could use “one-dimensionality” as a way of describing the sort of superficial banality that Heidegger aims to replace with “inner truthfulness.” Besides “laying inconspicuous furrows” of formal indication, Heidegger also wants to break up the level ground of “one-dimensionality” by calling into question the conceptual “masks” behind which individuals and societies hide from the task of self-responsibility.

In the Summer Semester of 1920, Heidegger calls this side of philosophical activity the “rigor” of philosophy, which “must heighten anxious worry in its constant renewal in the facticity of Dasein, and must ultimately make actual Dasein insecure” (G59 174). Philosophy is to be understood, on Heidegger’s view, as a “counter-motion,” a “motion against [Gegenbewegtheit]” the “ruinance” that life inflicts upon itself (G61 132/99). Philosophy must join “the constant struggle of factual, philosophical interpretation against its own ruinance, a struggle that always accompanies the process of the actualization of philosophizing” (G61 153/114).

In the “Natorp Report” from late 1922, Heidegger states that “the genuinely fitting way of gaining access to [life] and of truly safekeeping it can only consist in making itself hard for itself” (NB 3/113). This is the sole duty of a philosopher:

This [i.e., making things hard] is the only duty philosophical research can be required to fulfill, unless of course it wants to miss its object completely. All making it easy, all the seductive compromising of needs, all the metaphysical tranquilizers prescribed for problems that have been for the most part derived from mere book learning—
basic intention of all of this is from the start to give up with regard to the task that must in each case be carried out, namely, bringing the object of philosophy into view, grasping it, and, indeed, preserving it. (NB 3f./113)

What can be concluded from all of this? Heidegger's reticence about addressing moral issues in a direct way stems from this abiding concern with the "duty" of a philosopher. While called to promote and to exemplify what it means to live an authentic life, a philosopher (who shares Heidegger's values) is also constrained by her commitments to authenticity. These constraints preclude one from promulgating a world-view or even from giving a rigid definition of one's values. One is left with the more inconspicuous praxis of "making things hard," which, Heidegger contends, is the only "genuine" way to lead.

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NOTES


10. It is worth pointing out that, like other Romantic personalists, Heidegger was also keenly interested in artists as exemplars of an authentic life. In his case, Van Gogh seems to have had a particular powerful attraction. See Heidegger’s assessment of Van Gogh in Summer Semester 1923 (G63 32/26f.).


12. This characterization of their turbulent friendship is repeated in a later letter (HJ 33).


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2. Works by Dilthey

