

Being-Towards-Death and Owning One's Judgment

Denis McManus

University of Southampton, UK

Heidegger's discussion of 'Being-towards-death' occupies a prominent position in his reflections on authenticity. But this discussion has been the target of some of his fiercest critics,¹ and poses his sympathetic readers some of their greatest challenges. This paper will offer a novel interpretation of the discussion as contributing to the articulation of a not-implausible account of self-knowledge and self-acknowledgement. It has often been noted that the term typically translated as 'authenticity'—*Eigentlichkeit*—could be translated more literally as 'ownness' or 'ownedness'; and my reading reveals *Eigentlichkeit* to be the 'owning' of one's own judgment, an 'owning' that manifests itself in a distinctive relationship to one's death.

The reading builds on a comparison of Heidegger's discussion with an examination in his lectures of St Paul and, in particular, of his remarks on the Last Judgment in the letters to the Thessalonians. Others have suggested a connection might be found there;² and what I offer here is a suggestion of my own about just what that connection might be. I propose that Heidegger sees in St Paul's remarks an understanding of what it is to be willing to stand before God, and that this provides a model for Heidegger of an understanding of what it is to be willing to stand before oneself. The (confused) desire to escape God's judgment is a desire to avoid what one takes to be the facts about oneself and manifests itself in a distinctive relationship to the Last Judgment; alienation from one's own judgment is the avoidance of the same facts and can be identified, I argue, with Heideggerian inauthenticity and its distinctive mode of Being-towards-death.

Sec. 1 sets out some of the principal puzzling features of Heidegger's discussion of Being-towards-death; Sec. 2 presents my reading of Heidegger's discussion of St Paul; and

¹ In addition to Edwards' well-known criticisms (see his 1979 and 1989), Philippe claims that 'Heidegger's allegedly deep analysis of death does not contain significant philosophical insights', and is merely 'a mesmerizing play with words' (1998: 354).

² Cf., e.g. McGrath 2006: 196 and Tønning 2009: 147. Young (1997: 67) suggests an analogy also, though without reference to Heidegger's discussion of St Paul.

Sec. 3 identifies notable similarities between these two discussions in the form of common terms and shared motifs. Sec. 4-5 proposes a philosophical basis for these similarities, which the remainder of the paper (Sec. 6-10) sets to work in resolving the puzzles that Sec. 1 identifies.

The reading that I propose represents quite a departure from the ways these issues have been discussed of late and two important things are conspicuously missing in what follows. The first is a demonstration that such an interpretation is *needed*. Dreyfus' review (Dreyfus 2005) of prominent readings of the Being-towards-death discussion—having offered telling criticisms of other candidates—concludes that the best available interpret Heidegger's 'death' as some form of 'world-collapse'; and Thomson describes these readings—which, among others, Blattner (1994), Haugeland (2000) and White (2005) have defended—as representing the 'cutting-edge' of Heidegger scholarship (2013: 263). Nonetheless, these readings strike me as deeply problematic, though for reasons I set out elsewhere.³ In this paper, I am afraid, my aims are purely positive.

Secondly, readings of the Being-towards-death discussion will ultimately stand or fall with the readings that they suggest for the other notions woven into Heidegger's broader discussion of authenticity. I will sketch readings of some of these—'the They' and 'resolution', for example—but, in the confines of this paper, I can no more than sketch. So from the reader who will ask 'Yes, but how does this fit with Heidegger's account of anxiety, conscience, idle talk, guilt, etc.?', I can only ask forbearance.

1. Puzzles to be Solved

This section will set out, and give labels to, some of the key claims in Heidegger's discussion of death.⁴ Some of these labels pick out reasonably discrete claims:

The Individualization Claim (IC)

Heidegger labels authentic Being-towards-death 'anticipation' and claims that '[a]nticipation utterly individualizes Dasein' (SZ 266).⁵

³ I have criticised Haugeland's interpretation of Heidegger in McManus forthcoming-a, and Thomson's and Blattner's in McManus 2015a.

⁴ Sec. 10 lists some of those I do not address here.

The Possibility of Impossibility Claim (PIC)

Heidegger insists that '[d]eath is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein' (SZ 250). 'It is the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing', '*the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all*' (SZ 262).⁶

The 'Not an Event' Claim (NEC)

Heidegger insists that death is not 'an oncoming event', 'some impending event encountered environmentally' (SZ 254, 250). More specifically, he distinguishes death (*Tod*) from perishing (*Verenden*) and demise (*Ableben*).⁷ In what follows, I adopt Blattner's proposals that 'perishing' refers to 'something like the cessation of life-maintaining organic functions', and 'demise' to 'the end of [Dasein's] pursuit of tasks, goals, and projects, an ending that is forced by organic perishing' (1994: 54). Heidegger's familiar concern to distinguish Dasein from the 'merely living' provides us with a reasonably clear sense of why Dasein's death might be unlike 'perishing'.⁸ But what such a death might be that it is distinct from demise is a much more difficult question.

I will also give labels to more complex clusters of remarks.⁹ It is tempting here to shift to talk of 'motifs' but, for simplicity, I will continue with talk of 'claims':

⁵ Cf. also SZ 264, and SZ 250 and 263 quoted below. References to Heidegger's work use acronyms given in the bibliography, followed by page numbers. I use the established translations of Heidegger's works in most cases. As the two available translations of *Sein und Zeit* also give the pagination of the German original, I give references to the latter, though generally I follow the translation of Macquarrie and Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962).

⁶ Cf. also SZ 255, 266, 306 and 329.

⁷ Cf., e.g., SZ 240-41 and 251.

⁸ Cf., e.g., SZ 58.

⁹ In suggesting that these remarks form such clusters, the labels I use here run the risk of being interpretively-loaded; but the remarks in question will be given a more fine-grained reading in what follows.

The Choice Claim (CC)

Heidegger links Being-toward-death in complex ways to choice. For example, ‘the indefiniteness of death is seized ... when I am absolutely *resolute* in having chosen myself’ (*HCT* 318-19). ‘Anticipation’ ‘means choosing’, Dasein’s choosing ‘both itself and choice’ (*WDR* 168).¹⁰

The Constant Reckoning Claim (CRC)

Heidegger claims that death is ‘not something to which Dasein ultimately comes only in its demise’; instead Dasein is ‘constantly coming to grips with’ death, even if often in a “fugitive” manner” (*SZ* 259). Other formulations suggest that Dasein is always directed towards—or orienting itself in some way by—its death. ‘Death ... *stands before* [bevorsteht] Dasein in its Being, and constantly at that’ (*HCT* 313); Dasein ‘already *is towards* its end’ (*SZ* 259).¹¹ Context suggests that this thought lies behind the striking claim that ‘Dasein is dying as long as it exists’, that ‘Dasein is dying ... constantly, as long as it has not yet come to its demise’ (*SZ* 251, 259). So, for instance, Heidegger says that ‘[f]actically one’s own Dasein is always dying already; that is to say, it is in a Being-towards-its-end.’ (*SZ* 254)¹²

The Way of Being Claim (WBC)

‘Death’, Heidegger claims, ‘is a way to be.’ (*SZ* 245). Our ‘constantly coming to grips with’ death does not take the form of ‘merely having some “view” about’ something; rather ‘[h]olding death for true ... shows another kind of certainty’ (*SZ* 256, 265).¹³ This thought seems to relate to Heidegger’s insistence that our constant reckoning with—or orientation by—death is the way in which death makes itself manifest.

¹⁰ Cf. also *SZ* 264.

¹¹ Cf. *PICA* 118: ‘Life is in such a way that its death is always in one way or another there for it, i.e., there as seen in one way or another, even if this takes the form of pushing and away and suppressing “the thought of death”.’

¹² On this textual point, I disagree with Carman’s claim that ‘[t]o say that we are always dying is to say that our possibilities are constantly closing down around us’ (Carman 2003: 282), though a version of the idea he expresses here is one to which my reading is hospitable.

¹³ Cf. *SZ* 247 where Heidegger also gives a distinctive sense to ‘dying (*Sterben*)’ as ‘that way of Being in which Dasein is *towards* its death’.

‘[D]eath is only in an existentiell *Being towards death*’; ‘[d]eath is, as *Dasein*’s end, in the Being of this entity *towards* its end.’ (SZ 234, 259)

The reading I will offer yields plausible interpretations of all of these puzzling claims as well as others we will encounter on our way. It will further demonstrate its usefulness in identifying responses to two charges that are often made against Heidegger’s account of authenticity. One is that he gives us no good reason to be authentic; the other, which requires some explanation, I label the ‘Disengagement Charge’.

Marcuse claimed that Being-towards-death requires of us a certain morbidity, ‘a joyless existence ... overshadowed by death and anxiety’ (Marcuse and Olafson 1977: 32-33). Few of Heidegger’s sympathetic readers have endorsed this claim, but plenty feel the force of a more general worry that it illustrates: the worry that the authentic person must be—in some way—disengaged from the situations in which they ordinarily act, her attention directed—in some way—elsewhere. This worry has led to the suggestion that there is ‘no way to live permanently in authenticity’, because ‘the experience of coming to terms with our finitude in the *anxiety* of facing up to death ... wrench[es us] away from ... the everyday world’ that ‘we have to take ... for granted in all our practical concerns. (Frede 1993: 57). Similarly, Kukla claims that

The bulk of our action must always remain inauthentic, for sustained authenticity would require that we negotiate our world through an ongoing alienated uncanniness that would amount to a crippling form of psychosis. (Kukla 2002: 13)

How this worry emerges varies from one reading to the next. But the very idea of authenticity as some kind of being true to oneself may encourage such a worry. Certainly, if that feat requires reflective self-awareness, then, as Han-Pile puts it, that would seem to ‘prevent us from responding appropriately to the affordances of the world’ (Han-Pile 2013: 293); and Heidegger’s insistence that authenticity requires a proper acknowledgement of *death* would seem to raise this worry in an even more striking form: as he himself at one point asks, ‘What can death and the “concrete Situation” of taking action have in common?’ (SZ 302) So just as one might well wonder what being true to oneself has to do with ‘facing up to death’, one might well wonder what either have to do with concrete situations of action.

In response to such concerns, commentators have offered proposals such as that authenticity requires us only to ‘hold ourselves open to the occasional experience’ of ‘radical

breakdown’—of ‘distance with respect to our defining existential projects’—between which we can ‘settle[] back into’ a ‘naïve’—but nonetheless—‘good conscience’ (Thomson 2013: 289). Whether such proposals can be given substance and defended is a difficult question. But my reading has the advantage of sparing us the need.

To begin to explain that reading, let us turn our attention to a discussion of a seemingly far-removed topic.

2. St Paul and the Last Judgment

In lectures from 1920-21, Heidegger presents St Paul as struggling with his congregation to get them to see what their real concerns as Christians are.¹⁴ In the letters to the Thessalonians, for example, he is struggling to persuade them of the folly of asking when the *parousia*—and with it, the Last Judgment¹⁵—will take place:

Paul’s answer to the question of the When of the *parousia* is ... an urging to awaken and to be sober. Here lies a point ... against the incessant brooding [*Grübelsucht*] of those who dwell upon and speculate about the ‘when’ of the *parousia*. They worry only about the ‘When’, the ‘What’, the objective determination, in which they have no authentic personal interest. (*PRL* 74)

Heidegger sees St Paul as pointing to a confused irreligiosity in such ‘incessant brooding’—such *Grübelsucht*—over this ‘speculative’ question, a ‘false concern’ (*PRL* 110) in which we actually have ‘no authentic personal interest’. St Paul ‘juxtapos[es] two ways of life’ (*PRL* 70)—that of the ‘children of light’ and that of those who ‘talk of peace and security’, the latter being the ‘speculators and chatterboxes’ (*PRL* 110) who are concerned with when the *parousia* is to happen:

¹⁴ I will not consider here how accurate a reading Heidegger provides of St Paul, only how this reading may have shaped Heidegger’s thought.

¹⁵ ‘*Parousia*’ refers to the Second Coming (cf. McGrath 2001: 556), which, in principle, need not be accompanied by a Last Judgment. But I will use the terms inter-changeably here, a use which seems to reflect Heidegger’s concerns in his St Paul lectures.

About dates and times, my friends, we need not write to you, for you know perfectly well that the Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. While [some] are talking of peace and security, all at once calamity is upon them, sudden as the pangs that come upon a woman with child; and there will be no escape. But you, my friends, are not in the dark, that the day should overtake you like a thief. You are all children of light, children of day. We do not belong to night or darkness, and we must not sleep like the rest, but keep awake and sober. (1 Thess. 5.3-7, New English Bible)

But if the *parousia* ‘comes like a thief in the night’, why think—as St Paul appears to—that it is only those who ‘talk of peace and security’ for whom it is ‘sudden’, ‘all at once’? Heidegger elaborates upon this description of their condition in interesting terms: for ‘them’, the *parousia* is

‘sudden’ and inescapable; *unexpected*, unprepared for; no means for overcoming and taking a stance; they are *handed over* to it. ... They cannot escape; they want to save themselves but can no longer do so. To be *taken absolutely!* (*PRL* 107)

I will suggest that there is a reasonably clear sense in which the ‘speculators and chatterboxes’ are ‘unprepared’ for that event. This reveals itself not so much in what the above description shows them to lack but in what it shows them to desire.

Let us consider the kind of ‘preparation’ that knowledge of ‘the “when” of the *parousia*’ would make possible. This would be knowledge of a period in which one will not be subject to God’s final judgment and knowledge of the date by which—as one might see it—one must get one’s house in order, the date by which one must ‘fix’ one’s life. But desiring the latter knowledge betrays a particular attitude towards God. Such ‘preparation’ is not that of one who acknowledges God’s judgment as *the truth*, as a judgment for the enactment of which the true believer would *long*; instead this ‘preparation’ treats that judgment as something to be accommodated, dealt with, even ‘overcome’ or ‘escaped’, as *PRL* 107 puts it. To ‘prepare’ thus is to lack a ‘fundamental comportment to *God*’ (*PRL* 110).

Instead one's 'fundamental comportment' is to another matter altogether—one's 'peace and security'—which one seeks to protect *in the face of* God's judgment.¹⁶

This stance can be both compared and contrasted with that of someone whom one might call a 'pagan', someone who thinks that an all-powerful and all-knowing being created the universe and will return at some point to bring joy to those who have acted as it thinks they should have and suffering to those it thinks have not. The pagan might well attempt to prepare for such an event by attempting to identify when it will take place and ensuring she is behaving as that being desires when the time comes. But the pagan differs from St Paul's 'speculators and chatterboxes' in that the latter *think* they *love* God. I say '*think*' because the way they prepare for the *parousia* reveals their understanding of it to be fundamentally pagan after all. God's judgment for them is an imposition, something to which—as *PRL* 107 puts it—they are '*handed over*' and from which they 'want to save themselves'; although they have 'no means', they, nonetheless, want to 'overcom[e] and tak[e] a stance' towards this judgment; 'they cannot'—but, nonetheless, want to—'escape' it.

Such individuals 'refuse to love the truth' (2 Thess 2.10-11, translation from *PRL* 77) and a distinction that St Augustine draws—and that Heidegger discusses in lectures in the summer following those on St Paul—helps clarify their condition. These 'children of the dark' act out of what St Augustine calls '*timor servilis*', 'servile fear': they act 'not ... from love of God, but from fear of punishment' (quoted in *PRL* 225). Such fear contrasts with '*timor castus*', 'chaste' or 'pure fear':

This fear does not have the direction of keeping something or someone at bay, but of pulling something or someone toward oneself. *Timor separationem (est) amare veritatem* [Fearing separation (is) loving the truth]. (*PRL* 225)

To 'love the truth' is to fear God's 'forsaking you' (*PRL* 225). It is to see God's judgment as 'righteous' (2 Thess. 1:5) and to 'strive for the good for its own sake' (*PRL* 225), rather than

¹⁶ An objector might ask: 'Couldn't a Christian want to know the date of the *parousia* simply out of curiosity?' To anticipate a little, the account I will develop asks in response 'Is satisfying such curiosity more important to the Christian than doing what God needs of her right now?' (Cf. also *CTR* 57 on death as the object of 'curious speculation'.) But for further complications, cf. n. 24 below.

doing so in order to keep punishment ‘at bay’. *Timor castus* is a desire to be righteous in the eyes of God *full-stop*, rather than righteous in order that one’s ‘peace and security’ be saved.

Timor castus takes a distinctive form, which St Augustine’s famous plea to be ‘give[n] chastity and continence, but not yet’ (1961: 169) throws into relief. As a desire actually to be as God wishes us to be—and not merely to be so when the *parousia* comes—*timor castus* embodies a ‘permanent concern’; and St Paul too conveys to his flock a ‘[k]nowledge of distress ... that does not stop and let rest, but the opposite’, as he strives to convey that ‘the fundamental sense of Christian existence’ is one ‘of perpetual and radical concern’ (PRL 97, 98). The desire of the ‘speculators and chatterboxes’ to divine ‘the “when” of the *parousia*’, on the other hand, is recognizably a desire to ‘stop and rest’; such knowledge would allow them—to use an expression of William James’—a ‘moral holiday’ (James 2008: 38)—to desire chastity and continence, but not yet.

I have examined the above discussion at some length elsewhere, arguing that it illustrates Heidegger’s concern to distinguish the different ways in which we ‘have’ or ‘comport ourselves towards’ different kinds of events, entities, etc.—the different ‘subject-correlates’ of these different ‘objects’.¹⁷ To ‘expect’ the specific kind of event that the *parousia* is is to live a certain kind of life; as one might put, it is not to think a certain thought—or (to echo SZ 256) to have a view about something—but to *be* a certain way. We may say that the Christian looks forward with ‘hope’ but *this* form of “[h]aving hope” and mere attitudinal expectation [*Erwarten*] [are] essentially different’; the true Christian ‘ha[s] “expectation”’, but it is ‘faithful, loving, serving expectation’ (PRL 107). True recognition that there will be a righteous Last Judgment comes in the form ‘not [of] some representational “expectation” [*vorstellungsmässiges Erwarten*], [but] rather ... serving God’ (PRL 79)—‘striving for the good for its own sake’.

We will return to these thoughts below; but my concern—and guiding hypothesis—here is that there are illuminating parallels between Heidegger’s discussion of such Being-towards-the-*parousia*, as one might call it, and his later discussion of Being-towards-death.

3. An Initial Textual Comparison: On Anticipation, Resolution, Falling and Brooding

¹⁷ Cf. McManus 2013a upon which the present section’s discussion draws.

Significantly, the two discussions share many terms and motifs. Like St Paul's 'children of the dark', Heidegger describes the inauthentic person as 'falling' (SZ 166). The former 'cling to the world' and the latter flee 'into worldly concerns and apprehensions' (PRL 72, PICA 119). The former 'spend themselves on what life brings them, occupy[ing] themselves with any random tasks of life', while the latter 'abandons [him]self to whatever the day may bring', to 'those very closest events and be-fallings ... which thrust themselves upon him in varying ways' (PRL 73-74,¹⁸ SZ 345, 410).

St Paul's 'children of light', on the other hand, Heidegger describes as standing to the Last Judgment in a mode of 'resolution [*Entschliessung*]', and as 'running towards [*Laufen nach*]' that Judgment (PRL 109, 90). Later he describes the authentic too as manifesting 'resolution'—*Entschlossenheit* or *Entschluss* in SZ—and 'anticipation' of—*Vorlaufen*, meaning literally 'running ahead towards'—death (SZ 305). Heidegger distinguishes the latter from an inauthentic 'expectation' [*das Erwarten*], a 'waiting for the actualization' of death (SZ 262), just as we saw above he distinguishes running ahead towards the *parousia* from a mere 'representational "expectation" [*Erwarten*]' of that event.

Moreover, when the inauthentic do come to reflect on death, that reflection takes a form that Heidegger describes in very much—and, in some cases, exactly—the same terms that he uses in describing St Paul's 'speculators and chatterboxes'. At SZ 261, Heidegger characterises such reflection as 'pondering over when and how this possibility may perhaps be actualized'; 'it always gets brooded over [*begrübelt*] as something that is coming':

[S]uch brooding [*Grübeln*] over death does not fully take away from it its character as a possibility. ... [B]ut in such brooding we weaken it by calculating how we may have it at our disposal.

Such *Grübeln* over the "when"—over 'when and how this possibility may ... be actualized'—expresses the desire to have death 'at our disposal'—'under our control', as Stambaugh's translation puts it. Such a desire brings to mind that of the 'speculators and chatterboxes' not to be 'handed over' to the *parousia*. Their wish to 'overcome'—even 'escape'—this is the focus of their *Grübelsucht*.

But why say that such *Grübeln* 'weakens' death? When Heidegger says that 'such brooding over death does not fully take away from it its character as a possibility', he clearly

¹⁸ I follow Tønning (2009: 143)'s translation in part here.

thinks that to some degree—or in some sense—it does diminish it or strives to do so; but what does ‘taking away its character as a possibility’ mean anyway? My reading, which will solve the puzzles that Sec. 1 identified, will answer these questions too.

4. An Initial Philosophical Comparison: On Being Judged Out of One’s Own Mouth

I want to suggest that we find in Heidegger’s examination of these themes in St Paul a study of a form of self-estrangement, one that is possible for us whether we believe in God or not. It manifests itself in a particular attitude towards our own deaths and resurfaces in Heidegger’s mature early work as inauthenticity.¹⁹

What we have done so far is identify how particular ways of relating to God’s judgment are connected to particular ways of relating to the Last Judgment, and we have noted that Heidegger describes the latter in very much the same terms as he uses in describing authenticity and inauthenticity. Moreover—with an eye, for example, to the Disengagement Charge—we have seen that true acknowledgement of God’s judgment and of the Last Judgment manifests itself in acting now in line with His judgment—not in ‘brooding’ on the Day of Judgment but in ‘serving God’ here and now.

But there are natural concerns about the prospects of taking these connections further. Buried in the notes of *Being and Time* one finds references both to St Augustine’s *timor servilis/castus* distinction (SZ 190 n. iv) and to St Paul, the latter in an allusion to ‘the anthropology worked out in Christian theology’—‘from Paul right up to Calvin’—that ‘has always kept death in view’ (SZ 249 n. vi). But how, one might well ask, can the earlier discussion we have explored represent anything like a *substantial* anticipation of that in

¹⁹ I have argued elsewhere (cf., e.g., McManus 2012) that many of Heidegger’s crucial claims may be over-determined; so I certainly do not rule out the possibility that there are other stories to be told about the authenticity discussion or that other important influences need to be taken into account. For example, regarding Kierkegaard’s possible role here, cf. n. 22 below and the papers by Carlisle, Haynes and Pattison in McManus 2015b. But I do believe that the account I present above sheds some light.

Being and Time, when the latter lacks the former's religious setting and motivation.²⁰ For all the parallels identified above, what could a non-believer's 'running ahead towards' her death have in common with the Christian's 'running ahead towards' the Last Judgment? Moreover, isn't the earlier discussion precisely *not* a discussion of being true to *oneself* but rather of being true to *another*—to God?

In response to these concerns, I will argue that these discussions are connected in both concerning our desire to evade our own judgment. Heidegger's early understanding of the challenge of being willing to stand before God and His judgment provides a model for his later understanding of the challenge of standing before oneself and one's own judgment; and it can do so because meeting the former challenge requires our meeting the latter.

To invoke a familiar and important theological notion, God's judgment confronts us with ourselves. St Luke tells us that we will be 'judged out of our own mouths' (19:22), and Job that our 'own lips will testify against' us (15: 6). Similarly, Heidegger characterises St Paul's 'fallen' would-be-Christians as not only desiring not to 'stand alone before God' but also as 'run[ning] away from themselves' (*PRL* 79, 107); and a passage from St Augustine's *Confessions* that Heidegger quotes at *PRL* 214-15 gives graphic expression to this same notion:

You, my Lord, turned me around to look at myself, so that I no longer turned my back on myself, refusing to observe myself. You showed me my face so that I might see how ugly I was, how disfigured and dirty, blemished and ulcerous.²¹

The passage continues:

I saw it all and stood aghast, but there was no place where I could escape from myself. ... [Y]ou brought me face to face with myself once more, forcing me under my own

²⁰ Cf. *HCT* 314 and *L* 194's claim that 'any philosophy ..., as philosophy, must stand outside of faith'. That *SZ* really does express an atheist outlook is an assumption that has been questioned. (Cf., e.g., Philipse 1998 and Rickey 2002.) But I will accept that assumption here.

²¹ I here combine elements of Fritsch and Gosetti-Ferencei's *PRL* translation of this passage (from *Confessions* VIII, 7) and Pine-Coffin's more idiomatic rendering from p. 169 of the Penguin translation.

sight so that I should see my wickedness and loathe it. I had known it all along, but I had always pretended that it was something different.²²

There is indeed a clear reason why willingness to stand before God is willingness to live ‘under [one’s] own sight’: as long as I am a believer—and therefore do not doubt that what God will say of me reveals the truth about me—not wanting to confront God’s judgment of me is not wanting to confront myself. As we saw above, such self-evasion betrays itself in an effort to deny that the Last Judgment can happen at any time. The same self-evasion, I will suggest, is what Heidegger later characterises as inauthenticity, a condition which betrays itself in a parallel ‘*flight in the face of death*’ (HCT 316). This ‘flight’ is an inability to tolerate the fact that the final fixing of the truth about who I will have been can happen at any time—the final determination of the facts about me, whether articulated through a god’s judgment or not.

5. Developing the Comparison: Self-Evasion and Flight from Death

In the tendency towards falling, life goes out of its way to avoid itself. Factical life gives the clearest attestation of this basic movement in the way it approaches death. (PICA 118)

The fixation of the ‘speculators and chatterboxes’ on *when* the *parousia* will take place betrays their understanding of God’s judgment as something to be managed, ‘escaped’ or ‘kept at bay’, and of their lives as—in roughest of terms—needing to be ‘fixed’ in time. There are a number of different ways of looking at this understanding as expressive of confusion;²³ but I have focused here on how it betrays a gap between one’s manner of living and God’s judgment, which in turn betrays a gap between God’s judgment and one’s own. If one believes one loves God—that God’s judgment is righteous, is right—then this also shows

²² Cf. also Kierkegaard’s connection of ‘learn[ing] to know yourself’ with learning ‘to want to be known before God’, both of which—interestingly enough in our context—he connects to ‘earnest thought’ about death (Kierkegaard 1993: 90).

²³ E.g., ‘Are we not constantly under God’s judgment?’, ‘Can a planned later repentance constitute genuine repentance?’, etc.

one is *self*-estranged: one is not living in line with what one takes to be one's *own* judgment. The thought that I suggest underlies Heidegger's notion of inauthentic Being-towards-death is that—irrespective of whether one takes one's judgment to be shared by a God—estrangement from one's own judgment will express itself in a parallel attitude towards one's death. We ourselves are judges of our lives—we might say with Heidegger that our 'Being is an issue for' us (*SZ* 12)—and an understanding of one's life as needing to be 'fixed'—which betrays a gap between one's manner of living and one's own judgment, which itself betrays a failure to make one's judgment one's own—expresses itself in a desire to hold one's death at a remove, 'at bay'.

The claim is not that such alienation is a necessary condition of possessing such a desire, but that it is a sufficient condition;²⁴ and this alienation finds recognizable expression in the inauthentic's characteristic attitudes to death. If one could determine when that death would come—say, by 'brooding' 'over when and how this possibility may perhaps be actualized' (*SZ* 261, quoted above)—then, as long as the portents were not of imminent death, one could be happy that one would be able to put one's life in order at some future date: one could 'stop and rest', and wish—like St Augustine—for one's own equivalents of chastity and continence, *though not yet*. In our secular age, of course, we do not generally expect to be able to divine with any reliability the hour of our passing; so here the characteristic means of death being 'driven away' (*HCT* 315) is instead a *denial* of death and Heidegger identifies a particular form of this as also characteristic of the inauthentic. When the inauthentic 'push[] away and suppress[] "the thought of death"', they 'push[] away ... death into the realm of postponement' (PICA 118, WDR 167); they say to themselves 'Death certainly comes, but not right away' (*SZ* 258): 'There is still plenty of time' (*CTR* 69).²⁵

An objector might complain that, for Heidegger's implied criticism of the inauthentic's 'pushing away of death' to be justified, there would have to be nothing we can

²⁴ The desire might also arise, for example, out of a fear of the unknown or—with our pagan above—of the fires of an unloved creator's hell. (Cf. also Luper 2009 for a useful survey of recent philosophical views on the 'harmfulness' of death.) That the connection I describe above is sufficient but not necessary also makes room, for example, for the authentic person refraining from undertaking projects the completion of which will take a thousand years, despite that involving *some* kind of reckoning with the likely 'when' of demise. Though there certainly are further complications here, I will set them aside on this occasion.

²⁵ Cf. also *SZ* 253, 255, 425, and *HCT* 315.

do in the future about our situation; but, for most of us, there simply is: for most of us, there simply is still time. However—to echo an earlier claim—the most important thing that this objection reveals is not a preparedness for death that we may (or, if unlucky, may not) possess, but what the objector seems to desire.

The comfort the objection promises is that one has what one might call the ‘freedom’ not to be now what one supposedly believes one ought to be: one has time to enjoy the kind of ‘moral holiday’ that the ‘speculators and chatterboxes’ desire. The ‘holiday’ sought is a holiday from the ‘demand’ that one live up to one’s own judgment, from the ‘need’ to do what one says to oneself is most needful. If one is comforted by having such ‘freedom’, one is being comforted by a freedom not to do what one says to oneself one must do, and the natural conclusion is—to echo the earlier discussion—that one does not ‘love the truth’: one hasn’t appropriated it *as* ‘the truth’ but instead stand to it in a ‘servile’ relation, as something that needs to be ‘overcome’ or ‘escaped’. But if so, one is alienated from oneself, actually fleeing what one takes to be one’s own judgment.

To be able to reject such ‘freedom’—such a ‘holiday’—is to have embraced—to ‘own’—one’s judgment. Such a mode of being true to oneself can then indeed be described—as Heidegger describes *Eigentlichkeit*—as one’s being ‘free *for*’, ready for, ‘one’s death’ (SZ 264). Heidegger identifies ‘[f]ailure to run ahead towards the ultimate possibility’ that is death with ‘lack of decision’, and ‘every delay in making the decision’—such as one’s happily concluding that one is free not to act now, as death almost certainly isn’t imminent—with ‘a case of abandoning oneself to the fallen state’ (CTR 47). One probably does have such a ‘freedom’ to ‘delay’; but desiring it reveals one’s alienation.²⁶

Recognizing how this objection misfires also helps us see a related distortion in a moral that is not infrequently taken to be that of the Being-towards-death discussion: the moral ‘that life is short and that we have to use it well’ (Philipse 1998: 357). So Young, for example, depicts ‘the practical affirmation of finitude’—our genuinely ‘[f]acing-up-to-death’—as an ‘urgent ... intensity’, as

²⁶ One might also imagine this objection: ‘If I am indeed about to die, why should I worry about my failure to live up to my own judgment? That will be of no consequence to me, as I will be dead and gone!’ But my reading suggests that the significance of my inability to confront the possibility of death lies in what it says about my relationship to my own judgment *now*, when still very much alive.

[a] life that is appropriate to the fact that we do not have unlimited time at our disposal and so must reject ‘accidental’ [possibilities] and confine ourselves to living out our central, essential life possibilities. (1998: 116)²⁷

But to be moved by such thoughts—to feel such ‘urgency’—is to betray that what one says to oneself one should do and can do, one is, nonetheless, not doing; one’s life needs ‘fixing’ and that betrays a mismatch between one’s life and one’s own judgment. To feel one ‘*must ... confine*’ oneself to ‘living out [one’s] central, essential life possibilities’ betrays an estrangement from those possibilities: one may call them one’s ‘central, essential life possibilities’ but one does not treat them as such.

6. Setting the Comparison to Work: The Need for Possibility and to ‘Weaken Death’

We can further develop—and set to work—our comparison of these discussions by seeing how it assigns sense to one of the most puzzling claims that Heidegger makes about death, PIC.

PIC—along with NEC’s distinguishing of death from demise—has had a very significant influence on ‘world collapse’ readings. These take PIC to state that there is a condition in which—in some way—we both are and are impossible. Thomson, for example, claims that ‘Heidegger ... conceives of death as something we can live through’ (Thomson 2013: 267). It is an ‘anguished experience of the utter desolation of the self’, in which ‘all of our projects ... break down simultaneously’ and ‘we experience’ a ‘pure, world-hungry projecting’ ‘without *any* existentiell projects to project ourselves into’ (2013: 262, 270, 272, 269). I am then a ‘projecting [that] survive[s] the collapse of any and all my particular projects’ (2013: 277).²⁸

Blattner offers a similar view. He distinguishes ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ senses of Dasein’s existence, which are, respectively, ‘our always stand[ing] before the question, Who am I?’ and our ‘carrying on our lives in a determinate way, thereby taking a stand on who we are’

²⁷ It should be acknowledged that Philipse himself describes this kind of reading as ‘[t]he best I can make of Heidegger’s statements’ (1998: 357).

²⁸ Cf. also Thomson 2004: 452-53 and Crowell 2015: 218: ‘existential death ... is the ability to be without being able to be anything’.

(2006: 144). Blattner thinks that '[i]n anxiety'—with which 'world collapse' views essentially identify Heidegger's 'death'²⁹—'[w]e have thin existence, but not thick': 'We are thinned out to mere being-possible' (p. 144).

I have raised worries about these readings elsewhere;³⁰ and Thomson himself describes the condition they envisage—in which 'I no longer have a concrete self I can be, but I still *am* this inability-to-be'—as 'strange' and 'paradoxical' (Thomson 2013: 281, 271 and 2009: 31). Invoking such an idea is not a fatal flaw in a reading of Heidegger unless one thinks him incapable of propounding paradoxical ideas. But the principle of charity requires that we take any promising alternatives very seriously and I believe that my interpretation offers one.

Despite my doubts about his overall reading, Thomson gives us a useful initial gloss of PIC, as focusing on 'the possibility of not being possible' (2009: 39); that, I suggest, is indeed what the inauthentic 'flee'. According to my interpretation, authentic Being-towards-death is a readiness to be what I am now, for that to have been me. It is a readiness for one's existence no longer to be something that one has 'at one's disposal'—'under one's control'—something which one might yet alter and, in this sense, 'overcome' or 'escape'. Instead one is 'free *for* one's death', ready to 'give oneself up' (SZ 264). The inauthentic, on the other hand, must—in this sense—'remain possible'. What they will finally have been must remain yet to be determined, as they cannot tolerate what they are; more must be possible for them and hence there must also be more time for that 'more' to take place.³¹ Thus, when the inauthentic insist that '[d]eath certainly comes, but not right away', theirs is a '*forced* absence of worry about death' (PICA 119, italics added).³²

²⁹ Cf., e.g., Blattner 2006: 140: 'Death turns out to be the same experience as anxiety.'

³⁰ Cf. n. 3 above.

³¹ Heidegger remarks that the authentic always 'have time' (CT 14-16) and there is a clear sense, on my construal, of why the inauthentic always *need more* time. Cf. also SZ 174 on the 'essentially slower time' of the authentic.

³² One can see, I believe, in passages such as the following the thought behind formulations of PIC which the 'world collapse' readings misconstrue:

I am this 'I can die at any moment.' This possibility is a possibility of being in which I always already am. It is a superlative possibility. For *I myself am this constant and utmost possibility of myself*, namely to be no more. (HCT 313)

This lets us understand why Heidegger says that the way in which the inauthentic reflect on death—when they are brought to do so—‘weakens death’; and we also glimpse a deeper reading of NEC—deeper than, for example, an Epicurean construal, according to which my death is not an event in the sense of an event in my life, something I would need to be alive to experience.³³

Recall that the inauthentic’s ‘brooding [*Grübeln*]’ over ‘when and how this possibility may ... be actualized’ is a ‘calculating how we may have [death] at our disposal’. Similarly, the ‘brooding’ of the ‘speculators and chatterboxes’ on the ‘when’ of the *parousia* is an ‘expectation [*Erwartung*] of a special event that is futurally situated’ (*PRL* 81), a longing to identify the moment that that event will be actualized so that God’s judgment might be ‘overcome’. I suggest that the reason that the inauthentic’s ‘brooding’ on the ‘when’ of death ‘weakens’ it is that true readiness for death—like that for the *parousia*—is not knowing *when* it will happen but readiness for it to happen at *any* time. That is to treat death as a constant possibility rather than focusing on its ‘when’, its character as an event that will come to pass at some particular moment.

‘[T]he indefiniteness as to when death comes’—‘the possibility that it can come at any moment’—is, Heidegger says, what ‘gives it its sting’ (*HCT* 317); and the passage from *SZ* 261 quoted above continues:

[Death] must be understood *as a possibility*, it must be cultivated *as a possibility*, and we must *put up with* [*ausgehalten werden*] *it as a possibility*, in the way we comport ourselves towards it.

Those who are ready for the *parousia* live in line with God’s judgment—‘serving God’—so they do not require that the *parousia* happen at some particular moment, or that they know when that moment will be; instead they can ‘*put up with it as a possibility*’ because they are always ready for the moment to be now. The ‘speculators and chatterboxes’, on the other

I also believe my construal can be rendered consistent with Heidegger’s distinctive use of ‘possibility’, of which ‘world collapse’ readers have made much (cf., e.g., Blattner 1994). But I won’t attempt to demonstrate that here.

³³ Compare Wittgenstein 1922: 6.4311: ‘Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death.’

hand, attempt to ‘take away [the *parousia*’s] character as a possibility’, because to be able to say when it will happen is to be able to say when it will not. The *parousia* certainly comes; ‘but not right away’ they want—and indeed need—to be able to say, because they are not ‘ready’.

Similarly, the ‘brooding’ of the inauthentic on the ‘when’ of death attempts to ‘take away its character as a possibility’. They need to be able to say that death will not come right away—that *that* is not possible—because their lives are out of line with their own judgment: their lives need fixing, and hence they cannot ‘endure [*aushalten*] the possibility of death’ (WDR 168). Instead ‘the possibility of not being possible’ is one they must believe they can ‘weaken’. The ‘sting’ of death—as the possibility of impossibility—is the necessity that we act now and always as we ourselves believe we should. But if we could ‘push [death] away into the realm of postponement’ (a ‘pushing away’ we might hope to justify by successful calculation of its ‘when’), that necessity would be undone—we could instead ‘stop and rest’—and that ‘sting’ would be drawn.

We will have consider NEC again in the final section of this paper. But now I want to turn to the Individualization and Choice Claims.

7. The They, Individualization and Choice

The picture of authenticity sketched so far may seem markedly unlike that normally associated with what one might call the ‘existentialist tradition’. But familiar existentialist themes take on a ready sense here, such as anti-conformism, our freedom to choose the course of our lives—a freedom that it is inauthentic to ‘flee’—and a corresponding stress on being oneself, on acknowledging one’s individuality.

The Last Judgment could be seen as presenting in its most dramatic form the ‘religious singling out of the individual before God’ (Kierkegaard 1962: 53): there I ‘stand alone before God’ (*PRL* 79). The previous section shows how death—for believer or non-believer—emulates such ‘singling out’. As St Paul articulates Sec. 4’s central theme, ‘[w]hen God judges the secrets of human hearts’, our ‘own thoughts argue the case on either side, for or against’ us (Romans 2: 15-16). Hence, the ‘children of the dark’, who are aware that they cannot justify their lives even by their own lights, must ‘run away from themselves’ and from the truth. Similarly, to be able to ‘endure’ death—‘the possibility of impossibility’—is to be able to endure oneself as one is, to tolerate the truth about what one is now. Hence, Heidegger

identifies ‘the utmost possibility of death’ with a ‘way of Being of Dasein’ in which Dasein is ‘*purely and simply thrown back upon itself*’ (HCT 318) and claims that, ‘[w]ith death, Dasein ... stands before itself’ (SZ 263).³⁴

The stress on death’s *individualizing* of Dasein—that death ‘*lays claim* to [Dasein] as an *individual* Dasein’ (SZ 263)—is given added motivation by Heidegger’s account of how we typically resist that ‘claim’, an account that also plausibly has its roots in his theological studies of the early 1920s. When we ‘stand before God’s tribunal’, ‘each of us will have to answer for himself’ (Romans 14: 10-12); but in the course of my ‘fallen’, self-evasive life, I don’t answer for myself: instead I let others do so for me. To articulate a crucial theme in Heidegger’s St Augustine lectures, ‘hiding oneself’—‘the self [being] lost for itself’—can be achieved by ‘view[ing oneself] in the eyes, the claims, judgments [and] tastes ... of others’ (PRL 171). In as much as we look upon ourselves, it is not our own judgment that we then apply.

In our ‘bustling activity for the sake of praise’—for endorsement by others—‘we are scattered into the many’, ‘dispersed’ and ‘dissolving into the manifold’ (PRL 173, 151-52); and Heidegger’s later reflections on the inauthentic—and their being “‘*dispersed* into the “They”” (SZ 129)—echo such a deferral—or out-sourcing—of judgment: ‘insofar as it lives in the They’, *Dasein* is ‘relieve[d] ... of its choice, its formation of judgments, and its estimation of values’ (HCT 247). When inauthentic, I can say I am doing what *they* say is right or doing what *one* does—to pick up on both common renderings of *das Man*; and if my desire is not to be censured—a ‘servile’ ‘fear of punishment’—I may succeed, in that I am doing what a professor/son/British citizen/etc. is expected to do and what one who occupies such roles does. But whether *I* ought to do what I am doing—making those particular norms *decisive* for *me here and now*—is a truth I ‘refuse to love’ enough to seek; instead I let the They relieve me of the need to form such a judgment. By forcing upon me the question of whether *I* can tolerate what I am and am doing, ‘death ... individualises Dasein down to itself’; to confront *that* question is to be ‘wrenched away from the “They”’, ‘all [my] relations to any other Dasein ... undone’, ‘irrelevant’ (SZ 263, 250, HCT 318).³⁵

³⁴ In Stambaugh’s translation, ‘imminent to itself’.

³⁵ Death’s ‘individualiz[ing] Dasein down to itself’ (SZ 263) in this way gives sense to Heidegger’s insistence that ‘*[n]o one can take the Other’s death away from him*’ (SZ 240), which critics like Edwards (1979: 5-16) and Philipse (1998: 354-60) have argued is an insistence on either the false or the trivial.

According to the CC, authentic Dasein chooses ‘both itself and choice’ (WDR 168). We have seen already how authenticity requires Dasein to resist the They’s ‘reliev[ing] it of its choice’, and Heidegger’s talk of ‘self-choosing’—which, especially on Sartrean construals, can seem deeply problematic—also has a ready and at least prima facie coherent sense on the reading I offer. ‘*Dasein’s running forward toward death*’, which ‘*Dasein’s drawing back from the They*’ ‘means’, is indeed accomplished ‘*by way of a self-choosing*’ (HCT 318).

Dasein can ‘endure’ its possible impossibility only if it can ‘endure’ what it takes to be the facts about itself; and it can ‘endure’ this only if its life’s course is in line with its own judgment—that is, if it is making its own judgment decisive in its life. If it is, then *Dasein* has ‘chosen both itself and choice’ (WDR 168): it has chosen its own judgment as its guide and thereby chosen to be the one who chooses, deciding to decide rather than allowing itself to be ‘relieve[d] ... of its choice, its formation of judgments’. Hence, ‘running forward anticipatorily [towards death] means choosing’ (WDR 168): my capacity to live with ‘the possibility of my impossibility’ requires me to be doing what *I* think must be done. Rather than gambling on the fact that I will some day be able to make up for failing to make that choice—a gamble that itself betrays self-estrangement—‘[t]he indefiniteness of death is seized when I have understood th[is] possibility as a possibility for every moment’; and ‘that is’, Heidegger tells us, ‘when I am absolutely resolute in having chosen myself’ (HCT 318-19).

We have now a straight-forward answer to the question, ‘Why be authentic?’ Living out of line with one’s own judgment is to be living in a way that one does not think is the best way of living—living in a way that does not achieve what one thinks is most important. So the question, ‘Why be authentic?’, now becomes ‘Why should I do what I myself think I should do?’, the answer to which is ‘Go figure’. It also allows us to meet the Disengagement Charge, and to see how—though this may already be clear to the reader—the next section will first make explicit how my reading assigns sense to CRC and WBC.

8. Constant Reckoning and Ways of Being

There is a widely-held view that Heidegger provides a much more tangible account of inauthenticity than he does of authenticity; but through our analogy with confronting the Last Judgment, a tangible picture of the authentic has emerged: the authentic get on with doing the right thing. Just as the true Christian gets on with serving God, the authentic person gets on

with acting on what she herself believes to be right. Authentic ‘resolve’, Heidegger tells us, ‘does not blow its own horn [or] announce itself publicly with programmatic pronouncements’; rather ‘[i]ts mode of communication is silent exemplary activity together with and for others’ (*CTR* 70). This suggests a reading of CRC and WBC.

Recall that it is not the case that those who grasp the *parousia* are those who are there when it happens—when they see it before their eyes, as it were—or, as a second best, those who know when it will happen, which is the ‘grasp of the *parousia*’ that the ‘speculators and chatterboxes’ seek. Instead those who grasp the *parousia* ‘live towards’ it in ‘serving God’ now (*PRL* 103, 79). Similarly, death is ‘not something to which Dasein ultimately comes only in its demise’ (*SZ* 259) and—touching again on NEC—‘[t]o grasp certain death as one runs ahead does not mean to expect a future occurrence’ (*CTR* 48); rather, on my account, one grasps death by not allowing oneself to think one can ‘take away its character as a possibility’; I live in the light of death—‘I come as it were into the nearest nearness to it’—when this possibility is ‘left standing’ (*HCT* 317-18);³⁶ and I do that by acting on my own judgment, doing now—prior to any future ‘actualization’ of the possibility in demise—what I believe is right.

In line with the CRC then, ‘[d]eath is a possibility-of-being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case’ and ‘at every moment’ (*SZ* 250, *HCT* 318); to ‘maintain[] itself in this truth’ (*SZ* 264), Dasein cannot ‘stop and rest’. What this also shows is that just as the Christian acknowledges the *parousia* not by having ‘some representational “expectation”’ of it, but by ‘living towards’ it by ‘serving God’, ‘[h]olding death for true’ is not ‘having some “view” about’ something (*SZ* 265, 256). Rather—and in line with the WBC—it is a way of living, in which I repeatedly bring my own judgment to bear and act upon it. Dasein allows this distinctive ‘object’, ‘death’, to be genuinely manifest—present to it—by living this kind of on-going life: ‘death is only in an existentiell *Being towards* death’ (*SZ* 234).³⁷

³⁶ Cf. also *SZ* 262.

³⁷ This reading questions whether there is reason to say—with Mulhall—that death ‘can *only* be anticipated’, where this implies that death is either ‘an ungraspable possibility’ or only ‘graspable essentially indirectly’ (Mulhall 2005: 131, 128). My reading suggests instead that these claims—which form an important part of Mulhall’s case for thinking that ‘phenomenological analysis’ must end in ‘shipwreck’, as it is ‘internally related to that which lies beyond phenomenological representation’ (Mulhall 2005: 128, 131, cf. also his 2015:

9. Being-Towards-Death as Openness to Life

It should now be clear that the Disengagement Charge misses its mark, as does the Marcusean ‘gloomy’ interpretation which insists—as Heidegger articulates this misconstrual of his view—that ‘in order to exist properly man must be constantly thinking about death’ (*FCM* 295, 294).³⁸ Those who live in the ‘nearest nearness’ to the *parousia* do not brood upon the ‘when’ of a future event but instead serve God now; and, according to my reading, authentic being-towards-death is setting one’s judgment to work now: looking to see what really needs doing now.

‘But is this now a mode of relating to death at all?’, one might yet wonder. By way of response, it might be useful to note how, in one particular respect, there is an analogy to be drawn between Heidegger’s understanding of what it is to grasp death and his understanding of what it is to grasp the *Zuhanden*—the ready-to-hand, paradigms of which are tools (*SZ* 68).

Recall that Heidegger insists that ‘[t]he less we just stare at’ that which is *zuhanden*, ‘and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become’ (*SZ* 69). In this ‘primordial relationship’, the *Zuhanden* become ‘transparent’ for us; ‘that with which we concern ourselves’ is ‘not the tools themselves’ but ‘the work—that which is to be produced at the time’; indeed the tools ‘must, as it were, withdraw in order to *be* ready-to-hand authentically’ (*SZ* 69, italics added).

So too, the less we speculatively ‘brood’ upon the future moment of death, and the more we confront its constant possibility—by acting now and always on our own judgment—the more primordial does our relationship to it become. In this ‘nearest nearness’ to death, it thus become ‘transparent’ for us; that with which we concern ourselves is instead the work of each moment, that which, according to our judgment, must be done at the time; hence death must, as it were, withdraw—the day on which we die ceasing to be the object of our attention—in order for us to act in the way in which death—‘the possibility of impossibility’—truly shows itself to us and is truly acknowledged by us. When death is in its ‘nearest nearness’ and our relationship to it ‘primordial’—or as PICA puts it, ‘[w]hen one *has*

265-66)—may overlook the distinctive *way* in which we grasp death, its distinctive ‘subject-correlate’.

³⁸ Cf. also *CTR* 57.

death before one as *certain* and *lays hold of it* as such’—‘one’s *life* becomes visible in itself’ (PICA 119, last set of italics added).

A complex concept that Heidegger ties to ‘anticipation’—a tie which Sec. 3 traced back to the St Paul discussion—naturally develops the above vision. ‘Resolution’ is a perfectly natural translation of Heidegger’s ‘*Entschlossenheit*’, but it has often been noted that that term literally means a form of ‘openness’, a resonance that Heidegger certainly seems to want to exploit. Authenticity’s ‘appeal to the Self ... does not force it inwards upon itself, so that it can close itself off from the “external world”’, in ‘a kind of seclusion in which one flees the world’; ‘rather it brings one ... into the resoluteness of “taking action”’ (SZ 273, 310).

This combination of themes has puzzled commentators;³⁹ but it is natural, according to the reading I have offered. The authentic person clearly displays resolution—she does so in living by what she thinks is right—but doing that is a matter of engagement with the world around her; it is so because to own—to take seriously—one’s own judgment is to pay proper attention oneself to what must be done, to what lies before one in each situation of choice and action.⁴⁰ Hence, this being true to oneself is not ‘brooding over oneself in egocentric reflection’ (PICA 120). Rather, just as death becomes ‘transparent’ in one’s authentically ‘holding death for true’, so too, one might say, does the Self when one is true to oneself: ‘resoluteness is what first gives authentic transparency to Dasein’, as ‘[r]esoluteness brings the Self right into its current concerned Being-amidst what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it

³⁹ A theme in Davis’s 2007 discussion, e.g., is a perceived tension between ideas of ‘resolute willing’ and ‘openness’.

⁴⁰ The Disengagement Charge normally takes the form of a worry that the authentic must withdraw from ordinary situations of action. So it should perhaps be noted that the proper attention envisaged above could issue in action or inaction—and in this sense, in engagement or a refusal to engage—if that is what one’s judgment prescribes. So, for example, if one’s judgment—like that of an ‘ascetic priest’—is that the world is debased, such that one should retreat into seclusion, then proper attention—genuine engagement with the situations of choice one encounters—will take the form of a constant resistance to that world’s enticements, a constant vigilance over whether one may have fallen into acting or thinking in line with that world’s (debased) judgment rather than one’s own. (Cf. SZ 300, where Heidegger insists that though, ‘[a]s resolute, Dasein is taking action’, ‘[t]he term, “take action” ... must be taken so broadly’ that it ‘also embrace[s] the passivity of resistance’.)

into solicitous Being with Others' (SZ 299, 298).⁴¹ As CC has it, Dasein's 'anticipatory resoluteness'⁴² 'means' choosing 'both itself and choice' (WDR 168): the authentic adhere to their own judgment in *themselves* deciding to decide. But to make that decision is to decide what must be done *here*: it is to pay proper attention oneself—to be oneself genuinely *open*—to the situation before one.⁴³ 'Dasein ... can choose itself and decide to subject every concern to an original choice'; or it can embrace inauthenticity, in which 'Dasein lives *neither* in an originally appropriated world, *nor* does it exist as itself' (CTR 36, 29, italics added).

10. Concluding Thoughts on Judgment and Death

Clearly, *much* more needs to be said. Indeed there are issues that the discussion of Being-towards-death immediately raises that I have not addressed here. For example, Heidegger declares that 'Being-towards-death is essentially anxiety', and that '*the possibility of being itself ... in an impassioned freedom towards death*' that '*anticipation reveals to Dasein*' 'is attested by that which ... is familiar to us as the "voice of conscience"' (SZ 266, 268). All I can say here is that I present my interpretation of 'anxiety' and 'conscience' elsewhere.⁴⁴ Heidegger also makes a close connection between authentic Being-towards-death

⁴¹ The reader might here be reminded of Gareth Evans' influential image of self-knowledge as a 'transparent' attention to the world (Evans: 1982). For related discussion, cf. McManus forthcoming-c.

⁴² I have set aside here the textual detail of the chapter in SZ (Div. 2, Ch. 3) in which Heidegger proposes to explain himself how 'anticipation and resoluteness [are] to be brought together' (SZ 302). But in the light of this and the previous section, the prominence in that chapter of the notions of Dasein being 'held open and free for the current factual possibility', and of its being so '*constantly*' (SZ 307, 308) should come as no surprise.

⁴³ Herein lies a possible solution to other familiar objections, such as that authenticity is in some way self-regarding, amoral or 'isolationist'. (For documentation of such objections, cf., e.g., O'Brien 2011.) Bringing one's own judgment to bear will lead to living in such ways only if one's judgment is that what matters most is living in such ways; but if it isn't, then it won't.

⁴⁴ Cf. McManus 2015a and unpublished.

and ‘Being-a-whole’;⁴⁵ but discussing that connection would take us into complex issues bound up with *Being and Time*’s broader (and never completed) project, issues that I address elsewhere but cannot address here.⁴⁶ Instead I will close with a brief examination of an obvious worry that my account raises, and then consider finally what, according to my account, we ought to take ‘death’, in Heidegger’s usage, to denote.

The worry is: ‘Just what is this thing called “my judgment”?’ One might give content to this idea in various different ways and I will here give an indication in merest outline of one such way.⁴⁷

It focuses on the Aristotelean—or just plain old commonsensical—observation that, *very roughly speaking*, we need to go ‘beyond rules’ in deciding what to do. As one contemporary neo-Aristotelean puts it, we need ‘concretely situation-specific discernment’ (McDowell 2007: 340). Speaking less roughly would require refining how that capacity relates to the exercise of virtues; so, for example, one might see such discernment as allowing us to weigh different virtues against each other—for example, knowing when courage matters more than generosity and less than loyalty etc. etc.—or as allowing us to see what particular virtues call for *here*—for example, what does ‘Being loyal’ require of *me here*. The judgment that such discernment yields need not be ‘individualised’ in the sense of being unique or idiosyncratic. But it will not be derivable in an indisputable way from widely-accepted, general and substantive maxims; instead it will call for a kind of attention on my part to each specific context of action in which I find myself.

Is this Heidegger’s understanding of such matters too? Perhaps. His discussion of the ‘concrete Situation’ suggests that this possibility might be worth taking seriously; it would also fit naturally with his notion of ‘conscience’ (at least as I understand that), and make sense of Heidegger well-known identification of ‘conscience’ with *phronesis*.⁴⁸ But my claim *here* is no more than that, *if we allow ourselves some such notion of ‘my judgment’*, then much of what Heidegger says about Being-towards-death makes sense.

⁴⁵ Cf., e.g., *SZ* 234, 264, 265, 266, 306, 329, and *HCT* 313.

⁴⁶ Cf. McManus 2012: sec. 2.5 and ch. 9, 2013b, and forthcoming-b.

⁴⁷ McManus 2015a presents a rather different—though I believe compatible—account of ‘my judgment’; and McManus forthcoming-c considers different ways in which one might fill in the outline presented above.

⁴⁸ Cf. *SZ* 299-300, *PS* 39 and Gadamer 1994: 32.

By way of conclusion, let us ask what it is—if not demise—that ‘death’ denotes for Heidegger. According to my account, the ‘death’ that authentic Being-towards-death brings into ‘nearest nearness’ is the certain but indefinite ‘possibility of impossibility’, the fact that there will be a determinate body of fact about who I will have been, a body the final make-up of which can be determined at any time. To that one might reply, ‘Well, that’s just death, isn’t it?’, and that I take to be no objection. The difficulty of understanding Heidegger’s discussion has accustomed commentators to thinking thoughts such as that ‘Heidegger ... conceives of death as something we can live through’ (Thomson, quoted above). But being able to understand this discussion without taking steps like that strikes me as at least *prima facie* a good thing.

But my account also makes vivid why one might reject the suggestion that the object of Being-towards-death is ‘*just* death’. That suggestion misses the specificity of what the authentic ‘hold true’ and the inauthentic ‘flee’. Amongst the inauthentic may be those who fear death because they fear annihilation, pain or the unknown. But *in as much as they are inauthentic*, they flee the ‘indefinite possibility of impossibility’. Yes, they flee the prospect of ‘being no more’ (HCT 313),⁴⁹ but they do so because they cannot tolerate the possibility of being nothing other—no more—than what they are now.⁵⁰ So when they strive to ‘weaken’ death—insisting that ‘death certainly comes, but not right away’—they do not deny its certainty but ‘the possibility that it can come at any moment’, the ‘indefiniteness’ that gives death ‘its sting’ (SZ 258, HCT 317).

Heidegger’s insistence that his subject matter here is a ‘death’ that is not demise can be seen as a variation on a technique he deploys all the time: he introduces new terms because he believes that if he doesn’t, his point will be missed.⁵¹ So, for example, one could well say that the subject-matter of his phenomenology of Being-in-the-world is ‘the subjectivity of the

⁴⁹ Cf. n. 32 above.

⁵⁰ In this sense, the inauthentic crave indeterminacy, the ‘uprooted’ life of the They-self which is ‘everywhere and nowhere’ (SZ 177). But I won’t explore this thought further here.

⁵¹ Heidegger’s insistence that the *possibility* of our being no more is best referred to as ‘death’ might also be seen as another case of his reserving a term for that which makes possible that which we ordinarily label using that term, a move we see in Heidegger’s discussion of ‘conscience’, ‘guilt’ and most vividly and notoriously in his discussion of truth. How illuminating this kind of move is the subject of much debate, of course. Cf. e.g., Künne 2003: 106-7.

subject' (SZ 24). But given how ready we are to understand the latter in ways that Heidegger precisely wants to contest, he instead calls his subject-matter 'Dasein'. Similarly, one could say that the object of Being-towards-death is plain old death. But, as we have seen, a *central* theme in his reflections on death is inauthenticity's 'transformation' of 'anxiety in the face of death' 'into fear in the face of an oncoming event' (SZ 254), the challenge of 'holding true' our death distorted into a demand for a 'gloomy' 'thinking about death', a 'brooding' on our final day.⁵²

So our readiness to confuse authentic Being-towards-death with such modes of 'being towards' what Heidegger calls 'demise' is perhaps the most vivid reason to distinguish the 'object' of the former from the 'object' of the latter. A proper appreciation of the significance of the coming of righteous judgment does not express itself in a fixation on the future event that is the *parousia*, and authentic Being-towards-death does not express itself in a fixation on the day when one will die. In both cases, fixation on the 'oncoming event' precisely obstructs what such forms of 'holding true' really demand of us: 'owning' our own judgment through constant attention to our lives.⁵³

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⁵² Cf. McManus 2013c for further discussion of how this vision—of our philosophical confusions readying us to misunderstand—may shape the way Heidegger addresses us—that is to say, how he writes.

⁵³ For helpful comments on material on which this paper is based, I would like to thank Taylor Carman, Daniel Dahlstrom, Beatrice Han-Pile, Chris Janaway, Elseijn Kingma, Conor McHugh, Sasha Mudd, Stephen Mulhall, George Pattison, Aaron Ridley, Joe Schear, Genia Schönbaumsfeld, Jonathan Way, Lee Walters, Daniel Whiting, and Fiona Woollard, as well as an anonymous reader for the journal and audience members at workshops at the Universities of Southampton and Oxford (twice). One of the latter formed part of a series on 'Selfhood, Authenticity and Method in Heidegger's *Being and Time*', which was funded by the British Academy, to whom I and the other organisers—Beatrice Han-Pile and George Pattison—are very grateful. I would also like to thank the University of Southampton for a period of research leave during which work on which this paper is based was done.

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